

In this our summer teaching series we're looking at Ephesians chapter 1

And just verses 3-14.

A whole series on 12 verses.

But these verses are so rich in helping us understand who we are in God's eyes

To appreciate all the Spiritual Blessings we have received.

Let's look again just at verses 5 and 6, which are the ones I'm concentrating on this morning

What was the page number again?

So, starting with the last 2 words of vs 4

"In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Last week we heard from Michael about what it means that we are chosen by God

And this morning we'll see that God didn't just choose us

He adopted us into his family

Now, for those of you who spend any time with me,

you'll know that I love talking about my family

And here they are **SLIDE**

In amongst this crowd I have two older sisters

Helen the eldest on the floor at the front and Jane the middle sister on the right in the green shirt

and a younger brother sitting on the floor on the left of the photo

And today I'm going to talk a little about my brother, Andrew

Andrew is adopted.

He came to our family when he was about 4 years old,

And I was nearly 8

Yes, I'd been the baby of the family for nearly 8 years

And then all of a sudden there was this new person in the family

Usurping my place

And he wasn't even a cute little baby

He was a four year old boy with a wheezy chest and both legs in plaster.

Poor kid, he's always had bad asthma

and was born with club feet so was in the final stage of operations to correct this.

And in my loving, caring, generous way evidently I said out loud

"Well, if we had to have one, couldn't we have got a proper one!"

But there he was, a new member of our family

Sharing in all the love, the care, the teasing, the tantrums, the fun, the sadnesses and the joy of the Harvey family

Very quickly a full part of our family life

And now

Well, just like my sisters are my sisters

My brother is my brother.

SLIDE

And as I reflected on this part of the passage from Ephesians

All sorts of memories and thoughts about Andrew came to mind

But do you know, until now, I'd never really thought through what it means to have been adopted by God

We heard last week about being chosen by God

and that in itself is mind-blowing

But God has gone so much further than this

Because he has adopted us

He didn't just choose us,

He made us members of his family,

with all that this entails

So this morning I want to look at four things

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- **how** we are adopted by God
- **why** God chose to adopt us
- what this means for us **now**
- what it means for our **future**

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But first, let's just have a look at what adoption is

and what it was all about, back in the time when Paul was writing

Adoption.

It's a word and a situation I'm sure we're all fairly familiar with

A term used to describe the process where the legal rights and responsibilities for a child are permanently transferred from the child's birth parents to adoptive parents.

So it's a legal arrangement, binding and permanent.

But we don't really think about the legal side do we?

Instead we probably conjure up pictures of orphans being chosen by loving parents

Being taken home to become a part of their family forever.

It's what all children want

To have loving parents to take care of them

To belong

To feel secure

And of course this is what was behind my parents' decision to adopt Andrew to bring him wholeheartedly into our family as one of their children.

But in our passage this morning Paul is writing with the backdrop of the Roman culture where adoption was much more of a legal transaction

This is why in vs 5 Paul uses the term "*adoption into sonship*'

Because this was what adoption was all about under Roman law – adoption of a son

A son to be an heir to his new father's estate.

A son with all the rights of a fully legitimate son.

Even if other sons were born later, it didn't affect these rights.

In the eyes of the law the adopted person was literally and absolutely the son of the new father.

So, this gives us two aspects of what adoption is about

Becoming part of a loving, caring family

with parents concerned about both our physical and emotional needs

And becoming a legal member of the family and a legal heir to the father's estate

And this is what has happened for us

In being adopted by God

- we have become a member of his family and
- we have become heirs to his kingdom

I'll talk more about this in a minute, but first let's consider how this came about

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How did we become adopted sons and daughters of God

Now I often hear people saying things like

"Well, of course, we are all children of God"

Well, actually, we're not

Yes, we are all created by God and we all come under his authority

But not everyone is adopted by God.

Think about all the thousands of children in orphanages

All desperately wanting to be adopted.

But just because they want it desperately doesn't make it happen.

They will only be adopted if people come forward to adopt them

In the same way, we can wish as hard as we can to be children of God,

But wishing it to happen doesn't change anything .

If God did not want to adopt us as his children, then we would not have been adopted.

There's nothing we could have done to change this.

We are adopted by God, because God chose to adopt us

Look with me at vs 5, it's all there

"In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ"

Firstly God's motive was love

Secondly, It was predestined –

God set in stone his plans for adoption, as Michael said last week, before even the earth was formed

And the third thing to note is that it is through Jesus Christ.

Everything that we have from God comes to us because Christ was willing to go to the cross for us

Incredible

God so loved us that before the foundation of the world he planned Christ's death so that you and I could be adopted as children of God

God signed our adoption papers with the blood of Christ

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But Why did God choose to adopt us?

Look again at our text, vs 5 and 6; he adopted us

“in accordance with his pleasure and will—⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.”

Why - because it was his pleasure and his will

Why – all for the praise of his glorious grace.....

I'm sure you've seen those appalling news items showing children in orphanages in third world countries

Naked, filthy, starving, running sores – horrific images

It must take incredible, loving, generous caring people to adopt one of these children, given all the physical and emotional difficulties they will face.

Well, before you and I met Jesus, we were in a far worse condition.

From the standpoint of God, we were like one of these poor orphans,

Naked, filthy and without hope.

Our sins rendered us abhorrent to God.

And yet, to the praise of the glory of His grace, “he predestined us for adoption

The goal of our adoption is that the glory of God's grace,

freely given,

will be praised.

This is why he predestined us for adoption,

It was so that we could be in this close a relationship with the loving God who made us

So that we can be all that we were made to be

Children of God, loving their God,

naturally and instinctively, as a child loves their parents

With respect, with honour and with love

Because that's what we were created to do

and when we think of how overwhelmingly generous God's grace is to us,

how can we not fall on our knees and praise him?

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Given all this, it's not surprising that our adoption by God must have a huge impact on our lives

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So, let's look now at what our adoption mean for us now?

Being adopted was certainly life-changing for my brother.

The first four years of his life were spent in and out of foster homes and eventually in an orphanage.

His physical needs were met, however some of the emotional scars are still there, 50 years later

But his situation was completely transformed when he was adopted into our family

He now had a family of his own

Parents who loved him, no matter what.

Sisters to grow up with (even though they made his life hell from time to time – I speak personally here!)

His future as a part of our family was secure.

And we too, when we become Christians, have this same joy of being a part of a new family

We have a new father – God our Father

God in that caring, loving parent role....

Stop for a minute and let this glorious reality wash over you

This is the almighty creator,

The eternal one

Who loves us so closely and intimately

That we get to call him Father,

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As Paul writes in Romans

.... the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

Abba – this is the same word that Jesus used when **he** spoke to his father

And in fact it's much better translated as Dad or Daddy

Which is the way most of us refer to our own father, isn't it

That's how close God wants our relationship with him to be.

That's how much he loves us

And that's the privilege we have as adopted sons and daughters of God

To be able to call him Abba too.

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Another wonderful privilege of being adopted by God is that we have new brothers and sisters

We have a huge family of which we are a part

Phil and I have moved around quite a bit in our working lives, even living in India for a time

My colleagues often asked how we coped when we were always on the move

How did we settle, how did we make new friends

My answer – well, it doesn't matter where in the world we go

Because wherever we go, we have a ready-made family waiting for us

We have brothers and sisters everywhere.

Of course this brings the same challenges of any family

We love, we support, we care for one another, sometimes we disagree

And of course we fall out from time to time

But it doesn't matter because we're family, right.

Now, going back to my brother, one of the changes we often laughed about was how Andrew's facial features must have changed after he was adopted

And countless times we've heard people say

"Oh I knew he was your brother or your son – he looks so much like you"

Here he is ...**SLIDE** ...what do you think?

Well, we found this hysterical because Andrew is physically very different from the rest of us

He's always been stocky whereas we were all thin children

He has brown eyes when we all have blue eyes

Sickeningly he has beautiful, perfectly aligned teeth (I paid a fortune to get mine straightened)

And we were all jealous of his long curly eyelashes and beautiful fingernails

Although none of us wanted his nose

But do you know, I understand why people said they could tell he was our brother

Because over time his mannerisms changed, his way of speaking changed, his behaviour changed,

Changed because he learnt from us,

he copied us,

he spoke like us,

he behaved like us

He just absorbed the Harvey family traits.

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And in the same way, the longer we are part of God's family

The more we pick up the Christian family traits

The more we come to resemble Jesus

Yes , a faint resemblance of course,

But it's there isn't it

When we are adopted by God, we undergo a character or moral transition

Because we're led by the Spirit

Our thoughts, our attitudes, our way of speaking, our actions

all come more and more into line with what God desires

and the family resemblance grows and grows

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So, having been adopted by God,

We have the joy of a close intimate relationship with God our Father

We have the joy of new brothers and sisters in Christ

We are positively changed from the inside out

But if that's not enough

As adopted children our **legal standing** with God also changes

And because of this,

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our adoption also has wonderful implications for our future

Because we are now God's heirs

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In Romans chapter 8 Paul writes

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs —heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

So according to this verse, because we share in the sufferings of Christ now

we will share in the glory of Christ later as His “co-heirs” or “joint-heirs.”

In other words, because God has made us his children, we have full rights to receive his inheritance.

We are his beneficiaries.

And as children of God, what do we inherit?

Nothing less than the kingdom of God.

Christ's inheritance is the whole universe, all that is in existence

Hebrews 1 vs 2 says that the Son has been “*appointed heir of all things.*”

So being a co-heir with Christ means that we, as God's adopted children, will share in this inheritance.

What belongs to Jesus will also belong to us.

Think of what this means.

Everything that God owns belongs to us because, in his grace, he adopted us

Through adoption our future is absolutely secure.

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Now, one of the things I said right at the start is that adoption is a process

And us, well, we're still in that process

The process started when God predestined our adoption

Then we became Children of God through Jesus Christ

But even with all the wonderful blessings of being a child of God

we haven't yet reached the final stage of our adoption

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Elsewhere in Romans chapter 8 Paul writes

we ... groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

So in some respect we are still waiting for our adoption by God

Because we are waiting for the redemption of our bodies

Waiting for that time when we can truly stand in the presence of God our Father

Whole and unblemished

Only made possible through Jesus Christ who overcame death for us

Our own resurrection, assured by Christ, is the final stage of our adoption.

Praise God for his glorious grace.