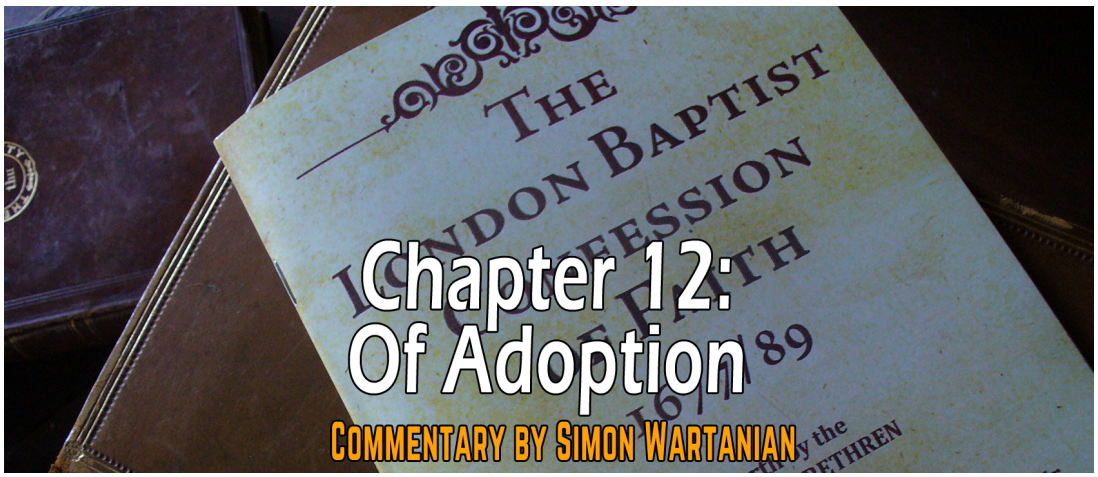
1689 Baptist Confession Chapter 12: Of Adoption - Commentary

Published: Wednesday 4th of March 2015 21:56 by Simon Wartanian
URL: https://www.thecalvinist.net/post/1689-Baptist-Confession-Chapter-12:-Of-Adoption-Commentary



Chapter 12: Of Adoption

In this chapter, we will try to find what the Bible says about us being the children of God. What does it mean to be children of God and how do we become children of God? These are the questions that we will try to answer.

§1 Make partakers of the grace of adoption

1. All those that are justified, **1** **God vouchsafed,** **2** **in and for the sake of his only Son Jesus Christ,** **3** to make partakers of the grace of adoption, by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the **liberties and privileges of the children of God,** have **his name put upon them**, **4** **receive the spirit of adoption,** have access to the throne of grace with boldness, are enabled to cry Abba, Father, **5** are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by him as by a Father, yet **never cast off,** but sealed to the day of redemption, **6** and **inherit the promises** as heirs of everlasting salvation.**7**
    1. Gal. 3:24-26[1]
    2. 1 John 3:1-3
    3. Eph. 1:5; Gal. 4:4-5; Rom 8:17, 29
    4. Rom. 8:17; John 1:12; 2 Cor. 6:18; Rev. 3:12
    5. Rom. 8:15; Eph. 3:12; Rom. 5:2; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 2:18
    6. Ps. 103:13; Prov. 14:26; Matt. 6:30, 32; 1 Peter 5:7; Heb. 12:6; Isa. 54:8-9; Lam. 3:31; Eph. 4:30
    7. Rom. 8:17; Heb. 1:14; 9:15

God has **vouchsafed**, i.e., granted, all of them that are **justified...in and for the sake of His only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption** (Eph. 1:5; Gal. 3:24-26; John 1:12-13). No justified person misses this **grace of adoption**. Their adoption, as well as their election (**chapter 3:5**), having the blessings of redemption (**chapter 8:8**), effectual calling and regeneration (**chapter 10:2**), justification (**chapter 11:3**), were not based in themselves. The absolute and free grace of God dominates all of the Christian life. Because we are **in...His Only Son Jesus Christ**, we are likewise counted as sons (Gal. 3:26-29; 4:4-5). And **for the sake of His Only Son** and the work He accomplished upon the cross, whereby He purchased our redemption with all of its blessings, we are adopted as sons of God. By this **grace of adoption**, we are to **enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God** (John 1:12-13). We are freed from sin and are able to willingly please God. We are privileged as children of God and of having God as our Father. The Confession

then goes on to list the **privileges** which the children of God have.

They have **His name put upon them** (Rev. 3:12), meaning that they belong to Him. He is their owner. He is their Father and Master. They **receive the spirit of adoption** (Rom. 8:15), Who is the Holy Spirit of God. The Spirit testifies with our spirit about our identity as children of God (Rom. 8:14-17). As children, we **have access to the throne of grace with boldness** (Heb. 4:16), because God is our **Abba, Father**. A child should not be afraid to approach their father. So likewise, we, as children of the Father, we may go to the **throne of grace with boldness**! We, by the fatherly care of God, are **pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by Him as by a Father** (Ps. 103:13; Prov. 14:26; Matt. 6:30-32; Heb. 12:6). He cares for us and provides for us. But an important part of how He proves that He is our Father and we are His children is by disciplining us. He thereby proves that He cares for us and the wrong things which we do. But this disciplining or chastising is not for the purpose of condemning us. No. We are **never cast off** (John 6:37-39). It is for the purpose of us sharing in His holiness (Heb. 12:10). We are **never cast off**, but **sealed to the day of redemption** (Eph. 4:30), meaning that we are absolutely safe in our state of adoption and grace. God will not disinherit us, but He will discipline us when we sin. Since we are **sealed** it means that we will **inherit the promises** for we are **heirs of eternal salvation** (Heb. 1:14; 9:15). Salvation has been promised for us from all eternity and now it is being realized in our effectual calling, faith, justification, adoption and all the other graces which God lavishes upon us.

The Golden Chain of Romans 8:29-30 continues. After our justification, the Lord takes us into His fold and adopts us for the sake of Christ as children and heirs of Him. This is done to all who are justified. It is not a privilege only of some believers, but the privilege of all the believers. All who are justified are also made children of God. "**Vouchsafe"** is an old word meaning "to condescend to grant or bestow something." Just like God condescended to make a covenant with man (**chapter 7:1**), so likewise the Lord condescends and by grace gives us privileges that we actually do not deserve. It is by grace—something that we don't deserve.

In and for Christ

The privilege of adoption is found only in the beloved Son of the Father–in the Lord Jesus Christ. We should not look anywhere else, but only in Christ through Whom adoption into God's family is possible. Yes, there is indeed a sense in which all are children of God in that He has created them, but the Bible never focuses on that (Acts 17:26-27). The New Testament, again and again, speaks about our adoption into God's family-centered in Jesus Christ our Lord. Paul says in Galatians 3:26 that it is **in** Christ that we are children of God. It is not that we simply are His creation, but we are children and we are adopted into God's family in Christ and through faith. Thus, the faithless are not admitted into God's family. This privilege is only in Christ and through faith. This is a blessed privilege in virtue of the Covenant of Grace and not the Covenant of Works in Adam for all men.

We are made children by regeneration. We are spiritually born of God and thus in this way and through Christ, we are rightly children of God. We are adopted and received as children through faith and regeneration (John 1:12-13). It was God's purpose even before the foundation of the world that we would be welcomed into His family through Christ (Eph. 1:5). God predestined us for the grace and privilege of adoption. God elected us so that we would be His children for the glory of His holy Name and the praise of His grace. It was God's purpose that we would be redeemed and cleansed from sin so that we would be adopted into His fold through Christ (Gal. 4:4-5). Through Christ we are made heirs of God's promises, we are made **true children of Abraham** through faith and thus the Abrahamic promises have their fulfillment in the Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ (Gal. 3:29; 2 Cor. 1:20). As Christ is the rightful heir of everything (Heb. 1:2), so we who are *in* the Son are heirs to what the Lord Jesus is an heir. We are **co-heirs with the Lord** (Rom. 8:17). In and through Christ we are made the **true Israel of God** (Gal. 6:16). The Lord says that He is the True Vine (John 15:1-2), which was a clear picture of Israel (e.g. Hos 10:1) and that we are in Him. If Jesus is the true Israel and we are in Him, then we are the Israel of God, Jewish and Gentile believers in the Messiah, not unbelieving ethnic Jews.

The Liberties and Privileges

With our adoption into God's family, we by amazing grace receive abundant privileges and graces, which we could have never deserved.

His name

We have God's name upon us. The book of Revelation describes the believers as having the Father's name upon their foreheads in contrast to those who have the mark of the Beast on their forehead (Rev. 3:12; 14:1; 22:4). To have His name upon us means that we belong to Him. We are His possessions. We are His children. He lays His claim especially upon us. We are welcomed into His family and the Lord Jesus, our precious and loving Savior, becomes our elder brother (cf. Rom. 8:29).

In fact, the Father has predestined us to be like His beloved Son (Rom. 8:29). It is the Father's desire that the Lord Jesus be an elder brother among many more who are conformed into His character and image. We will be spotless and pure just like our Elder Brother.

Our being adopted as children of God is a great demonstration of God's love for us (1 John 3:1). That we should be loved and cared for by Him is a great privilege and a marvelous grace, instead of rightly receiving the punishment that we deserve for our sins. We were previously children of wrath (Eph. 2:3), but now we are the sons and daughters of the living God (Rom. 9:26).

Receive the Spirit and Sealed by Him

Not only do we receive the Spirit when we believe, but we are sealed and protected by the same Spirit until our salvation is complete–until the day when we rise again (Eph 1:13-14). The Spirit is called the "Spirit of adoption" (Rom. 8:15). It is through Him that we are adopted into God's family and become children of God. It is thanks to His powerful and sovereign working that we are regenerated and brought into the fold of Christ. It is through the Spirit who is in us, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, that we are made able to love God and pray to God. It is the Spirit who regenerates us and thus brings us into God's family (John 3:5-8; 6:63; Titus 3:5). It is through the Spirit that we realize that we are children of God and address God as our "Abba" (Rom. 8:14-16; Gal. 4:4-5; Matt. 6:9). Through the Spirit who indwells us, we have access to the throne of God (Eph. 2:18; Heb. 4:16). Through the Spirit, we may go to God at any time we need Him. Through the Spirit of God, we are always "connected" to God. In fact, the Spirit helps us in our pitiful prayers (Rom. 8:26-27).

Pitied, Protected, Provided For

The Lord is compassionate toward us as we are His children (Ps. 103:13). He cares for us and grants us grace in times of need. In Him, we are protected. He is our refuge (Ps. 46:1; 64:7-8; Prov. 14:26). When trouble comes, in Him can we hide from our enemies. We find our peace in Him because He is the Prince of Peace (Eph. 2:14; Ps. 85:8; Isa. 9:6). As our Father, He provides for our daily needs as we pray to Him (Matt. 6:11, 31-33; 7:11). He cares for us and He loves us as a father loves his children (1 Pet. 5:7).

Chastened

As true and legitimate children, Hebrews 12:3-11 (also Prov. 3:11-12) argues, we are and will be chastened and disciplined by the Father. It is not because He hates us. It is exactly because He loves us that He will discipline us for our sins. He will never condemn those who are in Christ (Rom. 8:1). There is no condemnation and no one is able to condemn the children of God. But as He is grieved by our sin (Eph. 4:30), so likewise, He has in mind our best and thus disciplines us for our sins, but never condemns us. He welcomes us and cleanses us from sin when we confess them to Him (1 John 1:8-9). He demonstrates His love and care for us and to us through discipline because He does not want us to keep walking in our sins. His will is that all His children attain the "holiness without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). We should subject ourselves to the Father Who lovingly disciplines His children for their good and His glory.

It is important to make a distinction between condemnation and discipline. Condemnation sends us to hell, but discipline makes us more like our Elder Brother and purifies us from indwelling sin. God's discipline is motivated by His love for His children, and not vindictive justice. Scripture says, "For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives" (Heb. 12:6). It is not those whom He hates that He disciplines, but those whom He dearly loves with an everlasting love.

Never Cast Off

We are never cast off from His presence, never. Although He disciples us, He never rejects or forgets us. We are His children and He's a loving and gracious Father Who will never forget His own. While His discipline may seem painful and harsh, nevertheless, that is not His intention, rather His intention is that we become more holy (Heb. 12:10). See also **chapter 17 on The Perseverance of the Saints** where we will, Lord willing, make a case for that doctrine and also a **Scripture List supporting the Perseverance of the Saints**.

The Future Aspect of Adoption

While all that we listed above about our adoption concerns the present (1 John 3:2), yet there is still a future and final aspect of our adoption, namely the resurrection of our bodies. In Romans 8:23, Paul connects our adoption to the redemption of our *bodies*. Our redemption and adoption with all its privileges and graces will be final and complete on the last day when the Lord raises us up unto glory, to have a body like His (1 John 3:2; Phil. 3:21). Our adoption will be known to everyone on the last day and we will receive our glorified body when our redemption is final and complete.

Conclusion

Dr. Waldron defines adoption as—

> Adoption is a change in legal status from that of slave to that of son of God which takes place by faith at the moment of union with Christ, but will be publicly revealed at the resurrection. It is an act of God's free grace flowing from the electing love of God and Father in eternity and the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit in time, and immediately confers the Spirit of adoption and the privilege of being one of God's heirs, as well as other privileges, obligations and liabilities.[2]

Thank You, Father, for Your marvelous and amazing grace toward us, who were children of wrath and now made children of the living God.

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

(1 John 3:1)

Footnotes

1. ^ *Many Scriptural references have been supplied by Samuel Waldron's Modern Exposition of 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith which was apparently supplied by the Westminster Confession of Faith 1646.*
2. ^ *Sam E. Waldron. A Modern Exposition Of The 1689 Baptist Confession Of Faith. (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2013). p. 208, footnote references removed.*