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Grace CL305

Spring 2012

9-May 10, 33 Works of Grace: Numbers 9-12, pgs. 14-18

#9. Adopted. The peculiar position of one who is adopted is an important feature of the riches of divine grace. Its unique place in the following passage indicates its major import: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him, in love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Eph. 1:4-5).

In attempting to discover what this position really is, it is needful to recognize that divine adoption has almost nothing in common with that form of it as accepted and practiced among men.

According to human custom, adoption is a means whereby an outsider may become a member of a family. It is a legal way to create father and son relationship as a substitute for father and son reality.

On the other hand, divine adoption, while referring both to Israel's kinship to God (Rom. 9:4) and to redemption of the believer's body (Rom. 8:23), is primarily a divine act by which one already a child by actual birth through the Spirit of God is placed forward as an adult son in his relation to God.

At the moment of regeneration, the believer, being born of God and therefore the legitimate offspring of God, is advanced in relationship and responsibility to the position of an adult son. All childhood and adolescent years, which are normal in human experience, are excluded in spiritual sonship and the newly born believer is at once in possession of freedom from tutors and governors—who symbolize the law principle—and is responsible to live the full orb'd spiritual life of an adult son in the Father's household.

No period of irresponsible childhood is recognized. *Hence no teenage stage is noted in the New Testament.*

There is no body of Scripture which undertakes to direct the conduct of beginners in the Christian life as in distinction to those who are mature. Whatever God says to the old and established saint, He says to every believer—including those most recently regenerated (*i.e. sheeps and lambs*).

There should be no misunderstanding respecting the "babe in Christ," mentioned in 1 Corinthians 3:1, who is a babe because of carnality and not because of immaturity of years in the Christian life.

In human experience legitimate birth and adoption never combine in the same person. There is no occasion for a father to adopt his own child. In the realm of divine adoption, every child born of God is adopted at the moment he is born. He is placed before God as a mature, responsible son. Thus adoption becomes one of the important divine undertakings in the salvation of men and is a position of great importance.

Others On Adoption:

Regeneration begins the new life in the soul; justification deals with the new attitude of God towards that soul, or perhaps better, of that soul towards God; adoption admits man into the family of God with filial joy. Regeneration has to do with our change in nature; justification, with our change in standing; sanctification, with our change in character; adoption, with our change in position. In regeneration the believer becomes a child of God (John 1:12, 13); in adoption, the believer, already a child, receives a place as an adult son; thus the child becomes a son, the minor becomes an adult (Gal. 4:1–7).¹

All of the NT verses that use 'adoption': Rom. 8:15, 8:23, 9:4, Ga. 4:5, Eph. 1:5

Class Discussion: What are the practical applications of this work of Grace?

#10. Acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. As a position before God, none could be more elevated or consummating than that a believer should be “made accepted in the beloved” (Eph. 1:6) and “acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5).

Such an estate is closely akin to that already mentioned wherein there is no condemnation, and to that, yet to be considered, of justification;

Note: Justification being the absolute opposite declaration by God that we are not condemned, nor under any condemnation.

But this aspect of truth (Acceptable to God by Jesus Christ) not only announces the marvelous fact that the Christian is accepted, but grounds that acceptance in the position which he holds **in Christ**.

As definitely as any member that might be joined to a human body would partake of all that the person is to whom it is joined—honor and position—so perfectly and rightfully a member joined to Christ by the baptism of the Spirit partakes of all that Christ is.

In respect to this union with Christ and that which it provides, wonderful declarations are made:

a. MADE RIGHTEOUS. Reference here is neither to any merit nor good works on the part of the individual believer, nor has it the slightest reference to the unquestioned truth that God is Himself a righteous Being.

It rather represents that standing or quality which Christ released by His death according to the sweet-savor aspect of it, and which rightfully becomes the believer's portion through his living union with Christ. It is righteousness imputed to the believer on the sole condition that he has believed on Christ as his Savior.

On sweet savor aspect of His death see: Eph. 5:2 and we in turn can offer a sweet smelling aroma, see Phil. 4:18

Two major realities which constitute a Christian are: imparted eternal life (John 20:31) and imputed righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21).

Of the two great salvation books in the New Testament, it may be said of John's Gospel that it stresses the gift of eternal life, and it may be said of the Epistle to the Romans that it stresses imputed righteousness.

¹ Evans, W., & Coder, S. M. (1998). *The great doctrines of the Bible* (Enl. ed.) (161). Chicago: Moody Press.

Eternal life is defined as “Christ **in you**, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27), and imputed righteousness is based on the truth that the believer is **in Christ**. These two supreme truths are compressed by Christ into seven brief and simple words, when He said: “you in me (*Christ*), and I in you (*believer*)” (John 14:20).

Whether it be the reception of eternal life or of imputed righteousness, but one condition is imposed on the human side, namely, to believe on Christ as Savior (John 3:16; Rom. 3:22, 1 John 3:23).

In an earlier treatment of this theme the essential features of imputed righteousness have been recorded and the extended body of Scripture bearing on this doctrine has been cited. The believer is “acceptable to God,” even the infinitely holy God, since he has been *made* accepted in the Beloved; and this constitutes a transforming feature of the riches of divine grace.

b. SANCTIFIED POSITIONALLY. That there is a *positional* sanctification which is secured by union with Christ which has too often been overlooked, and, because of this neglect, theories of a supposed sinless perfection in daily life have been inferred from those Scriptures which assert the truth that the believer has been “perfected for ever” through his sanctification.

See a picture of this in 1 Cor. 7:14

The point of misunderstanding is with regard to the *design* of sanctification, which may be defined as the setting apart of a person or thing, a classifying, a designation if you will. It is thus that Christ sanctified Himself by becoming the Savior of the lost with all that that involved (John 17:19), which sanctification certainly could not imply any improvement in moral character on His part. How could that which was sinless improve morally?

Likewise, the sanctification of an inanimate object, such as the gold of the temple or the gift on the altar (Matt. 23:17, 19), indicates that a moral change in the thing sanctified is not demanded.

Thus, in the case of the sanctification of a person, the moral change in that person’s life may not be the result of sanctification; but no person or thing is sanctified without being set apart or classified thereby.

Christ has been “made unto us ... sanctification” (1 Cor. 1:30), and the Corinthians—even when being corrected for evil practices—are assured that they were not only “washed” and “justified,” but that they were “sanctified” (1 Cor. 6:11).

Such sanctification was neither the estate of those believers nor did it refer to their ultimate transformation when they would appear in glory (Eph. 5:27; 1 John 3:2). It evidently indicated that greatest of all classifications, which resulted in the standing and position of every believer when he enters the New Creation through being joined to Christ and partakes of all that Christ is. This truth is declared in the phrase:

c. “PERFECTED FOREVER”. This consummating phrase appears in Hebrews 10:14 and applies equally to every believer. It, too, relates to the Christian’s standing and position in Christ. Such a union with Christ secures the perfection of the Son of God for the child of God.

..... in the phrase:

d. “MADE ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED”. The student would do well to observe the force of the word *made* as it appears in a considerable number of passages, where it indicates that the thing accomplished is not wrought by the believer for himself, but is the work of God for him. If he is made something which he was not before, it is evidently the work of another in his behalf. In this instance, the

believer is said to be *made accepted*. He is accepted on the part of God who, because of His infinite holiness, could accept no one less perfect than Himself. All of this is provided for on the basis of the truth that the believer is made accepted “in the beloved” (Eph. 1:6). Without the slightest strain upon His holiness, God accepts those who are in union with His Son; and this glorious fact, that the one who is saved is accepted, constitutes a measureless feature of divine grace.

..... in the phrase:

e. **“MADE MEET OR QUALIFIED”**. Here, again, the word *made* with all its significance appears, but with respect to that requirement which must be demanded of all who would appear in the presence of God in heaven. The text in which this assuring phrase occurs is Colossians 1:12, and it asserts that the believer is, even now, fitted for that celestial glory: “giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet *or qualified* to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

No mere pretense or bold assumption is indicated in this passage. The least believer, being in Christ, is even now *made meet* or qualified to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. It therefore becomes no arrogance or vainglory to accept this statement of God’s Word as true, and as true from the moment one believes on Christ as Savior.

To be acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:5), is a reality in every aspect of it and this truth, incomprehensible as it is, constitutes an important item in the whole field of the riches of grace in Christ Jesus.

Class Discussion: What are the practical applications of this work of Grace?

#11. Justified. No present position in which the believer is placed is more exalted and consummating than that of being justified by God. By justification the saved one is lifted far above the position of one who depends on divine generosity and magnanimity, to the estate of one whom God has declared justified forever, which estate the holy justice of God is as much committed to defend as ever that holy justice was before committed to condemn.

Theological definitions respecting justification are more traditional than Biblical. Only inattention to Scripture can account for the confusion of justification with divine forgiveness of sin. It is true that each of these is an act of God in response to saving faith, that none are forgiven who are not justified, and that none are justified who are not forgiven; but in no particular do these great divine undertakings coalesce.

Likewise, though they are translated from the same Greek root, the terms *righteousness* (imputed) and *justification* represent wholly different conceptions. The believer is constituted righteous by virtue of his position in Christ, but he is justified by a declaratory decree of God.

Righteousness imputed is the abiding fact, and justification is the divine recognition of that fact. In other considerations of the doctrine of justification incorporated in this general work, a more exhaustive treatment is undertaken, including the scope of this divine enterprise in which God justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5) without a cause (Rom. 3:24), and on a ground so worthy, so laudable, and so unblemished that He Himself remains just when He justifies.

He reserves every aspect of this measureless benefit to Himself, for the only human obligation is that of *believing* in Jesus (Rom. 3:26). It is the Christian’s right to count this work done and to say, as in Romans 5:1, “Therefore being justified by faith ...” Though language may describe it, only the Spirit of God can cause the mind to realize this essential position so elevated and so glorified.

Class Discussion: What are the practical applications of this work of Grace?

#12. Made Nigh. The saved one, according to Ephesians 2:13, is said to be “made nigh.” This text states: “But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” As seen before, the word *made* is significant in that it assigns the whole undertaking to another than the one who receives the blessing.

In this verse the verb that ‘brings us near’ in the phrase ‘made nigh’ is in the Aorist and is passive. Which means it is a singular act in the past, made by someone other than ourselves

Various terms are employed in the New Testament to describe the close relationship which is set up and exists between God and the believer. To be “made nigh” is not only a work of God, but is to be brought into a relationship to God which is of infinite perfection and completeness. To it nothing could be added in time or eternity. What such a nearness may mean to the Christian when he is present with the Lord cannot be anticipated in this life; nevertheless, the reality which the phrase *made nigh* connotes is as cogent an acquirement at the inception of the Christian’s salvation as it will be at any point in eternity.

Divinely wrought positions are often accompanied by a corresponding Christian experience. This is true of the subject in hand. While, as has been stated, the position which is described as nigh to God is itself complete and final, the one who is thus *nigh* is exhorted to “draw nigh” to God. It is written: “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded” (James 4:8); “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:22).

These exhortations belong wholly in the realm of Christian experience, in which realm there may be a consciousness, more or less real, of personal fellowship with the Father and the Son (1 John 1:3).

The process by which a believer may draw nigh—as required by James and in response to which God will Himself draw nigh to the believer—is that of a confession of sin and an adjustment of one’s life to the will of God. Over against this it will be observed that, whether in fellowship or out of fellowship as respects conscious experience, the Christian is, because of his position in Christ, ever and always made nigh.

Class Discussion: What are the practical applications of this work of Grace?