

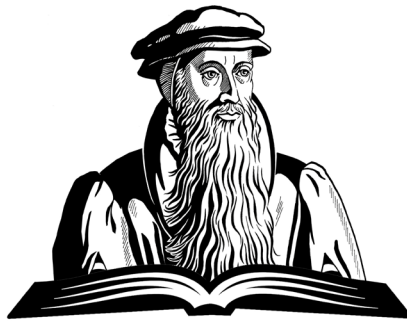
VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

The Application of Redemption

by Rev. William Macleod

Lecture 8

Adoption



**The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education**

Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

John Knox Institute of Higher Education

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Rev. William Macleod recently retired, after serving as minister of the gospel for 45 years at Knightswood Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), in Glasgow, Scotland. In addition, he was for many years the editor of the denominational magazine, *The Free Church Witness*. He was also Professor of Systematic Theology and Principal of the Free Church (Continuing) Seminary, in Inverness, Scotland. He is married and has three adult children and six grandchildren.

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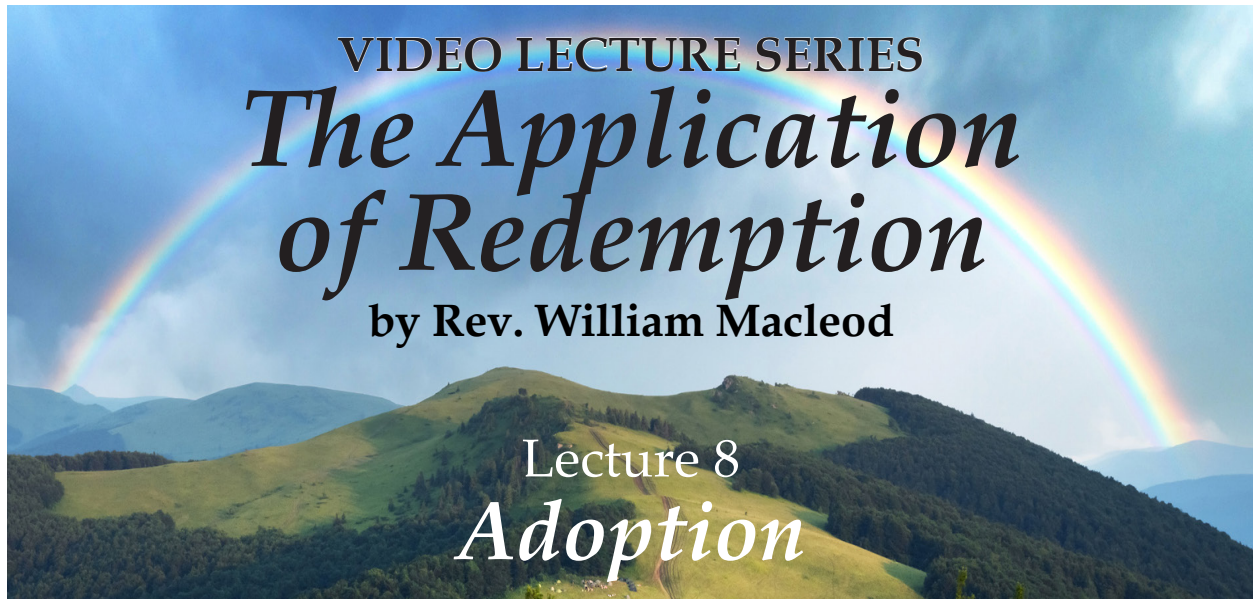
VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

The Application of Redemption

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12 Lectures

1. The Order of Salvation
2. Total Depravity
3. Effectual Calling
4. Regeneration
5. Repentance
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Our lecture today is on *Adoption*. God’s love is amazing; who can measure it? “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3, verse 16). In his epistle, John wrote, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not” (1 John 3, verse 1). God could not do more for us than he has done, and God could not raise us to a higher position. We were sinners by nature and by practice; we were born into this world as enemies who hate God, and are under his wrath and curse. We were, in fact, children of the devil (John 8, verse 44). We sinned in Adam and fell in him. We died to God spiritually when Adam ate the forbidden fruit, and we’re, by nature, on the way to eternal death in hell. Yet, God stepped in. He had elected us from before time began. Two thousand years ago, he sent his Son to die for us on the cross. We entered the world as rebels, yet God sent his Holy Spirit into our hearts to change us, to regenerate us; we were born again. We repented and believed in Jesus as our Savior. We were justified. Our sins were pardoned in justification, and we were accepted as righteous in God’s sight for Christ’s sake. Then we were adopted by God. This amazing truth that Jehovah adopted us is the theme of this lecture. How thankful, and obedient, and holy, and loving we should be for all that the Lord has done for us.

First of all then, *What is Adoption?* Adoption is taking a stranger into the family and treating him as a son and heir. If you or I were looking for someone to adopt, we would look for a healthy, strong, obedient, and intelligent child. But amazingly, God chooses creatures who are small, weak, sick, sinful, and stupid in comparison to him. He picks sons and daughters from amongst his enemies to adopt. Oh, the wonder of God’s love in adoption.

Adoption is an Act. Adoption is not a process, but an act. We are not half adopted one day, and the process completed another day. Rather, in a moment, we are adopted. Justification pronounced us righteous. It changed our status, but not our state. So adoption, too, does not change our nature, but rather our status before God. Adoption is the climax of our salvation. God has “predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved” (Ephesians 1, verses 5 and 6). No higher position is possible. As Paul stated to the Corinthians,

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2, verse 9). The world does not recognize our high position, because it did not recognize Christ: “It knew him not” (1 John 3, verse 1). Adoption is not simply a future blessing, but, “Now are we the sons of God” (verse 2). We already enjoy many blessings.

Considering then *the One Who Adopts*. Adoption is specifically an act of the Father. “Behold, what manner of love the *Father* hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (1 John 3, verse 1). God is Father in several different ways. First, he’s the Father in the Trinity—he’s the Father of the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. In his universal fatherhood, secondly, he is the Father, or Creator, of all mankind, but there is little mention or emphasis upon this in Scripture. Paul makes reference to it in his sermon on Mars Hill, when he quotes a heathen poet who says, “We are his offspring” (Acts 17, verse 28). By saying that, he implies that our life comes from God—we are his offspring. In a third sense, we are sons of God in this relationship to our Father by adoption. And this is the fatherhood which is especially stressed in Scripture.

Christ’s position is the only begotten of the Father, and if course, his case is unique. So he says, “I ascend unto my Father, and your Father” (John 20, verse 17). He never includes the disciples with himself, saying, “Our Father,” but “my Father, and your Father.” The three persons of the Trinity have different roles. The Father elects and adopts. The Son pays the required ransom price to divine justice, so that, “in bringing many sons unto glory,” he was made perfect in sufferings (Hebrews 2, verse 10). The Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of adoption, enters the hearts of the adopted, granting them assurance, and enabling them to cry, “Abba, Father” (Romans 8, verse 15).

Who, then, Are Adopted? Not everyone is adopted. ‘Tis a blessing bestowed upon those who repent and believe the gospel and so, are converted. The two ways of becoming part of a family are either by birth, or by adoption. We are born as children of Adam. For Christians, a point comes in their life, when, in Paul’s terminology, they are adopted (Ephesians 1, verse 5). As Paul wrote to the Romans, “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8, verse 29). Christ died only for the elect (Acts 20, verse 28). The Holy Spirit applies redemption only to them: “God hath sent for the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Galatians 4, verse 6). Interestingly, in John’s terminology, we are “born again” into the relationship of children: “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1, verses 12 and 13). Regeneration changes our nature, fitting us to be sons. Justification changes our status, pardoning us and accepting us as righteous, so that we can be adopted. Both Regeneration and justification must take place first, and then, immediately adoption takes place. Some regard adoption just as part of justification, yet it is such a special blessing that it is best that we treat it separately. Like justification, adoption immediately follows upon our exercising faith in Christ: “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3, verse 26). Faith is the instrument of justification, and faith is also the instrument of adoption: “As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God” (John 1, verse 12).

What then are *the Privileges of Adoption*?

First, *it gives us a new name*. We were children of Adam, fallen in him, and disgraced with him. And now we are the children of God, sons and daughters of the great King. When you are adopted, you take the name of the new family to which you now belong. We are Christians, God’s people, called by his name.

Secondly, *comfort in this life*: God providentially cares for his children. He feeds the little sparrows and clothes the wild lilies. And how much more will your heavenly Father look after you, his children; feeding you, clothing you, and providing you with all your daily needs (Matthew 6, verses 26 to 30). We will lack no good thing: “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4, verse 19). So that’s the second great privilege of adoption.

The third is *the Spirit assuring us*. God does not give to his children the Spirit to make them afraid, but to assure them of the wonderful relationship which they now have to themselves: “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear: but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Romans 8, verses 15 and 16). We know we belong to him. The Spirit’s presence and communion gives great joy and assurance.

And then, fourthly, the fourth privilege is *liberty*. God delivers from slavery to Satan and to the law. God took his ancient people out of the bondage that they were in, in the land of Egypt, to be his sons and his daughters. As God’s children, we are set free. Paul asserts, “The creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Romans 8, verse 21).

A fifth privilege is *access to the Father*. As his children, you can come boldly into your Father’s presence, to his throne. You are his family; not mere beggars or even servants. He will answer your prayers, and he will give you, through his Spirit, all good things: “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (Luke 11, verse 13).

The sixth privilege is *angels protecting you*. God sends out his angels to watch over you, and to care for you: “They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone” (Psalm 91, verse 12). They surround God’s children and save them from many dangers. “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Hebrews 1, verse 14). The angels are ministering spirits to God’s children.

The seventh privilege is *fatherly chastisement*. The Lord will not spoil his children, nor allow us to destroy ourselves, but corrects our backslidings. It is a token of his love, this chastisement. Like rebellious children, we don’t always appreciate chastisement as something good. But we must remember, “Him the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons” (Hebrews 12, verses 6 to 8).

An eighth privilege is *fatherly direction*. God overrules in our lives. He has a good plan for us. Even when we are motivated by sinful desires, and we make mistakes, he sorts things out for us: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8, verse 28). In every decision of life, we must seek his guidance.

A ninth privilege is that *we belong to a great family*. We now have many brothers and sisters, and we love them. “We know that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death” (1 John 3, verse 14). God is our Father: “Call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven” (Matthew 23, verse 9).

And a tenth privilege is that *we will go to heaven*. We are heirs and joint heirs with Christ. We have a title to the house of our Father: “Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe

also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14, verses 1 and 2). Many others will find the door to heaven shut, but God brings his children home to be with himself, where, "We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3, verse 2).

What then are the Responsibilities of Those Who Are Adopted?

First, we're to *love the Father*. Remember, he is our Father, and what a father he is! He first love us, and he won us by his love. It should be easy for us to love him, who did and does so much for us.

Secondly, *be obedient*. Because he is our Father, we are to be obedient to his commandments, showing our love by our submissiveness and performing the duties of his children.

The third responsibility is to *speak the Father's language*. We should learn God's ways and seek to please him, and relate well to him. In this sense, we will speak the language of heaven.

A fourth responsibility: *be like our Father*. Children are often recognized by how like they are to their father. "Be holy as he is holy" (1 Peter 1, verses 14 to 16). "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5, verse 48).

A fifth responsibility is to *carry his name in the world*. Be a bright witness to God your Father, and take care not to bring shame upon him. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3, verse 3). Remember, you're God's children and live as children of God.

A sixth responsibility is to *love one another*. We, as Christians, all belong to the same family. We are brothers and sisters. Let us be sure to take care one for another, and let nothing come between us. It grieves our Father when we quarrel.

A seventh duty is, *do not envy the wicked*. We sometimes see the wicked prospering and envy their success, as the psalmist did in Psalm 73. But remember, their heaven is in this world, and is soon over. Even here they miss out on not having the Father. We are the privileged ones. "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Timothy 6, verse 6).

An eighth responsibility is *be at peace*. Trust the Father and relax. He is working out all things for the best for you. You are precious to God. You are engraved upon the palms of his hands (Isaiah 49, verse 16). "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee" (Isaiah 49, verse 15). Cast your burdens on the Father who will look after you.

A ninth responsibility is *the necessity for self-examination*. Make sure that you are one of his children. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1, verse 10). Do not just take it for granted that you are one of God's children. It's too important a matter to leave to chance. If you are not a child of God, turn and seek the Lord now. Today is the day of salvation.

And a tenth responsibility is *praise God for adoption*. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God"—how amazing! (1 John 3, verse 1). Behold it, and consider it, and revel in it. Enjoy the privileges of his children, and praise God for them. It is all of grace, and to God must go the glory. Amen.