

ABBA FATHER - PART 2
SOME MARKS OF SONSHIP

Romans 8:14-17

April 24, 2022

"Spiritual Sonship may be recognized by the bearing of God's image. A father generates a son according to his image; a human being brings forth a human being, and a child has the same human nature as the parents. The Lord likewise regenerates His children according to His image." (Wilhelmus à Brakel)

Preliminary Clarifications:

From The Christian's Reasonable Service by Wilhelmus à Brakel - a Dutch pastor and theologian from the late 18th C. - taken from Romans 12:1

Shorter Catechism Q: 34: What is Adoption?

"Adoption is the act of God's free grace by which we become His sons with all the rights & privileges of being His."

Mark #1: Faith

Our Fundamental Basis of Sonship: We obtain the adoption of God by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

What do we mean by "in Christ alone?"

This refers to that which is outside of ourselves and which accomplishes or makes us right with God.

Alternatives:

- ☞ The church
- ☞ Good works (helping the poor, giving, serving, etc.)
- ☞ Religion (going to church, reading the Bible, etc.)
- ☞ Saying a prayer...

What do we mean by "by grace alone?"

Alternative: Measuring up, in some way

What do we mean by "through faith alone?"

Faith is a conduit. It is what we exercise in order to accept the gift of God's grace. Faith does not make us right with God, in and of itself. Being sincere does not make us acceptable. We can be sincerely WRONG! It is not a matter of how MUCH faith one has. The crucial issue is what\who the object of one's faith is.

Faith means acting upon what we know in our hearts to be true on the basis of what God has said in his Word.

Alternatives:

- ☞ Trusting in what we can see & scientifically verify
- ☞ Trusting in what we understand and agree with...

In this case faith means accepting the fact that your sin has made you completely unacceptable to God. That is why Christ came as He did, to suffer and die....

It means entrusting yourself to God alone to make you acceptable to Him....

Romans 6:23;

Galatians 3:26

Question #1: - Have you embraced Jesus Christ, by faith, out of a heartfelt desire to be right with God and to be His child, to live in peace of conscience, in obedient love to God, and spend eternity with Him?

Is your trust solely in Him & in what HE has done for you, rather than in some sense of being *good enough* for Him?

Have you surrendered to Him, thanked Him for what He did for you, and committed yourself to growing in your faith and understanding of Him as He has revealed Himself to us in His Word - not perfectly, yet from your heart?

This mark is the bottom line...

By faith we believe the gospel.

By faith we move towards God.

By faith we embrace His love and grace for us.

By faith we focus our lives on eternity, desiring and striving to be conformed to His image.

By faith we turn from sin to God, both sin already committed and sin which tempts us.

By faith we believe that God's willingness / desire to forgive far surpasses our desire to be forgiven.

Mark #2: Bearing the Image of God

God is in the process of re-making us after the image of His Son and He calls us to move in that direction through the decisions we make. He calls us to Follow [His] example in everything [we] do, because [we] are his dear children. (Ephesians 5:1 - NLT)

Colossians 3:10; Ephesians 4:22-24

This means becoming more like Jesus as seen in:

- ☞ A growing hatred of sin, both our own and that which surrounds us, and a growing hunger & thirst for righteousness - a desire to come into the light...
- ☞ A growing delight and desire to obey God in thought, word and deed.

NOTE: (Galatians 5:17)

Question #2: - Are you growing in Christ-likeness? Do you have a growing hatred of sin in your life, as God defines it, and a growing delight in and desire to obey God in all you do, think and say?

Mark #3: A True and Growing Love for God

"We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

"This love is a veritable and infallible mark of sonship."

1 Corinthians 8:3 ^(NIV) - But the man who loves God is known by God.

Psalms 18:1 ^(NIV) - I love you, O LORD, my strength.

Psalms 116:1 ^(NIV) - I love the LORD, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy.

2 Corinthians 5:14 ^(NIV) - Christ's love compels us.

This love is seen in:

☞ A growing desire to be with right with God and a growing dissatisfaction, even hatred of the stuff of this world

☞ A growing desire to know and to enjoy God - a growing longing for a deeper relationship with Him

Question #3: - Are you growing in your love and desire for God? Are you investing yourself in things which increase your knowledge of Him, and your understanding of his will for you as he has revealed it in his Word?

Inspecting the Marks:

☞ If you are convinced, by this, that you are not yet adopted into the family of God...

Matthew 11:28;

John 6:37

☞ If you are in doubt...

Identify what is source of your doubt

- Is it the fact that you are painfully aware of the sin which is still so much a part of who you are?
- Is it the fact that you fall so far short of the standards we have set forth this morning?
- Is it that you feel too unworthy...?

☞ If you can identify strongly enough with these marks of a true child of God to be confident in your standing as such with Him...

Some practical suggestions of how we SHOULD respond to these truths:

- REJOICE in the miracle of your standing...

1 John 3:1

- Beware of the danger of taking credit for the marks above, as though they were the result of your own goodness
- Beware the danger of dwelling so strongly on your unworthiness that you doubt your Sonship on the basis of your own unworthiness.
"That is a manifestation of pride, for it would be as if you do not want to receive anything unless you would be worthy of it, and as if the gift would have to be commensurate with your worthiness." ^(Wilhelmus à Brakel)
- Know that God gives His children everything above and beyond, and contrary to, what they deserve; the best of them is as unworthy as the least among them, and it is all "to the praise of the glory of His grace" (Ephesians 1:6 ^{NIV}).
- Set your mind to pursue the things of God and to consciously and intentionally put away the things which might hinder that.

If you are a child of God, His Word reminds us that we used to be "the same as others: 'of [our] father the devil' (John 8:44), 'a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters' (Isa. 1:4), 'children of disobedience...the children of wrath, even as others' (Eph. 2:2-3), and 'cursed children' (2 Pet. 2:14)" ^(Wilhelmus à Brakel)

We have gone from being a child of the devil to becoming a child of God,

...from being a child of wrath to becoming the object of God's favor,

...from being a child of condemnation to becoming an heir of all the promises and a possessor of all blessings,

...and to be taken from the greatest misery to the highest joy

-this is something which exceeds all comprehension and all adoration ^(Wilhelmus à Brakel)

A Truth to Remember:

God adopts, as His very own children, all those who come to Him by faith, acknowledging their sin and trusting Him alone to change them from the inside out.

A Challenge to Consider:

Have you trusted Christ to forgive you, to adopt you and to conform you to His image? Do you believe His promises enough to trust completely in Him alone for your right standing with God?

One thing I heard this morning was...