



23rd July 2023



8th of Pentecost

The Privileges & Problems of being an Adopted Child

"... the Spirit you received made you God's adopted children.
By the Spirit's power we call God 'Abba, Father'.
The Spirit himself testifies with our spirits."
Together they tell us that we are God's children."(Romans 8:15b-16)

Main Point:

Most of us are familiar with the concept of adoption. We've heard stories of poor, orphaned children rescued through adoption, thus finding a new life within a loving family. We are well acquainted with the tremendous privileges that go along with it. It is these privileges that Paul writes about as he describes our adoption from the kingdom of darkness to God's kingdom of light.

However, we seldom recognise the problems new adoptees experience when they first arrive in their new family. When we identify both the privileges and problems they face, we understand why God's newly adopted children often struggle to live as the free and privileged children they have now become.

I know some of you have watched the movie *Lion*, which depicts the true story of Saroo, a five-year-old boy, who grew up in a remote village in India, with his mother, brothers and sisters. One night he accompanied his older brother on an excursion and inadvertently fell asleep on a train that was headed more than 1200 kilometres away to Calcutta. Let's watch an excerpt showing what life was like for Saroo when he awoke in Calcutta. [Video 1 – 1 minute]



It breaks your heart, doesn't it. He had suddenly become a lost, destitute orphan. No one to look after him. No one to love him. No hope.

It is in fact this kind of destitute state that God describes *we are like*, before we were welcomed into God's family.

Point 1 | Without Jesus Christ's redeeming sacrifice we were like destitute orphans in the world. Paul tells us not to forget we were regarded as excluded foreigners, without hope and without God in the world.

When Apostle Paul describes for the Ephesians what we were like before God brought us into his family, he writes,

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth ... were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world." (Ephesians 2:12)

So, we were a lot like Saroo. Sleeping on a hard, concrete floor. Feeling as though no one loves us, no one sees him, no one regards him as anything more than rubbish lying in the gutter.

After wandering the streets for weeks, scavenging for food and shelter, Saroo was picked up and taken to an orphanage.

Point 2 | Adoption, by its very nature, is initiated in the heart of the Father. It is not the child's idea. God chose us, because of his compassionate heart, to rescue us from our destitute state, to make us his own.

One day, completely like any other, Saroo, like us, receives news.

Unbeknownst to him, a mother and a father have been gazing intensely at a photo of him. Their hearts were moved by compassion over his destitute state, and they decided to choose him to be their own. He, like us, was called out from among all the other orphans. Suddenly it is all organised. Saroo doesn't need to do a thing. He is placed on a plane, travels across the world, and lands in a new country, with a completely different language, new way of eating, new food, new buildings ... and shown a home that is nothing like anything he has ever seen before.

Let's watch the next excerpt. [Video 2 – 1 minute]



I wonder, as he gazes out the window, whether he's thinking, 'what have I done to deserve this?'

That is the amazing thing about adoption. An unloved child becomes a cherished child because of a love that was entirely beyond their imagination and completely outside of their control.

That's what our Heavenly Father has done for us. He has chosen us, and adopted us, and named us as one of his children. And now that we are adopted, we automatically are given the privilege of enjoying all that comes with being one of His children.

Now we have an amazingly loving Father, who possesses all things and liberally shares His goodness with us. Now we have received a new heart, cleaned and washed, and joined to the same family Spirit which dwells in His own Son's heart (Galatians 4:6) – a heart that is full of love, joy, peace and faith. We've got a new dad, a new family, a new hope and a whole new life.

We also have the privilege of enjoying a relationship of enormous intimacy. Because we are now his child, we have the privilege of calling God by his family name: "Abba, Father" or "daddy!" This intimacy gives us the privilege of approaching our Heavenly Father at any time.

And now, we've been written in the family will, and been made heirs, with an eternal inheritance which no one can steal from us. It all sounds pretty wonderful, doesn't it! Let's see how this played out in the life of Saroo. [Video 3 – 1 minute]



What an amazing adjustment it must have been for Saroo. He had to learn how to dress in a different way, eat in a different way, learn a new language, learn how to receive love, build trust and learn how to be trustworthy.

And here is where reality really kicks in.

Adoption almost always occurs because of a traumatic event, either a death, serious abuse or neglect. Having experienced this traumatic event, almost every adopted child has significant emotional issues that must be handled in the most loving and gentle way.

Now, when we think of adoption, we normally think of children. And children are usually pretty good at adjusting to change. But think about the adjustment process involved if the adoptee was not a child, but an adult! Think of the trauma, the abuse, the hurts adults would have experienced ... and all these traumas are brought into their newly adopted family.

It is interesting how similar the issues faced by those who are adopted, are with the struggles new believers face as they adjust to their new life in God's divine family.

Let's think of a few. Due to having experienced neglect and abuse, new believers find it hard to form and establish a trusting and secure relationship with their loving heavenly Father. It's called 'attachment disorder'. How many of us struggle with doubting our heavenly Father's love, His care and His faithfulness towards us, because of past hurts and disappointments?

Also, many struggle with what is known as 'adjustment disorder'. That is an inability to adjust to the culture of their new family. In the same way, when a person becomes a new child of God, they may have lived a considerable amount of time patterning their life in the ways of the world. When they learn that the culture in the family of God gives no place to addiction, violence, abuse, or immorality - it is often a very sharp learning curve. Yet our loving heavenly Father continues to love his children, even when they fail to live up to the right and good culture of His family.

Point 3 | God's family will experience brokenness and hurts, because his children have been adopted from a broken world.

We are all vividly aware that families are messy – we hurt each other, because we ourselves have been hurt by others. Sometimes this hurt can become so acute that our homes are no longer places of love and security, which God designed them to be.

The growing prevalence of domestic violence in the family unit, even within Christian families, has prompted the Diocese to make this Sunday: Domestic and Family Abuse Awareness Sunday.

We live in a broken and divided world, where sin and trauma is not always 'out there', but can find its way into our homes. Even Jesus' story revealed that God's children will have to grow and mature while living in a world surrounded by weedy, evil people.

So, what is our call as children in God's heavenly family? Paul wrote to the believers at Philippi,

"... be the pure and innocent children of God. You live among people who are crooked and evil, but you must not do anything they can say is wrong. Try to shine as lights among the people of this world" (Philippians 2:15)

We are called to fashion and align our lives with God's heavenly culture, striving to create family environments which exemplify the culture of heaven – homes that are full of peace, love, joy and safety for all members.

So when broken and hurt people happen to need a place to come and find safety, they will find our homes are filled with the fragrance of love and care, an environment where their wounds and hearts can be healed.