

1.

Introduction

1.

My sense of humor is shaped partly by the things I'm afraid of. I think it's so funny to get someone worrying that there might be a bear in the woods outside, and the very next night I'm chased by a bear in my dreams! I never had a younger brother to whom I could give the line that if he was disobedient, Mom and Dad could take him back to hospital like they did with his other brother who isn't here anymore! Children who are adopted sometimes worry they don't really belong in their adoptive family. But God gives us the assurance that because He adopted us, we truly belong in the family of God.

2.

The doctrine of adoption has often been neglected in the Reformed tradition, not to mention in churches that don't like doctrine. But it is as essential to Christianity as it is to call God your "Father." You can call God your Father because through adoption He has called you his child. We confess in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms that adoption is one of the chief blessings God gives us in salvation. In this passage we learn that the way to receive this blessing of adoption is by faith in Jesus Christ. We become God's sons by faith.

3.

Outline.

1.

The Gentile's Faith vv. 5-9

2.

The Gentiles' Adoption vv. 10-13

3.

Body

1.

The Gentile's Faith vv. 5-9

1.

Text. We read first of this Gentile's faith, in vv. 5-9.

1.

5 When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, 6 "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly."

2.

7 And he said to him, "I will come and heal him."

3.

8 But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. 9 For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

4.

His problem vv. 6, 8 To recognize this Gentile's faith, consider the centurion's problem, his request, and his reason.

1.

His servant. His immediate problem is his servant. "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly."

2.

His unworthiness. But he has another problem which is greater. He came to Christ "appealing to him.

"Does he have a right to make this request of Jesus? He humbly admits he doesn't--" I am not worthy.

"There are two key reasons he is not worthy: one, he is a Gentile, and two, he is a sinner."

Gentile

First, he is a Gentile, which means he was not a Jew, not a member of the biological children of Abraham whom God had chosen to be His special people out of all the nations of the earth. Christ did not come first for the Gentiles, but the Jews.

Among the Gentiles, this man stands out as one of uncommon distinction, character, and even godliness.

He was a soldier, but godly. Some soldiers are worthless; some are men of great character. This soldier had risen to the rank of an officer responsible for other men, so was trustworthy. Because he was a centurion he was probably the highest ranking officer in Capernaum, and because the Romans ruled Israel, he may have been the man of greatest influence in the city.

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He was a Roman ruling over the Jews, yet he calls Christ "Lord."

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Similarly, he was a Gentile, but Christ praises his faith and grants his request. In **Luke**

7:4

, we learn he loved the Jews and built them a synagogue. He was a God-fearing Gentile. The man who built Capernaum's house of worship believed his own house was not worthy of the Lord.

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Sinner

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To all appearances, this man's position, character, and godliness made him most worthy of honor from men. But his true godliness shows in his confession, "I am not worthy." His being a Gentile made him a second priority for Christ during His earthly ministry, and even less than that in the eyes of the Jews. He could have set forth his case that he was a righteous man, even a God-fearing Gentile, and for that reason Jesus should grant his request. But he doesn't claim any right to honor or privilege before Jesus Christ. Rather, he confesses, "

I am not worthy

." Not only is he a Gentile by birth, but he confesses that he is a sinner

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This is the confession, the attitude, the humility, the belief, of true, saving faith. True faith believes that we are not worthy, and God is worthy. That we are sinners, and God is sinless. That we are guilty, and God is just. That we are weak, and He is strong. That "all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.

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" (

Rom. 3:23

) We aren't worthy for God to come under our roof, and we don't deserve to come under His.

-

Do you believe this? I tell you, the Catholics don't—they believe our good works merit righteousness before God, and that we are justified on the basis of that righteousness. The Arminians

don't believe this either; they believe our faith is a good work on the basis of which God chooses to save us. Only the

Reformed

truly believe that God saves us "

not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace

" (

2 Tim. 1:9

), "

not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy

." (

Titus 3:5

)

-

Do you have a right to call God your Father, to be a son in His household? Not by your own works, you don't. Because you are a sinner.

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His request v. 8 Consider the centurion's request to heal his servant.

1.

Though in himself he has no right to request Christ's help, he still makes the request. Why does he, and why can he, do so? The only reason he does it is that he believes God's promise of

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salvation is not only for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles. Not only for the
apparently righteous, but
for sinners

. God promises what you don't deserve. Do you believe Him?

2.

It is not even the centurion's faith which gives him a right to make this request, but that right comes only from God's promise. Ultimately the centurion believes God's promise even in the Old Testament that "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

" (

Rom. 10:13

) It does not matter that he is a Gentile, or that he is a sinner, when it comes to God's promise. The promise is to be received by faith alone, "not by works, lest any man should boast."

" (

Eph. 2:9

) "

Do not fear, only believe.

" (

Mark 5:36

)

3.

His reason v. 9

1.

The centurion gives a reason why he asks Christ not to come to his house. The reason is not only his unworthiness, but the centurion also believes Jesus has a similar authority to his own, where the centurion can command his servants to do his work at a distance, and the work gets done merely in response to the centurion's word. The centurion believes specifically that Christ can heal, that Christ can heal at a distance, and that Christ can heal with a word. Only God can heal with a word. By calling Christ "Lord

" the centurion professes his faith that Jesus is not only a healer, but is both God and the promised Messiah, the Savior of all who trust in Him.

2.

The centurion's faith is not a worthiness in itself. Rather, it is a faith in Christ's worthiness. The centurion says "I don't trust me, but I trust you, Jesus! You are the Savior! And I am the sinner. Only you can save me from my sin!" Jesus praises the centurion's faith, saying "with no one in Israel have I found such faith."

" "

Truly

," this is the nature of saving faith.

3.

The Gentiles' Adoption vv. 10-13

1.

Text. We read second of the Gentiles' adoption in vv. 10-13, first in Jesus' teaching, then in the miracle He performs.

1.

10 When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. 11 I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, 12 while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

"

2.

13 And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed at that very moment.

3.

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Jesus' teaching. Jesus uses this centurion as an example to teach the surrounding onlookers, and to teach us, that the Gentiles will be adopted, and the Jews will be disowned.
Not all of them, but many.
Because we are Gentiles, we should rejoice at God's great kindness toward us, and if we are numbered among the recipients of that kindness, we should take warning lest we tread the Son of God underfoot, and profane the blood of the covenant by which we were sanctified. (**Heb. 10:29**)

1.

The Gentiles will be adopted

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First, the Gentiles will be adopted. Those who "come from east and west" are Gentiles, those who are far away, from the far ends of the earth. People from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

" (**Rev. 5:9**) These people will be given the privilege of the sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; they will recline at table with them in the kingdom of heaven.
This is what God has now done for you who believe on Christ for salvation. Paul says in **Eph. 2:12-13, 19,**

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Eph. 2:12-13, 19

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12 Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

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19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

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But let me ask you a question—is adoption merely a matter of Gentiles receiving the privileges of Jews? Are the Gentiles the only ones who receive this blessing of adoption? No. Paul says of the Jews, "

to them belong the adoption

." Turn with me to the passage where Paul says that; it is in

Romans 9:4

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The Jews themselves were adopted. They did not have the right to be called God's sons except by being united to God's only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, through faith in God's promise. V. 6 says "Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel," and v. 8 explains, "It is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

" The children of the promise are not merely the children of the covenant heads God promised to the patriarchs, but the ones who

believe

the promise. In

Rom. 9:30-32

Paul says even Old Testament Jews were saved only through faith in Christ.

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Romans 9:30-32

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Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; 31 but...Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. 32 Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on

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works.

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They should have pursued it by faith. The gospel for Jews and Gentiles is in **Romans 10:9**, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

" So in Christ "

There is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.

" (**v. 12**)

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Privileges. What all this means is that Gentiles receive two sorts of blessings in adoption: they receive equal privileges with Jews in God's kingdom, and they receive equal privileges with God's Son Jesus Christ. The first rescues us from being Gentiles; the second rescues us from being sinners

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By Faith. We must also recognize that not only Gentiles, but also Jews needed to be rescued from their sin. " All

have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

"--both Jew and Gentile (

Rom. 3:23

)--and for that reason, with justification adoption comes as a

free gift

—Paul continues in

Rom. 3:24

, "

and are justified by his grace as a

gift

, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...

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to be received by faith

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" Adoption comes only by faith. Though once we were strangers and outcasts from the family of God, now we are God's sons by faith

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Familial. Jesus doesn't tell us much about the nature of this adoption in this passage. We do learn one aspect, though, which is pictured through table fellowship with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Adoption is familial in nature. Adoption depends on justification, and is closely bound up with it, but is different in nature. Justification is God's

legal

declaration that He accounts us no longer guilty but righteous. Adoption is God's uniting us to Himself as His

children

and to His people as our

family

and

household

. Justification is

legal

, adoption is

familial

. You now are not only no longer guilty for your offenses against the God of the universe, but you are welcome to the joy of fellowship with Him and His people. You now freely call God " Abba, Father.

" You eat the Lord's supper which He ministers to you today. You will be welcome at this table of the patriarchs, and even the great wedding banquet of the Lamb (

Rev. 19:9

). He invites you to His banqueting table, and His banner over you is love. (

Song of Solomon 2:4

) "

Behold what manner of love the Father has given unto us, that we should be called the sons of God!

" (

1 John 3:1

)

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The Jews will be disowned

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Christ also teaches that the Jews will be disowned. The Jews were "sons of the kingdom" by birth, but not necessarily by faith. Those Jews who "did not pursue it by faith" (

Rom. 9:32

), those who trusted in their outward membership in the covenant community, never were saved in the first place.

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Romans 2:28-29

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28 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical.
29 But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart.

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Jesus warned that there will be false sheep mixed in among His flock; wolves in sheep's clothing, there will be sheep and goats, wheat and tares. For this reason, I must call you who are here this morning, who are outwardly numbered among the people of God, who have received the mark of baptism which outwardly identifies you as a son of the kingdom, to heed Christ's warning in this passage. "The sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

" If you are not a believer, you may continue in the church today, but one day Christ will throw you out. You may continue to think you are worthy of some kindness from God, that there will be light at the end of the tunnel for you, but there will only be darkness for you. You will weep from the pain you will feel on that day, and gnash your teeth out of the most horrible torment and regret. I believe "

better things

" about you (

Heb. 6:9

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)
, but turn with me to
Hebrews 10:24
, and read for yourself "
the kindness and severity of God.
" (
Rom. 11:22
)

Hebrews 10:21-31

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21 Since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

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26 For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. 28 Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. 29 How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

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God graciously calls you to cling to Him in faith as your Savior, for justification, adoption, and sanctification, for encouragement in love and good works in the family of God. And God warns you to fear for your life if you spurn His grace and go on sinning in unbelief.

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Jesus' miracle. Will you believe His promise and receive His blessings, or will you be thrown into the outer darkness? Christ's teaching is not mere words. He proved they will come true by performing the requested miracle.

1.

The servant was healed. Don't you see that the servant was healed? The Greek says it happened "

That very hour.

" Amazing. Now you know that Gentiles can be God's sons, and the unbelieving sons of the kingdom will be cast out.

2.

The centurion is a son. But if that wasn't enough, there is more. Now you know that this centurion is a son

. He is now an adopted son of the kingdom. Though the centurion was not worthy, Jesus granted this centurion's request, exactly the way the centurion believed Jesus could. Christ said "

Let it be done for you as you have believed.

" Though he was a Gentile and a sinner, Christ granted this centurion's request because he was a son of God. And he became a son by faith in Jesus Christ.

3.

Conclusion

1.

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If you are a son of God by faith, give thanks to Him for so mercifully accepting you through Jesus Christ His Son. If you are not a son of God, call out to Him to save you, and remember that "Everyone who believes in Him will not be put to shame." (**Rom. 10:11**)