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ADOPTED Ephesians 1:3-14

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In the state of Connecticut, in a little town of **(Click)** Wilton, in the southwest corner of the state, Gary Klahr sat in one of the local restaurants eating a burger. He said that one night in 1975 he made a new friend, **(Click)** by the name of Steve Barbin, who happened to be seated at the next table. By the time they finished their burgers, they'd pushed their tables together and were well on the way to becoming best friends. They grew so close that they finished each other's sentences and shared belly laughs at jokes that no one else seemed to get.

They had become so close that, **(Click)** at Steve's wedding, Gary told Steve that they were so much alike they could be brothers. Of course, that was just a figure of speech. Gary said his parents had tried for years to have a child before he came along, and they called him their gift from God. Steve, on the other hand, was adopted. Steve had known this for many years, and told Gary of many positive experiences of being adopted. For some reason it surprised Gary that Steve was adopted.

Gary and Steve's friendship continued and they had been best buddies for 23 years when, out of the blue, in December 1998, **(Click)** Gary got a phone call from a woman with the Connecticut Department of Children and Families. She needed to confirm Gary's name and birth date. "You should probably sit down before I tell you why I'm calling," she said. "Did you know that you were adopted?" "Are you sure you have the right Gary Klahr." She persisted. "Believe me," she said, "I wouldn't do this if I weren't absolutely sure. In fact, the reason I am calling is because one of your biological siblings needs urgent medical information from his family."

Gary was floored. His parents had always treated him like he was their own biological child, never once saying he was adopted. The lady on the phone continued, "Your biological parents lived in Bridgeport. They had thirteen children, and nine of which were adopted by other families. Is there someone besides your parents you can talk to about this? Someone you're close to?"

“My good buddy Steve is adopted, and he’s okay with it,” Gary said slowly. “So I guess I could talk with him, once I have some time to get over it.” “What’s Steve’s last name.” the woman asked. “Barbin,” he said. “Gary,” said the lady from the State agency, “Steve is your brother.” (1)

What a wonderful story. Our lesson from the writings of St. Paul to the Ephesians is about adoption. And the people who are adopted are you and me. Paul begins this lesson like this:

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“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

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In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will--to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.”

(Click) Think about those words, “In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ . . .” Even before the beginning of the world, God wanted you as His son and daughter and so HE choose you to be adopted into His family through Jesus Christ.

Please don’t get all bent out of shape over the word predestination. **(Click)** The word “chosen” would better suit our purposes. Here is the good news for the day: **(Click) God has chosen us to be His own adopted children.**

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Biblically the concept of adoption is an interesting. **(Click)** You won’t find the word “adoption” anywhere in the Old Testament. **(Click)** Adoption was not practiced in the Old Testament world, at least not by the Jews. Neither was it a practice among Jews in New Testament times. **(Click)** Jesus never used the term adoption nor is the word used in the four Gospels.

(Click) Adoption is a concept that Paul introduced from his own background as a Roman citizen. He used the term at least five times. (Click) It was quite common in the Roman world for wealthy families who did not have sons to adopt one in order to have someone to inherit their property. (Click) Girls weren't adopted in that time since, under Roman law, they could not inherit property. (3) It was a very special thing in the Roman world to be adopted. It still is a special thing to be adopted today.

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A little girl came home from school one day crying and very sad. Her mother tried to find out what the problem was. At first the little girl didn't want to talk about it but finally through tears she told how she had been made fun of at school by some of the other kids because she was adopted. "No one really loves you," the children taunted her.

(Click) So her adopted mother cuddled with her daughter and explained that when mommies and daddies who have children of their own love them, they have no choice about the children they get. They simply get what they get.

"We, on the other hand," the mother explained, (Click) "chose you. We looked and searched and out of all the children we saw, we chose you. That's how much we loved you from the first time we laid eyes on you." It's a special thing to be adopted.

It's a special thing to be adopted. The Apostle Paul says that you and I, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, have been adopted by God. That is why we are heirs of every good thing God has. We are God's adopted children. We were specially chosen because God wants children with which to share His love.

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But notice that there is a purpose to our adoption: **We were adopted to be holy and blameless in God's sight.** Paul writes, "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."

(Click) We don't have any problem saying God is holy. In fact, we ought to

take God's holiness more seriously than we do. **(Click)** But we're very uncomfortable applying those words to ourselves. **(Click)** Who wants to be a holy Joe? **(Click)** There was a time when we make fun of some of our more enthusiastic fellow Christians as "holy rollers." Who wants to be called a holy roller? **(Click)** The most common place we see the term "holy" used is in the derisive phrase, "holier than thou." Nobody today wants to be called "holier than thou." That indicates that we look down on others, that we revel in a sense of moral superiority.

Because of the unfortunate connotations that the word "holy" has acquired, we might want to **(Click)** substitute the word "excellent." That is, Christians are called to live an excellent life--excelling in faithfulness, excelling in generosity, and most importantly, excelling in love. When we seek after excellence in these things, we do not feel ourselves to be superior to anyone. Indeed when we excel as Christ excelled, we seek to be a servant to others.

St. Paul says we were predestined to be holy and blameless. But notice how he qualifies the words, holy and blameless. He writes, "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless **(Click) in His sight . . .**" What a beautiful statement. We could put it like this: **In God's eyes, we look as if we have never done anything wrong.**

How do we get those white robes that the writer of Revelation says we will wear when we surround God's throne in glory? They are white because they have been washed in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:14). Holiness is not something we earn, but something that is bestowed upon us by God because of what Christ has done in our behalf.

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Pastor Mickey Anders tell about a letter written to a death row prisoner by the Father of the boy who was killed. The letter reads like this:

"You are probably surprised that I, of all people, am writing a letter to you, but I ask you to read it in its entirety and consider its request seriously. As the Father of the man whom you took part in murdering, I have something very important to say to you. I forgive you. With all my heart, I forgive you. I realize it

may be hard for you to believe, but I really do.

“At your trial, when you confessed to your part in the events that cost my Son his life and you asked for my forgiveness, I immediately granted you that forgiving love from my heart. I can only hope you believe me and will accept my forgiveness. But this is not all I have to say to you. I want to make you an offer--I want you to become my adopted child.

“You see, my Son who died was my only child, and I now want to share my life with you and leave my riches to you. This may not make sense to you or anyone else, but I believe you are worth the offer. I have arranged matters so that if you will receive my offer of forgiveness, not only will you be pardoned for your crime, but you also will be set free from your imprisonment, and your sentence of death will be dismissed. At that point, you will become my adopted child and heir to all my riches.

“I realize this is a risky offer for me to make to you--you might be tempted to reject my offer completely--but I make it to you without reservation. Also, I realize it may seem foolish to make such an offer to one who cost my Son his life, but I now have a great love and an unchangeable forgiveness in my heart for you.

“Finally, you may be concerned that once you accept my offer you may do something to cause you to be denied your rights as an heir to my wealth. May I assure you that nothing could be further from the truth. If I can forgive you for killing my Son, I can forgive you for anything. I know you never will be perfect, but you do not have to be perfect to receive my offer. Besides, I believe that once you have accepted my offer and begin to experience the riches that will come to you from me, that your response will be gratitude and loyalty. Some would call me foolish for my offer to you, but I wish for you to call me your Father. It was signed, **(Click)** sincerely yours, Father of Jesus.” (6)

We have been adopted by God to become holy and blameless in God's sight. We've been called to excellence in living. Our city and community ought to be a better city and community, our family ought to be a better family, just because we are here. Why? Because we have a Heavenly Father who looks at us with the eyes of love. God looks at us as if we have never in our lives done anything wrong. And

in response to that love, we, in turn, give God our very best.

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1. *Guideposts*, Copyright (c) May 2002, <http://www.guideposts.org>
 2. <http://www.aumethodists.org/worship/sermons/2005-spring/freewill/>.
 3. Edward F. Markquart,
http://www.sermonsfromseattle.com/books_ephesians_strong.htm.
 4. The Rev. Jason E. Gamble,
[http://www.culvercitypres.org/sermons/Ephesians%201.3 14.htm](http://www.culvercitypres.org/sermons/Ephesians%201.3%2014.htm).
 5. Jim Davis, <http://www.focusongod.com/security.htm>.
 6. <http://www.mickeyanders.com/Sermons/Sermon19990905.html>