



## Introduction

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. (1 John 3:1a ESV)

- God did not become a father when he adopted us, but he has eternally been the Father of the divine Son, and it is through the Son that God is our Father.
- We are his children now.

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:9–13 ESV)

- Those that are in Christ are children of God.

## Old Testament

- God cared for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden as a Father cares for his children.
- God cared for Noah and his family by, not only sparing them from his judgment, but also graciously providing for them.
- God called Abraham and made a covenant with him.

And the LORD said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.’” (Exodus 4:21–23 ESV)

I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn. (Jeremiah 31:9b ESV)

When Israel was a child, I loved him,  
and out of Egypt I called my son. (Hosea 11:1 ESV)

When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of



men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. (2 Samuel 7:12–15 ESV)

I will say to the north, Give up,  
and to the south, Do not withhold;  
bring my sons from afar  
and my daughters from the end of the earth,  
everyone who is called by my name,  
whom I created for my glory,  
whom I formed and made. (Isaiah 43:6–7 ESV)

Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, “You are not my people,” it shall be said to them, “Children of the living God.” (Hosea 1:10 ESV)

They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. (Romans 9:4 ESV)

- The Old Testament presents God as Father and Israel as his children.
- The New Testament expands on this in the light of the finished work of Christ.

## New Testament

### Gospels

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son.” (Matthew 2:13–15 ESV)

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free’?” Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.” They answered him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told



you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. You are doing the works your father did." They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God." Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God." (John 8:31–47 ESV)

- We cannot claim to be children of God if we do not love the Son of God.
- God's fatherly love comes to us through his Son.

O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them. (John 17:25–26 ESV)

## Paul's Epistles

### Romans

So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. (Romans 8:12–17 ESV)

- It is not just that we have the new status of being God's children, we also have a new life as God's children.
- The Holy Spirit makes our adoption real to us.

And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." (Mark 14:36 ESV)

God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Romans 5:5 ESV)



For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. (Romans 8:18–23 ESV)

We are now sons of God through the Spirit, but when Jesus returns we will be fully sons of God in that our bodies will be resurrected incorruptible and imperishable.

### Galatians

Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. (Galatians 3:23–29 ESV)

I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. (Galatians 4:1–7 ESV)

- Paul had Roman adoption in view because he stresses that we are heirs with Christ, which is legal language.
- The essence of adoption, us becoming children of the Father, is rooted in the Old Testament.

### 2 Corinthians

- Paul links being children of God with being the temple of God.

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said,

“I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them,  
and I will be their God,



and they shall be my people.  
Therefore go out from their midst,  
and be separate from them, says the Lord,  
and touch no unclean thing;  
then I will welcome you,  
and I will be a father to you,  
and you shall be sons and daughters to me,  
says the Lord Almighty." (2 Corinthians 6:14–18 ESV)

- Just as Jesus is the true temple, so we in Christ are God's temple, and, just as Jesus is the Son of God, so we are sons and daughters of God in Christ.

## Hebrews

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. (Hebrews 1:1–4 ESV)

Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,  
nor be weary when reproved by him.

For the Lord disciplines the one he loves,  
and chastises every son whom he receives."

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Hebrews 12:3–11 ESV)

- Discipline is evidence that we are sons of God.
- God's discipline of us is not punishment for our sin. Jesus took the punishment for our sin. His discipline of us is not judicial but corrective.



## 1 John

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. (1 John 3:1–3 ESV)

No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. (1 John 3:9–10 ESV)

- Growth in holiness is a sign that God is our Father.
- Loving our brothers and sisters in Christ is a sign that God is our Father.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. (1 John 4:11–12 ESV)

- We show that God has adopted us and called us to be his own by how we treat one another.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:34–35 ESV)

- Knowledge of God's fatherly love for us should empower our love for the brothers and our love for the brothers is a testimony to the world of God's love for us.

## Conclusion

- Just as we did not participate in or effect our physical birth, so we do not participate in or effect our spiritual birth.
- Jesus says that our spiritual birth is a work of the Holy Spirit over which we have no control nor can predict.

The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit. (John 3:8 ESV)



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But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12–13 ESV)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (1 Peter 1:3 ESV)

- God, through Christ and by his Spirit, has done all that is necessary to adopt us into his family.

God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8 ESV)