

# “See yourselves as sons and daughters of God,” Amarillo pastor urges Texas Baptists

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## ‘See yourselves as sons and daughters of God,’ Amarillo pastor urges Texas Baptists

**By Teresa Young**

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AMARILLO—Texas Baptists have much to be proud of because their identity as adopted children of God, Howard Batson, pastor of First Baptist Church in Amarillo, said in the annual sermon at the Baptist General Convention of Texas meeting.

“Texas Baptists, as the adopted sons and daughters of God, go forth to work for the kingdom, knowing not only who you are but also whose you are,” Batson said. “You are his sons and daughters.”

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Howard  
Batson,  
pastor of  
First  
Baptist  
Church in  
Amarillo,  
brings the  
annual  
convention  
sermon at  
the Baptist  
General  
Convention  
of Texas  
meeting in  
Amarillo.

With the theme “On Being God’s People: Adopted,” Batson told a story about meeting a Texas family while on a mission trip to Russia. The couple was there to adopt a young girl from a Russian orphanage, and even though Vera had barely known the couple, she already was calling the man “Papa” as they were leaving for home.

“How does Vera’s being adopted by the Hasting family have anything to do with Texas Baptists being the people of God?” Batson asked. “Jesus came—or he was sent—in order that he might redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

Citing Galatians 4:7, Batson noted Christians are chosen by God for adoption and are, therefore, heirs of God’s kingdom.

Adoption represents a vital theme to believers because it carries the idea of

great benefits that would not normally be inherent to all people. Pointing to the example of a couple bringing home a new child, Batson said the adoption process requires not only the approval of the adopters but also the adoptee. In the Christian sense, the adoption brings about the Holy Spirit's indwelling, among other benefits.

"We now have the right to call God, 'Father,'" Batson said. Referring back to Vera's story, he noted the girl had some challenges relating to her Papa because of her experiences with a biological father.

"We sometimes have a hard time realizing that God loves us this much. Why should he? We're sinful and broken. We're incomplete and wanting," Batson said.

"We can read that God has made us his sons and daughters. We know it with our heads. But our theology must connect to our hearts when we realize that God loved us that much. For only when it's in our hearts will we change the way that we live."

Adoption in the Christian sense brings redemption sent through God's Spirit, Batson said. Just as the Hasting family traveled to Russia and paid the fees necessary to bring Vera home, God made the sacrifice and sent his son to redeem his children. And with adoption comes a special inheritance that believers do not deserve and cannot earn but can only receive through becoming a child of God.

"I don't know how the Hastings will divide their estate in the decades to come. But if I were guessing, I would guess that Vera will share equal portions with their biological sons. By birthright, Vera deserves nothing of the Hasting estate. But by adoption, she has her fair share," Batson said.

"By birthright, we sons of Adam deserve nothing in regard to the glory of Christ. But by our adoption, we become co-heirs with Christ."

Batson related the analogy by reminding the gathered Texas Baptists that “we are, each and every one of us, adopted as God’s children.”

“As Texas Baptists, all we do can be seen under the paradigm of adoption,” he said. “We are to be a James 1:27 people, and secondly, we are to be busy with missions and evangelism endeavors to bring people into the family of God as sons and daughters.

“We are all about adoption, both socially and evangelically. I would say to you today, if you’ve accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior: ‘I see the resemblance. You are a son or a daughter of God.’”

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