

Adopted

Building a Christian Mind

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Bible Verse: Ephesians 1:5-6
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Well, we have the sheer delight of turning back to the book of Ephesians here this evening, and I invite you to do so with me as we open God's word once again, reading from Ephesians 1, reading verses 3 through 6 as we begin. The Bible says,

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

We are in the middle of a series titled "How to Know True Salvation." On Tuesday evenings, we're looking at some passages in Ephesians 1, on Sundays we're looking at Ephesians 2, and one of the essential things to realize about knowing true salvation is exactly what it reveals to us about the character and nature of God. You see it's mentioned here in some of the terms anyway. When Paul speaks about the love of God in verse 4, the grace of God in verse 6, and blessing his name, the nature of true biblical salvation reveals a God of love, a God of kindness, a God of mercy, a God of grace, a God of patience and it's the nature of the remnants of our unregenerate self, it's the remnants of our prior teaching, it's the remnants of a works-based approach to God, that even true Christians, including some of you, if not many of you, live in continual guilt with a sense over their temptations and struggles, and the response to that in that works-based mindset, sometimes Christians are saved and yet they haven't worked out the fullness of what grace means and the fullness and haven't grown in the fullness of everything the Bible says, and so they stumble into a bad approach where in the midst of their struggles and their guilt, they try to get back into the good favor of God by trying harder and that just leads into a vortex of spiritual discouragement that's very difficult to get out of. In fact, the only way that I know of to get out of it is to come back to the gospel and see what it reveals to us about the nature of God. You know, whether you've thought about it clearly or not, you know by experience that the rules show you no mercy. No matter how hard you try to keep the rules that you think are going to get the smile of God back to you, the rules show you no mercy. You can't keep them long enough, you

can't keep them well enough, you start to question your motives, and all of that self-effort and that introspection just leads you into a very, very dark place. and it's very sad as a pastor to counsel people who on the one hand name the name of Christ, and yet are trapped in a black hole and it's hard to get the word of grace through to them that would liberate them and help them and refresh their souls. The rules will show you no mercy. They never will, they never have. The law does not provide mercy, nor does it provide the power to obey. It simply reveals the holiness of God and shows us our inability to keep it. The rules show no mercy, but beloved Jesus Christ does. The God of our salvation, the God of biblical truth, does show mercy. He does show love. He does show kindness and mercy and grace and patience. And he does that because that is who he is. that is essential to the nature of God. The goodness of God is manifested in these multifaceted aspects of his utter perfections and the sooner that you and I come to understand these things, the sooner that we embrace them and believe them and trust in them and affirm them in our hearts, the sooner we will grow and find what the joy of true salvation is.

You know, when you look at, say, the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, those things that the Spirit produces, beloved, the law doesn't produce that; that works-based obedience trying to earn God's favor could never produce that because all that can produce is fear and guilt and on the other hand, a sense of overbearing self-righteousness if you happen to think that you're keeping them, not understanding what the demands of God's holiness really are in the inner man. And so we really need to focus on these things. That's why we're taking several weeks to dwell on them and I want to highlight for you and bring to your mind as we enter into the text tonight those marvelous aspects of the good character of our God and the fact that in his life, in his death, in his sin-bearing sacrifice for us, Christ is showing all of those things, and the multi-splendored goodness of God is on display most preeminently at the cross of Christ. Scripture says, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins," 1 John 4:10. And so I ask you as we come here tonight and as we come, you know, I'm assuming and trusting that many of you are praying as I've asked you to do for this series, I trust that your hearts are prepared to hear what Scripture has to say about it.

Now, with that said, last Tuesday we looked at the doctrine of election that God chose us in love before the foundation of the world. We saw that in verse 4. I had planned, I thought that I might come back to that because I didn't get through all of my notes, but when I went through my notes I realized I was satisfied with what we had said last week, so we're going to move on to another wonderful doctrine of salvation called adoption. Adoption. Last week's message was titled "Chosen." This week's message is titled "Adopted." We are chosen in Christ, we are adopted into the family of God if we are Christians. And the different terms that the Bible uses to describe salvation shows us that it is a multifaceted reality. We're chosen in Christ, we're adopted into the family, we're redeemed out of the slave market of sin, which we'll see next week. Biblical salvation, if we're going to know true salvation, we have to realize that it has many sides and perspectives from which it should be seen and understood. It's a topic that we could spend years discussing, frankly, but just think about it this way. On Sunday, this past

Sunday, we saw that you were dead in your trespasses and sins. Scripture says, it's very plain about that. Nobody initiates their own salvation. Nobody produces faith from within themselves because a dead man can't do anything. A dead woman brings no energy to the task of anything. If we are to believe, if we are to have faith, God must be the first moving agent in our hearts, not something of our own self-will. And I like to say these things, I don't mean to be combative when I say it, but if you come from a Catholic or a Nazarene background, a free will background, and everything's about free will this and free will that, as if men who were slaves to Satan had a free will to do what is good, if you come from that background, these things are a direct challenge to what you've always assumed and I don't want you to miss that. We're denying certain things and we are affirming other things and the common, popular way of thinking about salvation very well may not be the right way to think about it. In fact, it's not.

And so we say that Scripture says that you were dead in sin. Well, in one biblical aspect of true salvation, in the work of regeneration, God made you spiritually alive in Christ. God planted new life in you at your salvation. He caused you to be born again, Peter says. And if you look over at Ephesians 2, I know I'm jumping ahead to Sunday's text, but these things are so linked together you can't do anything else, again, beloved, look at verses 4 and 5. Ephesians 2:4 and 5 here. We'll get to adoption eventually, probably sometime in six weeks. Notice the subject, the verb, and the direct object answering the question, who made whom alive? Verse 4, having said that we were dead in sin, dominated by the devil, and doomed to suffer the wrath of God, Paul lays out the good character of God when he says in verse 4, as he writes to these Christians, he says, "But God," there's your subject in the sentence, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved." It couldn't be any clearer than what it is there in Scripture, and it is simply a testimony to the confusing power of Satan and the blind eyes of men that this even is a point of contention in what passes for Christian theological discussions. God made us alive in Christ. God made us alive. We did not make ourselves alive. We did not awaken ourselves from the dead. God had mercy on us even while we were dead in our sins to breathe new life into us through the work of the Spirit by the power of the word of God and made us spiritually alive. You were dead, God made you alive if you're a Christian. And you know, one of the beautiful things about the glory of God is that he shows us this mercy even if we're not even understanding what's happening in the process and we misrepresent it in our spiritual immaturity and our lack of biblical understanding. He still shows us mercy even when we try to rob him of the glory and take it to ourselves. You were dead in sin and in regeneration, God made you alive, spiritually alive. Stated another way, you were guilty in the courtroom of God because of your sin. In justification, God has forgiven your sins and declared you righteous before the demands of his holy law. Guilty, God declares you righteous. Dead, God makes you alive. And on and on we could go.

Here's something, there's a tangent for free. None of you, none of you should be receptive to the kind of mindset you'll hear people say, "I don't want to talk about doctrine, I just want to talk about Jesus," as if you could know Jesus apart from true biblical doctrine. Or, you know, "Doctrine divides but love unites." Well, those are ridiculous statements.

How can we be united if we're not united on what the truth is and what it means? And so these biblical terms, these theological terms of regeneration and justification and election, they are essential to knowing true salvation and that's what we're seeking to do, is to know true salvation.

Now, pivoting into tonight's topic about adoption, Scripture says, Isaiah 59:2, for example, that you're separated from God by your sin. Your sins have made a separation between you and your God and he does not hear you as a result of it. Look at Ephesians 4 in verse 18, which we've looked at recently where it says that Gentiles, the unsaved people, "are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them." Alienated. Separated from him. In Ephesians 2:12, we read that in our unsaved state we were, "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." And so, you know, it's like if you picture a spiritual state as a hot, dry, barren desert that hasn't had rain for years and the sun is beating down and it's 130 degrees outside, there's no shade anywhere, that's a picture of the sinner shriveling under the heat of the separation that he has from God.

Now, in that state of separation, that state of deadness, that state of guilt, beloved, in the love and kindness and mercy and grace and patience of God, he reaches out to you and he does something on your behalf that you did not deserve, that you could not produce on your own, that you could not ever obligate God to do, and here we come to the wonderful doctrine of adoption. Separated from God, in adoption, God brought you into his family and made you his child. You were separated from him, under judgment, doomed to suffer the wrath of God, dead in sin, and while you were like that, without you doing anything to prompt it from God, no merit in you, no foreseen faith in you, nothing like that, you were utterly, totally, completely, helplessly lost, and if you're a Christian here tonight, it's proof positive that God reached down to you in love, grace, mercy, patience, and goodness and kindness and brought you to himself in a way that keeping the rules and trying harder could never, ever, ever do. In adoption, God brings you into his family and makes you his child.

Look again at verses 5 and 6 of Ephesians 1 and then we'll look at the text and consider some other things from Scripture to help us have a good perspective on it. In verse 5, "he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved." The Puritan Thomas Watson said this, he said, "Adoption is a greater mercy than Adam had in paradise." Adoption is a greater mercy than Adam had in paradise. You know, sometimes we might read Genesis 1 and 2 and read about Adam in the garden and long for that perfect environment, and in one sense it's understandable that we would, but beloved, you should never want to trade what you have in Christ for what Adam had in paradise because what Adam had in paradise was capable of being lost, as shown by the fact that he did it. You know, Adam was in a state of innocence and he sinned his way out of that and he lost paradise. By contrast, for us to be in the family of God, beloved by him as beloved children, in a secure position and relationship that cannot be changed because the gifts of God are irrevocable, to be in Christ and to be in the family of God

now is a greater blessing and a greater mercy than Adam had in paradise. Have you ever thought about it that way? It's true and it's only when we start to see these kinds of contrasts in our mind that we start to appreciate more fully the grace and the benefit and the blessing that we have in Christ.

So what I want to do as we talk about adoption tonight is to break it into two parts. We want to talk first about the reality of adoption and then, secondly, the results of adoption. The reality of adoption, the results of adoption, and if you have any hesitation that adoption is a greater mercy than Adam had in paradise as you sit here in this moment, you'll agree with that statement by the end of the message I trust as the Spirit works things out for us.

So let's look, first of all, at the reality of adoption. Point number one, the reality of adoption. You see, God appointed us to be saved. He chose us in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, verse 4, but he did more than that. He did more than that. He appointed us also to be in his very family, to be in the family of God. Look at verse 5 with me again, "he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will." And notice, predestined means to mark out beforehand. God marked you out before the beginning of time and said, "That one will belong to me." Before the beginning of time, before Genesis 1:1, God determined and set his love on you so that you would most certainly be a member of his family throughout all of eternity. Now, that thought alone is just staggering and takes us in realms that go far beyond time, that take us far beyond our preoccupation with the little troubles and heartaches that we have in this world, it takes us into the realm where we need to know, we need to understand, and we need to rest in. God marked you out beforehand so that you would belong to his family. Once again, we see that God took the initiative. Salvation belongs to the Lord. Salvation is God's idea. Your salvation was God's idea long before it was ever yours and so in this way, God gets all of the glory. We ascribe to him the praise that is due to his glorious grace and we are humbled, we are grateful, and we are humbled before the realities of which Scripture speaks.

Think about it this way, beloved. If you are in Christ, and what happens is that someone hears the gospel, they believe, they start to read Scripture, and then Scripture explains to them what happened and what the source and origin of it all was. We don't know all of these things in the moment that we first believe. God lovingly saves us and then, as it were, he takes us aside and says, "Let me tell you many things about the splendors of the love which motivated me to save you and the plan that I had to make sure that you would be mine throughout all of eternity." And we start to quiver. We start to tremble at the majesty of it all, trembling not in craven fear of his judgment any longer, but trembling at the majestic qualities of God that have been showered upon us for our good and for his glory, always keeping in mind, never forgetting that he could have righteously judged us. We deserved damnation. We deserved hell for our rebellion against him and yet, he reached in far greater than any earthly adoption agency, he reached in and selected us out that we would be his.

One of the things that this means, beloved, if you're in Christ, and viewing things from the perspective of eternity and viewing it from God's perspective, which is to say, viewing it from the Bible's perspective as a Christian, there was no possibility ever at any time that you would ever be lost. It was utterly impossible for you to be lost if you're a Christian now. It's not just that you won't lose your salvation going forward, it's that there was no possibility before your salvation that you would ever be permanently lost because God determined it beforehand. God predestined you for this outcome. He determined it before the foundation of time and all of the rolling millennia of time as it pertains to you was always inexorably leading to the fact that you would most certainly be saved and here you are now today saved and in Christ. One writer said this, and I quote, and we're talking about these purposes of election and adoption and all of that, he said, and I quote, "These eternal purposes of God for every Christian are a foregone conclusion because they are grounded in his predetermined will." Predetermined will. God determined it beforehand. Nothing thwarts his will. God always accomplishes what his purpose intends. Man cannot resist him. Satan cannot resist his will. Satan cannot overturn his choice and so when God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, it made it an eternal certainty that we would be saved. Now, we still had to be saved and, you know, you weren't born saved. Before God saved you, before you repented and put your faith in Christ, you were separated from God, you were alienated from him in that parenthesis of time, but the outcome was determined beforehand that you would not be left there, but that God would act to save you and deliver you and to bring you into his kingdom.

Now, beloved, this just gets better and better. You know, this is like having, for those of you that like sugary desserts, which aren't really my thing so much, but this is like taking the first spoonful of a delicious, wonderful, expensive dessert at the best restaurant in town and tasting it and saying, "Oh, that's good! I've got to have more of that!" And the more that you eat, the more you realize that this is a delicacy of highest order. Well, the doctrine of adoption is like that. Think about it this way, beloved, and prepare to repent of all of your cold, unworthy thoughts of God as you hear what I'm about to say and all of your suspicions of God's character, all of those pastimes where you've questioned why this, why that, perhaps like me in times past, shaking a fist toward heaven because life didn't go the way you wanted it to, get ready to repent of all of that, okay, because this draws us close and it also humbles us and makes us sorry and repentant that we've ever had unworthy thoughts of God and ever questioned the goodness of his character. What was it that God appointed us to? What was the goal? Well, beloved, he did not appoint us to have a cold, distant, formal relationship with him. He didn't save us so that he would be a remote God and we would be off in the distance and having to go through angels or Mary or something like that to get to Jesus, to get to God. What a blasphemous distortion of truth and when that satanic system is judged, it can't happen soon enough in my book. Not because I dislike Catholics, that's not the point at all. I would have every Catholic come to the truths that we're talking about here today, but that system is satanic. It is satanic because it leads people into hell and it is satanic because it so distorts the loving, good, patient, kind, merciful character of God and turns everything into a works-based relationship and Catholics are left without any sense of assurance, always wondering what's going to happen and troubled about how long purgatory is going to be before they ever get to heaven. It's an outrage, first and foremost, because of the way that it distorts

and hides and degrades and misrepresents the character of God. God didn't appoint you to that kind of distant, cold, questioning relationship. What he did was he adopted you into his family. Adoption, let me give you a definition, I haven't done that yet. Adoption is the act of God whereby he brings us into his family through Christ. Adoption is the act of God whereby he brings us into his family through Christ.

Now back in the day, Paul wrote this letter, most likely from the city of Rome, and the Roman system of jurisprudence was highly developed. I have a lot of respect for what the Romans did with their jurisprudence on a human level. Roman adoption law was similar to ours. What adoption did in the first century and what the word picture would have brought to mind to first century readers is this, is that when a child was adopted, he was released from the control of his natural father and placed under the control of his adoptive father, and in that new relationship with his adoptive father, the adopted child acquired new status, privilege, and property that would not otherwise have been his. He acquired a new status, privilege, and property that would not otherwise have been his. So picture, for example, just to use kind of a crude picture, picture a child born into poverty with a father that did not love him and did not have means to support him but as the natural father, he's got control over this child and the trajectory that that sets for his life is pretty bleak. Then, again we're just speaking in human terms here, then a wealthy, generous, kind man intercedes and goes through the legal process and adopts that child into his own family. The natural father surrenders his rights, the adopted father brings this poverty-stricken child into his family and suddenly everything has changed. He belongs there. Because of what the adoptive father did, he belongs in the family. He could not have demanded to enter the family, but by the choice of the adopted father, he's brought into this family and acquires the status and privilege and property of the wealthy man having left behind his natural father. And so if a man adopted a child in circumstances like that, he completely altered the trajectory of that child's life. He changed everything. He changes the present, he changes the future because that child now held the same position as a biological son, having been adopted into the family. Now, beloved, what Scripture is saying to us is that your status with God in Christ is like that. The riches of God, the riches of Christ, belong to you.

We looked at Jesus' baptism a few weeks ago, didn't we? At the baptism, the voice of God spoke and said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," and in Christ, we have that same perfect acceptance from the Father. He accepts us in Christ. He accepts his Son, and if we are in his Son, then he accepts us also, just like he accepts his Son because he accepts us on the basis of the righteousness and shed blood of his Son and not of anything of our own. And so your status with God is pictured as an adoption in Scripture.

I was just spending a lot of time today on 1 John 3 and so I want you to turn to 1 John 3. 1 John 3, and although the word adoption is not used here, the theme jumps off the page. Chapter 3, verse 1, "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are." In the original text in the Greek, it simply says, "and we are." It's even more direct, more blunt, more striking in the brevity of the language. Look at how God has loved us. We're called children of God, and we are.

We're not just called that, the reality is ours in him. And it's a measure of the great love, and John says, "Look at this, contemplate it, think about this, behold it, meditate on it, that that kind of supernatural grace and love would be showered upon you so that you would be adopted into the family of God and rightly called one of his sons." He says, "that's why the world doesn't know us, it didn't know him." Then he goes on to say in verse 2, he repeats it, "Beloved, we are God's children now." Now we're God's children now and this God who adopted us doesn't have a reverse process to kick us out of the family. There's not a reverse adoption in biblical salvation. There's not a reversal of regeneration. There's not a reversal of justification. "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."

Well, as we consider adoption, being taken out of one family and brought into the next, and your status of God is like an adoption, let's answer the question, how so? How is being a Christian like being adopted? This is kind of a sub-point in the reality of adoption. The reality of adoption means that you had a former father. You had a former father. And going back to Ephesians now, Ephesians 2, you appreciate this all the more when you look back across the chasm of your prior existence and you see the smoking ruins of what your former life was like. Before you became a Christian, my friend, you were a child of wrath and a son of disobedience. Chapter 2, verse 1, "you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience--among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind." You were a son of disobedience, meaning that was your very nature; disobedience was wrapped up in everything that you were. You were a child of wrath. You were oriented toward hostility against God. In Romans 8 it says that the carnal mind cannot please God, it cannot subject itself to God. That's what it was like for you.

And so you had another father, turn to John 8. You were a son of disobedience, a child of wrath. Now in John 8, the contrast here is pretty remarkable because the Jews, as we've seen recently, the Jews boasted in the fact that they were children of Abraham. They were physically descended from Abraham who received all of the promises of God in Genesis 12, 15, 17, and so on, and they were just, they were satisfied and proud of their physical descent in Abraham. Jesus addresses this. I want you to see this to set the context. In chapter 8 verse 31, gospel of John, "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 didn't like that. "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 commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever.'" Drop down to verse 39 and just notice how they're arguing blood dissent. It's pathetic. They answered him in verse 39, Well, actually, we should read verse 38. "I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father." Oh, that's interesting. Jesus speaks about his Father, which is obviously God the Father, and he draws a contrast to whom their father is. They have a different father than

God the Father, and then this just accelerates and from a Jewish perspective gets out of hand in a hurry. "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.'" See, he's driving this home, your father, your father. "They said to him, 'We were not born of sexual immorality.'" That was an implied rebuke because from a human perspective the birth of Jesus seemed suspicious. It wasn't, but it seemed suspicious to carnal minds looking on it from outside. They said, "'We have one Father--even God.'" And Jesus doesn't accept the premise. He said to them in verse 42, he said, "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."

Now we get into it, "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." Jesus says, "You want to talk about a father? Fine, I'll tell you based on infallible perception who your father is. Your father is Satan. The liar, the murderer, the cause of the fall of mankind, the one who opposes God and his kingdom, that opposes Christ and his word, that deceives millions and billions and blinds the mind of the unbelieving so that they cannot see the gospel of Christ in order to be saved, that's who your father is," Jesus said to those Jews. "And the whole world lies within the power of him," 1 John 5.

Now, beloved, as we're talking about adoption, you talk about being from a bad family. The whole human race is from a bad family. The whole human race is dysfunctional because they have as their father the devil, a murderer, a liar, and everything else wicked that opposes the kingdom of God. And so when Ephesians says that we were children of wrath, sons of disobedience, that's what it's saying, we belonged to the realm of Satan and we had him as our head. In Colossians 1 it uses the figure of a king. Colossians 1, you don't need to turn there. In Colossians 1:13, speaking about salvation, it says that God "has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." The father head over the house, the king of darkness, so to speak, head over all of the world, and that's the realm that every one of us was in. We were born into it. We continued in it. We loved the darkness rather than the light, Scripture says. That was your former father, meaning that that is the nature that you shared. You followed Satan as your head, even if you had no idea that that's what you were doing. He blinded you, you were a slave to him, and you kissed the chains that held you in bondage because you loved your sin. You loved to lie, you loved the lust, you loved to rebel against God, all of that being the fruit of belonging to Satan and the outcome of those things is eternal death. That's a father whose joy is not to give you life and to care for you. Satan is a father who delights in digging the graves of his children and casting them in there. And that's where we all once were.

Now, do you start to see how glorious adoption must be, that your new Father, that's the second sub-point, your new Father overruled the desires of your former father. Your new

Father intervened against your former father and acted for your benefit and helped you when you were helpless. While we were still helpless, Christ died for us, Romans 5. What a glorious thing for us to even be able to contemplate these things, let alone to know the reality of them. Your new Father, we've seen your former father, the devil, John 8, now let's think about your new Father. What God did in your salvation was this, beloved, he took you out from under the control of the devil and brought you into his family. He adopted you against the wishes of Satan, by the way. Satan did not cooperate in this. Satan was overpowered. He wasn't willingly complicit in it. And now that God has done that, and as we saw in 1 John 3, now we are children of God, you have a permanent, lasting status as his adopted child. You no longer belong to Satan. He no longer has power over you. Oh, he can threaten you and tempt you, but he doesn't control you like he did before. That bondage of your former father has been utterly and irretrievably broken. And so what God did in your salvation, my friend, is he changed your position, he's changed your status from a son of the devil to a son of God. Let that sink in. Let that sink in and realize what it reveals about the nature of God to you.

Adoption shows the kindness of God to you. It shows how good and patient and merciful and gracious he was to you, how patient he was to overlook, to pass over your sins in order to bring you into his family. You see, beloved, God, and it could be no other way than what I'm about to say, God willingly saved you. He wanted to save you. He wanted you in his family as an expression of his goodness to his glory, not because you were good, but because he is good. Not that you're so intrinsically valuable, but he is intrinsically valuable. It made God glad to save you. Jesus said that there's more joy in heaven among the angels over one sinner who repents compared to 99 righteous people who need no repentance. Heaven rejoices at the salvation of sinners, which means that God rejoices and he is the ultimate source of all of that joy. Look, beloved, he enjoys giving these riches to sinners. He has found pleasure in saving you and showering you with his mercy and goodness. It made him glad. He wanted to save you more than you wanted to be saved. He loves you more than you want him to love you. Let there never be a question in your mind about the holy, good, righteous, kind intentions of God towards you. We're simply looking at what Scripture says.

Go back to Ephesians 1:5-6 again, "he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will." It was God's will for you to be adopted into his family, not yours. It was his purpose. He determined this before the beginning of time and he has worked out his purpose in order to accomplish it and to have you adopted into his family and that cannot be anything other than an expression of his glorious grace for which we ascribe glory to his name, "with which he has blessed us in the Beloved." Oh, this blessing, this love, this grace, this kindness, this mercy. Look at verse 8, "the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight."

Adoption was his plan. It could only be done through Christ, only through the shed blood, blood poured out in death as an atoning sacrifice for sin. There's the basis upon which you could be received into the family of God. When we contemplate adoption and all of these other matters surrounding true salvation, true biblical salvation, you truly do get lost in it because it would be one thing, it would be one inexpressibly glorious wonder

that God loved us and adopted us into his family, that's one level of glory, but when you realize that God the Son had to humble himself in the incarnation, had to humble himself to the point of obedience of death, even death on a cross, that he had to suffer on the cross for all of the sins that you've ever committed and that he did that willingly, he did it voluntarily at the cost of his own precious life, to realize that the cross was the price, the adoption price that was paid, then this just loses us in the majesty of the greatness of the goodness of God, and the majesty of the goodness of the greatness of God. God the Father purposed it. God the Son died to secure it. And then the Spirit of God applied it to our hearts in time at the point of our conversion.

My friends, look upon these things with the eye of your understanding and see the immeasurable manifestation of the saving love and work of God. God was blessed within himself. He was perfectly self-sufficient and he needed nothing. He needed nothing to make him complete. Saving us didn't add anything to the essence of God. It did not improve the essence of God. It didn't make him any more blessed than he already is. But because he is loving, because he is kind, because he is merciful, because he is gracious, because he is patient, there was an overflowing of those perfections of his and he exercised them on objects of mercy who formerly were objects of wrath. God had everything within himself, and he shared that blessing with us. And he didn't just share it with us like a grumpy father saying, "Well, here, you can have what I've got." No, no. It delighted God to do this. Somehow there was a going forth of joy from God as he exercised this grace upon us. And our response, and the goal that it is to produce in us, is that you and I would praise him for his glorious grace, and that we would praise him not reluctantly, but joyfully, willingly, that somehow there's something in your heart that responds and yearns after this and is joyful in it, so that a zeal for God is in your right frame of mind the consuming passion of everything that you have and do. Nothing is more important than the glory of God in light of the fact that he adopted us into his family and because nothing is more important than the glory of God, then that is the aim of our lives, that is the purpose of our existence, is that we would live in a way that in the resources and the giftedness that he gives to us, that we would marshal all of what he has given to us in the life that he has given to us and use that so that we would thankfully ascribe glory to his name and proclaim it to anyone who would listen, for as long as they'll listen and not just horizontally, and here we all fall short in what I'm about to say, but in the privacy of our hearts and in the privacy of our closed prayer closet, to ascribe glory to him there. "Father, what can I say? Thank you for saving me. Thank you for adopting me into your family. I'm so grateful. I'm so unworthy. And the fact that you would save a wretch like me can only be a testimony to your amazing grace." Sometimes you just wish that the rapture would happen when you're in that realm, right? What a time for the rapture to happen. What a time to go into the presence of God on this theme. I would love to enter into the presence of God having just preached on this theme or having been meditating on it, the goodness, the grace, the kindness of God and then it's all become sight. That would be a great way to go.

But, absent that, let's look at point number two, the results of adoption here this evening. We've seen the reality of adoption. Point number two, the results of adoption and I want to give you results and I'm just going to name them off to you so you know where we're

going here. Number one, present trust. Present trust. Number two, present respect. And number three, future reward. Present trust, present respect, future reward. These are the results of adoption. In other words, this is how we respond to the God who adopted us into his family.

So let's consider, first of all, present trust. As we've seen, adoption established you in a loving, trusting relationship with God the Father. You have assurance of his eternal care. If, as is true for many and is only going to get worse as time goes on, you were deserted by your father, your earthly father. He was harsh, unkind, unloving towards you. I can't get over the fact that I have people in my extended family who don't even know who their father is and as they talk about it, you can just hear the pain in their voice after decades. Well, understand that for all of the miserable failures that earthly fathers can be, your heavenly Father, not like that at all. He is a loving Father that you can trust and you have assurance of his eternal care.

Look at Galatians 4. Galatians 4. And if you have one of those hearts that longs after, you know, a father who didn't return the affection, take the opportunity tonight to, as it were, this is not to start dishonoring him, but to turn your attention away from that failure and find your satisfaction in the Father who's revealed himself like this. Galatians 4:4 through 7. Galatians 4:4, "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," here's our point for now at this point in the message, "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."

Now, that word Abba, you've probably heard it explained in terms that aren't the best, and I won't bother you with that so much. Abba was a term of endearment and the best lexical sources tell us that it's not so much the idea of the childish daddy that I've heard taught, you've heard taught, but reduces it to a level of immaturity and it's not that so much as it's more like this, think of the affectionate of an adult child, fully developed mind, full appreciation for what a faithful father had done over time, proven himself over the years, and that affectionate child going up maybe putting her hand around his neck and saying, "Dad." Informed by decades of trust, decades of mutual care and affection, and in that one word, Dad, expressing respect and affection and appreciation and honor. That's the idea behind Abba, and beloved, that's what Scripture says adoption means for your relationship with him. "Dear Father, dear Father, there has never been a time, there has never been an instant in the history of mankind, there was never a blip in eternity past where your loving affection was not set upon me. And here now you've saved me and you've shown your kindness in so many ways, horizontally in an earthly way, and then vertically all of these things in Christ. Dear Father, I love you. I appreciate you. I trust you with everything." That's the idea of present trust. You say these things and you approach him on those terms with a full knowledge and confidence that you most assuredly belong to him and he will never cast you away, Romans 8:38 and 39. You have access to his loving care.

We have to take time to look at the book of Matthew. This is just far too important not to, even though we'll come to this sometime next year. Matthew 6:8-9. All of this section on prayer from verse 5 to verse 15 informs this. For the sake of time, we'll just look at verse 8. Jesus said, "Don't be like the Gentiles who just pile up empty words in prayer. Don't be like them." Why? "For your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this, 'Our Father in heaven.'" The way Jesus teaches us to pray, premised on the doctrine of adoption. "Father, you know what I need. I don't have to explain anything to you. I'm just here to express my worship and my dependence and to ask you to do whatever you deem is best."

Matthew 7:9-11. In the same way, this present trust, remember that's what we're talking about here, trusting God as a result of adoption, and recognizing him for the good established Father that he is, proven beyond doubt, never to be questioned, never the loving intentions of his heart to be doubted even if we struggle in the moment at times. Verses 7 through 11, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent?" What kind of father does that? Even unsaved fathers who are reasonably in their right minds, will respond to a request from their son with kindness, not with perversion. I realize we can't assume this in the way we used to. But that's not Jesus' point. Look at verse 11, "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" You can trust him. He's your Father. Even earthly fathers give good things to their children when they ask. When we go and ask for good things, which are things revealed in his word, he delights to give, delights to answer. So we trust him.

Now secondly, present respect. Present respect and for this, I want you to turn to Hebrews 12. Hebrews 12, going past the letters of Paul, you'll come to the letter to the Hebrews. Some people think Paul wrote Hebrews. That's neither here nor there for tonight. As our Father, God will train us in holiness so that we can learn better to please him. Look at verse 5 of Hebrews 12. Beginning in the middle of the verse we read, "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." Oh, okay, so it's not simply about trust, not simply about love and assurance, all of those things are real and abundant, but there is an added aspect, just as there is for an earthly child before his earthly father, to realize that that earthly father, when he's doing his job, brings discipline in order to train the child. Scripture says your adopted Father in heaven acts in that same kind of way.

Verse 7, "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?" Yes, discipline may sting for a moment. Even the earthly father has longer term goals in mind, right? He's not inflicting pain just for the sake of inflicting pain. He knows that this is necessary to train his child in order to be a productive member of society and to learn the difference between right

and wrong so he's got to apply pain sometimes because that's the vehicle in which the lesson is best learned. So discipline may sting for a moment, but it produces maturity.

Verse 8, "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."

You see, the Father trains us so that we'll reflect his character. We're not all the way there yet. We've got a long way to go and because that's the goal, nothing less than the perfection of God is what we're being trained up for and raised up for to ultimately be known in heaven, he's training us for that. We realize that's a good and lofty goal and he's going to make it happen even if it causes us pain in the process. Well, that causes us to respect him, to have a loving sense of fear toward him. We do not treat with triviality our adoption. We respect him as the Father of our spirit, and we gladly submit to his discipline for the sake of the overall relationship. The term father teaches us to trust and respect God. Again, the more our society collapses, the less immediately obvious that kind of point is going to be, but in an environment like this, where some of us at least have had fathers that we respected, well, just multiply that by eternity. I loved my dad. I feared my dad for good reason and that was in an imperfect relationship. There's a sense of love and respect that carries over to our adopted heavenly Father. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and a healthy view of adoption includes this element of present respect.

We must move on and just to make this final point, future reward. Future reward. Now, in some ways, you know, lost in wonder, love, and praise, adopted into his family at the cost of Christ, the blessing of being in him, belonging to him, never to be reversed, and yet somehow, somehow, Scripture has even more to say about this that goes even beyond everything that we've already said so that there's even, we've saved the best to last and it transcends it all and just brings it all together in a way that will echo and redound throughout all of eternity. Future reward. To be adopted by God means that we are a son to receive a future inheritance.

Look at Romans 8 and this will be the last text that we'll go to. Romans 8:15-17. "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!'" Dear Father. Gracious 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." God has a rich inheritance waiting for us in heaven, and we are going to enter into that. It will belong to us. And these abundance of riches that belong to Christ are going to be shared with us as coheirs with him. Words fail me, beloved. Words fail me to try to express something of the eternal

goodness of God to have done this for us, to adopt us and to bring us in as heirs of everything.

In verse 23 we read, "we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." There's more to come. This Father of inexhaustible riches has adopted us into his family, blessed us immeasurably in ways that go beyond all that we could ask or think right now, we love and respect him and trust him in response, and we realize that there's even more to come. When could we ever begin to stop declaring the goodness of God? When will we ever exhaust the topic? We never will. Throughout all of eternity, we'll never exhaust the ascription of praise due to God for his goodness to us.

I said Romans 8 would be our last text, but first I'll go circle back to 1 John 3. Like I say, I was in this text today. What's that inheritance going to be like? Where do you begin to measure it? Beloved, "We are God's children now," verse 2, "and what we will be has not yet appeared," there's something more coming, we don't know exactly what will be, "but we know this and it's more than enough, but we know that when Christ appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is." Christ, in his resurrected glory, in the wonder of his resurrected countenance, looking into his face, beholding his face, face to face, literally seeing him with physical vision, and the glory of that moment will be so great as it will utterly transform us into a perfection in which we share in his resurrected glory. We will see him and we will be like him. We will not be deity, but somehow we are going to share in his resurrected glory, be in his presence, made perfect like him and see him and know that it is eternally like that time without end, and that will be the fulfillment of our inheritance. Ultimately, the fullness of our inheritance is Christ himself, and we'll see him and we'll be like him, all because God predestined before time began to adopt us into his family that we might know him as Father and honor him accordingly with our present trust, our present respect, longing for a future reward. Brother and sister in Christ, you are secure in the family of God, the family of a loving Father. Praise God.

Let's pray.

Father, how can we speak of the magnitude of your mercy to us? It's a wonder that you would pardon all of our sins and declare us righteous in Christ, but that we as pardoned rebels, we who once were sons of the devil, should now become your very sons and daughters, enjoying the intimacy of your own family circle, Lord, we're lost in wonder, love and praise. May you graciously bring into your family others who are currently outside. May they see the magnitude of this and your Spirit work longings in their heart as you draw them to a saving knowledge of Christ. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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