

The Honors of Adoption

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[0:00] Well, we are in a series on adoption. We are talking about spiritual adoption and physical adoption. They both go together, so we're going to be talking about both.

And today we're going to be talking about adoption and honor. Adoption and honor. And that might sound strange to you at first, but I hope that you see the connections of those two concepts.

That's by the time our time is over. Before we go on, I need to clarify some things. Something I've said the last two weeks.

In our first lesson, I said that the highest privilege of the gospel, the highest blessing is adoption, even higher than justification. And I need to clarify that statement.

Some of you have understood me. Maybe my way of saying that maybe wasn't the best, and so I kind of want to work through that concept one more time and make sure that that's clear.

[1:06] When I said adoption is the highest blessing of the gospel, I didn't mean, even higher than justification, I didn't mean that adoption and justification are like in two different categories, with justification down here and adoption up here.

In no way did I mean that justification was just so-so. It's just sort of the entry thing, and it's not that good, but adoption is where it's at.

We see that in our memory verse. The Lord is our judge. The Lord is our lawgiver. The Lord is our king. It is he who will save us.

The God, our God, is our savior as he acts as our judge. So when God acts as our judge in justification, it is the way he saves us.

It is the way that he loves us. The picture of justification in the Bible is not the picture of a judge without emotion saying you're justified just because I have to do it that way, without heart, without love, just because it's the right thing to do.

[2:18] That isn't the biblical picture of justification at all. Rather, the biblical picture is of a judge who loves the person on trial so much that he is willing to send his son, and his son is put to death in order to set the prisoner free.

So our God, as judge, is our savior. He's our king, and he's our father. And I don't want anyone to think for a single moment that God our judge, or God our father, is better than God our judge.

It is the same God. The father is our judge. And so the judge, full of love, comes down from his seat and wraps his arms around us and brings us into his family.

And so what I meant when I said adoption is the highest blessing of the gospel, I think is simply this. God didn't have to bring us into his family, but he did.

His love just kept on going. So it was the same love that spread the feast that sweetly drew us in. So it's the same love that was behind our justification that's behind our adoption.

[3:44] And I didn't mean to divide those things. So adoption is the whipped cream on top of the sundae. It's the lavish love. It's the wow, he's justified me.

And yet he's still loving me more and more. His love is still going. And I hope that makes it clear. Our God is a gracious and merciful judge.

And our God is a gracious and merciful father. We don't want to divide those or put one above the other. Now, that being said, I actually have another correction to make.

This one's a lot less minor, but it gives me an opportunity to say some things over again. Last week, I read an extended quote from John Owen on the Christian's need to commune with the Father in love.

So, Owen says to us, as weak believers, as those who are struggling in so many ways, that this is an area, this is a thing that we need to exercise ourselves in.

[4:54] We need to be communing with our Father in love. And so sweetly having fellowship with Him, knowing that He loves us and He cares for us, that He's a kind, affectionate Father.

And He says Christians are weak when they could be strong and they go heavily when they could be rejoicing because they're not thinking about God's love for them as a father.

And so, let me read the quote to you again. I think it's really, it's such a good quote. I want you to hear it again, to think about it one more time. And then I have a minor mistake to correct just in the reading.

This is what John Owen says, talking about our need to commune with God, the Father in love.

Unacquaintedness with our mercies, our privileges, is our sin as well as our trouble.

We listen not to the voice of the Spirit which is given to us that we may know the things that are freely bestowed on us of God. And that makes us go heavily when we might rejoice and to be weak when we might be strong in the Lord.

[6:06] How few of the saints are experimentally acquainted with this privilege of holding immediate communion with the Father in love. With what anxious, doubtful thoughts do they look upon Him?

What fears, what questions are there of His goodwill and kindness? At His best, many think there is no sweetness at all in Him toward us, but what is purchased is the high price of the blood of Jesus. It is true. That alone is the way of communication, but the free fountain and spring of all is in the bosom of the Father. Eternal life was with the Father.

Jesus Christ was with the Father and is manifested unto us. And then He says, So, I, the Father, as love, look not on Him as always, lowering.

Last week I said lowering because it looks exactly the same. It didn't make a lot of sense to me when I said it. And then our brother Mark Akin said, You know, I think the word is lowering.

[7:13] And what lowering means is to look angry, sullen, or threatening, to appear dark or threatening as the sky.

So, do you see God as just billows of gray clouds hanging over you? That's what it means. So, I, the Father, as love, look not on Him as always a lowering Father, but as one most kind and tender. Let us look on Him by faith as one that has thoughts of kindness towards us from everlasting. They fix their thoughts only on His terrible majesty, severity, and greatness, and so their spirits are not endeared.

Would a soul continually eye His everlasting tenderness and compassion, His thoughts of kindness that have been from of old, His present gracious acceptance, acceptance, it, the soul, could not bear an hour's absence from Him.

Let then, this be the saint's first notion of the Father as one full of eternal, free love toward them. So, that's our God.

[8:25] He's a kind Father. And He wants His children to see Him like that. Not as always gloomy, always sullen, but full of kindness.

And so, out of His heart, He sent forth His Son. Out of love, He sent forth His Son. Jesus didn't twist the arm of the Father to love you.

And Jesus doesn't have to twist the arm of God to love you. The Father loves you. Yes, all that love that God has for you, it comes through Jesus Christ.

And especially, it comes through the cross. But the cross is not the origin of God's love. The origin of God's love is His own heart. He has freely given to us.

And so, in love, He predestined us to be adopted. And all those verses. So, brothers and sisters, this is God's grace to you.

[9:25] Believe it, John Owen would say, and I would say. Be strong in it. Horatius Bonar said, Terror accomplishes no real obedience.

Suspense brings forth no fruit unto holiness. No gloomy uncertainty as to God's favor can subdue one lust or correct our crookedness of will.

But the free pardon of the cross uproots sin and withers all of its branches. Only the certainty of love, forgiving love, can do this.

So, communing with God in love, knowing it, experiencing it, living in it, that's the way the child of God is going to grow, grow, grow.

Now, before we get to today's lesson, are there any comments about what we've seen so far?

[10:24] Any questions or anything that you, something, anything that struck you or you found helpful? Feel free to speak up. Okay. Well, we'll keep moving then.

So, today, we're going to talk about adoption and honor. And we have three points. First, God honors us in adoption. Second point is, so, we should honor him.

And third, so, we should honor our brothers and sisters. So, first then, God honors us in adoption. Last week, we talked about the Roman background of adoption.

It's the Roman legal practice of adoption that Paul is using and he's drawing his metaphor from. It's the basis of his metaphor. And we saw some very interesting things last week.

We saw that, I think, one of the most interesting, one of the ways that it differs most from our practice of adoption today is that those who were adopted were always, almost always, adults.

[11:36] They weren't children. Actually, it wasn't until the third century AD that it was even legal to adopt a child. So, Roman adoption was where a Roman man took another Roman man and made him his heir, his legal son.

So, it generally it wasn't a matter of charity, but it was done for political reasons, for financial reasons, for family reasons.

It was a way to provide a suitable heir. It was a way to provide, to keep a family together and the family's property together.

And so, because it was like that, it was a great honor to be adopted in the Roman culture.

To be adopted by a high-ranking official was a great honor. Now, the most famous adopted child, so to speak, in history is none other than Augustus Caesar.

[12:45] The first emperor of Rome was, he was the great nephew of Julius Caesar. His name was Octavian before he became Augustus Caesar. And Julius Caesar wanted to pass on his power, his wealth, his influence to a suitable candidate.

And so, he took his great nephew, Octavian, and he adopted him into his family. So, when Julius Caesar did that, Octavian's status in the world shot through the roof.

It went really high up. Now, he was the son of Julius Caesar. Caesar. Now, he had all the wealth of Caesar. Now, he had all the prestige of a Caesar.

And, actually, that was the way that the emperors were chosen, especially early on. So, Augustus was adopted by Julius Caesar.

Then, Augustus adopted Tiberius, who wasn't his natural son. Tiberius, and then Caligula, Nero, they were all adopted. Later on, Emperor Nerva adopted Trajan, who adopted Hadrian, who adopted Antonius Pius, who adopted Marcus Aurelius, who adopted Lucius Verus.

[13:59] All adoptees, all emperors. This is the background of what's going on in the Roman world as Paul writes to tell the Christians, now you've been adopted, not by Caesar, but by God, by the King of Kings.

So, that's the background when Paul writes to the Galatians, but then when the time had fully come, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons, that we might receive adoption.

And so, we're no longer a slave, but you are a son, and God has also made you an heir. So, to be adopted in the Roman world was an honor.

And God has adopted us. He's made us his very own sons and daughters, his very heirs. And so, do you see why adoption would, and is, would be a great honor?

We aren't the sons of Caesar. We are the son and daughter of the king of kings. And so, the full rights, the authority, is ours to be the son.

[15:23] It's great honor to be the son of a king. Now, in worship later this morning, I'm going to read, we're going to read Revelation 4. And as I was thinking about Revelation 4, and as I was thinking about this Sunday school lesson, this privilege of being a son of God struck me with such freshness.

I have access to this king. I'm his son. So, just listen to a few verses from Revelation 4. This is John speaking.

And there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of Jasper and Carnelian. So, he's sparkling and dazzling like a jewel.

A rainbow resembling an emerald encircled the throne. Surrounding the throne were 24 other thrones and seated on them were 24 elders. And they were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.

And from the throne came flashes of lightning and rumblings and peals of thunder. This is the king. This is the king of the universe.

[16:36] He's glorious in majesty. Around his throne are, I think, angelic figures. And there's all this glory and shining bliss.

And we are his sons and daughters. Does that blow your mind? Full rights of sons, heirs.

And so, do you see how God, God, in his grace, has honored us. He's given us a status and a privilege that we never had before.

So we can speak into his ear, and we can know that we have his heart, his love. So all that we talked about earlier with John Owen saying, you have to look on the father as love, that is here.

And all this glory at the same time is here. So is he glorious in majesty? Yes. Is he holy, holy, holy? Yes.

[17:37] And he's also our father. And so we don't separate those two things, and we don't put one above the other. Instead, both of them go together. He is great.

And that makes his love all the more amazing, that he would love us. And so instead of dividing those things, his majesty, his holiness, his fatherly love, we should pray as Jesus prayed, who said, holy father, holy father.

So he has honored us in adoption. Created beings could get no higher than to be called the sons of God. And see how great the love the father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God.

And that is what we are. So it's a great honor to be adopted by God. Now, secondly, we owe him honor. So if we've been adopted, then we owe him honor.

God has brought us into his family. He's made us his children, and so we owe him honor. What is the fifth commandment? Anyone? Honor your father and your mother.

[18:50] So we owe our earthly fathers and mothers honor, and we owe our heavenly father honor. honor. So let me ask you, how can we show honor to God our father?

What are some various ways? I don't have anything particular in mind, so speak out, just tell us some different ways. By pleasing him with our obedience.

How does that show that we honor him? very good. Yes, Lou? So, okay, Dale, then Lou.

Yeah, to bow before his throne, to put him in the place of our esteem. Yes, Lou? Yes, God has saved us in order that we could live to his glory and obedience to his law.

So we honor him that way. What else? Jim? John others, of his love to us, that he loved them the same way? Yes, speaking well of him.

[20:05] We honor our parents when we speak well of them to other people. I think we saw that yesterday. It was an honor to Letty to have her children speak well of her.

it's an honor to our father when we speak well of him. Dad. Right.

To be careful with the way that we talk about him and using his name because his name represents who he is. What else? Yes, Christine.

Yes. He is holy and righteous. righteous. We honor him when we imitate him. Right? Imitation is the highest form of flattery, we say.

So when we say, God, the way you are is worth imitating, we honor him. Yes. Very good.

[21:04] Yes, by giving him thanks. It's very dishonoring when your kids just take and take and never ever say thank you. it seems like they deserve it all.

It doesn't honor the parent. Can we say anything else? Jeanette? Yeah. It's not very honoring to ignore your parents.

It's not very honoring to ignore your heavenly father. Can we say, yes, Carrie? Believing His promises and taking Him at His word.

We're going to get to that. Believing that He's actually good is honoring Him. Believing that He loves us is an honor to Him.

Taking His promises and living our lives on Him shows everyone honoring His dependability and His faithfulness and His grace. Actually, turn in your Bibles to Galatians chapter 1.

[22:11] This is a good segue to that. Galatians chapter 1. Galatians is actually one of the books where Paul has to remind the readers that they've been adopted and they need to start living like that.

And he starts getting the family language, reminding them of who God is. He starts doing that early and then he says something very shocking in verse 6.

So, three times in the first five verses, Paul refers to God as Father. You see it in verse 1 in the greeting.

And then you see it in verse 3. And then you see it again in verse 4. He's bringing this up that God is their Father. God is their Father. God is their Father. And then in verse 6, if you know Galatians, this is the only book where he just sort of skips the blessing.

He skips a lot of the, I'm glad about this and I'm thankful for this. And he goes right for the jugular because something is really out of sorts here. In verse 6 he says, I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel.

[23 : 35] Let me ask you, who called them? Who does he have in mind when he says, You're deserting the one who called you? God the Father.

You're deserting your Father. And you're turning aside to another gospel. So they started living for someone else's honor.

And if you look, you can follow the words of boasting. How Paul uses the word boasting in this book. About people living for other people's honor. And so the false teachers want to, they want the approval of man.

They want to boast that people approve of them. The false teachers wanted to boast in their flesh. They wanted the Galatians to boast in their father Abraham. Of the physical line of Abraham. In the works of their hands. And Paul calls that desertion.

[24 : 39] Disloyalty. They are leaving the family that they've been graciously brought into. And they're starting to live and give the honor and glory to someone else.

Other people. Themselves. Even the false teachers. And so in the ancient world, honor and shame came from your family.

You were born with a certain amount of honor. Just based on what family you were born into. And Paul is saying, it is amazing. You've left.

You're leaving the honorable father who called you by his grace. Who saved you. And you're going to live in a slave family. That's what he says later on.

You're dishonoring him and you're dishonoring even yourself. When you turn away from the true gospel to a false gospel. You're leaving the free woman. The free family.

[25 : 38] The heavenly family. And you're joining the slave woman and the slave family. And that's what happens whenever we turn away from the false.

From the gospel to a false gospel. We draw. Or we drag down. The father's glory. So when we aren't trusting him to do all for us.

When we aren't trusting him to save us from first to last. Instead, we start living as a slave. With a slave mentality. We are dishonoring him.

And so the older son in the prodigal son parable. He greatly dishonored his father. When he made his father come out. When he refused to go into the feast.

When he refused to live on the father's goodness. Instead, he wanted to live. He was thinking of himself as a slave. I've been slaving away for you. And you've never given me anything.

[26 : 39] Do you see how dishonoring that is of the father's love? Of the father's generosity and goodness? And so, brothers and sisters. We've been adopted into God's family.

We've been brought into his household. And so we owe him fatherly honor. And we honor him by trusting his promises. Believing the gospel. We honor him then by obeying.

And respecting him. And living a holy life. That's what we owe him. As his sons and daughters. Now. Thirdly.

Adoption means. That we should honor each other. That we should honor each other. If God has honored you.

My brothers and sisters. And he's given you this exalted status. As a son or daughter of God. Then I owe you. A certain amount of respect.

[27 : 38] For your position. That we should honor each other. Because this is. These quotes are from C.S. Lewis. And he's talking about.

The potential glory hereafter. Of what God is going to make us eventually. And he says. That should make us respect. And honor each other. And so if we tweak these quotes a little bit.

And think about. How God has adopted us. And he's given us this honored status. As sons and daughters. Then we should honor each other. So listen to what C.S. Lewis said.

It may be possible. For each. To think too much of his own. Potential glory hereafter. It might be possible for us. To think too much of our status. But it's hardly possible. For him to think too often. Or too deeply. About that of his neighbor. The load. Or weight. Or burden. Of my neighbor's glory. Should be laid daily on my back.

[28 : 35] A load so heavy. That only humility can carry it. And the backs of the proud. Will be broken. So. You go to church.

Church. With the sons of God. And that's a glory. And that's an honor. That we should feel. So when we gossip. When we run down. Our brothers and sisters. When we feel bitterness. Or even hatred. For one of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

We're doing that to a child of God. And that's why Paul says in Romans 12.10. Be devoted to one another. In brotherly love.

Honor one another. Above yourselves. We're the sons of God. And so. We should love each other. As a family. Familial affection.

[29 : 35] Brotherly love. Should mark. Grace Fellowship Church. Because of who we are. Because of who God has made us. In his grace. And so we should love each other. We should have that kind of intimacy.

But also. Honor. This is what. Lewis goes on to say. It's in the light of these overwhelming. Possibilities. It is with awe. And circumspection.

Proper to them. That we should conduct. All our dealings. With one another. All friendships. All loves. All play. All politics. And there's no ordinary people.

In the family of God. God. So. That does not mean. That we should be. Perpetually solemn. We must play. But our merriment. Must be of the kind. And it is in fact.

The merriest kind. Which exists. Between people. Who have from. The outset. Taking each other. Seriously. No flippancy. No superiority. No presumption.

[30 : 32] And our charity. Must be a real. And costly. Love. Because our. Brothers and sisters. Because God. Has been so. Good to them. That demands.

And that requires. Humility on our part. When we're dealing with them. That's why we. When one of them sins. We are to restore them gently. That's the.

That's the reason. We need to sacrifice. For one another. Father. So we should honor. And love our brothers. And sisters. Because what God. Has done for them.

He has given them. A great honor. He's exalted them. Into his family. And he loves them. And he cherishes them. With a fatherly love. And so. As we believe.

The gospel. For ourselves. Of the goodness. And the grace of God. For ourselves. We should believe it. For our brothers. And sisters too. We should believe it. Of them.

[31 : 28] Christ came. Just at the right time. He became. A man. He was born of a woman. Born under law. He died. Under law. To redeem those. Who are under law.

To make them. The sons of God. So that they might receive. The full rights. Of sons. He's done that. For me. And he's done that. For you. And.

We need to be thinking. About both. And so. Let's love each other. With brotherly love. There's no need. For pride. In the family. Of God. There's no need. For competition here.

Like I'm better. I'm not better. There's no room. For bitterness. Or pride. Or competition. Or envy. God has loved. And honored. Each one of us. And so together.

We. Are children. Of the heavenly father. And so. Our life together. Should. Reflect that. Now. So. In adoption.

[32 : 24] God has honored us. Secondly. So. That means. We should honor him. And thirdly. That means. That we should honor. One another. Because of. What he's done for us.

We're dismissed. We're dismissed. Thank you.