

Orphan Care is War

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[0:00] This morning, we're going to continue our study on adoption. And today we're moving away pretty much, at least directly, dealing with spiritual adoption.

! And we're going to be talking about what's at stake as far as physical adoption goes and orphan care. And notice I'm expanding this. We're not just talking about and we're just not including adoption.

We're expanding this to orphan care in general. Not everyone is called to adoption. Probably most people aren't. Not everyone has the right set of gifts.

Not everyone is providentially in the right place. Some people have told me, I wish we would have heard this earlier, or we're too old to adopt.

And maybe you're right. That's certainly true. But if you are thinking of that, thinking that way, can I just throw this out there for you guys to think about?

[1:07] It's not with any undue pressure, but it's just something to think about. There's a saying that says, an old mommy is better than no mommy. Sarah was pretty old when she had Isaac.

And she wasn't a bad mom because of that. Abraham was pretty old when he had Isaac. And that didn't mean he was necessarily a bad dad. I'm sure it was a lot harder.

And aging does not make parenting easier. But that's just to say that age doesn't absolutely necessarily rule out adopting and really getting active in orphan care.

There's been 60-year-old couples who have fostered and adopted. It's not ideal. It's not ideal. But we aren't living in an ideal world.

And everything that we would like to see happen doesn't happen. It's a broken world. And so if we're going to wait for perfect circumstances, we're forever going to be waiting.

[2:08] So is it ideal? No. But it's not ideal to not have a mom or a dad. So that's just something to think about. That being said, let's just say you have no desire whatsoever to adopt.

You can adopt. Upon prayerful consideration, you realize adoption isn't for me. You've talked to people. And you've sought counsel. And they said, well, maybe you should think of some other way.

Does that mean that you have no part to play? No part at all in this arena? My answer is no. There's too much at stake. There's too much for us to sit this one out totally.

So it's sort of like missions. It's not exactly like missions. But it's sort of like missions. Is everyone called to be a missionary in the body of Christ? No, certainly not.

But we are all to have an interest in missions. We are all to have some part in missions. We might not have. You might not have a direct role in orphan care.

[3:13] So you might not be on the front lines in adopting. You might not be going to an orphanage. You might not be going to some country or working in this area directly.

But we should all have some interest in it. Some level of participation in it. We all should have some skin in the game, so to speak. Something that we have to lose.

Like our money, our time, our energy, our prayerful interests. And so today we're going to talk about why. Why, regardless of where you're at, why should you have some part in it?

And today the basic answer is, this is war. This is war. Orphan care is not charity. It's war.

And what I mean is, it's not some optional thing. It's some nice thing that we can do or we can't do. It's war.

[4:13] It's something that we are caught up in. So put yourself back in World War II. And that was the last time, I think, that our country was at total war, where the whole country and every industry in the country had to be governed for the end of winning the war.

Maybe you can put yourself back that far. Maybe you can remember that far. But everyone, there weren't a lot of people, I'm sure, saying we want to go at war. We want to be at war. But the fact was, they were. And remember how pretty much everything was rationed. Only so much food. Only so many tires. Only so much of this or that. Could you opt out of the rationing program? Could you say, I don't want to participate in that? No, because whether you liked it or not, whether you agreed with it or not, America was at war. So orphan care, it's sort of like that. We can't opt out. We are at war. We are in a spiritual war. And part of the field of battle, not the whole thing, but part of the field of battle is in this area of caring for the needy, the poor, the orphan, the fatherless.

[5 : 36] And the combatants are clear in this battle. The sides are clearly drawn up. On one side, you have God. And you have Jesus, the Lord of life.

And on the other side, you have Satan and his demons and the sinful world that he controls and exercises authority over. So Satan was a liar and a murderer from the beginning. And he exercises that role. He still does that to this day. And this warfare is worldwide. It's comprehensive. It reaches into every arena of life and in every country in this world. And it reaches into the arena of orphan care, of children and life and death. Now, I want to show you three pictures of this war at work, this warfare. So the first is in Revelation 12.

[6 : 44] Would you please turn to Revelation 12? We're going to read the first... Let's just read the first nine verses. The first four is what we really want to focus on, but we see the broader picture in the first nine verses.

A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven. A woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and a crown of 12 stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. Then another sign appeared in heaven, an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth so that he might devour her child the moment it was born.

She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule over the nations with an iron scepter, and her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.

[8 : 02] And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven.

The great dragon was hurled down. That ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth and his angels with him. Now, this obviously doesn't have direct bearing on orphan care. But we do see a clear picture of what kind of being Satan is.

Satan is the picture of the dragon. John identifies that. And this woman is some sort of combination. I'm not sure exactly, and that's not the point, of Eve and Israel and even Mary.

And the baby is obviously Jesus. Jesus Christ. And the woman is about to give birth, and the dragon, he puts himself right in front of her in order to devour the child as soon as it's born.

[9 : 07] It's a gruesome picture. And it's obviously talking more about more than Satan's attitude towards babies, but it does show us what kind of being Satan is.

He is willing to devour babies in order to extend his kingdom. Satan doesn't have a soft spot in his heart for children. Satan doesn't leave children as if they're off limits, as if they're safe.

He hates children. He hates babies because, well, they're made in the image of God. And more, they're even a picture of Jesus, the true seed of the woman who would come and destroy Satan's kingdom, who would crush Satan's head.

Jesus was born of a woman. He came as a baby. And so Satan hates him, and as a result, he hates every even picture of him that reminds him of any way of Jesus.

And so this warfare rages even to this day. He was a murderer. That's his heart. And he is that to this day. And now you'll see he's thrown to the earth and he exercises his authority on this earth.

[10:10] He's the God of this world, Paul says. And so this world does his bidding. It imbibes his heart. And we see this sort of attitude.

We see this sort of satanic pursuit of power. in two earthly examples. The first is Pharaoh. Exodus 1-7.

It says this. But the Israelites were fruitful and multiplied greatly and became exceedingly numerous so that the land was filled with them. God is blessing his people.

God is giving them children. And they are numerous, and they're exceedingly numerous. And the land is being filled with them. He's keeping his promise to Abraham. And he's making a great nation out of Abraham's family.

Now, did everyone see the blessing of children as a blessing? No. Pharaoh had a problem. He had a real problem with this.

[11:19] The Israelites threatened his rule. They threatened his power. And so you know what he did. You know the story. At first, the first plan was to overwork them.

To make it just unbearable. An unbearable load of work. And that didn't work. They just kept growing. There were more and more children. So what did Pharaoh do next?

What did he do next? He issued an order to kill the firstborn. He issued an order to kill all the male babies. So he talks to some midwives and he says, if it's a male, kill him.

If it's a girl, baby girl, let her live. So Pharaoh decided to be like an ancient version of Planned Parenthood. He decided to be an ancient version of Communist China with forced abortions and leaving, in this case, boys to die, but in China it's leaving girls out to die.

He said, kill the babies. Kill the babies. So, who suffers when sinful men want their own way?

[12:35] When sinful men feel threatened in their power and they want more and more for themselves? Well, oftentimes, children do.

And in this case, that's exactly what happened. The story goes on. This warfare goes on. 1,500 years later, a man crouches beside his wife and his wife groans and labor and finally she gives birth to a baby boy and the angels sing because the Son of God has been born.

Sometime later, wise men came and visited. They heard, they saw the star and they came to Jerusalem and they talked to Herod and Herod hears about them and he invites them to his palace and Herod says, when you find the baby, come tell me so I can worship him.

And all the time, that's not really what he wants. He wants, as soon as he can get the baby in his hands, he'll kill him. Ring his neck.

Kill him. And of course, the angels warned the wise men and they went home a different way.

Herod's plan was foiled but that murderous heart, that murderous fire, it wasn't put out.

[14:04] And so he issued a command, his soldiers went down to Bethlehem and killed all the baby boys two years and under. Noah, I don't really know how many that was but the intention, the heart, it doesn't even matter how many it was.

He was willing to kill every single baby boy two years and older because his kingdom was threatened. Because if this baby boy is the king of the Jews, guess whose days are numbered? Guess whose family line is numbered? Guess who isn't going to be the king of the Jews? And so, do you see this spiritual warfare? In the battle of this world, in the battle for the hearts and souls of men, in the devil's rage against the Lord and His anointed, it's often babies.

It's often children that are destroyed. Now, these are specific examples as they relate to redemptive history, as they relate to God's people.

But, I hope you can see just the principle that when sinful men want their way, they are willing to sacrifice the needy and orphans.

[15:21] It's often children that are destroyed. And that's why I say orphan care, it's not charity. It's not just something you can do or not do. It's war.

It's part of a larger spiritual battle going on. So, Satan's war against the image of God and men against God goes on.

The dragon is still the same. And the people under his control are still the same. And so, babies are cut up and they're chemically burned and their heads are pierced and their brains are vacuumed out and they're thrown away as medical waste.

In China, women are forced into abortions, like I said, into forced sterilization. And then, on the other end of life, more and more people are proposing euthanasia, the so-called good death.

So, in the Netherlands, there's a little group of doctors, nurses, who will travel to your house and who will kill you for a fee. The younger killed, the older killed, and anyone sick or disabled are threatened.

[16:46] If you get the World magazine, you might have seen this story a few weeks ago. There was a Christian family in the Netherlands and their brother, the brother in this family, the son, is disabled.

And, people have actually come up to them on the street while they were with him. So, they're walking all together and he's with them and they've asked, why haven't they killed him yet? Like he's a dog. The war goes on and the victims are the weak. The victims are the defenseless. They're often the children. And that's why I'm saying orphan care is not charity. It's war. Spiritual war. It's war against the culture of death that Satan and his demons and the sinful hearts of men impose on our culture, upon our world.

And so, this is the message that men gladly take up and preach it to other men. It's a culture of death that destroys life, that sears the conscience until men are just as brutal as they can be, as heartless as they can be.

[18:04] And God is not passive in this fight. And because God is not passive in the fight, we can't be passive. We can't sit it out.

He's not sitting it out. So when Herod's soldiers came, when Herod threatened, God had a man on the ground ready to do what it needed to be done in order to protect his son.

So, it was Joseph. Joseph. The guy who suddenly disappears in the gospel stories.

The guy who doesn't get any lines in the Christmas play. But, men, men, Joseph was God's man on the ground during that time.

Now, Joseph wasn't Jesus' biological father. father. There wasn't a drop of Joseph's DNA in Jesus. There was in no sense, in no way, he was biologically Joseph's son.

[19:13] Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the virgin's womb. But that being said, Joseph was not Jesus' biological father, but he was his real father.

And this is what I mean. Luke 2.41. Every year, his parents went to Jerusalem to the feast of the Passover. Who went to the feast of the Passover? Jesus and his parents.

It wasn't just Jesus and his mom. Luke 2.49. When his parents saw him, they were astonished.

Remember, Jesus disappeared and was at the temple learning and speaking to the people there.

When his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.

Joseph was not Jesus' biological father, but Joseph was Jesus' real father. Joseph didn't share any DNA with Jesus, but Joseph adopted Jesus.

[20:13] Jesus would have said, Abba, first to Joseph. Jesus' obedience to his father and mother, his obedience to the law for us.

obedience to his father was first exercised to Joseph and to Mary. And so Jesus did not share in Joseph's bloodline, but Jesus, nevertheless, claimed Joseph as his father.

And if you think about it, if Joseph isn't Jesus' real father, then we don't have a Messiah. we don't have a Christ.

And God is not faithful. Why do I say that? That's a pretty strong statement, but just think about it.

Jesus' identity, Jesus' promised identity, was as the Christ, as the son of David.

He was the long promised heir to David's throne. that human identity that Jesus possessed came to Jesus through adoption.

[21:26] It came from Joseph because it was Joseph who was in the line of David. J. Gresham Machen, the 20th century Presbyterian scholar, wrote this, Joseph's adoption to Jesus, of Jesus, means Jesus belongs to the house of David just as truly as if he were in a physical sense, the son of Joseph.

He was a gift of God to the Davidic house, not less truly, but on the contrary, in a more wonderful way than if he had been descended from David by ordinary generation.

So it was through Joseph that Jesus finds his identity as the Davidic Messiah. And so when Joseph took Mary to be his wife, despite what everyone was saying, you know, Joseph wasn't an idiot.

I mean, do you really think, I mean, when Mary came up with the story of, yeah, I'm pregnant from God, he didn't believe her because that just doesn't happen.

And he decided, I'm going to quietly put her away until an angel came and said, Joseph, what she said is true. So Joseph believed.

[22:50] He took Mary to be his wife, and he took Jesus to be his son. And when he did that, he struck a blow, a devastating blow, against the kingdom of Satan. So it was Joseph who heard the angel's message to get out, to go down to Egypt, to protect Jesus.

It was Joseph who went to work every day, to provide physically for Jesus. It was Joseph that probably taught Jesus first, the law and the prophets.

And so Joseph's this guy who gets so little praise, but he was God's man on the ground to raise up Jesus and care for Jesus. Joseph, sorry, there are two J's and I keep on getting confused.

Joseph is this guy who played his part in the spiritual warfare that rages all around us. And he played it by stepping up and by being a dad, by taking Jesus into his family.

Now, what does that say to us? What does that mean to us? Well, it means simply this, and I'm talking to men especially, it means we need to find our place in this warfare.

[24:11] God has taken his place in this warfare. Psalm 68 5, a father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.

He sets the lonely in families. God has clearly put down his foot where he is at in this battle.

God takes his place as the father to the fatherless and a defender of the widows. Brothers, that word defender is the word judge, as in the book of Judges, judge.

And so, what is God like? He's like Samson. He's like Samson for the widows. He's like Samson for the needy and the broken.

Samson was this mighty man who fought, right? That's a picture of God as he fights for the orphan and the widow. He's like Ehud who thrusts a sword up to his hilt into Inglon's stomach.

[25:17] He's like Shamgar who with an ox goad killed 600 Philistines. God has taken his place in this warfare. He's standing with the fatherless. He's serious about helping, about protecting the needy.

And the Messiah, the promised Messiah, was going to take his stand with God. He was like God and when his kingdom comes, Psalm 72 explains it, speaking about the Messiah King and his kingdom, for he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help.

He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence for precious in their blood is his sight.

so men, when we stand up and when we fight for orphans, we're standing up with God.

And when we turn away from what's easy and when we turn away from what is convenient and what I want from the treasures of this world, when we turn away from all that to love and care for the helpless, for the defenseless, we're taking our place next to Joseph, we're taking our place next to God, we're taking our place next to Job.

[26:38] Listen to what Job said. Whoever heard me spoke well of me, and those who saw me commended me because I rescued the poor who cried for help and the fatherless who had no one to assist him.

The man who was dying blessed me. I made the widow's heart sing. Isn't that beautiful? I made the widow's heart sing. I put on righteousness as my clothing.

Justice was my robe and my turban. I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy. I took up the case of the stranger and I broke the fangs of the wicked and snatched the victims from their teeth.

men, I'm talking especially to you because this is war. It's war. God made us men to lead in this way.

He's given us the authority. He's given us the responsibility to make sure that we and our families are caring for the poor and the weakest and the neediest.

[27:50] Job did it. Joseph did it. God does it. It's a manly thing to do. It's a godly manly thing to do.

And so you and your family you might not be called to adopt. A lot of you won't be. But you're called to do something for orphans, for the fatherless.

The world throws them. They throw them away. They throw them to the dogs. The world ignores them in this mad pursuit of wealth and stuff.

The world butchers them and abuses them. This world sells them. Literally sells them. Sexually destroys them. And Satan loves it.

And doesn't that make your blood just boil a little? Isn't there some indignation in your own heart when the world can be so cruel, so brutal, evil?

[28:52] And so men, if you're men of God, shouldn't you be doing your part? Whatever that part might be. Should the ladies lead the way?

Should the ladies be the one who are most excited and most caring? If you think it's manly not to get excited, to be always reserved, always, if you think it's just your job to provide for your family, then let me show you from the Bible that that's just, it's not cutting it.

Yes, that's our primary concern. If a man doesn't provide for his family, he's worse than a pagan. He's worse than an unbeliever. But God calls us to more than that.

That's the minimum. Paul writes to the Ephesians, he who has been stealing must steal no longer. but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

There is stealing to have. You can get things by stealing. It's not the Bible, it's obviously breaking God's law.

[30:11] There's also working to have. That's better than stealing to have. But then there's working to share. That's what Paul calls us to.

We go to work so we have something to provide for our families, and then so we have something, however small or however large, to share. That's God's call to men.

To adopt, to give, to pray, to love, to share some way. Remember James 1.27, religion that God our Father accepts is pure and faultless is this, to look after orphans and widows in their distress.

It's just, it's not good enough, biblically, to have all the right doctrine and a good church, and it's not good enough just to care for your family and make sure that they are doing well.

And I'm not belittling that at all. we all need to do a good job at caring for our family and providing for them and honoring them, but we're called to stretch out for more than that, for more than ours and our own.

[31:25] So, let's just switch James 1.27 around a little bit. Religion that God our Father finds fault with has everything right except looking after orphans and widows in their distress.

everything right except for that. God finds fault with that. So, why does he find fault with it? I think because a cold heart towards the weakest, who are in the greatest need, it cuts to the heart of our faith.

It shows that we don't yet appreciate God's fatherly love and concern for us like we should. I'm not saying it's a total failure. I'm just saying it hasn't gripped us to the degree that it needs to grip us.

We were orphans when God called us. We were in the family going to hell. Remember, our Father had fangs. we were in absolute poverty when God justified us and gave us all these glorious riches in Christ.

And if we get that, if that grips us, then that's inevitably going to turn us out of ourselves, and it's going to turn us outward. It's going to keep us from focusing on ourselves and our family, just this narrower focus, and it's going to bend our hearts outward.

[32:57] to those who can't care for themselves. Why? Because that is how God has loved us. He went looking for us.

He didn't wait for us to come to him. He went looking for us. And so, men and women, I don't know what part you have to play in the battle. I don't know what you need to do, where you need to take the stand, where God has called you to be exactly.

Maybe you need to get into the war. Maybe you need to get nearer to the front lines. Maybe you need to hold the ropes while someone goes off the edge, over the edge.

But we all have a part, some way. And men, your job is to take the lead in this. This is your responsibility, finally, for your family.

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