

Adoption

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[0:00] Well, I don't know if it was on purpose or just a coincidence, but I was assigned today's chapter on adoption. And I, of course, have been thinking a lot about physical adoption lately, and it is something that I am very excited about.

And to be honest, I would love for all of you to be as excited as I am for Grace Fellowship to develop, by God's grace, a culture of adoption where, to be honest, adoption is the thing to do, where young couples seriously consider and think about adopting, not just theoretically or not saying, oh, we'd like to do that someday maybe, but to actually sit down and count the cost and, by God's grace, go forward.

I want that for a very important reason, and it's because physical adoption is a beautiful picture of spiritual adoption.

It paints in living colors the beautiful reality of what God has done for us. It's a beautiful picture of the gospel. And if that reality would sink in here, it would say great things about our God.

It would say wonderful things about Him. Because if we are an adopting people, that means that God's adopting us has changed everything about the way we live and the way we think.

[1:27] We'll live differently. We'll think differently about race and about money and about time and about life and about death. Adoption says that because our Father has adopted us, we will do the same thing for others.

And so, fundamentally, adoption is not about helping orphans. It's not about rescuing little orphan babies in Ethiopia.

It's not about helping infertile couples have children. It is all those things. But fundamentally, adoption is for the glory of God. And it's about shining God's character into the world because He's adopted us and we reflect His glory.

So, spiritual adoption, physical adoption go hand in hand. But today we're going to talk about the glorious reality of our spiritual adoption. J.I. Packer says this, Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption.

Let me read that to you again. Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption. So, if that is true, there is a ceiling on all of our understanding of Christianity.

[2:50] There is a ceiling on our experience of the glories of Christianity. And it's how well we understand adoption. Our adoption.

And that really is remarkable. I mean, we measure how Christian we are by a lot of things. A lot of wrong things.

I mean, people measure how Christian they are by how much they obey and how much they know. And J.I. Packer is saying, you know what?

You could have James memorized. You can read in Greek and Hebrew. But if you don't have a heartfelt, emotional, spiritual understanding of adoption, then your understanding of Christianity is still infantile.

You're still a baby. So let me ask you, how big of a deal is it for you that God has adopted you into His family? Does that excite you?

[3:57] Or does that sort of just bounce off of you? Does that change the way you live? Or is that just sort of, you know, the common Christian lingo that we talk about? We say, brother, sister, you know, He's adopted us.

You're our father. Things like that. But they don't mean anything anymore. So take your spiritual temperature with this thermometer. How excited are you that you are a son or daughter of God? Now, this lesson has three points. And the first point is this. That adoption is the highest privilege of the Gospel. Adoption is the highest privilege of the Gospel.

And that might cause some of you to raise your eyebrows and all of a sudden you're starting to go through a catalog of all the blessings of the Gospel. And you're saying, really?

What about justification? That's often what we say is the highest privilege of the Gospel. Martin Luther said, justification is the doctrine on which the church stands or falls.

[5:04] If you don't understand justification, then you don't have the Gospel. And men in the past have died to prove, to say, that justification is the truth.

That justification by faith alone is the truth. So shouldn't we say that justification is the highest privilege of the Gospel? Well, Packer says, let's be careful.

Let's think about this for a minute. Justification is the doctrine that the church stands or falls. It makes all the difference in the world. If you don't have justification by faith alone, like I said, you don't have the Gospel.

That we have been justified is an amazing truth. But Packer says, adoption is still higher. It's even higher.

Justification is the first privilege. It's the first blessing. It's the fundamental one. It's the necessary prerequisite for enjoying all of the other blessings. And so, you understand that.

[6:09] We've talked about God's justice the last few weeks. And we know our sinfulness. And that presents us with a major problem.

We desperately need God to forgive us. Or His justice will fall upon us. And so, we need to be right with God.

And that's what God does in justification. He declares us right. He says, you are righteous. Your sins are gone. I look on your record and I removed all the blemishes.

There's not even a hint of failure on your record. And so, the relationship is restored. Justification bridges the chasm between sinful man and our holy judge.

So, it brings those two together. It brings us together. It is the first blessing of the Gospel. And what Packer says, and I think, and I'm hoping to get you to see and understand, is that adoption is still higher.

[7:14] It's still more amazing. Well, how can I say that? For this reason, justification doesn't imply, it doesn't carry with it the same intimacy that adoption does.

It doesn't carry with it the idea of a deep relationship between God and us. But adoption does. See, justification takes place in the courtroom.

So, put yourself in the courtroom. You're the juvenile delinquent. And, for whatever reason, the judge says to you, you're not guilty.

You're justified. Now, the judge can say that. But that doesn't imply any intimate relationship between the judge and you.

Justification is a forensic idea. That means it's a legal idea. It's about law, where God is the judge and he acts.

[8:19] But, brothers and sisters, adoption is different. It's more intimate. It's more glorious. Because, adoption is a family idea.

Adoption isn't about law. It's about love. And, it isn't where God is the judge, God is the father instead. So, in justification, God says, you're right.

Not guilty. And, in adoption, he says, my son. My daughter. I'm your father. So, it's one thing for the judge to declare the juvenile delinquent not guilty.

But, it's totally on a different level for him to come down off of the bench and say, now you're my son. And, you're going to go home with me.

And, you're going to have a bedroom in my house. And, you're going to eat breakfast with me. And, I'm going to love you. And, I'm going to go to your basketball games. And, I'm going to help you with your homework. And, I'm going to live with you.

[9:26] And, now everything that I have is yours. You're my heir. You're my son. You aren't a stranger anymore. You're my son. And, so, in adoption, there is an intimacy that justification just doesn't get to.

That's not to denigrate justification. That is to lift up adoption. So, turn in your Bibles to Galatians chapter 4. We're still talking about the intimacy that adoption gives us.

Galatians chapter 4. And, we'll read a few verses here. Beginning in verse 4. Galatians 4.4 But, 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, literally this is, the adoption as sons, the full rights of sons.

Because, you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts. The Spirit who calls out, Abba, Father. So, you are no longer a slave, but a son.

And, since you are a son, God has made you also an heir. We're talking about the intimacy that we enjoy because of adoption. So, did you catch that?

[11:03] Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, Abba, Father.

When God adopts you, He puts a new spirit in you. And it is the Spirit of His Son that says, Abba, Father.

Now, that word, Abba, is a word of intimacy. It doesn't mean, Daddy, like so many people have said. That's sort of like, this urban legend that gets passed around, and people believe it in evangelical circles.

Abba means Father. But that does not imply that there's any lack of intimacy in the word. It's still an intimate word, and let me tell you why.

Abba is an Aramaic word. And you know that the New Testament was written in Greek, primarily. But three times in the New Testament, this Aramaic word comes out.

[12:09] It pops out. It breaks through. Now, think about this for a second. The Galatians didn't speak Aramaic. So why does Paul use a word in Aramaic when they don't understand that language, when the Galatians don't speak Aramaic?

And the answer is, because this is how Jesus talked. This is what Jesus said. In Mark 14.36, in the Garden of Gethsemane, we have this example of Jesus praying, and He says, Abba, Father. And the disciples had never heard anyone pray like that before. And it absolutely floored them. And when they took the gospel into the other parts of the world, into Galatia, into the Gentiles, the disciples, the apostles, taught the people about the intimacy that Jesus had with God and how He prayed.

And so wherever they went, they couldn't get over this word, Abba, and so they taught that word to the disciples. And the amazing thing is, is that the disciples felt like they could pray like that. They felt like they could pray like Jesus prayed. And so the spirit of adoption rose up in them and inspired them, encouraged them to cry out, Abba, Father.

[13:41] To pray like Jesus prayed. And so in adoption, God makes us as sons and daughters, and then He encourages us to think that way, to feel that way, to pray that way.

He teaches us to pray and to feel like Jesus. And that's why adoption is higher than justification. In adoption, God treats us like Jesus. not in every sense, of course, but He puts a spirit in us, a spirit in us, that beats with the same love and affection and dependence that Jesus enjoyed. And so we begin to think and we begin to feel like how Jesus felt and how He thought about the Father. And so, in adoption, we become sons and daughters in the household of God. we become family members. So adoption is the highest blessing of the Gospel. And secondly, adoption is the basis of your life.

[14:52] It's the basis of your life. Adoption changes everything about how you live. And that's the clear testimony of the New Testament all throughout. It's basically saying because you are a child of God, it's going to change and affect everything in every way that you live.

It's a life-transforming reality. So nothing stays the same. Now, when the son that we are adopting, when he grows up, Lord willing, he's going to be a web.

And that is going to change everything about how he lives and how he would have lived. So who he is and what he does and what he likes and what he thinks and how he feels is all going to be shaped by the fact that he's now a web.

And so for better or for worse, we're going to expect him to act like us. And he's going to do the things that we do. He's going to hopefully feel the things that we feel and think the things that we think are important.

He'll think those things are important. And so he's going to love singing silly songs and going hiking and going to church and we're going to expect him to act like a web at the church and he'll eat what we eat.

[16:09] He'll do Christmas the way that we do Christmas and he's going to look different, but he's going to be a web. His family identity is going to shape everything about his life.

And that's what God does. That's what happens when God adopts us. It shapes everything about our lives. There's no aspect of our life that goes untouched because we're adopted.

So turn to the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew chapter 5. A lot of times people talk about the Sermon on the Mount and they say, you know, this is how Jesus is governing his kingdom. And that's true. But throughout this whole, the whole Sermon on the Mount, there is this strand of adoption that's weaving itself in and out.

And adoption, Jesus says, changes the way you live, the way you think, the way you conduct yourself. So look at Matthew chapter 5, verse 43. You see that there?

[17:14] Matthew 5, 43. You have heard that it was said, love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.

He causes his Son to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Now go down to verse 48. Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Now let me ask you, just for you to respond, why should we love our enemies? to be like our Father, exactly.

Jesus says, the fact that God is our Father should change the way we think about our enemies, should change the way that we conduct ourselves. We can't act the old way anymore.

We can't act that way anymore. We have to act like family. And so not only do we imitate our Father, we should seek to glorify our Father.

[18:23] Look at Matthew 5, 16. In the same way, let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

So, with a natural family, it's right and it's good for the children to want to make their Father look good, to behave in such a way that it reflects well on Him.

And Jesus is saying the same motivation should be moving in God's family. We should be wanting to make our Father look good.

We should behave in such a way that people think highly of Him. And so, Jesus motivates us, He motivates you to act in a certain way for family reasons.

reasons. Because you're a family and families act a certain way. Well, adoption shapes our conduct and it also shapes our prayer life.

[19:26] We've already talked about how the Spirit of God's Son teaches us to say, Abba, Father. And so, God Himself is teaching us how to pray like Jesus.

And, then, Jesus backs that up and He teaches us how to pray too. Remember on the Sermon on the Mount, He says, but when you pray, you should pray like this.

And what is the first line? Our Father in Heaven. Jesus is teaching us to pray to our Father, to talk to our Father.

Father. So, prayer, it's a family thing. It's talking to our Father. And, that means a couple of things. It means that we can't treat prayer like an impersonal or magical thing, like where we just, where God's this great candy dispenser in the sky and if we just say the right words, He'll give us what we want.

That's why Jesus said, don't go babbling on like the pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

[20:35] So, prayer isn't an automatic thing. It's a family thing. It's asking our Father for what we need. And, adoption also means that in our prayer life, we can be bold and we can be confident and we can be persistent in our prayer.

So, here's a throne room. You can just imagine this room as a throne room and the king is up here on his throne and so there he's sitting and at his feet lying on his face is a servant begging for mercy.

And then, maybe further away from the throne, standing up, there's some nobles and they're chatting quietly. They don't want to offend the king, but, you know, there's a little more freedom there.

And then, maybe, and then milling around the room are just various servants and they're, they're quiet because they don't want to disturb the king while he's at work. and then, into the back of the room, through the doors, comes a little boy and he has a milk mustache and his hands are dirty and he walks right past the servants and he walks right past the nobles chatting quietly to themselves, with themselves, with each other and he walks right past the man on his face and he goes and he sits down on the king's lap and he pulls the king's ear down and he tells them, you know what, I

want a rocket for my birthday.

Let me ask you, who is that boy? What? Yeah. I guess you never ask for things either, huh?

[22:31] Who is it? It's his son. And we can be bold with God because we're family. Now, children aren't afraid to ask for anything, are they?

And they're not afraid to be persistent. This week, Phoebe got out of bed when we already put her in bed and she came into our room and I was reading and she said, Daddy, I'm really, really, really, really, really, really, really, really, and I'll abbreviate it, she went on for a while and says, I'm really, really, really scared and I want my kiki.

That's her blanket. And I talked to her about trusting God and I told her that Mommy and Daddy love her and then I told her no. And then she said, Daddy, I'm really scared and I want my kiki.

And I talked to her some more and I said no. And she came back and she's asking again, I really want my kiki.

And on and on it went until finally she wouldn't take no for an answer and I had to spank her. And I'm not telling you the story because I want criticized on my parenting.

[23:54] I'm telling you the story because we need that kind of childlike faith and persistence. persistence. Phoebe knows that she can ask Daddy and Mommy for anything.

And she knows that we love her and that she can get up in the middle of the night and come talk to us about the things that she wants. And she isn't afraid to be persistent.

We need that kind of faith. Jesus says, if though you are evil, so there I am, I'm evil. If I am evil and I know how to give good gifts to my children, then how much more will your Father in Heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him?

So God is a good Father and He loves to give good gifts to His children and He loves to treat us like His Son. And so we can pray boldly and we can pray persistently and our adoption shapes our prayer life.

It encourages our prayer life. Well, adoption, it shapes our faith and that's the third thing.

[25:11] Where does your security come from? Does it come from your checking account, your savings account, your emergency fund?

Does it come from the fact that you have a decent job and so you feel secure because of those things? Does it come from certain people? As long as I can stay on His good side, then I'll be okay. So where does your faith rest? Jesus tells us to trust in the fact that we have been adopted, that God's our Father.

Look at Matthew 6.25. We're in the Sermon on the Mount still. Matthew 6.25. Matthew 6.25.

Therefore, Jesus says, therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink or about your body, what you will wear.

Is not life more important than food and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air. They do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your Heavenly Father feeds them.

[26:22] Are you not much more valuable than they? A lot of you keep bird feeders in your yard and you spend money each week buying bird seed and feeding them.

Can you imagine one of your children being afraid that you wouldn't feed them and clothe them when every day you spend money feeding birds?

It's really hard to imagine that a child would feel that way. But that's how we treat God a lot. And so, if you have a nine-year-old daughter and she's worried about whether you're going to feed her and clothe her and take care of her, wouldn't you take her out to the bird feeder and say, now look at this, honey.

I spend money on these birds every day and I give them food. Look at them. They don't work for their food. They don't store it up.

They're silly little birds that are here today and gone tomorrow and I feed them. And I'm not their father. I'm your father. So won't I feed you?

[27:35] Many times when orphans are brought out of an orphanage where food might have been hard to come by, they are known to hide food in their pockets and around the house because they feel so insecure.

They don't know, they don't trust their mom and dad. And it takes a lot of love, a lot of patience for them to realize that mom and dad are going to feed them. That things are different now.

They're not the way they used to be. So brothers and sisters, are you still living like you're in an orphanage? Storing up money, storing up treasure, hoarding things just in case something bad

happens, just in case your father doesn't feed you.

And adoption says, you know what, things are different now. They're different now. My father is going to take care of all my needs. If I need something, he will give it to me. If I need something, he will give it to me.

And that assurance strengthens and it shapes our faith. It gives you courage to venture out. It gives you courage to give away your things.

[28 : 52] Because you know what, you don't need them. Your father is going to supply you with everything that you need, so don't worry. That's where adoption encourages us to step out and live by faith.

Because I have a father who loves me. And so that's our second main point. That adoption shapes our whole life.

It shapes our prayer life. It shapes our conduct. It shapes our faith. And now here's the third point of the lesson. And I'm going to ask the question, what does our adoption show us?

What does our adoption show us? Well, our adoption shows us God's love. God's love. When Steph and I started the process of adopting, we had to choose the kind of child that we wanted to adopt.

And so we chose the infant male and relatively good health. And so before the agency refers our child to us, they're going to do all kinds of tests on the child to make sure that they're free of major diseases.

[30 : 02] that doesn't mean they're completely healthy, it just means they're going to be free of major diseases that he's going to be in relatively good shape. And so now when we go and we pick him up and they bring him out to us out of the orphanage, he's going to be a cute little baby boy.

And really as innocent as a person can be. And we will love him. We will have worked really hard to get him. We'll have given up a lot of time and money and energy in order to get him.

And we will love him. And all of our sacrifice will show that we love him. And so all the grief and all the money that we have spent on this child will show that we love him.

That's our adoption story. Now God's adoption story is much different. When God starts the adoption process, he looks and he doesn't see any healthy, innocent, little orphan babies.

He has nothing to pick from except for spiritually dead and decaying sinners as guilty as can be.

And so he doesn't go to an orphanage to pick up his children.

[31 : 19] It's like he goes to Westville prison. And he walks down death row. And that's where he picks his children out of. He picks out of the criminals those who are going to be his sons and daughters.

And that's God's adoption story. So we're in a terrible situation. We're on death row. And we're in a terrible condition.

We're not healthy. We're dying. We're dead. And then God chooses to adopt us. And that shows us his love love.

So can you imagine going to death row and picking out one of those inmates to be your son and saying, I'm going to bring you into my family.

That's what God does. So God's love is totally different. It's on a totally different level than our love.

[32 : 20] Well, how do we know that he loves us? Well, look at what he sacrificed for us. Steph and I are going to give up money. We're going to give up time and energy.

And the red tape is a hassle. It's hard sometimes. I don't say that to brag. I'm just saying it's hard. But God gave up his own son to adopt us.

We have to give up a lot of money and time and energy to get through the legal red tape to adopt a child. But God, in order to get through the legal red tape of our adoption, he has to dye that red tape in the blood of his son.

And so it's easy to get discouraged with all the setbacks that you face in adoption. But our difficulties and the human difficulty of adoption is nothing compared to what God overcame in adopting us and God's sacrifice.

And so do you get the full picture? God's going to prison. He's going to the death row and that's where he's picking out his children. And then in order to secure their legal status as his sons and daughters, he has to give up his one and only son.

[33 : 33] And to watch his one and only son, the only perfect one, be slaughtered for them. And then when that is done, he brings us into his family and then he treats us like Jesus.

And that is remarkable. That's love. That's why John says, how great is the love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called the children of God and that is what we are.

So in adoption, God lavishes love on us. He pours it out without thinking of the cost, without counting it up, without reckoning it.

And so God is prodigal. He's reckless. He's without counting when He loves the prodigal sons and daughters. So adoption shows us how great God loves us, loves His people.

Adoption also shows us, and this is the final point, adoption shows us the greatness of our hope.

And we already read Galatians 4-7.

[34 : 41] Let me read it to you again. So you are no longer a slave, but a son. And since you are a son, God has made you also an heir. So what's our hope?

Our hope is that we are heirs of God. Now, who is an heir? What is an heir? An heir is someone who receives the Father's things. And so we are heirs of God.

We're going to receive the Father's things. Now, you're a second-rate citizen, right? You're a second-rate child, and Jesus is first, and you'll get the leftovers.

Is that what the Bible says? The remarkable thing is, it says that we are co-heirs with Christ.

Romans 8, the Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

Now, if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ. So, that is your status. That is what you are looking forward to.

[35 : 48] So, what's your hope, brothers and sisters? Your hope is that you're going to receive everything. Everything. Because God owns everything, and if you're an heir, you will receive everything.

And that's how Paul put it to the Corinthians. Remember, in Corinth, they were fighting over whose they were. I'm of Paul, I'm of Apollos, and I'm of Cephas. And Paul says, you're fighting over scraps. You're like dogs under the table, fighting over the bones. And he says, stop it. So then, no more boasting about men. All things are yours.

Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or the present, or the future, all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.

So, why fight over the scraps? When you own everything, you own the apostles. And I'm talking to you, and I'm talking to me.

[36 : 48] You own the apostles. You own Paul, and Peter, and Cephas, and you own the world. You own everything, the sun, and the moon, and a million planets, and a million galaxies, everything God has created.

And perhaps you haven't come into your full inheritance, and that's true. These things are yours only in name, but they're yours nonetheless.

And until you receive all of those things, you know what? Everything must work for your good.

Everything. So, we're like children of a wealthy tycoon who has committed himself to building a huge inheritance for his children.

And so, he is sure, he makes sure that every business deal that he is a part of works out for the good of his children. If the children aren't going to prosper with this business deal, he doesn't do it. He doesn't let it happen. And so, in all the business that God takes part in, everything must work for our good, for your good.

[37 : 53] And so, what does it mean to be an heir? It means that you own everything, and it also means that everything must work out for your good. And that's your hope. It's your hope in life, it's your hope in death, it's your hope for eternity.

Now, adoption also shows us what heaven is going to be like. It's going to be a family gathering. The sons and daughters of God are going to be there, all of them.

And the wedding feast of the Lamb will be a family dinner. And we'll get to see our elder brother face to face. Remember, Jesus asked for it.

Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am and to see my glory. Father, I want them to be with me. I want my brothers and sisters here with me.

You know who else prays like that? Eowyn. She prays and asks for her baby brother to be with her. She wants him with her.

[39 : 00] And that's how Jesus prays for us. He wants his brothers and sisters. He wants you. And Paul says that on that day, when that prayer is finally answered, then our adoption will be complete.

The process will be over. And not until then. Until that final day, Paul says, we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit grown inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Only on that day will the adoption be complete. Now, when couples come home to the United States from adopting in a foreign country, they bring their new child with them, and many times the family and friends meet them at the airport.

And so, the parents holding their child walk down the airport ramp, they walk through the doors, they walk down the hallway with their children in their arms until they pass one last set of doors, and then they come out, and then there's this great cheer, and everyone's celebrating, and everyone starts to cry, and everyone starts to cheer, and grandmas and grandpas hold the baby, and aunts and uncles are taking pictures and holding the baby and hugging mom and dad, and all their friends are there, they're celebrating, and it's not until the baby is home is the adoption complete, it's not until all the family is together again, the adoption is over then, and so brothers and sisters, that's what heaven is, it's coming home, it's the final homecoming, and it's all of God's family together celebrating and loving one another, heaven is a family thing, that's all the time we have, we're dismissed.