

# Being Adopted into the Family

*God's Plan of Redemption*

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**Bible Text:** Ephesians 1:1-6

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## **Faith Church**

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Well, many of us would say this morning that one of the most important blessings in our lives is our family. But even for the many single men and women who are part of our congregation—and such an important part—they would reflect back on their parents or their brothers and sisters or their extended family, maybe even our church family, but thinking of them as persons who are profoundly important to them doesn't mean that everybody in each of our families is perfect or that the memories are always sweet or that the story always turns out well, but there is something very unique, something very special about the various bonds and relationships that make up a family. I think we would all say that this morning.

Well, in some of our cases the way the group was assembled was a bit unconventional. For example, in our family each one of our three children has a different biological father and a different biological mother. Please wrap your mind around that idea for a moment. That is because after Chris and I had our first daughter Bethany the regular way, so to speak, we were unable to have additional children. And Chris and I were completely ok with that. We are not the kind of people who find our joy only when things turn out the way we want it or the way we had anticipated them to be. So we were just trying to joyfully serve Christ in our responsibilities here with the one child that God had given us.

Of course, it was challenging to hear Bethany ask the Lord for a little sister in her prayers night after night after night. How do you explain infertility to a five year old? Or, in hindsight, how do you explain the lack of faith to the parents of a five year old, depending on how you want to look at that part of the story.

Well, it all changed when we received a phone call in the middle of the night that a baby had been born at Home Hospital and the birth mother and the birth father didn't believe they were best suited to raise their daughter at that point in their lives and they believed that the most loving thing for them to do in that situation was to place their daughter for adoption. And we were being asked if we would like to begin the process of adopting this little baby girl.

It is really hard to put into words what that privilege and opportunity was like for our family. As I said, the call came in the middle of the night and it was absolutely impossible for us to go back to sleep.

Well, we named our daughter Charis, which is the Greek word for grace. And she has brought unbelievable joy into our family's lives.

Well, that was 22 and a half years ago now and she is all grown up. The Lord has even given her a godly husband. And then while it is a bit off the subject, I will tell you, speaking for Chris and me, having two daughters, how thankful we are when families raise their sons for God. And I am so thankful this morning for both of our godly sons in law.

We have also had the privilege of being reunited with Charis' birth father and mother. They attended her high school graduation. They attended her wedding. Some of you who participated in those events had the opportunity to meet them. They have now been a regular part of Charis and Austin's married life.

Lord willing in just a couple of weeks, Charis is going to be graduating from Perdue with a degree in chemical engineering and all of us who have been involved in this story would say adoption is a really beautiful thing. I mean that is it. Adoption is a really, really beautiful thing.

Well, as if that is not enough, a few years later the Lord gave us another bundle of joy. And so we have the opportunity and privilege of adopting our son Andrew. Andrew is our special needs son. He is blind and he has a number of other developmental challenges, but we don't really think of him that way. We think of him as a wonderful addition to our family.

Now if you really want to get on Drew's good side, call him by his nickname, bear. He absolutely loves bears. He loves all things bear. He loves receiving a stuffed bear of any size as a gift and he likes to be called bear. So if you want to get on his good side, just call him bear. He also doesn't let his disabilities get in the way of having a good time. Here he is water skiing at a great program here in our town called Camp {?}. Here is one of him with Perdue Pete at the Perdue dream season camp which is another great program here in our community. Here is one of him playing on his softball team, the {?} Stars. And if you want to come out and cheer for his team this summer, we would be happy to get you the schedule. It is a great, great program. We just love what they do there. Here is one of him hanging out with the Purdue girls' basketball team. Doesn't everybody do that? And that was right before he started {?} and the girls gathered around in a circle and started dancing with him. I won't show you that video right here in the church house, but good old Bear. Here is one of him with his buddy Caleb Dutton. Here is one with Rod Henry from Perdue. You all have a picture like that, don't you? One of he quarterbacks at Perdue. Also with Ryan Carrigan from Perdue and also now with Washington Redskins.

As you can tell, Drew gets around. Now when you get close to Drew you want to start sniffing him, ok? He believes that that is the way bears communicate. So if you just get close to him and start sniffing him and he will start laughing and he will sniff you back and all will be good. If you really want to be his friend, ask him to teach you a few

words of {?}. That is a language he has made up. It is a long story. I can't get into that, but he will teach you a few words of {?} and then you can address him with those words when you see him again. You will be his friend for life.

Well, one of the most important things about Drew is joy. And I think he gets that from my wife Chris and the way she has joyfully cared for him for over 20 years now. Rarely does a day go by when he does not have us in stitches about something. In fact, it is frequent when I walk in the door of our home for he and Chris to be laughing just hilariously about something.

Well, here is the point. Sure our family was assembled in a rather unconventional fashion. And I understand that. But we just cannot imagine our lives without Charis. We can't imagine our lives without Andrew. And while we are just showing family pictures here, he is not adopted, but I thought you might want to see one of my grandson sporting that hat on Easter Sunday. Is he not like the most handsome grandson on the face of the planet? And I realize you might want to argue about that and show some pictures. I have the mic. I have the clicker. That is just the way it is. Sorry. Pastoral privilege, I guess.

But each one of us involved in this story, that is the point, would say adoption is a really good thing. Well, why am I raising this topic this morning? It is because one of the key words that God uses to describe his relationship with his children is the word adoption. We would like to study some of what that means this morning.

With that in mind, open your Bible, please, to Ephesians chapter one. That is on page 150 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you this morning. As you know, if you attend our church faithfully here, that our theme this year is planning to grow. And we are trying to emphasize that in three key ways this year. One is to continue to discuss, refine and implement our discipleship process. How are we helping and encouraging and even holding accountable every person around here for spiritual growth, planning to grow. And some very good things have already taken place in this first quarter. We are really excited about what we are continuing to plan to roll out on that particular aspect of this theme as the year unfolds. And then, secondly, to organize and launch our new cluster of ministries at Faith West.

Do you realize we are about 12 weeks away from being about to start moving our furnishings and equipment into Faith West? And about 16 weeks away from launching an entire new cluster of ministries over there. We are pretty fired up about that. That is part of what we mean by planning to grow. And then, thirdly, to work together as a church family to develop our next five year strategic ministry plan. And pastor Dustin mentioned a bit of that a moment ago. You can be involved in that right now. And we want to help you. We want to ask you to help us. This is not a top down plan. It is nothing like that, because that would not be biblical. We believe in the church family, the body working together to discern the will of God. And so one of the ways you do that right now is by completing that online survey. I appreciate those who have already done that. God bless you.

I am also thankful for a church family that does not believe in peeking too early. And so you have got one more week. You got that? So what are you going to do this week? You are going to turn off the TV. You are going to stop messing around and you are going to take your survey. That is what God wants you to do. You got that? Message from heaven. There it is. Are you going to do it? Thank you very much for just making a commitment right now. I am going to get that done, because we want this for the body, right? I mean, you don't want me coming up with this on my own. Who wants that? Well, then, we have to do our part, all of us do.

We are also... Dustin mentioned this, having a series of vision jams in the church gym today. You can walk through there and just be part of that. If you are in adult Bible fellowship you will go down and be part of that today. We are also going to have another one tonight. And we are also working very diligently on our long term strategic facility and site plans both for this property and 90 acres contiguous to this property, the 100 acres God has given us out of Bethany Farms. So a lot has already taken place in this first quarter. So when we said we were planning to grow, we were serious about that, all right? We didn't believe in just talking about something and not doing it. We have accomplished a lot as a church family and we are glad for that.

Well, we are also dove tailing our preaching series to go along with this same theme in a variety of ways. So two weeks ago we launched a brand new series on God's plan for redemption. And you say, "Well, I am not sure I like the plan." Well, here is some news. God plans a lot every day. And we are called to be like him. We are called to live out what it means to be made in his image. And one aspect of God's plan is his plan of redemption, the doctrine of soteriology, formerly known. What Scripture tells us about how God planned to design the process of drawing men and women to himself.

Two weeks ago on Palm Sunday we talked about the crucial issue of grace. And then last week on Easter we talked about the place of faith. This morning we want to think about how God also planned this to include our adoption. We are talking about being adopted into the family of God.

Ephesians one beginning at verse one.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 1:1-6.

That is as far as we are going to get this morning. We are talking about being adopted into the family of God. And I would like us to divide our remaining time into these ideas. First of all, the blessing of our adoption. If you know Christ as Savior and Lord, I hope you leave here today being more in love with God, just as a result of thinking about what God's Word says about how you have been adopted. And then, secondly, the history of our adoption. We saw in this text how long has God been planning this. How long has God been planning your, not our, your adoption? And then, thirdly, what are the results? What happens in us and to us and for us because we have been adopted?

So the blessings and the history and the results of our adoption. First of all, it is blessing. When it comes to the issue of understanding of our salvation, if that is what we are talking about in this 12 week period of time, we have to get to Ephesians one. A very important place to go, because the apostle Paul had a very close relationship with this particular church at Ephesus. In fact, the book of Acts tells us that during Paul's third missionary journey Paul actually spend three years of his ministry pastoring this particular group of men and women. He would later recount that period of time in Acts chapter 20 as he was leaving saying:

“Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.”<sup>2</sup>

There it is, fully invested in their lives. This wasn't anything casual. It wasn't a lackadaisical relationship. He for a period of three years did not cease to admonish each one of them with tears.

Later, then, he left young Timothy to serve as the pastor of this Ephesian church or maybe a cluster of churches. We don't know for sure. But as we read the epistles of 1 and 2 Timothy, we learn that some false teachers had infiltrated the church. Can you imagine that? And they were trying to teach a new kind of religion focused on man made rules and man made duty. That was what Paul was alluding to in 1 Timothy when he spoke of men who forbid marriage. Can you imagine anyone doing that? Or advocating abstaining from food. What? Which God has created to be gratefully shared in. Have another piece of pie, for crying out loud. What are these false teachers all up about that? Greatly share and by those who believe and known the truth.

Now, thirdly, by the time that Paul was writing this book of Ephesians he is in prison for his faith in Christ. That is why we refer to the book of Ephesians as one of the prison epistles.

Now I gave you these three things pretty quickly. Put that package together in your mind. He is writing to people he loves. And he also knows they are being negatively impacted by false teachers and now he is in prison. So he has time on his hands to focus on the four issues of what our salvation really means.

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<sup>2</sup> Acts 20:31.

So writing words that are inspired of God he gives a discussion that helps us understand what a relationship with the Lord is really all about. And you probably notice his emphasis on the foundation of the fatherhood of God. You see that in verse two.

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

And then again in the next verse.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”<sup>4</sup>

Here is what that means. We are not talking about some sort of capricious God who has to be appeased by our works whether we meet somebody’s arbitrary law about whether we should be married or not or whether we meet somebody’s arbitrary law about the kind of food we eat. Friends, we are talking about the possibility of having God as our Father, which, of course, is surprising for anybody who has a biblical view of God, namely that he is holy and who has a biblical view of man, namely that we are sinful and a biblical view of where that leaves us, namely that our sin has separated us from our God.

In other words, we all then start as what? As spiritual orphans. {?} and we all start as spiritual orphans. That is why Paul begins chapter two with this haunting analysis that were dead in your trespasses and sins, which is similar, by the way, to what he said in one of the other prison epistles, the book of Colossians. And although you were formerly alienated and hostile and mind, engaged in evil deeds, so, in case you didn’t like a moment ago for me to say to you, even if I don’t know your name, that you started as a spiritual orphan, well, how do you feel about the word alien? Paul says it is possible to get from that an orphan, dead, alienated, to become in a position where he is your Father?

It is no wonder, then, that the focus is on the blessings we enjoy in him. Blessed be God, absolutely. Blessed be the God who can make that happen, huh? I mean, you can just imagine the apostle Paul sitting in prison thinking about the men and women whom he knew in Ephesus who had repented of their wicked and idolatrous lives in that evil place who were now children of God purely because of his great blessings who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

These first three chapters of the book are about the gospel indicatives. And if we are doing a 12 week series on understanding God’s plan of redemption, it is important that you know that term, the gospel indicatives. In other words, our identity in Christ, our stand in Christ, who we are in Christ. The first three chapters of Ephesians are all about that, identity. Then and only then do we have the last three chapters, Ephesians four to six which talks about the gospel imperatives, the commands, what we are supposed to do as a result of who we are. What that means, if you just think that through logically, our relationship with God is not based on duties. It is not based on works. It is not based on

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<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 1:2.

<sup>4</sup> Ephesians 1:3.

activity. It is based on identity. It is based on who we are in Christ. Some days my children behave really well. A few days not so much. But they were always my children. Not because of what they did, but because of who they are.

See, God our Father, our Father, our Father has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. Well, how did that happen? How did you go from being an orphan to having God as your Father if you have? How did you go from being dead? How did you go from being alienated to having God as your Father?

Well, here is what had to happen. You had to be adopted. Do you realize that? You had to be... so Charis and Andrew are not the only adopted people. And notice what the text says. That happened in love. Our family can't even put into the words the love that we had and have for Charis when we brought her home. We can't put into words the love we had and have for Andrew. And to think of that being true of the way God chooses to relate to every person in this room in love. If you have admitted your need, if you have placed your trust in Christ, the text says he has predestined us to adoption as sons.

Now you might notice, by the way, this morning, that I am glossing over words like predestined and elected. You might say, "Oh, I think he is probably afraid to talk about that." Not exactly. We are devoting all of next Sunday to talk about that doctrine. I want to be sure we have plenty of time to be sure that you come to a full and complete appreciation of that aspect of the salvation story. So next Sunday is coming, my dear friends. Get a good night's sleep. Eat a good breakfast. Get happy about learning something from the Word of God that might be different than what you would have naturally thought on your own. I love you. But I don't want a god like you. I want one who is smarter than you. Is it ok for me to tell you that? And, by the way, you might say, "Well, same to you." Well, all right. I think we all understand one's position in the church house, don't we? Absolutely. But today we are talking about this incredible concept of adoption, which means if you have trusted Christ as Savior and Lord this morning, you are a servant of God, but not only a servant. You are a citizen of heaven, but not only a citizen. You are a friend of God, but not only a friend. Fundamentally, you have been adopted into the family of God as one of his own children, he has chosen to be your heavenly Father.

Now Paul is also very clear about the means. It is very important to look at each one of these prepositions. You have to chew on each one of these words very carefully. He predestined us to adoption as sons through—notice through—through Jesus Christ to himself. That is where the false teachers were wrong, because this kind of relationship isn't possible by simply keeping rules or serving rituals. There had to be a death. There had to be a burial. There had to be a resurrection of a perfect lamb in order for people like you and me to ever be brought into the family of a holy Father through Christ Jesus, which is why the purpose is to the praise of the glory of his grace.

See, why is it that people in this church family get along so well? It is because we are not strutting around like we are all that and a bag of chips. We knew who we were. We

know who we are. We know who we are likely to be and it is not about our protection. We are orphans. On our best day we are orphans. And if we do anything that would be honoring to God it is only because of the power and blessing of our heavenly Father. It is not about us. It is about him.

I hope Charis and Drew would say that God was gracious to them by providing them a family. When their birth parents were not able to care for them and though we failed in a thousand ways I am sure, we have tried our best to provide for them and to raise them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. So I hope they would look at their situation and see grace. But in a far richer way, God has adopted us into his family because an essential aspect of his nature is mercy. An essential aspect of it is grace which he has freely bestowed on us. So how could we not, as adopted children, do anything other than give him the praise of the glory of his grace.

I would ask every person here. Are you sure there has been a definite time in your life when you trusted Christ as Savior and Lord? Where you have received his gift of love and grace. There has to be a transaction just like with Andrew. I know the day when the adoption was finalized. Just like with Charis. We know the day. We can remember all the events, all the people. We have pictures. There has to be a day of your adoption. God has made it possible, but you have to acknowledge your need. And on that day you are not coming with all of your righteousness in your hands all filled up and trying to prove your worth. Forget all that. Cast all that aside and acknowledge your sinful condition and your need for grace, you need for a Savior.

You say, "Well, I think I earned my way in to becoming one of your sons."

No, I acknowledge my need. I acknowledge my sin. I acknowledge my rebellion. I acknowledge the way I have ignored you. And I want to place my faith and trust in Christ as Savior and Lord. I want to be adopted. And if you have never made that decision before, I would encourage you to make it today.

And if you say, "Well, I am not sure I measure up." Well, of course, you don't. I mean, none of us do. We are orphans. Have I made that clear? We are all orphans on our best day. This isn't about what we bring to the table. It is about what the heavenly Father has brought to the table.

Now here, is what Paul especially wanted his readers to think about. It was the history of our adoption. Did you see the key phrases? Just as he chose us in him, when? Before the foundation of the world. He predestined us, verse five, to adoption as sons through Christ Jesus himself according to the kind intention of his plan, the kind intention of his will.

From our perspective, both Charis and Andrew's adoptions were completely unexpected. We always hesitate to tell that part of the story, because we know that some families wait months. Some families wait years. For some it never works out. In our case we didn't plan at all.



But for those of us who know Christ, how long according to Scripture has God been planning your individual adoption ceremony? You know, before the foundation of the world. See, think about individually now when you came to Christ. Think about the details. Think about who shared the gospel with you. Think about who lived the gospel before you. Think about how well it came together. You realize those seemingly random conversations and events were carefully planned by a God who did whatever was necessary to make it possible for you to be adopted? He planned for that day, friends. He planned really, really well before the foundation of the world.

By the way, you will hear a little bit more in a minute about an initiative on the part of our children's ministry serve 13. Why would we care about that? Here is why, because we think there is a number of children that God has placed all around us in this community who do not yet know Christ. And we want to be part of the adoption ceremony. See, there is a number of humans. I haven't told all the story, because not all of it is appropriate to be told. There is a number of human beings who are part of us being connected to Charis. There is another group of people who are part of us being connected to Andrew. They are an important part of the story. Well, think about this. If God is an adopting God and there is a number of children in this community who don't yet know the Lord, don't you want to be an instrument of redemption in the hands of the Lord? And pastor {?} does a great job, along with all of his team on children's ministries and we want him to. He wants and as he looks at church growth he looks at the additional opportunities to serve children in this community. It is not like he looks at the growth and says, "Well, therefore, we are going to have back off our commitment to excellence. We are just going to have to serve them with C- children's ministry because there is so many kids now." Would you tolerate a pastoral staff member who would think like that? We want it to be A+, do we not?

Ok, let me try that again. We want it to be A+ plus when it... see, because... some of you say, "Well, that might mean I would have to do something." Hello. Are you listening to what I am talking about this morning? Are we really valuing our adoption and are we valuing the potential adoption of other people in this community? And if I have the opportunity to be part of somebody else's adoption ceremony, the process of bringing them to Christ, please tell me you would want to be all over that. And please tell me that is a whole lot more important to you than whoever wins the game tomorrow night. If you are all wound up about the latest game more than you are about seeking the redemption of those that God has placed around us, that is exactly why we installed masonry built walls in this building, for you to find one and bang your hand on it until you get your thinking straight about what really matters, about do we understand... I am sorry. That was off my notes, but ... actually, I am not sorry, but it was off my notes. Do we understand the very doctrine that we are talking about this morning, that our God has, in fact, planned the adoption of people before the foundation of the world. And if we really believe that, we want to be part of that great process happening in someone else.

Now what are some of the results? It really is amazing how much the Bible says about what is involved in having the God of heaven and earth as our heavenly Father. And,

honestly, I can just scratch the surface on this this morning. There is so much. Here is some of it, though. If you have allowed God to adopt you, you can be promised his provision. Jesus explained it this way.

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”<sup>5</sup>

Think about that provision.

For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!<sup>6</sup>

That is why followers of Christ choose to place our trust in him even when times are hard. Why? Well, because we know he is our Father. We are not going to offend him by living with doubt, are we? We are not going to offend him by living with fear. We are not going to offend him by going through life with worry. Instead, the repetitive phrase that ought to go through our hearts is: My Father has that one covered, because, as you know, I am adopted into his family.

Also this. Freedom... This word adoption comes up at some very strategic places in the Word and one of them is in the book of Galatians. Now you have to lock on to the argument of this text. The Galatians is a book that was written to overcome the sin of Legalism in the Church. Now listen to this.

Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.<sup>7</sup>

There is great freedom that comes to us because we have been adopted into God's family.

Somebody last Sunday, a visitor, fused at me anonymously on their bulletin tab. I really don't like it. If people want to talk to me, talk to me face to face, ok, with your name. I

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew 7:7.

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 7:8-11.

<sup>7</sup> Galatians 4:1-7.

am really not interested in people just fussing at me anonymously. But what they were fussing about was, well, some people carry coffee into church and other people don't dress to meet their particular standards. Well, here is a response to that and you can put my name on it. Tweet it if you want. A person like that is not going to last very long around here. And here is why, because we are not into Legalism. We have the view that the Bible is just about thick enough already, thank you very much. And so if it is commanded in the Word, then we are on top of it, right? Because our Father gave us the book and we are all about obeying what the Father has clearly said. But if it is not outlined in the Word of God and somebody else wants to impose it upon us as some sort of a legalistic standard, that is why this building has doors. We are not interested in individuals being legalistic. Why? Because we have been adopted, thank you very much. We have been adopted into the family of God and we are not going to live like slaves to the law and we are not going to live like slaves to anybody's legalistic position because we have been set free from all of that goofiness.

Praise God. Get back to my notes.

Now another place this concept is especially emphasized is in Romans eight, the chapter that our worship team was reminding us about. And that teaches us that our adoption gives us hope. You say, "What kind of hope?" Well, hope that we can make significant changes to become more and more like our Savior. Listen to this quickly.

So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"<sup>8</sup>

I would just ask you. Has there been a time recently when you have cried out to your adopted Father and asked him for help as you struggle to grow?

Drew and I like to go biking together and, obviously, he has got the vision thing going on and so the way you do that, you get two recumbent tandems. So he is not afraid of the thing shaking around. It is very stable. Pop the front wheel off of his, hook it to the back of mine and now you have got a two man bike. And off we go, a recumbent tandem. And so we love being on that thing. But, as you can tell, the bear there is a lot of the bear now these days and that is why the more of the bear the better. That is what I think. And so... but he has got to pedal. He has got to do his part. It is an independent pedaling system. He has got to do his part. And I can tell right now when he stops pedaling. I mean, right now. And I am getting old. So we are pedaling along one day and I can feel him stop and I say while I am screaming from the front. I say, "Bear, you have got to pedal. Do your best. You have got to pedal. Your dad is getting old."

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<sup>8</sup> Romans 8:12-15.

You see, he screams back to me, “Dad, I don’t want to do my best. I just want to do my worst,” he says.

And then just a few seconds later he screams this out. “Oh, God, help this bear pedal.”

And, you know, I will tell you. There is a side of that that brought tears to my eyes, that here he is when he is struggling and he looks to God, his heavenly Father for help. And so we have been freed. We are not slaves to sin anymore. We have been freed. We can grow. We can have hope that we can grow and we ought to cry out to our Father for help. And you might say, “But my sin and my suffering keep accusing me that I am not a child of God.” If you genuinely trusted Christ then tell yourself and tell your sin and tell the people around you who keep judging and putting you down. You are trying to progressively grow. You are trying to come to terms with the fact that perfection is for the next life, not this one.

That is why Paul went on to say:

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.<sup>9</sup>

What that means is our adoption will be completed when? In heaven when we become like Christ, because we will see him as he is.

And if you would say, “Well, sometimes things just seem so bad. I don’t even know how to pray. I am struggling so much. I am suffering so deeply.”

Our Father even has that one covered, doesn’t he?

“In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.”<sup>10</sup>

And, say, when we are facing suffering or we are facing sinning, that can actually draw us closer to our heavenly Father if we handle it well. And it is in that context of the hope we have that we have our great verse, Romans 8:28.

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<sup>9</sup> Romans 8:18-23.

<sup>10</sup> Romans 8:26.

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”<sup>11</sup>

To whom? Well, to those who have been adopted. Well, so much more on this subject that I just don't have time to cover this morning. We can talk about how our heavenly Father forgives, how he answers our prayers, how he disciplines us, how he will reward us, how he gives us the right words to say, how he protects us, how he comforts us, how he provides security, all of that and more comes under this heading of the blessings that flow out of the fact that we have been adopted.

Let me just close with this one which I find especially amazing in its purpose. We can live in a way now that pleases our heavenly Father. We are not talking about him just tolerating us. We are talking about him being pleased by us. I remember Bethany when she was just a little one. I was carrying her somewhere. And she had just done something right and she said, “You know that puts a smile on Jesus' face, doesn't it?”

That is exactly right. And think about it now as adopted... it is not like God just tolerates us. it is possible for us to live in a way that pleases him.

I want to show you one last video of an event that took place in this church. It shows you a little bit about how beautiful adoption is. Put yourself in the shoes of this young man and then when the video is over, Dustin is going to lead us in prayer.

[off mic voice]

[ Change of Voice ] Isn't that wonderful? Let's pray.

*Father God, we come before you and are just so encouraged by the Scriptures. And, Lord, we are amazed at your plan of redemption, beauty, the foresight and the great love manifested in your plan. And, Lord, we are so thankful that that plan involved us, being adopted into your forever family. And, Lord, we recognize that we have nothing to offer you and yet you chose to set your love and your mercy and your grace upon us. And, Lord, I do pray that we would never grow weary of thinking about that. We would never become bored about that reality and we would always be amazed that you would adopt us in your family. Lord, help us to remind each other that truth each and every day. And I pray. Amen.*

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<sup>11</sup> Romans 8:28?