

The Grace of Adoption

Selected Scriptures

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Introduction

We live in a society that hates children. That is a startling statement. But there is no way that it could be denied by anyone who has been paying attention. We live in a society that hates children. We see evidence of that in increasing rates of voluntary childlessness. More and more we hear from the world, “Why have kids? They’ll ruin my fun!” “I can’t be responsible for another life! I can barely take care of myself!” A report was released from the CDC just this Wednesday that announced that the birthrate in the United States is the lowest it’s ever been since they began tracking it: 1.64 births per woman—well below the replacement fertility level of 2.1.

The worldwide pandemic of abortion is another testament to our society’s hatred of children. The world’s leading cause of death in 2020 had nothing to do with a novel coronavirus. The world’s leading cause of death in 2020 was abortion, with over 42.5 million worldwide. Since the ruling in *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, in the U.S. there have been 62.5 million babies slaughtered in what is supposed to be the safest place in the world: the mother’s womb—all under the protection of law. In New York City, reports indicate that the abortion rate has pulled even with the birthrate. So an unborn baby in New York City is as likely to be aborted as it is to be born.

If a baby survives the abortion epidemic, as Pastor John observed last week, there is an increasing chance that both parents will not be in the home to raise that child. If they are, there is about a 50% chance that those parents will not remain married by the time the child grows to adulthood. Despite the mountains of research that continue to affirm how damaging it is not to have both parents in the home, our society of perpetual adolescents can’t put their own selfishness aside, and they divorce.

If a child is fortunate enough to have both parents in the home, those parents are now increasingly encouraged to allow their children—as young as three years old—to begin living as the opposite gender, if the child feels more like a girl than a boy. The child is too young to determine his own bedtime, but if he wants to mutilate himself, have life-altering surgery, and take puberty blockers, the parents wouldn’t dare interfere with his self-expression. I would argue that it’s actually child abuse to *allow* that to happen to your child, but our society has said that *disallowing* such “gender transitioning” is child abuse. There are lawsuits filed right now that

would actually make it legal for the government to remove your child from your home if you don't allow them to transition to their preferred gender.

And besides the absolute insanity of that, the woke mob now has a vested interest in cultivating grievances and bitterness in those children who are in minority and/or marginalized classes. Two babies lay beside one another in the same nursery on the Labor & Delivery floor of a hospital. And if one of those babies is white and the other is black, there is a whole host of ideologues today who believe it to be in the interest of justice to convince the black baby that the white baby hates him and is his oppressor. The famous sociologist and economist, Thomas Sowell, observed this phenomenon when he lamented, "What can any society today hope to gain by having newborn babies in that society enter the world as heirs to prepackaged grievances against other babies born into that same society on the same day?" (*Discrimination and Disparities*). And that's exactly what we see. The indoctrination of children screaming at protests angry at a world that they've been brainwashed to believe hates them. And the examples could be multiplied. We live in a society that hates children.

On the other hand, it is a vast understatement to say that the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a society that *loves* children. If there is any place on the planet where children should be loved, and welcomed, and served, and taught, and protected, and cared for, it is the church. After all, we follow the One who, when others around Him found children a nuisance, Mark 10:14 says, "He was indignant," and said, "Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." He was eager to take the children in His arms and bless them (Mark 10:16). You can hear the tenderness in His voice as He raises a 12-year-old girl from the dead, Mark 5:41, "Little girl, I say to you, arise!" Jesus loved children, and we His followers should love them as well.

After all, Psalm 127 verse 3 says, "Behold, children are a gift of Yahweh, the fruit of the womb is a reward." And verse 5, "How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them." Children are gift of God. They are a precious stewardship entrusted to us by God, that we might train them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, that we might raise them as disciples of Jesus Christ. The church, then, should be brimming with children! And what a blessing that our church is: Generations of Grace, Adventure Club, Vacation Bible School, Master's Kids. As we speak, there are 1,000 children under the age of 13 on this campus. And, let's face it: are you even a member of Grace Church if one of your children hasn't baptized themselves in the fountain on the patio?

But I want to speak to you this morning about a particular way that we can serve children—a particular way that we as the church can follow Jesus in loving and welcoming and caring for children—in a way that stands in bold contrast to our society's hatred for children. And that is: adoption and foster care. May is foster-care awareness month. (Adoption awareness month is

technically in November, but we'll allow a twofer, here.) And in light of that, as you've been hearing about, the elders decided to designate May as "Family Month" at Grace Church. And one of the things we wanted to do this month was to expose you to our Hands for Hope Ministry, but also to devote some time to biblical instruction on the opportunities that adoption and foster care present to us as Christians.

As Christians, we need to see the **evangelistic opportunity** that adoption and foster care present to us. We have been commissioned by our Lord to make disciples of all nations—to go into all the world and preach the Gospel. And we delight to obey Him in that commission by building up the church and teaching them to obey all that Christ commanded, by sending out missionaries to speak the Gospel in foreign lands, by raising up training centers to train biblically-qualified pastors, and even by being faithful to speak to our friends, family, and neighbors right where we are about the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the penalty of hell, the atonement of Christ, and the demand for repentance and faith in Him. And we seek for those evangelistic opportunities wherever we find them. But one opportunity that is ripe for the harvest is the thousands upon thousands of children that are in the foster care system, or others who are available to be adopted. Fostering and adopting are fantastic opportunities to be able to speak the Gospel to these little miniature sinners—as well as to their biological families, in some cases—whom we would never otherwise have the privilege of speaking to.

We also ought not to miss the **cultural opportunity** that adoption and fostering provide to us. We rightly decry the degradation of our society—even as I've done at the outset of this message. But where does society come from? Society is made up of people. And the people who give us the values and norms of society were all once children. And with the breakdown of the family—ravaged as we mentioned by divorce, adultery, and abuse—the responsibility for moral training has more and more been exported to government-funded schools, which have advanced anti-biblical ideologies and immorality with their secularist indoctrination. That only climaxes in the university system, where young adults are trained to be entitled, narcissistic, politically-correct busybodies, rather than contributing members of a God-honoring society. Well, dear people, if we decry the state of society, what are we going to do about it? I suggest that one thing we can do, is make the sacrifices to bring some of those future culture-makers into our homes, and provide for them the Gospel-preaching and biblical discipleship that will make them the salt and light that will bless the world.

But beyond even those motivations—the evangelistic opportunity and the cultural opportunity—we as Christians ought to be motivated to consider adoption and foster care because we ourselves have been adopted as sons and daughters into the family of God. Scripture casts **our very salvation** in the language of God the Father adopting spiritual orphans—even spiritual *slaves* to sin—into His own family, bringing them into His own household, to be His sons and daughters.

“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!’” (Rom 8:15).

And so what I want to do for the rest of our time together this morning is to focus our attention on Scripture’s doctrine of adoption, with the hope of motivating you to begin praying about how you can be involved in adoption and foster care. I’m not trying to pummel you with guilt about how many children there are who need homes, and so on—though it’s true the need is great. Instead, I’m trying to stir your hearts with glory—with the glory of God, revealed in what He has done for you through Christ by spiritually adopting you. I want you to be thrilled by the grace you’ve been shown in the Gospel, and out of that Gospel-driven foundation I want to motivate you to bend out to others the very grace you have been shown by God.

And to do that, we’re not going to look to just one text, as is our usual practice, but we’ll survey several texts which speak to the Scripture’s teaching on adoption. And as we do, we’ll look at **four contrasts**—four contrasts between our lives before and after our adoption into the family of God—that we might extend the grace of adoption that *we* have been shown to others.

I. From Orphans to Sons

And that **first contrast** is that we have gone **from orphans to sons**. Outside of Christ, in our natural state as human beings under the curse of sin, we were spiritual orphans. We had no one to look after our spiritual well-being. We had no provision for our spiritual needs. We had no protection from spiritual danger. We had no hope, no prospects, no future aside from what Hebrews 10 calls “a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.” We were spiritual orphans.

But that’s not to say that we had no father. Not at all. Turn to John chapter 8. In John 8, Jesus is engaging with the Pharisees. They’re boasting that they are the children of Abraham—that Abraham is their father, and so they are the proper heirs to the promises of God’s covenant with Abraham. But in John 8:44, Jesus tells them who their real father is. He says, “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father.” Sinners like you and me, if we are not united to Christ, are not the children of God, simply by virtue of being human. No, apart from a vital union to Christ by faith alone, the devil is your father. First John 3:10 says, “By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.” There are, and there have only ever been, two families of people on this entire planet throughout the history of the world: there is the family of God, and there is the family of the devil. And if your life is not characterized by the practice of righteousness which is the fruit or the evidence of a life united to Christ by faith alone, you are a child of the devil.

But that's not all. Turn over to Ephesians chapter 2. In Ephesians 2, Paul begins reminding the believers at Ephesus what their life was before they trusted in Christ. He tells them, verse 1, that they were "dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air [Satan], of the spirit that is now working in the *sons of disobedience*. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature *children of wrath*, even as the rest." This is who we are by nature! Nothing has to happen to us for us to be sons of disobedience, children of wrath, *of* our father the devil. Spiritual orphans. As Pastor John put it, "We had no home but this world, no guardian but Satan, and no future but hell" (*Slave*, 164).

But what has God done? He has looked upon us in the wretchedness of our sin—in the hopelessness of our spiritual orphanhood—and He has acted in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ—to make children of wrath children of God, to make sons of disobedience sons of the Father. He has taken outsiders, outcasts, strangers, misfits—the natural sons and daughters of the great enemy of all righteousness—and He has adopted us. We have gone **from orphans to sons**.

And this is just a staggering reality. When you think of the blessings of your salvation by the Gospel of Christ, I imagine that your minds go immediately to reflection upon your justification. And rightly so! In justification, the record of the debt of our sin is transferred from our account and counted against Christ, who bears the guilt of our sins in His own body on the cross. And then, the perfect record of the righteousness of Christ is transferred from Christ's account and imputed to us, so that God treats us as if we had obeyed in all the ways Christ perfectly obeyed His Father. We stand in the courtroom of God, before God the judge, sinful in ourselves, but declared righteous before the Law, because we lay hold of the perfect record of Christ's righteousness through faith alone, apart from any works of ours.

But our salvation is greater even than that! It's one thing for a Judge to pardon a guilty criminal because a sufficient penalty has been paid in that criminal's place. But it is another thing—it is abundant grace—for that Judge to then take that criminal into His own home, to provide for that criminal, to give him a seat at His own dinner table, to give him the family name, and to make him an heir of His inheritance. That is what God has done for sinners! He does not merely justify us. He does not merely declare us righteous with respect to the law. He adopts us into His own family, to be His sons and daughters, with all the protections, provisions, blessings, and privileges that belong to being children of God. As one writer said, "To be right with God the Judge is a great thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the Father is [even] greater" (Packer, *Knowing God*, 207).

In 1 John 3:1, the Apostle John reflects on this reality, and it causes him to burst forth in an exclamation of praise. He says, “See,” or “Behold!” “Stand back and observe!” “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God!” John is astonished, flummoxed, ravished by the thought that we—traitors and rebels against the God of the universe, destined to perish in our sins and pay the eternal penalty suffering His wrath—should not only be forgiven of our sins, but then welcomed into His family as His sons and daughters, to bear His name, and to be given all the rights and privileges of His children, including the eternal inheritance of heaven. And he says, “Behold, what a love!” “What kind of love is this, that we should be adopted into the family of God!”

And in fact, Scripture traces this concept of our spiritual adoption throughout all the phases of our redemption. In Ephesians chapter 1: before time began, in the eternal counsel of the Trinity, in the **plan** of redemption, God the Father is said to have “chose[n] us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.” Ephesians 1:5, “In love He *predestined us to adoption as sons* through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.” From eternity past, God the Father has never contemplated His elect—those He would redeem unto salvation—He has never contemplated us apart from the reality of our adoption. The very reason for His choice of us is that He might make us His own sons and daughters.

And it is not only the plan of redemption, but also the **accomplishment** of redemption that respects our adoption. In Galatians 4, verses 4 and 5, Paul says that God sent His Son into the world, “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.” And so the accomplishment of our redemption by Christ our substitute, as He paid the ransom price of our redemption on the cross, was carried out with the purpose that we who believe would receive the adoption as sons. Jesus died to make us sons and daughters of God. In fact, Hebrews 2:10 characterizes Christ’s atoning mission as that very thing: as “bringing many sons to glory.” You see, Jesus is not just forgiving guilty criminals, though that would be enough. He is bringing many adopted sons along to their eternal inheritance in the glory of heaven.

And then, not only the plan of redemption, and not only the accomplishment of our redemption, but even at the stage of the **application** of our redemption, Scripture describes our salvation in terms of adoption. In John 1:12, John says, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God.” That language of “the right” to “become children” is legal language. And those who get the legal right to *become* children are *adopted* children. John is saying that all those who receive Christ in faith become the adopted children of God—that all who believe in Jesus are granted an irreversible legal status as the children of God, and God never disowns any of His children. It would be a reproach upon His saving Fatherhood if that were ever to happen. Once Christ gives us that right to become children of God, we never lose it.

Paul says the same in Galatians 3:26 when he says, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”

And then not only at conversion, but all throughout our progressive sanctification, we live in the world as sons and daughters of our Father. We call out to God as our Father in prayer: “Our Father, who is in heaven.” We cry to Him in our need, “Abba! Father!” We imitate Him as His children, as Luke calls us to love our enemies so that we would be *sons* of the Most High (Luke 6:35). We live in the fellowship “of God’s household,” Ephesians 2:19 says, and so we go through life bound to our brothers and sisters in Christ. Even the prospect of our glorification, in Romans 8:23, is described as “our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.”

I want you to turn to Romans 9, starting in verse 23. In this portion of the letter, Paul celebrates the unfathomable mercy of God in the salvation of the Gentiles. And he speaks about God’s elect as those “vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,” verse 24, “even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.” And that in itself was a shocking display of grace, because Israel, in a sense, was the natural son of God. Exodus 4:22: “Israel is My son, My firstborn.” In Romans 11, Paul will speak about how the Jews were the natural branches in the olive tree of covenant blessing while the Gentiles had to be grafted in. The Gentiles were not the people of God! Israel was the people of God!

And that’s precisely what Paul picks up on in Romans 9:25, as he quotes from the prophet Hosea. God says, “I will call those who were not My people, ‘My people,’ and her who was not beloved, ‘Beloved.’ And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ there they shall be called sons of the living God.” Can you take that in? You were once no-people! That’s what Deuteronomy 32:21 calls the Gentiles! God says, “I will make them jealous with *those who are not a people*.” In 1 Peter 2:10, Peter says it plainly: “for you once were not a people. But now,” he says, “you are the people of God. You had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” You were nobody! You were orphans! And yet now, in the very place where it was said to you, “You are not My people,” now you are called sons of the living God! Because He saw you—helpless, strange, other, unwanted, even enemies—and He has made you His own.

Oh, friends, if He has been so bountifully gracious to you, can you bend that grace out to others—even to the children who are now no people, who belong to no one? Could you make them your sons and daughters, as the Father has made you His?

II. From Enemies to Brethren

Well, that brings us to a **second contrast**. First, in adoption, we go from orphans to sons. Second, we go **from enemies to brethren**.

Before salvation, in our natural state of sin and unbelief, Scripture characterizes us as enemies of God, and enemies of Christ. Romans 5:10: “For if while we were *enemies* we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son...” Romans 8:7: “...the mind set on the flesh is *hostile* toward God.” Colossians 1:21: “...you were formerly *alienated* and *hostile* in mind...” And Philippians 3:18 calls people whose lives contradict their profession of faith in Christ, “*enemies* of the cross of Christ.”

You see, we weren’t just helpless spiritual orphans, innocent victims of our circumstances, eager to receive blessing from a benefactor, if only a benefactor would desire a relationship with us. No, we were enemies of God. We were running away from our Benefactor. We were slapping away His outstretched arm of mercy. We were spitting in His smiling face while He offered us peace. There is no neutrality in unbelief, friends. We cannot pretend that man’s natural state of unbelief and sin is simply some “That’s-good-for-you,” “You-have-your-truth-I-have-my-truth” alternative lifestyle. No, you are either a friend of God through faith in Jesus Christ, or you are an enemy of Christ, hostile to Christ.

And that is what each and every one of us was. But now, through this grace-gift of adoption, we who were enemies of Jesus—can you think of it?—now have the unspeakable privilege of being called **the brethren** of Jesus. We read in that glorious text, Romans 8:29, that “those whom [God] foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son”—all whom God has chosen to save He has also chosen to sanctify, to conform us into the image of holiness that is the natural Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. But for what purpose? “So that He [Jesus] would be the firstborn among many *brethren*.” You see, the Father bestows the grace of adoption upon sinners in order to magnify His own mercy and multiply His own honor in the proliferation of sons and daughters for Himself. But that’s not the only reason. The Father also adopts sinners in order to glorify His Son in the proliferation of brothers and sisters, of which He will stand as firstborn! Adoption glorifies Christ by turning **enemies** of the Gospel into a whole host of brothers and sisters that look like Jesus—that reflect the glory of the Son, who is the image of the invisible God.

And turn with me to Hebrews 2. We already spoke about how the author of Hebrews casts the atoning mission of Christ in terms of adoption in verse 10: He is said to have been “bringing many sons to glory.” But listen to the implications, starting in verse 11, of what it means for God to have made us His sons, and for Him to have become our Father. Hebrews 2:11: “For both He who sanctifies [Jesus] and those who are sanctified [us] are all from one Father.” Do you hear that? The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is *our* Father! Middle of verse 11: “...for which reason He [Jesus] is not ashamed to call them brethren.” Can you believe those words?

I can only think of a fraction of all the reasons Jesus has to be ashamed to call me His brother. He sees my every deed. He knows my every thought. With the searching gaze of His omniscience, He sees how cold my heart can be. *I'm* ashamed of me. But because God has adopted me as His son—because He has gone through the trouble of becoming my Father—the Eternal Son, the One through whom and for whom all things have been created, the Great High Priest, holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens, — that magnificent One is not ashamed to call *me* “Brother.” “He shows His wounded hands and names me as His own.” What an unspeakable privilege! “Once Your enemy, now seated at Your table. Jesus, thank You,” for redemption. Yes, and “Father, thank You,” for adoption.

III. From Slavery to Redemption

A **third contrast**. Not only from orphans to sons. Not only from enemies to brethren. But also, number three: **from slavery to redemption**.

Scripture testifies that all mankind is born into the bondage of slavery—that we are so beholden to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life, that we are properly said to be enslaved to our sin. In Romans 6:16, Paul says, “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?” In the next verse he says, “You were slaves of sin.” Back in John 8, as Jesus is discussing with the Pharisees, He says the same thing, John 8:34: “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.” That is everyone. This is how God Himself speaks about who you are by nature: you are enslaved to sin. Your mind, your desires, your will—every aspect of your being is held captive by sin. And if you die in that bondage, you’ll never be free from it. And so Hebrews 2:15 tells us that through the fear of death, those who labor under that bondage are “subject to slavery all their lives.”

And so what has our God done? He has sent Christ to **redeem** the slaves, and turn them into **sons**. Turn with me to Galatians chapter 4. And we’ll start in verse 4. “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*.” The Father sent the Son into the world to purchase His people out of the slave-market of sin by the payment of the ransom price of Christ’s own life. As Mark 10:45 says, The Son of Man came to “give His life a *ransom* for many.” But look at the purpose of our redemption. It is not only that we should be free. It is not only that we should come out from under the bondage of sin and the curse of the law. It is so that we might receive the adoption as sons—that we might be welcomed into the home of our Father.

Adoption was popular in the Greco-Roman world. But it wasn't often an act of philanthropy on behalf of a child. It was actually for the benefit of a nobleman who didn't have a natural heir. For that reason, people would very rarely adopt infants or young children; they would adopt those who were already mature, who would be able to learn as a sort of apprentice under his adoptive father, as the father prepared to die and leave his estate to his adopted son, who would extend the man's line, and carry on his name and his property. But it was very rare for a nobleman to adopt a slave. But this is what our Father does. Not out of His own poverty and need; He already has the greatest heir there is: His own natural Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. But no, out of the superabundance of His grace, He seeks us out, sends His own Son to pay the ransom-price of our redemption, and then adopts us as His own children.

And look again at Galatians 4, verse 6: "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." This adoption is Trinitarian, because not only has the Father sent the Son to redeem us, but now He has sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts, so that we cry, "Abba! Father!" And this is truly astounding. Turn to Romans chapter 8, and verse 15. Paul writes, "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!'" The Father not only gives us His Son to redeem us, but He gives us His Spirit, who actually dwells in our own hearts, in the most intimate way, and who enables us to approach God and address God in a deeply felt sense of filial confidence and intimacy (Martin). That's what this term "Abba" signifies. It is a tender, affectionate term of endearment. It's not quite the equivalent of "Daddy;" that's taking it too far. But it is more familiar than "Father." It's something akin to "Dad," or "Papa."

And do you know where the only other time this term appears in the New Testament—aside from Galatians 4 and in Romans 8? In Gethsemane. In Mark 14:36, as Jesus contemplates the horrors of bearing the sins of the world—of drinking the cup of His Father's wrath against the sins of His people—He falls to the ground, and began praying (the tense of the verb implies he was praying over and over again), "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will." This is a cry of distress. This is the cry that a son utters when he's in fear or in pain, and his instinct is to call out to his father for protection. This is the loneliest, neediest moment of Jesus' life. It is the most impassioned, desperate prayer He's ever prayed. And He prays, "Abba!"

And what Paul is teaching us in Romans and Galatians is that because the Spirit of adoption has been sent into our hearts, we may address God with the same confident, childlike dependence that Jesus addresses the Father. Can you imagine the privilege? Jesus had been in the bosom of the Father from all eternity! He is the eternal Son! He is the natural Son of God by eternal generation! Even during His earthly sojourn as a man, He is the sinless Son! And we, creatures of the dust, can address God as our Father—as our *Abba*—with the same holy intimacy as the

Son of God! I'm a son of the devil. I'm a son of disobedience. I'm a child of wrath. I don't deserve to address God at all, let alone to address Him as Abba.

And yet the Spirit of God gives us this confidence, Romans 8:16: "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God." And oh, don't we need this? You could imagine, couldn't you, that an adopted child might live with some doubt, at times. "Am I really part of this family? I know I'm not their biological child. I know that by nature I don't belong here. Do they really love me like their own?" And you, if you have any awareness of the depth of your own sin, you struggle with the assurance of God's love for you at times. "Am I really part of God's family? I know I'm naturally a child of wrath; sadly, my remaining sin all too often reminds me of my natural father. I know I don't belong here, with Him. Does He really love me as His own?" And He says, "Dear child, I've sent my own Spirit into your very heart, to drive all fear from your heart, so that you can address Me in the very same way as My Son Jesus addresses Me: as your Abba." Unspeakable grace, this doctrine of adoption!

IV. From Destitute to Heirs

And our time is going quickly, so we'll have to look at this **final contrast** rather briefly. In adoption, we go from orphans to sons, from enemies to brethren, from slavery to redemption, and, number four, **from being destitute to heirs**.

As spiritual orphans, we were spiritually destitute. Like many who have no parents to care for them, in our natural sinful state, we had no promising prospects, no hope to look forward to, and no future, spiritually speaking. As I mentioned earlier from Hebrews 10:27, outside of Christ, the only thing we could anticipate was "a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries." Romans 2:5 says to the one who does not believe in Jesus, "Because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day...of the righteous judgment of God." In Ephesians 2:12, Paul describes our former lives as "separate from Christ, . . . strangers to the covenants of promise, [and] having no hope and without God in the world." Because we are without Christ, we are without God. And because we are without God, we are without hope. Nothing to look forward to. Nothing to set our hope on. No future aside from eternal destruction. A dead-end life.

But because of the grace-gift of adoption, we have been given a hope! We have been given a future! We have been made **heirs**! Going back to Galatians 4 and verse 7: "Therefore"—because God you are sons who cry, "Abba! Father!"—"Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an **heir** through God." Romans 8:17 says, "And if [we are] children, **heirs** also, **heirs** of God and fellow-**heirs** with Christ." We have an inheritance! Us! The nobodies! The *non-people*! Those who had no hope! Now, we look to the future with great anticipation and confidence! We have the hope of eternal life! Listen to Titus 3:7: "...being justified by His grace

we would be made **heirs** according to the *hope* of eternal life.” 1 Peter 1:3–4: Our Father “has caused us to be born again to a *living hope* through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an **inheritance** which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.” Ephesians 1:18: Paul prays “that the eyes of our heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the *hope* of His calling, what are the *riches* of the *glory* of His **inheritance** in the saints.” And Hebrews 6:19 speaks of this hope and says, “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul.” This hope is rock-solid. You can anchor your soul on this hope!

Friends, think of it! We are the heirs of our Father, who rules the world, who owns everything! “The earth is Yahweh’s, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it” (Ps 24:1). And we are co-heirs with Christ! And what is Christ the heir of? Psalm 2:8: The Father says to the Son, “Ask of Me, and I will surely give the *nations* as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession.” Hebrews chapter 1: “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of *all things*.” Revelation 21: “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain. ... And He who sits on the throne ... said ... ‘I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes will **inherit** these things, and I will be his God and he will be My *son*.’”

That is your future, Christian! That is your hope! You! Without God, and without hope in the world! Now heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ of all things! Praise God for our adoption!

Conclusion

Dear friends, if you have been shown such extravagant grace by no less a benefactor as the Almighty God of the Universe, the Maker of heaven and earth, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, can you bend that grace out to others in like manner, and imitate your loving Father, who delights to take outcasts and make them His own? Would you go before the Lord in prayer and ask Him if it might be His will for your life that you imitate Him in the grace of adoption? whether that’s by traditional adoption or by foster care? There is no more fitting candidate to be adoptive parents, or foster parents, than those who have become adopted sons and daughters of God through Jesus Christ.

Now, not everyone in this room—still less everyone within the sound of my voice—is in a position to adopt or foster. Some of you are grandparents, and the time the Lord has given you for childrearing has past. Some of you aren't married, and while it's technically true that not everyone who adopts or fosters needs to be married, God's pattern for raising children is with a mother and a father in the context of the covenant of marriage. And perhaps there is some other reason why, in the providence of God, adoption and fostering is not something the Lord has for you. That's OK. There is absolutely no shame in that. I am not suggesting that "Faithfulness equals adopting and/or fostering children," period, paragraph.

However, that doesn't mean that there's nothing you can do concerning adoption and foster care. It's actually quite like missions. Every one of us ought to be consumed and taken up with the Great Commission—to go and make disciples of all nations. But not every one of us has the ability, the calling, the opportunity, or the inclination to serve the Lord in overseas missions. Every one of us ought to be a Great Commission Christian; but not every one of us is called to go. Some of us are called to stay at home base and send and support those whom God has called to go. Well in the same way, not every one of us is called to foster or adopt. But every one of us adopted sons and daughters ought to be "adoption" Christians! If we can't open our homes ourselves—if we can't make the years-long and sometimes decades-long commitment to raising another child to be disciples of Christ in our own household—brothers and sisters, let us support those who are willing to do so.

It takes a whole church to send a missionary. In fact, it often takes multiple churches to send a missionary, as most missionaries raise support from a whole network of churches. But the point is: we don't tell missionary candidates that the only ones who will be sent out to the field are those who are able to save up enough money to retire to the country they're going to serve. And yet we often think of adoption that way. "Oh yes, we encourage adoption! But you're going to have to come up with the money on your own!" No, that shouldn't be, friends! Not in the church! One of the saddest, most sickening realities in our society is that an abortion costs \$400, while adopting a child can cost upwards of \$40,000 in legal fees. It just should not be! And yet this is the sin-cursed world we live in. And the number one reason people give for not adopting is the financial burden it poses. But just as it takes whole church to send a missionary, friends, it takes a whole church to adopt a child. We can come alongside one another and bear the burden of that cost. I would challenge you: if you're not able, or perhaps not willing, to open your own home, consider how the Lord would have you be a small part of generously enabling *other* believers to do what they're willing to do but unable in themselves to do.

You say, "But it's difficult!" And you're right! It is! It might be the most difficult thing you ever do in your life. You're laying down your entire life for the benefit of this other little life, that

couldn't survive on its own. And especially in the case of foster care, where you set all your love and affection upon this little child, take them in as your own, knit your heart to their heart, only for the state to come and take them away again—I can't *imagine* how hard that would be!

But I'll to you one thing: I know that it *won't* be as difficult as it was for Christ to leave the glories of heaven, to live with all the infirmities of sinful humanity (though having never sinned Himself), to fall on His face in that garden and beg His Father for another way, only to hear the silence of the abandonment that we deserved, to bear the full exercise of His Father's wrath against the sins of His people, to be forsaken by His Father, to submit to sin's penalty in death, and yet rise again in victory over sin and death on the third day. I can tell you, Christ has suffered more in purchasing your adoption than you will *ever* suffer in imitating your Father in adopting or fostering a child. As one preacher said, "The legal documents of your adoption are signed with the blood of incarnate Deity" (Martin). And if you are the recipient of such grace, you have the power, by the Spirit of God, to show such grace to others. And so I call you to search your hearts; to bear the family name well; to imitate your Father, and so be good sons and daughters.