

## Prayer 3 — Prayer and Adoption

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Passages	Romans 8:15-16
Sermon Series	Prayer
Topics	Prayer; Adoption
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### Introduction (Connection):

[Invite to Romans 8]

As you're turning there, I just have to ask: who tried out the standing broom trick this past week?

How many of you have no clue what that is? Don't bother, it's no trick; a broom can stand up every day of the year, not just Feb. 10th. Anyways...

### Tension:

"There's a Spanish story of a father and son who had become estranged. The son ran away, and the father set off to find him. He searched for months to no avail. Finally, in a last desperate effort to find him, the father put an ad in a Madrid newspaper. The ad read: "Dear Paco, meet me in front of this newspaper office at noon on Saturday. All is forgiven. I love you. Your Father." On Saturday 800 Pacos showed up, looking for forgiveness and love from their fathers."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Bits & Pieces*, October 15, 1992, 13, from Sermon Illustrations, available online <http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/f/father.htm>, accessed online February 13, 2020.

Sure it is a funny story, but it's hinting at an inner craving we all really have deep down inside: having a father who forgives us and loves us unconditionally and wants to be with us.

Real talk: Most of us in here didn't get the privilege of having a father like this as you were growing up; maybe you didn't have a father at all—he just left you to experience loneliness, left to question your identity and try to figure it out in a broken world.

Yet, we as Christians are never fatherless... we are never truly alone, never really abandoned, never actually poor and needy.

Why? Because the greatest gift of the gospel, the loftiest prize Jesus won for us in his death and resurrection is our adoption into the family of God, and that's what we're talking about today.

## Exposition:

We're going to read for some context but then we're going to focus in on one main verse.

Let's start in 8:12.

***Romans 8:12-17 — “So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. <sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs—heirs of God***

***and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.”<sup>2</sup>***

Romans 8 is a lot about our identity as believers, and focuses in a lot on God’s Spirit in us.

- The Spirit of God that sets us free...
- Leads us to abundant life and peace...
- Identifies us as belonging to Christ...
- Raises us to new life just as He raised Jesus from the dead, and
- Leads us as we walk according to Him, and much more.

But Paul says here in v. 14 that those who are filled with the Spirit, therefore led by the Spirit, are children of God... sons and daughters.

If the Spirit of God is in you, you are a son or a daughter of God.

But how? How did that happen? What makes the Spirit able to make us sons and daughters?

V. 15 tells us that the Spirit isn’t a spirit of slavery, meaning forced labor under the whip of a master.

That would lead to what? Fear. Fear is what we came out of, fear characterized enslavement to sin...

“God didn’t give us a Spirit of fear.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 8:12–17.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Timothy 1:7 ESV.

“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.”<sup>4</sup>

What kind of Spirit did God gift to us?

**v. 15 — “[We] received the Spirit of adoption as sons.”**

The Spirit is characterized by the concept and practice of adoption.

God’s Spirit is an adopting Spirit.

We heard a couple weeks ago from Jesse Comrie about the Greco-Roman concept of *patria potesta*, which is what a father would claim when he adopted a son or daughter.

Here’s what all adoption meant legally in Roman law since adoption wasn’t a Jewish practice:

- 1) The adopted person lost all rights to his old family and his old family lost all rights over him. Then he gained full rights as a legitimate son in his new family.
- 2) He then became a full heir of his new father’s estate along with his new brothers and sisters.
- 3) The law required that the old life of the adopted son be emancipated... every debt would be wiped clean and every lawful conviction expunged. He was a new person.

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<sup>4</sup> 1 John 4:18, ESV.

4) The adopted person legally, literally, and absolutely was the son of the new Father.<sup>5</sup>

5) That adoption cannot be undone; that child cannot be disowned by their adopted parents.<sup>6</sup>

Does this not sound like the Gospel? In Christ, we are set free from the authority of sin and death, cut off from our old slave master, according to Romans 6.

We become heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, according to 8:17.

All our law-breaking is atoned for and debt paid off according to 8:1-2 and 12.

And we get to be legally, literally, and absolutely, functional sons and daughters of God as this verse says, and that can never be taken away from us according to 8:38-39.

Ephesians 1 says that God “chose us in [Jesus Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love <sup>5</sup> [God] predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> “Patria Potesta and the Roman Ceremony of Adoption” Pilgrim Tours.com, no date, accessed February 14, 2020, [https://www.pilgrimtours.com/church\\_history/italy/devotionals\\_history/Adoption.htm](https://www.pilgrimtours.com/church_history/italy/devotionals_history/Adoption.htm).

<sup>6</sup> Ellen Mady, “How the Roman practice of adoption sheds light on what St. Paul was talking about,” [aleteia.org](https://aleteia.org), September 12, 2017, accessed February 14, 2020, <https://aleteia.org/2017/09/12/how-the-roman-practice-of-adoption-sheds-light-on-what-st-paul-was-talking-about/>.

<sup>7</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Eph 1:4–6.

God wanted us before we even existed, and he chose us and worked our destiny out to be adopted by Him.

John 1 says that we now have the guaranteed right to call on God as Father.<sup>8</sup>

It is your right!!! Not just a privilege, not just a gift, it is an inherent right as a born again believer!

There should be a revolution in how you live your life day to day because of this!

When Jesus prays for us in John 17 he says, "that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and **loved them even as you loved me.**"<sup>9</sup>

This is revolutionary! This is scandalous!

As adopted sons and daughters, God loves us the same way he loves Jesus!

Tim Keller said it this way: "To be adopted means that now God loves us as if we had done all Jesus had done."<sup>10</sup>

That is scandalous! Why? Because we couldn't do anything to earn God's love!

We could never do all that Jesus did! And yet, because we are adopted sons and daughters of God, God loves us even as God loves Jesus!!!

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<sup>8</sup> John 1:12-13, ESV.

<sup>9</sup> John 17:23, ESV.

<sup>10</sup> Keller, *Prayer*, 69.

This now means you and I have the most intimate and unbreakable relationship possible with the God who breathes and brings dead bones to life, who uses his words to create something out of nothing.

Just as we looked at Eph. 2:18 last week, we now have access to God... which is exactly what being a child means; when we seek to be with God, we get God!

Can you imagine trying to get access to the President of the United States?

You either have to be someone who has credentials, accomplishments, or power... or you just have to be a child.

I remember watching the movie directed by Stephen Spielberg on Abraham Lincoln, the greatest president to ever serve, and as I watched I noticed something about his character, especially in his relationship to his youngest son, "Tad."

His 11 year old son Thomas wanting his dad's attention, would barge into presidential cabinet meetings and council meetings where Lincoln was strategizing to both end the civil war with the South and abolish slavery with the 13th amendment.

Did the secret service stop him at the door? No.

Did cabinet members yell at the boy in outrage for the intrusion? No.

Did Abraham Lincoln bend him over his knee for blatantly interrupting?

No!

Every time his son walked in, Abraham took him up in his lap, held him tight, stopped every other conversation, and gave his full attention to his son... that is access!

That is the same kind of access we have to God!

Can't you see how this revolutionizes the way you live every little moment of every day?

In the same way, it revolutionizes how we pray.

Look at what Paul says next in v. 15.

We have the Spirit of adoption as sons, not slaves, and it is **by [him] we cry, "Abba! Father!"**

The word "cry" is a greek word that is used in the Septuagint to refer to a loud, fervent prayer, which is peppered throughout Psalms.

We can call out to God in prayer, and what is it that we now have the privilege to call God?

"Abba! Father!"

Abba is an Aramaic word that carries with it a homely and affectionate warmth, and in English it probably most closes matches with the word "daddy."

Abba is easy to say for small children, just like Papa or Gigi or Mimi, so even from infancy as a believer you can still call out to your Daddy.

What's even more crazy is this is exactly how Jesus prayed in Mark 14:36; he's in the Garden of Gethsemane, about to be betrayed, and he prays, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

Jesus praying this way and then Paul saying we can pray this way means Jesus is sharing his relationship with His Daddy with us.

Here's the main point for today:

## Prayer is talking with your heavenly Daddy.

We don't go to our Dad in fear; we don't go to try to win his affection or perform well enough that we get what we ask for when we pray.

It isn't an employee with a supervisor.

It isn't a performer before a judge.

It isn't a beggar before a king.

It is a child with his or her dad.

Prayer then becomes the primary way we sense and appropriate to our lives the fact we access God and talk to God as Dad.

And when we do, we experience this fatherly love and discover the calm and strength found in the realization that we're cared for, provided for, and loved by the best Dad who has power over everything.

When you pray, you're talking to the perfect Father — you can go to God with the confidence of receiving the kind of attention and love a good Father gives.

This is exactly what Jesus meant when he said, "Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup> Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? <sup>11</sup> If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!"<sup>11</sup>

Prayer is talking with your heavenly Daddy.

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<sup>11</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 7:9–11.

## Application/Challenge:

But this is too hard for too many of us, isn't it, because where is the first place we'll go to figure out a framework of how to relate to a dad? Our earthly dads.

Let me ask you this: What's the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear the phrase, "my dad"?

For me, the two men I respect and admire and want to be like most have Father in the title of their relationship with me, my father and father-in-law, so I feel warmth and joy.

Maybe you share similar feelings, but statistics show probably not.

Or, maybe for you, it is fear, or shame, or disgust, or hatred.

Maybe that man who carried the title "father" for you checked out when you were three because he had an affair or just lost interest.

Or maybe he was an alcoholic who wasted away his nights where he could have been spending time with you but loved the bottle and the buzz more.

Or maybe he beat you because he couldn't man up and control his own anger.

Or maybe he used you.

I've heard too many of these kinds of stories that just enrage me, and that's just domestically.

Around the world, I've heard of stories of father's beating their kids with a flaming stick and then chaining them up in the barn out back for a year.

I've heard of father's who sell their daughters into sex trafficking because they need the money.

Look at me... that is not a dad; that is just a little boy.

A man can be your father and not be your dad; he can be blood but have never been there for you.

Don't translate that mess to God.

But it's possible your situation is different.

Maybe your dad died way before his time and you grew up without him with all kinds of questions about your own purpose and identity, wanting protection and praise from a father figure and never finding it.

Or maybe your dad only showed tough love and wasn't emotionally available and deflected with humor saying that's what "being a man" is, never speaking encouraging words that called you into godliness.

Or maybe your dad was just a pushover and never really fought for anything and left all the parenting up to your mom.

Either way, it's difficult for you to figure out this whole "talking to God as Dad thing" because all you can do is bring into that conversation the broken pieces of your own experience with a dad and say, "this isn't coming together for me!"

Psychologists today have a term for all of this; it's call the Father Wound.

It is the wound that, if untreated, can plague you your whole life, a wound that contributes to almost all of the social problems in our world today, from the sexual identity crisis to crime.

Because you've been so deeply wounded by your earthly father, you aren't ready to relate to God as your daddy, because "dad" is almost a cuss word, it carries too much baggage, or its too unfamiliar and strange, too raw.

Brothers and sisters, you have been adopted by a God who never wounds, who dances in joy over you, who delights in you, who wanted you so badly he chose you and adopted you.

When Jesus was baptized, his Dad said to him, "You're my son, I love you, and I am pleased with you."

Brothers, because of Jesus, God says to you, "You are my son, I love you, and I am pleased with you."

Sisters, because of Jesus, God says to you, "You are my daughter, I love you, and I am pleased with you."

Are you ready to call God your daddy? Are you ready to pray to him as a son and a daughter?

This past week I heard one of our sisters here share her story about how her dad was a rat of a man to her mother and siblings growing up, and she prayed that God would help her forgive and love and care for her dad, and within just seconds all her animosity and bitterness faded away and was replaced with love for him, which eventually led to him accepting Jesus as his savior.

I want to challenge you this week to specifically ask God to help you fully learn how to relate to God as Father.

I promise you, he will answer that request because it is inherent to his character.

Martin Luther, the father of the Protestant Reformation, every time he prayed, which was at least two hours every day, would begin his prayer saying this...

"Although ... you could rightly and properly be a severe judge over us sinners ... now through your mercy implant in our hearts a comforting trust in your fatherly love, and let us experience the sweet and pleasant savor of a childlike certainty that we may joyfully call you Father, knowing and loving you and calling on you in every trouble."

### **Conclusion (Cast Vision):**

Will you ask God for help fully relating to Him as dad?

Will you step into fully functioning in your identity as a son or daughter?

[Invite to pray to your dad]