

Appreciating Our Adoption

by Tim Conway

The sermon explores the profound significance of our adoption as children of God and its implications for understanding His love.

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Scripture: John 1:12, John 17:23, Romans 5:1, Galatians 3:26, Ephesians 1:5

Topics: "Adoption Theology", "Intimacy With God"

Description

This sermon delves into the profound truth of adoption as children of God, emphasizing the higher privilege of adoption over justification, highlighting the intimate relationship with God as our Father. The speaker reflects on the immense love and grace displayed in God's act of adoption, challenging listeners to appreciate and grasp the depth of this doctrine in their lives.

Transcript

You can turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 1, verse 3, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved. I specifically want to draw your attention.

This Lord's day to verse 5, In love He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will. I've entitled my sermon, Appreciating Our Adoption. I chose that title as much for myself as anything.

You know what I recognized? The more time I devoted to the study of adoption in my preparation for this sermon, it was obvious to me that I'm not gripped by this truth, and I'm not moved by this truth, and I am not energized by this truth the way that I ought to be. I mean, I feel it in my own soul that the doctrine of adoption, I know it. It has not produced the kind of worship that I see coming from Paul right here.

That's just obvious to me. And you know, as I was feeling that, and I'm going to show you in a second some of the things that especially, acutely made me feel this way, almost ashamed. I'm going to show you in a second.

But while I'm feeling this in my own soul, I read these words by J.I. Packer. It is a strange fact that the truth of adoption has been little regarded in Christian history. Apart from two 19th century books, now scarcely known.

One is R.S. Candlish's *The Fatherhood of God*. The other is R.A. Webb's *The Reform Doctrine of Adoption*. But apart from those two scarcely known works, there is no evangelical writing on this theme.

Nor has there been at any time since the Reformation, any more than there was before the Reformation. And he points this out, Luther's grasp of adoption was as strong and clear as his grasp of justification. But his disciples held to the former and made nothing of the latter.

The Puritan teaching on the Christian life, so strong in other ways, notably deficient here. So here I am feeling my own, really a sense of shame, that I have not worshipped the God who adopts adequately. While I'm feeling that, I come across Packer's words that seem to indicate that historically, I'm not the only one.

But you know what? Maybe the question ought to be, well hey, if I haven't adequately devoted my own sense of worship to this, my own appreciation for this, and if historically they haven't, well maybe the question that should arise is, you know, when you compare it to the doctrines of justification and substitution and propitiation and sanctification, maybe it's not as important. But then you know what happened? I came across quotes from John Murray, J.I. Packer, Thomas Watson, John Owen, Robert Raymond, who did the systematic theology, Martin Lloyd Jones, that all the more shook me. I mean from all these men.

Now I know these are but men. We're going to get to Scripture in a second. We're headed there.

But it's these guys and their quotes that really made me feel somewhat ashamed and shallow. Just listen to what these guys say about the doctrine of adoption. John Murray says that adoption is the apex of redemptive grace and privilege.

Listen to this. Here we have the ultimate source. The adopting father.

And the highest privilege. Our adoption brought together. The highest.

The ultimate. The apex. The apex.

Packer, our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption. That's pretty significant. If it's true.

He says this, it is the highest privilege that the Gospel offers. Higher even than the gift of justification. I mean that's amazing if it's true.

He says adoption is the crowning blessing. Of all the gifts of grace, adoption is the highest. He even says this, it is the climax of the Bible.

Thomas Watson says extol and magnify God's mercy who has adopted you into his family. Adoption is greater mercy than Adam had in paradise. Owen says this is our fountain privilege.

Robert Raymond, can Christians enjoy any blessedness or privilege higher than that access to God the Father through His Son and Spirit which as members of His household they enjoy? What blessedness can

possibly supersede the blessedness of simply being a child of the Holy God? There is none. Not justification, not sanctification, however great those privileges are. Martin Lloyd-Jones says this, the final and ultimate end of redemption such is adoption.

He says there's nothing higher than this. Our adoption is the highest expression even of God's love. He says I speak carefully and with reverence when I assert that the statements in Scripture concerning adoption are the highest expression of the love of Almighty God.

There is nothing higher than this. See, I read those and I'm feeling... I felt ashamed. I felt shallow.

And of course the question that I ask is are these guys right? And I guess the text that just repeatedly kept coming to me is 1 John 3.1. Turn over there. 1 John 3.1 You see brethren, what I started thinking is this, if you let your mind move back and forth, I mean as much as you know about Scripture and you start thinking, there are certain expressions that are given to us about God's love that take God's love to a degree. There are certain statements about certain things that God has done that are expressions of love that really are the measurement of all love.

I mean you can measure everything else by it. When I come to Scripture, what I find is this, that the writers, the authors, God inspiring them, God would say this, if you want to know a category of love that's way out there, that God so loved, He so loved, not just loved, but He so loved. What comes to your mind? The cross.

He so loved. And you know what happens? The Apostle Paul would take that love and he uses it in his argument in Romans 8.32. And he says, look, if God would not spare His own Son, if He gives Him up for you, He's not going to withhold anything else. How can He not also, through Christ, He's going to give you everything.

When you come to 1 John 3.1, you get the same kind of shock about the extent of love. If you think about it, there are really only two things in our Bibles where the love is so out there that you get these kind of responses. Notice 1 John 3.1. See what kind of love.

Or as the KJV New KJ, behold what manner of love. Or the NAS, see how great a love. John is saying to us, there is a category of love here that just surpasses.

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God or the sons of God and so we are. It's like there's expressions of love that are so out there that really it's almost useless to try to describe that love except by showing you what the love does. What great extent.

I mean, you have to think about this. If somebody walks in and you see them, they walked into the service today, you made eye contact with them, and their face lit up, and they had a smile, and they came over and they gave you a great big hug, that's an expression of love. There is a category of love that does that.

There are all manner of categories of love. Jesus talks about loving much, loving little. There are different expressions of love.

There's no question about that. And that's one category of love. Hey, that brother, he smiled, he was joyful to see me, he came over and gave me a hug, made me feel special.

That's one kind of love. If he comes over and he does that and he hands you an apple, that may be another category of love. If he comes over and he hugs you like that and he hands you his car keys, because he knows that you're in need of a vehicle and he has a spare vehicle and he gives you that vehicle, that's another category of love.

If somebody is willing to take you into their home that you might live with them, that is another category of love. You see, there are categories of love. What sort of category of love is it for God to give His Son and then make you a son? That's what's got John floored here.

He's saying, Christian, come over here. You've got to behold this. You've got to see this for what it is.

This is a category that is out there. It's way out there. Turn in your Bibles to John 17.

In John 17, verse 23, Jesus says, we'll pick it up in verse 22, "...the glory that you have given Me, I have given to them, that they may be one even as We are one, I in them and you in Me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent Me." And the second thing He wants the world to know, He wants the world to know that the Father has loved Christians, you and me if we're Christians, that the Father has loved us even as the Father has loved Christ. Now, look, even as. Let me just tell you, those words mean, they do mean what they sound like they mean.

They mean in proportion to, or to the degree that. That's what that means. Father, Christ is praying.

We heard about the prayer life of Christ in the Sunday school. He prays, Father, I want You to do such things for these people. I want You to do such things that the world will look and recognize that You love them to the degree that You love me.

See, what we need to recognize is this, God intends His relationship with believers to be a reflection and a reproduction of Jesus' own fellowship with the Father. God adopts us as sons and loves us with the same dedicated affection with which He loves the eternally beloved, only begotten Son. Now look, yes, yes indeed, there are realities about Jesus' sonship that will never be true of me, but there is nothing but true of me that is not true of Jesus.

Now you need to think about that for a second. Look, it's true that His sonship meant He's equal to God. My sonship never means that.

But in every way I'm a son, Jesus is a son. Do you remember where it says that He is made like us in every respect? Brethren, He has our sonship like us in every respect so that He can say, you are my brothers. He is not ashamed to call us brothers.

He says, these are my brothers and sisters. We need to recognize the Savior, Jesus Christ, is our brother. But the thing is, although His sonship may indicate equality with God and my sonship doesn't do that, in every way that I'm a son, He's a son.

And in the love to the degree that He loves the Son, even as. And this is what Jesus is praying for. God shows no distinctions of love and affection in the divine family.

We are loved just as fully as Jesus is loved. And you need to start, we need to recognize that that's true as you go out these doors. Some of you might be sitting here questioning that, but I'll tell you, even as you look at the Greek lexicons, it means that to the degree that in proportion to.

As God has loved Christ, so Christ prays. But the world will see that He loves us to the same degree. We are in Christ.

What is His is ours. We are one with Him. And in the divine family.

You need to recognize this. Because what it tells us. I mean, you've got to come back to John.

Wow! Christian, behold what manner of love. Behold what category of love this is. It's in the category that's way out there.

It's in the category of which God loved His beloved only begotten Son. When you walk out there and you're walking through this world, brethren, every single thing that God puts into your life, puts into your path, it is an expression of the highest possible love. And then there's this.

I mean, you know. Maybe you don't. Maybe we just need to see it again.

But turn back to Ephesians. I know this verse does not specifically mention love. But just grasp.

Ephesians 2 v. 7 That in the coming ages, God the Father might show the immeasurable riches of His grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Our Heavenly Father, you know what this says? Through all the coming ages, our Heavenly Father is going to constantly be showing us in ways that are only known to Him at this point. He's going to show us more and more of His love.

Which you know what that will do to us. It's only going to increase our love back to Him. Look, this is the future prospect for the adopted children of God.

It's an eternity of love. It's an eternity of immeasurable riches of His grace and kindness. You know, J.I. Packer has actually, he has now written in his book Knowing God, he has written a whole chapter which I would highly commend to your reading.

You know, you read him there, he says to the Christian, this is like a fairy tale. You know, you can't hardly imagine a story like this. Because the truth is in this world, kings do not adopt such people like us.

They don't. A king, a king, I'm talking about a real king in this world, they might adopt a nephew, a niece, somebody out there in the extended royal family. We aren't royalty.

You know who we are? We're sons of a traitor. No one in real life adopts such people. Wait, you say, well, in real life, there are parents who adopt children that are not the most beautiful, that are not the most healthy.

I recognize that. But who adopts a 25-year-old mass murderer? Nobody. And we are God murderers.

We hated His image. We hated His Son. We hated His Word.

We despised His person. The truth is, what we are spiritually, if you came across the equivalent of that physically, nobody adopts anybody like that. Nobody does.

It's like a fairy tale. But you know what Ephesians 1.5 says? This is no fairy tale. There actually is a king in real life who takes in the filthy, ugly child and makes him a prince.

My hope is that God is going to give all of us a fresh outpouring of revelation to our souls. It's concerning the beauty and preciousness of this doctrine. What it means to be adopted into the household of God.

There's no possible way we can deal with this in one meeting. Maybe not even in two. In fact, I feel like because of the negligence of this doctrine, it deserves some ample attention.

Let's draw our attention to 1.5. In love, He predestined us for adoption. Let's just think about the term predestined. Predestination is in your Bibles.

Look, I know this. I know that a lot of people choose to come to a church like this because they believe in things like predestination. But then I also know this.

I often find that there are a whole other group of people that come to this church for other reasons and not necessarily the doctrinal positions. They kind of stumble here. They found us on the Internet.

Or you come by way of a friend. And so maybe you're not near as acquainted with some of these things as some others are who have studied these things and maybe been Christians longer. Or maybe you're not a Christian at all.

You're just checking out what this is all about. Predestination is a term that is in the Bible. It's not something that Calvinists made up.

It's something that actually has gotten right out of the pages of Scripture. Predestination. What does it mean? Well, just what it sounds like it means.

Predestination. Pre-before. Beforehand, one's destiny is determined.

That's basically it. God determines beforehand. God decides in advance.

Make no mistake about it. What Paul is teaching is that God decided in advance who would be adopted into His family. And the thing is, I know that this is a hard teaching for some.

But you know what jumped out at me? This hard word. God wants to give us this doctrine of predestination. And it's like He lowers it down.

I'm just imagining Him dropping that word right between love and adoption. I think He couches it right in those two terms. It's not a horrid word.

It's a word that is bookended by love and adoption. It's a good thing. Again, like I said before, concerning God choosing.

This is good news. This is Gospel. This isn't bad.

Notice, He predestinates with purpose, with will. In love, He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of His will or the good pleasure of His will. What we need to recognize is this.

God has a purpose behind what He does. That's what it says. There's will involved.

You know what? It may seem arbitrary. From our eyes, why does He pick that person and pass over that person? Have you ever looked at God's choice? I've looked and I have seen God pick the notorious one.

The one that least seems like they deserve it and passed over much better people.

But you know, then I've also looked and I've seen the one that by and large had the best reputation, was most liked, God reached down and saved them. I mean, I've seen it both ways. I've seen God save the rich and I've seen God save the poor.

The popular and the not so popular. You know, His ways seem to our eyes often pretty arbitrary. But you know what this says? According to the purpose of His will.

God may not tell us the reasons why He chooses who He does, but you know, we shouldn't conclude by that that He's without reasons for doing what He does. It's according to the purpose of His will. That's Paul's way of saying that God does what He does and He's really under no obligation to tell us why He does what He does.

But let us remember this. Though God has not made known to me, nor to you, who they are that He is going to adopt, nor the reason why He chooses one over the other, we do know this. We know that as much as He has chosen who He is going to adopt, He also makes the adoption in sonship available to all.

We know that. Have you never read Luke 14? Is there a banquet? Yes. Does the invitation go out? Yes.

When men and women don't come, are we ever told that it's because they have not been predestined to adoption? No. You know what they're told? Banquet's ready. All is made ready.

And you're bidden to come. And they don't come. Why don't they come? Well, I got married.

I can't come. I bought a piece of land. I can't come.

Got a new team of oxen. Can't come. Oh brethren, are we going to find difficulty with predestination when that is the reality? That God makes it available to all? And you know what? He makes it available on the easiest possible terms.

I mean, in one sense. Has He not? Look, if He said, you've got to climb Mount Everest to become My son, that would be very gracious on His part. But He doesn't say that.

He says, you know what? No works of your own. No law keeping of your own. No efforts of your own.

You come empty. In fact, that's how you come. Come with nothing.

Nothing in your hands. Nothing in your pockets. Without price.

You come. In one sense, that is the easiest possible term. Here, it's a gift.

You can come up and take the legal document that pronounces you His son. It's here for the taking. It's like if the banquet door is open and others are inclined to go and you're not, you want your sin and you want to keep Satan as your father.

You won't say it like that, but that's what it means when you love your sin more. You don't want to be saved from it. You really like the ways of the devil and you like his fatherhood.

And if others are going into the banquet and they're receiving that, who are you to find fault with that? There's no place for you to find fault. Because God not only predestined who would become sons, He

predestined that His ambassadors would offer this sonship to all without price. So none should complain.

None should find difficulty. But let's talk about adoption. What are we talking about here? You know what's very interesting? The concept of adoption is not found in the Old Testament.

The Jews did not know about adoption under the Old Testament law. Not under Moses. There were no precepts given concerning it.

This adoption, foreign to the Jews, was not foreign to the Romans. The Romans did have a system of adoption. It was written into their legal code.

And what we need to remember about Paul, Paul was a Roman citizen. And by the way, Paul is the only one in all the Scriptures that speaks directly to the doctrine of adoption. Now I know we looked at a text in John.

It comes through in many other places. It's just Paul uses the term adoption. It's found only in the New Testament.

Found only in his writings. Now, under Roman law, basically adoption is not so much like what we see it today. Today when we think of adoption, primarily we're thinking of parents who go along and adopt infants.

Under Roman law, typically those who were adopted who had already come to age was typically something that was done among the wealthy. The situation that tended to adoption was you had a husband. You had a man.

He had wealth. And for whatever reason, he had no son or no children at all. And so he would look for somebody worthy to bear his name.

Somebody worthy to inherit his wealth. That's the picture. Someone to carry on the family name.

Excuse me. Let me tell you this. It's legal.

Adoption is legal. Or forensic. It's basically a declaration.

It legally declares that somebody is my child and I am their father. That's the nature of this. Some young man would be selected.

He had shown himself fit, able to carry on the family name. He was worthy of it. And a man legally would declare that's my son.

And when he declares him his son, he bears his name. He's heir. That's the idea.

A legal reality. We have it in our legal system as well. Only typically it's infants.

One thing about adoption is this. It is absolutely the prerogative of the father. Children don't make that decision.

The one being adopted doesn't make that decision. That is entirely a decision that is made by the parent. Parents are responsible as the ones to adopt.

It is their choice. The choice always rests there. Same with God.

No one is legally bound to adopt somebody else. The one doing the adopting. It's their choice.

Their choice alone. Parents' decision. It is God's prerogative to adopt who He wants to adopt.

He's under no obligation. And you know the truth is this, if He had left us in our sins to perish, He would have been totally right to have done so. Forensic.

Let's just think about that. Legal. It's a legal reality.

When we speak of a child being adopted, we are not speaking of anything that happens to his nature. When you adopt a child, it's legal. Me adopting a child doesn't make that child bear my bloodline.

No matter how much I adopt a child in this world, he is not going to get my 23 chromosomes. Doesn't happen. It's legal.

It does not have to do with his nature. Now, that is different from the way that God adopts. Because God does give us His nature.

But here's what you need to recognize. Adoption is not the doctrine you want to look to when you're looking at the nature of the Christian. Regeneration is the doctrine you want to look to when we're dealing with the nature.

In our world, adoption is totally legal. They will never biologically... They may imitate us. They may be around us.

They may see us. They may love us, our adopted children. They can follow in our tracks.

They can count us every bit their father. And we are. If we adopt, we are their father.

It is real. It is certain. It is true.

It is legally binding. They will never possess my biological nature as a biological child will. God does impart His nature.

But not through adoption. Even with Him. It's totally a legal reality.

So, I want to talk... You know what's interesting is repeatedly you had these men I was quoting, Packer, Raymond, they're saying that adoption is higher than justification. Let's talk about that for a second. Adoption and justification.

The statement that adoption is higher. Well, let's look at what they both are. Both are forensic.

Legal. Both are legal. They are declarations of what is true.

Both of them. Both of them occur by faith. We are justified by faith.

So says Romans 5.1. Listen to these two verses. John 1.12 But to all who did receive Christ, who believed in Christ's name, God the Father has given the right to become children of God. How are we given the right? It's a right.

It's a legal right. How are we given the right to become children of God? By believing in the name of Christ. Or Galatians 3.26 In Christ Jesus you're all sons of God through faith.

Now that's what you want to recognize. Both are legal declarations. Justification.

Adoption. But how do they differ? And if we're going to say adoption's higher, how is it higher? Well, what is justification? The doctrine of justification speaks to what sort of relationship? That's what we need to think about. What does justification do? What is it? What's the nature of it? Well, it has to do with the way we relate to God as lawgiver and judge.

That's what justification is all about. That's what it speaks to. Justification is God declaring what? What is declared in justification? Our righteousness.

Our pardon. Our forgiveness. That's the issue.

Justification is declaring the believer is not liable to face the penalty any longer of his guilt. There's no wrath. There's no punishment.

There's no penalty. Why? Because I've been acquitted. My sin.

And God finds me not guilty in His courtroom. That's the issue. Justification deals with God on the level of lawgiver.

On the level of judge. On the level of the one who is going to have me condemned for the sins that I've committed. It's on that level.

Justification declares a man not legally in a position any longer where he's going to pay that penalty. That's what it's about. The thing to note about justification is that justification does not of itself imply any sort of intimacy with the judge.

Not at all. God can say, I acquit you of your sin. Now out of my courtroom, I never want to see you in here.

You know, judges say that kind of thing. Young man, we're going to overlook this sin this time, but I never want to see you in my courtroom again. You see, you're going to acquit somebody of a crime and it implies nothing of closeness, communion, love, intimacy.

Not at all. It implies no deep relationship with God. But see, adoption, this is where it takes us higher.

Not that justification isn't a ground for adoption. We've got to have justification if we're going to get to adoption. You've got to be acquitted of your crimes if you're going to dwell in the presence of God.

But you know, a servant can dwell in the presence of a master or even a friend in the presence of another friend. We've got something over and above that going on here. The doctrine of adoption speaks to the relationship of the Christian to God as His Father.

It doesn't declare that I'm acquitted of my guilt. It declares God is my Father. It declares that I'm a child of God.

It declares that I'm in His family in adoption. God brings us into His family, gives us His name, makes us an heir, gives us all the privileges of sons and daughters that are entitled to the privilege of adoption. Yes, it presupposes pardon.

There's no question. But it takes us higher. To be right with God as a judge is one thing.

To be right in the center of God's family, that's another thing. To be loved and to be cared for and to be protected, that's greater. There's no question that's greater.

One deals with God as a ruler and His subjects. One deals with God as a Father and His children. One of the things that just needs to happen is we need to just dwell deeply about what sort of high honor it is to be a son of God.

One of the things that has to happen is we have to back away from taking things for granted. You see, that familiarity breeds contempt. We can become so familiar.

My brother was trying to draw this out in the first hour. We've become so familiar with the term Father. If you really think, yes, Old Testament, Yahweh, Yahweh, Yahweh.

You come to the New Testament, Father, Father, Father. It doesn't undo the reverence. It doesn't undo the holiness.

But it opens up an intimacy with God. Why? Why? Because the Messiah has come. It's just opened this door and access has been made.

But you think, I have your laptop. And I accidentally drop it. And it breaks.

And you come up and you put your arm around me and you say, brother, it's okay. You're forgiven. I have another one at work that I own.

That one was old anyway. I said, thank you, brother. I didn't have money to pay for another one.

If you got upset, and I throw your laptop on the ground, I mean, I do it intentionally. I do it boldly. I do it blatantly.

And you know I did. But then I look at you and I feel, after it interrupts our fellowship and friendship, I regret it. And I go to you and ask you to forgive me.

And you do. I'm even more thankful. Because I realize I violated our relationship to a greater degree.

And you're forgiving me. And I feel, I mean, you know, you're putting yourself in this place. You'd be relieved.

But imagine this. Imagine you committed the most hellish sins imaginable against the King of Kings. And He came along to you and He said, you deserve the torments of hell.

You deserve the lake of fire. Remember that volcano you looked down into? You deserve that. But I am going to just remove you from existence.

I'm just going to annihilate you. Listen, I don't know if that sounds like good news to you, but I can tell you those in hell would rejoice at that offer. Even allied soldiers during World War II were given cyanide pills in case they got caught in certain situations and they would rather pop those pills than suffer the torture.

To avoid torture, to avoid punishment, is viewed by us as a relief. You would be relieved to be annihilated rather than suffer the lake of fire. You would be relieved.

But if God came along and told you, I am going to acquit you of your sins. Now go. Go.

Just go. And you can live this life here forevermore. I mean, after all of our rebellions, that would be tremendous news.

There's no question that would be tremendous. There's no question we would be elated. But if He said to us, but hold on, I'm going to heap wealth upon you.

I'm going to heap riches upon you. The thing is, not only am I acquitted and now I can just go on my way. That's really what the court systems here do.

If a man gets acquitted of a crime, go away. Go on with your life. Away from the judge.

But if the judge, after you've committed crimes like that, if he heaped wealth, he heaped all manner of riches and showered you with such things, you would hardly know how to answer. After what I did, I mean, if I was annihilated, I would rejoice. If He just told me to get out of your courtroom never to come back here again and you acquitted my sin, I'd be jumping for joy.

You're going to heap wealth on me? Don't you know what I did? I mean, if He says, I'm going to adopt you into My family, My firstborn son, I'm going to execute him in your place and I'm going to bring you into My family. Brethren, it's a fairy tale. It's a fairy tale.

You can hardly imagine a story like that. And what? If you're a king, I'm going to come into your house? Not only into my house, you're going to sit on My throne with Me and you're going to wear a crown. I mean, we're not even to the point where you don't have an answer.

It's like, who could think of such a thing? I'm going to go into your house as a son? Not as a slave? Not as a servant? Not even as a friend? But as a son. You see, John says, Behold. Behold the category of love.

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that He should call us sons of God. Higher. The climax.

The apex. The supreme blessing of the Gospel. Packer believes if you've got eyes to see it, the whole New Testament can be summed up this way.

Sonship through propitiation. We need to remember who we are. Well, Father, I just pray, I pray that as Paul goes on to say to the praise of Your glorious grace, Lord, I pray that this reality of adoption would permeate our thick skulls.

Lord, we can be slow, and I can be slow. But Lord, help us to grasp that we might live in light of these realities and worship in light of these realities and be who we should be as the children of God. Lord, us just saying thank You seems... It says, the songwriter says, what language shall we borrow to thank Thee, dearest friend? We hardly know what language, what words in our language.

We feel like we need another one to express... Lord, I pray that You'd help us as a church to be swallowed in the glories of being brought into the membership of the family of God, the household of God. Lord, as our Father, loved like Christ is loved, Lord, we ask You, please, Lord, in all Your faithfulness to Your children, we ask You, Lord, as a faithful Father, lead us, protect us, keep us, help us, give us grace in all this glorious grace. Give us more grace.

More grace. More grace. Great grace to excel still more and more and to love more and more and to walk worthy of this calling to which we have been called as children of light, as children to seek to imitate You and to have Your character.

Lord, by Your Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance, the Spirit of adoption, we pray that there would be such spiritual power resonating in our lives as Your children that we would stand clearly apart and we would ask and we would just resonate this prayer to You, back to You again that our Lord Jesus Christ prayed so long ago. Lord, we pray that You would so deal with us that the world would see for certain that You have loved us like You have loved Christ. That was His prayer.

We would pray the same. Lord, do such things amongst us as a church that would draw the attention of the onlooking world. Not just that they would see we're different.

Not just that they would see that we have a different message. Not just that they would see that we identify with Christ. But Lord, may they see by Your love to us that we are the redeemed.

Lord, please, as our Savior has prayed it, we would pray it. We pray that there would be a reality to it in our day. That it would be recognized that the watching world would not be oblivious to the church of God in its midst, but they would recognize and it would be brought to bear on their eyeballs and their brains that there is a people in this world who are so loved as Christ was loved.

Father, we pray, I pray, that there would be manifestations of this. May I see it in one of the brethren after another in the weeks ahead that Your love is coming forth. It's being manifested in one way after another after another after another.

Lord, in the coming ages, we recognize that this immeasurable riches of Your grace and kindness are going to be lavished upon us. But I pray, Father, that in whatever ways, the chiefest ways, the best ways, that Your love can be manifested, it would be manifested in our day at this time now while we still live in the midst of this passing world and in the midst of a world that is controlled by Satan. We pray that the loved ones of God would... Lord, may we bear a mark on our foreheads and on our hands that indicate we're the loved ones of the living God, of the heavenly Father.

Lord, I ask this in Christ's name. Amen.

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