

# Adoption as the Foundation of Prayer

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Date: 12 January 2025

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[ 0 : 00 ] So let's tell you about Thomas Boston briefly. He was a chap who lived from 1676 to 1732.

! He was a prominent Church of Scotland minister, a prolific theological writer.! Boston was saved under the preaching of a chap called Henry Erskine in Scotland.

Boston was a master in linguistics. He learned the biblical languages. He learned French and Dutch and many of his sermons and books have been widely published and are still read today.

Boston experienced many of the sorrows in life. He lost his mother at age 15 and his father 10 years later. Boston would later, when married, buried six of their 10 children.

He settled in ministry in the Scottish village of Simprin and discovered many people there who were ignorant of spiritual truths and who neglected family worship. He ministered in Simprin for eight years and then moved to Ettrick, where he ministered in the parish for 25 years. He ended up marrying a girl called Catherine Brown, who he said he saw sparkles of grace within her. Isn't that wonderful?

[ 1 : 40 ] He considered marriage to be a gift from the Lord, even though his wife suffered many bouts of depression and insanity. From 1720, she was often confined to an apartment where Thomas said she was an easy target for Satan's onslaughts, both concerning her assurance of salvation and her peace with God.

In his first 10 years of ministry in Ettrick, he saw very little fruit. He was at the subject of serious controversy in his denomination as well, the Church of Scotland, as he advocated preaching the free grace of God. Boston often suffered acute physical pain and weakness, but in all his trials, people said that he endured them cheerfully and in submission to God. Importantly this evening, he was a man who knew what it was to pray. Each Monday morning, he would rise early to pray for hours.

He devoted time to pray during the week, and in almost every page of his autobiography, he said he laid one matter after another before the Lord in prayer. People in his congregation in Ettrick saw him take to the pulpit on the Lord's Day, and they would say this, when his congregation saw him enter the pulpit on the morning of the Lord's Day, they knew they were looking into the face of one who had just come forth from intimate communion with God and who at once was God's ambassador and their friends.

After he died, someone said of Boston's ministry that Boston did more to fan into flame true piety in Scotland than any other single minister in his generation. So we're in the hands of a good chap if we're being helped by him when thinking about prayer. Central to his view on prayer was the doctrine of adoption, and he traced this doctrine back to prayer as to God as our Father. So we're going to think firstly about adoption because Boston says that's the foundation of prayer. That's why we have the privilege of praying our Father. And then we'll think about prayer, looking at the Lord's Prayer briefly.

So first of all, adoption as the foundation of prayer. We'll read later the Lord's Prayer, which as we know, starts our Father who is in heaven. And Boston says of this, the children of God are those who only can or are capable to pray acceptably, for they can indeed call God Father. We cannot pray acceptably unless he be our Father and we his children, namely by regeneration and adoption.

[ 5 : 07 ] You might be thinking as you read that, what about unconverted Christians or perhaps my children, if we have them, can they pray before they're converted? Well, Boston would say, say yes, the Lord may choose to answer prayers of the unbeliever by his grace. And obviously, all of us can call to the Lord for mercy, otherwise we wouldn't become Christians. We wouldn't become the children of God.

But to truly be in communion with God, we need to be his adopted children. So he says this is key to prayer. So what is adoption? What is it to belong to the family of God? Well, think of two families in the world, the family of Satan and the family of God. All of us are naturally over there. And when we're born, aren't we into the family of Satan, for we're born sinners. But God, by his grace, brings people to his family, to the family of God. And to think about two callings, there's a universal call and an effectual call. By universal, we mean it is universal.

The gospel can be preached, the whole world. And by effectual, we mean God's calling is effective. If God calls a sinner, they will come to know him by his grace. We could also call this irresistible grace. Hopefully, this illustration is somewhat helpful. When I worked at Primark, I had two buttons that I could press when I was on the checkouts that said, check out number four, please, for example.

The two buttons, one was female, one was male. It was very exciting. But it wasn't always a very effective way of calling people. People in the queue might hear the call, but they might not register. That's the call for them. And so, sometimes I would have to beckon them, myself, wave to them, grab their attention if they're at the front of the queue, come over.

And that makes me think of these two calls. The universal call is like that button, check out number four, please. Everybody could hear that. But not until I beckon someone towards the till might they come. And so, I can serve them. And that's true of the gospel. Many people can hear of it, but it's not until God comes himself to them by his spirit will someone effectively become a child of God's. We could define, so once we're called into the family of God, once he's worked in us, we can find ourselves as adopted children of God. And Boston defines this as an act of transfer from an alien family into the family of God himself, which then made me think of aliens.

[ 8 : 33 ] Weird people from other planets. We have weird ideas about them. Are they green like that? What do they travel in? How do they speak? We might have weird ideas. And it's like we were once aliens to God.

It's like we were once weird for not following our creator, not looking to him. We were weird for saying no to him, no to his rule, no to his love. But by his grace, he transfers us to his family. And imagine letting an alien into your family. Imagine growing up with parents and all of a sudden, your parents say to you, we're going to adopt someone. We're going to invite someone else into our family. And so they now live in our family. They now live in our house. They now get to share inheritance with us. They now also get a hug from mum and dad before bedtime. It would be, it could be hard, but it's an extraordinary thing. An extraordinary privilege to become an adopted child.

And that's who we are with God. We're adopted into his family. I'll just get rid of those aliens for now.

And it's a Trinitarian work. Boston helps us to see. So looking at scripture, in 1 John chapter 3, verse 1, you might want to look it up. We're told that we're adopted by God the Father. 1 John chapter 3, verse 1. See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God.

[ 10 : 31 ] We're adopted by God the Father. And we're adopted in Jesus Christ. Ephesians chapter 1, Ephesians chapter 1, verse 5. In love, he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and will. Boston says Christ is our elder brother.

Father. He has come as one of us in order that by our elder brother's obedience and satisfaction, he purchases our adoption. And it's also a work of the Spirit. Romans 8, verse 14.

Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you receive does not make you slaves so that you live in fear again. Rather, the Spirit you receive brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him, by the Spirit, we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we can be God's children. And Boston says of the Spirit's work in us that though Satan fights to retain his children, he fights to keep us in his family, the Spirit of Christ presses forward the elect and determines to bring them into the family of God. It's a work of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And adoption gives us many privileges. Boston highlights many of them, but I'm going to just pick a few which I think are particularly helpful when we're thinking about prayer.

So because, apparently I've just done 10,000 steps. Sorry, distracted. So a distinct privilege of adoption is that we have access and communion with God.

[12:56] And that's something we're interested in this evening as we're thinking about prayer. We may, as children, come further than others before God. We may, as his children, come with holy boldness. For God is our Father and he wants to be familiar with his children. And so we can come and we can pour out our complaints to him. We can tell him our wants. We can express our love for him who has brought us from this alien family to be his very own sons and daughters.

And in our praying, we can now know God's fatherly pity and love. Boston takes us to this verse. In Isaiah, can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has born? Though she may forget, I will not forget you. We, as God's children, can know his fatherly love and pity. The bond between a mother and a child is great. But even some mothers may forget a child.

But God's love, God's fatherly love is greater than a mother's love for their children. Imagine that. And so he will not forget us. He will not forget to have love and compassion on us. We come close to a God who loves us.

[14:46] And in the Lord, we also find protection. We have a father who we can run to for protection from the fiery darts of the evil one, Boston says. And he takes us to this verse in Psalm 27. The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid? We come to him and we know his protection. And we also know his provision for us. He is a father who delights to provide for his children. Let's turn just a little bit at Luke chapter 11. Luke chapter 11.

Which of you, this is from verse 11. Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask of him? Imagine that scene of a child going to his father and asking for a fish and instead they give them a poisonous snake. What an awful father that would be. Or if a child comes and asks for an egg, would give him a scorpion instead. It's silly.

And Jesus is saying, even though you're sinful people, even though you're that, you know how to give good gifts to your children. How much more then does your Father in heaven know how to give good gifts to you? And so we can come to him in prayer and ask for his provisions, knowing that he is our Father and he will give us good gifts. So, knowing the privileges of adoption, that Boston speaks about here, it's no wonder that he spent much time in prayer and communion with his Father. How much then should we be thinking of spending much time in prayer with our Father if we know these privileges of being his adopted children? Knowing that we have unique access to him as the children of God, knowing that we come to the one who's all compassion, who's all loving, who's committed to protecting and providing for us. We're going to think more from the Lord's Prayer in a moment, but firstly, we're going to sing a hymn. It goes to the familiar tune, the tune that goes to Immortal, Invisible, and it's a hymn all about how we're adopted children of God. And in the hymn, it talks about us being sons of God. So, if you're a lady here this morning, it's true you're daughters of God, but actually it picks up on good New Testament language. For in the New Testament times, the son would be the heir, wouldn't they? So, it's good biblical language. So, we'll know the tune, even if we don't know the words, but they're great words. So, let's stand and sing. We're adopted children of God, and now we're thinking about prayer as the fruition of adoption. So, it's something we have the privilege of doing as the children of God. So, we're going to go through the Lord's Prayer being guided by

Thomas Boston's thoughts on it. So, Matthew chapter 6 and verse 9 to 13. Let's turn to these familiar words, but wonderful words that Jesus uses to teach his disciples to pray.

This, then, is how you should pray. Matthew 6 verse 9. This, then, is how you should pray. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

[19:42] Boston begins, splits up the Lord's Prayer into three parts. The preface, the introduction, the petitions, and the conclusion. And speaking on God being our Father, he says we should draw near to God in prayer with childlike dispositions and affections towards him. He is our Father in heaven. We come as his children. And as he is our Father in heaven, we're to think about respect towards him, respect as our Father in heaven. Malachi chapter 1 verse 6 says this, a son honors his father and a slave his master. If I am a father, where is the honor to you me?

If I am a master, where is the respect to you me? Says the Lord Almighty. We're to remember that he is our Father, and fathers should be respected, shouldn't they?

And he is not just any father, but he is our Father in heaven. Whether we were in, even before we became children of God, God is due respect. He is due honor, isn't he? But we don't come to him now as his children with slavish fear, do we? Before we were Christians, we might do. We might come to him shaking, terrified if we understood rightly who God was. But now we come to him out of fear because we know who he is. We know he is God. We know he is holy and mighty. Sinclair Ferguson helpfully talks about what it means to fear the Lord.

The fear of the Lord is our undefinable mixture of reverence, fear, pleasure, and joy. That can be all that we come with. All that we come with to the Lord as we come to him with respect, which fills our hearts when we realize who God is and what he has done for us.

Remembering, as Hebrews says, he is our God who is a consuming fire. He is our Father God Almighty. I think I've heard this said, not our Daddy Almighty. We're to remember that. When we come to him with confidence, respect and confidence, a remembering that he is in heaven, a remembering that we can be confident that he will hear us and that he can do things. Thomas Boston says this, Our Father in heaven encourages us to eye his sovereign power and dominion over all things in our address to him, believing that he is able to help us in our greatest straits and that nothing is too hard for him, but he can do whatsoever he will. This is noble ground for faith, for confidence.

[ 23 : 04 ] Our Father on earth may be unable to help, but our Father in heaven is almighty, and has power to help in every case. Wow. That's the great confidence we can come to God with.

So next, the petitions, and he splits them up into two bits. Firstly, petitions about God's glory, and then our good. So thinking about petitions about God's glory, we begin, hallowed be your name. Hallowed be your name. And when we're thinking about this, it's thinking about being concerned for God's glory above all things. We come to him saying, your glory first. May your name be hallowed. May your name be glorified. Not mine. For God is above all things.

God is above all things. And in this prayer, we're praying for God's holiness to be manifested, declared, shown, and acknowledged by us and by others. We're asking that the beauty of his holiness would shine out to the world. Just as we ourselves have come to love and delight in God, have come to see the beauty of his holiness. So we pray that others would see that too. In this, we're praying, as Jesus prayed, glorify your name. Glorify your name. It's all about God's glory. glory. And then, your kingdom come. Boston says that is the advancement of his kingdom and should be desired by all the children of God. And Boston identifies four things about God's kingdom. He says, when we're praying that your kingdom come, think of the kingdom of his power, his universal reign over all his creation by his divine providence, whether people are willing to submit to that or unwilling to submit to that. So the kingdom of his power, the kingdom of the gospel, by which Jesus Christ reigns by his word and through the offices of his church. So the kingdom, the gospel, the kingdom of his grace, the kingdom of his grace, the thinking about the church, the people that have known God's grace and know that Christ dwells within our hearts, in our hearts, his kingdom.

[ 25 : 54 ] And the kingdom of his glory, the blessed eternal state that we will arrive in when Jesus Christ comes again.

And so we're thinking things now and things future. And Boston says of this particular petition, and this has really challenged me, he says, show yourselves to be of the family of God by your concern that his kingdom may come.

For this is language of those who cry unto God, Abba, Father. It is their father's kingdom. How then can the children not be concerned for it? Their father's honor must be dear to them.

And to the piano, maybe. We'll pick those up. Let's start again.

Show yourselves to be of the family of God by your concern that his kingdom may come. For this is language of those who cry unto God, Abba, Father. It is their father's kingdom. It's our father's kingdom.

[ 27 : 04 ] How then can the children not be concerned for it? Their father's honor must be dear to them. Have you a concern for the coming of his kingdom? Do your heart say within you, your kingdom come?

If it be not so, Boston says God is not your father. But he is so. That's challenging.

If you think about your prayers, if you think about what you pray for, how much time is spent praying your kingdom come? Would your kingdom advance? Would your rule be made known to the world?

Or is it coming with our own material needs or people's health needs, which are right things to pray for? We can absolutely pray for them.

But do we have a concern to pray for these things? Will we have a concern to pray for this in our week of prayer? And next, we pray your will be done.

[ 28 : 06 ] And by praying this, Boston says, we are saying, I want to be part of your kingdom coming and your name to be glorified. If we're not interested in praying your will be done, if we don't want to do his will, then actually maybe we're turning to sin.

If we want to say my way is better. But that's not what the adopted children of God should be wanting. And it can be a really scary thing to pray your will be done, especially when I think my will is right.

But we pray in humble submission to our Father. Boston says, God must command and you must obey without disputing your Father's orders.

Your Father's will must be yours. You must give him internal as well as external obedience.

Children of God will love, reverence and delight in him and fear to offend him.

So we've seen petitions about God's glory. And next we see petitions about our goods. Our good as his children. Give us today our daily breads.

[ 29 : 28 ] Our humans depend wholly and entirely on God's bounty for all the means and comforts of life.

God is the creator, preserver, owner and life giver. And so we're being taught in this line, Jesus, I depend on you.

I depend on you for even my basic needs today. And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.

This teaches us to plead our inability to pay off our debt of sin. To instead seek God's forgiveness through Christ's merit.

It's a reminder to us of how we need to keep doing that. And then we're told to pray, and Lord, lead us not into temptation.

[ 30 : 37 ] And deliver us from evil. And he splits this up. One with preventing grace. And one with assisting grace. And to help me sort of picture this a bit more.

Maybe it's only helpful for me because I have asthma. Brown inhalers are meant to prevent asthma. Blue inhalers are meant to assist me if I'm having an asthma attack.

So that's why there's a picture of an inhaler on there. I hope it helps you. If it doesn't, don't worry. So lead us not into temptation.

Praying that. We're praying, God, keep me in your grace. By your grace and prevent temptations from coming my way.

And when we're praying that, we're recognizing that temptations and sins are still a danger for the Christian. We're not immune from them. We're not in a sinless state yet.

[ 31 : 43 ] Boston says of this petition, our desire, we should desire to be kept from engaging with temptations, as with an enemy too strong for them.

For our desire as children of God should be like our father, to grow like our father, to grow in the family likeness. And then deliver us from evil.

So the blue inhaler I would use if I was wheezy and struggling with asthma to assist me in the asthma attacks. And that's what deliver us from evil is sort of praying for.

Deliver me in the temptations. There's this wonderful verse, reassuring verse, in 1 Corinthians 10 verse 13, no temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind.

And God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

[ 32 : 53 ] So that gives us confidence to pray, deliver us from evil. Lord, help me to find a way out of this temptation. As we pray that we can be confident, as we heard in Psalm 121 last week, he will not let our foot slip.

We're confident in his keeping power as we pray that. And there's, I think, two or three things Boston wants to say about this line, deliver us from evil.

Firstly, we find deliverance in the temptations. Deliverance in the temptations. That God would help us to stand firm in the hour of temptation.

Deliverance under temptations. Sometimes we're in the mess and muck of sin, of falling into those temptations, and we struggle to get out.

So we need to cry out to God, like Joan her in the belly. Free me, help me, work for me, God, in this mess that I have brought upon myself.

[ 34 : 05 ] And then deliverance completely from sin. As we pray this, we're longing for our eternal home, which will be free from sin, free from temptations.

Boston says, sinning is more terrible than suffering in the eyes of the children of God. They pray to be delivered from sin at any rate, at any cost, whatever it will cost.

It is a black mark of one that belongs not to God when there is no parting betwixt between him and his lusts. It is not a spot of God's children. It is in the nature of all God's children to desire to be home.

They know this prayer will never be completely and fully answered till they be beyond the clouds, but from their hearts they desire it. Let us evidence ourselves to be the children of God by our ardent desires for this complete deliverance from sin.

We're longing for better, longing for home as we pray that. And then there's the conclusion, which isn't in Scripture, well, certainly not in our NIVs.

[ 35 : 29 ] There is in the footnote. And for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Whether Jesus did teach his disciples to pray that or not, it's a really helpful line. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. And they remind us at the end of this prayer, again, of who our Father is and what belongs to him, that he is sovereign, almighty, and his glory is the one we're interested in, not our own.

And so that's a sort of whistle-stop tour through the Lord's Prayer with the help of Thomas Boston, who we've been helped to see that adoption is the foundation of prayer and adoption is the fruition of prayer as we pray, our Father.

And final word from Boston, prayer teaches the adopted children of God that no children are so happy as God's children are, for they have the most honorable Father, the most loving and compassionate Father, the most helpful Father, the richest Father, and the wisest Father of all. Quite a lot has gone out to you this evening. And why don't we just pause for a moment and just respond to God quietly in our hearts.

[ 37 : 02 ] Maybe there's something we need to confess. Maybe we just need to pray, Lord, teach me to pray. Whatever it is, just take a moment. Amen. Amen.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Let's grab a microphone, mainly for the sake of the recording. There you go. Roger will just turn it on. There we go. Testing one, two, three.

Yeah. It's interesting you picked this subject, Daniel, because today is on premier radio. There was the coming together of praying at 12 o'clock for our nation.

[ 38 : 51 ] Oh, cool. The Lord's Prayer. Wow. So I don't know if I only did it at 12 o'clock, but it's a call to prayer that our nation would come back to the Lord and we repent. Wow. So, yeah, it's quite interesting you picked this subject because I think as a nation, we need the Lord, don't we?

Yeah. We've gone away from him. I just want to add that. Thank you. That's helpful to know that's going on. I had no idea. Brilliant. Any other comments or questions?

I was really interested in what you were saying about, and I haven't really thought about this, the whole idea of adoption and prayer in terms of particularly being a father and what that means for my children.

It was helpful what you said, that our children can pray and they can pray for God's mercy.

I mean, have you any thoughts about how we approach that with our children? Because on one hand, I don't want to fall into the pit of presumption and to be acting with my children as if they are already saved, if they are not.

[ 40 : 12 ] But on the other hand, I don't want in our household to be treating them like little pagans because they're within the covenant of grace. They're being raised in the church.

Has anyone really got any thoughts about that? Because I've never really intentionally in our prayer time considered that. Yeah. Yeah. It's interesting. See if anybody does have thoughts on it before I jump in.

It's something I've definitely wrestled with over the years, and I think Boston is helpful on this. It's that the Lord is merciful and he will, like, he's big enough and powerful enough to hear our prayers,

whether we're Christian or not.

But there is a difference between praying as the child of God and not. And so I'd love to think that the Lord is answering the prayers of non-Christians as a way to sort of show him, yeah, I do answer your prayers.

And that's a gracious thing of him to do. But they can't pray, my Father in heaven, in the way that the true child of God can.

[ 41 : 34 ] Yes, yeah. And you did say something along the lines of that only the true believer can have that real communion with God. So the unbeliever can cry out to God for mercy, can make requests and petitions, but that sense is that.

Thank you. That was helpful. Great. Thank you. Any other? Is there the Mark and Jerome? Sorry, but just something at the end, that last slide about how God is so rich in mercy and helpful, wisest. It just makes me as a father see my own inadequacies as a father. And please thank the Lord that I have such a great heavenly Father to look to.

So that's really, really helpful. And I guess how when we make mistakes as human fathers and mothers, we actually point them to an even better father.

Yeah. Yeah. Any more? Any more?

[ 43 : 14 ] Let's pray this prayer and then we'll pray for other things. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not in temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For yours is the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Sorry, I forgot about kingdom. But there we go. What are some things we can... Let's pray.