

# Adoption (3)

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] as we prepare ourselves to come to the table and to the emblems of love set out before us i want us to meditate upon god's word and in the dependence on god's spirit to meditate upon our motivation for responding to god in service we've been thinking of the the glories of our adoption as the children of god i want to see how our adoption as god's children frees us from the mindset of being a slave you see our calling as believers is to respond to the love of god our father in glad obedience here is love not that we love god but that he first loved us but all too often there's a strong temptation to see our our service our christian acts in some way as a kind of payment to god a way of earning god's acceptance that is very much a pre-christian attitude but too readily it smuggles its way into our thinking as christians and we do need to seek to riddle ourselves of this false idea this harmful this destructive idea that we earn in any way god's love and acceptance and one of the ways in which the scriptures uh reinforce this is by setting up a contrast between the slave and the son it's an interesting contrast because in some ways it doesn't fit it's not the contrast that you would expect you would think that that there would be a contrast between perhaps an orphan and an adopted son but again and again the contrast is made between a slave and a son so paul says in romans 8 15 you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear but you receive the spirit of adoption by him we cry abba father contrast between a slave and a son by adoption and to the galatians he says again so you are no longer a slave but a son and since you are a son god has made you also an heir so there is this great contrast we have been adopted into the family of god we've been transferred from the family in which we were sons of disobedience and sons of wrath brought into the family of god and in the one place we were slaves and we thought like slaves and in the the new place in the new location in the new family we are to think like sons because that is indeed what we are but we're going to see how we can slip back into the way of thinking of slaves and we're going to see that from our meditation on the parable of the two sons but before we look at the parable that jesus taught i want us just to to remind ourselves of the tremendous privilege that we have in being called the children of god children of god by adoption listen to what our confession says are the privileges of the children of god the children by adoption it says they are taken into the number and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the

children of god have his name put upon them receive the spirit of adoption have access to the throne of grace with boldness and so on marvelous marvelous marvelous privilege once children of wrath now children of god called out by god from slavery to sin and in a sense just as god called out his people israel from the bondage of egypt israel's my firstborn son therefore i say to you let my son go that he may serve me unconditional election unconditional love it is not for any good in me or in you that god called us to be his children simply from the overflow of his love he sets his design upon us and he will not take no for an answer he overcomes every obstacle to bring us into the embrace of his family what an amazing privilege it is chosen by god again adoption brings that out so clearly for us it's such a such a wonderful picture you might have heard the story of the little boy who was adopted and when his friends at school found out that he was an adopted child who began to tease him cruelly as children often will do and his father got to hear of his father and his father and his father got to hear of this and one day after school his father asked him what do you say to your friends at school when they tease you for the fact that we have adopted you and the child responds i just tell them this i say that your parents had no choice they simply had no choice but my parents they simply had no choice but my parents they chose me chosen by god the wonder of his electing grace we have his name put on us god says i will be a father to you and you will be my sons and daughters and this was what was happening to israel at mount sinai they were being constituted the family of god god calls them to himself puts his name puts his name on them and then tells them now these are these are the house rules these are the family rules and they

would bind themselves to responding to god because they by grace had been made family and the great motivation back then was to be love and gratitude that is the solid platform for all of our service of god the security the the firm knowledge that we are loved by our heavenly father that we are secure in our position in the family of god and again if we if we think of the the ordering of the the ordering of the events in exodus then we we're enabled to think out how law and grace fit together remember that the ten commandments were given to a people who were redeemed they they are redeemed by god at the cost of blood they're brought out of egypt and there's all this bloodshed with the the passover lambs being sacrificed in every home and the sign of blood being put upon the the the doorposts and the lintel brought out across the the red sea brought to god himself brought into his embrace and it is to a redeemed people that the law that the law is given a people already bought and accepted by god so entry into the family of god has always been by grace and not works sadly down through the years god's people uh lose sight of that and begin to to think that it is by the the keeping of the law that they will find acceptance before god and so uh develop a a legal way of thinking and multiply rules in order to earn god's acceptance and so when paul writes his letters uh uh very many of them are are addressing people with this mindset and to the romans and to the galatians especially paul is driving home the paul is driving home the truth that we are saved by faith and not by our works not by even faith plus our works but by faith alone in christ alone god gives us a full acceptance a perfect standing in his family by faith we do nothing at all to earn it to the man who does not work but trust god who justifies the wicked his faith is credited as righteousness so here's the gospel the gospel uh in the the old testament the gospel in the new testament i am accepted by god and therefore i obey and all manner of religion that does not know the gospel turns it around and says i obey god and therefore i hope to be accepted you see it's a reversal of the gospel the first is the motivation of of sonship god the father accepts me and in this this glad and joyful place of of security i respond to him but the attitude of the of the slave is i must prize from this unwilling grudging uh overlord his acceptance by my obedience the son says my father loves me therefore i obey now we all have different relationships with our our earthly fathers our physical fathers but if we have had a good relationship with our father then we do get something of an insight into this i know that i had a good relationship with my own father i have a good relationship with my father i remember when when we were little and growing up uh he kept a a pretty tight ship and didn't spare us uh in discipline but there came the point when uh it was much more the fear of displeasing him the fact that he would be upset that was a deterrent to me more than the than the slipper or the belt or whatever it was at the time that was used as the the rod of correction so it is with the son to be adopted as a child of god we're brought into the presence of god our eyes blinking with wonder that it is thus and we want to ask our father how is it i may please you how is it that i may serve you this is what thomas chalmers uh was speaking of when he spoke of the expulsive power of a new affection the characteristic of the slave is that there's no relationship with the father figure he's simply an authority figure and he thinks the slave thinks if he can obey and if he can work then he will gain acceptance from the father and there are lots of people and they are moral people and they've never become christians they have never come to christ they've never entered into relationship with the father through the lord jesus christ and they have the attitude of a slave they are moral because by being moral and upright they think they please god and earn his favor that's a deadly attitude and it's an attitude that we as christians must guard against slipping back into well the parable of the the two sons we call it the parable of the prodigal son and sometimes the parable of the the forgiving father i want us to think in terms of the parable of the the two sons and jesus addresses that the parables in this chapter to a particular people it's to the the the pharisees and the scribes who are murmuring at the grace of the lord jesus at his acceptance of those that they called sinners publicans and sinners those the typecast is being outside uh they're a group of buttoned up uptight religious people quick to look down on others and wag their finger and they're annoyed at jesus uh breadth of acceptance uh breadth of acceptance and so jesus tells them a series of parables that shows that that god's approval doesn't rest on this on us having become good enough and the the parable of the two sons is the the third and the most powerful of of these parables it's like a a scud missile which gets underneath the radar of the pharisees and and explodes their their self self-righteousness and their their attitude their slaves attitude it's a story of course of two boys in a farm a prosperous farm an estate with a loving father two boys and in different ways they show that they have lost the attitude of sonship neither of them is motivated by love for their father let's see how it works out uh in the story the first lost son is the youngest son

goes to his father and he asks for his inheritance up front and as a younger son this would amount to one-third of the inheritance the two-thirds would fall to the elder brother one-third to the younger but what's his most shocking in the context is that in going to his father and saying father give me my inheritance up front he was in effect saying father i wish you were dead i wish you were as good as dead that i may derive from you what i really want from you you see what i want from you is not uh not a relationship with you i do not want to walk with you and enjoy you i want what i can have materially from you what i derive from being your son and so his father gives him the inheritance due him and the sun goes off and he kicks over the traces in a far-off country he throws off all the restraint that he had been brought up within this god-fearing home he lives fast wine women song and eventually his his money runs out and the queue of friends who were always at his door because he always had money and always knew how to have a good time they disappear and he's left with no support and he's supposed to go and find a means of income by by hiring himself out to a pig owner a pig farmer again this was about the the the most degrading activity a jewish boy could uh could have because

pigs of course were unclean animals despised animals and here he is up to his knees in the mud of the pigsty feeding pods to the pigs and so hungry so absolutely famished that he would be tempted he thinks to to get down on all fours and eat like the pigs from the trough now of course the younger son in many ways is a picture of the the kind of person that uh that we come across in our day-to-day work who has got no interest whatsoever in the church completely non-religious has turned his back on on what people so are so quick to call institutionalized religion today just has nothing to do with it uh it's out there to have a good time to enjoy himself to to be authentic to pursue his own agenda but it's interesting that when this religious brother comes to himself and begins to think about the father who of course uh is representing god in the in the parable it's interesting that that his first thoughts are still slavish thoughts he has to have his thinking corrected later on by the father look how this works out he has this moment of self-awareness and he sees that it's crazy that uh he's in this position uh he could go back he says and and he could at least enjoy the position of a hired servant he'll go back and he'll ask his father to make him a hired servant now what's interesting here is that uh many of the commentators point out that a hired servant was different from the the regular servant on an estate like this there were the servants uh who did the farm work who lived on the place and then there there was another category of people hired servants who were who were tradesmen and craftsmen who lived in local villages and who were brought in who are who are hired for the particular job hired for a day or two to do tasks for the owner and many think that the young son's strategy was to to go back and to make restitution him for the way he had disgraced the family and he intends in effect to say father i know i don't have a right to come back into the family but if you apprentice me to one of your hired servants then i'll be able to pay back the debt somehow i've no right to be a son or even to to live within the confines but make me a hired servant and i'll buy my way back and so his motivation is to pay off his sin to earn his way back into the family now with the elder brother that that mentality that way of thinking is even more explicit the younger brother's request as we know is simply swept aside by the father he doesn't even have an opportunity to to go right through with the little speech that he had prepared his father simply embraces him with love and puts on him the symbols of sonship cloths him in new clothes puts sandals on his feet the ring of sonship on his finger and then the wealth welcoming party is ordered but the when the invitation goes out to the elder brother to join the feast his response to the father's one of bitterness lo he says these many years do i serve thee neither transgress i at any time my commandment and yet

[ 20 : 28 ] i never gave us me a kid that i might make merry with my friends now in some of the the other translations it's even more striking all these years i slaved for thee you see he has all the time been at home and yet in a sense he's been away from home he's not been thinking as a son at all he's been thinking as a slave he's been thinking that he's he's given so much by way of dutiful service to his father that his father owes him something he's been as lost as his younger brother what are some of the the the ways that this this kind of thinking works its way out spurgeon once told a story which illustrated the fact that people can look to god for something other than god himself he said that once upon a time there was a gardener who grew an enormous carrot and he took it to the king and he said my lord this is the greatest character that i've ever grown or ever will grow and i want to present it to you as a token of my love and my respect for you and the king was touched by this this uh a straightforward expression of of love and loyalty and he said to the gardener you're clearly a good steward of the earth and i own a pot of land next to you as i want to

give it to you as a garden the gardener went home amazed and delighted the spurgeon says there was a nobleman who was uh listening in on this audience and thought to himself well if that's what you get for a carrot what if you give the king something better so the next day the nobleman came before the king with a handsome black stallion and he bowed low and he said my lord i breed horses and this is the finest horse that i've ever bred or ever will breed i want to present it to you as a token of my love and my respect but the king being a shrewd man realized what the what the noble was up to and simply said thank you very much and dismissed the man and the man was perplexed and so the king said to him let me explain the gardener was giving me the carrot but you were giving the horse so that you could get something for yourself that was a slave's mentality so long as we're motivated by what we can get rather than motivated by our love for the king then we're thinking like the slave because the slave has no relationship with the head of the household and love is not the the propulsive power driving his actions now sometimes uh christians can be thinking like this we can think with a slave mindset so that our labor is not a labor of love and even the the best of things can be done for getting something rather than pleasing god even things like reading a bible uh going to church preaching sermons if you're a minister we cannot they can all be done not from a delight in god but for gaining something else because i want to be for example part of the group or i want to have a successful ministry i want to have a successful youth group and it is in order to gain these other things that i'm serving and if any of these other things fail in

some way i'm devastated because i've not done them because i'm secure in the love of god i've done them because i want something from god notice also that the the slave the one who has a slave mindset has a superiority complex he thinks of himself as being superior to other people notice how dismissive the elder son is of his younger son of the younger son he thinks that he is so much better than he is he can't even bring himself to call him his brother verse 30 as soon as this thy son was come which hath devoured thy living with harlots thou has killed for him the fattened calf the the person who's thinking like a slave because all of his life is based on effort and performance in order to get something he will pride himself in those things in his effort or his performance or his intellect or his class or whatever it is he thinks is going to win him god's acceptance and will look down on those he thinks are less able or gifted or worthy and also if we're thinking like that it does mean that we are very easily hurt unless we're securing god's acceptance then we will feel sometimes that we are let down just as the elder son felt that his father had let him down he deserved more than he was getting and so if we're thinking like this then we will be apt to blame god when things go wrong we'll think that he's punishing us because we don't think of him as our father when we fall ill we're resentful because we think we deserve better from god than this we've earned it when we're criticized by other people we fall to pieces because we're not resting on god's unconditional love and his acceptance but on what other people think of us but on the other hand if we're thinking as children of god then we know that we have come to god with no rights of our own that god has accepted us not because of my performance not because of my works not because of my intellect not because of my ministry not because of anything i've done he's simply brought me in his grace into his family and has enveloped me in his love and i am as secure as i possibly could be in his family his making me his child is the great motivation for all that i will do and i know that god will not stop loving me i will not stop being a child of god i'll not stop being his adopted son when i've not done as well as i should watchman knee tells about a new convert who came in deep distress to him on one occasion and said to him you know no matter how much i pray no matter how hard i try i simply can't be i can't seem to be faithful to my lord i think i'm losing my salvation he said and he said do you see this dog here he's my dog he's house trained never makes a mess he's obedient and he's a pure delight to me

but out in the kitchen i have a son a baby son and he does make a mess he throws his food around he throws his clothes he's a total mess but who is going to inherit my kingdom it's not my dog but it's my son who is my heir and you he said are jesus christ's heir you are god's heir because it is for you that christ died our security is not through our performance or perfection it is by god's grace that we stand and are accepted and brothers and sisters does that not give us great comfort as we come uh in a moment or two to the table because at least of all times satan would come and would perplex us and would so thoughts of our unworthiness and so on and we remind ourselves this morning that we have been adopted adopted as sons and daughters of the living god and we cannot be any more secure than we are that we're not compelled to strive for acceptance and that we find our joy in god himself and his love for us not in our attainments and if we've been criticized by others well

only god's opinion of me really counts and he has accepted me in christ and if i have slipped and if i have fallen and i've looked again to my father i know i know that he still holds on to me because neither the opinion of others others nor our success in whatever realm we we work whether we're teachers or nurses or ministers or students or any of these things no matter how well we think we do in these areas nothing of these kinds is our peace our peace our peace is found only in the love of god our father our joy is found only in him behold what manner of love the father have given unto us we should be called sons of god god may god bless to us the preaching of his holy word now we're going to come to uh the lord's table after the singing of the the next psalm month yeah