

**God's Gifts:
“Adoption As Children of God”
Romans 8:12-17**

Well, let me say my warm greetings to all of you this morning. If you're a visitor here, we're so glad you are here. You stand for the reading God's word. The moment children go to their classes. To the left. I just echo my exhortation to hood is something that is just about unparalleled in North America. A ballet program to the glory of God. Dozens of our young people. It's really remarkable. And then later this week, Walk through Nativity, which I have not experienced yet. But I've heard all about it, and I'm excited to shake 4000 hands on Wednesday. Thursday and Friday. And I will have something to soothe my hands later on. Far more soothing than any balm for our fingers is God's Word, which I'm glad to read to you. Now. If, again, you're a visitor, we're glad to have you. Whether you're here in person or online. And this Christmas season, we're doing something a little bit different. We're looking at God's gifts to us. The gifts are described in Romans chapter eight. The gift we're studying today is the gift of adoption. God has adopted us into his family. Doesn't always feel like it, but we can always live like it and move toward it. The theme is from Romans 8:32-33, which says,

If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own son, but gave him for us all. That's God's great gift, the son. How will he not also with us, with him, give us all things? That is to say, many, many blessings come following the gift of the son. And we're reading about that. The gift of adoption today. Here. God's word. So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh to live according to the flesh. 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. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. Or you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry, ABBA, father! The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And if children, then heirs of God, and fellow heirs with Christ, provided that we suffer with him in order that we also might be glorified with him.

Pray with me one more time.

Give us, I pray ears, and give us hope. We ask that we might receive what you're saying to us about who we are in you. We pray in Jesus name. Amen. And now you may be seated.

So a number of years ago, maybe five years ago by now, I received one of those mildly prankish birthday cards, and it featured a young man with his hand on his hip and standing in a most extremely confident pose. This arm, and it was a picture of a man from an age past. You could tell because he had pork chop sideburns too. And he had hair that was, you know, 1978 type hair for young men at the time. And he had his head cocked to one side and he was standing by, I'm going to say a 10 or 12 year old Chevy Impala and the caption on the card said, it's tough

being both handsome and humble, but somehow you manage. Now that was part one of the joke. Part two is that if you look carefully, the Chevy Impala was in bad shape and the paint was peeling off and there was one visible tire and it was balding severely, it looked like pieces of tire were sort of falling off it as debris. And he was wearing blue jeans. In a day when, you know, blue jeans length is constantly changing. And that day you were supposed to wear long blue jeans and his were short. We used to call them flood pants. And he was wearing wingtip dress shoes with blue jeans. And you just had the sense that this man was not even close to as grand as he thought. You felt pretty sure that its confidence was exaggerated and his tire would blow, and people would tell him he was dressed like a fool, and then generally, he would be brought back to earth.

Well, that card sense of grandeur being grandiose and the sense it's all going to blow is actually something the apostle Paul addresses in Romans 5,6,7 & 8. In chapter five, he begins by telling us the first thing is that having been justified by faith in Jesus Christ, we have peace with God, and we can stand in God's presence unafraid. We don't run from God's presence. Chapter six. He says, you died with Christ and you've been raised with him. You're united to him, and if you've died with Christ, you're dead to sin and alive to righteousness. He actually says that in Christ we're instruments. The word there really usually means weapons were weapons in God's arsenal to accomplish great things for God in this world. And this comes to us but love of God through justification by faith. That's Romans chapter six, and we're at the top of the world, and we're awesome. And our hands are on our hip and we're ready to go. And then chapter seven comes along. Chapter seven, the apostle Paul speaking about himself, but about all Christians, about all believers. And he says, you know, when I examine my life, I see that I am under the flesh, I'm under the flesh and sold under sin. He said, in fact, often I hate what I do, but nothing good dwells in me. The evil I do not want to do, I find right beside me, and I keep on doing it.

In terms of the photo, the tire is going to blow. Chapter five, peace with God standing God's presence. Chapter six, instruments of Righteousness united to Christ in His death and his resurrection. Chapter seven, sold under sin. That's the tension. Then chapter eight, which we studied last week, says there is nonetheless now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. You could be condemned, but God will not condemn. You may condemn yourself, other people making them you, but in Christ God will never condemn you despite your sin. That's the first gift. And what follows then is that we can walk according to the spirit, not according to the flesh. That is a possibility. That is indeed not just a possibility, but it's something we can do.

Paul says we can meet the righteous requirement, singular of the law. If I could just review for a second, that means that there's a unity to God's law. You don't have to ask, what are all God's rules? There's really one law. Love the Lord your God with heart, soul, mind, and strength and let that pour out into love for your neighbors.

That's all. Everything else is commentary. Everything else is describing how you go about doing that, and it's within reach. God sent His Son to fulfill the law, to condemn sin. And now we walk

according to the spirit. We're sons and daughters of God are children of God. The passage says. Now when Paul describes this, he says, we're children and not debtors.

I'm going to focus on that, not debtors for a moment. Because what we're saying, what I'm saying right now is we have some a mix of high confidence and yet realism and even in fact, doubts. So we're children, not debtors. Look at it again. Verse 12. The apostle says, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. So he doesn't say what we are debtors to quite yet. The answer really is we are indebted to live according to our privilege, and that is to be sons and daughters of God. But first he says, you just need to know this. You do not owe anything to the flesh. By flesh he does not mean simply acts with your physical flesh.

The flesh is anything that's opposed to God and His Spirit. You don't own anything to the flesh. Even though we might feel like we do. I'm going to ask you to imagine that you've worked for somebody for a number of years. This man or woman is your boss, and they've told you what to do. They're perhaps very competent, but they demand a great deal. And they ask you to do something. You know, you need to do it. And they're not shy about sending emails at 9:00 or calling you at 640 in the morning telling you what to do. And the instructions are clear, and he's thankful for you, obey them and so forth. It's not onus, but he's demanding and you get another job. You no longer work for that boss. But if after working for that boss for ten years, you get a call from the boss saying, Dan, there's something you need you to do, your first instinct will be to say yes because you've been saying it for ten years. You will still feel as if you're a debtor to that old boss, but you're not. You don't work for that boss anymore. Now, I'm not talking about bosses. I'm talking about sin, about the flesh. The flesh can urge you to keep on doing something that you've been doing for a while, and. And you feel like I've got to keep on doing it. There are pathways or impulses in you to keep on, and you don't owe that boss anything.

Now, you may wonder if I'm thinking about big red letter sins like sexual sins, or taking drugs or getting drunk or something like that. But it would be a mistake to think that's what the flesh is all about. The flesh can also simply being critical and negative for no reason, or letting yourself give in to anger. Frequently for trivial reasons, or letting yourself wander into greed or envy. When you see someone who has more than you do? For reasons I don't fully understand, I went shopping yesterday. Ordinarily it's a punishment, but it was a nice day and I'm trying to take a break and went into a men's store. And in this men's store, behold, there were beautiful clothes, even unto men, and we started looking at the price tags of some of these beautiful clothes. And we came upon a sweater that cost \$3,500. Wouldn't you like to have enough money to just buy that sweater? So I have so much money I can buy a \$3,500 sweater now, I'll admit that the I mean, obviously the thought crossed my mind or I wouldn't be saying it right now, but some people. Think that way a lot. Or they think angry thoughts are critical thoughts, and that also is the way of the flesh. If we don't have to say yes to that anymore, look at what verse the 13 says.

... if you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if by the spirit you put to death or kill the deeds of the body, you will live.

Now that that word kill the needs of the body has a huge place in Christian thought over the centuries. I'll say more about it in just a minute, but we're supposed to view ourselves as simply like warriors. We're in a battle. A battle against that old master, old nature, and the new nature we have that is as believers, but also as children of God who have the ability and the summons to live like children of God. There are many ways to fall into sins. The deeds of the flesh. I mentioned, anger and being critical and coveting, but sometimes you're barely aware of it.

We just kind of float along with our society, with trends, uncritically taking them in. I read an article that made me think of that this week in the New York Times. A New York woman, had an article about mothering. I said, well, I'm going to read that because, you know, birth rates are plummeting. We're becoming an anti child families, anti, child society. More and more. Let's see what this article is about. This New York Times article about motherhood. And the woman who wrote the article said, came I came really close to deliberately choosing not to have children because I'm a pediatrician and I've got an important job and I do some research, and I want to have my prominent career in New York City. And I also like spending time with my friends unimpeded by children, whining or needing a diaper to be changed. But I was afraid I'd miss out and regret not having a child. And I have to tell you, I'm almost embarrassed by how much I love being a mother. I'd watch my two year old daughter string words together with difficulty in sentences, and watch her counting dogs and busses on the way to childcare. I feel her tiny arms around my neck and I think I almost missed this. Now how does that happen? That happens because you live in New York City. I'm not against New York City. I was born in New York City. You live in New York City and in New York City. Very few people have children. As expensive. And, you know, apartments are small and you just start doing what's around you.

And even Christians start to do what's around them, and they just adopt an entire child attitude without really thinking about it. And forget that the Bible says children are a blessing from the Lord. Some people would love to have children or not able, but we still have to say children are a blessing from the Lord and we will receive God's blessing. We love children because God has said they're a blessing. And if you forget that, then that's also living according to the flesh, living according to the ways of this age and not the age to come. Age in which we truly live. What was happening with that woman? She was thinking what people often think. My career will make me meaningful, will make me beloved, respected, noteworthy. Create yourself. Exercise from your life anything that would keep you from becoming all that you can be and so forth. Don't let anything interrupt your career. The Lord says children are a blessing. And so when we say no to the anti-child attitude of our age, we say yes to children.

That's a part of living as children of God, seeing the world as God does. Now, I said I'd say a word about the idea of killing sin. The term that's used in many of you would have heard it is called mortification of sin. And the study that people engage in is how do you kill sin? And the Roman Catholic Church had an idea for many centuries, and it is that there are four things you should do to kill sin.

And the first thing you should do is pray. And we say, absolutely, we agree with you on that 100%. We agree with you. In fact, this coming year, our theme for the year is going to be Seek First the Kingdom. And the first subtheme of that will be Seek First the King. So there'll be an emphasis on prayer. So we totally agree that you should pray. Then they added some other things. They said it's also good to separate from the world and become a monk or a nun. And when you do that, you take three vows. And those vows are poverty, chastity and obedience. And so you have rough clothes, so you don't give in to your self-indulgent desires. And if you wear rough enough clothes, you won't even look at that sweater that cost \$3,500. The thought won't enter your mind, which I think is exactly the way it would really work. But that was their idea. And so you live a life of poverty. You don't indulge yourself at all. You live a life of chastity. Not only do you not have relations outside marriage, you don't get married at all. And furthermore, you try to live in an enclave in which there are no women at all. And that'll keep things straight for you. Poverty, chastity, obedience. You do whatever the boss says which crushes you will. That's the way. And I just have to say, that's very mechanical. And it didn't work. And so Protestants are always quick to say the Catholic way didn't work. We're going to do it better came along and said, we agree with you on point one. We should pray the best way to modify sin is to pray to confess your sins. Examine your life before God. That's always true. And next, we're going to write self-help books, and they're going to look a lot like secular self-help books, but they'll be about Christian themes, and it'll be five ways to be a better husband and father, and six ways to work better, and seven ways to be a better, a better friend and eight ways to be happily married. Amen. Well, you know, the self-help books have a lot of good counsel in them, but the if Protestants are trying to improve on the Catholics, which we always are. Let's make sure we actually improve and don't give our list instead of God's list. And self-help books are often about self-helping as opposed to the spirit helping. In fact, the mechanical approach Paul addresses at one point in Colossians 2 he says, listen, some people advocate harshness toward the body as if that will crush sin. He says specifically, this harshness sort of body is a human precept.

Its precepts like do not handle, do not taste, do not touch, have an appearance of wisdom, but have no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. That's Colossians chapter two. So we do pray. We do seek new habits. And if we ask, what does the Bible say? So it does say we should do things. One thing it says is make no provision for the lust of the flesh, which means if you see when and how you fall into sin, don't create avenues for that sin. Don't provide an opportunity. Don't pray, lead us not into temptation. That's the Lord's Prayer, of course. And then lead yourself into temptation. So if you see a pathway, avoid that pathway. That's something the Bible clearly says. That is to say, we structure our lives to avoid sin and to live more like a child of God. But we also understand that there's no set of practices that by itself can liberate us from sin.

We're not against practices, but we don't give them too much credit. What we do give credit to is verse 13 if by the spirit, if by the spirit, you put to death the deeds, the body, you will live. The

spirit lives in us. All who are led by the spirit are sons of God. That's verse 14. So adoption into the family of God and then living like it is the gift.

Now if we want to talk about adoption, we have to get a couple things clear. And one of them is that adoption has had different forms over the ages. And we have a form in America. There was a form in the Roman Empire, and there's a form in the Bible. And just to start with, we know best adoption in America, generally speaking, features people choosing children who are very young and very cute and very adorable.

And often, you know, people choose the prettiest or the most attractive children for one reason or another, and they adopt those children. Other people praise God, deliberately choose children who aren't as beautiful or as perfect in the eyes of society. But generally speaking, we choose very little children and we adopt them. They, you know, they're smiling at us, they're cooing us.

They're dependent. They melt into our arms. It's very sweet. It's not easy, but it's sweet. In the Roman Empire, it was done very differently in the Roman Empire at the time of Jesus and Paul. They had invented lead pipes, and they didn't know that lead when leaching into the water creates in fertility. And so it was a crisis of fertility.

And people of means sought to adopt accomplished young men, to carry on the family name because they had no children of their own. You might have two living parents, and if you were rising in the ranks of civil service, or you're a good business trader, or you were in the army, someone quite possibly would come along and say, we have no children, we would like to adopt you as our child.

So in America, we adopt beautiful, cute children. And in the Roman Empire at this time, adoption was for excellent people, beautiful people, accomplished people. And in the Bible, God adopts unworthy adults. The opposite of America, the opposite of Roman Empire. He adopts people into his family on one foundation, and that is the foundation of faith and a desire to follow the Lord.

That's how God adopts doesn't adopt those who are meritorious. He gives us merit. We might say, now, if there's something in our culture that's opposite, there's also something in our culture that's positive and that is the words that are spoken at an adoption. When parents adopt a child, a judge will pronounce the adoption complete with words, either these exact words or word like them, depending on where you live in America, you have a judge will say you have every duty, every privilege, every responsibility for your child, just as if she sprang from your body, every right, every privilege.

Absolutely the same as if this child came from your body. And that's a picture of God's adoption of us. Now, if you're a visitor here today, we're happy you're here. And I want you to know this is a Presbyterian church, and Presbyterians have a confession of faith. We actually have a

confession and two catechisms and the larger catechism, if we can have it up here, the larger Catechism has a marvelous statement about adoption.

Now, I'm going to take a tiny sidebar and tell you when I change things from the past in this church, two times out of three, it's an accident. I didn't know what I was doing. They forgot to tell me that you're supposed to do this or that. Two times out of three, one time out of three, I changed things because maybe the next pastor might have a different interest in something. And so we're going to do something different right now if you're willing. We're going to recite a catechism question in the middle of the sermon, because you never know, the next pastor might want to do things like that. But mostly I want you to do it because it's a tremendous statement summarizing what the Bible has to say. Are you willing to say it with me?

Great. Let's do it together and I'll pace us. Here goes.

Adoption is an act of the free grace of God, whereby all those that are justified are received into the number of his children. They have his name put upon them, the Spirit of His Son given to them. They are under his fatherly care, and gain all the liberties and privileges of the sons of God. We are heirs of all the promises and fellow heirs with Christ in glory. Praise God! Isn't that a great statement of the privileges that we have right? Not only do we have those privileges, but the Bible says that before we become a child of God, we're not just blank wanderers, we're children of wrath because of our sin and godlessness.

And so now we become children of God. Now the best picture this in the Bible is Luke chapter 15. And I'm going to quickly remind you of the parable of the lost Sons.

You may remember that in that parable there's a father with two sons, and one wants to leave and talks dad into giving him the inheritance, and he goes and squanders it quickly. And while living. And then a famine descends upon the land. He has no money left, and he's starving to death. And while he's starving to death, he came to his senses and said, I'm going to go home and I'm gonna give my father a speech. And the speech goes like this father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me one of your hired hands. And so he goes home and he starts the speech, and he gives most of it, and he gets the part machine to say, I just want to be a hired hand.

And the father cuts them off and says, put some shoes on. That boy, because he's descended into the abject poverty of a slave, and get the family robe and the family signet ring and have let's bring out the fattened calf and celebrate for this son of mine was lost and has been found. Not this. Hope for servant. No, this son was lost and is found. He's still my son. Now, I tell you this because it's so important to recognize the privileges of being a child of God, and among them is you are always a child of God and receive all the benefits of his favor and his kindness and his love. No misbehavior is meaningless, but more importantly, no misbehavior will cause God to annul his act of adopting you into his family.

Now I have children, as you know, and children of a certain age, and my children have certainly reached that age they desire to drive. And when they drive, things happen. And for this sermon, I recounted the seven accidents my children had between the time they turned 16 and the time they went to college. And of those seven accidents, two involved cars being totaled and there were no fault of theirs at all.

Just sitting in a red light, rainy day plow and, do you know, run through a light cream, the car, etc. another car was totaled, but it was actually a good thing. As our mechanic told us, the car was going. My daughter's going a little too fast. Heavy rain, hydroplane, go into a bank and the cars destroyed and our mechanic said you should give thanks.

This car is just that bad. But there were four other accidents, and one involved driving into a fire hydrant for no particular reason. And another one involved driving into the side of the garage and coming to the conclusion. The best possible thing would be to keep going. And then there were two others, and we have a principal in our house.

The principal was, and to some extent still is, over the grown and married. As long as you tell the truth, everything's fine. We would love you just to say, just don't hide things from us because we can't relate. If you hide things. But just tell us the truth. And they told us about destroyed cars. And we said, are you safe?

Are you healthy? Did you learn anything from what happened? And we love you because there's really nothing a child can do to make mom and dad stop loving them. I don't say that lightly. This week I talked to two of my co laborers in ministry, not close friends, but friends who've who have a child who's been in the most extreme forms of dissolute, reckless living for 15 years.

And it's agonizing. And they love their child the same as always. They will never stop loving their child. They always want their child to come back. They always love their child. So it is with God. If you are God's child, you will always receive his love. Now there are many privileges of fall from this. The first of them is you get to call God your father.

Now our passage says that we receive the spirit of adoption allows us to cry, ABBA, father, I want to tell you that in the history of humanity, so far as anybody can tell, was never a religion except Christianity, in which anybody was encouraged to call God their father until Jesus came along and Paul came. A lot of people have mimicked it since then.

The Buddhism and Hinduism and all the ancient religions of the world, and even for centuries other God is the Mighty One. He's the sovereign, he's the master, he's the king. Even in the Old Testament, God's names are names like King, the Almighty, the Lord of hosts, Yavé, the one who's self-existent. And now we can call God Father. Now, you may have heard that ABBA means something like daddy, and I think that's, you know, it means something like daddy, but it actually doesn't. Daddy isn't quite it because daddy is too childish. Remember in Gethsemane when Jesus was waiting to be crucified, he said, ABBA, father, if possible, remove this cup. Let's stop baby talk. It's serious talk, but it's affectionate talk. It's maybe like dad or I know some

adults call their father Papa. Lots of grandchildren call their grandfather Papa. That's a term of affection, but also respect.

So, ABBA father includes respect for our father. But it's also tender and kind and warm. Sinclair Ferguson, wonderful theologian of our day, wrote a whole book about adoption and tells a little story in it about a man who adopted a child from another country, and the child who was 4 or 5. Connected with mom and not dad. And so he was waiting.

How can I connect with this child? She's been living on this with us for a while, waiting for that moment when they would connect. And one day she walked up to him, holding a shoe with a broken shoelace and said, daddy, I need help with my shoe. And then he knew when she said, daddy, the affection is there.

We're going to go somewhere together. I can tell you about my grandson who was discovered. My daughter told me this one day, bouncing up and down beside the family car and she said, Jonah, he was two at the time. Why are you bouncing up and down? Why are you jumping? He said he's two. So sentences aren't real big.

He said, go see Papa. See Papa, go see pop because he's so excited to come see me because he loves me. And then he came to my house and we're doing things and. And there's a cute dog, you know, a neighbor house about 150ft away. And we're patting the dog, and his dad comes and he sees his dad. He breaks into a grin and he says, go see daddy. And he starts to run up the hill and is the grass is kind of long and his legs are kind of short, and he decides he's not going fast enough. So he says, hold me, run because he wants to run to his daddy because his daddy dries his tears, puts in a bad, tickles him tears for him.

Those are pictures of what God is like, that intimacy that we see is something we can have now. It's not merely intimacy. It's also respect. It's ABBA, father. We respect our father God, and he is our father. Now, sometimes we have doubts about this. You know, if you if you examine yourself too much, or maybe your spiritual life is weak at the moment, or you've been in that language of the good that I would do, I do not do.

What I hate is what I do. We can become self-doubting, especially if you're a perfectionist. If I'm really a child of God, why, why why do I behave this way? God seems far away now. What I want to tell you is don't let emotions that that say you can't really be. I don't feel like a child of God. Therefore I'm not a child of God. Don't let that sway you. And here's why. We're thankful for all of our faculties, right? For our mind, our body, our will, our emotions. They're all good gifts from God and they're all tainted by sin. Have you ever struggled to remember a name or a quotation? That's because your mind is good.

You know there's a file up there with that name, but you can't quite get to that file. You'll remember it by Thursday afternoon, but you want to remember it now. And you don't, because your mind is imperfect, your mind is imperfect. And your body. At that shopping trip where I saw that \$3,500 sweater, I stood up from a chair at one point and I don't know exactly why.

There was a big thing with all kinds of Christmas presents, and I just walked into it and the whole thing almost fell over me. I didn't hit it. I didn't bump it. I mean, I really I hit it with my whole shoulder because my body does strange things sometimes. Does your body ever hurt for no reason whatsoever? So our bodies are good. We give thanks for our bodies. We give thanks for our bodies. Tonight at the ballet program. But our bodies are imperfect. Right minds, imperfect bodies imperfect. And our emotions are imperfect. And if your emotions tell you you're not a child of God, don't listen to them all that much. They're still good. Don't crush your emotions. Emotions are good, but there is flawed and fallen.

Is there any other faculty you have? So what do you do? You live like a child of God. Now I've given you one thing we do as children of God. We. We call on God as Father. Here's another. Let's call this number two. We worship and praise him. We sing songs, songs that tune our hearts to sing his praise.

As God our Father. Number three, we remember. You might remember the day you came to faith. You might have grown up in the faith. You might remember the day when you knew you had to decide if your parents faith was yours or not, and you decided it was yours. Because Jesus is beautiful in the gospel, made sense of the way the world is beautiful but broken and are our hope for redemption. Remember those things. Number three, you expect to have some experience, some feeling, at least sometimes, that your child of God notice what it says. It says the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. Sinclair Ferguson said there are two mistakes we can make about our feelings as children of God. One is to expect mystical transport at all times, the other is to expect nothing.

We should expect to have some sense that we belong to God, at least sometimes. That's number three. Number four, we should pray and fear God. Fear God not because we think he'll crush us. Recovered this. Parents love their children irrevocably, unconditionally, whatever their sins might be. We expect God to love us. We expect God next to chasing us. I think this is number four. We expect him to discipline us. When you discipline your children, there's a motivation. And the motivation is a love you too much to let you think that what you're doing now has no consequences in this world. I love you too much to let you be an obnoxious person that people don't want to see coming their way. I want you to stop acting this way because I love you so much. I want people to be glad when they see you're coming. That's why I tell you, stop kicking people in the shins and stop pulling their hair.

And as adults, we also receive the discipline of God. Read Hebrews chapter 12, if you will. God disciplines us as adults, not just as children. Number five, as much as this good to come to church on line and it is, it's even better to come in person, because then you get to meet your brothers and sisters, fascinating people, warm, interesting people, people who help you on the journey of the faith. That's number five. Number six, claim the privileges of your adoption. This is the last one, by the way. I read somebody gave me a book about two weeks ago and I read it Thursday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday of this week. Short book. And it's about the Sabbath as the gateway to the Ten Commandments. And it says that the idea of resting one day a week is an act

of worship. It covers commands one, two and three. It makes a lot of sense. We're trusting God instead of working endlessly. And it also opens the way to the other commands. Because you know what better cure for the problem of greed, for example, or envy, or the problem of wanting to steal things than saying, you know, I don't live to work and work and work. My life is not about more and more things. I don't. I don't work endlessly. That's the theme of the book. But the book also has a little section that describes work among the Israelites in Egypt, and it rightly points out that Pharaoh viewed the Israelites as his slaves, not workers, but slaves. And they worked seven days a week, every week, forever.

And if they didn't meet a quota, the quota was increased. And if you said it was too hard because you don't have straw to mix with the bricks, Pharaoh would say, okay, you have to fetch your straw and make bricks, and the quota is the same. And if you say, I can't do it, it's extra work. How can I have the same quota? He says, you're lazy and your quota increased again. It's a life of work, work, work, work, work and work. And God said, I brought you out of the house of slavery. And how absurd it is that in America so many of us work, work, work, work, work and work seven days a week. Why? Because of email. Because we think working hard is the way to rise and be viewed as important and get more money and have more financial security. And because our friends do it live like a child of God rest. When I was just about finishing the book yesterday morning, some kids started bouncing in the trampoline next to our house. They're laughing and look out the window. There's a two year old and a five year old bouncing up and down in shorts and t shirts, 37 degrees, just having the best possible time. And I think that's what children do. Children don't work. They play. You know why they play? Because they have parents. They're not out gathering roots and berries because they know their parents will feed them.

Friends, you have a father in heaven. You don't have to work all the time. You can give up a return to the ways of Egypt. Work, work, work, work, work, rest. Relax. God will take care of you. And so this is one of the ways in which we live out the privileges of being children of God. We call on God. We meet our brothers and sisters. We pray the rest not because everything is easy, but because we believe we belong to God. And we've trusted him in faith and we're going to live like it. We live like it as long as you live until the Lord renews all things one day, which by the way, is where advent is pointing, right? We're on our way from the first coming to the Second coming. Let's lean into that or meet our Lord, our father one day.

Let's pray.

Heavenly father, I thank you for the privilege of being sons and daughters. Thank you for the joy of. Learning about the privileges we have. But more than that, Lord, I ask that you give us more of your spirit so we would not only learn about, but live the privileges of being your children by faith in Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.