

Romans
Let Us Claim the Privileges of God's Covenants
Romans 9:1-9

It's a holiday weekend. So if you're a visitor today, we're glad to have you. And it's our custom to remain standing for the reading of God's Word which is Romans 9:1-9.. We're resuming our study in Romans which we started in December. This is God's Word. Apostle Paul says, I am speaking the truth in Christ. I am not lying.

My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh is the Christ. Was God overall blessed forever? But it is not a though, as though the Word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all children of Abraham, because they're his offspring. But through Isaac shall your offspring be named. This means that is not the children of the flesh or the children of God, but the children of the promise who are counted as offspring. For this is what the promise said about this time next year I will return, and Sarah will have a son.

Let's pray one more time for a moment. Lord, give us ears to hear of your promises, the hope of salvation for the people of Israel and all the nations, for the hope of claiming the privileges that are ours through your promises, your gifts, your revelation of the law. May we take it to heart, receive it. Live by it. We pray by your grace. Amen.

It's easy to follow the big idea today. The big idea is that God gives us many privileges and it's our sacred responsibility and pleasure to claim them. Claim your privileges. And that needs to be said, because people often do neglect their privileges. And Israel, certainly as a whole, the nation as a whole was guilty of that. And we, of course, do not want to follow that pattern when thinking about this theme. I remember the book, written in 2003, a book about punctuation by a woman named Lynne Truss. The title of the book was, Eat Shoots and Leaves. It's based on a time that she went to a zoo in London and saw a sign outside the panda exhibit and it should have said, eats, shoots and leaves because pandas eat shoots and leaves. But the person running it didn't have a grip on the comma. And so they wrote eats comma, shoots comma and leaves. But she has a very different idea of a surly panda who goes to a restaurant for animals, devours a meal, dissatisfied, intensely, pulls out a revolver, shoots the place up and runs away, all because of a couple of commas.

Now, Truss wrote this book and used that illustration no surprise to gather attention, and the book sold many copies, and she had book signings. And one day there was a stack of books on a table. Many books, and people were coming to have their book about

punctuation signed and a woman, who she says, rather bedraggled and unhappy looking, came up and said, oh, oh, I would love to know about punctuation. And she said, well, then this is the book for you. To whom shall I make it out? To whom shall I sign my copy? And she said, as if the author had disagreed. No, I mean it. I would really like to know about punctuation, because years ago I did know, and I'm a teacher and I put everything in the wrong place, and I just don't know what to do. And she said, well, then this is the book for you. And she said, no. And it's just so sad because there's nowhere to turn. Well, here's 100 books on punctuation and a woman saying, I have no idea where to turn to learn about punctuation. Now that's what we would call neglect of an obvious gift or privilege. Now, it would be simply an amusing story if it were not the case that so many of us do similar things.

If you read the literature about our culture today, one of the things sociologists note as we live in a day of loneliness, people are more and more isolated. And some people do connect our social media to loneliness. But, you know, there's a cure for loneliness. And that is get out there and be with people. Buy a dog and walk it, and you'll meet people or meet other people's dogs. Walk around your neighborhood, join a club. Join a gym. Join the church. Do something. There are ways to solve the problem of loneliness and people don't take them up. Probably a bunch of people in this church resolved that they would, get fit in the New year. They're tired of feeling sluggish and stiff. And so the thing is, there's a solution to the problem. What to do is get a good pair of walking shoes and walk around and slowly and swing your arms and you'll loosen up. It will happen. There are cures for these problems.

Now, of course, I'm not really talking about those sorts of things. Romans eight, you may recall from a few weeks ago, describes many of the privileges we have as believers. We have the illumination, the Holy Spirit. We have adoption. We have justification, sanctification, unity to Christ becoming more like Christ in insurance, that nothing will separate us from the love of Christ. Those are privileges that are offered to us. And in Romans nine, Paul grieves that his own people have not claimed these privileges. Now, that's not an absolute statement. Thousands upon thousands of Jews believed in the first days of the gospel after the resurrection, Peter preached and thousands came. And if you track the work of historians from the first century, many, many more Jews, thousands upon thousands, maybe even millions of Jews came to faith within the first 100, 150 years.

But it's still true that a great many did not. And maybe in Paul's day, most did not. And he grieves that. It grieves it because there's are the promises, and they, above all, should have known that the one they long awaited, the Messiah, they long awaited, had finally come. Now, Paul says, it's not shocking that not everybody trusted the promises or receive Christ, because there's always been a division in the house of Israel.

You know, Abraham had two sons, Ishmael, whom he loved and said to the Lord, May he stand before you. And God said, no, actually it's going to be Isaac, and he will be the heir. And then Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau, both of them, both of them flawed

men. When I was a young Christian, people told me that because Jacob was kind of interested in in the home and in the things of his mother, he was a better person. No, he was a liar, deceiver, a schemer, and then a liar and a deceiver and a schemer. And he gave God conditional statements. You know, if you do what you say, maybe I'll believe in you. That's a rough paraphrase. But God persevered with him and he became a believer. Esau despised his birthright and never repented. So Jacob, not because he was better, but because he believed. In the end, as God pursued him. And David had many sons, but one was named Absalom, who betrayed him, tried to kill him. Another Solomon, who tried to live in the wisdom as his father, and he did so at times at least. So David, two sons, Jacob 12 sons. Isaac. Two sons. Abraham. Two sons. Some believe and some don't. And Paul grieves all who don't. He grieves, grieves over his ethnic kinsmen, his friends, his fellow Jews, his fellow Israelites. They failed to appreciate. He says, my conscience bears witness. Verses one and two in the Holy Spirit that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart, he says, I could wish, he can't wish, but he says, I could wish. If it were possible, I could wish that I myself would die and face God's judgment so that my countrymen would be redeemed. Now he knows it's not possible. No person can stand in the presence of God for someone else other than Jesus. No ordinary human can face judgment or punishment or God's wrath for sin. But he says if it were possible, I would do that.

And probably many of us here can resonate with that. You may have you may have 1 or 2 or 3 or 10 relatives who have heard the gospel, and you've tried to share your faith with them, and they have no interest in it, and you're concerned about their eternal fate. You might even say, Lord, if possible. I would suffer for them, but it's between them and the Lord. Always, always. It is appointed to men once to die, and after that to face the judgment. And so Paul grieves. He grieves grief for his brothers, increase for his kinsmen. Now he calls them brothers here. And that's a little bit unusual, because if you know the Christian faith in the doctrine, you know that that our brothers are brothers and sisters in Christ, people who trust in Jesus as we do.

That's the way the word brothers usually use, but not always. Sometimes those who are physically connected to us are our brothers and sisters. In fact, if you think about music and I didn't warn our musicians in time for them to prepare, but if I had, someone would be playing on the piano. A couple songs like, you know, West Virginia, almost Heaven, Mountain Mama right now, apparently there's a dispute as to whether this is about western Virginia or West Virginia. West Virginia claimed that they say, this is us. This is our people. We live in the mountains, and there's a song people sing in the state of Alabama. I think it's a Sweet Home Alabama. And you go to a sporting contest and people sing about Alabama and they'll say to Neil Young, southern man, don't need them around anyhow, because we're from Alabama. And out in LA we grieve over the fires. And a serious musician wrote a song in which the chorus was, we love LA and there are songs about New York. And it makes sense. We could, we could call it provincial, I suppose, but actually, it's an act of love to the people God has providentially put into our lives.

And so Paul grieves. He cares for his friends, cares for the people who share his genetic heritage. That means he wants to evangelize them, which he does not. Just want to say a quick word about evangelism today. You know, in the 1950s, 60s, 70s, people like Billy Graham and others could put on a crusade and just preach a series of sermons, and hundreds and thousands of people would come to faith.

And it's because in those days there was a sort of a social consensus that there is a God, that Jesus is his son, that the Bible is His Word. Even if people didn't believe it, they knew the concepts. They knew the Ten Commandments. They knew about sin and grace in some sense or other. And so if it was presented well and people had a spiritual hunger, a thirst, you could just lay out the gospel in 45 minutes and people would believe it's not that way anymore.

Last time I was in Australia, a little over a year ago, I was talking to those who serve. They're highly organized in religious culture and one of the men said to me, you know, one of the problems in Australia is if you use the word sin, they don't know what you're talking about. They simply have no idea what you mean by the word sin, no idea that there's a God who has standards, who gives laws you're violating God's will.

They don't understand the word. And if you say God, they may not know what you mean at all. Or Jesus. Today, in many places, people have no idea what the church says, but whatever they say, they're against it because they're hostile to the church.

If you want to be an evangelist today, it's going to take some grief for the lost and some listening to the lost. If you want to serve your people today, you got to be willing to take time. If you want to talk about Jesus with somebody, you may have to say, would you like to read the Gospel of Luke and then maybe the Gospel of John with me over the next couple months, you might need to have hours of listening to their objections to the faith, hearing maybe how they're hurt or angry, or how some Christian misrepresented the cause of Christ to them.

You need to be willing to ignore your superficial differences. You may be a political conservative, and they may not be a political conservative, and you have to listen to their views non-judgmental. And when they say, this is what I think, the goal is not to correct them. The goal is to say, is this what you're saying? And state their views in terms they would approve of?

So you don't get hung up on politics, so be patient enough to hear what they have to say and make use of what little they know, maybe about the Good Samaritan or Moses. It takes time, but it's worth it if you're loyal as David was to his people, the people he cared about, his people, the Israelites. And Paul says, this is what they're missing.

These are the privileges that he describes in verses four and five. He says, to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the law, the worship, the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race according to the flesh is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. These are six privileges. I want to make sure we know

what they mean. The first privilege is adoption. Adoption. To join the family of God. The Lord said to Moses and the Pharaoh, Israel is my firstborn son. Let him go. Israel's my child, my son. That's Exodus four. God said, he carried Israel out of Egypt as a man carries his sons. That's Deuteronomy chapter one. Jeremiah has the Lord saying to Israel, I am a father to Israel in chapter 31.

Now when we hear about adoption here this morning, which we did, what we're doing is echoing the way God adopts us into his family. Any movement toward adoption of children who are beyond the care of their parents is an echo of what God does when he adopts us into his family. We celebrate God's grace and mercy, and then we apply it to needy people in our own life.

That's number one. Number two is glory. Glory. Following adoption, God adopted his son. Israel brought them out of Egypt. The glory would then be the glory cloud that followed the Israelites in and protected them from the Egyptians who wanted to pursue them. And then gave indication of his ongoing presence in the tent of meeting for worship. And so, in a similar vein, then we echoed that when we say glory, when we sing in a heartfelt manner, when we sense the glory of God among us, the covenants are the covenants God made with Israel, beginning with Adam, and then Noah and Abraham and Jacob and David and the new covenant.

Do you know that covenants were around among secular people in biblical times, but they had a very different flavor from the biblical covenants. The covenants in that time said, I am the Lord, I'm the Susa, and I'm the great king of conquered you. You are my vassal. You are my subordinates, and these are the stipulations. This is what you owe me.

You owe me tribute. You owe me troops if I go to war. And if you don't. These are the punishments, stipulations and punishments. The covenants of God have stipulations. The Decalogue, the law of God. But they also have blessings and forgiveness, not just threats. God completely changed, or at least largely changed the whole concept of covenants. And then, of course, there's the giving of the law, and that's consistent as well.

Mount Sinai God gave the law good law, beautiful law. Well, that provides life for us in one place. A little bit later, God says, I gave you these laws for your good, and if you live according to my laws, your life will be so beautiful that the surrounding nations are going to say, where did you get such wisdom?

Tell us! And then the Israelites can point them to God's will and God's ways. There's the worship. We think again of the temple, the tabernacle before that in which the people of God offered gifts to him and sacrifices were made for their sins. And finally, the promises God said to Abraham, I will bless you. I'll bless you now.

Bless the nations of the world through you. If you're not Jewish, you are a recipient of that promise given over 4000 years ago. A blessing to the nations, a blessing to you, the

people in every continent on the earth. Made a promise to Moses that he would help him take the people out of the house of bondage. I made a promise to David that a son would sit on the throne, his throne, forever.

That points to Jesus in another place. In second Corinthians chapter one, Paul says, all the promises point to Jesus. Every promise is fulfilled is yes in Jesus. And our response to every promise is to look for the way in which that promise points to Jesus to say, thank you, Lord. Amen. Every promises yes in Christ. And then we should say to every promise culminate in Christ.

Amen. You see what it says about Christ in this passage? Look at it. It says to them, verse five, belong the patriarchs. And from their race according to the flesh is the Christ, who is God overall blessed forever. Jesus is of Israel, but he's also more than Israel. He's. He is the Christ God. Overall, forever. That kind of make sense of the strange things people sometimes objected to, things Jesus did in his life.

You know, at one point he spoke to a man who was lowered through a roof and said, your sins are forgiven. And the Pharisee said, he blasphemes who can forgive sins, but God alone? This is not happening in the temple with sacrifices. This isn't a priest saying your sins are forgiven. This is an ordinary dude walking around Galilee saying, your sins are forgiven.

Yes, yes, Jesus is claiming to be God. A little bit later, Jesus healed ten lepers and nine of them went on their way and one came back and felt Jesus feet praising God. And Jesus did not say, get up. He said, where are the rest? That is something only God can do. Jesus received the privileges and exercised prerogatives that are God's alone.

It's the only way to make sense of his life and Paul summarizes it for us. He is the Christ who was God over all. Blessed forever. Now let's make use of these privileges. I don't know about you. I don't know about privileges. I'm going to make you hurt for a minute, okay? I'm just going to warn you.

I'm going to talk to you about privileges you don't use. So I have a credit card that gives me a companion ticket every year. Who here thinks I've taken my wife on a companion trip every year? Who thinks I waited too long for a really expensive ticket and never somehow managed to use it? Anybody here ever do that?

Fail to use your companion ticket? Fail to use that privilege? How about a gym membership? Anybody join a gym and go two times in 320 days?

what are the other privileges? How about how about Spotify? \$13 a month. All the songs you can listen to, you look up one day and say, where's that Spotify account? I haven't been on that for seven weeks now, so we don't use our privileges. That's kind of one of the sad things about humans. Let's use our privileges above all the privilege of faith.

And then the many ways in which God has given us in his providence, ways to strengthen our faith. You know that you can have your very own Bible, which was impossible for most of humanity. And by the way, you can not only get your very own Bible, you can get a Bible with study notes that explain hard things.

You can one with little reference to other passage, say more about it. You can go online and here and here great talks and you can hear podcasts. You can read books that people wrote for you to understand and grow in your faith. You go to Bible study. You can go to support groups if you have suffered loss is a great support group here based on biblical wisdom.

These are your privileges and we should make use of them now. Today is a holiday weekend. And so, you know, we have lots of travel and many of our people away and other people are here. We're glad to have you. but it's also weekend when people you know don't know where to go to church. And so they, they watch online.

A lot of people watch online. We're glad to have you. but it is really a privilege to be with God's people in the church. When I was at home over Christmas, I had time watching television with my four year old granddaughter. We had a variety of conversations over a span of an hour, but at one point, we're watching maybe Bluey or something like that, and she looked over at me with a sort of a conspiratorial grin and said, you know, Papa, we watch you on TV sometimes. And I thought, okay, now I know my children aren't going to church. No, that's not what I thought. No. That is not what I thought. And I'm only pretending that I thought that. It a reason, you know, someone was sick in the family. They have little babies. They get sick. Reasons to go to church online. You're traveling, you're sick. You can't drive. The weather's horrible. There are reasons. But it's really better to come and enjoy the privilege of Christian fellowship, by the way, for your good. And because other people need you to.

That is to say, when I say to you friends who are online, when I say to you, it's good for you to come to church. I don't mean to just tell you it's good for you, you need us. And by the way, it's a good chance we need you and your skills and your presence. And however God made you.

There's a book a couple of people I know wrote called The Great Church. In that book. They do theological and sociological studies of where people went when they stopped going to church. And one of the things maybe the most important thing they found, because it appears at least five times in the book. And I asked them, why did you say it so much?

And basically the answer was, if somebody reads 20 or 30 pages, we want them to find it. What they found was that half of all people who stopped going to church still believe all biblical Orthodox doctrines, and they say they would come to church if they were plausibly invited by one person.

So invite your friends. Participate in the privilege. Now somebody may say, oh yes, but the church hurt me. And I take that with utmost seriousness. The church does hurt people. I do want to make sure everybody knows that wherever you go, you can get hurt. The church can hurt you. Yes. So can your family. So can your workplace.

So can your neighbors. Anybody can hurt you. Because we live in a world of sinners. So the church does hurt people. I have a friend, a pastor, a tremendously gifted pastor, a great teacher of God's Word, a caregiver, a souls, a true shepherd, a wonderful man, led a church that grew beautifully in both numbers and spirit for 15 years, led another church for 15 or 20 years.

And in that span of time he had conversations, which is inevitable in the church with people who had a dispute. And he had to decide who was telling the truth. And on several occasions it was difficult to say who was right. He had to make a judgment, and he judged wrongly. One of them caused pretty significant distress, maybe even major distress.

It was a mistake, not a sin. He wasn't reckless or careless. He just had a tough decision, made the wrong decision, and it caused somebody. And there was a little bit of an inquiry and they didn't accuse him of sin. They didn't condemn of sin. But they said, you need to meditate on this. And he decided to pull himself out of ministry for five years.

By the way, I'm changing a couple details a tiny bit so that if you think you know who it is, you probably don't. But Amos stepped out of ministry for five years and sold cars and trucks. Because he was so gifted as a teacher. People kept on asking him and he kept saying, I'm not qualified, I. I made a mistake, I made several mistakes and one of them caused real pain.

And then just recently, I talked to him and he said, I'm speaking again. And I said, Praise God. He said, I think I learned what I needed to learn and I'm back. And that's a privilege. And the people have the privilege of hearing from him. Now there are two points I'm making. The church does hurt people. It does.

And it's possible also to recover. And when we make mistakes, we can recover. We can reclaim the privileges that are ours. And I want you all to think about the privilege is in the form of gifts you're not. Many of you are called to be preachers, but you all have gifts, even as Amos had gifts, is teaching and shepherding and, I read novels over Christmas and over summer break, and I read a lot of novels.

I read novels, and some of them are beautiful, and some of them are not. I read three novels by a woman named Hilary Mantel, historical novels about one of the first progenitors of the English Revolution, Thomas Cromwell. They're brilliant. They're so well written. They are so instructive without ever preaching for a second. Praise God for your gifts, Hilary Mantel.

And then and then there's Elena Ferrante, also multiple novels about Naples post-World War Two, and they're instructive and they're funny and they're tragic and they're heart

wrenching, and they're very dark at times. And I've read other novels by female novelists who are unrelenting, which are unrelentingly dark. And I think, why would you put your skill and years of writing just tragedy upon tragedy and pain upon pain?

Let's use our gifts. Well, not squander them. Use them to edify, to teach, to instruct. What are your gifts? To ask the question. What privileges has God given me and use them? Please. Not just the spiritual privileges, but the privileges of giftedness.

But again, I tell you, every promise is yes and Amen in Christ. That's the main idea. God overall blessed forever. The high point of the Gospel of Matthew is when Peter says, you are the Christ, the son of the living God. When Jesus says, Before Abraham was, I am one of the high points of the Gospel of John forgave sins.

You receive worship and the question is, how will we respond? And Romans nine six is what some people call a hinge text that ends 9125 and it starts another section, which we'll talk about next week about God's sovereignty, predestination, human responsibility, and so forth. Nine six says, after saying, you know, God doesn't, doesn't call absolutely everybody from a family Jacob, not Esau.

Isaac, not Ishmael. Nine six says, but it's not as though the Word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to us or not. All Israel are. Israel's way reads literally in the passage. It's those who are Abraham's offspring. So let me say it to this way make sure you are the offspring of Abraham by believing the promises yourselves and seizing those privileges, those Bible studies, those study Bibles, those mentors, those people who care for you, receive it.

And if we're gonna talk about privileges, it really does make a good and logical connection to what we're celebrating today in this church and in society, because it's pro-life Sunday, praise God, it's also Martin Luther King weekend. And they have a common thread. And the common thread is that the most basic of all privileges is the privilege of life.

And when you have life, the most basic of all privileges is to be create an image of God, which means everyone has dignity. And these two celebrations stand together. Life. God says, I'm the potter. You're the clay. Lord. You are our father. We are the clay. You are our potter. Isaiah says, God forms us as it seems good.

Our bodies, our minds were formed by God. One person said, God forms us on purpose with a design, informs us with purpose, and informs us for a purpose. That is to say, God forms everybody here uniquely it. We're all different and he has a purpose. The forms us with purpose. For that purpose. Another person I listen to recently said, when we're talking about life, it's really important within the framework of biblical theology to remember.

Although we use the words unplanned pregnancy and it refers to humanity, we have unplanned pregnancies. But in God's eyes there are no unplanned pregnancies. God knows every life. God's not surprised that this woman became pregnant. Now, when

there is an unplanned pregnancy, we have a responsibility, a responsibility for those who are in great distress to come alongside them and help them, as we do in this church and many other churches.

If someone thinks they can't take care of their child, we said, let me talk to you about an adoption. If someone has an abortion or was pressed into abortion by maybe a father who said, just want you to know, I'm not going to be around for you, I won't be there to help you or my parents who said the same thing.

You're pregnant and we're retired. You're on your own. Or many ways to be culpable. So if someone has guilt on their hands, they feel bad. We counsel. If someone has not enough resources, we come alongside them. If a child is wanted and then for some reason, parents can't take care of the child. We have foster care. We have a foster care group in this very church supports. So we care from womb, the tomb. As we sometimes say holistically, we care for the aged as well. We care for all life. And this is connected to questions about race and the dignity of all people. Because.

Everybody who's born is made in God's image. Now, if I could just do a tiny bit of history, you know, for a long period of time that people in different continents didn't know about each other, and then around 1440, actually, exactly 1440, the Europeans had sailing ships that could go instead of dozens or a few hundred miles hugging the coast.

They go thousands of miles. And as they went farther, they discovered to them the Africans already knew about it. But the Europeans discovered Africa. The half the Africans already knew about Africa, but the Europeans discovered it. And they came back and they said, you know what? There are two human races. And then the ships went a little bit farther, and they went to China and Korea, and they came back and they said, you know what?

There's actually three human races. And then they explored, the Pacific Islands. And they said, you know, those people look different. Two there's actually four races. And then another group of people said, you know, those people from Middle East, they look different, too. And so we have five human races. And then some people said, you know, those southern Europeans, it took 500 years to decide this from 1400 to 1900.

By 1900, a whole bunch of people thought, there are six races now. I talked to my African-American, Asian American, Hispanic friends and they say, let's all agree, I mean theological friends. And they said, let's all agree what the Bible says. There are many races. No, there are many ethnicities. Yes, many languages and peoples of tribes, nations and lands.

Yes. But there's one race, the human race. They all say that there's one race, the human race. Thank you for an Amen. Presbyterian church. I got an amen. And I thank you for it. Now, if you want to press the idea of the two races, I'll allow that. And then there'll be the race of Adam, that is to say, made in God's image, but unredeemed.

That's Romans five. And then the race of Christ, image of God and redeemed, if you want to races. But in the Bible there is one race, the human race, and everyone has a potential to treat each other respect, but is also an extraordinarily common human propensity to look down on others. I'm going to talk about the sixth race, the last one to be discovered late, late 1800s, early 1900s.

And in 1911, a man wrote in the Yale University Press, which is a respected academic press, a man who was regarded as a great scholar American. He wrote about the wave of immigrants coming from Southeast Europe, the Hungarians and the Greeks. This is a direct quote. What he said the modern immigrants, race number six, Southeast Europeans are generally regarded as inferior peoples.

They are brought to America for economic reasons, to do hard work and menial work, which an American does not care to do. They go into mines, foundries, they stoop into sewers, stifling air of factories, to railroads in the burning sun of the summer and the driving sleet of the winter. If he proves himself a man, this southern European rises above his station and acquires wealth and claims himself up.

Very well. We will accept him after a generation or two, but at present he is far beneath us, and the burden of proof rests with him. There's something in humans that want to speak that way of other humans. It's not the way God speaks. There are many peoples. Many tribesman nations will all come to praise God. Jesus says, don't judge according to appearances.

Judge with righteous judgment. Everyone is open to receive the privileges of sonship. The promises. But here we are. You know, there's Isaac and there's Ishmael, and there's Jacob and Esau. And the promises are laid before us. When you hear a promise, my friends claim it, receive it. Don't take something. Just a general observation about human nature and making it a promise.

But if you hear a promise, lay hold of it. What does the Bible say? It says things like, I will never leave you and I will never forsake you. That's a promise. Claim that that's one to hold. Here's another one. Jesus said, come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden. I will give you rest. If you're weary, heavy laden, come to Christ.

Receive that promise. Jesus said, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, will never be thirsty. Receive that promise. And so by receiving them, become a part of the true Israel. So there's no sorrow, grief over any of us but joy that we've all received what God has offered us in Christ, who is overall Lord and God and Savior, light of the world.

Let's pray for a moment. Heavenly father, I thank you for all that you offer us in Your Word. All the glory the Lord's, the promises, the way of life. That's beautiful. May we have beautiful lives. Lives marked by repentance. If we are part of the church that hurts people lives of reclaiming lost privileges, lives of grasping, laying hold of all that you've given us above all in Christ. In his name we pray. Amen.