

You Are Chosen

Ephesians 1:4-6

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Adoption. When I say this word I'm sure there are a lot of different thoughts, feelings, and ideas that come to mind. I would be surprised if everyone in this room didn't know someone, have experience with, or have been/adopted someone themselves. It is very prevalent around the world and something many people are exposed to. I want to share a story of a boy who was adopted, His name is Daniel Nymzach. I have known Him for quite a while; we have had many conversations about his adoption and life. He was adopted at birth by a very loving family because His mother was young and couldn't keep him. His father when he found out she was pregnant ran away, wanted nothing to do with them. The mother wanted him to go to a better family and life than she could give. Daniel grew up in a great home. Very loving parents, followers of Christ, treated him extremely well and have given him every chance to succeed. They instilled good values, discipline, and attempted to introduce Christ in His life as well. In fact I remember him saying once that he couldn't think of a better set of parents, that he loved them immensely. Even still with everything going for him, he was ravaged by thoughts and fears of rejection, loneliness, and heartache. Even though his parents loved him so much and taught him of God's love for some reason, he said, there was this hole in his heart that just could never seemed to be filled. He would ask me questions like "why didn't my birth mother love me enough to keep me?" "What could I have done wrong as a baby to make her get rid of me?" "Aren't mothers supposed to be the one person who loves you no matter what?" "If she doesn't love me or want me, why would anyone want me or be capable of loving someone like me?" He would describe horrible nightmares of his birth mother screaming at him she never loved him and no one ever could. That He was worthless. He went to a lot of counseling and even had thoughts of possibly taking his own life, who would miss someone whose own mother didn't even love him? I think there is something in his pain and in his stories that we can all relate to. Even if we are not adopted, I'm sure we have had instances where we felt worthless. That no one wants us. That we are truly alone. That we don't even like ourselves so how could anyone love or even like us. Well I'm here to tell you the exact opposite. That there is someone who loves you so much exactly the way you are sitting here today. That person is God and He has adopted all of us into His family because he loves you, wants you, enjoys your presence, and delights in you.

God has something to say about this, In Ephesians 1:4-6 it says "Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear son (NLT)." Daniel would always say he didn't know how to love himself when he didn't feel like his own birth parents loved him.

Why would someone want him when his own birth family didn't even want him in their family? This is a deep pain, the pain of feeling unwanted, that everyone has experienced at some point. That thought or fear of people not wanting them around them, rejecting them, and pushing them away. We do this with our friends, neighbors, even our own families we are unsure of at times if they even want us in the family. God absolutely wants you in His family and invites all of us into that family. It says right in Ephesians 1:5 that "This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure." Not only is he inviting us into the family, but He is doing it joyfully and gladly because He loves you so much. In the world we live in one of the most powerful emotions is the need to be wanted, to be needed by someone or something. Many people spend their entire lives looking for this, they try to find it in a spouse, in friends, in family. These are all good things but because they are human and so are we, we can fail that at times. Some people bottom out so low they look for the answers in drugs, alcohol, or sex because they feel it is the only thing there for them and hide their loneliness in it. God is telling us right here though that He wants us and is glad to have us! We don't need those other vices to fill that hole because Christ is delighted to do it, fill us up, and make us feel wanted and cherished. He has chosen us to be in His family, because adopted children are chosen children. He has chosen you. He extends an invitation of grace into His family. All we need to do is accept it.

Daniel would also wonder at times out of fear well if I have been given up before, what if my adopted parents got tired of me and would give me up? What if I messed up really bad and they sent me away. I'm sure we have felt similar experiences whether it is being laid off from a job, being turned down by that school we really wanted to get in to, turned down by that person we wanted to take to prom. We try to compensate by filling our lives with so much activity that we can't slow down and be alone with our thoughts. We run from the issues and don't want to slow down because we are afraid of that rejection. We feel like failures and we feel this way with God at times too. We feel as if we keep messing up, keep giving into that sin that we just can't seem to shake that God is going to give up on us and give us away. Simply stated "Do I even matter?" To God, to my family, to my friends, to anyone. Even though we may have been accepted into God's family, we feel as if there is that chance we may get kicked out, or if God even likes us or just tolerates us. Not only is there no chance you can get kicked out of God's family, He is immensely joyful that you are there. This is a family that will never leave you, never forsake you, never leave you high and dry. You are in it for life and you are here to stay and God is delighted that you are. We can never be torn from Him once we are in His family. In Romans 8:35-39 it says who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." It says right here that nothing in all creation can ever tear us from God once we are His. What a freeing truth. We are His forever and it is a family that will never abandon nor forsake us. We are liked, loved, and relished by our Savior.

What do we do with this now? We know that we are chosen by Him to be in His family, and that now that we are adopted into His family He will never reject us and loves being in our lives. Where does this truth now fit into our lives now that we know it? This is the best news of all, because of God's grace we are adopted and this truth sets us free. Free from fear of rejection, free from the sin that has been holding you back, free from the chains of death that were wrapped around you, free from the sentence of hell. This adoption has given you new life, God has breathed that into you. Daniel would make comments about how He didn't know his future, which his past kept catching back up to him and holding him back. How can he keep pressing forward when he felt trapped to the lies that would constantly pop into his head? Daniel no longer had to feel that way and you don't either because of God's grace. We may have lies creep into our heads, try to shake our faith and foundations. The enemy loves to do this, but we need to remind him to get back into his place and stay away with the rest of our past because we are now a new free creation. Galatians 5:13-14 does a great job in helping to guide us with what we should do in our freedom, it says You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Since we have received God's love and grace, we are now free to share it with our neighbors. Chances are that they are feeling many of the same thoughts, feelings, and fears that you do. Let us share this grace, share this freedom with our neighbors. We have the best news ever given right here inside of this book and yet we keep it to ourselves or are afraid to share it. Let us be bold in our freedom, be abundant in grace, and share this amazing news so that our neighbors may be adopted into God's family and be free like we are.

Daniel had many struggles in his life, he wrestled with feeling accepted. Feeling like he always needed to be perfect or he would be rejected. It rocked him to his core and he thought that hole that was stuck in his heart would never be filled no matter how much his adopted parents tried to help. Daniel is no longer with us today.... That is because he has a new name and has become a new person in Christ. His name is Eric Watts and I am standing before you here today. When I accepted that invitation of Grace and to be adopted in God's family I became a new creation. I am a new person, have a new name, and have been adopted into God's family. I had grown up in the church, always believed in the existence of God but had such a hard time liking myself and wrestling with the rejection of my birth parents, I just didn't see how that love could apply to me. I heard every story about God's love, that it is unconditional, that it was for everyone, I just had a hard time believing it even though I followed many Christian moral norms. But one weekend when I was 16 I went on a youth retreat with my old youth group. The entire weekend was based around God's unending love for us, that He will never leave nor forsake us. I had heard this message a million times but this time it was different, this time it penetrated through all the walls I had built around my heart and took hold of me. It changed me from the inside and for the first time, my heart felt hole. It was so much deeper than just an emotion but I have never felt anything like it. That was the weekend that I committed my life fully and completely to Christ. It took many years but that fear of my parents leaving me, that fear of God turning his back on me, that fear of having to be perfect because I would be rejected otherwise, is defeated. God's grace has penetrated into my heart and filled up those empty holes with His love. I have my weak days just like everyone else

when I can feel defeated or those fears of rejection try to creep back in. But because I am adopted into God's family, I know I no longer have anything to fear because God is standing there with me and delights in me, likes me, loves me, is excited to be with me and that will never change. Just like every single one of you sitting here today, God feels the exact same about you in every way. All He is asking is that you accept his invitation of grace so that you may partake in the most loving, grace filled, beautiful family that has ever been created because He chose you to be in it from birth and has adopted you into it.