

A LETTER FROM DR. SEAN LUCAS

November 8, 2018

My dear Friends:

For the last few weeks, my thoughts have been taken up with the biblical doctrine of adoption. On Sunday evenings, we've been looking at the Lord's Prayer; last week, we talked about the address in the prayer, "Our Father in heaven." I tried to make the point that when we pray, we aren't praying simply to a powerful master, a transcendent other, or a sovereign Lord—although God is all those things. Rather, Jesus invites us to address God as our loving father, someone who will incline his ear and bend down to hear us, someone who is ever ready to listen.

And then, last night in our Wednesday night larger group teaching, we unpacked Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 12. We saw how God grants us this benefit of sonship as a result of our union with Christ, which occurs in our effectual calling. God brings us into his family and grants us family membership, family identity, family assurance and access, family relationship, and family inheritance. For us—former rebels, wayward sons and daughters—God gives us this benefit: that he calls us his own beloved children and we call him our father.

All of this has gotten me reading this week a little more widely on the issue. It's taken me to J. I. Packer, who wrote in his *Knowing God*: "Were I asked to focus the New Testament message in three words, my proposal would be *adoption through propitiation*, and I do not ever expect to meet a richer or more pregnant summary of the gospel than that." I've also read in Sinclair Ferguson's little book, *Children of the Living God*, "Our sonship to God is the apex of creation and the goal of redemption." And John Calvin himself noted that "none will ever revere God but those who are confident that he is well-disposed to them. None will willingly gird themselves to keep the law but those who have been persuaded that he is pleased with their obedience. This indulgence in bearing with us and putting up with our failings is a sign of fatherly love" (*Institutes*, 3.3.2).

Yet, how often we struggle to think in these terms! How much easier to see ourselves as servants or slaves or disciples or performers or consumers or some other way! That's not how God sees us: he sees us as his beloved children, bought with a price, part of his family secured by our elder brother who has brought many sons to glory (Heb 2:10-18). How differently we would live and love and serve and pray if we could simply see ourselves this way! May God give us eyes to see this Gospel truth and to believe it!

In the grip of God's grace,



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