

Harris Creek Baptist Church
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Series: More Than Conquerors
September 4, 2022

Whose You Are

Romans 8:14-17

“For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”

Well, my daughter is one and a half, which means that she loves reading books. Like that's what we do in our house, all the time. We've got books all over the place because she just loves for us to read books to her. And I don't know if this is true of other kids, my kid is the first kid I've ever really been around, but she will just read a book to the ground. Like we will read it over and over and over again on the same day, and then we'll do the exact same thing the next day, and the next day, and the next day, which is why I've got Chicka Chicka Boom Boom down. I've got that thing memorized. And this week, she picked out a new book, this is the book that we've read over and over again this week. [shows book] It's Do Princesses Wear Hiking Boots? So essentially the story is a daughter asking her mom what a princess is like. She has all different questions 'are princesses like this?', 'are princesses like this?'. I just want to make sure that you could experience it because this is what I've been doing this last week. It starts off the book by saying this, "Mommy do princesses wear hiking boots?" And then the mom responds, "Yes, when they wish to take the scenic routes". "Mommy, do princesses ride tricycles?" "Yes, even two-wheel bicycles." I think you get the story. So, I'm going to skip ahead to the end. This is the heart of the story. It says this, the conclusion is, "Mommy, do princesses seem at all like me? Look inside yourself and see". And then there's this mirror at the end [of the book]. And it says, "A princess is a place in your heart." It's a great book. It's a cute book, cute message. It says that my daughter is a princess in her heart. And it's just an awesome opportunity for me to connect with my daughter because when I'm done reading that book, I get to pull her in close look, her in the eyes and just tell her, "Jacie, I just want to make sure you know, you will never ever be a princess". Right!? I mean, I'm a dad who cares about truth. And I want her to know what's true. She will never be a princess! And it has nothing to do with who she is, or what she likes, or what she does! Why will she never ever ever be a princess? It is because her daddy is not a king. Her daddy reads Whataburger ads at Baylor games. That's what she's got in life. This is her lot!

Because who she is right now is largely defined by who I am and the decisions that I have made. The language that she speaks, the school that she cheers for, the place where she lives, her economic status are not decisions of her own, they're my own decisions. Because who she is

right now is largely because of who I am. And at the at the beginning of your life, for better or for worse, your life experiences are a result of who your parents are. But as you get older, you kind of grow out of that. Who your parents were and the decisions that they made matter less because you get to make your own. For example, after you leave here today, you're not going to call your parents and ask them where you should go to lunch. You get to make your own decisions. As an adult, that's what you do. You have made the decision of what career path you're going to choose, you have made the decision if you're married, of what spouse you were going to choose, you get to decide how you spend your time, you get to decide how you spend your money, because as you get older, who your parents were simply matters less.

But maybe this is the overprotective dad in me. But I so hope that for the rest of my daughter's life that the most important thing about her is who her dad is. Because the thing I care about more than anything, the thing that I prayed for every single day of her life is that she would learn to love to be a daughter of the king. Because I so hope and pray that sooner rather than later she would grow up out of being defined by who I am and that she'd grow up into being defined by who her heavenly Father is. Because the more she knows who her heavenly Father is, the more she'll know who she truly is.

And this is what we're going to talk about today. We're going to talk about who you are because of whose you are. Who you are because of whose you are. Here's why we need to talk about it. Some of you are taking the bait. Some of you believe that the most important thing about you is your career. Some of you believe the most important thing about you is who your friends are. Some of you believe the most important thing about you is how many zeroes are in your bank account or how many years you went to school or where you went to school. Some of you believe the most important thing about you is what organization you are in. None of that is true. The most important thing about you is how important you view your relationship between you and your heavenly Father.

You need to know who you are because of whose you are. So today we're going to see that in Scripture, Romans chapter 8, we're going to be in verses 14 through 17. As we go through this sermon series called "More Than Conquerors," we're just going verse by verse through Romans chapter 8. And we would pick that chapter in that book for a reason. And it's because if I was on a stranded island, and I could only pick one chapter of Scripture to have with me, I wouldn't even think twice. It's an easy decision. Romans chapter 8 is what I would choose, because Romans chapter 8 is thick with theology, and it tells you about who you are and who your God is. We've already learned that in the sermon series as week one, we realized that there is now therefore no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus. And then last week, we asked, "Who's driving your life? Is it the Spirit of God? Or is it your own flesh?" And then today, we're going to look at who you are, because of whose you are. And the new verses we're going to read are verses 14 through 17. But I'm actually going to read two verses before two verses that we preached on last week just to set this this scripture up in context. So, I'm going to start reading in verse 12. Paul writes this:

12 “Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. Here's the new verse, 14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.”

So here's how you know if you're a child of God. It is not if you go to church, it is not if you live in Texas, it is not if you go to Baylor, you know if you're a child of God, if you follow God, which is point number one, the first thing we can learn from this passage is that the children of God follow their father, the children of God, follow their Father.

1. The children of God follow their Father.

Now I've got an important distinction I need to make, because one of the most common misconceptions here in Waco, Texas—in fact, I was talking to a security guard at the Baylor game last night about this very thing—one of the greatest misconceptions here in Waco, Texas, is that if you follow the rules, you'll be accepted by your heavenly Father. If you're just good enough, that's how you get into heaven. He accepts you based on what you do, or do not do. That's just not true. I want to make this so clear. In fact, I want to put this on the screen. I hope we understand this.

You are not a child of God because you follow God. You follow God because you are a child of God. You get that, is that clear to you? You are not a child of God, because you follow God, you follow God because you are first a child of God. You do not follow him well, and then he accepts you. He accepts you, and then you come to know who your Father is, which makes you want to follow Him. You become a child, and then you follow because you come to know who your Father is, and it makes you want to follow him.

Let me explain what that looks like. Growing up my family, we took rather unique vacations. I don't know if anyone else who did what we did. Because if you asked me if I'm a beach guy or a mountain guy, I would tell you I'm a baseball stadium guy. I know, I know, it's weird. But I've been to 27 out of 32 major league baseball stadiums. We just traveled all over the country growing up going from one stadium to the next. In fact, I've got proof of it. Here's a picture of us at a Chicago Cubs game at Wrigley Field. I'm second from the right. We started early at this. But then a few years later, here's another one. We went to a Philadelphia Phillies game. That's me and my dad and my brother on the right. And then a couple of years later, here's another one on the entire opposite end of the country. We went to a San Diego Padres game. And I think this is the same trip we just went up a little bit north to L.A. to go to a Dodgers game. And you can take your beach, they gave out free Snuggles! I mean, come on! I would travel to L.A. for that, like that's legit. And you might be thinking, I can't believe that they went on vacation without their mom. She was there she was just taking pictures, moms you know how that goes.

But why did we do that? Like, why did we do that? I'm telling you; I know this my mom and dad would have rather done something else. They would have. They would have rather gone to the

beach or mountain or something else other than that. Why did we do that? It's because when my dad was planning out our family vacations, he was planning them primarily through the lens of what would my sons enjoy. You see, my brother and I, we loved it. We would go early to those games, we watch batting practice, try to get autographs try to get a foul ball like this is what we love. We traveled the country getting to see some of our favorite players like this was awesome to us. And after going on vacation after vacation after vacation, I started to realize that my dad was going to take me somewhere where I wanted to go.

So, whenever he said later in life, in middle school in high school, whenever he said, "Nate, we're going on vacation, pack your bags." I wasn't like, "Ugh, Dad, do I have to go?" In fact, I didn't even need to know where we were going. My bags were already packed, and I was ready to go, because I knew that my dad was going to take me somewhere where I wanted to go. I knew that my dad was out for my good, he was going to lead me somewhere that was ultimately best for me. And I wanted to follow my father, the more I came to know my father.

This is true in your relationship with God as well. The more you come to know him, the more you want to follow him, because here's what it looks like in your relationship with God. The more you follow him, the more of his goodness that you get to experience. And the more you realize his goodness, the more you want to follow him. And the more you follow him, the more you get to experience his goodness, and the more you experience his goodness, the more you want to follow him. And the more you follow him, the more you get to experience his goodness. And the better and better and better you know your dad, the more you want to follow your dad, because you begin to realize that your heavenly Father is out for your good.

Which is why the psalmist is able to write this in Psalm 119, **97 "Oh, how I love your law!** (that's not how we typically think of it) **I meditate on it all day long. . . 103 How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! 104 I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path. 105 Your word is a lamp for my feet, and the light on my path."** But some of us are like, "Do I really have to follow everything that God said? Do I really have to follow scripture? Do I have to follow God's commands?"

You see, we've come to learn that following God is a burden. It's a burden to follow his commands. Because we come to believe, and this is the wrong way of thinking, we come to believe that the commands of God are an end in and of themselves. They're not. God's commands are leading you somewhere. When you follow his commands, he's taking you somewhere. But so often, we think that God only gave us these commands so that we would follow him to make him happy. Like, we just think I'm going to follow what he says, I'm going to pursue physical purity to make him happy. I'm going to not get drunk to make him happy. I'm going to try not to gossip to make him happy. I'm going to give a couple of my dollars to the church to make him happy. That's not how this thing works. God did not give you his commands, he did not ask you to follow him to make him happy. He gave you commands and asked you to follow him so that you might experience fullness of joy. You see, he's not trying to take something for himself, he's trying to give you something.

Now, let's just say that my dad was like, "Nate, we're going on vacation, pack your bags, we're ready to go." Let's just say I was like, "Nope. I'm not going, I've had enough, we've gone before, a million different times, and I'm just not going. I don't want to go". If that was my reaction, my family went on vacation without me, what would that mean for me? If I chose to not be a part of the family vacation, what would that mean? That would mean that I would not be experiencing the benefits of being a part of that family. If the rest of my family is doing something and I decided to not be there, that means I'm choosing to not take part in the benefits of the family. And the longer along, I would go if I kept saying no, no, no, no, what that eventually would mean is that I had chosen to not be a part of the family.

And this is also what the scripture is saying. In Romans chapter 8, Paul is not just saying that the children of God follow God. What he's also saying is, if you don't follow God, you're not a child of God. Because this is so important, because if you are never submitted to the Spirit, if you don't care what the word of God says, if you are living in sin and want to continue to live in sin, you have self-selected out, and you're not a part of the family. And it's not because he doesn't want you it's because you don't want him. I hope that changes for some of you today. Because point number one, the first thing we can learn from this passage is that the children of God follow God.

Now in this next section, what Paul is going to do is he's going to make a comparison between a son and a slave. And a slave is an evil idea. It's far from God's design. But what a slave is is someone who is essentially owned by someone else, and who is underneath someone else, and exists for the good of their "master". They exist for their master's benefit only. But on the other hand, a son is someone who lives underneath someone else and it's for the son's good, the son's benefit, the son's protection. How do you see your relationship between you and God? Are you a slave or are you a son? But Paul says this in verse 15, **15 "The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."**

You know, for me, one of the most interesting things in this passage is that it says, "**The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear, again.**" To "live in fear, again" means that at one point we lived in fear, which is true for all of us. We at one point lived our lives in fear. Maybe for you, it was fear of man, maybe it was fear of death, maybe it was fear of failure, maybe it was fear of rejection. All of us at one point were consumed with fear. But how did we go from living in fear to living without fear? Something would have had to drive it out.

1 John 4:18, "**There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.**" John says that fear and punishment are linked. If punishment is a possibility, fear is always going to be there with it. But on the other hand, he says that we can live fearlessly, because punishment is no longer an opportunity for us. It's not a possibility. Why is that? It's because Jesus took our punishment. It's

because **God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life**. Where's the fear in that? It's gone, because the perfect love from your perfect father has driven it out. Which is the second thing we can learn from this passage. Point number two, children of God are loved by their Father.

2. *Children of God are loved by their Father.*

Verse 15 says, “**the Spirit we received brought about our adoption to sonship**”. What does adoption mean? This is important, you need to hear this, what does adoption mean? It means you're not a child by chance. You're not a child by chance. Adoption is the choice of the adopter, not the adopted. He chose you.

Another thing that I think is helpful in just some historical context is that in this day and age, the adopted son and daughter actually had more benefits than the naturally born son or daughter. Because if you were just born into that family, you could actually be cut out from the family. If you dishonored the family, your parents could say, you're no longer welcome. You're no longer welcome in our home, you're not going to be on our will, they can cut you out. But in that day and age, if you were adopted, adoption was permanent, because adoption was legally binding. You were going to be in the will no matter what. You were a son or a daughter, no matter what. Adoption in that day and age was completely permanent.

And I don't know if you've ever known anyone who's gone through adoption today. But if you go through adoption today, it's an incredibly difficult process. Like you have to make so many hard, hard decisions all along the adoption journey. And really, the first decision you have to make is how much risk you're willing to take on. From my understanding, this is what really happens to everyone who decides to adopt. You're handed this sheet of risks, essentially. And it says, are you willing to take these different things that might happen to your kid. It might be a heart condition, it might be challenges with brain development, it might be blindness, it might be different deformities. There's all these different things. You have to decide what type of risks that you can take on. It's a grueling process, it's so hard to know that if you say you can't take that type of child, that child will be passed over once more.

You know, I can't help but think that this is what it looked like when our heavenly Father chose to adopt us. I like to think that someone was walking him through that process and then gave him a list of all these different risks and says, you know, the this is the list of people that that typically people pass over. Because you see, we got we got the selfish people that that are only going to think about themselves. We've got the materialistic people and no matter how much you give them, it's just never going to be enough. And we got the rebels and they're just never going to want to do what you say. Then we've got the liars, we've got the gossipers, we have people filled with lust. And honestly, on this list of risks, nobody ever really wants to take these people. I just imagined our heavenly Father saying, “No, no, no, you don't get it. I only want the rejects. I only want the lost and the lonely. I only want the forbidden and the forsaken. I only want the blind

and the broken, I only want the broken ones, and I want all of them as my kids.” Because there's not a single thing you've ever done past present or future that would disqualify you from his love, because his love overwhelms your disobedience.

Another thing you can learn about adoption is that adoption is incredibly costly. If you know anyone who's ever done it, it costs a ton of money like tens of thousands of dollars. I've heard if you adopt internationally, it can cost up to \$100,000. Not just that, but you're paying for plane tickets, and you've got to take a bunch of paid time off days for that travel. Adoption is incredibly costly. Why do parents do that? It's because their kids are worth it. They're worth it. In the same way, your adoption was costly. But your adoption did not cost 50 grand and some PTO days. Your receipt for your adoption, your proof of purchase are nail scarred hands, a bloody back, and a head that had a crown of thorns on it. That's what your adoption cost. But why did God pay it? Because you were worth it. He was willing to give over his perfect son, his obedient son, so that he could welcome in his disobedient sons and daughters, because he loves you just that much.

In fact, this is what Paul is trying to remind us of in this passage. I want to show you one other thing in verse 15. He said this in verse 15, **“Rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, *Abba, Father*”**. So, there's a weird word there. It's not just weird for us, if they were reading it in that day and age, it would have been like shockingly read. It's shocking, like code red. This is a weird word. And it's that word, *“Abba”*. Because *abba* is an Aramaic word. And Paul wrote all of his letters in Greek because the people who read his letters, read Greek. So, it's weird, like here he uses an Aramaic word. Why does he do that? Why does he use that word, *abba*? Why does he use an Aramaic word? Well, it's because Jesus spoke Aramaic. And what Paul's trying to do is he's trying to remind us of how Jesus spoke to his Father.

And I found this interesting this week, there are only three times in Scripture where *Abba* Father is used. It's in Romans chapter 8. It's in Galatians chapter 4, which says the exact same thing as this passage. And then it's also in Mark chapter 14. What's in Mark chapter 14? Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane, and it's the night before he's about to be crucified. In scripture it says that he's overwhelmed with sorrow, and he's with his disciples, but he leaves his disciples so that he could go talk to his father. And this is what we read next Mark 14:35, **35 “Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. ‘*Abba, Father,*’ he said, ‘everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me, yet not what I will, but what you will.’”** See Jesus, the perfect Son of God approaches his father. And he says, “Father, I don't really want to go through with all this pain and suffering”. And he cries out, *“Abba, Father,”* and is forsaken by the Father. So that when we cry out, *“Abba, Father,”* we might be forgiven by the Father. This is the gospel, and this is what Paul's trying to get us to understand here. The reason he uses this language is to point back to this very moment. He's saying, remember that when you cry out, *“Abba, Father,”* you're accepted, but it's only because Jesus was denied.

But you don't just get to call him Father. Because I need to explain what *abba* is. “*Abba*” is essentially the Aramaic word for father. But that just doesn't do it justice. It's really not the best possible translation in the English language. The good news is we actually have a better translation in the English language. Because what's interesting is almost every single language on earth has just about the perfect translation for *abba*. Because just about every single language on earth has this short two syllable word for dad. In Aramaic, it's *abba*. In English, it's *dada*. In Spanish, it's *papa*. In Indonesian, it's *bapa*. In Turkish, it's *baba*. Why is that? Who comes up with those words? Toddlers do.

It's so important for you to understand what Paul's saying here. And this is weird. I admit that this is weird. It feels ridiculous even me saying it, but he's saying that through the Spirit, we can cry out, “Dada!” Because you got to understand this, your relationship with God is not one of a slave to a master. Your relationship with God is not one of a teacher to a student. Your relationship with God is not an employee and an employer. It's one of an infant crying out to their dad. This has revolutionized my time with Jesus this week. This has changed my quiet time. It's made me realize that when I choose to spend time with Jesus and his word, and prayer, even in worship, what it looks like is it's me reaching up for my dad. And what does a dad do when he sees his infant reaching up towards him? He reaches down towards them, he picks them up, and holds them close, and tells them that he loves you, because this is who your Father is. He loves you because you're his kid. Which is point number two, the children of God are loved by their Father.

Let's keep reading and finish out this section in verse 17. Paul writes this, “**Now if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.**” So, when someone passes away, what do their heirs get? Everything. They get it all. And on a will, what do you list out? You list out everything that you have. What does our heavenly Father have? Everything. You see the cattle on a thousand hills are his. Everything from the lowest point in the oceans, to the farthest Galaxy away, all the hosts of heaven, are his. And what this scripture says is that at one point, he's just going to hand it over to his kids, which is point three, the third thing we can learn from this passage is that children of God have a hope for the future.

3. Children of God have a hope for the future.

And think about this, if you were God the Father, what would you give Jesus? After everything he went through, after everything that he decided to do, after he left heaven to enter into earth as a baby in a smelly manger? Only to live 33 perfect years seeking and saving the lost only for those lost people to abuse him, reject him, crucify him, and kill him. What would you give your son after he rose from the dead and descended into heaven? What would you give Jesus? Man, I know if I was God the Father, there'd be no end to what I give my son. I'd give him everything. But guys, this verse, it says that we are co-heirs with Christ. “Co” means equal in value or rank, so that when you go home to be with God, you get what Jesus got. This is

insanity! I mean, it's preposterous! It's ridiculous! This is undeserved. But this is grace, because this is who your Father is. He's better than you know.

But I also want to tell you one last thing about this passage, it's an important qualifier. Let me read it again, verse 17, **“Now if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings, in order that we may also share in His glory.”** See, we are only children of God, heirs with God, if we share in Christ's sufferings, this is a problem for so many of us. Because so many of us, we are trying to receive everything that the world can give us. And then we expect to die and go and be with God and receive everything that he can give us. It just doesn't work that way. All across scripture, it says over and over and over again, even the verses before it says, you will either serve your flesh or you will serve the Spirit, you will either go after heavenly things, or you will go after earthly things. You cannot serve two masters; you can't have both.

Which is why if you were a child of God, if you choose to pursue your heavenly Father here on this earth, this earth will feel uncomfortable. And even more than that, sometimes it will mean deep pain, deep suffering. And I want to communicate this as clearly as I possibly can. That following your heavenly Father does not always look like, “We're going to another baseball game!” Sometimes it means we're going to the cross. That's essentially what it looked like for a lot of Jesus's disciples. But here's what you got to understand in both cases, your God's still good. In both cases, he's still out for your good.

And I know right now, even right now, here at Harris Creek, there are situations in our church that I do not understand. Like deep grief, deep pain, deep suffering, we've got losses of parents, we've got kids that are that are kicked out of a will. We've got families that that want to have kids, but for whatever reason, cannot have kids. We've got loneliness, we got rejection, we've got deep pain and suffering. What you need to hear is it's not because you're doing something wrong. It's because this world is not our home.

But I want you to know beyond a shadow of a doubt, that even then, even there, your God's still good. Even there, he's still leading you to something that's ultimately for your benefit, because I don't want to give away too much. But a few verses later, in Romans chapter 8, verse 28, Paul writes this, he says, **“And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him who have been called according to his purpose.”** Even in the cancer, in the job loss, in the rejection, and the broken relationships, God will work together all things for your good because He loves you.

And I don't exactly know how this is going to work out. Maybe it will happen here on this earth, or maybe it will happen at home in heaven. But I just want you to be reminded, because Paul wants you to be reminded, that when you suffer here, when you share in Christ's sufferings on Earth, he wants to remind you that one day you will share in Christ's glory later, in heaven. Don't take the bait, believing that what the world has to offer is best, because God's got more waiting for us later. So, in summary, point number one, children of God follow their Father, point

number two, children of God are loved by their Father, and point number three, children of God have a hope for the future.

One other thing this passage brought to mind this week for me, this was helpful to me, I hope it's helpful to you. This summer, my wife and I, and my daughter, we were staying at this hotel and had had a huge hotel lobby. It was a great hotel lobby. So, we're just kind of hanging out in there one day and my daughter Jacie she was just kind of having a hard time, just kind of fussy that day, woke up on the wrong side of the bed and just wasn't having all that great of a day. But we're trying to make it a little bit better. So, we walked over to this gift shop in this hotel lobby. And as we're walking over there, my daughter saw this huge stuffed animal. So, she runs over to the stuffed animal. And she ate it. I mean, like more than I've ever seen before. Like, didn't catch herself at all, head to the ground. Ate it. Like she gets up her entire face is red from the ground, hitting her face. And she's just wailing. Like it's game over, like tears streaming down her face, crying, screaming, wailing, and we're trying to do everything we can possibly do to help her. I mean, I take her, my wife takes her, we're doing everything we possibly can do to make her feel better. But nothing's working. She's just screaming her lungs out. And as I said, this was a big hotel lobby with a lot of people in it. Do you know what these people were looking at? Us! And I know, I probably shouldn't say this. But as parents, I don't know, maybe you've been there before. But in that moment, even as her dad, I was embarrassed to be with her. I know it sounds bad. I'm just going to tell you the truth. I was embarrassed to be with her. I wish she could have been someone else's problem. I didn't really want to be seen with her. I was embarrassed to be with her.

Here's what you need to know. Here's what Romans chapter 8 says: if you are a child of God that has never, ever, ever been true of you and your heavenly Father. He has never once been embarrassed to be seen with you. He's never once tried to distance himself from you, even at your worst. Because if you're a child of God, even in your addiction, even in your anger, even in your lust, even in your greed, even in your selfishness, even in your worst moments, like the moments that you know that I'm talking about. The moments where you're embarrassed of you, he's not embarrassed to be seen with you, because even then, at that moment what your heavenly Father is up in heaven saying, "That one is mine! She's my daughter. That one right there, he's my son because I paid for him, because I adopted him, because I chose him. That one right there, that one's mine!"

Because you see when your heavenly Father thinks of you, he's not embarrassed of you. he just wants an embrace with you. And I don't know about you, but there's so many times in my life, when I don't feel like I'm a child of God. I don't feel like I'm God's son. Because there are so many times in my life, I'm just filled with selfishness, all I care about is what's best for me. There's so many times in my life where I just say, reckless things, I don't have a tight rein on my tongue. I just don't feel like a child of God. There are sometimes my life, when I flat out--I'm a pastor, I know—there are some times when I just don't desire God. And it's in those moments when I just don't feel like a child of God. But I'm so thankful that reality is not defined by what I feel. Because the reality is not what I feel but what he says.

In Romans chapter 8, it says you are a child of God, you are a son of God, you are a daughter of God. And it's not because of what you've done or haven't done, it's because he adopted you, he chose you, you're his. And nothing else matters. Because you're a daughter of the king. You're a son of the king, and nobody and nothing can change that. So, you don't need to pursue your identity in your career, or in your friendships or your relationships, or where you live. Your identity, who you are, is defined by whose you are. Because you're loved by the creator of the universe. Let me pray that we believe it.

Father, would you set us free from finding identity in anything other than being known and loved by you. May we never ever grow out of being defined by who our Father is. Whether we're five or 55, I pray that for the rest of our life, the most important thing about us would be who we are, because of whose we are. That we're yours. And God, praise God, it's not because of what I've done, I certainly haven't deserved being called your son. But because of what your perfect son did, you've come to accept disobedient and imperfect sons like me. And God, I also know that with all these people in this room and watching online or in the lobby, there's some baggage that comes with the word "father." I pray that you've stepped in the gap, and that my friends here could just experience the perfect Father. Not who their earthly dad is, but they could experience the perfect heavenly Father who loves them. They don't have to earn it, but it's just because you've given it to them. And God, thank you for your word, that it doesn't return void, that the message that you were writing to the church in Rome 2000 years ago, still make sense and matters to us here in Waco, Texas. And God, I know that that we only know a little bit of just how good you are. We just know a small picture. But we do thank you that the picture that you painted in Romans chapter 8 is a good one. I can't wait to fully be in your presence one day. When we get to fully see your goodness, and your greatness, and your grace to us. But God, I also don't want to have to wait for that day to worship you for all you're worth. Because you're deserving of all of our praise and adoration because you are alive, and you're with us, and you're for us, and it's in the powerful name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.