

I. Introduction

- A. I have good news for you today. It comes from the Bible. Our topic today is: .
 - 1. **Self-Respect**
- B. Let's get right into the Bible.
 - 1. *"having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved."* (Ephesians 1:5-6)
- C. I want you to notice that everything in this verse flows out of this beautiful gift called *adoption*. When you accept Jesus into your life, God adopts you. You literally become a member of his family forever. God literally becomes your Heavenly Father.
- D. What this means for us is pretty mind blowing once you figure it out.
- E. My talk today is part two in a series. The series is called My Father... and we're talking about what it means to say that God is your Father.
- F. I know that talking about our fathers will raise a whole lot of different reactions. Some of us feel really great about our dads. Some of us feel really bad about our dads.
- G. For good or bad, our dads are one of the single most impactful forces in our lives.
- H. Our father's influence is not only impactful, it's long-lasting. We will be dealing with our father's influence for our whole lives.
- I. But, like I said, I do have good news today. But to get to it, we have to trace down a family tree in the Bible. And that family tree is really messed up.

II. King Saul

- A. The first king of Israel was a man named Saul. He started out okay, but then turned into a monster. He rebelled against God. He was a bully. He was a coward. He was a bad guy. At one point, he actually looked for help from a witch and her demons. King Saul was a beast with a very ugly dark side.
- B. King Saul was also a father. You could probably guess that King Saul was an epically bad father to his son, Jonathan.
- C. In one hideous story in the Bible, King Saul wanted to kill Jonathan, but the people rescued him.
- D. In another appalling story, Saul wanted to murder Jonathan's best friend, David. But Jonathan spoiled his father's plot and rescued David.
- E. That's when you get this gem in the Bible. Warning, this is brutal:
 - 1. *Saul boiled with rage at Jonathan. "You stupid son of a whore!" he swore at him. "Do you think I don't know that you want him to be king in your place, shaming yourself and your mother?"Then Saul hurled his spear at Jonathan, intending to kill him...* (1 Samuel 20:30, 33)
- F. This is pure evil. God hates this. This is never right, never righteous, never acceptable to God.
- G. For you, this might be the story of your life. You might understand this all too well because you are living this right now. This is your father, or this was your father.
- H. I want you to know that God is completely, and totally against any man who would abuse you, your mother, or anyone. This is not from God. This is satanic.
 - 1. And I feel like I have to say this too: Never let any abusive person throw Bible verses at you about submission and obedience. That's just heaping abuse on abuse.
- I. Jonathan is one of the great men of the Bible. He has class. He has integrity. He is a good man and a great friend to David. He's in a horrible situation, but he never lets his father's evil define him.
- J. And that's why I telling you about him.
- K. Jonathan was proof of this lesson:
 - 1. **Lesson 1: Even though you cannot control what happens to you, by grace you can control how you respond to what happens to you.**
- L. Jonathan didn't pick Saul as his father. He had no control over that. He didn't pick a violent bully to raise him.
- M. And you didn't pick the bad stuff in your life either. That's not your fault. You can't control what happens to you.
- N. But you can control how you respond. You do have the power, you do have the agency, to control what you make of it.
- O. Jonathan made the best of it... as long as he could.
- P. Even so, later on, the family tree bends again toward the dark side, as King Saul drags his son into a battle that never should have happened.
 - 1. *"Then the Philistines followed hard after Saul and his sons. And the Philistines killed Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul's sons. The battle became fierce against Saul. The archers hit him, and he was severely wounded by the archers. Then Saul said to his armorbearer, "Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised men come and thrust me through and abuse me." But his armorbearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword and fell on it."* (1 Samuel 31:2-4)
- Q. This is horrible, and I think I need to spend a couple minutes teaching on why stuff like this happens.
- R. Why so much suffering in the world?

III. Fallen World

- A. The basic reason is that we live in a fallen world. God did not make it this way. This world is not as God intended it should be.
- B. When God made the world it was beautiful. It was perfect. Pure happiness. Total health. No needs. No sorrows. No pains.
- C. God created a Paradise for the human race.
- D. And the human race used their free will to demolish it.
- E. And I know I promised Good News, and I'll get there, but I have to set it up.
 - 1. **Lesson 2: This fallen world is a morally broken Pain Machine... and it's not your fault and it's not God's fault.**
- F. Let's agree that we've all brought bad stuff into our own lives through our own bad choices. OK agreed.
- G. But probably most of the bad stuff in our lives came out of us through no fault of our own.

- H. I want you to know that you can't blame God. That's just not how the world works.
- I. We can't blame him. The only way to get rid of suffering and evil would be to turn everybody into robotic machines with no free will, no choices, no pulsating heart, no humor, and no passion.
- J. Those are the ground rules.
- K. And those ground rules come with consequences.
- L. As long as there is free will, as long as you and I get to make choices, people will hurt people. Guys like King Saul, will abuse their power and abuse their families, and abuse people.
- M. We have all been victims of other people's sin. Bad news, right?
- N. But, and this is hard to admit, all of us have people who have been victims of our sins, right?
 - 1. Haven't you hurt somebody? Haven't you been unkind to somebody? Haven't you spoken harsh words, or told half-truths, or been mean or dishonest, or cruel?
 - 2. Whose fault is that?
- O. Bad things happen, and we can't blame God.
- P. Saul was a horrible person and a horrible father. Jonathan suffered because of that. Jonathan died because of that.
- Q. Yeah, we live in a fallen world. That's the ground rules. This fallen world is a morally broken pain machine, and it will be until Jesus returns.
 - 1. Lesson 3: Grace makes you strong to rise above the Pain Machine and to thrive in this fallen world.**
- R. In other words, the bad guys don't get the final say.
 - 1. Sin doesn't get the final say.
 - 2. Fallenness doesn't get the the final say.
 - 3. Evil doesn't get the final say.
 - 4. The devil doesn't get the final say.
 - 5. The giant Pain Machine doesn't get the final say.
- S. God is not only your creator, he is your father. As your father, he wants the best for you. He wants you to thrive. He wants you to raise above. He's cheering for you. He is on your side.
- T. And he has given you this incredible superpower, called Grace.
 - 1. *"You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."* (2 Timothy 2:1)
- U. Grace is where your strength comes from. Grace is how you rise above the stuff that breaks your heart.
 - 1. Grace is the muscle you need to be the very best possible version of yourself.
 - 2. Grace makes you you.
 - 3. Grace. Peels off all the demeaning labels from anyone has ever stepped on you. A cruel father. An absent parent. The mean girls. The bullies. The bad bosses. The stoned out peer group.
- V. No matter how many names Jonathan's father called him and no matter how much abuse his father heaped on him...
 - 1. ...Jonathan knew that he had another father.
 - 2. Jonathan knew he had a father in heaven.
 - 3. And Jonathan listened to that father.
 - a) *That* father told him who he was.
 - b) That father gave him his identity.
 - c) That father, his heavenly father, built him up and showed him his Worth.
 - 4. Don't let the world around you tell you who you are. They don't have a clue.
 - 5. Listen to the one who made you and knows you best. Listen to the one who loves you and loves you best.
 - a) That's what Jonathan did, and he never let his crazy father define him.

IV. Accepted

- A. We will come back to this family tree. But I want to go back to the verse we started with.
 - 1. *"having predestined [this is your destiny] us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved."* (Ephesians 1:5-6)
- B. When I was in high school, this verse was a life-saver for me.
- C. Self-acceptance was so hard. It's probably the biggest struggle of adolescence. Who am I? Do I matter? Am I worthy?
- D. I had memorized this Bible verse when I was a little kid, in Awana clubs. But it wasn't till I was in high school that something in my soul "activated" these words.
- E. I said last time that I had some anxiety about my father's acceptance.
 - 1. I was a Christian, he was not.
 - 2. I was pretty religious, he was a truck driver and bartender who never went to church, smoked everything, and cussed a lot.
 - 3. I was not really athletic; he played third base for the Chicago Cubs in the minor leagues. I was in Little League baseball, and I always freaked out when my dad showed up at a game.
 - 4. I never felt his approval. I heard him say once that he didn't want me.
- F. And I know that there are a lot of you hearing me today who know exactly what I mean when I say this:
 - 1. Lesson 4: Your father's acceptance of you and your self-acceptance go together.**
 - 2. Your father's respect for you and your self-respect go together. It's kind of Job One of a dad.
 - 3. If your dad spends your childhood telling you your a bum, or basically ignoring you, then self-respect is going to be hard for you.
- G. My dad never told me he was proud of me till I was 20. And he only told me because I asked him.
- H. Don't get me wrong... He was faithful. He provided. He was a good dad in a lot of ways.

1. But emotionally, my gas tank was empty.
- I. However, things changed when I found this Bible verse, and gradually, the Holy Spirit shoved it into my heart.
- J. By grace, the Father has made me accepted. A pastor from 2,000 years ago actually explained this to mean *God has made you his favorite*. I love that.
 1. My father accepts me. My father is proud of me. My father loves me. My father notices me. He gets me. He pays attention to me. He listens to me. He enjoys me. I do have a father who wants me.
- K. And so do you.
 1. You don't have to do anything. Say anything. Prove anything. Win anything. You don't even have to hit the ball. You already have his approval.
- L. And notice where this comes from:
 1. *"having predestined [this is your destiny] us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved."* (Ephesians 1:5-6)
- M. That's a reference to Jesus. We become accepted in the Beloved One, Jesus. When you are saved, you are placed into Christ. You are placed into permanent union with him. You become one with him. Everything that is true of Jesus, in his human nature, becomes true of you... Jesus is beloved.
- N. The father looks at him with tenderness, with affection, with happiness, and with love. God the Father looks at Jesus and says "you are the one in whom my soul delights."
- O. Jesus is the beloved one.
- P. And if you have been saved, you've been placed into him. You are wrapped up in him. You are one with him.
- Q. Guess what that makes you! ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED.
- R. It means that God, the father loves you just as much as he loves Jesus Christ. Your father, except you, just as much as he accepts Jesus.
 1. Will God ever reject him? No! Then he will never reject you either.
 2. Will God ever abandon him? No! Then he will never abandon you either.
 3. Can God forget him, ignore him, condemn him? Never in a million years! Then he will never do those things to you either.
- S. I said that your father's acceptance of you and your self-acceptance go together. Your father's respect for you and your self-respect go together.
- T. And what I want you to know today is this:
 1. **Lesson 5: If your earthly father didn't build self-respect into you, your Heavenly Father will.**
- U. That's what being a Christian is all about! It's about rehab for the broken places in your soul.
- V. Mephibosheth
 - A. I want to go back to the family tree of King Saul.
 - B. Saul was a bad man and an abusive father. Jonathan, his son, was a great man and an excellent father, but he died really young.
 - C. The third branch on the family tree is the son of Jonathan. He is the grandson of King Saul.
 - D. He was supposed to be part of a royal dynasty. But all of that was wrecked by his grandfather's evil.
 - E. Instead, a new dynasty has been formed under king David.
 - F. Now, this son of Jonathan is wasting away in the wilderness. He is poor. He is alone. He has no power, no authority, nothing. He's a giant nobody. His self-respect is broken. His self-esteem is zero.
 - G. And to top it all off he has a physical disability. As the Bible puts it he is lame his feet, meaning he is unable to walk.
 1. We all have something that is broken in us, whether it is mind, Will, or emotions, body, soul, or spirit. There is something messed up. There is something wrong. The giant pain machine has shoved us out of the Palace and into the wilderness. For some people, this brokenness is very visible, and on the surface. For others, it is hidden. Hard to spot.
 - H. But it's always there. Whether our brokenness is mental, emotional, physical, we are all the same.
 - I. Let's pick up the story and see how Grace floods into this man's life.
 - J. Back in Jerusalem, King David is remembering what a great friendship he had with Jonathan. He longs to have any kind of connection with that part of his past. So he said something to a servant.
- VI. *"Then the king said, 'Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, to whom I may show the kindness [hesed] of God?'" And Ziba said to the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan who is lame in his feet."* (2 Samuel 9:3)
 - A. Whatever else you got from the story, do not miss this. The whole point of the story is to show the kindness of God. That is awesome. That is super cool. But it gets even deeper.
 - B. Do you see that word *kindness* there? This was written in Hebrew originally. The Hebrew word there is actually the word *hesed*. *Hesed* means grace. It means the undeserved favor of God. It means the unmerited blessings of heaven. It means God doing something good for someone who doesn't deserve it.
 1. *Hesed* means the love of God, the affection of God, the tenderness of God, the mercy of God, the joy of God, the generosity of God, the happiness of God, the righteousness of God, and every other aspect of the goodness of God, rolled into one and offered as a free gift to every unworthy sinner who will just say yes to his gift.
 - C. In fact, when they first translated *hesed* in the English, they couldn't find one word big enough to convey the riches and awesomeness of what this word means. So the translators of the Bible actually invented a new word. They invented the word **lovingkindness**.
 - D. There is a powerful lesson hiding in plain sight right here for us.
 - E. The story you are about to see is intended to show forth the grace of God. In other words, if you want to know what God's Grace looks like, look at the story of Mephibosheth... it says so right here.
 - F. So king, David son, his royal entourage to go get Mephibosheth and deliver him to King David. Here's how that goes down.

- VII. *"Now when Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, had come to David, he fell on his face and prostrated himself. Then David said, 'Mephibosheth?' And he answered, 'Here is your servant!'"* (2 Samuel 9:6)
- King David has summoned him into his presence. And poor Mephibosheth doesn't know why. He is freaking out. He is on the floor. He is shaking. He is afraid.
 - By the way, this is exactly how I felt about God. The whole idea of appearing in his presence gave me a panic attack.
 - But Mephibosheth is about to hear something so beautiful, that he won't be able to accept it.
 - David speaks:
- VIII. *"So David said to him, 'Do not fear, for I will surely show you kindness [hesed] for Jonathan your father's sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your grandfather; and you shall eat meals at my table continually.'"* (2 Samuel 9:7)
- In 30 seconds flat, he goes from outcast to royalty. He goes from homeless to the lord over vast estates. He goes from hungry to eating at the table of the king.
 - He goes from a nobody to a somebody.
 - And all of this is by Grace.
 - But he can't believe it. Why not? Because his self-respect is in the toilet.
- IX. *"Then he bowed himself, and said, 'What is your servant, that you should look upon such a dead dog as I?'"* (2 Samuel 9:8)
- Back then, dogs were unclean animals. They were not domesticated. They were not pets. They were scavengers, like rats. To call yourself a dog was to call yourself the lowest of the low.
 - So to call yourself a dead dog was to basically call yourself garbage.
 - This is the opposite of self-respect.
 - I don't want you to think that I have this all figured out. There are times when I remember something stupid that I've done, and I cringe. I judge myself. I beat myself up. I'm calling myself names, and telling myself, the blessing of God might be for others, but it's never for me.
 - If your self-respect is zero, the devil has you hypnotized. If you are self-acceptance is fragile, there's a stronghold in your mind.
 - And God, the father will tear that strong hold down. He will snap you out of that spell. And he will do it with the truth of the gospel of the grace of God.
 - You are not garbage. You are beautiful in his sight.
 - You're not damaged goods. You are complete and perfect by grace.
 - You are not old, and your hopes are not dead. Your youth is being renewed, like an eagle, and God is restoring to you the years that you've wasted.
 - David tenderly reaches toward Mephibosheth and lifts up his face, and he decrees this:
- X. *"As for Mephibosheth," said the king, 'he shall eat at my table like one of the king's sons.'"* (2 Samuel 9:11)
- When God put a picture of his grace in the Bible, he capped it off with a never ending feast! And not with just any feast, but a royal feast.
 - And the invited guests of honor — that you and me, and everyone who has Jesus — are treated not as guests, but as Sons and Daughters in the Royal family of God.
 - He just got... adopted...
- 1. Lesson 6: God heals your sense of self-respect as you draw your identity from Him.**
- XI. Conclusion
- If you have Jesus, you are a child of God. This makes you an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus.
 - God has an inheritance for you right here right now today. He wants you to step into your birthright. Into the full experience of all that God planned for you and all that God had in mind for you on the day that he saved you.
 - That inheritance includes abundant riches for every need. Includes treasures and possessions beyond what you can ask or think.
 - That inheritance also includes supernatural supply for every aspect of your life. Your body, your soul, your spirit, your physical health, your emotional health, your healing, your mental health. Step into your birthright.
 - And your inheritance also includes a whole new identity. Christian, you are a new creation. You are a new spiritual species.
 - You are royalty. You dazzle the angels. You share the throne of Christ.
 - This is your family tree... the one that defines you forever.
 - Demons are afraid you knowing all this. The worst thing that can happen to them is that you would believe your inheritance, and claim your birthright.
 - You have nothing to be ashamed of. Christ has made all things new.
 - You have nothing to feel guilty over. Your sins have been nailed to the cross.
 - You have nothing to hang your head over. You are a glorious, beloved, Spirit-indwelt, empowered, authorized, blessed, adopted, justified, redeemed, glorified, sanctified, Spirit-baptized, heaven-bound, enriched, provisioned, secure, complete, fully accepted, fully adopted, fully saved, going to heaven, perfectly righteous, completely adopted child of the living God.
 - What's your problem?
 - Lift up your head, Christian!
 - Look to your Father.
 - And let his full acceptance flood into the deepest, darkest recesses of your soul, with healing, power, and light.
- XII. DISCUSSION QUESTION:
- Of all the things your Heavenly Father says about who you are, what are 2 or 3 of your favorites?