

How many of you have had your DNA tested to find out more about ancestry? I've been tempted to do that, but a combination of being a little skeptical about the process and being too cheap has held me back.

I know enough about my past to satisfy my curiosity. However I would like my wife to find out more about her past. Sandy was adopted as a child, and though we've met her biological family, there's still some uncertainty about her ethnic background.

Having her DNA tested would clear up some unanswered questions. Would that change her life at all? No, the mother and father who adopted her are her real parents. The fact is that we are all sons of Adam or daughters of Eve.

We are made in the image of God with an inherent dignity and value. We have also been born with Adam's sinful nature. That nature separates us from our Creator and makes us subject to death and the miseries of this fallen world.

The good news of the Gospel is that through Christ, we can be given a new nature. That new nature makes us alive to God and dead to sin {in that we are no longer under sin's dominion}.

That doesn't mean that sin is absent. It does mean that sin does not define who you are. You are not obligated to the desires of the flesh.

[picture]

You will know of those desires, you will feel the pull and influence of those desires, but you don't have to obey them. You belong to another.

While that is objectively true, subjectively the appetite of the flesh may seem more real than the life in the Spirit. When sin comes knocking on your door, you know that you have company.

If you are a Christian, you know to whom you belong. You know that your ultimate hope is found not in the momentary pleasures of the flesh, but in your union with Christ.

There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ JESUS. Not only are your sins forgiven, but one day your sinful nature and all the desires that come with it will be gone forever.

When your faith is replaced by sight, you will no longer face temptation. Your thoughts will be completely pure. Your fulfillment will be complete. You will want for nothing. That's what the 23rd Psalm anticipates. (Psalm 23)

The sinful things of the flesh that beckon for your attention now are imposters. They can't deliver what they promise. They seek to fill a void that only God can fill.

How can you keep sin in its place? This morning we're going to talk about the mortification of sin; our adoption as children of God, and suffering with Christ.

Romans 8:12-13 (ESV)

So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

The first point in your outline, The Mortification of Sin is taken from a book written by John Owen, a Puritan writer from the 17th century.

It talks about the life long battle with sin that Christians are involved in. If you fight that battle **in your own strength**, the best you can hope for is to be a self-righteous snob.

You'll come across as someone who thinks, "I've overcome my sin, what's the matter with you?" You may look like a pious and righteous person, but nobody is going to like you.

But more important than that, your relationship with God will be distant and impersonal. What service you do for the LORD will be more like a contract than a covenant.

If you give of your time and resources, you expect something in return. In the process, you will become just as impatient with God as you are with others.

When things are not going your way, instead of trusting the LORD, you will demand deadlines. You will take matters in your own hands. You will doubt God's goodness.

The mortification of sin is the believer's battle with their sinful nature. That sinful nature can display itself through open rebellion or through self-righteousness.

[picture]

The most well used quote from John Owens is this: “**Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you.**” This is taken from our text.

So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

You are under no obligation to the flesh. The flesh will tell you that you have to give in to what it wants. The flesh will insist that it would be wrong to deny yourself because that’s the way God made you.

Galatians 5:16-24 (ESV)

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Summarize that in one sentence: Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you.

Whenever somebody who claims to be a Christian insist that their sinful behavior isn’t a problem with them or with God, you can be assured that sin is killing them.

Whenever somebody who claims to be Christian doesn’t seem to care if their lifestyle is out of accord with God’s Word, you can be assured that sin has the upper hand.

But the emphasis of Romans 8 is not to be looking at the sins of others, but to our own sin. What sin of the flesh is plaguing you? What needs to be mortified in your life?

In warfare, there are different tactics used to defeat an enemy.

- An attack on a walled city would often be done through a siege. You would starve them out.
- In ancient battles, the frontal assault was effective. (The advancement of modern weaponry made the frontal assault implausible; i.e. Picket's Charge)
- Instead attacking the flanks of opponent would seek to exploit their weakness.

To defeat any stronghold, you must understand what you're up against. The mortification of sin is identifying the besetting sins in your life and going on the offensive.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 (ESV)

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. ⁵ We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, ⁶ being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

Some of you have surrendered to the enemy because you're not willing to put up a fight. Some of you are sitting on the sideline when you ought to be in the arena.

Don't accommodate, don't rationalize, and stop making excuses.

Do not accommodate to your sinful desires, fight them. Do not rationalize away the guilt of your transgression, confess your sin and repent of it. God's grace is greater than your sin.

Don't accommodate, don't rationalize, and stop making excuses. It doesn't matter what the culture is doing or saying, sin is an affront against God. It is selfish, it is wicked, and it will be judged.

Romans 8:7-8 (ESV)

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

However if you are a believer, you will grieve over your sin. You know that your sin separates you from the God who loves you. It is your most earnest desire to be reconciled with your heavenly Father.

Romans 8:14-15 (ESV)

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

One of the most common psychological issues of our day has been called the "father complex". Those who have "father issues" long for the affirmation and strength that comes from a close relationship with ones earthly father.

The absent or abusive father leaves a void in the life of a child that affects a person for the rest of their lives. This is not to downplay the importance of a mother's influence, but we need both a mother and a father.

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The Spirit of adoption brings us into the family of God. In Christ we know that we belong and so we can cry out "Abba! Father" which is the most affectionate way to address your father.

Your heavenly father becomes your protector and provider. Just being near your father gives you a sense of security.

He will eventually make everything right. In pleasing your father there is no greater affirmation.

When you feel weak, you lean on His strength. When you waver in uncertainty, He is your rock. When you are despised or rejected by others, He is your safe harbor.

Adoption means that we have a new family; a new freedom, and a new inheritance.

As sons (and daughters) of God we belong to the household of faith. The family of God. The fellowship of believers in the Body of Christ as brothers and sisters in the LORD.

Question 34

What is adoption?

Answer

Adoption is an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the Sons of God.

Westminster Smaller Catechism

When you are adopted, you are chosen. You are selected. You are brought into the family because the family wouldn't be complete without you.

If you've ever had the pleasure of picking out a new puppy from a litter, you know how adorable all of those puppies are. Put somehow you know which one is to go home with you.

When you are adopted by God, you become the pick of the litter; not that you're better than anyone else, but you are welcomed into the family as one chosen and given the spirit of adoption.

1 Peter 2:9-10 (ESV)

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Adoption is the most loving and gracious act of our heavenly Father. He desires to bestow His favor upon His chosen ones. In adoption He gives us a new name, a new identity, and a new freedom.

We are free to come into the presence of the Father. We are free to bring our concerns before His throne of grace. We are free to call upon His name in our time of need.

Psalm 103:13 (ESV)

As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.

Years ago the legendary coach Vince Lombardi was a father figure to many football players. In that day and age it wasn't that unusual for a coach, or any authoritative leader to call a younger man "son." {picture}

Lombardi would inspire a player by simply saying, "I know you can do this son." That kind of language seems passé these days, but we all long for that kind of relationship.

The spirit of adoption gives us the freedom to be the person we were meant to be without the fear of rejection.

To be a son is to be loved by a father who will stand by you no matter what. To be adopted is to be brought into a family where you are loved unconditionally.

Romans 8:15-17 (ESV)

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,¹⁷ and if children, then heirs— heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ...

An heir is one who has an inheritance coming. What belonged to the father is passed on to his children.

We think of an inheritance mostly in terms of monetary gain. The father passes on his wealth and fortune to his descendants. If a father was highly successful in life, then the children would benefit even after his demise.

But there is a greater inheritance that can be passed on from generation to generation. A spiritual heritage or legacy is of far more value than money and riches.

On a couple of occasions as a pastor I was called on to mediate in family disputes over an inheritance. There is nothing nastier than family members fighting over money.

Those kinds of clashes bring out the worst in our natures. Even those who gain a vast amount of wealth through an inheritance can sometimes be ruined by this big windfall.

The stories are very similar to what you hear about those who win the lottery. Lots of money, but not the internal strength of character to keep things in perspective.

If your parents have passed on to you a spiritual heritage of a vibrant faith in the LORD JESUS Christ, you have what the world longs for.

A spiritual inheritance is more than a lifestyle or a code of conduct. It is a way to view life. It is a pattern for living. It is a set of priorities and convictions that gives you a solid foundation on which to build a life.

Almost every week we allude to the question, "What is the chief end of man?" What is man's primary purpose? (To glorify God and enjoy Him forever)

It's nice to know that in your head. To see that lived out from day to day gives you an understanding of the meaning and purpose of life.

Were you blessed with parents who taught you that by example? Money, wealth, success, pleasure; those are good things, but they are not ultimate things.

A spiritual inheritance will teach you to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and the things of this world will then fall into their proper place.

A very successful businessman lost almost all of his wealth in the recession of 2008. His family lived a very comfortable upper middle class life with all of the perks that come with that.

In a short amount of time, they lost it all. Their home, their cabin on the lake, their private schooling, and their status in the community.

But they did not lose faith. Led by a contrite and humbled father, that family gained more than they lost. They learned that the things of this world are transient, but the things of God are eternal.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 (ESV)

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,
¹⁹ thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

There are no perfect earthly parents, but if your parents taught you to love the LORD your God with all you heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself, then you are an heir to a great fortune.

To be adopted into an earthly family is a good and wonderful thing. To be adopted into the family of God is a blessing that goes beyond this life into eternity.

Romans 8:16-17 (ESV)

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Like it or not, suffering with Christ is a part of the package. When the Spirit of God dwells within you, His spirit will bear witness to your spirit.

JESUS wept over his beloved city of Jerusalem. JESUS was greatly troubled over the spiritual dullness of His disciples. JESUS was infuriated with how His Father's house of prayer was turned into a marketplace.

The culture of our day is inventing new ways of doing evil. People are doing that which is right in their own eyes. That which wasn't even thinkable a generation ago is becoming mainstream.

It is painful to watch the decadence of a nation that still has as its motto, "In God We Trust."

That's the same world that JESUS entered into. "He came unto His own, but His own received Him not." A prophet is not without honor except in his own town.

Next week we'll talk more about our present sufferings, but for now, the sufferings of Christ is a vital part of our life in the Spirit.

When we face rejection, ridicule, or even persecution, we better understand the value of our salvation.

The things of this world are good, but they point us to a greater good. The praise of men is nice for the ego, but it's nothing compared to the favor of God.

If you are suffering this morning, look to Christ, who suffered in your behalf. If you could get out of that which is causing you to suffer, you would do it. But most of the time we don't have a choice in the matter.

{cross}

JESUS did have a choice, and He chose to suffer on the cross for you, so that you can share in His glory. Trust Him with your life; He has your best interest in mind.