

### A most basic human need is belonging

- We were created to belong
  - This is why God said “**It isn’t good for man to be alone**”—man needed someone to belong to and someone to belong to him
  - This is why God created family
  - This is why God tells us to preserve family (**hates divorce**)
  - This is why God expresses special care for **the fatherless, the orphan and the widow**
- We were created to belong and when we don’t—things go wrong

### One of the tragedies of sin is that it **breaks the experience of belonging**

- Evidenced by the fact that when Adam and Eve sinned God **banished** them from the garden
- “**Go. You don’t belong here.**”
- A picture of the **belonging breaking** results of sin

### Since that time, humanity has both perpetuated and suffered from **a sense of not belonging**

- The feeling that we have been by someone at sometime been **abandoned**
- And this sense (and its associated challenges) wreaks havoc on humanity

Think about it just within the context of ‘father’. Since that is really what the text is about...

### What does a break in belonging and experience of abandonment (with regards to just this one relationship) do?

- **63% of youth suicides** are from fatherless homes (Source: U.S. D.H.H.S., Bureau of the Census)
- **90% of all homeless and runaway children** are from fatherless homes
- **85% of all children that exhibit behavioral disorders** come from fatherless homes (Source: Center for Disease Control)
- **80% of rapists motivated with displaced anger** come from fatherless homes (Source: Criminal Justice & Behavior, Vol 14, p. 403-26, 1978.)
- **71% of all high school dropouts** come from fatherless homes (Source: National Principals Association Report on the State of High Schools.)
- **75% of all adolescent patients in chemical abuse centers** come from fatherless homes (Source: Rainbows for all Gods Children.)
- **70% of juveniles in state-operated institutions** come from fatherless homes (Source: U.S. Dept. of Justice, Special Report, Sept 1988)
- **85% of all youths sitting in prisons** grew up in a fatherless home (Source: Fulton Co. Georgia jail populations, Texas Dept. of Corrections 1992)

Obviously there are many complicated factors behind these things issues, but there is an obvious common denominator

I say this to illustrate the point—**we were meant to belong** and when that is fractured in some way, things go from bad to worse

- Especially (but not only) as it pertains to ‘father’

### We **intuitively know** this (that we need to belong and that a broken experience of belonging hurts) and so we **fear abandonment**

- This is why we put up with abusive friends and family and spouses
- We believe that the **pain their presence** causes us is better than the **pain their absence** will cause us
  - And so we choose to suffer in all sorts of ways to avoid a sense of abandonment/not belonging

This is why we often (in the Christian community) do 2 wrong things:

- 1. We pretend to be better than we are (because we are afraid we won't belong)
- 2. We fail to encourage people to live better than they are (we fear they won't like us anymore)
  - (Misappropriations of self-love and overcompensations for our need to belong)
    - Rather than **accepting who we are** and being who we are we mask who we are
    - Rather than **spurring each other on** toward love and good deeds we tolerate destructive behavior because we love ourselves too much to be honest with others
      - On the one hand **we don't love** ourselves enough
      - On the other hand **we love** ourselves too much
        - All tussled about by our need to belong and fear of being abandoned

Whether it is in a marriage, or with parents, or with family or peers, or in the Christian community—we fear abandonment (no longer belonging)

What fear of abandonment is, is powerlessness

- [This person might leave me and I can't do anything to stop it](#)
- [This group might banish me and I can't do anything to keep it from happening](#)
- And so we live in fear and anxiety (and we act in **untrue** ways)
- And we desperately try to please and appease people so that they will **stay with us**

This is especially true as it pertains to God

- Scripture declares that our sin has made us worthy of both abandonment and banishment

Scripture declares that we are **powerless** to save ourselves—the ultimate sense of powerlessness

For the person that realizes his or her sinfulness and accountability before God, and that they are powerless to save themselves, fear—fear of abandonment—sets in

- This is why most everyone fears death
- There is a deep common feeling in humanity that there will be a Judgment—a day of reckoning
- Where we may discover that we do not belong in heaven and are abandoned to hell (Clapton—*Tears in Heaven*)

But we have a Rescuer—a Savior from this very real fear

1 John 4:18

... [perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love.](#)

**The love of God: vv4-5**

- [God loved us and chose us \(in Christ\) and decided into advance to adopt us \(through Jesus Christ\)](#)

**Adoption**

- One of the ways Scripture speaks about our salvation
- What it means to communicate is that we have been brought into a love relationship with God where we understand Him as Father and He treats us as children
- The main thrust of the concept of **adoption** is **belonging**
- He **adopted us into His own family by bringing us to Himself** (through Jesus Christ)
- **We belong...**

But we **did not belong**, before Jesus saved us!

- **Not** children of God
- Ephesians 2:3 (in NASB) = **children of wrath** // **By our very nature we were subject to God's anger** (NLT)
- Romans 5:10 says we were **enemies of God**
- Ephesians 2:11-13 says we were **outsiders, living apart from, excluded, far away, without God and without hope**
- Romans 1 says we were **abandoned** to our sin by God
- Jesus said we were headed for a place of **outer darkness** (total exclusion) and **weeping** (absolute abandonment)
- We were far from being God's children!
  
- John 1:12 (speaking of Jesus)  
**But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.**

**Adoption** = we become God's children even though we were not (and had no right or natural claim)

- The Roman view of adoption (full rights and status)

### We only have this through Jesus

- In being united with Christ by faith, we share in His Divine Sonship (in the sense of relationship)
- We call God "**Abba Father**" only because Jesus spoke this way of His relationship with God
  - The writers of the OT only referred to God as Father 14x (in 39 books!)—and these occurrences are pretty impersonal
  - And it was always in reference to the whole nation of Israel—not individuals
  - But Jesus addressed God as Father exclusively! (more than 60x in the Gospels)
    - And He did not use the formal term
    - He used the common Aramaic word that little children would use—**Abba**
    - No one had ever spoke of and to God this way!!! Ever!
  - He never used any other term... **except when** quoting **Psalm 22** from the cross
    - **Where He was abandoned that we might be adopted!!!**
    - Isaiah 53:5 (NLT)  
**He was pierced for our rebellion,  
crushed for our sins.  
He was beaten so we could be whole.  
He was whipped so we could be healed.**

So that the horrific result of sin—**abandonment and broken belonging** are reversed

- We are **whole** and **healed** – We are **adopted** and we **belong**

Jesus the Son willingly endured **abandonment** as Son in order to secure our **adoption** as sons of the Father

And God **decided** all this **in advance** (v. 5) of making the world (v. 4)

- **Predestine** = to decide in advance

For the NT writers, **predestination** is a way of saying that the whole of our salvation, from beginning to end, is a work of God

- This is the view of the NT as opposed to our concept that **predestination** means we are **puppets** or **robots**
- Rather, there is nothing we could do to bring about our salvation
- God has acted in Christ to do all that is necessary

C.S. Lewis said salvation “is the change from being confident about your own efforts to the state in which we despair of doing anything for ourselves and leave it to God.”<sup>1</sup>

We are brought into close relationship with God **through His own choosing; through Christ**

- Because **He loved us before** we existed (we had done no good)

### **Closest human experience = a new baby**

- Before they have done anything we love them—radically (baby cheeks and baby breath) (prodigal)
- They bring us great joy
  - V. 5 = **This is what God wanted to do, and it gave Him great pleasure**

### Zephaniah 3:17 (NLT)

For the Lord your God is living among you.

He is a mighty savior.

He will take delight in you with gladness.

With his love, he will calm all your fears.

He will rejoice over you with joyful songs.

Predestination was never meant to be a doctrinal club used to batter people into acknowledgment of God’s sovereignty. Rather, the message of God’s love preceding our accomplishments and outlasting our failures **was meant to** give us a profound sense of confidence and security in God’s love so that we will not despair in situations of great difficulty, pain and shame. –Bryan Chapell<sup>2</sup>

### This does away with relational fear

- This is what is meant by **perfect love casts out fear... fear of judgment**
- We have no relational fear with God!!!!!!!
- It is about His love for us and not our love for Him—we imagine His love to be like ours (**see Ragamuffin p. 102**)

### **Predestination** is the Heavenly Father’s shout of love!

- We all wrestle with the doctrine and the questions it creates... but the more immediate reality is the wrestling we face concerning our wickedness and failures and sin and shame... these are **answered** in predestination!!
  - **I have loved you with an everlasting love; before the world was made I called you my own. You are mine!**
  - **You have always been in my heart, no matter what happens. I have chosen to love you since before the world began. You are mine!**

### When my son Isaiah was born... I apologized to my parents

- This sort of love makes us want to live to please Him
- Romans 8:29 says: **God knew us in advance and chose us** (predestined us) **to be like His son**

### And when we fail... we do not fear... we have been **adopted into His own family**

- How did Jesus relate to the Father?
  - Not as the judge, the spy, or the disciplinarian or the punisher...<sup>3</sup>
  - But as **Abba Father**
- **Romans 8:31-39**

<sup>1</sup> *Mere Christianity*, 128

<sup>2</sup> Bryan Chapel, *Reformed Expository Commentary (Ephesians)* (Phillipsburg, NJ.: P & R Publishing, 2009), 27.

<sup>3</sup> Brennan Manning, *Ragamuffin Gospel* (Colorado Springs, CO.: Multnomah, 2005), 77.