

# Adopted

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] That was the Lord's help. If you can turn back to Romans chapter 8.! Now, when we think, as we often do at this time, a communion time, about what it is that the death of Christ has achieved for us, what it is that the atonement of Christ has achieved for us.

One of the wonderful things about scripture and the theology of the atonement is that there's lots of different facets to that.

There's lots of different ways or angles that you can look at the atonement to try and understand something of the wonder of what the atonement actually does for us.

So, for example, one facet, one kind of view that you can look at is the doctrine of justification. So that's the language of the law courts.

That's thinking about these things in a kind of a legal way. And that's that wonderful doctrine that teaches us that in our sin, we are guilty. We are a people who are condemned.

[ 1 : 2 9 ] But, of course, when we put our faith in Christ as a result of the death of Christ on the cross, as a result of the atonement of Christ, we are declared righteous. So our legal standing changes.

So that's all about kind of the law court, the courtroom kind of context there. So that's one way of thinking about thinking about what the atonement of Christ has done. You can think legally about it.

But there's other ways as well. So, for example, you can think of reconciliation as well, another doctrine. And that's more the language of relationship.

So it's the idea that in our sin, there's this great separation between us and God. There's this great chasm there. We're separated from God as a result of our sin.

But, of course, as a result of the death of Christ and putting our faith in the Lord, we're brought near. So we're reconciled. So there was a great break there. Now we're reconciled.

[ 2 : 2 4 ] So that's kind of the language of relationship. So you can think of it in the legal side of things with justification. You can think of relationship and reconciliation. But there's lots of other ones.

There's redemption as well. That's another big one that we think about, thinking about the atonement in terms of redemption. That's the language more of the marketplace or the slave market, really, in particular.

And in that context, we're thinking about our being in bondage. You know, when we were in sin, we were in bondage. We were in slavery. But we were redeemed. And what was the price of our redemption?

The price of our redemption was the blood of the God-man. So the blood of the God-man, the cross itself, is what redeemed us out of that place of slavery. So, again, you get all these different ways to think about it.

Another one, I suppose, that we maybe think about less is propitiation. That's another one. That one's a bit different to the others. Because the others, we kind of have some kind of grasp of how to understand those kind of concepts, even in our modern day, you know, redemption.

[ 3 : 29 ] You know, these are words that we might even use in our ordinary language. But propitiation, not so much. That's more the language of the temple kind of setting. The idea of turning wrath aside.

That the death of Christ has resulted in the wrath of God being turned away from us. You know, it was directed to us when we were in our sin. But because of the death of Christ, the wrath of God has been propitiated, turned aside.

And, again, that's just another way to think about what it is that the death of Christ has done for us. And there's a number of other different doctrines and things that we could think about to help us to understand some of the wonder of the atonement of Christ.

But the one I want us to think about this evening is, as you could probably guess from the text that I put out. And that is the doctrine of adoption.

So that's another one of these kind of facets. Another one of these angles of thinking about what the death of Christ has actually done for us. And you see that wonderfully in this doctrine of adoption.

[ 4 : 29 ] And what I'm hopefully going to get onto is effectively a list of some of the benefits that come our way as a result of the fact that we are adopted into the family of God.

That's what I hope to get onto fairly shortly. But first of all, before we get onto that list of benefits that are ours as a result of our adoption, I just want to maybe, I suppose, think about the basics of the doctrine itself, first of all.

So we have there in verse 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.

Now, this chapter here in Romans chapter 8, it's an incredible chapter. It's very often if people are given their sort of favorite chapters, if we're allowed to have favorite chapters in Scripture, very often this one comes out on top Romans chapter 8.

It is rich in doctrine and wonderful theology as well. And it is really a culmination or a climax moment in terms of what Paul has been arguing through the letter.

[ 5 : 41 ] And if you remember at the beginning of the letter, he's really highlighting the fact that we're all sinners. That's how he begins the letter. Focusing on the fact that we are sinners, Jew, Gentile, nobody has an excuse.

All of us, we are a sinful people. We are unrighteous. We are at enmity with God. As I was reflecting on earlier on as well, we're separated. There's that gap there.

We're cut off from God. And in that state, which we're all in by default, we belong to the kingdom of darkness. So that's where we begin. We begin part of this kingdom of darkness.

And the thing is, in that kingdom of darkness, we actually have a father. It's not that we are fatherless in the spiritual sense, I mean. It's not that we are fatherless.

God is not our father at that point. But there's another being who is our father. And that is solemnly the devil himself. In that kingdom, in the kingdom of darkness, our father is the devil.

[ 6 : 50 ] So in John, in chapter 8, he's speaking to Jesus, speaking to the Jews. And he says, you are of your father, the devil. That's quite a striking statement.

And probably not one that we thought much of in terms of when we were in that unconverted state, who our father was. But nevertheless, he says to these Jews, these unconverted Jews, you are of your father, the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.

So even if we don't realize that at the time, when we were in the kingdom of darkness, the devil is effectively our father.

Very solemn. So, but that is where we are by default, in that kingdom of darkness. Whether we're aware of it or not, the enemy himself is our father.

And that's a kingdom in which we have no desire really for the things of God. A kingdom as well where sin is no problem. It doesn't really bother us. You know, I spoke about sin earlier on.

[ 7 : 53 ] And when you're in the kingdom of darkness, generally speaking, sin doesn't bother us at all. But what Paul is saying here by this point, he says, when you come to salvation, Christ, that's where you were, kingdom of darkness, the devil was your father, when you've been brought to saving faith in Jesus.

It's not just that you become part of a new kingdom. You do. And that's wonderful. You become part of a new kingdom. But it's not just that you become part of a new kingdom. Importantly, we actually become part of a new family.

We become sons and daughters of the living God himself. And that's a family that we enter into because of what Christ did on the cross.

It all is directly connected to the atonement of our Savior. Because of what our Savior did there on that cross, those who are his people, those who have put their trust and faith in him, were brought in to the family of God.

And that's remarkable when you think about that. When you think about Jesus on the cross. When you think about the Father pouring his wrath on his only begotten in order, in order that he can bring many sons and daughters into this wonderful heavenly family of the Lord's people.

[ 9 : 04 ] So we're adopted into that. We are adopted into the very family of God himself. And thinking about salvation in that sense of adoption, I think it's that we're able to understand something of what that means because of the fact that we understand the concept of parent and child in this world, you know, in terms of our human relationships.

These are things that we understand. We have some kind of a comprehension of the parent and child bond. And a healthy parent and child relationship is one that is ought to be rooted in love, where the parent is looking after the child, seeking to protect the child, to provide for the child, to care for the child.

So in that sense, when we think about parent and child relationships, it helps us to understand something of what this doctrine is about, adoption. But the problem is that, and this is where we have to be careful, because that's not always the case in our earthly families.

There are many people, when they come up against a doctrine like this, and the idea of God as father as well, for a lot of people, they can have very negative connotations to the very concept of a father figure.

Perhaps they might have experienced many failings in relationship with their own father. And even sadly for a lot of people now, increasingly more and more people now, even not having any relationship at all with a father figure.

[ 10 : 46 ] And some of these things, which is becoming an increasing issue, that can cause some people difficulty when they come up against this doctrine and this idea of thinking of God as father.

And we can connect some of the failures of human relationships into our understanding of our relationship with God as our father. But we have to be clear on this, and we have to make sure we're understanding it.

When we come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we enter into a family where we have a father who is absolutely perfect.

We can't connect past failures that people have had with who God is. When we come into this family of God, we are met with a father who is absolutely perfect.

That means he loves his children with a perfect love. This is a father who protects his children.

[ 11 : 47 ] A father who provides for his children. A father who's there for his children. Who spends time with his children. A father who teaches his children.

And a father, crucially, who will never leave. And that's very important. When we think about God as father, he is one who will never leave his children.

Now, in this world, humanly speaking, we can have no eternal father, you know, in terms of our human relationships. There's various reasons for that. The obvious one, death might take a father from a child.

A relationship breakdown can take a father from a child. Broken homes. All sorts of things can take a father from a child in our human relationships.

But our father in heaven is one who will never leave, will never forsake, and can never be taken from us. So that's a wonderful truth.

[ 12 : 51 ] That when we enter into this family, we enter into a family that will never break down. Massively important. We talk about the importance of stable families and stable homes.

There is no more stable family than the family of God. It is the most stable family of all, because we have the most stable of fathers. God is our father.

And that's a wonderful reality. And a reality that belongs to you here tonight, if your faith is in Christ. You're part of that family. Very much part of that family.

And what I want to do just for the time that we have left is very quickly to go through. This is going to sound like a lot, but I'm literally just going to be touching on each of these.

Eight benefits that are ours as a result of our adoption. So I've got eight things noted down here. They're not necessarily in order, and certainly isn't every single benefit that's connected to our adoption.

[ 13 : 52 ] But just eight things that I've noted, perhaps a good discussion question afterwards, just to think maybe of some other benefits connected to our adoption. But I'm just going to very, almost just touch on each of these eight that I have here.

First one, probably spend a little bit more time on this one. First one is that we are loved. So thinking about the benefits that are ours, being part of this family. First one is that we are loved children.

Now, when our earthly family units are functioning as they should, they ought to be family units with love at the very center of them.

I think that that makes sense to all of us. Love ought to be what motivates the very functioning of the family. So for example, the parent, it shouldn't just be that the parent is looking after the child out of me or duty.

It shouldn't be the case of the parent is looking after the child out of mere responsibility. It ought to be the case of the motivation is love, that there's a motivation of, of, of love that's there.

[ 14 : 58 ] Now, again, sadly, that's not always the case, but that, that is how it, that is how it should be. And, and in God, that's exactly what we have. When we turn to the pages of scripture, we, we, we are met with a God who perfectly loves his, his children.

You know, his actions towards us are motivated by that. You see that in everything the Lord does, motivated by, by, by this, this love for his people.

And when you try and unearth what this love is, it's remarkable. It is, it is a love that is unconditional. That, that love for his children is a love that is unconditional. It's, it's not a love that's based on what we have done for him.

It's, it's not a, a love that's, that's based on, on, on perhaps anything we might be able to give to him. It's not, it's not any of that. It's, it's unconditional. He, he loves his children, those who are his own.

He, he loves his children with that unconditional love. And then you try and measure the thing and you can't. In, in, in its magnitude, in its size, it is, it is infinite. Height, depth, breadth.

[ 15 : 59 ] There is, there is no, there is no measuring. The extent of the love of God. So not only is it unconditional, but it is a love that is infinite. And importantly as well, it's a love that is eternal.

It has no end. It, it, you will not reach a point where the father at some point will say, I don't love you anymore. You, you've sinned just that little bit too much.

You've strayed just that little bit too much. My, my, my love is something I am withdrawing. That, that'll never be the case. That this love that the Lord God, our father shows his children.

It's a love that is unconditional. A love that is infinite. A love that is eternal. And that's something we experience. You know, science tells us so much nowadays of the importance of children when they're young, experiencing love.

And, and, and how important that is for their development. How, even their, their formation of their brains. You know, love is a huge, hugely important aspect in their upbringing. Experiencing love. And spiritually, that's true for us as well.

[ 16 : 57 ] That's hugely important in our growth. That understanding of, of the love of God, that experience of the perfect love of our, our father. So that's the first thing. He, he loves us. We are loved children.

Secondly, he provides for us. So as our father, think about the benefits connected to our adoption. He provides, uh, for us. And, and as our father, he knows exactly what, what we need.

He knows exactly what we need to sustain us. On this, uh, Christian, uh, pilgrimage that, that, that we are on. You know, again, when we think about, um, parent and child, uh, relationships in, in, in this life, um, children, uh, often, um, know what they want.

Um, but they, they, they, they don't often know what they need. Uh, so a child will be very quick to say what they want. I want this. I want that. But, but not always aware of what they need. And of course, the job of the parent is not just to give the child what the child wants.

Um, the, the job of the parent is to understand what it is that the child needs. That's, that's always what's most important. And, uh, those two things might not always be the same. What the child wants, uh, may, may, may very well be different to what the child needs.

[ 18 : 04 ] And our father in heaven deals with us in the same way. He provides for us. Yes, but not necessarily everything we want. Uh, and I'm sure you've had many an experience where you've, you've come with specific things that you've wanted and you've desired and you've come before the Lord.

And you may well have had good intention for these things, praying for these things. And the Lord has said no to that prayer. Uh, the Lord has his reasons for these things. The Lord doesn't always give us what we want, but he absolutely does give us what we need.

And he knows exactly what we need. We don't know what we need. The Lord does. And when we're in need of comfort, he comes. When we're in need of encouragement, he comes. When we're in need of strengthening, uh, he, he, he, he comes.

And he nourishes us as well. You know, just as a parent feeds the child, provides food for a child, the Lord nourishes us as well. And he nourishes us through the word, through fellowship, through various means of grace, even gathering together like tonight on a Friday night.

You know, again, like children, sometimes children can think, Oh, I don't want that. You know, I, I don't want these things that my, my, my, my parent is providing me to, to eat. This can be a, a, a very, a common refrain, uh, from, from, from children.

[ 19 : 15 ] And sometimes as Christians, we're like that. Oh, there's a Friday night service. Oh, no, I don't need that. Saturday night service. No, I don't, I don't need that. I'll just go on a Sunday. I don't need to read the word every day. I'll just come now and again.

Uh, be like children saying, we don't need these things. We absolutely need these things. The Lord is nourishing us. He's given us that food. He knows what we need to strengthen us. He provides that. And when he, as it were, provides that on the table for us, let us, uh, partake, uh, of it.

So he's the God who, who provides. So he loves, we experience his love. He provides for his children. Um, thirdly, and, and I suppose, uh, connected with, um, the, the, the provision point is that he, he disciplines us.

Uh, that's another benefit. He disciplines us. So in, in, uh, Hebrews and in chapter 12, verse five, we read this, my son do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him for the Lord, it disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives.

So the disciplining of, of, of, of our father. Now, when I say that, and I'm, and I've said, this is a list of benefits. You might hear that third one and think that doesn't really sound like much of a benefit.

[ 20 : 34 ] How, how, how is disciplining, uh, a benefit, uh, but it absolutely is. You know, when we, when we stray in a life of faith, and it happens, uh, all of, all of the Lord's people understand that when we stray in the life of faith, we need to be disciplined.

And it's important to remember that when the Lord disciplines, he disciplines as a father, he disciplines very much out of his love for us, out of that desire to bring us back onto the paths of, of, of, uh, righteousness.

So he disciplines us for our good. And we have to understand that, that, that, that even the, the discipline of, of, of the Lord, it is for our good. Now, that's not to say it's not a painful process.

And when you're going through it, it can be a very painful process when you're experiencing something of the disciplining of, of, of the Lord, but we absolutely need it. Cause you think about what's the alternative. What would be the alternative if the Lord did not discipline us?

The alternative is for the Lord just to absolutely ignore us. And by doing that, what happens is we go further and further down a path of disobedience. And when we find ourselves further and further down a path of disobedience, that causes even more pain in our lives, even more suffering in our lives.

[ 21 : 50 ] We, we need the discipline of the Lord. We need for the Lord to, to, to call us back onto the, the paths of righteousness. Again, you know, to, to, to think of the parent and child relationship in, in, in this life, you know, to, to fail to discipline a child, greatly damaging, greatly damaging.

I know that's a big thing. Nowadays, it's almost don't discipline the child at all, uh, in terms of instruction and, and, and, and pointing out where they're wrong. Discipline's so important, absolutely crucial.

To, to, to, to not discipline, uh, children is, is going to be hugely detrimental to them. And that is absolutely, uh, the case spiritually for us as well. We need, uh, the, the disciplining of our loving heavenly father.

And that's the important point. It's a disciplining of a loving parent, a loving, uh, heavenly, uh, father. So, as adopted children of God, we're loved, we're provided for, we're disciplined.

Fourthly, we are protected. Again, uh, we, we know ourselves in, in healthy, uh, family structures, you know, the, the, the protective, uh, way in which, um, parents are towards their children.

[ 23 : 00 ] A parent will go to the greatest of lengths to look after, to protect their child. Um, you know, similarly, if a child is sick, a child is, is, is unwell, you know, a parent would do anything to be able to take that illness, to take that disease, whatever it might be, and to, to take it, uh, upon them, upon themselves.

That's the natural instinct ought to be the natural instinct of, of, of the parent to protect the child. And as when we think about our, our, uh, earthly father, he is one who, absolutely protects his children.

He protects us spiritually. He's guarding us from the enemy. He's, he's, he's like a wall of fire around us. And, and I think very often we're not actually fully aware of the way in which he's doing that.

The way in which he is protecting you from spiritual attacks that you know nothing about. Perhaps when we get to glory, we'll get more of an understanding of that, of the way in which we were, uh, protected by, by, by our, our, our father in heaven.

And we see the links that he actually goes to in order to protect us as well. You, you see the links. Can you open scripture? And you, you see there a description of it. You see the whole plan of redemption. This, this whole book, this one great plan to, to save his children.

[ 24 : 15 ] A plan that, of course, has that amazing climax moment on the cross. as, as we see our savior taking the curse that we, that, that we deserve to bear.

And he's taking that curse to himself. He's bearing, not, he doesn't become sin, but he bears sin. On that cross, he, he becomes the atoning sacrifice. And all of that is part of the plan of the father.

This, this wonderful, redemptive, uh, plan of, of, of God himself to protect his people, to protect his children. So, so you see in scripture, the lengths that your father will go to, uh, in order, uh, to, to protect us in that eternal spiritual sense, but also, also on a daily basis, even in practical, physical ways.

Again, I think when we get to glory, I think we'll be amazed even the number of physical ways in which we've been protected. Things that we don't know anything about. Again, a bit like a child. Sometimes a child has no idea the things that the parent is protecting the child from.

And I think that's very true for us as well. Um, we're, we're, we're quick to give thanks when we're aware of God protecting us. But what about all those times when the Lord is protecting us? Uh, and, and perhaps we have little comprehension of the ways in which he's actually doing that.

[ 25 : 25 ] So, um, we, we are loved, we are provided for, we are disciplined, we are protected. Fifthly, another benefit connected to our adoption, being part of the family of God, we have access to him.

We have access to him. Uh, this is a hugely important one, by the way, when you think about who our father is, that we have access to him. And I don't mean formal access, like the way in which a servant would have access to a king, or that, that, that sort of thing.

The kind of access that we have is, is, is, is very different. We have an access with an intimacy. Uh, it's an access where, whereby we come to God as father and we call him Abba, father.

There's an intimacy about the language there. There's a closeness about the, the language, Abba, uh, father. When we come into the presence of God, we have, we have access like, like a child has access to a, to a loving father.

And we come and we come and we, and we say Abba, father. And we have that access at any time, at any point in the day, anywhere we are, doesn't matter where in the world we are, we have this access, uh, with our father.

[ 26 : 41 ] We can speak to him and his ear is bowed down. His ear is bowed down before we even say the, the, the word, the door is never closed. The door is never locked. It's never a sign saying your father is too busy.

That's never the case. The door is always open. His ear is always bowed. And not only does he hear, but crucially importantly, he speaks as well. He answers and he does so, uh, through, uh, his, his word.

And in verse 15, again, thinking about that theme of access, you've got that contrast there of the slave. You know, the slave coming before a master is scared, fearful.

That's not the kind of way we come before God. There's a fear there. Yes, but not the kind of fear of a slave before a master. It's this reverential fear of one who respects his father or her father.

It's this loving, godly fear, a fear that draws us towards our father, that, that, that, that calls us in as we come before him and as we call him Abba, father.

[ 27 : 40 ] We have access to our father who is the God of this whole world. That, that's amazing to think that we have access to, to a father like that at any point, at any time.

So that's the fifth one. Sixth one, sixth benefit of, uh, some of the benefits that are always connected to our adoption, uh, is that we are assured of our place in his family.

Um, you see that in, in verse 16 in the passage we were, we were reading there that the spirit himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of, of God.

So the, the, the Holy, uh, spirit whom my father, uh, gives us, he, he, he gives us the spirit to, to assure us. The spirit does a lot of things, uh, but one of the things that he does is he, he assures us of our place in his family.

We are reminded of our place in this family. We are assured of our adoption. And that's important too, because again, when you think about a parent and a child, uh, good parents know, um, the, the, the things that are a real difficulty and problem for, for, for their child.



[ 28 : 55 ] They understand something of some of the things that might cause them to be scared and, and, and fearful and, and worry about. And as God is our father, as we're thinking about earlier on, he knows every detail of all our fragilities, uh, all the, the things that cause us problems.

And in this context, he knows that we are a people who struggle with doubt. He knows that. And that, that's something that, uh, a lot of the Lord's people struggle with this, this, this idea of, of, of, of doubt, doubting our place in the family, doubting whether we are children of God, doubting whether, uh, perhaps we belong amongst the Lord's people, but the spirit of the Lord, he's working in our hearts to assure us of our place in that family.

He's assuring us of our place as sons and daughters of, of the living God. So that same Holy Spirit who worked in our hearts to bring us into that family in the first place is the same Spirit who's at work assuring us of that through his word and perhaps even through other people as well. He's assuring us of our place in the family, our status as adopted sons and daughters of the living God. So that's six benefits so far. So we are loved, we are provided for, we are disciplined, we are protected, we have access to our Father, we are assured of our place in the family. Number seven is that we are part of a vast family.

We are part of a vast family because when you think about your adoption into this family, it's not just about your relationship with the Father. Clearly that's primary in that image.

But what's also important is the relationship that we have with one another as well. Because if God is your Father, then fellow Christians, fellow believers are our brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 30 : 53 ] And that's a wonderful truth. And that's a truth that I think ought to become very apparent at communion time. Because again, when you're sitting at the table, it's not just your fellowship with the Lord.

It's not a one, one-to-one thing. It's a family table. You know, you're there with your brothers and sisters in Christ. There ought to be that awareness of being there together with the Lord's people, one family of the Lord's people. Because when you're part of this family now, now you have a union with people who, before you came to faith, you maybe had no connection with at all. And I'm not just talking about locally here. I'm talking about people from different nations, tribes, tongues, cultures. And we're one family. Not just locally, one family, globally with all of the Lord's people.

And that's a wonderful truth. It's an incredible truth. And a reason as well, when you think about that, a reason to remember to pray for the church globally, our brothers and sisters in Christ, but also locally, a reminder to be looking out for one another. You know, to be seeking to share one another's burdens. You know, when there is division and strife, to resolve that when we see these things. Because these things do happen, you know, just like in any family, human families, that happens. In the spiritual family of the Lord's people, that happens too. And when we see it, we see to resolve these things. Because we ought to be united together as one family in the Lord.

And that's true denominational as well. So we're part of this vast family. That's number seven. I just, eighth one, I'm just literally going to mention this one. We are heirs. We are, so another benefit connected to our adoption, we are heirs. You see that in verse 17, it speaks of our being heirs of God. And an heir is someone who receives an inheritance.

Inheritance. And for all God's children, we are heirs to an inheritance that comes the way of all God's children. This is an inheritance that's incorruptible, undefiled, that will never fade away.

[ 33 : 07 ] An inheritance that awaits us in the new heaven and the new earth. And that is an inheritance that no financial crisis can take from us. It is an inheritance that no thief can take from us.

It's an inheritance as well. Unusually, when you think of an inheritance in this world, you know, the bigger the family, the less of the inheritance you get. But with this inheritance, the spiritual inheritance of what awaits us as the Lord's people, the bigger the family, it's almost as though the greater that inheritance is.

The value doesn't decrease when it's shared amongst all the Lord's people. It's as though the greater the family, the greater the inheritance that actually awaits us as the Lord's people. And that is an inheritance in glory that awaits every single one of the children of God. And nothing, no one, the devil, no one will take that away. You can't even lose it yourself. Sometimes we're scared of losing our own treasures. We can't lose this. We cannot lose that inheritance that awaits the Lord's people in glory. So there's eight different, and sure, there's many more you can add to that list. There's eight different benefits connected to our adoption. We are loved, provided for, disciplined, protected.

We have access to our Father. We are assured of our place in the family. We are part of a vast family, and also we are heirs to a glorious inheritance. And all of that, and even when you add to that list yourselves as well, it's a reminder to us just how blessed we are. For those of us who have been brought to saving faith, you've been brought into this family of God, it is incredible, the benefits that are ours.

And it's good to reflect on these things, even in a communion weekend, to think about some of these things, because in a communion weekend, you're coming to that family table. And that is very much part of our thinking, part of our preparation as well, thinking about that aspect of the family of God. And as you, God willing, come to sit at that meal in a couple of days' time, my prayer is that you would indeed be strengthened, just as a parent seeks to strengthen their children through provision of meals, that you would be strengthened as you partake, as you reflect sacrament and word as well. And important to point out too, that that family meal, if we're part of that family, it is not only a privilege to sit at that table and with the Lord's family. It is very much our duty. So if you are the Lord's, if God is your father, then it is your duty to come and to sit at the table of the Lord with the family of the Lord's people. And if that is the case for any in here, may the Lord give you the strength to do just that. Amen.