

A Chronicle of Redemption

Chapter 15: Father to the Fatherless

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CHAPTER 15: FATHER TO THE FATHERLESS **Psalm 10**

If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, I invite you to open with me to Psalm 10. The first Sunday I ever preached here at Brook Hills, Heather and I had begun the process of adoption a couple of months before. We were kind of an anomaly in the circles we ran in; we didn't know a lot of people who had adopted, and so when we would share with people that we were adopting, people were kind of surprised and intrigued. It was something kind of new.

So, we came to Brook Hills, and I remember that first Sunday I was here, I shared with a couple of people that we were in the process of adopting, and nobody was surprised here. Like, the immediate question people would ask around here...they would say, "Well, how many?" We're like, "Uh, well, like one." They would say, "Oh," and they'd just kind of walk away, like, as if to say, "That's all? We do it in the tens around here."

I am so thankful for the priority of adoption that has been present in this faith family for many years. It is evidence of God's grace and a demonstration of God's gospel in this faith family, and I am thankful for God's grace in you that has taken that to an entirely new level over the last year. Just in case you haven't been with us for the last eight, ten months, we, in August, started walking through James.

James 1:27, *"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress..."* A bold statement in James. So, to call up...we called up DHR, the Department of Human Resources here in Shelby County, and we said, "Do you have any needs? Are there any needs in our county when it comes to foster care or adoption?" The folks on the other end just laughed, and they said, "Yes, we have tons of needs." So, we asked them...we said, "Well, how many families would you need to cover all the needs that you have?" They laughed again, and we said, "No, really...like, just imagine, a miracle...how many families would you need to cover all the needs in our county?" They said, "Well, a miracle would be, like, 150 families." So, I said, "Okay," and two weeks after we studied James 1, we had an informational meeting in this room.

That night 160 families signed up and said, "We want to care for children in our county. We want to make sure that every child in our county...as best as we are able...has loving arms around them at night." You have done it. Families across this faith family have been doing training, been walking through the process. Some beginning adoption; some doing...many, many, many doing foster care, and even for those who may not be doing that, a whole network...there's a family-to-family network that has risen up to offer support for families going through foster care; to give assistance when it comes to clothing needs, transportation needs, furniture needs, just a variety...a whole prayer network that surrounds that whole picture. I praise God for His grace in you, not just here. I've had other churches in Birmingham calling saying, "How can we be a part of this?" and then churches from other states calling and saying, "How can we do this in our counties and our communities?" So, God's grace in you all is glorious.

What I want us to do, tonight, is I want us to look at Psalm 10, and I want us to celebrate. Just like we've done in these stories that, like I said, represent so many other stories, and let's just celebrate what God's doing. I also want to remind us why we're doing what we're doing as a faith family and what this means for us in the days ahead. So, when you come to Psalm 10, we're going to read it in just a second, but I want you to go ahead and circle the two times that the "fatherless" are mentioned.

First time at the end of verse 14, *"to you [God] the helpless commits himself; you have been the helper of the fatherless."* So, circle it there, underline it, the "fatherless" there. Then, down in verse 18, *"[God] you will incline your ear to do justice to the fatherless..."* so circle it right there. Here's the thing: the fatherless just don't appear out of nowhere here in Scripture. God has put an emphasis on this all throughout the story of Scripture that we've read to this point this year.

We don't have time to turn to all these places...you might write them down. Exodus 22:22...this is right after Exodus 20, when the Ten Commandments are given, the laws is being given to the people of God. In Exodus 22:22, God says, *"You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child."* He's showing himself from the very beginning in the law as a defender and a protector of the fatherless. Then, you get to Deuteronomy 10:17-18, the recounting of the law. I love these two verses, back to back.

Deuteronomy 10:17 says, *"The LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty and the awesome God."* So, it's a verse that's just exalting God in His majesty, and then right after that, verse 18 says, *"He executes justice for the fatherless..."* So, the picture is God, our God, shows His majesty and His might by caring for the fatherless. So, that's the law. Then, you go to the prophets. Isaiah 1:16-17, God tells His people that true worship leads to justice for the fatherless and care for the fatherless.

Worship disconnected from that misses the whole point. Isaiah 1:16-17, then Jeremiah 7:5-7, again, talking about worship in the context of the people of God. God says, *"You must care. True worship cares for the fatherless."* So, you've got the Law, the Prophets, and then here the Psalms. Here in Psalm 10, Psalm 68:5...God is the Father to the fatherless. That is His name, Psalm 68:5 says, and that is just a representative sampling. It's all over the place; the Law, the Prophets, the Psalms. God has chosen to care for the fatherless.

So, I want us to see the context behind these two mentions of God and His relationship to the fatherless here in Psalm 10, and I want us, then, to think about what this means for us as the church in a world where there are some say 143, others say 147 million orphans...147 million fatherless. So, what is the Word saying to us in a world with 147 million orphans?

Psalm 10:1.

Why, O LORD, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? In arrogance the wicked hotly pursue the poor; let them be caught in the schemes that they have devised. For the wicked boasts of the desires of his soul, and the one greedy for gain curses and renounces the LORD. In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him; all his thoughts are, "There is no God." His ways prosper at all times; your judgments are on high, out of his sight; as for all his foes, he puffs at them. He says in his heart, "I shall not be moved; throughout all generations I shall not meet adversity." His mouth is filled with cursing and deceit and oppression; under his tongue are mischief and iniquity.

He sits in ambush in the villages; in hiding places he murders the innocent. His eyes stealthily watch for the helpless; he lurks in ambush like a lion in his thicket; he lurks that he may seize the poor; he seizes the poor when he draws him into his net. The helpless are crushed, sink down, and fall by his might. He says in his heart, "God has forgotten, he has hidden his face, he will never see it." Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up your hand; forget not the afflicted. Why does the wicked renounce God and say in his heart, "You will not call to account"?

But you do see, for you note mischief and vexation, that you may take it into your hands; to you the helpless commits himself; you have been the helper of the fatherless. Break the arm of the wicked and evildoer; call his wickedness to account till you find none. The LORD is king forever and ever; the nations perish from his land. O LORD, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more.

Explanation of this Psalm

Here's what I want us to do. I want us to see what the psalm is saying...explanation of the psalm...and then consider implications of the psalm for us personally and for us when it comes to orphan care. I'll start with an explanation of this psalm. It begins with a two-fold...it's repeated twice...the question, "Why?". "Why, O Lord? Why? Why when the wicked are prospering, and the weak are suffering does it seem like you're nowhere to be found?" This is not the Bible saying that God hides Himself in times of trouble. This is the wrestling of faith that I think we're probably all familiar with, when walking through a dark time, and you're wondering where is God in the middle of this? "Why is this happening the way it is happening?"

The way of the wicked ...

What the psalmist does, he begins to describe the way of the wicked, starting in verse 2, and we're going to brush this with a broad stroke. We're going to move through this pretty swiftly, but I want you to see the way of the wicked summarized here. First, they seek their own selfish gain.

Verse 2, they "*hotly pursue the poor.*" They have "*schemes that they have devised.*" They boast "*of the desires of their soul,*" and they're "*greedy for gain.*" Selfish schemes, wicked pursuits, selfish desires, only one thing on the mind of the wicked and that is gain. If that means trampling over others and stepping on others, particularly, those who have less than they have, then all the better, in order to advance themselves. They seek their own selfish gain; they ignore the one true God.

They are arrogant, verse 2, and verse 4 says "*in the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him; all his thoughts are, 'There is no God.'*" Now, it's interesting...this psalm implies that the wicked...it's not referring to people in other nations. It's referring to the wicked that are actually a part of the covenant community of faith, the people of God. So, these are not people who would say they're atheists outright, but they are people who are claiming with their life, with the way they think and the way they act, that there is no God. They're living like there is no God. They're thinking their lives are totally independent from God.

They ignore the one true God, and in verse 5, the psalmist says, almost in anguish, *"His ways prosper at all times."*

Third, they trust in worldly prosperity. In their wickedness, they experience success. "Where is justice in your judgments, O God? They are far off, out of his sight. He sneers at his foes." He continues in his wickedness, and it helps him in this world. He is prospering in this world and trusting in his worldly prosperity all the more, which leads him, next, to live with deadly pride.

Verse 6, *"He says in his heart, 'I shall not be moved; throughout all generations I shall not meet adversity.'"* It's like the wicked believe they are immune to tragedy and nothing can touch them; nothing can stop them. Throughout all generations, they will face no problems. You can feel the tone, the anger of the psalmist here; "Why?" He continues on, verse 7...their words are sinful. *"His mouth is filled with cursing and deceit and oppression; under his tongue are mischief and iniquity."* The wickedness of his heart shows itself in his words.

It's what we see in Romans 3 when we see that description of the sinfulness of man. *"None is righteous, no, not one...their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."* The wickedness in our heart shows itself in the way we speak, and the wicked's words pierce; they destroy. Their words are sinful, and their works are evil.

You look in verses 8 and 9, you see the wicked described like a lion waiting in a thicket with might and power, ready to pounce on the weak, to take advantage of the weak. Like a fisherman who catches the poor in his net and drags them away. The weak get weaker, and the strong get stronger, all leading to these last two: they oppress the needy of the world. *"The helpless are crushed"* by the wicked; they *"sink down."* They oppress the needy of the world, and the wicked disregard the justice of their God. Verse 11, *"He says in his heart, 'God has forgotten, he has hidden his face, he will never see it.'"*

The wicked live as if they will never be called to account for what they are doing; as if God has turned a deaf ear to all they are doing. They are not concerned about His justice or His judgments. They disregard His judgment altogether. So, this is the way of the wicked that leads, in verse 12, the psalmist to pray, to petition God. *"Arise, O LORD..."* It's the verse we memorized this last week. *"O God, lift up your hand; forget not the afflicted."*

The God of the weak ...

As if to say, "Do something! Look at the way of the wicked, how they are prospering, and how the weak are suffering!" It's at this point, we begin to see a transition in the psalm from the way of the wicked to the God of the weak, and the psalmist begins to confess. In the middle of wrestling through faith, he begins to confess that God does see their need. The God of the weak sees their need. He is not blind to injustice.

Verse 14, *"You do see, for you note mischief and vexation,"* trouble and grief. God is not blind to injustice. It's the cry of Hagar, remember, in Genesis 16? "The God who sees me..." she says, "I have seen the God who sees me in my pain." It's a profound statement that the God of the universe sees us individually, in our hurt, in our pain. He sees their need.

Second, He hears their cry. Verse 17, *"You hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed..."* It's like Exodus 3. You remember when the people of God were slaves in Egypt, and God comes to them and says, "I have heard your cries. I have heard your groaning and I am concerned about your suffering."

He sees their need, He hears their cry, and He brings them hope. Key verse...verse 16 where the psalmist confesses, "*The LORD is king forever and ever.*" If the Lord is King, then that means two things; if the Lord is King, two promises: Number one, if the Lord is King, then there's hope here that justice will reign, and if the Lord is King and He executes justice, then in the end, justice will reign, and justice will be executed for the fatherless and the oppressed. To all who long for justice in this world, look to the Lord. He will reign in justice.

Justice will reign, and second, deliverance will come. It's the last phrase in the psalm, "*so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more.*" The wicked will not have the last word; the Lord will have the last word, and He will deliver His children. He will deliver those who are fatherless and oppressed. This is the hope of all who trust in Him.

Implications of this Psalm

So, that is, in a nutshell, Psalm 10. I want you to see where Psalm 10 leaves us. Psalm 10 leaves us like the whole Old Testament leaves us, looking forward; leaves us longing for more, looking forward to the day, to the point, to the time when justice will reign and when deliverance will come. There's a hope here, looking forward to justice reigning and deliverance coming, and when is that going to happen?

It's this Old Testament hope that is constantly on every page pointing us to, creating in us, a longing for Christ to come, and to bring the justice of God, and to show the deliverance of God. Think about it: the cross is the ultimate act, the epitome of man's wickedness, man's desire for selfish gain. Ignoring the one true God, disregarding the judgment of God; in deadly pride with worldly power, they blasphemed the very Son of God, and with their words, they mock Him, and they spit in His face, and like a lion pouncing upon Him, they nail Him to a cross.

Yet, in that moment, in the epitome of the wickedness of man, what is God doing? He is showing His justice, and He is pouring out the payment and the penalty due sin upon His Son. In the cross, justice is reigning. God is showing the penalty of the payment of sin, and at the same time, He is delivering the weak, so that all who trust in Christ on a cross will be delivered out from their sin. Justice reigns, deliverance comes...this happens only in Christ. It's Psalm 10 pointing us to the gospel.

So, in light of this psalm then, what does this psalm mean in our lives and what does this psalm mean for us as a faith family when we consider a world with 147 million fatherless? Two implications...first one for us personally, second one for us as a faith family when it comes to orphan care.

The cross is the solution to our crisis.

First implication: the cross is the solution to our crisis. The cross is the solution to our crisis. Now, here's what I mean by that. You might think, "What do you mean 'our crisis'?" This is where we need to see this psalm through the lens of our lives, just like we see over and over again in the pages of the Old Testament, we need to see ourselves in a mirror of this psalm. We need to see, in one sense, ladies and gentlemen, we are wicked. We would miss part of God's design in this psalm if we did not see in it a reflection not just of the world around us, but of the sinful tendencies that are inside of us.

Look at the way of the wicked...look at that list there in your notes. Is it not an anatomy of every single sin that you or I commit? Look at that list. A desire for selfish gain...is that not where every sin begins? The adulterer begins with a desire for selfish gain, and the liar begins with the desire for selfish gain, and the man looking at internet pornography begins with the desire for selfish gain, and the woman looking for worldly pleasure begins with the desire for selfish gain. American materialism is engrossed and consumed with the desire for selfish gain. This is the anatomy of sin. The desire for selfish gain that leads us to ignore the one true God...to ignore His goodness and His authority over us. We spurn Him, and we say, "No. I will seek my prosperity, my joy, my comfort in the things of this world." So, we run after the things...this is every sin that we commit. I don't want to be overly depressing here, but this is reality.

It is our words that can be oftentimes so piercing, so evil, whether spoken to someone or spoken about someone. We see, we hear in our own words, sometimes, reflection of a sinful tendency at the core of our hearts, disregarding the judgment of God. When I think about sin that I have struggled with in my own life...when I think about patterns of sin...and to think that I actually think that maybe God does not see this! That maybe this is unknown to God.

How foolish sin makes us; this downward spiral that it takes us on. This is us. We are in a battle with deadly pride, day in and day out, battling with the self-sufficiency that our hearts are prone to wander toward. We are wicked, and then, on the other hand, we see in the psalm we are weak. Amidst the wickedness in us and around us, don't we find ourselves wounded by the effects of sin in and around our lives? Wounded by sin in other's lives; trampled upon...have you ever felt trampled upon by someone else's sin? Hurt by someone else's sin? We walk a road filled with fragmented relationships and unmet needs, wrestling oftentimes with loneliness or hurt or pain. Oftentimes...have you ever experienced pain at the hands of someone who seems to be prospering as a result of the pain that's been inflicted upon you? I feel the hurt here!

We are wicked; we are weak, and the cross is the only solution to our crisis, because at the cross...don't miss this...at the cross we discover that God judges our sins. At the cross, God takes the penalty due your sin and my sin and puts it on His Son. Just think of it: every wicked thought you have ever had. Every wicked thing you have ever said. Every wicked deed you have ever done. Poured out...the payment and the penalty of that sin and that wickedness poured out on Him who had no sin.

God made Him who had no sin to be sin...to be wickedness...for us; to pay the price for us; to take the judgment due our sin upon Himself, brothers and sisters. He judges our sins, and at the same time, He makes us His sons. We, helpless in our sin, fatherless, slaves to sin, and God on high reaches down and, instead of leaving us as sinners in rebellion, worthy of eternal damnation, He raises us up to be His children, in whom He delights. That's what happens at the cross.

The cross is really good. The cross is where God judges our sins and makes us His sons, and at the cross, we find the solution to our deepest need. To every single person in this room who is not a Christian, I want to urge you, tonight, to see your wickedness before a holy God, and see your weakness before a God whom you need. To turn aside from worldly prosperity and all the stuff that clouds your world to make it seem like everything is okay. To turn aside from pride and self-sufficiency and see your need for God, and to realize that He has sent His Son to die on a cross to judge your sin...to take the payment of your sin upon Himself, so that you might become a child of His, now and forever. Turn from your sin

and trust in Christ to make you His. This is the crisis in every single one of our lives. There is no more important, no more significant crisis that every single one of us has to deal with.

The cross is the solution to the orphan crisis.

Our wickedness before a holy God; our weakness before Him, needing Him to do something in our life, and He has done it in the cross. So, the cross is the solution to our crisis. That's fundamental, but then second...and I want you to follow with me here...the cross then becomes the solution to not just our crisis; the cross becomes the solution to the orphan crisis. I want you to follow with me here, because it's at this point, church, where we need to realize...I want us to realize...that orphan ministry is distinctively and uniquely cross-driven.

This is very different from the way we talk about care for orphans in our culture, and many times even in our church culture. I want you to follow with me. Care for children, care for orphans, is not about humanitarianism, and care for orphans is not driven by altruism. I think that much of what is done in the name of caring for orphans in our culture, and sometimes even in our church culture, amounts to nothing more than humanitarianism, altruism, and in many respects, desire for selfish gain.

Orphan care has become almost trendy in our day. It's cool to care for orphans. We hear Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, and Madonna, and Bono, and American Idol, and they all tell us to care for orphans. So, we're tempted to jump on this bandwagon, to do what is right...altruism driving us. "Good people, we need to go and help!" Maybe it's a moving video we watch on TV or the internet that stirs something in our hearts, and we say, "Okay, I need to do something." Or, maybe...and we wouldn't say this out loud...but maybe there lurks in the back of our minds this idea that it would be adorable to have a nice, cute little child from another country in our Christmas card that we send out to all of our friends, but here's the problem: what happens when the child that you adopt, when the child that you bring into your home, is not cute? What happens when that child is suffering from fetal alcohol syndrome, and can't sit still for your family picture without throwing a tantrum?

What happens when the child you adopt has a terminal disease that puts your other children at risk? What happens when the child that you adopt, his mother was on crack when she was pregnant, and he was born with all kinds of delays and developmental problems that keep him from knowing how to act around others, and his teenage years become for you a living nightmare? What happens when that child who has spent years in an institutional orphanage where he or she has learned to live without the love of a mom or dad, such that when you try to show love to him or her, they don't know what to do with it, and so they've rejected it every single time? Or what happens when the child that you adopt is dangerous? Mere altruism will not get you through that. The only thing that will carry you through that is the cross of Jesus Christ.

You say, "What do you mean?" It's at the cross of Christ that we realize we were once in a pit of our own sin, uncontrollable in our own evil desires, with absolutely nothing in us to attract Christ to us. Yet, He pursued us, and He persevered in His pursuit of us. Our constant rebellion, our constant turning against Him...He pressed in, and with His patience and compassion and His love, He continued to care for us. He brought us to Himself, and even then, we still walk and are unfaithful, and we turn aside to our own ways, and we see our own wickedness.

When we realize what has happened at the cross and what God has done in our lives, then it makes total sense to love the unlovable, and to care for the uncontrollable. Now, the cross radically transforms the way we love in this world, and we don't just love...orphan

care, orphan ministry, is not about loving the cute children that make life better for us. It's about loving the tough children that make life hard for us, and this is where orphan care is absolutely and uniquely cross-driven.

Follow with me here. This is so key. In light of our wickedness...this is huge. The cross radically changes orphan ministry. In light of our wickedness, we must recognize that we are not rescuers. Brothers and sisters, we are not a group of good, altruistic people out to be saviors of orphans in Birmingham and around the world. That's not what drives us in orphan ministry. We are not rescuers, brothers and sisters. We must realize that we are the rescued.

We are not rescuers; we are the rescued. We are the ones who have been saved from eternal damnation, and so caring for fetal alcohol syndrome or all of the other struggles that might come in orphan care or foster care ministry make total sense. I want to be careful...it's not my intent, not my aim to paint a horrible picture of orphans and children who are fatherless. The reality is there are many in the foster care system and many in adoption processes that everything is just as smooth as can be, and everything flows wonderfully in an adoption process between family and child. Attachment just happens wonderfully and there are no struggles with that at all. At the same time, I know there are families across this faith family that I have spent time with who could testify before you...who could line up before you and tell you of the challenges that adoption and orphan care bring, and the attacks upon their families and struggles that they have walked through as a result of this, and the cross is a reminder that we all need to be rescued; that we are not rescuers.

Christ is the rescuer, and He has done it at the cross, and that changes everything. Now, we love distinctly differently from the rest of the world. We are not the rescuers. We must realize that we are the rescued, and in light of our weakness...now it makes sense when we realize that we were orphans...follow with me...when we realize that we were orphans...we were spiritual orphans in need of a Father on high who would care for us, and He reached down and He made us His children...when we realize that, then it makes sense for those who were once orphans and who are now children of the King...it makes sense for every single child of the King to now care for orphans all around them. Now, James 1:27 makes sense. Yes, it's a mark of true, God-centered, Christ-centered religion. It's the mark of Christians to care for orphans, because we were orphans. It's automatic; it's natural. I'm not saying it looks the same in every single one of our lives, but it's not possible to be a Christian, a child of God, and not have care for orphans.

Now, we realize that the church absolutely must be leading the way in orphan care and care for children in need. This is not an option; it's not a negotiable. It just flows from the spiritual reality that we're seeing in the gospel. In light of our weakness, we now see their need...all 147 million of them. We see them. We don't turn a blind eye to them as if they don't exist. We see children in need in Birmingham, in the United States, in the Third World. We see their need.

We now hear their cries. We hear the cries. As Christians, we hear the cries of children who cannot sleep at night because their stomachs are distended with hunger, and we hear the cries of babies in hospitals in the United States being rocked by nurses right now; babies who are addicted to cocaine because of what they received from their mom. We hear their cry. We hear the cries of teenagers in Eastern Europe who are about to be put out on the streets to a life of prostitution or drugs if someone does not care for them soon.

I've shared with you all before. When Heather and I were walking in the process of adopting Caleb, we had read the statistics and the numbers, and they are staggering. I mean, just millions upon millions without a mom or dad. Millions of orphans in Africa, that's a number that is increasing dramatically as a result of AIDS, and millions of orphans in Eastern Europe and Asia and Latin America and the United States. We read the numbers, but everything changed when we walked into that orphanage on that first day in Kazakhstan, and we saw the faces of these kids, and we heard their voices. We realized that Caleb was one of those numbers; that Caleb was sleeping in one of those cribs, crying. Orphans are easier to forget until you see their faces. They're easier to forget until you hear their voices, and orphans are easier to ignore until you hold them in your arms, but once you're vulnerable enough to do that, then everything changes, and this is what we do as the body of Christ.

We see their need, and we hear their cries, and we bring them hope. Now, don't miss this: what we bring is not the hope of better life in America. What we bring is not the hope of a nicer part of Birmingham to live in. That's not the hope we bring. If that's the hope we bring, we have missed the whole point. If the point of orphan ministry is to bring children into nice homes with nice stuff and comfortable lives, we've missed the whole point, and we have not helped orphans at all.

Malaria kills, and we need to help children who are suffering and dying from malaria, but brothers and sisters, materialism also kills. It's dangerously deceptive in its ability to kill. So, we bring them hope, but it's not hope of more and better stuff and comfortable life and American dream. We bring them hope of a Father on high who defends and protects and provides for them, and a Savior who pursues them and rescues them. That's the hope we bring.

The beauty is, there is not one child in this world...no matter how dark their past is or their family's past is, no matter how dim their future looks physically, emotionally, no matter how dark or dim...there is not one child in this world who is beyond the hope of Jesus Christ. This is why we must do orphan care. We bring them hope as families. As husbands and wives and children all across this room, we open our homes and our lives and our arms to receive the fatherless and to care for the fatherless, and we make it an intentional priority as families and as a faith family. Church, this is huge for us...this is huge for us. As we move forward as a church, when it comes to orphan care, caring for children...as we move forward, then the more we adopt children as a faith family, the more we care for children in foster care, the more those children come into our faith family, then we will experience the blessing of just beautiful children, wonderful children, precious children, every single one of them, across this place.

At the same time, as a faith family, we will also face challenges that we have not faced before. Preschool workers will face challenges that they've not faced before, and children's and student ministries will face challenges that they've not faced before. I have not seen this at all in our faith family...I have not seen this at all, and I praise God for that. This is more preemptive; I want us to be on guard because I think this is some place where the Adversary could easily attack.

When children come into our faith family who come from different backgrounds and maybe have different struggles that cause them to act differently in preschool or children's ministry, I want us to make sure to guard against ever thinking, "I can't work in preschool or children's ministry because I just can't put up with the way some of these children are acting." I want us to guard against that, because the beauty of the gospel is that Christ has put up with us, and it's nothing but pride that would say, "I can't put up with someone else."

See how the gospel changes everything! There's sure to be a temptation for parents to say, "I don't want my children to be involved in this or that where they're going to be around other children who are not like them." I want to encourage us to guard against that, and to teach our children and our families to live out the gospel, to stay close to the cross in the way we care for children in need.

I put there at the end of your notes a portion of our church covenant. I just want to remind us of it. It's so clearly what this is talking about, because the reality is not one of us can do orphan care, orphan ministry alone. We are not intended to do it alone. No family intended to do it alone. This is a community project. It is us as a church, as a faith family together, spurring one another on to love and good deeds; meeting with one another consistently, praying for one another regularly, serving one another selflessly. When that's happening, orphan care is possible all across the board.

We heard it in the stories. We will share each other's joys, bear each other's burdens. We need that. There are families all across this room, this faith family, who need someone to bear the burdens of some struggles that are going on with adoption or foster care. Edifying one another with our speech, encouraging one another with our example; humbly and gently confronting one another, receiving correction from one another; giving to support the church, the relief of the poor, the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We do this together...we do this whole thing together.

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