



A Hope Deferred

ADOPTION AND THE
FATHERHOOD OF GOD

J. STEPHEN YUILLE

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*Hope deferred makes the heart sick,
but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.*
—Proverbs 13:12

Introduction

We're all familiar with the word *adoption*. Unfortunately, we use it very casually today—we talk about adopting a pet, adopting a book, or (my personal favorite) adopting a highway. Yet the word has a far nobler significance than any of these trivial matters suggest. Simply put, adoption is the permanent placement of a child in a family with all the rights and privileges associated with that family.

In September 2011, my wife, Alison, and I adopted Emma—a beautiful baby girl from China. She stirs in us emotions that are difficult to express in words. She's more precious to us than any earthly treasure. She's part of our family. She bears our name, lives in our home, eats at our table, and inherits our wealth (we can always dream). We meet her needs. We share in her happy moments and her not-so-happy moments. We nurture, protect, counsel, discipline, educate, and love her. Why? She's *our* child. That's what it means to adopt.

Our adoption of Emma was the culmination of a long and difficult journey. We first discussed the possibility of adopting a child twenty-two years ago. We actively began to pursue it seventeen years ago. We initiated the process for adopting from China eight years ago. And we finally adopted two years ago. As you've probably guessed, we encountered numerous twists and turns along the way.

In the even-numbered chapters that follow, Alison and I trace our journey—as best as our collective memories allow—from start to finish. We do so for two reasons. First and foremost, we want to celebrate God's unchanging goodness. In the midst of our journey, we weren't always willing to do so. The reality that God is good

(no matter our circumstances—good or bad) is easy to confess, but difficult to celebrate. We want to take the opportunity to declare in this book what we’ve always known to be true.

Second, we want to encourage those of you who are in the midst of a similar journey. As Paul declares, “[God] comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Corinthians 1:4). Infertility is often a paralyzing and agonizing trial. Adoption is often a frustrating and exhausting pursuit. We’ve chosen to share what we’ve learned as we’ve struggled through both, praying that God will use our insights to strengthen you along the way. In the case of those who aren’t struggling with infertility or the process of adoption, let me assure you that the main theme of this book is God, and its lessons extend well beyond struggles peculiar to the mechanics of infertility and adoption to affliction in general. That is to say, there’s something in here for you.

In the odd-numbered chapters, I’ve chosen to tackle something different yet related—the biblical doctrine of adoption. Recently, I was lecturing at Redeemer Seminary in Dallas. One of my students asked, “How has your adoption of a child impacted your understanding of the doctrine of adoption?” God has placed us in his family with all the rights and privileges of that family. I’ve believed it and preached it for many years. However, my appreciation of this biblical truth has grown immeasurably in recent months. In particular, I’ve been drawn to what I call “the six blessings of adoption” as found in Romans 8. After an initial chapter on the meaning of adoption, I commit a chapter to each of these blessings. My prayer is that God will use these chapters to deepen your appreciation of this heart-warming, faith-enlarging, hope-strengthening, and love-inducing reality—what it means to be a child of God.

Deus pro nobis

1

What Is Adoption?

Many years ago, I attended a Saturday morning Bible class at my local church. One of the elders (my father actually) was teaching on Paul's epistle to the Ephesians. As we made our way through the opening verses, Paul's use of the phrase "in Christ" really grabbed my attention. Among other things, he tells us that we are *blessed* in Christ, *chosen* in Christ, *redeemed* in Christ, *predestined* in Christ, and *sealed* in Christ. In short, our salvation rests entirely upon our position in Christ. As far as I can remember, that was my first introduction to the doctrine of the believer's union with Christ. It was also my first introduction to the relationship that exists between union with Christ and adoption into God's family. In this chapter, I seek to unpack that relationship.

Paul writes, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:3–6). In these verses, we discover six wonderful truths about the biblical doctrine of adoption, specifically that: adoption is rooted in love; predetermined; through Jesus Christ; according to the purpose of God's will; to the praise of God's glorious grace; and fixed (or embedded) in union with Christ. Let's examine those truths.

Adoption Is Rooted in Love

“*In love* he predestined us for adoption . . .”

At the outset, Paul makes it clear that the reason God adopts us is his love for us. To appreciate what Paul means, we must make two important distinctions. First, we must differentiate between God’s love for his *creatures* (his general love as Creator) and God’s love for his *children* (his special love as Redeemer). Many people confuse the two, thereby resulting in a diminished view of the glory of God’s love.

Let me illustrate the difference. I love the children at Grace Community Church in Glen Rose, Texas, where I pastor. I enjoy being around them. I enjoy interacting with them. I really enjoy playing broom-ball with them (I’m not sure the feeling is mutual). But how does my love for them compare with my love for my daughters? Can I compare the two? Is it the same love? No.

Equally so, when we speak of God’s general love for his creatures and his special love for his children, we’re speaking of two different things. John declares, “See what kind of love the Father has given to *us*, that *we* should be called children of God; and so *we* are” (1 John 3:1). According to this verse, God loves his children. We must never confuse that love with his love for his creatures. Simply put, God’s love for his children is his love for his Son. Christ says, “I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:26). In other words, God loves his children, because they’re one with his Son—his Beloved. That’s why we sing:

Jesus, the very thought of Thee, with sweetness fills my
breast.
But sweeter far Thy face to see, and in Thy presence rest;
But what to those who find? Ah, this, no tongue or pen can
show;
The love of Jesus, what it is, none but His loved ones know.¹

Second, in order to appreciate God’s love for us, we must differentiate between human love and divine love.² As humans, we need love just like we need food and water. We can’t live without

it. Therefore, when we love others, we expect them to love us in return. That means our love is always self-serving to some degree. But God's love isn't like that. It's never self-serving. As Christians, we believe God is triune. We confess it in the Apostle's Creed. We confess it when we're baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). We believe the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. We also believe the Father isn't the Son, the Son isn't the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit isn't the Father. That is to say, we believe God is three distinct persons in one substance.

God's tri-unity is crucial for understanding his love. Why? It means love is essential to his eternal self. In a word, God is the object of his love. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit dwell in an eternity of mutual delight. That means he's satisfied in himself. And that means he doesn't need to love us, nor does he need us to love him. Simply put, he doesn't gain anything from loving us. That realization shouldn't disturb us or offend us. On the contrary, it should comfort us, because that's the kind of love we need. We need someone to love us who doesn't actually need us.

God has that kind of love in himself. And here is the wonderful thing: he lavishes it upon his children. We don't need to earn God's love. We don't need to merit God's love. We don't need to worry that God's love for us will change. We don't need to worry that God's love for us is contingent upon our performance. Why? God's love is *merciful*, and it's the sole reason why he adopts us.

Adoption Is Predetermined

"In love *he predestined us* for adoption . . ."

Paul doesn't merely say that God adopted us, but that he *predestined* us for adoption. Clearly, he wants to draw attention to *when* God determined to adopt us. In the previous verse, he places this divine decree "before the foundation of the world." That's an extremely significant truth, because it means adoption is God's first choice—that is to say, his original plan. He didn't determine to adopt us after he had created the universe. He didn't determine to adopt us after Adam had disobeyed in the garden. He didn't determine to

adopt us after he had promised salvation through the seed of the woman. To put it another way, God's decision to adopt us wasn't reactionary. It wasn't a case of God making the best of a less-than-ideal situation. On the contrary, adoption was his plan from the beginning. That is Paul's point.

Regrettably, many people tend to view the adoption of a child as an afterthought: "Oh, you couldn't have your own children, so you decided to settle for adoption." Having adopted, I would never describe it as *settling*. I would never refer to it as an *afterthought*. In terms of God's adoption of us, he definitely wasn't settling. God didn't create the world in the hope that he would have natural children—only to discover that he had a bunch of little rebels on his hands. He didn't throw his hands into the air (anthropomorphism intended), crying, "Oh no, what will I do now? What are my options? I suppose I could always adopt!" No. God *predestined* us for adoption. He did so before the foundation of the world. That necessarily means his adoption of us isn't plan B, but plan A. Moreover, it means that his adoption of us is the revelation of his eternal will.

Adoption Is Through Jesus Christ

"In love he predestined us for adoption *through Jesus Christ . . .*"

Paul stresses the fact that Christ is the means by which God adopts us. Here, Paul is thinking primarily of Christ's substitutionary death. Christ declares, "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). In the original language, the preposition *for* is *anti*. It literally means *instead of*. The term *ransom* means to purchase the freedom of a slave. And so, Christ is saying that he gives his life for us to free us. Our bondage is immeasurable in magnitude. Therefore, the ransom must be infinite in measure—the very Son of God.

When Christ died on the cross as our substitute, he actually accomplished two things for us. First, he paid our debt. We're guilty of disobeying God, and we're guilty of breaking his covenant. As a result, we're debtors to him—under the curse. But Christ paid our debt upon the cross. That's called *redemption*.

Second, Christ purchased our inheritance. At the time of Adam's fall, we lost everything. Most importantly, we fell into a state of alienation from God. But Christ purchased our inheritance (membership in God's family) upon the cross. That's called *adoption*. In Christ, we possess a new name, new position, and new identity. And Christ passes on this inheritance in perpetuity to all his people.

It's important to note that the link between redemption and adoption is reconciliation: a change in our legal status before God. By Christ's death, redemption effects reconciliation (i.e., peace with God), and reconciliation becomes the basis of God's adoption of us. Paul describes Christ's double-work (redemption and adoption) in very clear terms in Galatians 4:4–5, "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."

Why did God send his Son? He sent him "to redeem those who were under the law." That is to say, God sent Christ to pay our debt by his death. That's redemption. But Paul doesn't stop there. He makes it clear that Christ's death also secures our inheritance: "so that we might receive adoption as sons."

Adoption Is According to the Purpose of God's Will

"In love he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, *according to the purpose of his will . . .*"

God's adoption of us is quite different from our adoption of children. How so? There are a number of differences, but I'm going to restrict myself to two. First, God doesn't adopt us because of anything lacking in him. We, on the other hand, adopt children for that very reason. We long for children. We feel incomplete without them. We plan for the day when we'll have children. Once we have them, our lives revolve around them. That's normal. God made us that way. But God isn't like us. He doesn't have any needs to fill, nor does he have any longings to satisfy.

Second, God doesn't adopt us because of anything compelling in us. We, on the other hand, adopt children for that very reason. We love children. We think they're cute and cuddly (most of the time).

Despite the challenges they present, there's something very lovable about them. They're a delight. But God isn't like us. He doesn't find us irresistible. He isn't overcome with a warm and fuzzy feeling whenever he thinks of us. To be honest, there isn't anything particularly attractive about us.

God's reason for adopting us is found in him alone. As Paul makes clear, God adopts us "according to the purpose of his will." God doesn't need us because we're special. God doesn't love us because we're cute. God doesn't adopt us because we're precious. We aren't any of those things. Paul makes it painfully evident that we're "by nature children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3). That shouldn't offend us. On the contrary, it should encourage us. Why? Let's think about it. If God's adoption of us were contingent upon something worthy, compelling, or attractive in us, then God wouldn't have adopted any of us. Personally, I find it extremely comforting and heartening to know that God's sole reason for adopting us is "the purpose of his will."

Adoption Is to the Praise of God's Glorious Grace

"In love he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, *to the praise of his glorious grace . . .*"

Why would God predestine us to adoption before the creation of the world? Paul gives us the answer: "to the praise of his glorious grace." Before creation, God selected out of the human race—foreseen as fallen—those whom he would adopt. In other words, adoption is rooted in election—God's sovereign choice. This choice is immutable: "God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are his'" (2 Timothy 2:19). This choice is unto salvation: "God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:9). This choice is according to God's will: "It depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy" (Romans 9:16). And this choice is designed to accentuate God's glory: it's "to the praise of his glorious grace."

"This divine choice," writes J. I. Packer, "is an expression of free grace, for it is unconstrained and unconditional, not merited by

anything in those who are its subjects.”³ We’re sinners, therefore, we deserve God’s punishment. God is at liberty to inflict that punishment now, or to delay that punishment until the future, or to save whomever he pleases from that punishment. He’s free to do as he pleases, because he doesn’t owe anything to anyone. This is called *God’s just liberty*, and it stands at the foundation of the doctrine of adoption.

Adoption is rooted in God’s sovereign grace. By definition, grace is undeserved and unmerited. By forgiving us our debt and lavishing his inheritance upon us, God puts the immeasurable glory of his grace on display for all eternity. In the plan of redemption, his main purpose is the glorifying of himself. The means he has designed for achieving that end is our adoption.

Adoption Is Rooted in Union with Christ

“In love he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, *with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.*”

Paul emphasizes the fact that God the Father is the author of our adoption. He also stresses the fact that adoption (along with all other spiritual blessings) is mediated to us through Christ. To put it another way, we don’t receive anything from God apart from union with Christ. The Bible employs several metaphors to help us better understand this union.

The first is that of graft and stock. Paul writes, “For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his” (Romans 6:5). The term *united* (or *planted* in the Authorized Version) conveys the idea of a graft being implanted into a stock. When that happens, the stock’s sap or juice immediately passes to the graft. Consequently, the graft receives its vitality from the stock. In the same way, we’re implanted into Christ. We’re conjoined with him. As a result, we receive life from him.

Christ conveys the same basic idea, declaring, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). A branch derives life from the vine by virtue of its union

with it. Similarly, there's a vital, organic union between Christ and believers. We draw on Christ's life through the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us. As Paul affirms, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

The second metaphor is that of head and body as found in Ephesians 4:15–16, where Paul says that "we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body to grow so that it builds itself up in love." That metaphor means we stand to Christ in the same relation as the members of a physical body stand to their head, and Christ stands to us in the same relation as the head of a physical body stands to its members. What relation is that? Just as the head gives sense and motion to its physical body, Christ gives sense and motion to his spiritual body. The Puritan, John Flavel explains, "As all the members of the natural body receive animation, sense, and motion, by their union with their natural head; so all believers, the members of Christ, receive spiritual life and animation by their union with Christ their mystical head (Ephesians 4:15–16)."⁴

The third metaphor is that of husband and wife. In Ephesians 5:30–31, Paul quotes from Genesis 2:23–24, where Moses writes, "Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.' Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." In these verses, we discover three important features of the relationship between Adam and Eve. First, Eve is taken out of Adam. She is, therefore, flesh of his flesh and bone of his bones. That's important because it shows that Eve derives her existence from Adam. Second, Eve is brought to Adam. They're joined together, in that they cleave to one another, thereby becoming one flesh. Third, Eve completes Adam. Prior to God's creation of Eve, there was no

suitable “helper” for Adam (Genesis 2:20). But once God created Eve, Adam was complete.

There are invaluable lessons here concerning the marriage relationship. That, however, is not Paul’s primary concern. He says, “This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church” (Ephesians 5:32). This means that the union between Adam and Eve typifies the union between Christ and the church. How? First, as Eve is taken out of Adam, so too the church is taken out of Christ. When Christ died, the soldier pierced his side with a spear. Water and blood flowed from his wound: the purchasing price for the church. The church is, therefore, flesh of his flesh and bone of his bones. Second, as Eve is brought to Adam, so too the church is brought to Christ. They’re joined together, becoming one flesh—one body. In the words of the Puritan Edward Pearse, “Though Christ and the soul were two before, two who were strangers to each other, yet in this marriage or espousal they become one, and so much one that all the world can never make them two again, can never dissolve this union.”⁵ Third, as Eve completes Adam, so too the church completes Christ. As the eternal Son of God, Christ is perfect and complete. However, as Mediator, he’s incomplete without his people. As Paul declares, the church is “his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:23).

Each of the above metaphors serves to illustrate the intimate nature of the union that exists between Christ and his church. The graft derives its vitality from the stock; the body derives its motion from the head; and Eve derives her existence from Adam. Each metaphor stresses the fact that the church derives its life from Christ. We owe all that we are to Christ.

Conclusion

As recorded in Genesis 24, Abraham sends his servant to the land of his forefathers, in order to find a bride for Isaac. His servant makes the journey and meets Rebekah by the well at Nahor. In his conversation with Rebekah, he says many things, including this: “I am Abraham’s servant. The LORD has greatly blessed my master, and he has become great . . . And Sarah my master’s wife bore a son

to my master when she was old, and to him he has given all that he has" (verses 34–36).

Why does Abraham's servant say all that? What's he doing? In a word, he's wooing Rebekah. To *woo* means to entice. He mentions that Abraham is great, and that he has given everything to Isaac, because he's trying to persuade Rebekah to accept the marriage proposal. That's a beautiful picture of the work of the Holy Spirit, who *woos* us. He persuades us to marry Christ. In effect, he says, "The Father has greatly blessed the Son, so that he has become great . . . and he has given all that he has to the Son." Christ confirms that very thing in John 16:15, declaring, "All that the Father has is mine."

When Christ takes hold of us by his Spirit, and we take hold of him by our faith, we become one. These are the marriage bonds that knit us together in an indissoluble union. By virtue of our union with Christ, what's his becomes ours. We enjoy a new legal status in him. Furthermore, we enjoy communion with him in his names, titles, righteousness, holiness, death, and resurrection. Numbered among all these gifts and privileges stands adoption, whereby God lavishes upon us all the blessings of membership in his family.



2

A Certain Expectation

Lubango, Angola (1992)

April 15, 1992

Dear Mom and Dad,

What do you think of the names Laura, Meghan, Rachel, Richard, and Jeffrey? We aren't expecting yet, so don't get any big ideas. We might change our minds on some of these, but Laura is definitely the name for our first daughter.

Love, Alison

Alison wrote this letter from our dining-room table in our second-floor duplex in Lubango, Angola. We had been living in Angola for about two months at that time.

How did a couple of Canadian kids end up halfway round the world in southwestern Africa? Good question. We had been married the year before, after completing college. Several months later, we signed a one-year contract to work for Christian Children's Fund of Canada. Following two months of language study in Lisbon, Portugal, we arrived in Angola, where Alison taught at an interna-

tional school for expatriate kids and I worked on several small-scale development projects.

Angola is a fascinating place. It had first captured my imagination a few years before we landed there when I read Dan Crawford's account of his travels in the heart of Africa.

Down goes the sun like a ball of fire over dark Lubaland. The first sough of the cold night wind goes through like a dart. The distant dogs in the fishing hamlet howl. The frogs croak, croak, and the bitterns bump, bump. To climax weirdness, the fire has recently swept through the long yellow grass, covering the land with a dark pall. The sluggish stream by which we camp seems a mere trickle of liquid mud, the only hint of water being the deeper dye of green down its hollow. There you draw your drinking water the color of bad tea; there, too, at sunset the reed-buck comes down to drink. And as the darkness deepens the sighing sounds of Africa's dark are heard saying—"The night cometh when no man can work."¹

Before traveling to Angola, I had learned that Portuguese traders began to arrive on the west coast of Angola in the 1500s, establishing forts at Luanda and Benguela. Over the next two centuries, traders, settlers, explorers, and missionaries gradually made their way inland. This vast territory (twice the size of Texas) became an official Portuguese colony in the 1800s and remained so until 1974.

For almost thirty years after that point, Angola was ravaged by civil war, serving as a flash point for the so-called Cold War for many years. On one side of the conflict stood the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), and on the other side was the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). In between were rich deposits of petroleum and diamonds. In other words, the war, which finally ended in 2002 with the death of UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi, had little to do with ideology and much to do with good old-fashioned greed.

Thankfully, when we moved to Angola, Lubango had been preserved from the devastation. We would see the occasional tracer bullet light up the night sky—but it was usually the aimless discharge



of a careless soldier's AK-47. The city itself is very picturesque, situated on an escarpment 5,800 feet above sea level. Portuguese from the Island of Madeira had settled in the area in 1882, and more would follow over the next few decades. During our time in Lubango, the Portuguese influence, although tired and worn, could still be seen in the stone sidewalks, tile rooftops, floral gardens, blue mosaics, and *Cristo Rei*—a statue of Christ the King, overlooking the city.

On Sundays, we worshiped at a small church in a neighboring *bairro de lata* (community of tin). Our walk to the church was an adventure since we had to cross a small stream by way of an old car bumper that had been set up to serve as a bridge. On most Sunday mornings, there would be women washing clothes in the stream who would stop to watch as they saw us approaching. I really believe they were secretly hoping one of us would tumble headlong into the water.

The church itself was made of burned mud bricks with metal roofing and small logs, lying directly on the dirt floor, to serve as pews. These believers were poor—Chokwe refugees, who had fled from the countryside to escape the ravages of war. Alison and I were particularly saddened that almost everyone in the church was illiterate.

Two elders did all the preaching. They had three or four sermons between them, which they preached on a cycle. So, we heard the same set of sermons every month. But this local expression of the body of Christ was very welcoming. Despite the language barrier, they seemed genuinely pleased that we joined in fellowship with them. Years later, on warm summer evenings, I often drift back in my mind to those simple church services. When I close my eyes, I can still hear them softly singing:

Deus enviou Seu Filho ao mundo,
Para salvar e perdoar.
Morreu na cruz pelo meu pecado;
Há um sepulcro aberto para o provar.²

As you can tell from Alison's letter to her parents that opened this chapter, we had decided after almost a year of marriage that it was time to start a family. After some discussion, we had decided that we'd like to have at least two biological children and two adopted children. After further discussion, we had decided on potential names. After even more discussion, we had decided exactly how the rest of our lives was going to play out.

Do you see a trend? There was something we needed to learn—something we would be learning for years to come. Here it is: “Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand” (Proverbs 19:21).

James states the same lesson in slightly different terms:

Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”—yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that” (James 4:13–15).

Here, James warns against the sin of *presumption*—convincing ourselves that we'll live a long life and that all our dreams will come true. When we *presume*, we make plans “without any sense or thought of our own frailty, or the sudden strokes of God.”³ Such an approach to life is sheer folly, for—as James so eloquently reminds us—we're “a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.”

That truth resonated with me several years later, while I was visiting the national archives in the city of Edinburgh, Scotland, where I traced my ancestors back to the late 1700s. It's a sobering experience. At one time, these relatives were active and vibrant human beings—dreaming, planning, and anticipating. Now, they're merely names on slowly decaying pieces of paper. They're dust on the lintel of time.

What a powerful reminder that we're here one moment, and gone the next! We're but “a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.” Or, as the psalmist declares, “As for man, his



days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, it is gone, and its place knows it no more” (Psalm 103:15–16). It’s folly to think otherwise, and it’s folly to live otherwise.

That’s a lesson Alison and I needed to learn in 1992 as we discussed names for our anticipated children. We needed to learn “to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom” (Psalm 90:12). Our lives were then and are today in God’s hands. With that reality before us, we must plan, dream, and anticipate, while always praying, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.”