

Series on the Book of Ephesians
Ephesians 1:5-6
Sermon #4
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Alright, take your Bibles and turn to the Book of Ephesians chapter 1.

I want you to read with me verses 3, 4, 5, and 6. We will be considering verse 5 and 6 together this morning. Let us read in unison.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

Anyone who reads Ephesians 1 carefully and thoughtfully should not be able to miss the fact that as Paul talks about salvation he makes it very clear that salvation is a work of God, or, as we find it expressed in Scripture, salvation is of the Lord. He is the One according to this passage who determined that there would be salvation. It could have been possible that God would have left us in our sins; but He determined to save, to provide salvation. This chapter also tells us that God is the One Who determines who will be saved. We are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. He is the One Who decreed the relationship that saved people would have to Himself. This is what brings us to our text this morning: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

As we begin to see these truths in Scripture we realize that it is never to any man's credit that he is saved. It is all to the glory of God. Whenever a person is saved you are seeing the will of God being carried out. Since it is the will of God, we know that God's purpose in salvation cannot possibly fail. It is not possible that any who were chosen of God before the foundation of the world would fail to be saved. The Lord Jesus expressed this in John 6:37 when he said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him thta cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Those whom the Father has given to His Son are the elect. They will, without a single exception, come to the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, they will not be saved until they do come to the Lord Jesus Christ. Nobody is going to be saved who does not believe in Christ, trusting Him.

This verse which has so much truth in it (I was reading from John 6:37) expresses the eternal nature of our salvation in the fact that the Lord has promised that He will never cast us out. There may be, and there will be, times in the life of every Christian when he sins and when he displeases the Lord, but the Lord will never cast away those who have been chosen by the Father and drawn to the Son. While the death of our Lord Jesus Christ which is the means of our salvation is of infinite value, when He died on the Cross we can see very clearly from the Word of God that the Lord Jesus died for the specific purpose of saving those who were chosen of God. We do not know who they are until they trust in the Lord, so we preach the Gospel to every creature. As we do, we trust that the Lord is going to use His Word to bring His chosen ones to Himself. If you have trusted Christ as your Saviour, and I know this includes most of you this morning, your election of God has become evident by the expression of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Regardless of the problems that may stand in the way of getting the Gospel out to the world, we can be sure that the preaching of the Gospel is not going to fail. God will accomplish His purposes. We

can be absolutely sure of that. To me, it is the greatest encouragement in evangelism to know that God has a people to be reached and God is working out His purposes because if God were not vitally involved in this work of salvation, it would be a very, very hopeless thing for us to be preaching the Gospel to unregenerate people. God is not going to fail to accomplish what He determined before the foundation of the world. I am sure that this was one of the reasons that the Apostle Paul had his heart so full of thanksgiving and praise to God as he thought of the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

Last week we talked about the doctrine of election, thought together about this great doctrine. I hope you love it as much as I do. This morning we want to go on to talk about the doctrine of sonship. This is found in the two verses of our text, verses 5 and 6. Just to give you an outline of the way I am going to be dealing with these two verses, I want you to see first of all that we are dealing here with a decree of God; and secondly, that Paul has expressed the nature of this decree--what this decree actually is; and then, finally, we are going to see the purpose of the decree.

Why do I speak of this statement in verse 5 as a decree of God? Well, I speak of it because of the words "Having predestinated us". "Having predestinated us." The verb actually means to determine something beforehand. When you read verse 5 along with verse 4, it seems that Paul is telling us here that God in planning salvation predestined, determined beforehand, that those who are saved would be members of His family. Then it was, in the light of that, that He chose those who were to be saved and He chose them from the foundation of the world.

Many of the older translations which we do not have access to anymore-- Wycliffe's Translation and Tyndale's Translation--use the word "foreordained" here. "Having foreordained us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ." This is what was determined by God. This is what was decreed by God before the foundation of the world. God could have saved us without bringing us into His family. I think that we can all see that. We could have been forgiven of our sins and we could have the promise that we are going to be in heaven and we could have many of the blessings that we have in Christ. It was not really necessary, as far as my understanding is concerned, for Him to do this. But this is over and above. Yet, this seems to be the place where God started, that we would come into His family.

I like to think of this as a decree of God, something that He determined from the foundation of the world, so that you and I will understand that inevitably this is going to come to pass. There is no possibility that any of God's decrees will fail. His decrees are an expression of His sovereignty. There is no possibility that His decrees will ever be changed. Paul was not writing here about something that was determined by the Patriarchs in the Old Testament or by the prophets of the Old Testament or by any of the great men of God or women of God in the Old Testament. This is not a truth that was even determined by angels. This was determined by God Himself. God is the One Who determined before the foundation of the world that those who were saved would be brought into His family.

What is really the nature of this? I have already expressed this when I speak of the fact that, as our translation says, "He has predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself." In dealing with this, instead of using the word "adoption" I have been using the word "sonship." As far as I understand the Scriptures, there is really no doctrine of adoption as such in the Word of God. The doctrine of sonship is a doctrine that was discussed by the Apostle Paul there in Galatians chapter 4. That is the reason I asked that that be read this morning. I want to explain what this word means because there is a lot of wonderful truth in this. It might be a little bit difficult for us to grasp at the beginning if you have never heard this explained before; but it is very, very important that we understand what it is to be in the family of God.

All of us, when we were saved, were born into the family of God as His children. Born. Not

adopted. As children we are to grow to maturity in Christ. So we have those exhortations in Scripture, do we not, "as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2). This is not really what Paul is talking about here in Ephesians chapter 1 and it is not what he was talking about in Galatians chapter 4, that is, the idea that we are born into the family as babes in Christ and we grow to maturity, and as we grow we become more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is distinguishing, when he uses this word and he uses it again in Romans chapter 8 as well as in Galatians 4 and here in Ephesians chapter 1, the difference between children and sons. The difference can best be illustrated for us when we consider our own childhood and compare that with the changes which took place for us when we were recognized by law as being of age.

When I was a young man, a good many years ago now, you were legally of age when you were 21. I think it has dropped down to 18 now. When I reached that age I could vote. When I reached that age I could own property. When I reached that age I did not need my father's signature, say, on anything that I would purchase. I could inherit money. I did not, but I could. I was responsible for myself in the eyes of the law. I think that we all understand what it means to become of age.

In Paul's day there was this same type of thing in the Gentile cultures as it was in the Jewish culture. If you are familiar at all with the way Jews do things with their sons, you are familiar with the Jewish Bar-Mitzvah. When a Jewish boy reaches the age, I think it is, of 13 he becomes (what Bar-Mitzvah means) a "son of the commandment". This means that he has reached the age when he is not longer looked upon simply as a child, but he is a son. He is looked upon as being responsible as an adult person. This is what Paul was talking about in Galatians chapter 4. Paul was using this truth in Galatians to emphasize that when the Lord Jesus Christ came there was a difference made as far as the family of God was concerned. Old Testament saints were saved just exactly like you and I are saved. They were saved by faith in the coming Redeemer. They were born again. Born again is not something that is just distinctly New Testament. You remember that when Nicodemus, we are memorizing the Scripture in Sunday School, was confused about what the Lord meant when He said, "You must be born again." The Lord said, "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" (John 3:10). By that question He was indicating that if he had understood the Old Testament properly he would have seen that salvation in the Old Testament meant a new birth, it meant regeneration. There is no difference as far as that is concerned when you compare the Old Testament with the New Testament. All of God's people are in His family.

When Jesus Christ came and died He moved the members of His family from that place where they were simply children in the family, not yet of age, into this new relationship where they were of age, where they could enter into their inheritance, where they could claim their blessings. This thought is suggested to us by the verse of praise there in verse 3 when he says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." I am not teaching, this morning, that Old Testament saints did not have as much as we do; but they were not free to enjoy the privileges that salvation brings to the people of God until the Lord Jesus Christ died on the Cross and until He was raised from the dead.

If you will turn in your Bibles to Galatians chapter 4, I want you to see how he makes this contrast when he says, "Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a (minor) child (I am inserting the word to indicate what he is saying), differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were (minor) children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive (our translators have said the same thing here) the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:1-5). It means that as the result of the death of Christ we moved from that place where we are under tutors and governors into the place where we are looked upon as being spiritually of age (if I may express it that way). We become sons, and "because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts

whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6). I think you can see that Paul is pointing here to the time when God sent forth His Son as that which marks a real change in the lives of the people of God.

Let me illustrate some places where this is obvious in Scripture. There are many places. For example, when we think of the priesthood in the Old Testament, you remember that the priesthood was limited to one family and one tribe, the family of Aaron and the Tribe of Levi. There was a veil in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple. The High Priest alone was the only one who could enter into that Holy of Holies, and even he could only go into the Holy of Holies once every year. When Jesus Christ died on the Cross the veil was miraculously rent from top to bottom. It is just as though God reached down and took hold of the veil and pulled it apart, indicating that the way was now opened into the Holiest of All to all of the people of God. Today, you do not look upon me as your priest because you are a priest. We are a kingdom of priests. God has made us all priest. When the writer of the Book of Hebrews says, "Let us therefore come (with confidence) boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16), he was giving expression to that. You see, by virtue of the fact that I am not only a child of God, but I am a son of God, I have the right, you have the right because of the death of Christ of entering in yourself into the very presence of God. That is certainly an illustration of what the Apostle Paul was talking about when he spoke of this.

Take the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We have been talking about the Holy Spirit and we are studying the Holy Spirit this summer in Sunday School. We hope that more of you will join us for these profitable times. When the Lord Jesus was here on earth He said concerning the Holy Spirit, "He has been with you, He shall be in you, and He is coming to abide for ever." When you study the relationship of the Spirit of God to the people of God in the Old Testament, you do not find that the Holy Spirit was permanently indwelling all of the people of God all of the time; but in the New Testament, since the death of Christ, this has been changed. You and I have entered more into our inheritance, our privileges as the people of God as a result of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are no longer children; we are sons with all the privileges of sonship granted to us and all traceable to the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. So when Paul writes about this in Ephesians chapter 1 he is not pointing to the fact that we have been adopted into the family of God. He is saying that since Jesus Christ died we have been placed in the family of God as sons and that we have a right to claim before God all of the wonderful privileges of sonship. God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ. When we get to heaven, of course, there is not going to be any difference between Old Testament saints and New Testament saints. We are not going to have any more than they have. What I am saying this morning does not mean that we have more now than they had, but we have the privilege of enjoying these and entering into them more than they did. There could be other illustrations that we could use. This is the decree of God: Not only that God would bring us into His family as His children, but that God would give us all the privileges that belong to those who are the sons of God. You notice when he says this that he says that this is by Jesus Christ and it is to God Himself. "Having predestinated us unto sonship by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." That is a very wonderful statement.

The word "good pleasure" is a noun that is used just three times in the Gospels, it is used six times in Paul's epistles, and nobody but Paul in the New Testament epistles uses this word. I will not take the time to give those references now, but the word is found several times in the form of a verb in the New Testament. It is a distinctly Biblical word. Those who have studied the Greek language say that this word "good pleasure" is not to be found in secular Greek. What it means is this: when it talks about according to the good pleasure of His will, it speaks of that which delights the heart of God, that which gives Him the greatest pleasure plus the fact that He could not really be satisfied with our salvation with anything less than this. Think for just a moment what we are apart from Christ: guilty, defiled, hopeless, helpless sinners. The love of God for sinners is the most amazing truth in Scripture. Here the Apostle Paul is saying, and you can see why his heart is so full of thanksgiving, God could not be satisfied--there is not anything that gives Him more delight in salvation than to bring us into His

family as sons with all the privileges of sonship. That is grace, is it not? That is nothing but grace. That He can take, reach down, and lift us up out of the miry clay and set our feet upon the rock and set His affections upon us.

I will tell you something else that makes this even more wonderful. You remember that when the Lord Jesus Christ was being baptized, and we have that picture of His death, His burial and His resurrection, the Father spoke from heaven and said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 17:5). It is the same root. It is the verb form, but it is the same root as what Paul was using here. As the Father expressed His delight in His Son, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I find all of my delight." Then you come to the New Testament passages and you see that He has predestined us unto sonship according to the good pleasure of His will. This means that you and I, before God in the family of God, have a standing that is equal to that of Jesus Christ Himself. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." What an amazing truth, is it not? If you know anything about your own heart, the sinfulness of your heart, how quickly you would leave God, how easily you can rise up in rebellion against Him. How often we forget His mercy and His grace. To see that we have a heavenly Father Who could not be satisfied in this work of salvation with all of the blessings that we have unless He brings us into His family and finds delight in us as He finds delight in His own beloved Son the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a wonderful truth--a wonderful truth.

Why has He done this? Because we deserve it? We do not deserve it any more than anybody else deserves it. We do not deserve it any more than the worst sinner on earth would deserve it. We cannot earn it. We cannot get it because of the fact that we show some promise that we are going to be of some value to God. That is ridiculous kind of talk, is it not?

His purpose in this was that all of this to be would be "to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." Or, just to give it a little more literal translation, "which He has freely bestowed upon us in the beloved." Why has God chosen to save sinners and why has He chosen to bring those sinners into His family and to give those sinners the position of sons in the family? Why has He done it? Is it because of what He has seen in them? No. It is all that it might be to the praise and to the glory of His wonderful grace.

When you read this passage from verse 3 down through verse 14, have you been reminded of the Psalms? It really is a Psalm, a psalm of praise. As I have read some of the Psalms in our Wednesday evening prayer meeting, those of you who have been there will remember that I point out whenever I can that there are refrains in certain Psalms. That is, like our hymns will have maybe three or four verses and then will have a chorus or refrain. We sing the verse and then we sing the chorus, then we sing another verse and we repeat the chorus. We repeat the chorus as many times as we sing the verse. This is a psalm which has a refrain to it. I want you to see what the refrain is. It is here in verse 6, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." The refrain comes in again in verse 12, "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ." Then, this psalm ends in verse 14 with the same statement, "Unto the praise of his glory." You see, God has condescended to love and to redeem us as sinners, not because He wants to make a great deal out of us, but He wants to magnify His grace. If it is to the praise of His glory, the glory of His grace, then this means that He wants to display in us the fact that we have been changed, we have been born again, we have been made the sons of God, we have been made new creatures in Christ. Our lives have been delivered from sin and transformed by the mighty power of God in order that He might show forth in us the wonders and marvels of His grace. If it is all by grace, then it means that neither you nor I can take one bit of credit for the fact that we are the people of God.

"Oh, to grace how great a debtor,
Daily I'm constrained to be
Let thy goodness like a fetter Bind my wandering heart to thee."

"Grace! 'tis a charming sound, Harmonious to mine ear;
Heav'n with the echo shall resound,
And all the earth shall hear.
Grace first contrived a way
To save rebellious man,
And all the steps that grace display Which drew the wondrous plan.

Grace taught my wand'ring feet To tread the heav'nly road
And new supplies each hour I meet
While pressing on to God.
Grace all the work shall crown
Through everlasting days;
It lays in heav'n the topmost stone, And well deserves the praise."

If you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour this morning, may I tell you that grace makes room for you? I do not need to know your sins. God knows what your sins are. You have actually committed a lot more sins than you are conscious of having committed. He sees you utterly unworthy. But when we are talking about grace, you do not have to be concerned about your own merit. I encourage you this morning, if you have never trusted Jesus Christ as your Saviour, to put your trust in Him.

Paul has written in Ephesians chapter 2, "It is by grace that we are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). Paul called himself, speaking by the spirit of God, the chief of sinners. If God can save the chief of sinners, then I say to you this morning that He has promised that those who come to Him will not be cast out. I plead with you this morning to put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ and enter with us into these wonderful blessings that God has provided for us through salvation.