

The Father's Plan: Adoption

Ephesians 1:5-6 (08/27/17)

Ernie Godshall

Faith Bible Church

Evansville, Indiana

I have the best news you could possibly hear this morning. Let me put it in a question: What is the highest privilege, the greatest blessing you have from God? Put another way, what about your relationship to God is God most excited about, that brings Him the greatest pleasure in saving you? One word: adoption. You are God's son or daughter and He is your Father! Don't take that lightly. Don't go past that quickly. Justification by faith alone is a glorious truth, the primary truth of your relationship with God. Your sins were imputed to Christ and His righteousness was imputed to your account; therefore God declares you righteous and you have peace with God. Regeneration is another glorious truth. When you came to Christ in faith, God gave you a new heart, a new nature. You were born again, made a new creation in Christ, given eternal life, and now you want to live for Christ!

But these aren't the highest blessing of your salvation. Here you are before God as your Judge, declared guilty and condemned. But there stands Jesus Christ, wounds in His hands and feet and side, and says to the Judge, "I paid for his sins in full on the cross." The Judge asks you, "Do you receive His sacrifice on your behalf?" "Yes I do!" The gavel falls: "Justified!" You are declared righteous by the Judge. But watch this.

The Judge, God Almighty, takes off His judicial gown, steps down from that bar of perfect justice, and with His Son by His side comes to you, wraps His arms around you, and with eternal love in His eyes and heart He declares, "I here and now make you my son. You will live in My house forever. I will provide for you, protect you, teach you, guide you, and discipline you for your good. I'll order every single event in your life, good or bad, pleasant or difficult, to grow you to become more and more like My Unique Son, your elder Brother, Jesus Christ."

"Not only this, but you are now heir of all that I possess, and I possess a lot. In fact, everything from the cattle on a thousand hills to all the gold and silver. The entire earth is mine. Actually the stars are all mine, I call them all by name, and they are yours too. But this is just the beginning. You are the rightful heir to my fortune in My Son. Welcome into the family, son and daughter." You may have had a miserable, horrible earthly father, not worthy of the name father. But now you have a Father who will never mistreat you, forget you, beat you, or abuse you. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called the children of God." (1 John 3:1)

This is what it means to be adopted by God into His family. J. I. Packer begins his chapter "Sons of God" in *Knowing God* with this question: What is a Christian? The question can be answered in many ways, but the richest answer I know is that a Christian is one who has God for his Father. "If this truth doesn't control your worship, prayers, and outlook on life," he adds, "you don't understand Christianity very well at all." This brings us to our passage this morning:

Ephesians 1:5-6 In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

God wants you to know something that should control your life. Don't let this reality ever be eclipsed by the world or your own discouragement or suffering or difficult relationships. Know this: God's great pleasure was to adopt you as His son or daughter! Whether you are excited about it or not, God is! If you can imagine God getting excited, here is something that He is excited about. You see it in verse 5 – "according to the good pleasure of His will." God takes pleasure in adopting you into His family. Let's look at five great truths about your adoption in this passage.

First, God was motivated by His special love to adopt you. *"In love He predestined us."* There's a question whether "in love" should go with verse 4 or verse 5. I'm taking it with verse 5, but ultimately it doesn't matter. The fact is, God was motivated by His special grace—saturated love to bring you into His family. This isn't His general love that He has for the world. Everyone experiences God's general love every day. You see it in the weather, the rain and sunshine and oxygen and health and all the so-called "common grace" in which everyone lives. You even experience it in a moving piece of music like the 1812 Overture or a Super Bowl winning pass in the last seconds of the game. These all display God's goodness to humans. Sadly the world doesn't realize they are experiencing God's general love and that all the evidences of His love hold them accountable to acknowledge Him. Romans 1:20 says the entire population of the world is without excuse for not bowing down to God's Son. The depravity and sin of our hearts has so blinded and bound us that we exchange the truth of God for a lie and worship created things rather than the Creator!

But God's love in Ephesians 1 is a special, redemptive love that He had for you from eternity past. Remember last week we learned that God chose you before creation, in eternity past? Why did He choose you? Because He loved you. And why did He love you? What did He find lovely or lovable in you? You were born in sin. You were His enemy. You were spiritually dead in your sins. But God in His sovereign grace determined to love you. Why? Because He loved you! That's what He told Israel in Deuteronomy 7:7-8, "I loved you, not because of anything in you, but because I loved you."

This is the love bound up in that word foreknowledge. Check out Romans 8:28-29, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren."

God's foreknowing is not God knowing stuff ahead of time. To "know" in this case means to know in a loving way. He "fore-loved" you. God set His love on you back in that eternal counsel. He is a God of love, He loves His Son, and He has this special, saving, redeeming love that motivated Him to choose you and then to predestine you to be adopted. Martyn Lloyd-Jones comments, "Our adoption is the highest expression even of God's love."

Second, God pre-planned to adopt you in eternity past. "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself." Predestination is a sixteen cylinder word that is really pretty simple in meaning. "Pre" means before and "destination" means, well, destination. It means to mark out a goal ahead of time. For example, God predestined or pre-planned that His Son would be crucified. Acts 4:27-28, "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose **predestined** to occur."

So when God chose you before the foundation of the world, He marked out your destiny. And that destiny was your adoption! In His rich, great love He determined that you would be forever His son or daughter in Jesus! You would be given all the legal rights and privileges of being in God's family, with God as your Father. That's what adoption means: legally placed as a son with full rights and privileges, including being made an heir of the Father's infinite wealth.

Do you hear this? Believe this? Does this make any difference in your life? Or do you just yawn and blow it off as boring? A child delights in his father's plans when he says they'll be going to Holiday World, "Oh boy! Daddy's planning to take me to Holiday World!" God planned to make you His son or daughter. Tell me that's not amazing grace!

This truth isn't just in Ephesians. God planned your adoption in Ephesians and Romans 8 talks about your adoption. But in Galatians you see how your adoption was made possible through Jesus and then brought to you personally through the Spirit of Jesus:

Galatians 4:4-7, "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the

adoption as sons. 6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God." It doesn't get any better than that, people.

Third, God delights in the fact that you are now His son or daughter in His Son. "according to the kind intention of His will." Some of you can personally relate to this. You made plans to adopt a child. You were told ahead of time that a child would be available for adoption and you chose to go ahead and adopt this child. You were really excited about it as you made your plans to bring this new person into your family. You took great pleasure in traveling overseas, or as in our case our first adopted son was brought to our house by our lawyer. We took a trip to pick up the other two. All the legal work was done and we took all the responsibility for caring and raising those three rascals. They carry our last name. They are part of our family.

But as excited as we were or you were in adopting that child, here's what God wants you to see. He is infinitely more excited! He pre-determined, pre-planned to adopt you in His love and according to His kind intention or sovereign pleasure, doing exactly what He wanted to do! He delighted in it. Just like Luke 10:21 says, "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom." Not reluctantly, but gladly. What a view into our Father's heart. And why did He want to adopt you? Because He loved you. And why did He love you? Because He chose to love you!

"Yeah, but don't overdose on God's love. He's also holy and just and full of wrath, you know." True enough. But right now we're talking about this holy and righteous God taking unholy, hell-deserving rebels, and with great relish and delight, loving you and making you His son or daughter. Do you get it? Do you grasp anything of the awesomeness of God adopting you into His family? He did it by pure grace. You didn't deserve it. You were a child of wrath, a sinner, no better than that prodigal down in the mire of the pig pen or worse. But God, *but God*, chose you, loved you, and planned to adopt you as His son or daughter in His eternal counsel. Then He sent Jesus and His Spirit to adopt you at a point in time so that forever you would worship and adore and love Him because He first loved you!

Should that make a difference in your life? Do you think your life is boring? Are you scared? Are you lonely? Are you discouraged or even depressed? Weary? Confused? Upset because someone betrayed you, gossiped about you, or ended a relationship you hoped would lead to marriage? Is your heart really heavy? What if God right now spoke out of heaven to you personally and said, "You are my beloved son. You are my beloved daughter. I am well-pleased in you." Would that change your Monday mornings and Thursday afternoons? Would that give you great hope and fill you with overflowing, unspeakable joy? It's all true. Pray that God would help it to be real to you! By the way, if you are married to a Christian wife, then you are married to one of God's daughters. You better treat her well. 1 Peter 3:7 says she's a fellow heir of the grace of life. Treat her with honor so God will listen to your prayers! In fact, treat all of your brothers and sisters in Christ with great honor and respect. They are all seated around our Father's table.

As great a pleasure as we take in the blessings of life, in romance, marriage, sex, children, in good food, in wonderful experiences, in seeing your favorite team win the super bowl – as much pleasure as these human experiences bring us, God takes infinitely more pleasure in adopting you as His son or daughter through His beloved Son Jesus. Zephaniah 3:17 puts it boldly, "He will exult over you with joy. He will quiet you by His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy." ESV says, "with loud singing." Did your earthly father rejoice over you with loud singing? Your heavenly Father does!

Fourth, your adoption brings highest praise to the dazzling glory of God's grace. "To the praise of the glory of His grace." Let me put this as clearly as possible. God is more glorified in choosing and adopting and redeeming hell-deserving sinners than if Adam had never sinned. God's adopting us sparkles with His grace. Every believer is a walking, living, breathing display of God's glorious grace. You shine as God's glory-lights in this dark world (Philippians 2:15).

Any human merit that detracts from God's pure grace is really blasphemous. God has done it all. We're not praising our own efforts and goodness. Calvin says, "Men will never yield to God his due glory till they are utterly brought to nothing." There is not a single drop in us in which we may boast! Where is the

money that could purchase this gift from God? What argument could we use to convince God to accept us? God in pure, unmerited grace has adopted you and me! Calvin adds, "We must be, as it were, inflamed to give ourselves wholly to His praise!"

Fifthly, your adoption means God loves and welcomes you in the same way He loves and welcomes His beloved Son. "Which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved." Versions differ here. The KJV says, "wherein He made us accepted in the beloved." It literally reads, "the glory of His grace with which He begraced us in the beloved." By His grace He highly favored us in His beloved Son. Never think your relationship to God is ever apart from Jesus. God adopted you by His rich grace because Jesus was willing to come and fulfill God's will in redeeming us. No one stands before God in his own his own merit or righteousness. We only stand before God because He has "begraced" us in His beloved Son and loved us like His beloved Son! In John 17:23 Jesus prayed, "that the world may know that you have loved them, *even as You have loved Me.*" That's what adoption assures you of – God loves you just like He loves His Son!

Have you ever doubted God's love and thought God unfair, harsh, severe, unkind? Banish such thoughts forever. You will never be loved more than you are loved by God your heavenly Father right now because He loves you in His beloved Son with the same love that He loves His Son, and we'll forever praise Him for His Fatherly love.

SO WHAT?

- Do you love your Father? How could we not love Him who first loved us?
- Do you honor your Father? You carry the family name. You don't want to shame Him.
- Are you submitted to and obeying your Father? He is training and disciplining you for your good and His glory to help you grow more and more to become like His Son Jesus. That's what Romans 8:29 says. His goal for you is to be conformed to the image of His Son.
- Are you enjoying your Father's fellowship? He's your Abba, your Papa, your intimate loving Father. Walk with Him every day.
- Are you living in hope of all He has for you down the road, across the river, and into the Celestial City? You have an Elder Brother who is looking forward to showing you His glory. Jesus prayed in John 17, "Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given Me, be with me where I am."