

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

***Praise God for Our Adoption!***  
***Ephesians 1:5-6***

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**PowerPoint Presentation included:** NONE

**SermonAudio Blurb:**

**I. Introduction.**

- A. Today I invite you to consider the next reason we are to be a people who praise God.
  - 1. First reason was that God has blessed us by choosing us to be "in Christ."
  - 2. Today we see the next reason, He has adopted us into His household and family.
  - 3. Now that fact can be easily heard and discarded without a burst of thanksgiving if we forget what we learned last week about our condition.
  - 4. Biblical adoption is not about adding a trophy to your home. It is not about getting the good one. It is all about the gospel.
  - 5. Biblical adoption is about taking rebels, dead in their sins and content to be dead in them and so utterly redeeming them that they are taken from one reality to a new one.
    - a. From death to life.
    - b. From darkness to light.
    - c. From sinfulness to righteousness.
    - d. From enslavement to sons and daughters.
    - e. From hopelessness to certain hope.
  - 6. When we think of ourselves as a "good catch" by God we deny the very gospel that saves us. When we lift up our hearts and voices in thanksgiving and praise we remind ourselves and those around us that once we were lost but now we are found.
  - 7. Listen to these very strong, good words by J. I. Packer,

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You sum up the whole of New Testament teaching in a single phrase, if you speak of it as a revelation of the Fatherhood of the holy Creator. In the same way, you sum up the whole of New Testament religion if you describe it as the knowledge of God as one's holy Father. If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means he does not understand Christianity very well at all. For everything that Christ taught, everything that makes the New Testament new, and better than the Old, everything that is distinctively Christian as opposed to merely Jewish, is summed up in the knowledge of the Fatherhood of God. 'Father' is the Christian name for God (*Evangelical Magazine*, 7, p. 19f.).

- B. So today I want us to consider the glory that is ours because of the wondrous mystery that is adoption as Paul describes it in verses 5-6.
  - 1. The method (5a).
  - 2. The reason (5b).
  - 3. The result (6).

## **II. Predestined unto adoption.**

- A. That pesky 'in love' phrase in verse 4.
  - 1. Understand that this is a bit technical but I am doing it because so many of you are now studying Greek and I want you to continue to grapple with the text rather than just be inspired for a fleeting moment with a sermon.
  - 2. A favorite text for me on this point is Matthew 22:32 (go there and show the way Jesus is teaching the fact of the resurrection).
    - a. In vs 31 Jesus points them to the text.
    - b. In vs 32 he uses grammar to make his argument.
    - c. In vs 33 we see the impact of having the text unfolded.
  - 3. The question is how does it fit into Paul's declaration in vss 4-5. Many views, all of them rather complex. Let me give you three views and then how I understand it and more importantly what it means.
  - 4. It is a prepositional phrase and connects back to "chose."
    - a. The argument is that God's choice to save us is born out of love.

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- b. Grammatically the problem is that the phrase is so far from the verb it is supposed to be modifying.
  - c. Theologically it is also unnecessary to try to explain that God's election of us to salvation is born out of love. The very act of choosing wicked rebels is evidence enough.
5. It connects to "predestined."
- a. This is very popular and is how many of the translators chose to go with it (ESV, NASB, NIV).
  - b. The idea is that it is put in this position to emphasize the nature of God's predestination and helps expand the idea of adoption.
  - c. This is an acceptable way of seeing it. However, as you study the arguments you quickly realize that the bulk of the arguments are not about why it fits with predestine but why it should not fit with "holy and blameless" and when I considered those arguments they were unsatisfying.
6. It connects to us being holy and blameless.
- a. This the best view and it understands Paul to be saying that the way we are to live, walk and breath holiness is in love.
  - b. The best argument is that in this context the verbs and participles that describe God's actions always precede the qualifying phrases. (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, p. 184)
    - (1) vs. 3 "The one who blessed us . . . with every spiritual blessing."
    - (2) vs 4 "he chose us . . . in him before the foundation of the world."
    - (3) vs 5 "having predestined us . . . to adoption."
    - (4) vs. 7 "we have redemption . . . through his blood."
    - (5) vs 8 "he lavished on us . . . with all wisdom and insight."
    - (6) This continues through verse 11.
  - c. There is another passage that is similar that is worth looking at together, 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13.
7. All of this is to say that A purpose in God's choosing us to be in Christ is that we would be a holy people.

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- a. And the way this is to function is in and through love.
  - b. He did not save us to be men and women of rules and law. Rather we brought into salvation so that we would be truly holy. And holiness is fulfilled when we love.
  - c. Love God and love man and you fulfill the Law.
  - d. Or as he wrote in 1 Thessalonians 3, as we abound in love we become established in holiness. Without the love we are merely legalists.
8. With this in mind let us now move on to consider our destiny and its grand purpose.
- B. The method (5a).
1. Vs 4 tells us before anything was but God He joyfully, gladly, graciously chose us. But for what end? And how would this be manifested.
  2. And it is here that we see the method. He predestined us unto adoption as sons and daughters.
    - a. When we think of God electing us to be in Christ it is important to understand that this puts us on a clear pathway for our lives. To be adopted into the very household of God.
    - b. We are not a people with no purpose nor are we a people with direction. If you trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior then you are moving toward the fulness of being brought into the very household and family of God.
  3. This word, predestine, is not used a lot in the New Testament but when it is used of people it is always good.
    - a. First we have it used here in our passage and speaks to the clear pathway of adoption that God Himself put us on.
    - b. Then in 1:11 we have it mentioned again and here it is speaking of the fact that we are predestined to be God's inheritance, actually "heritage" is better.
    - c. Now go to Romans 8:29-30 for the final two.
      - (1) "foreknow" is another way of speaking of election/choosing. It is not emphasizing knowledge as much as the intensity of relationship. Before we 'knew' God He 'knew' us.

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- (2) And the result is just like Ephesians 1, it results in our future being determined and established by Him.
  - (3) We are all being made into the likeness of Jesus.
  - (4) Note the purpose for it is similar to Ephesians 1:6.
4. In our passage this predestination is to be adopted. And the biblical idea of adoption does not get the attention that it should.
- a. Remember the point Packer had made, that the essence of the Christian faith is bound up in the idea of adoption—that we are children of God and He is "Father."
  - b. Remember how we read of God in the Old Testament.
    - (1) He reveals Himself to Moses as "I Am." His name is YHWH and He calls His people to be a people of that name.
    - (2) He gives Israel, His chosen people, the Word, the Temple and the Priesthood.
      - (a) They are to do all that is in His Law.
      - (b) They are to worship Him very specifically in the Temple.
      - (c) When they fail to keep the Law they are to be reconciled and forgiven through the working of the priests who functioned as mediators between them, the sinner, and God.
    - (3) When you read the Old Testament you see that YHWH stressed His holiness.
      - (a) In the Temple this was powerfully shown as only the priests could enter the Holy area. And only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies and only once per year.
      - (b) Though God was close He was also separate and unique and holy. And you approach Him properly and carefully, with fear.
  - c. But then we come to the New Testament and we see Jesus teaching His disciples to pray and the first thing given is "Our Father. . ."

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- d.      And because of the adopting work of God toward us the focus is not a fearful approach to Him but rather a confident access as children. And this is a key message in Ephesians.
  - (1)      And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. (Eph 2:17-18)
  - (2)      "This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him (Eph 3:11-12)
  - (3)      There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. (Eph 4:4-6)
  
- e.      So we are to view ourselves not so much as saved sinners but as children of the Most High God.
  - (1)      And this is a most favored position. As John writes in 1 John 3:1, "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. . ."
  - (2)      To understand the fulness of God's love we need to focus on at least two key things.
    - (a)      The first is the Cross, for the bible says that God displayed His love for us that while we were sinners Christ died for us.
    - (b)      The second is adoption. God did not merely restore us to Adam's position before sin. He does not make us equal to angels.
    - (c)      He makes us sons and daughters and this is to cause us to gasp and weep and laugh with joy because of the great love with which He loves us.
  
- 5.      Adoption is often misunderstood by us.
  - a.      It is seen as a step less being a true son.

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- b. Russell Moore of Southern Seminary has some helpful words that illustrate this point:

“SO, ARE THEY BROTHERS?” the woman asked. My wife Maria and I, jet-lagged from just returning from Russia, looked at each other wearily. This was the twelfth time since we returned that we’d been asked this question. This lady was looking at the grainy pictures, printed off a computer from some digital photographs, of two one year-old boys in a Russian orphanage, boys who had only days earlier been pronounced by a Russian court to be our children, after the legally mandated waiting period had elapsed for the paperwork to be filed.

Maria and I had returned to Kentucky to wait for the call to return to pick up our children, and had only these pictures of young Maxim and Sergei, our equivalent of a prenatal sonogram, to show to our friends and relatives back home. But people kept asking: “Are they brothers?”

“They are now,” I replied. “Yes,” the lady snapped, “I know. But are they really brothers?” Clenching my jaw, I coolly responded, “Yes, now they are both our children so they are now really brothers.” The woman sighed, rolled her eyes, and said, “Well, you know what I mean.”

Of course, we did know what she meant. She meant did these two boys—born three weeks apart—share a common biological ancestry, a common bloodline, some common DNA. It struck me that this question betrayed what most of us tend to view as really important when it comes to sonship: traceable genetic material.

This is the reason people would also ask us, “So do you also have any children of your own?” And it is the reason newspaper obituaries will often refer to the deceased’s “adopted child,” as though this were the equivalent of a stepchild or a protégé, rather than a real offspring.

(“The Brotherhood of Sons: What Some Rude Questions about Adoption Taught Me about The Gospel of Christ,” *Touchstone*, May 2007, p. 1)

- c. The grand reality is that we are not merely "sort of" brothers and sisters, but in the fullest most eternal and infinite sense we are all brothers and sisters because of God’s choice to adopt us.
6. Some helpful passages:
- a. Romans 8:15
- (1) Adoption is the glorious blessing that invites us to come to the Sovereign God and cry out "Father" with absolute assurance that He looks upon us intense and pure pleasure and delight.
- b. Romans 8:23

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- (1) This also reminds us that there is, like most things we have in salvation, a now/not yet aspect.
  - (2) The fulness of this adoption occurs on the day of redemption. What is that day? When is that day? Revelation 21:1-8.
- c. Romans 9:4
- (1) This shows that adoption as sons was a uniquely Jewish privilege.
  - (2) Theologically, because of the Gentile's union with Christ, the representative of Israel, we too become sons.
- d. Galatians 4:4-5.
- (1) Note the two *hina* clauses in vs 5. Again we see the very clear intention of our Father.
7. These passages help show us what Paul meant in Ephesians 1:5 with the phrase, "through Jesus Christ to Himself."
- C. The reason (5b).
1. Just as God has ordained that we be holy and blameless before Him in love, so too His love and kindness motivates this radical move to adopt us.
  2. Karl Barth said it well, "Not a grim Lord watching over the execution of his predetermined plan, but a smiling Father is praised. He enjoys imparting his riches to many children" (Hoehner, p. 199)
  3. This adoption is like the choosing. It is not according to anything we do or are, but rather in spite of it all. It is purely out of the mercies that flow from God, our Father.
  4. Notice how it is written. The Father, in eternity past determined that He would accomplish all of this through (*dia*) Jesus to bring us to (*eis*) God Himself.
  5. And this leads us to the final point.
- D. The result (6).
1. What you will see in this whole section that the ultimate goal is us praising God.
  2. This is what we exist to be and what humanity was made for. To be worshipers of our Creator, who is also our Father.



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3. It is to delight in Him. Rest in Him. And make much of Him before a dying world.

### **III. Conclusion.**

- A. I want to end this with another story from Russell Moore:

When Maria and I at long last received the call that the legal process was over, and we returned to Russia to pick up our new sons, we found that their transition from orphanage to family was more difficult than we had supposed. We dressed the boys in outfits our parents had bought for them. My mother-in-law gathered some wildflowers growing between cracks in the pavement outside the orphanage.

We nodded our thanks to the orphanage personnel and walked out into the sunlight, to the terror of the two boys. They'd never seen the sun, and they'd never felt the wind. They had never heard the sound of a car door slamming or had the sensation of being carried along at 100 miles an hour down a Russian road. I noticed that they were shaking, and reaching back to the orphanage in the distance.

I whispered to Sergei, now Timothy, "That place is a pit! If only you knew what's waiting for you: a home with a Mommy and a Daddy who love you, grandparents, and great-grandparents and cousins and playmates... and McDonald's Happy Meals!" But all they knew was the orphanage. It was squalid, but they had no other reference point, and it was home.

We knew the boys had acclimated to our home, that they trusted us, when they stopped hiding food in their high-chairs. They knew there would be another meal coming, and they wouldn't have to fight for the scraps. This was the new normal.

They are now thoroughly Americanized, perhaps too much so, able to recognize the sound of a microwave ding from forty yards away. I still remember, though, those little hands reaching for the orphanage, and I see myself there.

- B. Beloved, may you and I begin to reach out our hands by faith toward that for which God has destined us?
  1. May we reach out to our Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit?
  2. May we define ourselves and one another with the reality that we are brothers and sisters, children of the Most High?