

Sermon Notes of Rev.Dr.I.J.W.Oakley (22-10-1995 Guisborough Evangelical Church)

Ephesians 1:5
Additional Bible Reading: Romans 8:28-29

Predestined to adoption, to the praise of the glory of His grace

Introduction

God's people are not only chosen, but also predestined to be adopted into God's family with all the privileges and responsibilities that come with that. The whole glorious motive behind the sweep of salvation from eternity to eternity is for the praise of the glory of His grace. Not mainly for our sake or our comfort, but for the glory and honour of God's great name.

These great truths show God on the throne of grace, dispensing His grace to guilty sinners, not as a helpless pleader constantly frustrated by men who keep getting in His way and upsetting Him. But we see Him as sovereign, ruling on high, almighty to save.

Now we come to the next step in His purpose for His chosen ones. **For those God foreknew** (loved beforehand, or loved with favour), **He also predestined** (Romans 8:29).

Statement about our predestination to adoption

He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:5). He foreordained, marked out the way beforehand, planned, arranged beforehand, set us apart, wrote our names down that we should be adopted as sons and daughters into His family through Jesus Christ. Note that origin of salvation is not conversion, or Calvary, or Creation of men, but began with God the Father in eternity past.

Paul is the only writer in the New Testament who uses the word "adoption", and it betrays his knowledge of Roman law, because it was an idea unknown to Jews. Under Roman law, adoption enabled a child who was not a blood relation to be part of family and have right to name and property of person who adopted him. Term which emphasises relationship, standing, rank and distinction.

Reminder that this teaching is counter to popular idea and presentation of Christianity often found in media. It is assumed we are all God's children, all brothers and sisters, all belong to God, and all going to heaven. Assumption behind much religious broadcasting and preaching, therefore all we need is advice about how to live our lives. It is not true that we all belong to God and all are going to heaven. In this very epistle we are said to be **dead in transgressions and sins... by nature objects of wrath...separate from Christ... foreigners.... without hope and without God in the world** (Ephesians 2:1,3,12). Not born God's children, not our natural right, not owed to us, not deserved.

But God, according to His eternal plan, has conferred on His people this amazing privilege of adopting them into His family. Not only forgiven and cleansed, not only regenerated and given new life by the Spirit, but also conferred on them this new status and dignity, with many privileges, by adopting them into His family.

Of course our sonship is very different from that of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ was the Son of God. But He was unique, eternal Son, son by nature, always Son of God in eternal divine relationship. He is very God of very God. We are not sons by nature, but by grace and adoption, when once we were far off, under wrath and condemnation. This is our new rank, status and privilege.

And how has all this been made possible? Through Jesus Christ. All God's blessings are mediated to us through Jesus Christ. Look at this chapter: **Apostle of Christ Jesus** (v1), **the faithful in Christ Jesus** (v1), **every spiritual blessing in Christ** (v3), **chosen us in him** (v4), **his sons through Christ Jesus** (v5), **in Him we have redemption** (v7). We are completely indebted to the Lord Jesus Christ. All depends on His atoning death – removing the barrier of sin, and wrath of God, bringing us into new relationship with God. **Laid on Him the iniquity of us all** (Isaiah 53:6), **He did not spare His own son** (Romans 8:32). All depend on Jesus and His Cross. Essential to whole process. This is the hinge, or the lynch pin, on which it all relies. Of the many things we give thanks to God for, our greatest thanks should be for His gift of a Saviour. Is this reflected in our prayer life? In our outpouring of gratitude, do we above all remember His unspeakable gift?

*“Brightness of the Father’s glory
Shall thy praise unuttered lie?
Fly, my tongue, such guilty silence,
Sing the Lord who came to die”*

Robert Robinson

We enter the family by relationship to the One who died for us. **You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus** (Galatians 3:26). **To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God** (John 1:12).

All these great and glorious truths go back to God's eternal plans. He who sees the end from the beginning planned it all before we were born, before the world was created. As we look into His plan and scheme, do we delight in it? Are we thrilled by it, marvel at it? We ought to if we are spiritually alive, and we should have immense sense of gratitude.

Privileges arising from adoption into God's family

Adoption has brought us unbelievable privileges, because we are part of God's family, and have new rank and status. In context, Paul underlines one of the greatest – **Accepted in the beloved** (v6, A.V.) Because of the One whom God described as His Beloved Son at His baptism and transfiguration (Matthew 3:17, 17:5, 21:37), we have access and acceptance into God's presence. Once rejected, condemned, miserable, hopeless state – but now accepted, favoured, freely given His grace. *εχαριτωσεν* only found one other place in New Testament – Luke 1:28 – **Greetings you who are**

highly favoured. This is our condition too! **He has brought us into the Kingdom of the Son he loves** (Colossians 1:13).

Part of the privilege is that we become as near and dear to God as Christ Himself is. He loves us as He loves Christ. **You have loved them even as you have loved me** (John 17:23). **By Him we cry ‘Abba Father’** (Romans 8:15).

*“Near, so very near,
Nearer I could not be
For in the person of His Son
I’m just as near as He”*

Also, as adopted sons, we are **Heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ** (Romans 8:17)

Then there are the present blessings in life, both spiritual and material. If the very hairs on our head are numbered, that relieves us of much worry in this life. Another privilege in this life - the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And then future blessings. The day is coming when new body to be given, the day when we will be **brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God** (Romans 8:21). Free from sin and defilement. **A new heaven and a new earth, the home of the righteous** (2 Peter 3:13).

And all this is totally secure because nothing **will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord** (Romans 8:39).

But if there are privileges, then there are also responsibilities, e.g. to show forth the family likeness and to be subject to the discipline of the Father – because the Father will not spoil us, and He has to discipline us for our good, that we may share in and be conformed to His holy character.

Ever considered what it means to be highly favoured in Christ, to have God’s grace lavished on us? The problem is we have heard and read and sung these things so often that the wonder and glory have departed. If only we could get back to the point where we heard them for the first time.

The story is told of a Hindu boy helping with the translation of the Gospel of John into Indian language. When he came to John 1:12 – “To as many as received him, he gave the right to become the children of God”, the boy broke down in tears, saying “This is too much that he should give us the right to be his sons. It would be wonderful even if he only gave us the right to be his servants”. The truth hit him in its fullness, and it overwhelmed him. Oh that it would hit us again!

The world has nothing compared with this. The praise and honour and privilege that the world is interested in, be it in society, academia or sport, is fading and decaying. It will only last this world and this life. Cannot take them with you through death. Men have their reward in this life, but nothing beyond (Matthew 6:5).

Think of your own privilege in Christ – as a child of God, part of His family. Feeling dejected, ignored, discouraged, as if you do not matter? Let them despise and forsake

you and ignore you and all you do. As Horatius Bonar said, “Men heed thee, love thee, praise thee now; The Master praises – What are mine” [writing unclear]. Hold up your head, you have glory and honour and privilege that the world knows nothing of – glory that will never fade away. If anyone should walk tall in this world – it is the child of God, and he alone.

Purpose of predestination to adoption as sons

To the praise of his glorious grace (Ephesians 1:6). Every believer ought to have a singing heart, and the theme of his song should always be the matchless grace of God. We are so self-centred. Feel the whole scheme of redemption is mainly for our benefit. That we might be happy and comfortable and that we might be seen in heaven. We always want to be in the picture. No! The main motive is that the whole process should be to the praise of the glory of His grace. Remember we are not the measure of all things, though we think we are. We are not ends in ourselves. We have no rights, claims or standing. Redemption has nothing to do with anything in us, our desire or our deserving. The whole thing is from God. God extends His mercy to us – but for His own sake and for His glory.

One of the old Puritans put it like this: “God’s chief end was not to bring Christ into the world for us, but to bring us into the world for Christ.” The whole scheme of salvation is to show men and the whole universe how great God is, and how amazing and glorious His grace is, and to give pre-eminence to His beloved Son.

The people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise (Isaiah 43:21). **You are a chosen people... that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light** (1 Peter 2:9). The first and greatest truth concerning salvation is the revelation of the glory of God – His majesty, His splendour, the wonder of His love and mercy towards us, His beauty and His greatness.

God’s glory is seen in everything He does – in nature, in history, but always and above all in our redemption in which His power and wisdom are most clearly demonstrated. On Calvary’s hill, we see His justice and righteousness in punishing sin, and His love in providing a substitute for guilty sinners. Then in the way we are brought to Christ, saved and made His children, His glory is demonstrated. The Gospel we preach is **the glorious gospel of the blessed God** (1 Timothy 1:11).

Conclusion

Think of self, what you once were. Think of the eternal plans he had for you before he made the world, that you were given by the Father to the Son, the fact that your sins were laid on Christ, all that He has made new in this life, and all that will be yours one day, the way you have been highly favoured. What He planned in eternity, carried out in time, He will complete in eternity. These plans will never fail, these promises will never be broken, He will not let us down. What can you do but give to Him the glory that is due to His name. **Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord** (1 Corinthians 1:31). Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. This is our motive for prayers. It includes living lives to the glory of His grace.

Said before how important doctrine is to give foundation and structure to faith. When doctrine is right, that should lead to living that is right. When we consider His dealings with us in sheer grace – because He would have it so – live **to declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.**