

Sermon Notes & References  
“Predestined to be Sons”  
Ephesians 1:5-6  
February 10, 2008

- A. Introduction <sup>A</sup>
  - 1. the text tells me about
  
  - 2. adoption begins with the adopting parents
  
- B. Foreknowledge, Election, Predestination <sup>B</sup> ... “In love He predestined us to adoption as sons” ..... 1:5a
  - 1. how do I picture these truths?
  
  - 2. how does the Bible portray them?
  
- C. Rebirth and Adoption
  - 1. what does rebirth (regeneration) deal with? <sup>C</sup>

2. what does adoption deal with <sup>D</sup>

- D. The How and Why
  - 1. “through Jesus Christ to Himself ... in the Beloved” <sup>E</sup> . . . 1:5b, 6b
  
  - 2. “according to the kind intention of His will” <sup>F</sup> . . . . . 1:6a
  
  - 3. “to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed upon us in the Beloved’ . . . . . 1:6b
  
- E. Conclusion <sup>G</sup> ... how should I respond to this tremendous truth?

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<sup>A</sup> Ephesians 1:4, Revelation 22:17, 2 Peter 3:9, John 1:12-13  
<sup>B</sup> Psalm 16:6, Acts 2:22-24, John 3:16, Hebrews 2:10  
<sup>C</sup> John 3:3, 5; 1 Corinthians 2:14, Colossians 2:13, Titus 3:5-7

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<sup>D</sup> Galatians 4:1-7; also our Scripture reading, Romans 8:9-25  
<sup>E</sup> Hebrews 7:24-27, 6:17-20, 2:11  
<sup>F</sup> Isaiah 57:15, Jeremiah 31:3  
<sup>G</sup> John 14:6

—{1}. **Ephesians 1:5-6** . . . . . **Predestined to be Sons**

A. Introduction

1. Reading from Ephesians 1, verses 4–6, and we start in the middle of that single sentence that forms verses 3-14 — just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

2. Adoption is a tremendous subject

- a. Charlie was a mortally wounded soldier, and Jim, his best buddy, stayed with him until the very end. Jim had no family and the dying Charlie asked him to go to his mother to take his place there. 'But Charlie, your mother doesn't know me; why would she take me to be her son?' Charlie wrote a letter for Jim to take to his mother, describing his own wounds and suffering and of Jim's faithfulness. Later, Jim returned from war and went to Charlie's hometown and then his home. He was bedraggled, ragged and worn out from the ravages of war. At first the lady who opened the door thought him just another beggar, but then he handed her the letter. The final line, moved her to tears and to accepting Jim as her son: 'Mother, receive Jim for my sake.' —{2}.
- b. A first grade teacher was discussing a picture of a family with her class. One boy in the picture had different colour hair than the rest of the family. One child suggested that the boy might be adopted. Another named Jocelynn, said, 'I know about adoption because I was adopted.' A third asked, 'What does it mean to be adopted?' 'It means,' said Jocelynn, 'that you grew in your mommy's heart instead of her tummy.' —{3}.
- c. adopted, growing in the heart of God as His child, received into the family of God for Jesus' sake.
- d. What has brought this to pass for the child of God?

B. Adoption begins with the adopting parent

1. last week we looked at those words in verse 4, 'just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.'

- a. our emphasis was that God chose us for a purpose
    - (A) in pre-history – before the foundation of the world
    - (B) in the present – today, tomorrow, next week
    - (C) and, in the future when Jesus Christ returns
  - b. that purpose being that we should be holy, blameless
  - c. that as God's children
    - (A) we should bear the family image
    - (B) we are being prepared
      - (1) by our family life below
      - (2) for an eternal day of family life above
  - d. we saw that the way to being one of God's children is opened by the invitation from God Himself, in Jesus Christ
    - (A) invitations embodied in that gentle word, 'Come'
    - (B) concluding with that great invitation of Revelation 22: 17, *The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.* ... to which we could have added,
    - (C) *The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.* — 2 Peter 3:9 – yes, God's invitation is genuine and trustworthy with an R.S.V.P. at the bottom
    - (D) so men and women, boys and girls, before God have a responsibility as to how they answer that invitation
2. but we did not dwell upon the fact that it is God who chose us
- a. for without way transgressing our human willfulness
  - b. when we come and accept His gracious invitation
  - c. we find that we are chosen by the grace of sovereign God
  - d. *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.* — John 1:12-13

3. now let us continue with verses 5 and 6, centring our thoughts on that phrase, 'In love He predestined us to adoption as sons,'

C. Foreknowledge, Election, Predestination

1. for many, these may be unsettling words and truths

a. one pastor greeted his congregation in a message on this verse with the following words,

b. While the verse begins with a warm fuzzy love, for some it quickly dissolves into a contentious and controversial word: "predestined." For those of you who carry a picture of John Calvin in your wallet, know what the acrostic TULIP means or say Jacob Arminius with a sneer, this word is like the sweet dew of the morning. For the rest, if the only Calvin you know had a stuffed tiger named Hobbes, tulips are grown in your yard and when someone calls you an Arminian you correct them by saying you're Polish-Irish, "predestined" may be equated with laziness in prayer or evangelism, self-righteous Christians who value their theology more than their Lord. The word may conjure images of a puppet on a string or a robot. But few read this word and picture love. —<sup>{4}</sup>.

c. yet, love is central to the great truths of God's election, foreknowledge, and predestination

d. predestined, sometimes translated fore-ordained, means to place a boundary around in advance

(A) this has many facets, but today, let's look at but one

(B) the Psalmist (16:6, AV) wrote 'The line are fallen unto me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage.'

(C) the picture is that long before the Psalmist was born, the boundaries of his possession were laid out

(D) so also, long before we were born, God has laid out our life boundaries, that of being His sons and daughters

e. love in the heart hers mom lay behind Jocelynn's being adopted; it is love that lays behind our being adopted to be part of the family of God; consider

f. Peter says in his sermon in Acts 2, '... Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death...' — Acts 2: 22b-24a; Peter explains that what men did

- in their own willfulness was God's ordained plan
- g. what motivating attribute of God gave rise to that plan? For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. — John 3:16 – Love; simply love, this love
  - h. love's purpose is found in Hebrews 2:10, 'For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings,'; it is what is found in this verse in Ephesians; adoption into His heavenly family
  - i. Rev. Alan Perkins has expressed this far better than I can: 'God's purpose from the very beginning has been to create a family; one that would bring joy to Himself and His people; one that would never end. You see, God's purpose in bringing you to faith was not just to bring you into relationship with Himself; but also to bring you into relationship with other believers. And that's what He's doing, through the church. He's building a family, which you and I and everyone who trusts in Christ are a part of. And it's a great family.'<sup>{5}</sup>.

#### D. Rebirth and Adoption

- 1. perhaps you may ask, 'But aren't we God's children' when we are born again? Why do we have to be adopted?'
- 2. Rebirth deals with our nature, our fallen nature, inherited
  - a. from when Eve and Adam ate of the forbidden fruit
  - b. in that very day they died, they became spiritually dead
  - c. and all mankind thereafter with them
  - d. that is why Jesus said, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. ... Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' — John 3:3, 5.
  - e. and Paul tells us, 'But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.' – 1 Corinthians 2:14
  - f. rebirth deals with our spiritual deadness, 'When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our

transgressions, ' — Colossians 2:13 or, expressed in other ways,

- g. He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life. — Titus 3:5-7
- h. whence we see that regeneration deals with sin and the creation of our new man, our spiritual nature, so that God may work in us His grand purpose of adoption

3. Adoption has to do with our legal standing in God's family

- a. it is a Greek compound word of 'son' and 'to put or place'
- b. it is being put the condition of a son, being made a son.
- c. the expositor Kenneth Wuest explains it thus: *It was a term used in Roman legal practice. It referred to a legal action by which a person takes into his family a child not his own, with the purpose of treating him as and giving him all the privileges of an own son. The custom was not common among the Jews, but was so among the Romans, with whom an adopted child is legally entitled to all rights and privileges of a natural-born child. This custom, well-known in the Roman empire, is used in the New Testament as an illustration of the act of God giving a believing sinner, who is not His natural child, a position as His adult son in the family. This is legal act and position ...* <sup>{6}</sup>.
- d. and Donald Grey Barnhouse provides this illustration taken by the book, 'The Robe' by Lloyd C. Douglas:
  - (A) Lucia describes the ceremony held for her older brother {Marcellus} in which he was acknowledged publicly as the son of his father.
  - (B) As they all assemble in the forum to see Marcellus step forward to receive the white toga of sonship, his father and Cornelius Capito make speeches. Then they place the white toga on Marcellus's shoulders.
  - (C) Sister Lucia is so proud and happy that she is nearly beside herself with joy. But she is only nine and she knows that Marcellus is much older and must act like a man.
  - (D) As Marcellus is inducted into manhood, his father makes a speech welcoming him into Roman citizenship and Marcellus's eyes fill with tears. Then Cornelius Capito makes a patriotic speech reminding Marcellus that Mother Rome deserves young Marcellus' finest loyalty and

commitment. Thus, with the ceremony and the placing of the white toga on Marcellus' shoulders, he is publicly acknowledged as a son, introduced to manhood and to citizenship in the Roman Empire.

(E) This is something of what the New Testament word "adoption" means. It is not simply the bringing of another child into the family. Rather, it is the welcoming of a grown-up man or a grown-up woman into the family. They are welcomed into the family with all the rights of a grown-up with full citizenship. Thus we come into God's family not quaking in fear of Him, but as grown-up children who have come of age, and are publicly acknowledged as sons and daughters of God. <sup>-(7)}</sup>.

- e. with this in mind, you will see the force of Paul's words in Galatians 4: 1–7, 'Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.'
- f. so how could this be? ... why should God do this?

E. The how and the why – let us look at the remainder of our text

1. 'through Jesus Christ to Himself' and, verse 6, 'in the Beloved'

- a. the bringing of many sons into Glory as we previously read from Hebrews 2: 10, is the direct result of the mediation of Jesus Christ, God's one of a kind, beloved Son
- b. we celebrated the incarnation just a few weeks ago and in that celebration we praised God that in Jesus of Nazareth, the eternal God entered time as a man
- c. this is important for the forgiveness of our sin, for as we are told in Hebrews 7: 24-27, because Jesus lives for ever, because his priesthood is permanent, because he is totally holy and pure, therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, he meets our needs
- d. but there is more than that, for Jesus not only died for our sins and rose again for our justification as the Author of our salvation, but He also entered within the veil, into the most Holy Place, into

God's presence as our 'forerunner' – this hope is an anchor of the soul, (Hebrews 6:17-20) the knowledge that where Jesus has gone, then those whom 'He is not ashamed to call them brethren' (Hebrews 2:11) will one day follow into glory

e. so we are now sons in position; by our being 'in Christ, in the Beloved' but we anticipate then being sons in practice

2. 'according to the kind intention of His will' – verse 6

a. are you beginning to see that all of God's foreknowledge, election and predestination are rooted in His loving and gracious purpose for those whom Jesus died to save?

b. what tremendous assurance this should give to the child of God, knowing his Father's kindly, generous purposes!

c. and in knowing these are anchored in eternity: *For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever {or, Who inhabits eternity}, whose name is Holy, 'I dwell on a high and holy place, And also with the contrite and lowly of spirit In order to revive the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of the contrite.'* — Isaiah 57:15

d. time constrains us all in our thinking — Which is the me that God loves ... the innocent infant, the child coming to Jesus at age 10, the rebellious teen, the busy young adult, the middle-aged man, the guy that messed up this week, the man before you now, when I come to death, at the resurrection? I see them as distinct and different ... but His everlasting love applies to me the same as to Israel, He sees them all as one – *"The LORD appeared to him from afar, saying, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness."* (Jeremiah 31:3 NAS)

3. 'to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed upon us in the Beloved' – verse 6

a. the first question in the catechism is 'what is the chief end of man' and its answer, 'to glorify God and enjoy him forever'

b. God's grace is both the subject of our praise and the root of our enjoyment of Himself

c. literally, this says 'His grace by which He begraced us', a way of emphatically declaring the incomprehensibility of the grace of God shown to us in Jesus Christ, the Beloved

Wonderful the matchless grace of Jesus,  
Deeper than the mighty rolling sea;

Higher than the mountain, sparkling like a fountain,  
All sufficient grace for even me  
Broader than the scope of my transgressions,  
Greater far than all my sin and shame;  
O magnify the precious name of Jesus,  
Praise His name! —{8}.

F. Conclusion – and the Way to God as Father is open today; Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me' (John 14:6); if you have not already done so, God's invitation is there today for you to come to him through Christ; how tremendous it is to be children of the heavenly Father,

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AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
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NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
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2. By J. Wilbur Chapman from Dynamic Preaching Disk, Spring 1992, ‘A’ – Kerux illustrations #3017
3. ‘What it means to be Adopted’ compiled by Ed Nollen – Kerux illustrations #4573
4. “The Marks of God’s Affection - Predestination” by Rev. Chris Vogel – Kerux illustrations #7121
5. ‘You Were Formed for God’s Family’ by Rev. Alan Perkins – Kerux sermons #16155
6. Studies in the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament by Kenneth Wuest — Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1955, pp. 78-79 – Kerux illustrations #14674

7. Let Me Illustrate; by Donald Grey Barnhouse, Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1967, P. 19 – Kerux illustrations #14675
8. Wonderful Grace of Jesus, by Haldor Lillenas (1885-1959)