

The Father's Eternal Purpose

Ephesians 1:1-6

*"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,
To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus:
²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved."*

Paul writes this letter to reassure a church that faced opposition from outside and weakness within.

1) What things in your life cause you to fear, raise doubts, or just flat wear you out?

Looking at verse 3, Paul turns our attention off both our circumstances and our performance and on to what God is doing. He says that God, in Christ through the Holy Spirit, has blessed us. He has put us into a good situation for eternity.

2) Why is it so important to look to God's work rather than our own?

3) God's blessing is an objective change in our situation, not a change in how we feel about things. Why is this important?

As we move into v4, we find that God chose in eternity past to make us holy and blameless before him.

4) In what way are we made holy and blameless? How does this help us deal with our everyday life as a saint/sinner?

5) How do the things we see here about our salvation (God's plan before time began, our election, imputation, etc.) comfort and assure us?

Paul moves on in v5-6 to talk about our adoption. Our confession describes our adoption in this way: *"All those that are justified, God conferred, in and for the sake of his only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption, by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God, have his name put on them, receive the spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace with boldness, are enabled to cry Abba, Father, are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by him as by a Father, yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption, and inherit the promises as heirs of everlasting salvation."* All our confession describes here is ours, not because of anything good in us, but as a sheer gift of grace alone.

6) How does the truth of your adoption minister to you, especially in places you weary, fearful, or doubting that we talked about at the beginning?

7) How does all we have seen in this passage influence the life of our church? How does it help us care for one another?

Some things you can be praying about:

- What can we praise God for?
- What sin do you need to confess?
- What cares or burdens we can help carry?