

Every Spiritual Blessing is Found in Christ (Adoption)

What do you most want from others? Are you looking to people for comfort, satisfaction, or a sense of identity? When you feel empty, discouraged, or weary, where do you turn? And are you expecting others to give you what only the Lord God can provide? We often look to people or things for our satisfaction. We seek affirmation, attention, comfort, success, and even power, expecting them to complete us, expecting them to do for us what only the Lord God can do.

No person or thing in this world can bear the weight of your greatest and deepest needs. All people are looking for something; something that will give meaning and purpose to their lives. But in the end, true and lasting satisfaction is not found in people, nor in anything this world can offer. True and lasting satisfaction is found only in Jesus Christ. And more than that, your greatest and deepest need is not merely to be satisfied, but to be brought into the family of God. To be claimed. To be made His own. You see, this is why the Lord God created man and revealed Himself to him—for relationship, for communion, and for fellowship. The second question of the Baptist Catechism asks: What is the chief end of man? The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. Communion with God, the enjoyment of God, is the very purpose for which we were created.

In Genesis 3, our first parents, Adam and Eve, fell from their original righteousness, and their communion with the Lord God was lost, and we with them. As a result, all men are born in sin, alienated and estranged from the Lord God, having no hope, and without God in the world. And so man lives in solitude, looking for life, looking for meaning, and looking for satisfaction; but apart from the Lord God, these things are never found. But God, in His great mercy and grace, has not left us in that condition. God is good, and God does good.

Please turn with me to the book of Ephesians. This morning, we continue our study of Ephesians 1:3-14. As we come to this passage, we are not only considering what God gives, but the kind of God He is: rich in grace and worthy of all praise. Last week, we saw that God is the one who blesses and God is the one who chooses. God has provided every spiritual blessing in Christ, in the heavenly places. In Christ, we are given everything we need for life and godliness, because God's purpose, from eternity past, is that His people would reflect His character. We have been chosen by God, in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. And this morning, we see something even more personal; God is not only the one who blesses and chooses, but God is also the one who adopts us into the family of God.

Ephesians 1:3-14 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth in him. 11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our

inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Over the next few weeks, we're going to be unpacking each manifestation of the Lord God's character. This morning, our focus will be on Ephesians 1:5-6. God is the one who adopts. In these verses, we see:

1. The Motive of Our Election (v. 5a)
2. The Result of Our Election (v. 5b)
3. The Goal of Our Election (v6)

Let's look at each one of these in detail.

Ephesians 1:5 In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

The motive of our election is the sovereign, gracious love of God: "In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will..." Our God is a God of love; indeed, our God is love. From eternity past, He sovereignly determined to set His love upon us, to grace us with His favor and blessing. He made a decree, according to His own will, to make us the objects of His love and affection. This decision was not motivated by anything in us. It was not based on our worth or anything outside of Himself. Rather, it was according to the purpose of His will. God works all things according to the counsel of His own will. God chose to love. And in that love, He saw our great need; dead in sin, enslaved to sin, and corrupted in the flesh; and He determined to deliver the highest possible good at the highest possible cost: the blood of Jesus Christ. You know, no matter how often I reflect upon the love of God, I am still amazed by it. To meditate upon it leaves you speechless, filled with awe and wonder. Especially when we consider the exceedingly sinful condition of all men. God chose us in love, fully knowing the depth of our depravity. He knew our wicked disposition toward Him—that we are by nature enemies of God, enslaved to idols, with self seated upon the throne of the heart. And yet, in love, He acted:

Romans 5:8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God's motivation for our election is His sovereign, gracious love. From eternity past, He set His love upon His people; He loves us now in Christ, and He will never cease to love those whom He has redeemed. For love is from God, and God is love. The motive of our election is the sovereign, gracious love of God. The result of our election is adoption.

Ephesians 1:5 In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, and in love He predestined us for adoption as sons. What is the difference between the doctrine of election and the doctrine of predestination? These terms are closely related and are sometimes used interchangeably in Scripture. But generally speaking, predestination is the broader category, under which election (unto salvation) and reprobation (God's passing over the non-elect) are understood.

By way of reminder, last week we defined election as the act of God before the foundation of the world in which He chooses certain individuals to be saved, not on the basis of any foreseen merit in them, but only because of His sovereign good pleasure. In other words, God sovereignly and unconditionally chose His people for salvation. On the other hand, reprobation is the sovereign decision of God, before the foundation of the world, to pass over certain persons, leaving them in their sin, and to punish them justly for their sin, thereby manifesting His justice.

Some of you may feel the weight of that doctrine, and rightly so. Reprobation is one of the most difficult doctrines to consider. It presses against our instincts. It appears difficult to reconcile with the love, mercy, grace, and goodness of God. But nevertheless, there are many passages that teach us this glorious doctrine. There are many passages that teach the reprobation of sinners. For example, in the book of Jude, referring to the false teachers that had infiltrated the church:

Jude 4 For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Jude 4 teaches that some people who reject Christ and distort His grace are described as being “designated for condemnation.” In other words, their judgment is not random or accidental—it is part of God’s settled purpose. At the same time, Jude makes it clear they are responsible for their sin. They are ungodly, they twist God’s grace, and they deny Christ. Their condemnation is tied to their own rebellion. So the passage shows both truths together: God is sovereign in judgment, and people are fully accountable for their sin.

In the book of Romans, Paul speaks in this same manner, referring to Egypt's Pharaoh and other people.

Romans 9:17-22 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” 18 So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. 19 You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?” 20 But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” 21 Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? 22 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,

This passage teaches that God raises up even those who oppose Him, like Pharaoh, to display His power and make His name known. God is completely free and sovereign in showing mercy to some and in justly judging others. Paul also makes clear that God is not unjust in this, because He is the Creator and we are the creature; no one has a right to question His purposes. At the same time, those who are judged are responsible for their sin, and God’s patience in delaying judgment highlights both His justice and His longsuffering.

This doctrine is also seen in the book of 1 Peter.

1 Peter 2:7-8 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” 8 and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

Peter is saying that Jesus is precious and honored to those who believe in Him; He is the cornerstone of their faith. But for those who refuse to believe, the same Jesus becomes a stumbling block and an offense. They reject Him because they will not submit to God’s word, and even this happens within God’s sovereign purpose. In other words, the passage shows that God has appointed both the honor of belief and the reality of judgment, while still holding people responsible for their unbelief and disobedience.

There are some who misunderstand these passages and suggest that God is directly responsible for man’s sin or that He is the author of evil. But Scripture is clear that God is not the author of sin, nor does He

tempt anyone to sin. If man is judged for his unbelief, it is because of his own sin and rebellion, not because God coerced him into evil. God's decree never removes human responsibility. At the same time, the doctrine of reprobation is never presented in Scripture as something cold or indifferent in God, but always as consistent with His holy, righteous, and just character.

Ezekiel 33:11 Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?

Matthew 23:37-38 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! 38 See, your house is left to you desolate.

In Scripture, the blame and responsibility for sin always rest with those who sin and reject the Lord Jesus Christ. On the other hand, the praise and glory for the salvation of sinners always belongs to God, the Author and Finisher of our faith. Salvation is not something man contributes to or ultimately produces in himself; it is the sovereign work of God from beginning to end, so that all glory is rightly given to Him alone. Our election is entirely because of God; His grace, mercy, and good pleasure. But a person's condemnation is because of their own sin, guilt, and rebellion. Election shows God's grace and kindness, while condemnation shows His holiness and justice. If you receive the Lord Jesus Christ, you do not receive what you deserve; you receive mercy. But if you reject the Lord Jesus Christ, you receive exactly what you deserve: justice.

R.C. Sproul used a helpful illustration to explain this. Imagine a circle, and draw a line down the middle of it. One side represents the mercy of God, and the other side represents the justice of God. In God's dealings with mankind, every person will receive one or the other. Those who are in Christ receive mercy. Those who remain in unbelief receive justice. But no one ever receives injustice from God. Man either receives justice, what he has earned by his sin, or mercy, what he does not deserve. But no one is ever treated unjustly by the Lord God. He is free to show mercy to some without owing it to all, and He is always righteous in all that He does.

The first time I heard the doctrine of election and reprobation explained, I remember thinking, "Who cares? I don't need to know all this theological stuff." Do you know why it is important to understand these truths? The primary purpose for studying these doctrines is not self-advancement. It is not so that we can be puffed up with knowledge or think ourselves superior to others. Rather, it is for the praise, glory, and honor of God. The more we come to know the nature and character of God, and the more we understand the greatness of our salvation, the more we are equipped to worship Him rightly. Greater knowledge of God should lead to deeper worship of God.

Romans 9:22-23 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—

These are weighty truths, but they are revealed truths. God has made them known so that both His justice and His mercy would magnify His glory, and so that His people would worship Him more fully. If, after diligent study and reflection, some things still remain difficult to fully grasp, we are reminded of what Scripture says:

Deuteronomy 29:29 The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Isaiah 55:8-9 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

The Lord our God is infinite, and we are finite. He is eternal, unchangeable, and unsearchable—His wisdom and His ways cannot be measured. We are bound by time, subject to change, limited in strength, and able to know Him only as He graciously reveals Himself.

The book of Job displays this clearly. In Job 26, God “stretches out the north over the void and hangs the earth on nothing.” He “binds up the waters in His thick clouds,” and the clouds do not burst under their weight. He “covers the face of the full moon” and “spreads His cloud over it.” He has inscribed a circle on the face of the waters at the boundary of light and darkness. Nothing is hidden from His sight or outside His sovereign rule over all creation. And yet Job concludes:

Job 26:14 Behold, these are but the outskirts of his ways, and how small a whisper do we hear of him! But the thunder of his power who can understand?”

What we know of God is only the outskirts of His ways, just a whisper compared to the full thunder of His majesty. But this we affirm: what the Lord God has revealed is sufficient. His Word is sufficient. Therefore, it is our calling as His people to labor diligently to understand these truths more deeply; not for mere knowledge, but for worship, for obedience, and for the glory of God. And so, though God’s ways are far beyond us, He has not left us in darkness. He has spoken clearly in His Word, and to that revelation we now turn.

The motive of our election is the sovereign, gracious love of God. The result of our election is adoption.

Ephesians 1:5 In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

The result of God’s election is our adoption as sons. This means that in eternity past, just as we were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him, we were also predestined for adoption into His family as His sons and daughters. Adoption is a gracious act of God. It is a legal declaration that changes our standing before Him. It means that we are truly brought into His family, to know Him and be known by Him as our Father. We are brought from being strangers and outsiders into the very household of God, received as sons and daughters, with all the rights, privileges, and inheritance that belong to His children. At the moment of conversion, when we repent of our sin and place our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we become children of God. Adoption is an immediate result of saving faith.

John 1:12-13 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

To those who receive Christ, to those who believe in His name, to them He gave the right to become children of God. Man does not become a child of God through blood, through any racial or ethnic heritage. Man does not become a child of God through his own efforts, through the will of the flesh. Man does not become a child of God through any man-made system, through the will of man. Rather, man becomes a child of God by receiving Christ through faith. But even that faith is not from ourselves; it is the result of God’s work in us, as we are born again by His grace. It is all by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Scripture holds both truths together: we become children of God through faith in Christ, and that faith itself is produced by God’s saving work in us.

Galatians 3:23-26 Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. 24 So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, 26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

Our adoption into the family of God is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. God has no children who are not united to His only begotten Son. No one comes to the Father except through Him. And it is in the Son, in the Lord Jesus Christ, that we receive all the benefits of adoption. What, then, are some of the practical benefits of being a child of God? What does it mean for us to live as those adopted into His family?

First, as sons and daughters of God, God is our Father. Prior to conversion, we were without hope and without God in the world. We were children of the devil, children of disobedience, children of wrath. But now, in Christ, everything has changed. We have hope, and we have been brought near to God. We are part of His family. We are no longer strangers and aliens, no longer slaves or debtors, no longer condemned, no longer enemies. In Christ, we belong to the household of God. God is now our Father, and we come to Him as beloved children.

As sons and daughters of God, God loves us.

1 John 3:1-2 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

We are the special recipients of the Father's love: "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are." God's love is not abstract or distant; it is a Father's love that actually brings us into His family. This love defines our present identity and our future hope of being fully like Christ.

As sons and daughters of God, God has compassion for us.

Psalms 103:13-14 As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. 14 For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.

Our Father God is caring. He is slow to anger, gracious, and forgiving. He is tender and patient; he knows our frame; he fully understands our weakness and frailty. Our heavenly Father does not deal with us harshly, but with mercy suited to our condition.

As sons and daughters of God, God gives us many good gifts.

Matthew 7:11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

God is not reluctant to bless His children, but freely gives what is truly good for them. His generosity toward His people is far greater than even the best human father.

As sons and daughters of God, God gives us His Spirit.

Luke 11:13 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

The greatest gift the Father gives is Himself through His Spirit, who applies salvation to us. The Spirit convicts, regenerates, empowers, guides, and sanctifies God's children. Through the Spirit, our Father brings His nearness to us and assures us that we truly belong to Him.

As sons and daughters of God, God also disciplines us.

Hebrews 12: 5-7 And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. 6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." 7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

How is the discipline and chastisement of God a benefit? God's discipline is proof of His love, not His rejection. God corrects and trains His children so that we will share in His holiness and grow into maturity. His purpose is not to harm us, but to sanctify us. It is not the punishment of an angry judge against a criminal, but the loving correction of a gracious Father toward His children, shaping them for their good. Thomas Brooks, in his book, *The Mute Christian Under the Smarting Rod*, writes:

He who has deserved a hanging has no reason to charge the judge with cruelty if he escapes with a whipping! And we who have deserved a damning have no reason to charge God for being too severe if we escape with a fatherly lashing!

The discipline and chastisement of God the Father is a very good thing in our lives. In fact, God's discipline is evidence that we truly belong to Him. He disciplines those whom He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives. In the Old Testament, God repeatedly referred to the nation of Israel as His son. And though Israel was often rebellious and wayward, God did not cast them away, forsake them, or abandon His covenant love toward them. In the same way, God will not cast us away when we stray from Him, but will lovingly restore us through His discipline and correction.

Being a child of God is a tremendous privilege, but it also brings responsibility. There are many benefits to being sons and daughters of God, and there are also many duties. As sons and daughters of God, we are to obey our Father. We are to be led by His Holy Spirit. We are to imitate Him. We are to walk in His presence. We are to love His image bearers. We are to engage in His work. We are to trust in His sufficient Word. We are to pursue holiness. We are to walk in humility and repentance. We are to persevere in faith. We are to bear witness to Christ in the world.

God has chosen and predestined us to be His children, holy and blameless before Him. The motive of our election is the sovereign, gracious love of God. The result of our election is adoption; we are the children of God. And the goal of our election is the glory of God.

Ephesians 1:5-6 In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

Why did God choose us in Christ before the foundation of the world? Why did He predestinate us for adoption as sons and daughters? What is the purpose behind God's electing grace? All of it is according to the purpose of His will, and all of it is to the praise of His glorious grace. Election, reprobation, salvation, condemnation; all of it is ultimately for the glory of God.

Revelation 4:11 "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you

created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

Everything that exists in the universe exists for the glory of God. His glory is the supreme end of all things. For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. And if it is true that your salvation does not rest in your will, or in your strength, or in your ability to keep holding on, but in God’s eternal purpose in Christ, then your salvation is not fragile or uncertain. It is not something that rises and falls with you. It is not dependent on how tightly you hold onto God. Rather, it is secure because God Himself holds you in Christ, and He will not let you go.

Therefore, the doctrines of election and adoption were not given to lead us into speculation and debate, but into worship and confidence in God. In Christ Jesus, you are chosen in love, adopted in grace, and kept by God’s sovereign will. And the goal of it all is simple: the praise of His glorious grace.