

We Are Sons of God, Predestined and Accepted by Grace

April 1, 2012

The Text: Eph 1:4c-6

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. (NASB95)

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. (The Anchor Bible)

In love, He predestined us to be adopted through Jesus Christ for Himself, according to His favor and will, to the praise of His glorious grace that He favored us with in the Beloved. (Holman Translation)

Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. (NKJV)

in love, having foreordained us to the adoption of sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, in which He did make us accepted in the beloved, (Young's Literal Translation)

in love having previously marked us out to be placed as adult sons through the intermediate agency of Jesus Christ for himself according to that which seemed good in His heart's desire, resulting in praise of the glory of His grace which He freely bestowed upon us in the Beloved, (Wuest)

I. My thoughts on Eph 1:5

A. Predestined; (GK = proorizo); (See note 1 for further understanding.)

1. Definitions:

Vine's definition:

This verb has special reference to that which is the subjects of His foreknowledge; "predestinated."

It is to be distinguished from *proginosko*, "to foreknow"; which has special reference to the person's foreknown by God;

Thayer's definition:

To predetermine, decide beforehand, to foreordain: in the N.T. of God decreeing from eternity,

Strong's definition:

To limit in advance, i.e. (figuratively) predetermine:

2. It is used 6 X in the NT in the following ways in these verses:

(Ac 4:28; Ro 8:29, 30; 1 Co 2:7; Eph 1:5, 11)

- Jesus' death on the cross was predestined. (see also 1 Co 2:7-8)
Ac 4:27-28 "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur."
- We are predestined to the adoption as sons
Eph 1:5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself,...
- We are predestined according to His purpose
Eph 1:11 we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,
- We are predestined to become conformed to the image of God's Son.
Ro 8:28-30 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

B. ADOPTION

- GREEK = (huiiothesia) from huios, "a son," and thesis, "a placing."

Adoption signifies the place and condition of a son given to one to whom it does not naturally belong. (from Vine's Dictionary)

- Adoption as sons:

There are three distinct Greek words for sons in the New Testament:

hurios = a mature son

teknion = a little child

teknos = a child

From this study, we see that the adoption in the New Testament is that of a mature son; it is very different concept from the way we would use the word adoption today.

(See note 2 for further understanding).

- The word adoption (huiiothesia) is used 5 times in the New Testament and only by the apostle Paul.

Eph 1:5 God predestine us, in love, to adoption as sons.

He predestined us, to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will

Ro 8:15 we have received a spirit of adoption as sons

For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

Ro 8:23 we are waiting for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body

And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

Ro 9:4-5 initially, the adoption of sons, belonged to Israel.

who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, 5

Gal 4:5 Christ redeemed us because the adoption as sons could not happen under the law. in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

Look at the following verses to further understand sonship.

Ro 11:15-24 because Israel rejected Christ through unbelief, they were cut off from the root (Jesus) of the olive tree; faith in Christ grafts one into the root.

Jn 1:12 we become children of God through believing and receiving Christ.

Gal 3:26 faith in Christ makes us sons of God.

C. Questions about predestination:

I see 6 questions and answers concerning predestination in Eph 1:5.
(Abbreviation keys; Q = Question; A = Answer; V = Verse)

Q #1. Why did He predestine us?

A. Because He loves us!

V. in love... (V 4)

Q #2. What are we predestined to?

A. Sonship (adoption)

V. He predestined us to adoption as sons

Q #3. How are we predestined?

A. We are redeemed through the work of Jesus at Calvary.

V. through Jesus Christ

Q #4. Where does predestination lead to?

A. To a relationship with God (Father).

V. to Himself

Q #5. Why were we predestined?

A. Because He is kind, and His will and intention are full of loving kindness.

V. according to the kind intention of His will.

Q #6. What is the end result of predestination?

A. God is praised and grace is shown glorious.

V. to the praise of the glory of His grace.

D. According to the kind intention: Greek word = eudokia;

Definitions:

Strong's

satisfaction, i.e. (subjectively) delight, or (objectively) kindness, wish, purpose:

Thayer's

1. will, choice: Mt 11:26; Lk 10:21

2. delight, pleasure, satisfaction: with the genitive of the thing that pleases, 2 Th 1:11

3. desire Ro 10:1

Vine's

Literary "good pleasure" (eu, "well," dokeo, "to seem")

It implies a gracious purpose, a good object being in view, with the idea of a resolve, showing the willingness with which the resolve is made.

It is translated

"good pleasure," Eph 1:5, 9; Phi 2:13;

"good will"; Phi 1:15; 2 Th 1:11

"desire," Ro 10:1; 2 Th 1:11

It is used nine times in the New Testament as follows:

Eph 1:5 ... according to the kind intention of His will,

Eph 1:9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention ...

Mat 11:26 "Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.

Luke 2:14 ... on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.

Luke 10:21 ... You have ... revealed them to infants ... for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.

Rom 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.

Phil 1:15 Some ... are preaching Christ ... from good will;

Phil 2:13 God is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

2 Thes 1:11 we pray ... that God will ... fulfill every desire for goodness...

E. According to the kind intention of His will, Greek word = thelema;

Definitions:

Strong's

a determination (properly, the thing), i.e. (actively) choice (specially, purpose, decree; abstractly, volition) or (passively) inclination:

Thayer's

a. what one wishes or has determined shall be done Lk 12:47

b. equivalent to (thelein) (i. e. the abstract act of willing, the subjective) will, choice: 1 Pe 3:17

Vine's

denotes "a will, that which is willed"

akin to (thelo), "to will, to wish," implying volition and purpose, frequently a determination, is most usually rendered "to will."

It is used 64 times in the New Testament. It is always translated will in the KJV, except for:

Eph 2:3 desires

Rev 4:11 pleasure

II. My thoughts on Eph 1:6

to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved (NASV95)

to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.(NKJV)

A. Grace: Greek word = charis

Definitions:

Strong's

graciousness (as gratifying), of manner or act (abstract or concrete; literal, figurative or spiritual; especially the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life; including gratitude):

Vine's says that it is a noun and denotes:

- (a) objectively, "grace in a person, graciousness,"
- (b) subjectively,
 - (1) "grace on the part of a giver, favor, kindness,"
 - (2) "a sense of favor received, thanks."

B. Acceptance (in Christ) Greek word = charitoo
He freely bestowed or He made us accepted

• Definitions:

Vine's says that it is a verb

to endow with charis, primarily signified "to make graceful or gracious,"

and came to denote, in Hellenistic Greek, "to cause to find favor," Lk 1:28, "highly favored" (marg., "endued with grace");

in Eph 1:6, it is translated "made... accepted," KJV, "freely bestowed," RV (lit., "graced"); it does not here mean to endue with grace.

Grace implies more than favor; grace is a free gift, favor may be deserved or gained.

Notes on Ephesians 1:5-6:

1. Predestined

A. from Vine's Dictionary of Biblical Words; there are three words used in the Greek for predestined and foreknow.

- a. Proorizo; 4309; "predestinated."
It is to be distinguished from proginosko, "to foreknow"; which has special reference to the person's foreknown by God;
- b. Proginosko, = 4267 is a verb in the Greek "to know before" (pro, "before," ginosko, "to know")
It is used five times in the following references Ac 26:5; Ro 8:29; Ro 11:2; 1 Pe 1:20; 2 Pe 3:17.
 - (a) It is used of divine knowledge, concerning
 - (1) Christ, 1 Pe 1:20, RV, "foreknown" or, "foreordained"
 - (2) Israel as God's earthly people, Ro 11:2;
 - (3) believers, Ro 8:29; "the foreknowledge" of God is the basis of His foreordaining counsels;
 - (b) It is used of human knowledge,
 - (1) of persons, Ac 26:5;
 - (2) of facts, 2 Pe 3:17.
- c. Prognosis = 4268; is a noun in the Greek "a foreknowledge;" is used only of divine "foreknowledge,"
It is used twice in the following references Ac 2:23; 1 Pe 1:2.

"Foreknowledge" is one aspect of omniscience; it is implied in God's warnings, promises and predictions. See Ac 15:18. God's "foreknowledge" involves His electing grace, but this does not preclude human will. He "foreknows" the exercise of faith which brings salvation. The apostle Paul stresses especially the actual purposes of God rather than the ground of the purposes, see, e. g., Gal 1:16; Eph 1:5,11.

B. from Merriam-Webster's collegiate thesaurus:

synonyms for predestine: destine, determine, doom (to), fate, predestinate, predetermine, preform, preordain

C. from The NKJV Study Bible. 2007. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

Election The doctrine of election is one of the most hotly debated mysteries of the Christian life.

Theologians through the ages have pondered the meaning of 8:29, "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son." What did the apostle Paul mean when he wrote that God "foreknew" certain people? How are we to understand the notion of God having "predestined" certain individuals to be saved and sanctified?

In attempting to resolve these profound questions, Bible students have typically aligned themselves in two camps.

Arminians, those who embrace the position of the seventeenth-century Dutch pastor Jacobus Arminius, understand foreknowledge to mean God's knowledge in advance of those who would repent of their sin and believe the gospel. In other words, in eternity past, God looked down the corridors of time to see all who would one day accept the offer of salvation through Christ. In the Arminian view, those who accept salvation are the elect. The fact that they would eventually believe in Christ was the condition that prompted God to choose them "before the foundation of the world" (see Eph. 1:3) or predestine them to eternal life. To bolster their position, Arminians point to verses that clearly state God's desire for all people to be saved (see 1 Tim. 2:3, 4; 2

Pet. 3:9). Furthermore, they argue the universal call for sinners to repent and believe the gospel is meaningless if salvation is determined solely by God apart from the free will of a person.

Calvinism is the second dominant viewpoint. Calvinists, named for the Reformer John Calvin, understand foreknowledge as a "relational" term. In other words, foreknowledge refers to God's intimate knowledge of and love for His elect before they came into existence. From the Calvinistic perspective, it is God's sovereign choice, and not a person's exercised faith, that determines who the elect are.

Put simply;

Calvinists define election as the unconditional choice of God that is the cause of our faith.

Arminians, on the other hand, would define it as the conditional choice of God that is the result of our faith.

Calvinists defend their position with passages like Rom 9:6–24 which describe why God hardened Pharaoh's heart. Moreover, they argue that depraved, spiritually dead people could not choose to believe and would not choose to believe.

Regardless of one's stance on the matter of election, this much is clear: God is infinitely wise, powerful, and good. We cannot accuse Him of being unfair in His dealings with humans. It was our own sinfulness that has entrapped us and condemned us. Yet God, out of His infinite mercy, chooses to save.

D. from The Pillar New Testament commentary (102–103).

The verb 'foreordain, predestine', which appears six times in the New Testament, is used exclusively of God (Rom. 8:29, 30; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:5, in relation to sonship; cf. 1:11; Acts 4:28) and serves to emphasize his sole initiative and authority in our salvation. Predestination is for a God-designed purpose, in this instance, 'adoption'.

This was understood in Graeco-Roman law as referring to the adoption as sons of those who were not so by birth. It signified entry to a privileged position. Paul applies this term from the Graeco-Roman world to the special relationship which believers have with God.

This reference to adoption must also be understood against the background of Israel's relationship with the Lord as his 'firstborn son' (Exod. 4:22; Isa. 1:2), a relationship which was established at the Exodus: 'When Israel was a child I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son' (Hos. 11:1).

Paul asserts that adoption as sons was one of the particular privileges belonging to Israel (Rom. 9:4). Now it belongs to Christians (cf. Rom. 9:26; 2 Cor. 6:18). The fulfillment of the divine purpose is the (final) 'adoption' confidently expected by those 'who have the first fruits of the Spirit' (Rom. 8:23). But because of 'the first fruits of the Spirit' the enjoyment of the new relationship with God as heavenly Father is ours already (Rom. 8:15–16).

Ephesians 1:5 indicates that before time began God chose to adopt men and women into a personal and intimate relationship with himself. Being adopted into his family as sons (and daughters) is an incredible privilege, because those now able to call upon him as Father were at one time 'sons of disobedience' and 'children of wrath' (2:2, 3).

This personal relationship is made possible only through Jesus Christ, a highly significant expression which points to his agency. It is only through the work of God's Son, the Beloved, that believers can be adopted as sons (cf. Eph. 4:13; Rom. 8:29; Gal. 3:26; 4:4, 5).

E. from The Preacher's Commentary Series, Volume 31; (148).

"Predestine" means literally to determine beforehand. This verse virtually duplicates verse 4. The realizing of God's purpose is seen in terms of sonship rather than as being holy and blameless.

Unfortunately, in much consideration of the doctrine of predestination, the negative rather than the positive is dominant. We torture ourselves over the issue of hell and heaven as the reward determined beforehand by God for us humans. We get into trouble when we try to devise a doctrine, iron-clad in its logic, about the sovereignty of God as it relates to our chosenness. Is it not enough to know that the destiny of the Christian believer is in the hands of a God who loved us so much that He gave Himself for us in Christ? The Pauline doctrine of predestination does include the fearful doom of the unrepentant, but that does not mean we are destined to be unrepentant. The salvation of Christ is universal in the sense that it is available to all. Therefore, this verse is the triumphant expression of the glory of the redeemer.

F. From A handbook on Paul's letter to the Ephesians; Helps for translators (13–14).

The Greek verb translated "predestined" is a compound verb meaning "to mark out beforehand (or, ahead of time)." It appears in the New Testament in Romans 8:29, 30; Acts 4:28; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1:5, 11. It is used only of God, and it serves to emphasize God's sole and complete initiative and authority in the experience of salvation, his independence of action based on a decision already made in the past, in God's own eternal time. The full theological implication of the word is brought out in Romans 8:29–30.

Theological considerations on the relation between God's sovereign power and man's freedom of choice inevitably arise, but such matters cannot influence a translator's choice of a word to translate the Greek verb. In English "planned" (Phps) is too weak; some translations have "destined"; NIV "predestined" seems better; BJ "determining in advance" is good; TNT "he set us apart (for himself)" does not give sufficient value to the temporal element expressed in the Greek prefix meaning "before."

It may be difficult to find some expressions which will appropriately render "predestined." If one uses a phrase such as "he decided ahead of time to set us aside," this may have quite a negative value, for in many languages "to set aside" implies some type of rejection or lack of appreciation. The connotation of such an expression may be made somewhat less objectionable because believers are predestined to be his own sons. In some instances, translators have tried to build an expression for "predestined" on a more or less literal translation of the Greek term, namely, "to mark out ahead of time." But this often suggests some kind of restriction or encirclement. In a number of cases the best way of dealing with "having predestined us to be his own sons" is to translate "having decided ahead of time to make us his own sons" or "... to cause us to be his sons."

Hdb "for him (God)" goes with the participle, "Having predestined us ... to himself," that is, in connection with "to sonship": "having predestined us to be his (own) sons."

The Greek noun "sonship" means "adoption as son," a legal term used exclusively in a religious sense in the New Testament; of Israel, Romans 9:4; of believers in Christ, Romans 8:15, 23; Galatians 4:5; and here. An adopted son had all the privileges and rights enjoyed by a natural son. Brc uses the phrase "adoption into his own family."

It may be difficult in some languages to use a literal rendering of sons since this might exclude women completely. Therefore a more appropriate expression would be "his children." Since believers become God's children not by biological means but by a kind of theological adoption, it may be necessary in some instances to use a term for "children" which indicates the adopted status. Otherwise there may be an implication that God is somehow involved in sexual activity.

(Interpretation of abbreviations; Phps = Phillips; NIV = New International Version; BJ = Bible de Jérusalem; TNT = Translator's New Testament; Hdb = Handbook, a translation by the author)

2. Adoption (as sons of God)

A. from Holman New Testament Commentary; Holman Reference (100–101).

One way the Father takes care of our past failures and makes us holy and blameless is that he changes families for us. William Barclay writes of this Roman concept of adoption in his commentary on Ephesians:

When the adoption was complete it was complete indeed. The person who had been adopted had all the rights of a legitimate son in his new family and completely lost all rights in his old family. In the eyes of the law he was a new person. So new was he that even all debts and obligations connected with his previous family were abolished as if they had never existed" (The Letters to Galatians and Ephesians, The Daily Study Bible, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959, 91–92).

That is what God has done for us. We were absolutely held in the power of sin and of the world. We belonged to the family of Adam. God, through Jesus, took us out of that family and adopted us into his. That adoption wipes out the past and makes us new.

B. from Word studies in the New Testament (Vincent, M. R.)

adoption, is from υἱός son, and θέσις a setting or placing:
the placing one in the position of a son.

Mr. Merivale, illustrating Paul's acquaintance with Roman law, says:

"The process of legal adoption by which the chosen heir became entitled not only to the reversion of the property but to the civil status, to the burdens as well as the rights of the adopter — became, as it were, his other self, one with him ... this too is a Roman principle, peculiar at this time to the Romans, unknown, I believe, to the Greeks, unknown, to all appearance, to the Jews, as it certainly is not found in the legislation of Moses, nor mentioned anywhere as a usage among the children of the covenant. We have but a faint conception of the force with which such an illustration would speak to one familiar with the Roman practice; how it would serve to impress upon him the assurance that the adopted son of God becomes, in a peculiar and intimate sense, one with the heavenly Father" ("Conversion of the Roman Empire").

C. from Manners and Customs of the Bible

Among the Greeks and Romans, when a man had no son, he was permitted to adopt one even though not related. He might, if he chose, adopt one of his slaves as a son. The adopted son took the name of the father, and was in every respect regarded and treated as a son.

Among the Romans there were two parts to the act of adoption: one a private arrangement between the parties, and the other a formal public declaration of the fact.

It is thought by some that the former is referred to in Rom 8:15, and the latter in Rom 8:23, where the apostle speaks of "waiting for the adoption." The servant has been adopted privately, but he is waiting for a formal public declaration of the fact.

After adoption, the son, is no longer a slave, and has the privilege of addressing his former master by the title of "father."

3. Acceptance

A. from Expository Outlines on the New Testament; by W. W. Wiersbe,

In ourselves, we are not acceptable to God, but in Christ, we are "made accepted." Read the Epistle to Philemon for a beautiful illustration of this truth. Paul wrote, "Receive your slave Onesimus as you would receive me" (Phile. 17). Though we have sinned, Christ says to the Father, "Receive this saint as you would receive Me." Trace that wonderful phrase "in Christ" throughout Paul's letters—you will be thrilled!

B. Word Studies from the Greek New Testament; by K. S. Wuest

(1:6) This act of God in previously marking out certain to be placed as adult sons through Jesus Christ for Himself according to the good pleasure of His will was "to the praise of the glory of His grace." Vincent comments: "The ultimate aim of foreordained ... Glory is an attribute of grace: that in which grace grandly and resplendently displays itself. Praise is called forth from the children of God by this divine glory which thus appears in grace. The grace is not merely favor, gift, but it reveals also the divine character. In praising God for what He does, we learn to praise Him for what He is. Glory is another of the ruling words of the epistle, falling into the same category with riches and fulness. The apostle is thrilled with the sense of the plentitude and splendor of the mystery of redemption." Alford says: "The end, God's end, in our predestination to adoption is, that the glory, glorious nature, brightness and majesty, and kindness and beauty,—of His grace might be the object of men and angel's praise: both as it is in Him, ineffable and infinite,—and exemplified in us, its objects."

This grace is described as that "wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." The better manuscripts have "which" referring to "grace," not "wherein." The translation reads "Which (grace) He freely bestowed upon us in the Beloved." The words "freely bestowed" are the translation of *charitoō* (*χαριτωω*), "to pursue with grace, to compass with favor, to honor with blessings." This verb has the same stem as the noun *charis* (*χαρις*) (grace). One could render the clause, "which (grace He graced us with in the Beloved." The word "Beloved," referring to the Lord Jesus, is the translation of a Greek verb "to love," (*agapaō* (*αγαπαω*)), which here is a participle in the perfect tense. This Greek word for "love" is the same one found in John 3:16, Romans 5:5, 8, Gal. 5:22, 1 John 4:8. It speaks of the love that God is, and with which He loves the lost, the love which is the product of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the yielded believer. The perfect tense speaks of an action completed in past time having present, and in a context like this one, permanent results. It speaks of the fact that God the Father has always loved God the Son with an absolute love which is a permanent attitude on His part.

The words "in the Beloved" are locative of sphere. That is, God the Father freely bestowed on us the grace which saved us, and did so in the sphere of the Lord Jesus, His Person and His work on the Cross. His grace could not operate in our salvation apart from the atoning death of our Lord, for God is not only loving God, but a righteous and just God who cannot pass by sin, but must require that it be paid for. Only thus can He manifest His grace. The word "Beloved" is a perfect participle, the perfect tense being used by Paul to show the degree of the love with which the Father loves the Son. Vincent says: "Beloved par excellence." He refers us to Col. 1:13 and the expression, "the Son of His love."