

Sermon Outline

THE YEAR IN OUR LORD, 2011-2012

CHRIST JESUS: OUR ADOPTION AN ADVENT MESSAGE (EPHESIANS 1:5-6)

I. Christ Jesus: Centerpiece of Time and Space

II. God Lovingly Predestined Us for Adoption

- A. The main idea in 1:5 is that God predestined us.
—The word behind “predestine” (*proorizō*) means “to decide beforehand.”
- B. While predestination is a simple concept, it is one of the hardest truths to accept.
 - 1. Freedom is the prevailing mood of the present day.
 - 2. Due to the all-consuming thirst for freedom, many have difficulty accepting that their lives are actually determined from the start.
 - a. The protest against predestination is seen in popular films like *The Matrix* (1999), or more recently, *The Adjustment Bureau* (2011).
 - b. The heroes in these films all have one thing in common: They strive to make their own destinies and to change their futures.
 - 3. Yet, Scripture seems to be quite clear.
—Whether we want to admit it or not, God has predestined from the very beginning all those who would eventually become his holy and blameless people.
 - 4. God has every right to do this because God is God.
- C. But there is more to God’s predestination than mere power.
—Paul reveals more about the character and purpose of God’s predestination.
- D. God’s predestination is done “in love” (*en agapē*).
 - 1. This would mean that God’s predestination was itself an act of love.
 - 2. God chose us with delight, affection, and our best interests at heart.
- E. God’s loving predestination is “for adoption” (*eis huiōthesian*).

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What does it mean to “predestine”? (2) Why is predestination a hard truth to accept? (3) What is the character of God’s predestination? Is it more than just a show of power? (4) According to Ephesians 1:5, what is the purpose of God’s predestination?

III. Our Predestination Is through Christ

- A. Paul says that God chooses us “through Jesus Christ” (*dia Iēson Christou*).
- B. Once again, we are reminded that our predestination did not take place apart from Christ.
—Just as God created the world through Christ, and chose us in union with Christ, God also chooses us by means of Christ.
- C. Christ is the means by which God achieves his purposes.
—God does nothing apart from Christ his Son.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) Who was the agency by whom God made his predestination? (2) What does this suggest to us about the “working relationship” between God the Father and his eternal Son?

IV. Our Predestination Is according to God’s Purpose

- A. The Scripture says that our predestination is also “according to the purpose of his will.”
- B. This statement supports the conclusion which we drew in our previous lesson:
 - 1. God did not predestine us because he saw that we would turn out well.
 - 2. God predestined us for his own purposes.
—The reason for God’s choosing us does not lie in us but in God himself.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) Whose purposes does predestination fulfil? (2) “The reason for God’s choosing us does not lie in us but in God himself.” What assurance does this give us?

V. To the Praise of His Glorious Grace

- A. In 1:6, we see the purpose for God choosing us: “to the praise of his glorious grace...”
- B. In summary, the ultimate purpose for which God saved you and I is *God-centered*: God ultimately chose us for the sake of himself.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) Aside from being his holy and blameless children, what else forms the ultimate purpose for which God chose us? (2) “God ultimately chose us for the sake of himself.” Discuss.

VI. How Predestination Links up with Christmas

- A. What does God’s predestination have to do Christmas?

1. *Christmas is the arrival of the Lord Jesus in time and space to gather those whom God the Father had chosen to adopt.*
 2. John 10:14-16: “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me...And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.”
- B. But in order to gather God’s appointed children, the Lord Jesus also had to do what is necessary to cleanse them from their sins.
1. The Bible teaches that sin is the reason behind all the sin and evil in the world.
 2. What is sin?
—“Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God” (Westminster Shorter Catechism)
 3. Notice how the Catechism defines sin ultimately in relation to God.
 - a. Sin depends on God for its definition, because God alone defines what is good or evil, right or wrong.
 - b. This further implies that...
 - i. Sin is not the same as failing to keep cultural traditions.
—Not all cultural traditions are commanded by God, or have God’s endorsement.
 - ii. Sin is not limited to “crimes.”
—Not all sins are punishable by national laws.
—Not all crimes are sins.
 4. How did sin come into the world?
 - a. Sin came into the world when our first parents, Adam and Eve, chose to defy the will of God.
 - b. In doing so, they did two things.
 - i. They cut the relationship between God and the rest of the human race, bringing upon themselves the punishment of God—weakness and death.
 - ii. They made rebellion toward God the nature attitude of every human being.
 5. All the evil in the world today is a result of sin.
 6. When our Lord Jesus came, he ended the rule of sin and brought about reconciliation between mankind with God.
 7. The Lord Jesus deals with our sin in three ways:
 - a. He lived a perfect life for us before God, so fulfilling all of God’s requirements on our behalf (Rom 5:19).
 - b. He suffered the ultimate punishment of our sins, death (Ezek 18:20), so that the punishment is removed from us.
 - c. He rose from the dead to gain our justification (Rom 4:25; 1 Cor 15:22-23).
—The resurrection of Jesus is the evidence that Jesus is righteous and all who believe in Jesus will be declared righteous as well.

8. Having declared us righteous together with Christ, God is able to reconcile us to himself and make us into his children, members of his eternal household.
- C. Who are those who get to become one of God's children?
1. They are not everyone and anyone.
 2. They are those whom God has chosen from the beginning.
 3. They are those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation.
 - a. Faith in Christ is the *evidence* that we are God's chosen.
 - b. John 1:12: "But to all who did receive him [Jesus], who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."
 - c. The only way back to God is to let Jesus' righteousness be your righteousness, to let his death on the cross be the punishment of your sins, and to let his resurrection justify you in the sight of God.
 4. Why is Christ the only way back to God (Jn 14:6)?
—God planned things this way because he wants his Son, Jesus Christ, to be the supreme hero in the history of the human race.

*Where are you in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ today?
Have you put your trust in him to save you from your sins and reconcile you to God?*

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What is sin? (2) How did sin enter the world? (3) How did Christ deal with sin? (4) Who gets to become one of God's children?

VII. Make the Power of Our Heavenly Adoption Felt—Now

Since God the Father has predestined us for adoption through Christ, and Christ has achieved that adoption by his obedience, death, and resurrection; we are to find our self-esteem in Christ, and then go on to highly esteem our fellow Christians for the sake of Christ.

- A. Since we are adopted by God through Christ, we must seek out our self-esteem in Christ.
1. Since we are all made in the image of God, all of us have an instinctive desire to be valued.
 2. The Lord Jesus answers our desire for self-esteem with *himself*.
—Since Jesus is the Hero of our individual life stories, then ultimately, our self-esteem must be based on Christ above all.
 3. Our adoption in Christ helps us to stand with dignity, and not be crushed by the labels that the world places on us.
- B. Since we are adopted by God through Christ, we must also highly esteem our fellow Christians in the one family of God.
1. Once we become Christians, the Church becomes our ultimate community, our new family.

2. Through the Church, God affirms to us our new identity in Christ, and instructs us in the new way of life that comes from Christ.
 3. As Christians, we owe one another love and respect that is rooted in Christ Jesus.
—We can respect one another because of Christ who dwells in us.
 4. How does love and respect look like? Here are a few ways:
 - a. We regard one another according to Christ, not simply according to the flesh (2 Cor 5:16; Gal 2:20).
—We do not allow earthly status, or success and failures to determine how respectfully we treat one another (Col 2:20).
 - b. We deal truthfully and honorably with one another (Eph 4:25).
 - c. We protect one another's good names.
 - d. We seek to be of help to one another (Gal 6:2).
 - e. We (verbally) encourage one another with the Gospel of Christ.
- C. The coming of Christ makes a new community that increasingly reflects the holiness of heaven and the new world to come.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) How does the truth of our heavenly adoption affect us today? (2) How does our adoption affect our self-esteem? (3) How does our adoption affect how we treat others who are in the same family of God? (4) What are some ways we love and honor one another?