

ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED

TEXT: EPHESIANS 1:1-6

Introduction:

1. Tonight we will continue in our series in the book of Ephesians.
2. Last week we saw that God “hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). I want to focus again tonight on some of those blessings, and want to particularly draw your attention to the phrase “in Christ” (1:3).
3. Last week we saw that we have been chosen “in Him” (1:4). As we saw, this concept of the Christian being “in Christ” is taught all throughout the epistle (cf. 1:1, 10, 12, 15, 20, etc.). There are similar phrases, such as “in the beloved” (1:6), which we will also look at tonight.
4. Last week, we looked at the doctrine of election (1:4). The time of our election was “before the foundation of the world.”
5. The purpose of our election was “that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (1:4).
6. Tonight, we will look at three other doctrines from this passage: predestination (1:5), adoption (1:5), and our acceptance in the beloved (1:6).

I. GOD HAS PREDESTINATED US (1:5).

1. Because this doctrine has been so badly abused and misunderstood, many Christians avoid it and that is unfortunate.
2. The word “predestine” simply means “marked out beforehand.”
3. Webster’s Dictionary says predestine means “predetermine or foreordain.”
4. Spurgeon said: “Mark then, with care, that our conformity to Christ is the sacred object of predestination” (cf. Rom. 8:29).
5. In other words, God has a plan and everything is going along according to God’s plan. That should encourage us – knowing that God has already marked everything out for us.
6. Before a building is put up, an architect has to draw up plans. Before Michelangelo ever struck his chisel against a heavy piece of marble, he had to have a plan.
7. And that is the way it is with God – He has a plan for everything and His plans include you and me (cf. 2:10).
8. Predestination is never used in reference to unsaved people. God never predestinated anyone to hell. If a sinner goes to hell, it is because he refused to repent and believe in Christ.
9. Suppose a dying man sees a doctor, and the doctor says to him: “If you take this medicine, you will get better and live.” And then the sick man looks at the doctor and says: “I do not believe you and I do not want your medicine.”

10. Then the man dies. The official cause of death was a deadly disease, but he really died because he refused the medicine.
11. Consider the story of the Israelites in the wilderness, recorded in Numbers 21:5-9. Did the Israelites die of poisonous snake bites or did they die of unbelief?
12. They died of unbelief – the remedy was provided but they refused to take it. They would not look at the brass serpent and live.
13. Here is another definition: “Predestination is that effective exercise of the will of God by which things before determined by Him are brought to pass” (Scofield Bible).
14. And one of the things determined beforehand by God was our adoption (1:5). Adoption means “son-placing” (see Scofield notes, p. 1250). This word is found five times in the Bible.
15. “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15).
16. “And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:23).
17. “Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises” (Rom. 9:4).
18. “To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Galatians 4:5).
19. Those of us who have trusted Christ have been adopted “according to the good pleasure of His will” (1:5).

II. GOD HAS PREDESTINATED US “UNTO THE ADOPTION” (1:5).

1. The word “adoption” is used in the Bible only by the apostle Paul.
2. It does not mean “son-made,” but “son-placed.” Christians are made sons the moment they receive Christ (cf. John 1:12).
3. Regeneration is a change of nature. Adoption is a change of relationship.
4. There is a distinction between “child” and “son.” The word “child” has to do with our membership in the family of God.
5. The word “son” has to do with maturity. It refers to the position we occupy in God’s family as adult sons.
6. John Phillips gives this illustration: “If we see a sign on a business that reads *Henry Brown and Sons*, we know that Henry Brown’s sons are partners in their father’s business. They have grown up and assumed positions of authority and responsibility in their father’s business. We never see a sign that reads *Henry Brown and Children!*”

7. In the early days of the Roman Empire, when a boy was born into the family, he was cared for by his parents until he was 21 years old. At the age of 21, they took him and placed him in the market place before the public. He was “son-placed.” From that time on he could sign his own name to legal documents, and went forward with the full authority of a man. This act at the market place did not make him a son; he was a son when he was born into his parents’ family. Now he was son-placed.
8. Adoption does not mean son-making, but “son-placing.” In eternity we shall be sons no more than we are right now. First John 3:2 says, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”
9. William Evans wrote: “Regeneration has to do with our change in nature; adoption, with our change in position...the full realization of sonship awaits the coming of Christ. It is at that time that the adoption will be fully consummated.”
10. That is why the apostle Paul says in Rom. 8:23 that we are “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”
11. This is all “according to the good pleasure of His will” (Eph. 1:5).
12. God’s presence in us (the indwelling Holy Spirit) is the seal, or guarantee of our adoption (cf. Eph. 1:13, 14).
13. “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6).
14. Note the Trinity: God (the Father) sent forth the Holy Spirit of His Son.
15. We see this in Ephesians chapter 1:
 - (1) God the Father chose us and predestinated us before the foundation of the world (1:4, 5). “He hath made us accepted in the beloved” (1:6).
 - (2) God the Son redeemed us by His blood (1:7).
 - (3) God the Holy Spirit regenerates us, quickens us, seals us, indwells us, etc. (1:13, 14, 17; cf. 2:18, 22; 3:5, 16; 4:4, 30; 5:9, 18; 6:17, 18).

III. GOD HATH MADE US ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED (1:6).

1. These words are yet another link in a golden chain starting in verse 3:
 - God hath blessed us (vs. 3).
 - God hath chosen us (vs. 4).
 - God has predestinated us (vs. 5).
 - God has predestinated us “unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will” (vs. 5).
 - God “hath made us accepted in the beloved” (vs. 6).
2. Who is the beloved? It is the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Matt. 3:17; 17:5).

3. God sees the believer in Christ and He accepts the believer just as He receives His own Son. In John 17:23, Jesus prayed to God the Father, “I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”
4. When God sees us, He does not see us the way we truly are – wicked sinners who deserve to go to hell, but rather He sees us in Christ (1:1, 3, 10; 2:6) – “accepted in the beloved” (1:6).
5. Therefore, we are accepted, not on our own merits, but only because God “hath made us accepted...” We are only accepted in God’s presence because we are in Christ.

CONCLUSION:

Spurgeon wrote this poem:

What the hand is to the lute,
What the breath is to the flute,
What fragrance is to the smell,
What the spring is to the well,
What the flower is to the bee,
That is Jesus Christ to me.
What’s the mother to the child,
What’s the guide in pathless wild,
What is oil to troubled wave,
What is ransom to the slave,
What is water to the sea,
That is Jesus Christ to me.