

# **The Glory of the Son's Purchase: The Privilege and Right of Adoption**

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*Ephesians 1:3–6*

The Christians of Ephesus to whom Paul wrote lived in a religiously pluralistic environment. The people could choose from a smorgasbord of gods, religions, and occult practices. The worship of Artemis, or Diana, the goddess of fertility and child-bearing, was a major enterprise in Ephesus. The powers of darkness had a firm grip on this city.

Today, millions of people are also falling prey to eclecticism. They are melding various gods to form their own kind of religion. Acts of witchcraft and occultism abound. Many American cities and towns are gripped by the powers of darkness and secularism.

How should Christians function in such a world? When wickedness is pressing in on every side and discouraging us, how do we keep our focus on Jesus Christ? Scripture teaches us to look beyond the circumstances of this life. In Ephesians 1, Paul advises us to focus on the Father's plan of salvation in Jesus Christ and the wonderful blessings we have in Him through His redemptive and adoptive work. To keep this focus, let us specifically look at Ephesians 1:3–6:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual

blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Under the theme “The Glory of the Son’s Purchase: The Privilege and Right of Adoption,” we will consider the following aspects of adoption: its author, anchor, ambition, advantage, and acclamation.

Ephesians 1:3–14 is a long sentence that praises Trinitarian redemption and the privileges of believers. One of the most important of those privileges is adoption—a privilege that is wonderfully grounded in the electing purposes of God the Father and inextricably tied to the redemptive work of Christ. Paul stresses adoption in these ways because it includes so many of God’s purposes in salvation. Adoption encompasses so many aspects of the true believer’s walk that it actually functions as a dominant metaphor for our salvation.<sup>1</sup> So, let us focus on adoption, particularly as it is laid out for us in these opening verses of Paul’s hymn of praise for the Trinitarian plan of salvation.

### **Adoption’s Author: God the Father**

“Great is Diana of the Ephesians!” was the cry of Ephesus’s citizens when the economic wealth that the

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1. Jay T. Collier, “The Prayers of Joint-Heirs,” <http://www.togetherforadoption.org/wp-content/media/prayers-of-joint-heirs-by-jay-t-collier.pdf>. Accessed October 20, 2009. Calvin also equates election with adoption. In his commentary on this verse he writes, “He [Paul] rises to the first cause, to the fountain, — the eternal election of God, by which, ere we are born, (Rom. ix. 11.) we are adopted as sons.” *Commentary on Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 196.

worship of the goddess Diana provided was threatened by the gospel. Luke tells us in Acts 19 that the gospel threatened to undo what Satan and his silversmiths had crafted for Diana worship. In verse 27 Demetrius the silversmith complained about the impact that the gospel was making on Diana worship: "Not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth." It is no wonder that Diana's worshipers hated the gospel and those who preached it.

In Ephesians 1:3, Paul countered the cry of Diana worshipers with his own cry of doxology: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" The Ephesians worshiped Diana and regarded her as the author of life, but Paul presented the correct perspective of the children of God. We no longer worship the gods of this world; we worship the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we are living in union with Christ, then He is also our God and our Father. That is the first privilege and right that Paul mentions in this passage: God the Father is the author of our adoption. Through the Father's Son, we are made sons and daughters of God.

The worship of Diana was of great significance in Ephesus. Historically and religiously, the relationship between Ephesus and Diana was "forged in terms of a divinely directed covenant relationship."<sup>2</sup> The Ephesians were obligated to serve Diana. The economy, entertainment, and worship of the city centered on this goddess. Christians who lived in the region must have felt great pressure to worship both God and Diana. Paul did not rebuke the believers but encouraged them

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2. Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 303.

by reminding them of the blessings they had in Christ. He directed them back to the gospel, to their redemption, and to their adoption as sons and daughters of the Most High God. He reminded them of the wonderful covenant that God had made with them. The covenant with Diana and with the gods and goddesses of this world was a covenant of death, but the covenant of God was a covenant of life and of grace.

Paul referred to the covenant relationship of Christ with His Father by saying, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” God the Father, who is the author of our adoption, has ratified that adoption in this covenant. It is within this covenant relationship that our adoption was ratified. As Son of God, Christ claimed and enjoyed God as His Father. As the Son of man, Christ was subject to God to fulfill His redemptive mission. This covenantal relationship between God the Father and God the Son was forged in eternity to redeem us from sin and break our covenant of death with sin and the world so that we could enter a new covenant of grace and be adopted by God as our Father.<sup>3</sup>

As Paul considered the great gospel privileges and blessings of this covenant, he could not help but praise God for His grace. First, he praised God for His *electing grace in Christ*. Verse 4 says that God has blessed us “according as he [the Father] hath chosen us in him [Jesus Christ] before the foundation of the world.” God’s electing grace is the foundation of the gospel. Without election there would be no gospel, no redemption, and no adoption. Out of this covenantal relationship between the Father and the Son flows the electing grace of God the Father towards His children. God has chosen us in Christ and is worthy to be

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3. See also Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *God’s Ultimate Purpose: An Exposition of Ephesians 1* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 53–56.

praised for His electing grace. Without it, we would not be His children.

Second, Paul praises God the Father because of His *redeeming grace in Christ*. In verse 7, Paul says that we have redemption through Christ's blood "according to the riches of his grace." We who are in Christ enjoy redemption from sin and idol worship. Many people cannot tear themselves away from their narcissistic mirrors of self-idolatry. They have become gods unto themselves. But Paul reminds us here that we do not belong to ourselves. We were bought with a price. Although we live in a culture of idol worship and self-absorption, we have been freed from self to worship the true God because of His redeeming grace in Christ.

Election is the bedrock of redemption, Paul says. God the Father provided the way of suffering and the cross so that Christ might bear our punishment and guilt of sin. In the dark, unknown recesses of eternity, God planned our redemption, and in the fullness of time He brought it to pass. As Galatians 4:4–5 says, "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." We have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. God the Father is worthy of worship because He planned and executed this redemption through Christ, which has resulted in our adoption by the Father.

Third, Paul praises God the Father for His *adopting grace in Christ*. In verses 5 and 6, he praises God for "having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." God not only elected and redeemed us, He has also adopted us as His children. Redemption and adoption are inseparable because, as Walter Elwell and Barry

Beitzel write, “in the Bible, adoption and the blessing of sonship are viewed almost exclusively as benefits of redemption, so that only the ‘saved’ are God’s children. The ungodly are called children of the devil.”<sup>4</sup> Election and redemption affect our adoption as children of the most High God. Before we were redeemed, we were children of the devil, but God has now made us partakers of His covenant of grace, not only giving us right standing with Him, but also including us in the warm bonds of His Trinitarian love. The Father elected us, the Son redeemed us, and the Spirit indwells us. No wonder, then, that Paul exalts God, first to encourage the Ephesian Christians, and, second, to encourage us as we face a world as bleak and filled with idolatry as Ephesus was. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!”

God is worthy of our praise because Jesus Christ is our Elder Brother, and in Him we have God as our God and Father. The Spirit of adoption dwells in our hearts so that we can run to God and cry, “Abba, Father.” We need not turn to weak and beggarly elements but to the high privilege we have as the children of God. So Thomas Watson says, “We have enough in us to move God to correct us, but nothing to move him to adopt us, therefore exalt free grace, begin the work of angels here; bless him with your praises who hath blessed you in making you his sons and daughters.”<sup>5</sup>

It is a great privilege to hear our children call us “father,” for it conveys dependence, admiration, and love. But the greatest thing of all is to come to our Father in heaven as His children, crying out to Him, “Abba, Father.” When we are hemmed in by evil, as-

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4. Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Map on Lining Papers. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 31. Logos edition.

5. Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2000), 240.

saulted by false teachers, or suffering because of our faith, we should cry out with Paul, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" Like a child who boasts, "My dad is stronger than your dad," we as believers ought to cry out to the world, "Our God is stronger than your gods. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" People around us might know God minimally as Creator and as Judge, but we who have been elected, redeemed, and adopted know God personally as our Father!

We ought, then, to ask ourselves this very important question: Does a eulogy of praise reign in our life since God is the fountain of our salvation and our adoption?

### **Adoption's Anchor: Our Election**

Paul next praises God the Father for *choosing* us in Christ. Verse 4 says, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." Our adoption is anchored in the electing purposes of the Father. God has not loosely arranged our adoption. He has taken great care in adopting us by taking upon Himself the covenant oath and obligation of His people.

Some people think that election is a difficult doctrine to accept, particularly when thinking of sinners who are eternally lost. But Paul finds great comfort in the doctrine, saying our election in Christ is the foundation of our salvation and adoption. Thomas Watson writes, "When men adopt, they have only some deed sealed, and the thing is effected; but when God adopts, it puts him to a far greater expense; it sets his wisdom to work to find out a way to adopt us."<sup>6</sup> Watson goes on to describe what happens in God's electing grace, "Our adoption was purchased at a dear rate; for when God was about to make us sons and heirs, he could not seal

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6. *Ibid.*, 235.

the deed but by the blood of his own Son. Here is the wonder of God's love in adopting us, that he should be at all this expense to accomplish it."<sup>7</sup> For Watson, the three elements of election, redemption, and adoption are essential to the Christian life, for they are all rooted in Christ.

How does God choose us? Paul has three important things to say here. First, God chooses us "in Christ" (v. 4a). When children play soccer, they choose their best friends or the most skilled for their teammates. God, though, does not work this way. He does not choose us on the basis of any ability in us to believe or to be friends with Him. Rather, we are so vile and wretched that there is nothing in us that should move God to choose us. Every reason that God chooses us is found in Himself. As verse 5 says, He chooses us "according to the good pleasure of his will." God has reasons for choosing us that we will never know. What we can know is that God has chosen us in Christ, reconciled us to Himself in Christ, and adopted us in Christ. Our election is realized in a living faith union with Christ. Outside of Christ there is no comforting election. Because God has elected us, He has sent His Son to purchase us and to unite us to Himself by faith.

Second, God chose us from "before the foundation of the world" (v. 4a), Paul says. While we were yet unknown, God already knew us. He knew that there was no good thing in us, yet He chose us. Before we existed, God was already at work, electing us and laying the foundation of our redemption and our adoption. Can you think of any more powerful comfort than to know that there was never a time that God did not intimately know us? We live in a world of shallow friendships, but God delights in deep and profound relationships with His people—relationships that are rooted in eternity!

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7. Ibid.



When you talk to people about their friends and ask, "How long have you known them," they may respond, "For a long time." But God says to us, "I've known you forever. There was not a moment that you were out of my sight or out of my mind. I have been in relationship with you from eternity as your electing Father, redeeming Son, and sanctifying Holy Spirit."

Third, God has "predestinated us unto the adoption of children," Paul says (v. 5a). These words destroy any notion we might have of election being a cold, calculating choice made by an arbitrary God. Instead, it is a great wonder that God chooses any one of us rebellious children to be His children. Our adoption is certified because we have been chosen by God. The word here for adoption means "to formally and legally declare that someone who is not one's own child is henceforth to be treated and cared for as one's own child, including complete rights of inheritance."<sup>8</sup> We who were once alienated from God have now been predestined to be adopted as His children.

In *Sermons on Ephesians*, John Calvin explains the assurance of this adoption when he says, "When he [Paul] says that God has predestinated us by adoption, it is to show that if we be God's children it is not through nature but through his pure grace.... For we have no such status by birth or inheritance, neither does it come of flesh and blood."<sup>9</sup> We are assured that by the grace of God in Jesus Christ we are adopted into the family of God. Therefore, "they whom he calls to salvation ought not to seek the cause of it anywhere else than in this gratuitous adoption."<sup>10</sup> Calvin goes on to say:

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8. Johannes E. Louw and Eugene Nida, eds, *Greek-English Lexicon of the NT Based on Semantic Domains*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988-89), 35.53, BibleWorks 7.0.

9. John Calvin, *John Calvin's Sermons on Ephesians*, trans. Arthur Golding (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1973), 39.

10. *Ibid.*, 43.

Whosoever then believes is thereby assured that God has worked in him, and faith is, as it were, the duplicate copy that God gives us of the original of our adoption.... It follows then that if we have faith, we are also adopted. For why does God give us faith? Even because he elected us before the creation of the world. This therefore is an infallible order, that insofar as the faithful receive God's grace and embrace his mercy, holding Jesus Christ as their Head, to obtain salvation in this way, they know assuredly that God has adopted them.<sup>11</sup>

Election is like a rearview mirror in which you see the steps God took in electing you. When you look back at the Holy Spirit calling you from darkness to light, it confirms that God has chosen you. When you look back at how you were justified by faith in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, it confirms your election. As we, by God's grace, grow in holiness and purity before God, we are assured that we are the elect of God. As 1 John repeatedly tells us, when we possess Christ in His Word, desire Him for His own sake, know Him in our souls, yearn for Him in our walk of life, and love those who love Him, we know that we are God's elect and have passed from death to life. Ultimately, then, Christ assures us of election. As Calvin writes, "Christ, then, is the mirror wherein we must, and without self-deception may, contemplate our own election."<sup>12</sup>

In Christ, election is our friend, not our enemy. Election produces humility, not pride; encouragement, not depression; confidence, not fear; assurance, not presumption. Election fills us with joy and praise because it glorifies God and His grace from beginning to end. It moves us to confess with Charles Spurgeon, "I believe

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11. *Ibid.*, 47.

12. Cf. Fred Klooster, *Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1961), 29ff.

the doctrine of election, because I am quite sure that if God had not chosen me I would never have chosen Him; and I am sure He chose me before I was born, or else He never would have chosen me afterward.”<sup>13</sup> Or as Sinclair Ferguson says, “Until we have come to the place where we can sing about election with a full heart, we have not grasped the spirit of the New Testament teaching.”<sup>14</sup>

### Adoption's Ambition: Our Holiness

Holiness is the grand ambition of election. Verse 4 says that we were chosen from eternity “that we should be holy and without blame [or blemish] before him [God] in love.” When God pursued us in His love, we were ugly and deformed by sin. Realizing that makes the doctrine of election and adoption even more precious because few people would choose terribly deformed orphans to redeem and make them part of their family. But the infinitely perfect and holy God does just that with terribly deformed sinners! God has chosen not only to redeem us but also to restore us in the image of His Son. He has chosen us to be holy and blameless before Him in love.

Many translators stumble over this phrase *in love*. Some keep the phrase with verse 4, explaining that the pathway to holiness is through love.<sup>15</sup> Others put it with verse 5, explaining that God has predestined us to the adoption of sons *in love*.<sup>16</sup> This phrase can go

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13. C. H. Spurgeon *Autobiography, Vol. 1: The Early Years, 1834–1859* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1962), 166.

14. Quoted in John Blanchard, *The Complete Gathered Gold* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2006), 163.

15. John Piper, “God Predestined Us Unto Sonship Through Jesus Christ,” [http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByDate/1992/792\\_God\\_Predestined\\_Us\\_Unto\\_Sonship\\_Through\\_Jesus\\_Christ/](http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByDate/1992/792_God_Predestined_Us_Unto_Sonship_Through_Jesus_Christ/) accessed October 15, 2009.

16. Most newer translations read this phrase with verse 5. The AV reads it with verse 4. Most commentators argue theologically for

either way. If we unite it with verse 4, it confirms that we are elect if we are fulfilling the purpose for which God has predestined us. The apostle John speaks of that in 1 John 3:10–16, where he says the basic mark of God’s children is that they love one another. Their love reflects that of their heavenly Father, who has loved them from all eternity. This truth is confirmed in Galatians 5:22–23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” The first fruit of the Spirit is love, and out of this Spirit-worked love flow all other fruits. We are predestined to produce those fruits of the Spirit, and as we demonstrate those fruits with God’s help, we can be assured of our election and salvation.

We have also been predestined to holiness, Paul says in verse 4. Holiness is not just a state or a duty but chiefly a privilege to which we have been called by God. Holiness is what distinguished Israel from the nations surrounding her, for she was to be set apart. God told the Israelites, “And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine” (Lev. 20:26). Holiness was God’s design for Israel, and it is His design for us today. We have been chosen to mirror the image of God. We have been predestined to be made holy and blameless like our God. What a great and solemn purpose we have been predestined to! Are you living out this privilege? When God elects us and adopts us into His family, we are chosen to the privilege of holiness exercised in love.

Paul here refutes the greatest objection Arminians

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the phrase to go with verse 5, but the argument can be made just as strongly in both cases. Both readings are consistent with how Paul uses the phrase elsewhere. See A.T. Lincoln, *Ephesians: Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco, TX: Word, 1990), 17. Lincoln treats both positions but argues for the AV reading based on grammar and syntax.

have to the doctrine of election. "If election is true, people can live as they please, without striving after holiness," Arminians say. But Paul says just the opposite. The very purpose of election is to make us holy (cf. 1 Pet. 1:2). God's election does not destroy moral effort; rather, as Spurgeon notes, "God's choice makes chosen men choice men."<sup>17</sup>

You may ask how you can be predestinated to holiness and blamelessness when you struggle with sin in yourself. Paul says in Romans 7 that he had the same internal struggle between the old man, his flesh, and the new man. All believers deal with that struggle. Yet, our struggle does not negate our being predestinated to holiness because this holiness does not depend on us. Notice how Christ-centered Paul is here. He brings everything back to Christ, who controls the entire Christian life. We have been chosen in Christ, which means that our holiness and blamelessness rest in Him and His righteousness. He has bought us with His precious blood, and He will see our sanctification through to the end. His Spirit of adoption dwells in us as children of God; and by grace, the Spirit intercedes for us and sanctifies us unto holiness.

We live with tension—a "now, not yet" tension—as the children of God with regard to this holiness. As adopted children of God we enjoy holiness in this life, but we also battle ferociously with sin. We experience a measure of progressive holiness in our hearts and lives when we gain the victory over sin through faith in Christ and His obedience, but we also anticipate the day when we will be completely holy, without spot and blemish before God. That will be a great day because God's eternal blessing will then be pronounced on us for the sake of Christ's work in us. We live with ten-

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17. Quoted in John Blanchard, *The Complete Gathered Gold*, 164.

sion now because we do not know what we will one day be like. So, Scripture tells us that our mortality shall put on immortality and our corruption, incorruptibility (1 Cor. 15:53ff.). When we finally behold Christ face to face, our adoption will be perfected forever. God's work in us will be consummated.

### **Adoption's Advantage: Spiritual Blessings**

If we have been adopted by God, the Father blesses us with all spiritual blessings in Christ. Union with Christ makes us partakers of a vast spiritual treasury in heavenly places. From the moment of our union with Christ by faith, we were given those blessings to enjoy. In verse 3, Paul tells us that God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing *in Christ*. The verb is in the past tense, showing that these blessings are not only in the future, but have already been given. Outside of Christ there are no blessings, only misery, shame, guilt, and a future of everlasting punishment. These blessings include what Paul is speaking about here and so much more! While they are heavenly blessings, we enjoy them here on earth as the children of God. We enjoy them in Christ, for He is the source of all these blessings. They come to us in Christ our Elder Brother. Hugh Martin summarizes these blessings in this way:

How rich and glorious, then, is Christ, considered as the treasure-house of all spiritual blessings. In him we find laid up for us election, adoption, acceptance, redemption, inheritance, the Spirit's unction, seal and earnest. He is the Elect, the Son, the Beloved, the Redeemer, the Heir, the Anointed and Sealed of the Spirit.... We are elect in Christ the Elect One, sons in Christ the Son, accepted in the Beloved, redeemed in the Redeemer, heirs in the Elder Brother, anointed and sealed in Christ.<sup>18</sup>

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18. Hugh Martin, *Christ for Us* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of

When we are in Christ, no blessing is withheld from us.

Apart from union with Christ in His death and resurrection, we would not enjoy any of these blessings. Christ's redemptive work alone has made us fit to receive them, because prior to the Spirit's regenerating work we were not worthy of them. The reality of our unworthiness is what the prodigal son realized when he said, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants." Nevertheless, the father accepted him as his son, saying, "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:24). His response to his son is how God deals with us in Christ. Not only does He view us from eternity as His sons in Christ, but He also assures us of this fact when He brings us to our senses and applies the redemption of Christ to our hearts. When God speaks this assuring word, we essentially hear Him say, "This my *son*, this my *daughter*, was dead, and is alive again." Because of Christ, we are not servants but children of God. Out of God's sheer grace to us in Christ, we receive the right not only to be His sons and daughters but also to enjoy the vast treasury of privileges that it provides.

Unfortunately, we often live as though we had no privileges and blessings as the sons and daughters of God. Sinclair Ferguson illustrates how we ought to be living according to the blessings we have received in Christ:

When I was a boy in Scotland, I occasionally read puzzling notices in the local newspaper, such as: "Will Angus MacDonald please contact McKay, Campbell, and Ross (Solicitors) at 10 Bannockburn Street, where he will learn something

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Truth, 1974), 216, 219. Quoted in Richard D. Phillips, *Chosen in Christ: The Glory of Grace in Ephesians 1* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004), 39.

to his advantage?” Angus, whoever he was, was a beneficiary of someone’s will, and he did not yet know it. Angus had suddenly become a rich man. But what if Angus did not see and respond to this notice? His poverty would continue. If Angus did not pursue his claim to his inheritance, he would not taste its riches. Do not make that mistake! If you are a Christian, then you are rich in Christ; enjoy and share your riches.<sup>19</sup>

Do you claim your privileges in Christ? Are you enjoying what was given to you by the Father through the Son’s redemption?

### **Adoption’s Acclamation: Amazing Grace**

Finally, let us look at adoption’s acclamation. Paul highlights this acclamation in verse 6, “To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.” These words tell us that adoption is not first and foremost for our benefit, although great benefits accrue to us. The significance of our adoption is to acclaim the grace of God.

As parents, we pour our lives into our children. We influence them each day with our thoughts, our teaching, and our examples of character and godliness. The same is true of a child of God. We have been chosen to be adopted as God’s children to reflect the image of the Father in righteousness and holiness. We have been chosen to acclaim the grace of God who has impacted our lives for good. It is by the grace of God that we are what we are. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:10, “But by the grace of God I am what I am.” He attributes his apostleship, his character, and his adoption to the grace of God. The glory of the Son’s purchase is that we have been adopted to magnify the grace of God. We

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19. Sinclair Ferguson, *In Christ Alone: Living the Gospel-Centered Life* (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust, 2007), 123.



have been included in the family of God because of His grace. We have been blessed in the Beloved because of the grace of the Father.

The grace of God puts our adoption in perspective. We were once orphaned through sin, walking in the smoking wreckage that we had made of our lives. Why would God want to adopt sinners like us? Paul gives the answer, "To the praise of the glory of His grace." This is the glorious acclamation of our adoption: to magnify the grace of God in our lives.

Grace changes us completely. We were once fatherless orphans alienated from God, but now we are the sons of God. We were once full of the filth and smut of this world, but now we have been washed clean in the blood of Christ. We did not seek after God before, but now our hearts pant after Him, longing for communion with the One who loved us from before the foundation of the world. Before grace, we tried to renovate ourselves. We tried to gloss over the glaring sins of our lives. But now we wholly submit to God's indictment of us as sinners, and we rest in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Before grace, we were powerless to do anything to reverse our condition, but now God has given us the power to become the children of God. In doing so, He has entirely changed our prospects (John 1:12). Before grace, we attempted to reduce feelings of guilt and shame because of our sin, but now through the redemptive work of Christ, God has done away with all that pollution. Before grace, we worshiped ourselves and other gods, but now we worship the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Grace has turned us from cursing God to worshiping Him. By grace we live as the children of God.

Paul goes on to say that God has "made us *accepted* in the Beloved." As Spurgeon has pointed out, we are accepted as believers in Christ's person, Christ's heart, Christ's book, Christ's loins, and Christ hands. For

Christ's sake, we are accepted in our persons, in our prayers, in our participation in God's kingdom through using our gifts, and in our praises. What wonderful content is contained in this short phrase, "accepted in the Beloved"!

Literally, this phrase could also read, "Wherein he has *blessed* us in the Beloved." Again Paul links adopting grace to the Beloved Son, echoing the Father's approbation of Christ our Elder Brother in Matthew 3:17: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Christ is the ultimate object of the Father's affections and good pleasure. Through Him and in Him we are adopted, which is the essence of grace. The Beloved Son has blessed us richly, redeeming us from destruction and transforming us into His image. He has sent His Spirit of adoption into our hearts to enable us to cry, "Abba, Father." This magnifies His grace and causes us to praise it. The apostle thus makes a full circle of praise. He opens in verse 3 by blessing the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He ends this circle of praise in verse 6, "To the praise of the glory of his grace." The entire spectrum of God's redemptive work commands our amazement, our acclamation, and our praise.

We owe everything to God's amazing grace. From election to glorification, grace reigns and triumphs. John 1:16 says we receive "grace for grace," which literally means "grace facing or laminated to grace." Grace follows grace in our lives as waves follow one another to the shore. Grace is the divine principle by which God saves us; it is the divine provision in the person and work of Christ; it is the divine prerogative manifesting itself in election and adoption; and it is the divine power that enables us to freely embrace Christ so that we might live, suffer, and even die for His sake and be preserved in our Elder Brother for eternity.

Are you praising the glory of God's grace? When visiting an elderly friend in a nursing home some time

ago, I noticed that she had nothing on her walls except a small index card, upon which she had typed:

God's  
Riches  
At  
Christ's  
Expense

“That means everything to me because I live only by grace,” she said.

Is that true of us as well? Do we consider it a wonder to be the sons and daughters of God (1 John 3:1)? Oh, what a privilege it is to be children of God through the great redemption price paid by Jesus Christ! Truly, the glory of the Son's purchase of us culminates in the privilege and right of adoption for all eternity! How blessed we are to be on our way to heaven where we, together with millions of other elected and adopted brothers and sisters, will share in a concert of praise to our Redeemer and in communication with each other! In that eternal family, heaven will teem with wonderful relationships, first with Christ and the triune God, but also with our spiritually adopted siblings and the holy angels.

Are you living with the consciousness of your inestimable privilege of being a son or daughter of God? Is that realization compelling you to worship and live to God alone for His great plan of salvation?

Or, do you lack all the blessings of adoption because you are still children of the devil? You need not live that way any longer. The Father in heaven is willing to adopt you into His glorious family. He has no pleasure in your death but calls you to repent and believe the gospel. Will you hear His voice and enter into the riches of His adopted family, or will you persist in following your self-destructive path into the homelessness of hell? There you will have no faithful Father,

no faithful Elder Brother, and no faithful brothers and sisters to love you.

Flee, then, today, to the Redeemer. Allow yourself no rest until you know the privilege and right of God's adopted children through the glory of the Son.