

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

"Adopted and Accepted"

Ephesians 1:5, 6

Introduction

1. God's salvation is the most marvelous ever conceived. One major feature is that it includes all the blessings of God in Christ at the moment one is saved. God is to be blessed for these blessings wherewith He has blessed us. Ephesians starts with a beatitude and is therefore like the Psalms.

2. The initial blessing noted by Paul is that of God's sovereign election of the believer. Contrary to much discussion about the matter, election is linked in the text with sanctification. Election is not, therefore, a harsh abrasive word but concerned with a separated lifestyle and blameless living (v. 4). There is tremendous need for this purpose of election to be learned.

3. This concept of "election" is joined in the context with three other strategic doctrines. They are:

1. PREDESTINATION v. 5

a. The meaning

The word itself means to mark off in advance, to foreordain, determine before. In the New Testament, it is used of God from eternity. There is hardly any rigid distinction between this word and that of election. Both take place at the same time and are practically the same. The Holy Spirit does not shy away from the term (cf. Acts 4:28; Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:11).

b. The manner

It appears best to take the last phrase of v. 4 and join it to this verb in v. 5, hence, "in love having predestinated...." It is God's merciful desire in love to perform this way. His is not a blind, mechanical, and impersonal act, but one out of infinite love and wisdom. The doctrine becomes one of the most precious, if seen in biblical contexts.

2. ADOPTION v. 5

The significance of this noun is incredibly important for the believer. It means "to place as a son." It is a legal and technical term. It concerns the placing of a son by birth into the position of a legal child. The son has the place of privilege and responsibility attained by an adult. It relates to maturity. The son is advanced positionally to his majority and given at once the standing of an adult son. The only limitation on this status is the unspiritual state of carnality. God's total resources in the Holy Spirit are available. The expectation of full maturity comes to the believer from the start. There is no thought that growth is necessary for spirituality in this doctrine! Predestination is with a view to this sort of adoption. Now, adoption is:

a. Mediate (through Jesus Christ)

Like the pattern which brings us to the sonship in Christ, so the matter of adoption is mediate. It is through Jesus Christ. The person and work of our Lord are accented. Works are entirely excluded.

b. Personal (for Himself)

This expresses a goal. The concept is that God's purpose is to bring redeemed sinners through Christ into an adoring relationship with God as the true object of their being. Adoption is not for personal gain, but for His gain and glory. Since God is what He is, this cannot mean any selfishness on His part.

c. Measured (according to His will)

The ground of His predestination and election for adoption is not found in us, but in His goodness and the deliberate resolve of His own mind. He did not foresee something acceptable in us nor was it because He foresaw that we would believe the Gospel. The ground must be sought entirely and exclusively in His own gracious character. It looks to His benevolent sovereignty alone. He saw that it was right and good for Him to do it, so He did it.

d. Intended (unto praise)

This is the ultimate end of God's choice and predestination respecting adoption. The word "glory" probably marks out the idea of profuseness of God's grace. Grace has been gloriously manifested and because of this is to be eternally praised.

3. ACCEPTATION v. 6

a. Related

The "wherein" is a reference to "grace." It shows that it is the exercise of this same grace which has done even more for us. Oh, the boundlessness of God's grace. What we have is by grace alone.

b. Received

"Made accepted" is really a rendering of a root related to the term grace. It means to be "made recipients of grace." But it is the grace of acceptance. Here is the love of God in grace expressing itself especially in a practical welcome.

c. Represented

The "Beloved One" is obviously a name for the Lord Jesus Christ. It is "in" the Beloved One that the acceptance finds its expression. Being recipients of God's grace in the Person of our Lord is marvelous. A distinction must be drawn between being a recipient (accepted) and being acceptable (2 Cor. 5:9). The former is a position and the latter a condition. Being "in the Beloved One" means we have partaken of all that He is. Hallelujah.

Conclusion What God has said can never be altered by men. It stands forever. Blessed be His Name. Election and predestination are down to earth truths. They get at the life of a child of God. We are to live holy lives. We are to live blameless lives. We are to live as adult sons responsible to an eternal God. We are accepted in Him. Glory to God.