

*Predestined to Adoption*  
*Ephesians 1:4c-6*  
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**INTRODUCTION**

We are returning tonight to our study of the book of Ephesians. I would like to invite you to take God's Word and join me in Ephesians chapter 1 as we examine verses 5-6. In our last two studies together, we looked at the salutation in verses 1-2 and the blessing in verse 3 and God's choosing for salvation or election in verse 4.

Election is one of the first spiritual blessings that we examined in Paul's list that begins in verse 4. Tonight we are going to continue in this context as we look at the subject of adoption in verses 5-6. As we said last time, Verses 3-14 form the first major section in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Here Paul is showing us some of those "spiritual blessings" that we have been "blessed" with according to verse 3. The first spiritual blessing is election in verse 4 and now we're looking at the second which is adoption found in verse 5-6.

Ephesians 1:5-6 says, "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."

As we look at the subject of adoption as it is found in this passage, we are going to see the motive, the manner, the meaning, the means, and the mission. Before we consider the first, let me say that verses 4-5 offer the greatest amount of controversy in the church because you have one group saying that the Bible does not teach election and predestination and another group says it does. It doesn't take a Bible degree to see that the Bible DOES teach the

doctrine of election and predestination. The real question is “What does the Bible teach about those two doctrines?” We looked at the doctrine of election in our last time together so I won’t go through it again. But let me suffice it to say that the doctrine of election is God choosing some for salvation before the creation of the world.

Steve Lawson, in his book “Foundations of Grace, A Long Line of Godly Men, Volume 1” says, “From Genesis to Revelation, God is emphatically represented in Scripture as being absolutely determinative in bestowing His mercy. He is shown as choosing before the foundation of the world those whom He will save and then, within time, bringing it to pass.

The apostle Paul clearly announced God’s sovereign grace in man’s salvation. He wrote that, from eternity, God chose, willed, decided, and planned to save some sinners. To elect is to choose, and God chose who would be saved. Paul wrote: ‘For he says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.’ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy” (Rom.9:15-16). This is to say, God decides whom He will save in order to display His glory” (30-31).

Now the doctrine of predestination “though somewhat related to election, it is not the same. Election pictures God's choice of people to salvation. But predestination...means that God determined ahead of time that all who would be saved would also be adopted into His family as sons” (MacDonald, W., & Farstad, A. (1997, c1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments*, Eph 1:5). So as we look at verses 5-6 we are going to see that the elect were not just chosen for God but they were *predestined to adoption*. As we do that, we begin with *the motive of adoption* which actually begins at the end of verse 4.

## I. The Motive of Adoption (v.4c)

Paul says, “In love.”

The question at the moment is, “Do the words ‘in love’ refer to what has been said in verse 4 or what follows in verse 5?”

One commentator says, “The last two words in verse 4 of the Greek text, meaning ‘in love,’ may be taken with what precedes or with what follows” (Bratcher, R. G., & Nida, E. A. (1993). A handbook on Paul's letter to the Ephesians).

Another commentator says, “The words in love occur without interruption between the words of verses 4 and 5 of Ephesians 1, so it is impossible to know without doubt whether Paul thought of them as modifying the words holy and blameless in his sight or he predestined us” (Liefeld, W. L. (1997). Vol. 10: Ephesians. The IVP New Testament commentary series: Eph 1:6).

Kenneth Wuest gives more clarification when he says, “The words, “in love,” are, in the a.v., construed with what has gone before, but Nestle in his Greek text punctuates so as to relate them to what follows, thus, “in love having Predestinated” (Wuest, K. S. (1997, c1984). Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English reader: Eph 1:3).

If you have the AV it says “blameless before Him in love.” If you have a NASB it reads, “In love He predestined us...”

The text of the NASB is based on a different and older set of manuscripts than the AV so I am more inclined to side with the NASB with the words “in love” referring to God’s motive in adopting us as “sons through Jesus Christ to Himself.”

A. God's Election and Predestination is Because of His Love for Us

It is the reason *why* He chose us and made us His *sons*.

This word "love" is the familiar word *agape*, which refers to a sacrificial kind of love.

This kind of love "is not an emotion but a disposition of the heart to seek the welfare and meet the needs of others" (MacArthur).

We see this term displayed beautifully in John 15:13 and Romans 5:8.

1. In John 15:13 Jesus defines this term for us as one laying down his life for his friends

He says, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."

2. In Romans 5:8 He demonstrated this term by doing exactly that—laying down His life for His friends

It says, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

God's election and predestination is an act of love through Jesus Christ.

Those whom He chose and predestined to adoption as sons, He died for.

Jesus said in John 10:14-17, "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, 15 even as

the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. 16 "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd. 17 "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again."

The first truth we see at the end of verse 4 is *God's election and predestination is because of His love for us*. Notice the second truth:

B. God's Election and Predestination is the Proof of His Love

1. God chose us in spite of what we would do

Romans 8:29 says, "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren."

The word "foreknew" is the Greek word *proginosko* which means "to know beforehand or in advance" (GING).

This is "not a reference simply to God's omniscience—that in eternity past He knew who would come to Christ. Rather, it speaks of a predetermined choice to set His love on us and established an intimate relationship—or His election" (MacArthur, J. J. (1997, c1997). *The MacArthur Study Bible*).

- a) Adam and Eve's sin was no surprise to God, it was part of His redemptive plan.

1 Peter 1:20-21 gives us insight into this when it says, "For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you 21 who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God."

"In eternity past, before Adam and Eve sinned, God planned the redemption of sinners through Jesus Christ" (John MacArthur, The MacArthur Study Bible).

He knew they were going to sin and chose them anyway. The same is true for us. He knew we would sin and chose us anyway.

- b) Israel disobeyed God many times but God did not destroy them
  - (1) God said to Israel in Isa.48:8-11, "You have not heard, you have not known. Even from long ago your ear has not been open, Because I knew that you would deal very treacherously; And you have been called a rebel from birth. 9 "For the sake of My name I delay My wrath, And for My praise I restrain it for you, In order not to cut you off. 10 "Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. 11 "For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; For how can My name be profaned? And My glory I will not give to another."

(2) Rom.10:21-11:5

Why did God choose us? When Adam and Eve Sinned why didn't He kill them and start over? He did do that later in Noah's time—destroyed the entire world with a flood but saved Noah and his family. Why didn't He destroy Israel for their disobedience? Why doesn't He now destroy all of us? The answer is simple:

2. God chose us because He loves us

A.W. Pink said, "The apprehension of God's infinite knowledge should fill the Christian with adoration. The whole of my life stood open to His view from the beginning. He foresaw my every fall, my every sin, my every backsliding; yet, nevertheless, fixed His heart upon me. Oh, how the realization of this should bow me in wonder and worship before Him!"

Deut.7:7-8 says, "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8 but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."

Verse 4 gives us *the motive of adoption*, notice now:

## **II. The Manner of Adoption (v.5a)**

"He predestined us to adoption as sons"

Now we come to the second most controversial word found in the Bible—predestination.

A.W. Pink says of both election and predestination that “No doctrine is so detested by proud human nature as this one, which make nothing of the creature and everything of the Creator; yea, at no other point is the enmity of the carnal mind so blatantly and hotly evident” (The Doctrine of Election).

“Hodge has well remarked that, “rightly understood, this doctrine (1) exalts the majesty and absolute sovereignty of God, while it illustrates the riches of his free grace and his just displeasure with sin. (2.) It enforces upon us the essential truth that salvation is entirely of grace. That no one can either complain if passed over, or boast himself if saved. (3.) It brings the inquirer to absolute self-despair and the cordial embrace of the free offer of Christ. (4.) In the case of the believer who has the witness in himself, this doctrine at once deepens his humility and elevates his confidence to the full assurance of hope” (Outlines) [Easton, M. (1996, c1897). Easton's Bible dictionary].

What is:

#### A. The Meaning of Predestination

This is the Greek word *proorizo*. It comes from *pro*, “before,” and *horizo*, “to determine.” It means “to determine or decree beforehand” (Spiros Zodhiates).

1. “Predestination means that God has a purpose that is determined long before it is brought to pass. It implies that God is infinitely capable of planning and then bringing about what he has planned, and Scripture speaks of him as doing this” (Elwell, W.



A., & Elwell, W. A. (1997, c1996). Evangelical dictionary of biblical theology).

- a) Isa.14:24-27 says, “The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, ***“Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand,*** 25 to break Assyria in My land, and I will trample him on My mountains. Then his yoke will be removed from them and his burden removed from their shoulder. 26 ***“This is the plan devised against the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out against all the nations. 27 ***“For the LORD of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?”******
- b) Isa.46:8-11 says, “Remember this, and be assured; Recall it to mind, you transgressors. 9 ***“Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, 10 ***Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure’; 11 Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it.”******

John MacArthur says, “In a broad sense, election refers to the fact that God chooses (or elects) to do everything that He does in whatever way He sees fit. When He acts, He does so only because He willfully and independently chooses to act.

According to His own nature, predetermined plan, and good pleasure, He decides to do whatever He desires, without pressure or constraint from any outside influence.

The Bible makes this point repeatedly. In the act of Creation, God made precisely what He wanted to create in the way He wanted to create it (cf. Gen. 1:31). And ever since Creation, He has sovereignly prescribed or permitted everything in human history, in order that He might accomplish the redemptive plan that He previously had designed” (Forward to Foundations of Grace, Steve Lawson, 9-10).

2. Predestination is a theme of both the Old and New Testament
  - a) This is seen in the act of creation in Genesis
    - (1) The Bible begins in Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”
    - (2) Verse 3 says, “Then God said, ‘Let there be.’” In this case light “and there was light.”
    - (3) Throughout chapters 1-2 we see God creating exactly as He desired with no limitations
    - (4) In verse 31 He “saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.”
  - b) This is also seen in the Old Testament by God

choosing a nation for Himself

“Out of all the nations in the world, He selected Israel (Deut.7:6; 14:2; Pss.105:43; 135:4). He chose the Israelites not because they were better or more desirable than any other people, but simply because He decided to choose them....God chooses whomever He chooses for reasons that are wholly His” (MacArthur, 10).

- c) Scripture also speaks of God’s electing choice in Jesus Christ, the holy angels, and believers

“In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is called ‘My Chosen One’ (Luke 9:35). The holy angels also are referred to as ‘elect angels’ (1 Tim.5:21). And New Testament believers are called ‘God’s chosen ones’ (Col.3:12; cf. 1 Cor.1:27; 2 Thess.2:13; 2 Tim.2:10; Tit.1:1; 1 Peter 1:1; 2:9; 5:13; Rev.17:14), meaning that the church is a community of those who were chosen, or ‘elect’ (Eph.1:4) [MacArthur, 10].

- d) The New Testament uses different terms to describe predestination

- (1) “Predestined” (Acts 4:28; Rom.8:29-30; 1 Cor.2:7; Eph.1:5, 11)
- (2) “Foreknew” (1 Peter 1:20)
- (3) “Foreknowledge” (Acts 2:23; 1 Pet.1:2)
- (4) “Beforehand” (Rom.9:23)

Predestination means that “God has determined or decreed before an event occurs.” It is based on His sovereignty which is influenced by nothing other than His good pleasure.

Notice in Ephesians 1:5 who is:

B. The Object of Predestination

“Us”

1. “Us” refers to “the saints” and “faithful in Christ Jesus” (1:1)
2. They are the ones who have been “blessed Ephesians ...with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (1:3).
3. The “us” are those whom He “chose” in verse 3
4. In verses 11-12 Paul says that “*we* have obtained an inheritance, having been ***predestined*** according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will to the end that *we* who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.”
5. In 2:5-6 they are the ones whom He “made...alive”
6. Paul says in Romans 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.*** 29 ***For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son,*** so that He

would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”

In Ephesians 1:5 we not only see who is the object of predestination but we also see:

C. The Purpose of Predestination

It is “to adoption as sons.”

“This is what God miraculously does to every person whom He has elected and who has trusted in Christ. He makes them sons just like His divine Son. Christians not only have all of the son's riches and blessings but all of the Son's nature” (John MacArthur, Ephesians, 15).

That brings us to:

**III. The Meaning of Adoption (v.5a)**

A. Placing a Person in the Position of a Son

The word “adoption” is the *huiiothesia*. It comes from *huios*, “a son” and *thesis* “a placing” (W.E. Vine, Vine's Expository Dictionary, 23).

The word has reference to placing “a person in the position of a son” (Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study NT*, 949).

“Adoption implies a change of nature and a change of relationship. Sonship precedes adoption.

As used by Paul, the term (adoption) implied a

ceremony of conveyance, or an order of a Roman court of justice whereby one was transferred to the family of the adopter. The adopting parent acquired the potestas (legal power) over the adopted child exactly as if it were the issue of his own body; while the latter enjoyed, in his new family, the same rights as if he had been born in it” (Herbert Lockyer).

This word then, as it is applied here by Paul, means “placing a believer in the family of God as a mature, adult son with all the privileges and responsibilities of sonship (Gal. 4:4–7)” (MacDonald, W., & Farstad, A. (1997, c1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments*, Eph 1:5).

William Hendriksen says, “It is rather useless to look for human analogies, for the adoption of which Paul speaks surpasses anything that takes place on earth. It bestows upon its recipients not only a new name, a new legal standing, and a new family-relationship, but also a new image, the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29). Earthly parents may love an adopted child ever so much. Nevertheless, they are, to a large extent, unable to impart their spirit to the child. They have no control over hereditary factors. When God adopts, he imparts his Spirit! This adoption is through Jesus Christ for Himself. It is through the work of Christ that this adoption becomes a reality. By His atonement the new standing and also the transformation into the spirit of sonship were merited for the chosen ones. Thus, they become God’s children who glorify Him” (Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953-2001). Vol. 7: *New Testament commentary : Exposition of Ephesians*. Accompanying biblical text is author's translation. *New Testament Commentary*, 79).

- B. There Are Five References to Adoption in the New Testament
1. Romans 8:15 says, “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!"
  2. Romans 8:23 says, “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.”
  3. Romans 9:3-5 says, “For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, 4 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 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.”
  4. Galatians 4:4-7 says, “But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the **adoption** as sons. 6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.”
  5. Ephesians 1:5

“The result of God’s election is our adoption as sons”  
(MacArthur).

How does God accomplish our adoption? Notice the next phrase where we learn:

#### IV. The Means of Adoption (v.5b)

Paul says, “He predestined us to adoption as sons *through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will.*”

##### A. It is Through Jesus Christ

Kenneth Wuest says, “The act of God the Father placing believing sinners as adult sons was ‘by Jesus Christ.’ The preposition is *dia*, the preposition of intermediate agency. Jesus Christ was the intermediate agent of God the Father to bring to fruition His purpose of placing believers as adult sons. He did that through His work on the Cross where He satisfied the just requirements of God’s law which we broke, making it possible for Him to bestow mercy upon a believing sinner on the basis of justice satisfied” (37).

Gal.4:4-5 again says, “But when the fullness of the time came, ***God sent forth His Son***, born of a woman, born under the Law, ***so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.***”

##### B. It is According to the Kind Intention of His Will

This takes us back to His motive in verse 4. Why did God predestine “us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself”? Because of His love for us (v.4).



He chose in eternity past to bestow His love on some by choosing them for salvation in order to make them His sons.

This is why this doctrine should be loved not hated. God is not unjust to choose only some to be the object of His saving grace—He could have chose no one and still been completely just.

He is the sovereign Creator who can do what He wills and when He wills.

Our adoption as Sons through Jesus Christ was “according to the kind intention of His will.”

Notice lastly:

#### **V. The Mission of Adoption (v.6)**

All of this has a purpose and verse 6 gives it. It says it was “to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.”

“Why did God do all of that for us? Why did He want us to be His sons? We are saved and made sons ‘to the praise of the glory of His grace.’ Above all else, He elects and saves us for His own glory.

When Jesus said, ‘Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom (Luke 12:32), He was affirming the delight of God in putting His glory on display.

God chose and preordained the Body before the foundation of the world in order that no human being could boast or take glory for Himself, but that all the glory might be His.

Salvation is not partly of God and partly of man, but entirely of God. To guarantee that, every provision and every detail of salvation was accomplished before any human being was ever born or before a plant was formed on which he could be born” (John MacArthur, Ephesians, 15-16).

## CONCLUSION

1. God has “blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph.1:3).
2. What are those blessings? Election and adoption.
3. Why did God do this? Ephesians 2:4 says it was “because of His great love with which He loved us.”
4. God chose those He would redeem so that He could pour out His love and grace upon them.
5. As such they become His “sons.”
6. As we have been looking at God’s sovereignty in election and predestination, let’s not forget the responsibility that He gives to every person to “repent” and believe in Christ.
7. Jesus said in Mark 1:15, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; *repent and believe in the gospel.*”
8. Paul said in Acts 17:30-31, “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, 31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

9. God calls you to repent and believe in the gospel.
10. Have you responded to Him in this way?
11. I pray you have.
12. If you haven't, I want to call you to Him today.
13. Let's pray.