**Loved by the Beloved Series**

 **“Adopted by the Beloved”**

**Ephesians 1.4**

**Introduction:**

For the last couple of weeks we have been considering that we are “Loved by the Beloved.” Our main text for this series is Ephesians 1.3-6.

Hear now the Word of God:

***3****Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,****4****just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love****5****He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,****6****to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.*

In the past few weeks we have discovered that we are “Loved by the Beloved,” “Blessed by the Beloved,” and “Chosen by the Beloved.” Today we will see that we are “Adopted by the Beloved” as we focus on verse five that reads: “*In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will.”*

Some people get all freaked out when they hear that God predestined us. People struggle with the thought that if God predestined us then we must have lost our individual freedom. Let me say that God is so big, so wise, and so mighty that He can orchestrate His sovereign will while never devaluing, diminishing, or disrupting your rights as an individual. God can execute His divine purposes while never violating your personal freedom. As I shared last week we must be entirely willing that God should be God! We must come to the point where God is God!

I think it is reasonable to conclude that an all-wise, all-knowing, and all-powerful God had a predetermine plan before He created the universe and that being God, He has the divine ability to carry out His plan. Even though I am incapable to understand the details behind God’s sovereign decisions, I am comforted by the thought *that* *God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.* (Rom.8.28)

**He Predestined Us**

Our text this morning reads, *He* (God) *predestined us.* What is interesting is that the Bible uses this word “predestined” 6 times. Two times the word is used to state the fact whatever God has predestined to do will occur. (Acts 4.28; ICor.2.7) The other four times the word “predestined” is used to describe some aspect of God adopting us as His kids. (Rom.8.29-30; Eph.1.5, 11)

The point is that the Bible doesn’t dwell on the reasonable fact that God is God and He can do whatever He pleases. (Ps.115.3) God knows you are smart enough to figure that one out. Rather the Bible focuses on God divine intentions. God wants us to know the heart and soul behind His eternal purpose. God wants you to know that it has been His eternal purpose to adopt you as His own child.

The Father did not predestine us to make us robots. He predestined us to make us His beloved children. The Father did not predestine us to make us less. The Father predestine us to give us more – more than we ever deserved – more that we could ever imagine.

Verse five makes it clear that God the Father predestine us as sons because of His love and the kind intentions of His will. God did not predestine us as sons out of some sick motivation of a cosmic dictator. He predestined us as His children. Why? Because of His great love He has towards us. Why? Because of the kind intentions He has eternally had for us. Our God is not some divine dictator trying to rob you of your personal freedom. He is a loving Father who has had an eternal purpose to make you a child of God.

Listen to the love notes that God has written to you in His Word:

*God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved* (Col.3.12)

Those who were not loved, I will love. (Rom.9.25)

*Brothers and sisters, you are loved by God* (IThess.1.4a)

*Brothers and sisters who are loved by God.* (IIThess.2.13a)

*See what kind of love the Father has given to us in that we should be called God’s children, and that is what we are!*(IJn.3.1)

The fact that God has predestined us as His children as an expression of His divine love and kind intentions should cause us to experience great comfort and solid assurance in our status with God. *In love* *He predestined us to adoption as sons.*

**Adoption as Sons**

We will examine the beautiful truth that God has adopted us as sons in a few minutes but I believe that we cannot have a true appreciation of our adoption as sons until we fully recognize our previous condition. We cannot have a true appreciation of our adoption as God’s children until we fully recognize where we came from before God adopted us as sons.

God paints a graphic picture of our previous condition in Ezekiel 16.4-14. The Lord describes a horrible scene where a newborn baby had been thrown into an open field squirming in the fluids of childbirth. The baby is lying in the field naked, gasping for life, and no one passing by had pity or compassion on this abandoned child. But then the Lord passed by. He covers the child’s nakedness, put the child in His arms, He bathes the child, and anointed the child with oil. He brings the child into His Kingdom and adopts the child as His own. He clothed the child with fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. He put sandals of porpoise skin on the child’s feet; and adorned the child with ornaments, puts bracelets on the child’s wrist, a necklace around the child’s neck, and a beautiful crown on the child’s head. He bestows all of His splendor on the child and gives the child access to every blessing of His kingdom. Why, because this child was His adopted son. This child was His beloved.

I told you this dramatic story so that we might understand where we came from. From an earthly perspective you might had been born into a wealthy family, or a middle class family, or a low-income family. But spiritually speaking we all were born naked, abandoned, and squirming in our own sin. No one had pity on us. We were hopeless, helpless, and worthless. *But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).* (Eph.2.4-5)

I want the eyes of your heart to be enlightened, so that you will understand that God’s eternal plan has been to lavish His love upon you and to claim you as His adopted child. There was nothing attractive or desirable about us that prompted God to adopt us into His family. To the contrary, our sin made us repulsive. But God loved us, reached down into the depths of our depravity, puts us into loving His arms, washes us with the water of regeneration, clothed us with His righteousness, and anointed us with the oil of the Holy Spirit. He brings us into His sanctuary, gives us a seat at His banquet table, and grants that we are entitled to every spiritual blessing in heavenly places. He bestows all of His splendor upon us and lavishes us with the riches of His grace. Why? Because He loves us!

I want to drive home the point that you this term “predestined” describes God’s loving destiny for our lives. *He predestined us to adoption as sons.* I like the way the Revised Standard Version translates this verse, “*He destined us in love to be His sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will.”* (RSV)

As many of you know, Barbara and I have four grown boys, two are adopted and two are our biological sons. When Barbara became pregnant with our youngest you can understand why she was hoping that this one would be a girl. Barb had allowed me to take the lead in naming of first son, Caleb. So, I naturally thought Barb would be interested in my ideas on the name for the new baby, especially if it was a girl. After many hours of considering a variety of names for girls, I finally approached Barb with my suggestion. “If we have a girl I think we should call her ‘Destiny Dawn.’”

“Destiny Dawn! Are you kidding?” Barb replied. “What are you thinking?” “Well,” I said, “every child has a destiny. So, we should call her Destiny to remind us of that. And Dawn is your sister’s name and I though it went well with Destiny.” Barb said, “Well, it sounds like a name for a female dancer and we are NOT calling our daughter Destiny Dawn!” I hadn’t thought about that and admitted that she had a good point. I still like the name and maybe that’s why God bless us with our forth son, Joshua, so that I would never have the change to curse a child with a bad name.

I like the RSV because it emphasizes that God’s destiny for us has always been that we would be His children, to be a member of His forever family, to be His sons and daughters. “*He destined us in love to be His sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will.”* Our adoption was His idea. Part of His eternal plan. It was not an afterthought. It was our destiny. Our destiny has always been that God would adopt us as His children.

Unlike some theological terms that are difficult for the average person to have a cue of what you’re taking about like Supralapsarianism, or hypothetical universalism, or the cosmological argument, the term adoption is easy for anyone to understand. Adoption describes our new relationship with God our Father.

When someone adopts a child they claim that child as their own. They bring the child into their home, into their family, and give the child their name. They care for the child, they educate the child, and treat the child as their own. Our Church Fathers taught us that adoption is an act of God’s free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God. (WSC#34)

In God’s act of adoption He removes us from being spiritual orphans, He adopts us as His children, and grants us an eternal inheritance as heirs to His kingdom. Before we were spiritual orphans separate from Christ, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But Jesus promised that He would not leave us as orphans. So, we who were far off are brought near and He adopts us as His children. (Eph.2.12-13; Jn.14.18)

Listen, because of our background as orphans we all come into God’s family damaged, bruised, and broken. These dysfunctional characteristics do not hinder the Father’s love for us or diminish His desired purpose of adopting you and these dysfunctional characteristics should not hinder you from receiving the Father’s love.

As I mentioned earlier, Barb and I have two adopted sons. These boys were 8 and 7 years old when they came into our family. Their childhood experience was marked by abusive behaviors and when they came into our family they were carrying a lot of baggage. But we loved them, welcomed into our family, and care for them as our children. My point is that because of our background as orphans all of us come into God’s family with emotional baggage and past experiences that can weigh us down. But as God’s adopted children need to lay aside every encumbrance and the sin that so easily entangles us, fit our eyes on Christ, and receive God’s love.

God by His Spirit works faith into our orphaned heart, we receive Christ as our redeemer, and the Father gives us the right to become the children of God. (Jn1.12) The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. (Rom.8.16) As His sons and daughters we call God, Father. We cry out, “Abba! Father! Daddy! Daddy! We call God Father! (Rom.8.15) “Father” was not just a way Jesus taught us to address God; it was THE way. God is our Father. Father is God’s covenant name. He is our Father which art in heaven. Hollowed be His name!

*And if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.* (Rom.8.17a) As a son, I have a right to an inheritance from my father and as a child of God I have the right to an inheritance from my heavenly Father. The Bible tells us that *we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will*. (Eph.1.11) The Bible tells us that eye has not seen, ear has not heard all that God has prepared for those who love Him. (ICor.2.9) The Bible tells us that God has seated us in heavenly places in Christ in order that

*in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*(Eph.2.6-7) *Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.* (IJn.3.2)

Yes, God removes us from being spiritual orphans, adopts us as His children, and grants us an eternal inheritance as heirs to His kingdom. But **how** does He do this? Well, our text tells us, *He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself.*

**Through Jesus Christ**

As I have purposefully mentioned this in every sermon in this series, the Bible tells us that Jesus is God’s beloved Son. Christ, and Christ alone, is the pinnacle of the Father’s delight. Only the Son pleased the Father. Only the Son brought pleasure to the Father. Jesus is His Beloved Son. So placing us in Christ the Father makes us acceptable and pleasing, holy and blameless. Placing us in Christ makes us the beloved. The same love and admiration that the Father has for His Beloved Son is now poured out upon us.

God called us to be in Christ. He justified us in Christ, He sanctified us in Christ, He is perfecting us in Christ, and He will glorify us in Christ. (Rom.9.30) The Father calls us in Christ because only His Son is His only delight. The Father justifies us in Christ because only the Son pleased the Father perfectly. The Father sanctifies us in Christ because only the Son brought pleasure to the Father. The Father will one day glorify us in Christ because only Christ makes us acceptable and pleasing to the Father. Being in Christ is what brings ultimate glory to the Father. This is why the Bible tells us that He *predestined*us *to be conformed to the image of His Son.* His Son brings the Father glory and placing us in Christ brings glory to the Father and the Son.

*In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself*

**To Himself**

There is a difference of placing a kid is an orphanage and adopting a child as your own. Placing and supporting a child to live in an orphanage is a kind and considerate thing to do. God’s Word tells us that caring for orphans in their distress is pure and faultless in the sight of God. (James 1.27) However, I believe that adopting a child as your own is one-step higher because it is what God the Father has done with us. God draws us to Himself, claims us as His own, and gives us His name. We live with Him. We enjoy His presence. God is not an absentee father but rather He is a loving father who seeks to have an intimate relationship with His kids.

**Conclusion**

Brothers and Sisters, in this series I have attempted to show you that you are “Loved by the Beloved.” God’s love is not fake or fickle. God’s love is not puppy love. God’s love stems from who God is – His divine nature. Therefore, God’s love is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. God’s love is endless, everlasting, and forever constant.

We have seen that because we are “Loved by the Beloved” we are also “Blessed by the Beloved,” “Chosen by the Beloved,” and “Adopted by the Beloved.”

Embrace the love of God today by resting in Christ.

After the Apostle describes all the ways we are Loved by the Beloved he writes,***“****to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.”*

Let’s close out this series giving God the praise He deserves for loving us, blessing us, choosing us, and adopting us! Let us rejoice and be glad and give glory to Him for His grace, and for freely bestowing on us the love of the Beloved!

**Call to Prayer**

*Keep yourselves in the love of God* (Jude1.21)

**Benediction**

*For I am convinced that . . . nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Rom.8.38-39)