

September 3, 2020

Today's words of hope.

How are family, culture, and Christ inter-related or connected? Through Christ we are born into a new culture; the culture of the Christian faith. How did this emergence into a new culture come about? How are people brought into the family of God? Is it something we did? Or was it something accomplished by God? Today I want to facilitate a greater understanding regarding how one comes to be in the family and culture of Christ. Read with me from Ephesians 1:3-6.

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.

People are brought into the family of God by adoption through Jesus. John writes, "As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12). God promises "I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters" (2 Corinthians 6:18). Moreover, Paul asserts "... We have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if we are children [of God], then we are heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:15-17). This adoption was accomplished according to the kind intention of God's will.

Once we are adopted into the family and culture of Christ then we are obligated to do the will of God, our heavenly Father. Yet, we ask, "How

can I know the will of God?" We seek God's will through prayer and the study of His word. Then God's will is the rule of our daily life. At the very least we can say that God's will is for us to "Love one another" (John 15:17).

What are the results of adoption? We receive the blessings of God; specifically, God's spiritual blessings. This does not mean that we will not experience or receive physical blessings rather the emphasis of this passage is upon the spiritual results of a relationship with God.

The blessings are received through Christ. Five of these blessings are described in the following sentences. First is joy. Jesus teaches, "These things [teachings regarding our need to abide in Christ] I have spoken to you, so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full" (John 15:11).

The second blessing is life. The Good Shepherd came so that His sheep, that is those who believe in Jesus, might have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10). Third, is the Spirit of God. We are told to be filled with the Spirit and not with wine (Ephesians 5:18). The fourth blessing is wisdom. It is desirable that we be "filled with all spiritual wisdom and understanding so that we will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord" (Colossians 1:9-10).

Our fifth blessing is God. The author of Ephesians prays that those who would follow Jesus would be filled up to the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19). That is the presence of God now indwelling us by the Holy Spirit enables us to be more Christ-like. This happens through sanctification.

Once God is fully in our lives it becomes clear that salvation and God's sovereignty are inter-connected. God chose His children through Jesus Christ. Jesus asserts, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you should go out and bear fruit, and that your

fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you” (John 15:16). According to our Scripture God’s children are chosen before the foundation of the world, that is before creation. Jesus while speaking of His second coming teaches, “The King [Jesus] will say to those on His right, ‘Come you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world’” (Matthew 25:34).

In order to accomplish God’s plan of salvation He sent Jesus His only begotten Son into the world so that through Him all who would believe in Him by faith would not perish but have everlasting life. In this way, that is belief in Jesus as Savior, one is born or adopted into a new family and culture. This is done for the expressed purpose of glorifying our heavenly Father.

Why did God choose His children beforehand? Because He loves us. Our scripture text reads, “In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ...” How does this work with our freedom to choose? I don’t know. I only know that God loves us so much that He sent Jesus His only begotten Son to die in our place, to pay a debt we do not want to pay, and to live again so that through Him we have the hope of forgiveness of sins and eternal life and fellowship with God. This is the nature of our new family and culture—a love that willingly gives of itself.

Today I want you to consider the culture in which you live. Is it a culture that gives of itself so that others may live as well? Does your culture point to the everlasting and eternal God, our heavenly Father? Please let God adopt you today as His son or daughter as you in faith accept God’s grace through Jesus. Pray with me.

Gracious Lord and Savior, I thank You heavenly Father for all who will believe in Your Son, Jesus, God in the flesh through these words today. In Jesus' name I give You thanks for answering my prayer, amen.

Until the nets are full