

Ephesians

Ephesians 1:5-6 - Our amazing brother

The summary to Ephesians 1:4 was “how obvious it becomes for us to love and trust the Son like the Father does,” because, as verse 5 now explains, it’s “**through Jesus Christ**” that the Father’s “pleasure and will” are unfolding. But can we actually know what the Father’s pleasure and will are?

Yes we can, verse 5, because “In love the Father predestined us to be **adopted as his sons,**” or as John 1:12 phrases it, “he gave us the right to **become his children.**” That’s his pleasure and will. But how can our Father, being spirit, have children produced by physical humans? Or how can the children we as males and females produce become his children too?

Paul’s answer to that is in the word, “**adopted.**” In Greek it’s *huiiothesia* (we-owe-thess-eeah) which means “making someone a son.” And people could do that legally back then too. If you didn’t have a natural born son to pass things on to, you could legally adopt an unrelated male and make him your son and legal heir. It was very popular among the upper classes if they didn’t have children, because with adoption you could keep your family name and dynasty going, and keep all your wealth, status and privileges in the family too.

A wealthy childless man could even adopt a slave as his son, as in the fictional movie *Ben Hur*, when the Roman admiral, Quintus Arrius, adopted Judah ben Hur as his son for saving his life. But in real life too, the childless Julius Caesar adopted his great nephew, Octavius, to succeed him - as Caesar Augustus, the first Roman emperor. But poor old Augustus was also childless, so he adopted his stepson as his successor, who became the emperor Tiberius.

So adoption was perfectly legal and acceptable in Paul’s day, which came in jolly handy for childless Roman emperors, but also for Paul when scouring the culture of his day for anything that would adequately and beautifully describe what our amazing Father has managed to set up for us.

And in adoption we see what the Father has done, because **he too** made it perfectly legal and acceptable for physical humans to become his children. He was the first to do so too, beating the Greeks and Romans to it by a long shot, because in Romans 9:4 Paul talks of “the people of (Old Testament) Israel, to whom belongs the **adoption as sons** (same Greek word).”

So God made it his pleasure and will to **include adoption** in his plan for us humans. But what did adoption mean to him? Well, when it came to adopting the Israelites as his sons, he definitely meant “sons,” because he calls Israel “My son, my first-born” (Exodus 4:22). In God’s mind, then, **adoption was just like a natural birth**. To be adopted by him you became as much his child as a natural born child, and you were just as loved too - as we see in what he gave to the Israelites as his adopted children, because in **Romans 9:4** it was to them that he “revealed his glory, with them he made the covenants, for them he provided the law to guide them and a temple to meet with him in, and to them he gave absolute promises they could trust in.”

In God’s mind, therefore, he wanted his adopted children to have everything he had to give, just like human fathers want everything for their kids. So Paul had that picture to fall back on too, in trying to find something, anything, to make the Father’s “pleasure and will” real to us. On the one hand, Paul had the Greek and Roman **cultural** meaning of adoption, pictured by the emperors and wealthy upper class passing on all their wealth, status and privileges to an adopted son, but he also had the references in the Old Testament describing **God’s adoption of Israel** as his son too, and the tremendous privileges that went along with that as well.

On two fronts, then, Paul had a word he could use in **Ephesians 1:5** to picture what the Father takes such pleasure in making possible. And it is a pleasure too, because it’s “**In love,**” **Ephesians 1:4**, that our Father “predestined us,” **verse 5**, “to be adopted as his sons.” So having established it’s the Father’s great pleasure to legally adopt us physical humans as his very own children, what does all this mean to us today?

Well, Paul writes in **Romans 8:17**, “Now that we’re God’s children it means we’re **his heirs** as well.” Because we are his children we **automatically** inherit all that our Father has to offer. And “all” means all too, because in **Galatians 4:5** Paul tells us we “receive the **full rights of sons.**” Whatever our Father has to give, we have full right and access to all of it. And not only is it our Father’s pleasure to do that for us, he also stamped it as a legal right in his will.

But, hang on, in **Hebrews 1:2** didn’t the Father legally “appoint **Jesus** as heir of all things”? And rightfully so too, because Jesus really is his Son, and always has been, no adoption needed. But **in adopting us as his heirs as well**, the Father put us on exactly the same footing as Jesus. We’re as much his sons as Jesus is. And Paul confirmed that for us in **Romans 8:17** by calling us “**co-heirs with Christ.**” We are equal heirs with him. But isn’t that just a tad unfair to Jesus - because look how much **he** accomplished compared to us.

And the Father certainly took that into account, by “exalting Jesus to the highest place” in **Philippians 2:9**, and “crowning him with glory and honour” in **Hebrews 2:9**. But what are we to make of **verse 10**? Because it’s not just Jesus whom the Father crowns with glory and honour, he’s also “bringing MANY sons to glory.” And they’re all “sons” too, just like Jesus. Same glory, then, as well.

It seems staggering that we should share Jesus’ glory as such imperfect beings compared to him. But, continuing in **Hebrews 2:10**, “it was fitting” to our Father to make it so, that “both the one who makes men holy (that’s Jesus),” **verse 11**, “and those who are made holy (that’s us) are of the same family.” So we’re as much members of God’s family as Jesus is, which makes legal sense too, because we and Jesus share the same Father. And in the Father’s definition of “family” we all share the same rights and privileges. No one gets more than anyone else, including Jesus.

And Jesus is OK with that? Totally, because as **verse 11** says, “**Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters.**” He has no problem at all being on the same footing as us, despite him having to do all the work and being made “perfect through suffering (verse 10)” to get us there.

But that’s our Jesus. He wants us where he is enjoying the same glory the Father’s given him, which we see in **John 17:24**, when he said to his Father, “I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to **see my glory**, the glory you have given me.” And it wasn’t just “seeing” his glory Jesus was after either, because in **verse 22** he said, “I have **given** them the glory you gave me.” Jesus wants us **experiencing** his glory too, “so we may have the full measure of his joy in us.” When it comes to what Jesus wants for us, it’s his full glory and full joy, and nothing less.

So our Father set us up with an **amazing brother**, who not only loves sharing his glory with us, he’s also the one through whom our Father made such glory for us possible. Which ties in with the summary of **Ephesians 1:4**, as to “how obvious it becomes for us to love and trust Jesus like the Father does,” because in Jesus we have a brother who loves us being his brothers and sisters. He loves us being co-heirs of everything the Father has given him. He loves the Father’s plan of creating humans he could adopt as his very own children so their family could grow. It was all so splendid to Jesus, he was willing to do anything to make it happen - including being a big brother to each of us personally every day, as we see in **John 17:26**, when he prayed that “I myself may be in them.” Imagine having a big brother **wanting to be that close to us**, so we know we’re loved with the same glorious love he experiences.

And the thanks for all this, of course, goes to our Father, “to the praise of his glorious grace,” **Ephesians 1:6**, because it was the Father’s wild plan to adopt us as his children so that his forever Son Jesus could be our brother. To him there’s no greater gift than that, because he’s always known his Son and what he’s like, and therefore what an amazing brother he would be to us.

But what in the Father’s mind makes Jesus so amazing? Well, Jesus’ own words in **John 14:18** give us a clue, when he told his disciples, “I will not leave you as orphans.” And he really meant orphans too; in Greek it’s *orphanous*. To Jesus, then, that is the saddest and most pathetic state for any of us to find ourselves in, being orphans deprived of parental love. But what he meant by parental love was the love of his Father. What Jesus could not stand the thought of, therefore, was we humans careening through life without ever realizing we have a Father whose pleasure and will is to make us his children.

So Jesus came to let us know that. Which is why the Father loved him so much, because Jesus was willing to go through whatever it took to get it into our heads that we are loved. To Jesus there was no more glorious thing in existence than that. So he came here as one loved by the Father to express in word and action exactly what our Father wants us to know, that he loves us as his very own children.

So when Jesus says in **verse 18**, “I will not leave you as orphans; **I will come to you,**” Jesus wants to get that point across to us **personally** that we aren’t orphans at all. Quite the opposite; we have an amazing Father whose pleasure and will has always been to make us his children. So this is what Jesus makes real to us personally, which he’s best equipped to do, because being a child of the Father himself **he** knows how real the Father’s love is.

And all this Jesus wishes for us because of his love for his Father and his love for us. The hope then being that we see the kind of brother we’ve got and we love him for it, because, **verse 21**, “He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself (or make myself real) to him.” So not only do we experience our heavenly Father’s love for us being real, we also get to experience our heavenly **brother’s** love for us being real too.

And our Father set it up this way “to the praise of his glorious grace,” **Ephesians 1:6**, “which he has freely given us in the One he loves” - **so that we come to love and trust his Son like he does.**

To the Father there is no greater gift he could give us than coming to know his Son and the love that he has for us. And it’s in the next few verses that we see how the Father made his Son’s love for us real.