

WILDFIRE, CHRISTMAS AND THE LOVE OF GOD

(Ephesians 1:5-6)

Two weeks before Christmas day, people's hearts and minds are engulfed in fear, anxiety and grief in light of the devastation of the Southern California wildfire. These natural disasters are manifest evidence that we are living in a fallen earth which groans for its deliverance from its bondage to sin and corruption (Rom. 8:20,22). More importantly, calamities like this should drive us to derive our ultimate comfort and consolation from the love of God. After all, this is what Christmas is all about: the immense love of God in Christ towards unworthy and undeserving sinners (Psalm 33:5; 103:8-11; 1 John 4:9-10). Reflecting on Paul's message to the Ephesian Christians, let's consider three encouraging truths about God's fatherly love.

- 1. In His love, God our Father assures us of our _____ in Christ.***
God's fatherly love for us is a predestining love. To predestine simply means to set or determine one's destiny beforehand or to mark out someone for a divine purpose. From eternity past, God has already purposed in His mind and heart to predestine us for adoption as His children (Eph. 1:5). Adoption is the believer's permanent and eternal placement into the family of God. It is God's loving act whereby He rescues certain sinners from the dominion of Satan and places them into His eternal family. Adoption is God's gracious act of bestowing upon a believer of Christ the status of being the son and daughter of God (1 John 4:1). We become adopted children of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Our adoption comes to us as God's gracious gift at the expense of Jesus' redeeming sacrifice (Gal. 4:4-5). Since our divine adoption is according to purpose of God's will, we are forever safe and secure in the household of God.
 - 2. In His love, God our Father grants us _____ as His adopted children.***
Our adoption as sons emphasizes the truth that we are direct beneficiaries and inheritors of all the blessed privileges that belong to the children of God (Eph. 1:5). We enjoy intimate relationship with God whom we call Abba Father (Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:15). Our heavenly Father is not an abusive father, nor is He an absentee father. He is our Father who loves us with an everlasting love. As such, we could always depend on His fatherly care, provision, protection and discipline (Matt. 6:10-13, 31-33; Heb. 12:5-7). As God's adopted children, we are also guaranteed of our eternal inheritance in the Father's glorious kingdom (Gal. 4:7; Eph. 1:11; 1 Pet. 1:3-4; Matt. 25:34; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26-27).
 - 3. In His love, God our Father delights in our _____ of His glory.***
The ultimate goal of God in loving us and in predestining us to adoption as His sons and daughters in Christ is the praise of His glory (Eph. 1:6,12,14). God's glory is the inherent and revealed majesty of His divine worthiness, honor and splendor. Throughout our Christian life and for all eternity, God finds His delight in our wholehearted praise of the glory of His grace in loving us, undeserving sinners, the way He loves His one and only Beloved Son Jesus (Matt. 3:17; John 17:23).
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