

Chosen by God Ephesians 1:3-6

Ephesians 1:3-6 (ESV) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, [4] even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love [5] he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, [6] to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

Introduction

- A. These four short verses are the beginning of one long sentence that runs through verse 14. Paul greets and then cannot contain his enthusiasm (intense enjoyment from divine inspiration).
 - 1. Paul is effected by the grace of God (Paul marvels at God's plan of salvation of God).
 - 2. How do the devastating truths of this Scripture affect you?
- B. The title of this sermon is **Chosen by God**. My goal is to first show you the doctrine, second to examine inappropriate responses, and third to show you some appropriate responses.

I. The doctrine (robust and rich).

- A. Notice how Paul begins. As Paul unfolds the plan of salvation he begins with God the father. One, this God has blessed us (believers) in Christ with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places.

Genesis 1:1 (ESV) In the beginning, God created the heavens in the earth.

- 1. Who made God? God is without beginning. God is one yet He consists in three persons (the Father 4-6, the Son 7-12, and the Holy Spirit 11-14).
- 2. Paul does not begin with us (our wants, needs, issues, etc). Paul does not begin with the work of Jesus Christ. Paul begins with God the father.
- 3. God blessed us (though the best of us deserved wrath) with:
 - Every spiritual blessing (spiritual more important than physical)
 - In the heavenly places (owned now but not yet possessed)
 - In Christ (leave out Christ, no blessings)

- B. Two, this God chose us (believers).

- 1. When? Before the world existed. There are some 10 steps in the order of salvation. The first step is election because it is before we are. The doctrine of election is this:

The verb 'elect' or 'choose' ... expresses the idea of picking out, or selecting, something or someone from a number of available alternatives. J.I. Packer in *God's Words*, p 158-159

- C. Three, in love God predestined us for adoption.

- 1. Adoption is an act of God (not us) whereby we who believe are now family. You may remember the gospel in three words: Adoption through propitiation.

Ex: The birth of a child is a major event in a family. It was also a major event in our family

when we adopted Matt. Matt now had family (we now have family).

2. Adoption, done correctly, is motivated by love. We say something like this: I'll take that one and bring them into my family.
3. Adoption is done according to the purpose of the will of God.

Ex: In *Fiddler on the Roof* we the audience experience the play visually. Behind the scenes, other things go on that we don't see. Just like election and adoption.

- D. This is glorious doctrine. We are blessed in Christ with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places, God chose us, and in love adopted us into His family.

II. Inappropriate responses to this doctrine (I will only describe three but they seem to have a similar root, namely, a lack of humility). These are not in any order of priority.

- A. One, is to respond in anger. Please understand this doctrine from Ephesians 1:3-6 will be disliked (even hated) by some. Who would do that?

1. Natural man (sinners) because they believe it insults them (I am good enough).
2. Religious folks (meaning not godly).

Ex: When Jesus began His public ministry (see Luke 4:14-30) he announced that God chooses some and not others. The response was anger (over a cliff).

3. Believers lacking in knowledge (the Word of God is both milk and meat). We tend to forget that we all are blind in some ways or at some times.

Ephesians 1:16-18a (ESV) I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, [17] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, [18] having the eyes of your hearts enlightened.

- B. Two, is to be argumentative. Historically there are two sides (Calvinists and Arminians - beware of using labels). A common response is an argument (it always takes two).

This question is not to be approached in an argumentative spirit, nor in a party spirit. It is never to be approached with heat or with dogmatism; it is a subject to be approached with reverence, and with a sense of worship. More and more do I agree with those who say that there should be a sense in which the Scriptures should always be read by us on our knees. If we realize that it is God speaking to us, surely that must be the way to approach it. Yet how often are these great and glorious statements discussed and debated with heat and acrimony and anger. We are on holy ground here, and we should take off our shoes from off our feet. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in *Ephesians 1*, p 84

- C. Three, would be apathy or indifference (yawn). Can't we dismiss this and get on with our lives?

1. No. We cannot dismiss this doctrine because we live what we believe. From doctrine comes action, and from action comes fruit.

III. The appropriate responses. I will list three of these (they come straight from the text).

- A. The first appropriate response is to seek to live holy and blameless lives.

1. Some folks think that grace leads to laziness and a lack of holiness or godliness. This is thinking that is opposed to the Scriptures. That is never grace.

Titus 2:11-14 (ESV) For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, [12] training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, [13] waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, [14] who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

2. We (believers) are chosen by God to be holy and blameless (verse 4). That is our position in Christ and we aim to grow in godliness so our lives shine like light.

B. The second appropriate response is to praise God for His glorious grace.

1. The Christian cannot help but sing.

Ex: Charles Wesley - "O for a thousand tongues to sing my great redeemer's praise."

C. The third appropriate response is to enjoy grace.

1. The gospel is good news (great news). You and I are saved by the deeds and sacrifice of another person. We are saved by grace, through faith. We contribute nothing.

Perhaps the most difficult task for us to perform is to rely on God's grace and God's grace alone for salvation. It is difficult for our pride to rest on grace. Grace is for other people - for beggars. We don't want to live on a heavenly welfare system. We want to earn our own way and atone for our sins. We like to think that we will go to heaven because we deserve to be there. R.C. Sproul quoted by Jerry Bridges in *Transforming Grace*, p 59

Ex: When I encounter a joyless Christian my foremost concern is this. Are they hopeless? They need to be hopeless to get grace.

2. Thinking that our response consists of "ought to" leads to legalism and joylessness. This is truth-oriented, not feeling driven.

We have loaded down the gospel of grace in Christ with a lot of "oughts." "I ought to do this," and "I ought to do that." "I ought to be more committed, more disciplined, more obedient." When we think or teach this way, we are substituting duty and obligation a loving response to God's grace. Jerry Bridges in *Transforming Grace*, p 75

D. When we understand grace (election and adoption that we never earned) we effectively:

1. Eliminate boasting and pride.
2. Love God (His choice was made before I was).
3. Are encouraged to evangelize (fruit awaits us).

E. But, the doctrine raises questions. If God chooses some it means He doesn't choose all. Can that be accurate? It is called reprobation.

1. Election is active, reprobation is passive. God passes over some. They are free to respond but they do not choose to do so.

Election and reprobation surround and protect God's glory, for they remind us that God is absolutely free and sovereign. God does whatever he wants with his universe. He is glorified in the damnation of the reprobate as well as the salvation of the elect; his justice and mercy are both glorious because they both demonstrate his divine sovereignty. James Boice in *The Doctrines of Grace*, p 105

2. I don't know why God doesn't save everyone. It seems He desires to display both His justice and His mercy. I do not know why I (or you) was chosen.

3. Two Scriptures that serve us well:

Deuteronomy 29:29 (ESV) "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."

Isaiah 55:8 (ESV) For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.

Close

- A. Theology done correctly leads us to worship God. As we move through Ephesians 1 we will see phrases like "to the praise of his glorious grace " and "to the praise of his glory."

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see. *Amazing Grace* by John Newton

- B. Paul cannot contain his enthusiasm because he marvels that mercy and grace were extended to him despite his considerable sin. No sin is presently beyond God's grace.