

Chosen

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Bible Text: Ephesians 1:4

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As the Lord may be graciously pleased to help us, I would ask you to turn with me to Paul's epistle to the Ephesians chapter one and verse four.

“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.”¹

Those of you who were here on the past Wednesday evening will remember that we spake from the third verse. So I am just going to read again the two verses, verse three and verse four.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.²

Election, then, is this foundation from which and by which all blessings flow.

The Lord has a chosen people. It was evident in the Old Testament that God chose Israel to be his people and they were to be a type of the true Church of Jesus Christ. He separated this people out. He gave them his holy laws. He watched over them and protected them. He chastised them when they went astray, but his love continued toward them all their days.

Now in the New Testament times the Lord Jesus Christ having come to deliver his people, the covenant of grace is toward all those that are found in him. And whether in Old Testament or New Testament, they were chosen, elect vessels of mercy according to the predetermined will of almighty God.

Now we know the day in which we live that these doctrines, for the most part, are not received by men, because man wants to think that he has something inherently good within himself and that there is something that he can produce from without himself to present to God which God must and will receive. But that is blatantly a lie for we see it

¹ Ephesians 1:4.

² Ephesians 1:3-4.

in the first children that were born upon the face of this earth and how God distinguished between them and showed the mark and evidence of a true child of God and one that was a reprobate.

Now, of course, man in his nice feeling does not want to hear that there is a distinction to be made between man and man. He want to put all upon the same level. He want to mark them all in the same way. He wants to think that the reprobate may turn himself and present himself to God in an acceptable manner.

But, of course, when the time came for Cain and Abel to present themselves to God, they came with their offerings and in this they were both alike. They both presented offerings unto God. They recognized that God was almighty, that he was the sovereign potentate over all things and that they recognized that as poor creatures of the earth, they should do obeisance unto God. And so they bring their offerings to present to God for his acceptance.

But Cain brought that which was of the earth, earthy, that which the labor of his own hands had produced. And his gift was not acceptable to God. But how different his brother. Abel brought an offering of blood, a sacrifice that had been made.

But here in these very early times in the history of this world we see what God requires, an offering which is acceptable in his sight, an offering not without blood. And we see in this how that by faith Abel saw the sacrifice of the perfect Savior present himself without fault before his Father in heaven and received from the Father those words, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."³

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world."⁴

I like to think that the words that are written and presented to our view are plain words. Man has a tendency to want to complicate the gospel. For the most part these things are simply presented for our consideration. And these words are unambiguous. They are very plain, surely, even to one who would not determine himself to be a scholar.

But it present to us this, that God made a choice of some. But that choice was made from before this world was created and that there was a purpose in his calling them and the evidence would be seen and God's choice justified in the blessings that he would pour out upon his people.

And, again, it is very clear that this was in the mind of God and no others because no others existed then. He, that is almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the one eternal God, he hath chosen us. And if we analyze those words with some tenderness, how amazing those words are.

³ Matthew 3:17, 17:15; Mark 1:11; 2 Peter 1:17.

⁴ Ephesians 1:4.

We have two things—two as we might determine them to be opposites—him, us. And then between we have the word chosen. And to make the matter sure he has or he hath chosen us.

This is what God has done. This is something which is in the past, accomplished, performed, settled, secured. He, the almighty God... or do we not live in a sad day when man want to bring God down from heaven and view him as one of his own, to rob him of his majesty and of his greatness, his supremacy and his power and to make him some object of their own sinful, wicked imagination.

But God is not such a God as man may imagine. He is the God that is presented to us in the Bible. He is that God who first created. We can make things out of what we have. A man in many places can become very adaptable to making things, marvelous things, wonderful constructions, beautiful objects. But he has made them from something that already existed. He has never brought something out of nothing.

But when God created the world he simply spake. He commanded and all was done according to his mind, purpose and will. God made heaven and earth and all that in them is. God made man also after his own image, made he him. But that image was marred when man fell into sin. And so we are born in sin and shapen in iniquity. We have lost our first estate. We are fallen creatures. We are unworthy for anything good.

Then all the greater but wonder how marvelous that God hath chosen us.

But we need to determine who is Paul referring to when he says, “us.” Is it not a matter which is vital to us? But we may know that we are the eternal choice of God.

Paul here is writing to Ephesus, but he is not writing to all the Ephesians. He is not writing to all that would call themselves Christian. We have it in the first verse—as I believe we pointed out last week—Paul is writing to the saints.

What is a saint? I believe we may consider it this way. A saint is a sinner that is saved by free and sovereign grace. Again, man has painted a picture, an image of a saint with angels’ wings who lives in utter perfection. But saint upon earth are still sinners. But they are saved sinners and they have that seal of the Holy Spirit, that identification that they have been set apart to be the Lord’s people.

Then there were in Ephesus at that time a group of people united together in the common faith, one in the Lord Jesus Christ who were identified by the apostles of being saintly.

Now, the people of God should ever seek to present themselves as those that are saintly, not that we will ever find perfection this side of the grave, but we should ever be aiming toward that mark.

He, then, hath chosen us. And I believe that we can expand these words to go beyond those just at Ephesus. I believe these words were true of the Romans, of the Galatians, of

the Corinthians, of the Colossians and others. And they are true of the saint of God in every generation from that day to this. And the Lord Jesus has a people at this time as at any other time.

“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.”⁵

Chosen in eternity past. And, you will notice this, that they are chosen in him. In whom? In the Lord Jesus Christ because Christ will be the mediator of his people. He came for that purpose that he might ransom their souls from the grave, that he might make atonement by the shedding of his own precious, meritorious blood, that he might wash them and make them clean that they might be presented to God perfect. For it is Christ instead of us is seen when we approach to God.

In him. And this is the only way that a person will be chosen because, again, God has determined it.

Let us also consider about the character of God, that he is a God that cannot change. Therefore, he is a God that does not change. Man likes to think that we live in a modern day, that things are different now to what they used to be. And, I suppose, to give some credence to that there are many things that have changed. But these really are superficial things. God has not changed. His Word has not changed. The way in which he operates has not changed because God saw his sovereign work from the beginning unto the end.

We might have a project in mind, something that we want to accomplish. We may have some idea of how we want to go about it, the things that we need, that we require to bring it about. But when it comes to it we have not always exactly worked according to our mind. Sometimes we make alterations to suit some commodity or other. But God never changes. He knew exactly what he would do and how he would do it. Nothing ever takes him by surprise. All that he has determined will surely come to pass.

God, then, is an unchangeable one. And, as it is said concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, that he is the same yesterday and today and forever. Then those who are chosen are chosen from before the world began, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God in Christ Jesus.”⁶

Or to emphasize this glorious truth in Romans chapter nine and verse 11 the apostle speaks about two children.

“For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.”⁷

Let me read that again. It is a very important verse.

⁵ 2 Timothy 2:19.

⁶ 1 Peter 1:2.

⁷ Romans 9:11.

“For the children...”⁸ This is the two children in the womb of Rebekah.

The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.⁹

These two babes in the womb of their mother, who have not yet seen the light of day, who have no mind or intelligence that they can commit or do anything good or evil and yet God says of the one, “I love him,” and of the other, “I hate him.”

Solemn, yet sovereign election. The purposes of God determined.

“But then,” says the carnal man, “Well, does it matter then how I live? If I am elect I am elect. If I am not elect, I can do nothing about it. Therefore let us eat and drink and be merry for tomorrow we die.”

Doesn’t it show something of the natural and depraved heart of man that he could so consider such a concept in his mind. But here, you see, the apostle deals, as it were, with this situation.

“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy.”¹⁰

God has not called us because we are holy, but God has called us that he might make us holy.

“Be ye holy,”¹¹ saith the Lord Jesus Christ, “for I am holy.”¹²

But we should be holy.

Isn’t this the very purpose of God’s calling, that he might separate us out?

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.”¹³

Is not the Christian to seek to live a holy life? Does not God give unto us through his only beloved Son grace that we might live unto him?

⁸ Romans 9:11.

⁹ Romans 9:11-13.

¹⁰ Ephesians 1:4.

¹¹ 1 Peter 1:16.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ 2 Corinthians 6:17.

You see, conversion is not just a slight alteration in the opinions or feelings of mankind. Conversion is a complete and utter turning around. Once we loved sin. Will you acknowledge that? Do you confess it? There was a time in our lives when we loved sin. And you may be able to go on and say, “Yes and we hated what was good because we saw no interest in it.”

But when God came and dealt with us, he turned us around so that we walked in the opposite direction and now we hate the things that we once loved and love the things that once we hated. Now we love the Lord Jesus Christ and if we love him...

“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”¹⁴

And what is that commandment? To be holy, to be like the Savior.

Well, look in the gospels. See the perfect life of the dear Lord Jesus Christ. In every circumstance under every eventuality he retained that which was good and could never point at any fault in him because there was none.

“Holy, harmless, undefiled,”¹⁵ the Son of the living God.

And so we see a [?] of true holiness which we are to follow.

Where do our desires lie? Do they lie in the things of this world or in the things of God? Do we do that which pleases the god of this world, Satan? Or do we desire to do the things that please almighty God, the true God of heaven and earth? And oh what a mercy if we can say, “our God. This God us our God forever and forever. He will be our guide even unto death.”

And it is a following on to know the Lord. Following the footsteps of the flock, following the pattern given and the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. But we shall be holy and blameless or without blame before him in love.

This world lies in sin and wickedness. And solemnly in the day in which we live it is only too evident how that Satan has raised his ugly head and is perverting the whole race of mankind. Yet, you see, there is a remnant, according to the election of grace of whom Christ has said, “They shall be mine.”

And so he calls them. He calls them by his grace. He quickens them by his Spirit. He calls them out of the world and unto himself. He calls them that they might be sanctified by his Spirit to be made holy.

Oh, isn't it something that we should ever pray for, something that we should ever be pursuing? And do we not mourn our failures in this respect that we come short of the glory of God?

¹⁴ John 14:15.

¹⁵ Hebrews 7:26.

What is heaven? It is that holy, happy place where sin no more defiles. Do we not desire to go to heaven at last to live in perfect holiness? Then should we not be striving for it now, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus our Lord that we might be holy?

Oh, how difficult it is to be holy in a world of sin. And yet, you see, we have some illustrations in the Word of God who those in the midst of persecution and opposition yet retained their integrity who lived lives that could be identified even by those of this world.

You take Joseph. How provoked he was to do evil. And yet because he was chosen of God and called by the Spirit, how could he do this great evil and sin against God? He couldn't. But that rolls him into deeper difficulties. And yet even in the prison they had to acknowledge that this was a good man, one who lived a holy life in the sight of God and man.

We have people like Daniel, people like Paul the apostle, the writer of this epistle, how he was persecuted on many occasions and yet he still retained that life which was exemplary that he would be holy as his master was holy, without blame or blameless.

What fault could they find in Daniel except they could find it with regard to the worship of his God? And so they produce a false god for him to bow down to, but he refuses. Would rather bear the consequences instead. And God honored him in it and it showed him even more holy in his life without blame before him.

“Thou God seest me.”¹⁶

“The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth.”¹⁷

God looks upon the world that he has created. He looked upon all mankind, but he looks with divine affection upon his people because he sees them walking in a course which is opposite to this world.

Sometimes it is like the fish that has to swim upstream, going in the opposite direction from the main flow. And it seems like that with the people of God sometimes. But they are walking in opposition to this world for the ungodly and unholy laws that are being promulgated at this time. But it will bring us into collision with those who seek to procure wickedness.

But the disciples could be identified as those which had been with Jesus.

How can we be with Jesus and not be holy?

¹⁶ Genesis 16:13.

¹⁷ 2 Chronicles 16:19.

Holy, holy, holy Lord, we love thy holy name. We love the character, the person, the work and all that concerns the Lord Jesus Christ himself. And it is our ardent desire that we, too, might be holy. And we mourn and grieve because we are not as holy as we want to be, because we see ourselves dyed and stained with sin. Our all is nothing worth. But to be holy and blameless before him in love; isn't this the very key that really unlocks the door to our understanding of all that has gone before in love?

What will we not do for those that we really love? And are we not exhorted in the Word of God to put God first, to love the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul, being?

As it said in the words of the song, "We love thee, Lord Jesus."

Do we love the Lord? The more we love him, the more we will become like him, the more these excellencies will be perceived upon our Spirit and in our lives. And others will see it, too. To be holy because we love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth.

Well, says Gatsby, "Oh that my soul could love and praise him more." Is not that your desire? Do you not want to love and praise him more day by day? Then our lives surely must reflect this. And we need to search ourselves. Are we walking according to Scripture? Are we seeking to know and do the will of God? Or are we still yet taken up with this dark world of sin?

What is most important in our lives? What comes first? Is it Christ first and last and all in all? Either he the first and last and all in all or he is nothing at all. Where does he stand in our affections?

Oh, to draw near and bow before him and acknowledge him to be the Lord. We cannot look at a person and point to them and say they are elect. But the Lord Jesus Christ has told us, "By their fruits ye shall know them."¹⁸

A good fruit doesn't come upon a bad tree neither does a bad fruit come upon a good tree. But good fruit is to be found upon a good tree.

How do we live? Do we live to the honor and glory of God or do we live to ourselves?

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we..."¹⁹
You and I, if we are chosen of God, "...that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."²⁰

May the Lord bless his Word to us. Amen.

¹⁸ Matthew 7:20.

¹⁹ Ephesians 1:4.

²⁰ Ibid.