

INTRODUCTION

1. We are in a new series called “The Doctrines of Grace” or “The Five Points of Calvinism.”
2. We have already looked at the first point, *total depravity*, and tonight we’re considering the second, *unconditional election*.
3. As we consider this truth tonight, I want to invite you to turn in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter one as we look at verse 4.
4. Verse 4 is a very familiar verse of Scripture to any child of God. Notice what it says, “Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.”
5. Paul begins this letter in verse 3 by eulogizing or speaking well of God.
6. Why does he do this?
7. Verse 3 says because God “has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”
8. Now beginning at verse 4 running through verse 14 he gives what some of those blessings are.
9. He begins in verse 4 with *election*.
10. In verses 5-6 he mentions *predestination* and *adoption*.

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11. In verses 7-8, he mentions our *redemption* and *forgiveness*.
12. In verses 8-10, he talks about God making “known to us the mystery of His will,” in other words, *revelation*, and in verses 11-14 he concludes with our *inheritance*.
13. No wonder Paul blesses God!
14. God has blessed us with election, predestination, adoption, redemption, forgiveness, revelation, and inheritance.
15. Unfortunately we will not be able to look at all these spiritual blessings, because that is not our purpose in this study.
16. But we must keep them in mind to help us understand the context of what Paul is saying here in Ephesians 1:4.
17. The doctrine of election is not a new teaching for the apostle Paul
18. He references it over 50 times in his 13 epistles.
19. It is sad that there are some in the church who hate this doctrine and lead others to hate it because it is a glorious doctrine.
20. This doctrine has certainly divided many in the church.
21. A.W. Pink said, “No doctrine is so detested by proud human

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nature as this one, which make nothing of the creature and everything of the Creator; yea, at no other point is the enmity of the carnal mind so blatantly and hotly evident” (The Doctrine of Election).

22. Without the doctrine of election we would not understand salvation.
23. We would be left to “boast” thinking we had something to do with it.
24. But because it is here in God’s Word, it confirms the opposite—our salvation is wholly of God.
25. He calls, elects, chooses— He is in control of our salvation.
26. A.W. Pink again says, “God is not working at random: the gospel has been sent forth on no uncertain mission: the final outcome in the conflict between good and evil has not been left indeterminate; how many are to be saved or lost depends not on the will of the creature. Everything was infallibly determined and immutably fixed by God from the beginning, and all that happens in time is but the accomplishment of what was ordained in eternity.”

So “Let it be plainly announced that salvation originated not in the will of man, but in the will of God (see John 1:13; Rom. 9:16), that were it not so none would or could be saved—for as the result of the fall man has lost all desire and will unto that which is good (John 5:40; Rom. 3:11)—and

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that even the elect themselves have to be made willing (Ps. 110:3), and loud will be the cries of indignation raised against such teaching” (The Doctrine of Election).

27. For those who say the Bible does NOT teach the doctrine of election, I want to invite you to just listen to the following verses:
- a) In John 15:16 Jesus said to His disciples, “You did not choose Me but ***I chose you***, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.”
 - b) Earlier in John 6:70 He said to them, “Did I Myself not ***choose*** you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?”
 - c) Acts 13:48 says, “When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.”
 - d) Romans 8:28, 30, 33; 9:11, 23; 11:5, 7, 28; 16:13
 - e) Eph.1:4; 2:10
 - f) Paul refers to the Colossians in Col.3:12 as “those who have been ***chosen of God***.”
 - g) When Paul sent his first letter to the Thessalonians, he was thankful to God for them after he saw their work of

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faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, he knew their “election by God” (1 Thess.1:4, NKJV).

- h) Paul said in his second letter to the Thessalonians that “**God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation** through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth” (2 Thess.2:13).
- i) When Paul was speaking with Timothy concerning persecution and suffering he said 2 Timothy 2:10, “For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are **chosen**, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.”
- j) When Paul wrote to Titus, he said in Titus1:1, “Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those **chosen of God** and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness.”
- k) 1 Peter 1:1-2 says, “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are **chosen** 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.”
- l) Psalm 65:4 says, “How blessed is the one whom You **choose** and bring near to You To dwell in Your courts.

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We will be satisfied with the goodness of Your house,
Your holy temple.”

- m) Psalm 105:6 says, “O seed of Abraham, His servant, O sons of Jacob, His **chosen** ones!”
 - n) Deuteronomy 7:6 says, “For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has **chosen** you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.”
 - o) Isaiah 43:20-21 says, “The beasts of the field will glorify Me, The jackals and the ostriches, Because I have given waters in the wilderness And rivers in the desert, To give drink to My **chosen** people. 21 "The people whom I formed for Myself Will declare My praise.”
28. What was the common truth in all of those verses? God’s choosing.
29. Salvation is God’s choice.
30. As we saw in our previous study of total depravity, man is dead in trespasses and sins and therefore unable to choose God.
31. As Acts 16:14 illustrates, God has to open the “heart to respond to the things spoken.”
32. When Paul went to Philippi, he went to a place “where [they]

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were supposing that there would be a place of prayer, and [they] sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled. A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and ***the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.***”

30. In other words, God’s gave her the faith to believe the gospel spoken by Paul.
31. According to verse 15, not just her but also “her household.”
32. Over and over in Scripture we hear that “salvation belongs to the Lord” (Ps.3:8).
33. It is, as David confessed in Psalm 51:12, “your salvation.”
34. Before we go any further, let me give you *the meaning of election* as it is presented in verse 4.

I. The Meaning of Election (v.4a)

“Just as He chose us in Him.”

A. Its Basis

Paul begins with “Just as.” This is the Greek word *kathos* and is translated “just as” or “according as.”

It refers back to the reason why Paul is blessing God.

It is “even as, in conformity to or with the fact” of His blessing.

Marvin Vincent says: “Explaining blessed us, in v. 3. His blessing is in conformity with the fact that He chose” (Vincent’s Word Studies).

Kenneth Wuest says, “Here *kathos* designates the ground of the ‘blessing’ and so is also the note of its grandeur. The ‘blessing’ proceeded on the divine election, and took effect in accordance with that. It has its foundation, therefore, in eternity, and is neither an incidental thing nor an afterthought of God” (Word’s Studies from the Greek NT).

“The writer asserts that God has blessed believers both because and to the extent that he elected them” (Lincoln, A. T. (2002). Vol. 42: Word Biblical Commentary : Ephesians).

B. It's Meaning

The word “chose” is the Greek word eklego. It means “to pick out, select” (Vine) or “choose out for one’s own self” (Wuest). This word “indicates God’s totally independent choice” (MacArthur).

This verb is “found twenty-two times in the New Testament.

It is used eight times of Christ’s choosing or electing his disciples (Luke 6:13; John 6:70; 13:18; 15:16 (twice),19; Acts 1:2; 2:4).

On one occasion Jesus is himself the person chosen (Luke 9:35).

Six times it is used in a context that does not pertain to salvation (Luke 10:42; 14:7; Acts 6:5; 15:7,22,25).

The remaining seven occurrences refer to men and women as the objects of election to eternal life (Mark 13:20; Acts 13:17; 1 Cor. 1:27 (twice),28; Eph. 1:4; James 2:5).

The noun “elect” (eklektos) is also used twenty-two times in the New Testament.

On three occasions Jesus is the “elect” one (Luke 23:35; 1 Peter 2:4,6), and in one text the word refers to angels

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(1 Tim. 5:21).

There is also one passage in which the word has no bearing on salvation (Rom. 16:13).

In the seventeen remaining cases the word is used of men and women as God’s “elect,” those chosen to eternal life (Matt. 22:14; 24:22,24,31; Mark 13:20,22,27; Luke 18:7; Rom. 8:33; Col. 3:12; 2 Tim. 2:10; Titus 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1; 2:9; 2 John 1,13; Rev. 17:14)” (Dr. Sam Storms, *The Biblical Terminology of Election, Enjoying God Ministries*, <http://www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article.asp?id=293>).

Charles Spurgeon said, “You cannot look to Christ before He has looked to you. If you are willing to be saved, He gave you that will” (*Effectual Calling*, March 30, 1856).

What is the doctrine of election?

It means “God elects, chooses, before the foundation of the world whom He will save and whom He will pass by and leave to unbelief and sin and rebellion. He does this unconditionally, not on the basis of foreseen faith that humans produce by a supposed power of ultimate self-determination (“free will”)” (John Piper, *Summary of the Sovereignty of God in Salvation*, December 10, 1997).

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One writer says, "Election is...that decree of God which He eternally makes, by which, with sovereign freedom, He chooses to Himself a people, upon whom He determines to set His love, whom He rescues from sin and death through Jesus Christ, unto Himself in everlasting glory" (Herman Hanko, *The Five Points of Calvinism*).

John Piper adds, "Election...is unconditional in that there is no condition man must meet before God chooses to save him. Man is dead in trespasses and sins. So there is no condition he can meet before God chooses to save him from his deadness. We are not saying that final salvation is unconditional. It is not. We must meet the condition of faith in Christ in order to inherit eternal life. But faith is not a condition for election. Just the reverse. Election is a condition for faith. It is because God chose us before the foundation of the world that he purchases our redemption at the cross and quickens us with irresistible grace and brings us to faith" (Sermon manuscript *What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism*, desiringgod.org).

John MacArthur, in his book, *The God Who Loves*, also writes, "We are redeemed not because of anything good in us, but because God chose us unto salvation. He chose certain individuals and passed over others, and He made that choice in eternity past, before the foundation of the world (Eph.1:4). Moreover, He chose without regard to anything He foresaw in the elect; simply 'according to

the good pleasure of His will [and] to the praise of the glory of His grace' (vv.4-6, KJV). Election arises from the love of God. Those whom He chose, He 'loved...with an everlasting love [and drew them to Himself] with lovingkindness' (Jer.31:3) [p.12].

"The meaning of the phrase 'before the foundation of the world' means 'from all eternity' (Fritz Rienecker, *The Linguistic Key to the Greek NT*, 521).

II. The Object of Election (v.4a)

"Just as He chose *us*."

The object of election "is 'us,' not everybody. This pronoun 'us' must be explained in the light of its context. Paul is writing to 'saints and believers' (verse 1).

He says that the Father has blessed 'us,' that is, 'all saints and believers' (here with special reference to those at Ephesus) including Paul (verse 3).

Therefore, when the apostle now continues, 'just as he elected us,' this 'us' cannot suddenly have reference to all men whatever, but must necessarily refer to all those who are (or who at one time or another in the history of the world are destined to become) 'saints and believers'; that is, to all those who, having been set apart by the Lord for the purpose of glorifying him, embrace him by means of a living faith" (Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953-2001). Vol. 7:

New Testament commentary : Exposition of Ephesians.
Accompanying biblical text is author's translation. New
Testament Commentary (75).

III. The Time of Election (v.4b)

“Before the foundation of the world.”

The word “foundation” is the Greek word *katabole*. It comes from *ballo*, which means “to throw,” and *kata*, which means, “down.” It is a ““throwing or laying down.” It describes God throwing down a universe into space, speaking a material universe into existence which had no existence before” (Kenneth Wuest, *Word Studies in the Greek NT*, 31).

A. Scripture Speaks of God’s Plan of Salvation in Jesus Christ Before the Foundation of the World

1 Peter 1:20-21 says, “For *He was foreknown before the foundation of the world*, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you 21 who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.”

The word “foreknown” is the Greek word *proginosko* which means “to know beforehand or in advance” (GING).

“In eternity past, before Adam and Eve sinned, God planned the redemption of sinners through Jesus Christ.

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The Father did not react to the Fall with a last-minute fix; before the Fall—even before the creation—He predetermined to send His Son as the Savior” (John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*).

1. In Acts 2:23 when Peter was preaching to the Jewish people on the day of Pentecost, he said Jesus was “delivered over by ***the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God***, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.”
2. In Acts 4:27-28, after the apostles were persecuted for preaching Jesus, they prayed, ““For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ***28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.***”
3. In 2 Timothy 1:8-9, Paul told Timothy to not “be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, ***9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.***”
4. In Matthew 25:34 Jesus tells us that “the kingdom” was “***prepared for you from the foundation of the***

world.”

B. Scripture Speaks of Names Written in the Book of Life Before the Foundation of the World

1. In Revelation 13:8 John tells us about the anti-christ (the beast) who will make war against the saints and who will be worshiped by those whose names have not been written in the book of life

He says, “All who dwell on the earth will worship him, ***everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life*** of the Lamb who has been slain.”

2. In Revelation 17:8 it also says they will marvel when they see the beast (the anti-christ)

It says, “The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, ***whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world***, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.”

3. Revelation 20:11-15 gives the following scene:

“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled

away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 *And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life*, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

When were names written in the book of life?
“Before the foundation of the world.”

IV. The Purpose of Election (v.4c)

“That we would be holy and blameless before Him.”

The NKJV includes the word “love” at the end. It says, “that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.”

The purpose of election is holiness.

A. God Chose Us in Order that We Might be Holy

The word “holy” is the Greek word *hagios* which means

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“separated to God.” It’s verb form means “to separate from things secular and dedicate to God” (Wuest).

Ephesians 2:10 hints at this same idea when it says, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

Holiness is the reason for salvation and sanctification.

For salvation it is the reason for His choosing; for sanctification is the manner in which we live. But it is obvious that Paul is talking about our position here and not our practice.

Positionally speaking we are holy because God elected us to this.

1. Deuteronomy 7:6-11 tells us that Israel was set-apart to God as a holy people

“For you are *a holy people* to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has *chosen* you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. 7 "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8 but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a

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mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9 "Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments; 10 but repays those who hate Him to their faces, to destroy them; He will not delay with him who hates Him, He will repay him to his face. 11 "Therefore, you shall keep the commandment and the statutes and the judgments which I am commanding you today, to do them."

2. In 1 Corinthians 3:17 Paul referred to the Corinthians as being the temple of God when he said, "If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, *for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.*"
3. In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 he says further, "Or do you not know that *your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you*, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."
4. In Ephesians 2:19-22 Paul said that the Ephesians believers were "no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 having been built on the

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foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a ***holy temple in the Lord***, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”

5. In Ephesians 5 when Paul was speaking about marriage he gave it as a picture of the church. In verse 27 he said, “He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, ***having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.***”
6. In Colossians 1:21-22 he told the believers at Colossae that “although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, 22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order ***to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach.***”
7. In Colossians 3:12 he referred to this as “those who have been ***chosen of God, holy*** and beloved.”
8. In Hebrews 3:1 the writer refers to his readers as “holy brethren.”
9. In 1 Peter 2:9-10, Peter says of his readers that they are “***A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN***

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POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.”

Holiness is what every child of God is because of God’s election. Paul uses a second word to describe the purpose of election and it’s the word blameless.

B. God Chose Us in Order that We Might be Blameless

The word “blameless” (amomos) means, “without blemish, free from faultiness” (Wuest) or “spotless” (MacArthur)

John MacArthur says, “Because we are chosen in Him we are holy and blameless before Him. Because Jesus Christ gave Himself for us as "a lamb unblemished and spotless" (1 Pet. 1:19), we have been given His own unblemished and spotless nature. The unworthy have been declared worthy, the unrighteous declared holy” (Ephesians, 14).

Speaking of being “without blemish,” Paul says in Romans 8:33-34, “Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who

also intercedes for us.”

CONCLUSION

1. God chose us for salvation.
2. He did that “before the foundation of the world.”
3. He did that so that we would be “holy and blameless before Him.”
4. The doctrine of election should not be a hated doctrine but a glorious one because it praises the Father!
5. God is a holy and just God who would have been completely just to have chosen no one for salvation! Think about that the next time you wrestle with this subject.
6. Let’s pray.