

EPHESIANS 1:4b
The Wonderful Work of Salvation
Message 11, February 7, 1999

INTRO: The words we have before us this morning in Ephesians 1:4 are, "...that we should be holy and without blame before Him..." Let me introduce these words by commenting on the words which come before and after. In verse 3 Paul says that the believer is to bless God because He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Then in verse 4 he says that God blessed us *just as* He chose us. The words *just as* give us a comparison. Wherein is the comparison? I believe that the comparison is one of purpose. God blessed us with every spiritual blessing "in order that we should be holy and without blame before Him" and He chose us in eternity past with exactly the same purpose in mind. God's overriding purpose in salvation is to make us holy and without blame before Him.

So in verse 4 we go back into eternity past where God chose us and in the same verse we go to eternity future, where the believer stands before God, holy and without blemish. I have often said that God's primary purpose in salvation is not to save us from hell fire but to conform us to the image of Christ. God wants to make godly people out of us. The doctrine that covers this great work of God is the doctrine of sanctification.

Now I wish to comment on the words that close verse 4, "...in love." There is a debate among scholars whether the comma should stand before these words or after. If the comma comes after the text reads like this, "...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love..." If the comma comes before, it reads like this, "...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him, having predestined us in love..." There is nothing in grammar or in the Greek that tells us where the comma should be placed. Now I prefer the latter reading, that God predestined us in love. My reason is simply this that to say we are to be holy and without blame before Him in love is redundant. If we stand holy and without blame before Him, everything else *MUST* be in order. It is unnecessary to add the words *in love*. But to tell us that God predestined us in love is very significant indeed!

5) Why we were elected

Now I wish to take these words out of their order in the text this morning. God blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ and chose us in eternity past that we should be holy and without blame before Him. We want to consider first the words *before Him*. Is God expecting final and complete sanctification at the moment we are saved? Are we to be holy and without blame before Him in life now? Or is He speaking of the final condition of the believer, when this life is over?

Well, God does expect us to be holy here and now. But much more so does God expect us to progress in holiness. Increasing in holiness is a process. As a matter of fact, it is a lifelong process. And as we look at our text, the words *before Him* give us some indication of the time he is speaking of here.

The Greek word here is *katenwpion*. It comes from *en op*, in the eyes of; *kat en op*, according to Vines Dictionary, right over against. Vines further says it means, "before God as judge." This would indicate that being holy and without blame speaks of the final state of a person when he stands before God.

Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich, in their comprehensive Greek Lexicon say of this word *katenopion* in Ephesians 1:4 that it means, "in the sight of God on his heavenly throne." Colossians, a letter very closely related to Ephesians and written at the same time says in 1:21-22, "And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight..." The words in His sight again are the same Greek word and speak again of the

achievement at the end of life when we stand before God.

In Ephesians 5:27 Paul speaks of the Church being presented to the Lord without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be presented holy and without blemish. Again we are speaking of the final condition. Jude 24 speaks of him who is able to present us without blemish before Him. And again the achievement of being without blemish is the final end product. Revelation 14:5, using the word *enopion* rather than *katenopion*, speaks of the 144,000 being blameless before the throne of God.

I conclude that when Paul speaks of our being holy and without blame in this verse, he is speaking, not of the process but the product; the end result. The end result of the Christian life is to result in our being presented to Him holy and without blemish.

We now want to consider the words holy and without blame. Notice the first major difference between these two terms is a contrast. One is positive and the other negative. So these two words may be contrasted. But there is a comparison as well. I agree fully with D. Martin Lloyd Jones that both of these words belong to the doctrine of sanctification. These words in this text have not to do with our standing, then they would speak of our justification. But they have to do with our state, what we are in experience, and therefore speak of sanctification.

But let us look now at the meaning of these words. The first word is holy. It is an adjective. It describes. Holiness has to do with separation. When we speak of holiness in the believer we are speaking of separation from sin. When we are

finally presented before God, Paul wishes us to be entirely separated from sin.

Holiness speaks of what we are like inside. At various stages of life various new sin problems surface in our life. Sanctification, the process of becoming holy, is to root out those sin problems. If at any stage I do not overcome I will be defeated again and again. There is no full Christian victory where there is not victory over sin.

I have not time to deal with the whole doctrine of sanctification but let me note two things about it. First, sanctification is by grace through faith. That statement needs a message on its own. If you have come to our Bible studies you understand. Second, sanctification is one sin at a time. This is demonstrated for us in the OT in the exodus of Israel from Egypt to Canaan (Deut. 7:12-26).

Between 4 and 500 years after Christ there was a man by name of Simeon Stylites. He wanted to become holy. At that time many sought to achieve holiness by asceticism. They denied themselves any kinds of comforts and lived by themselves in some very strange conditions, thinking this would make them holy. Simeon Stylites built a little booth on top of a pole and there he lived. He ate what others brought him. He wore a hair shirt which is very uncomfortable to the touch. What did he do with his slack time? He prayed. Simeon lived 37 years on different pillars. Each pillar was higher and narrower than the last. The last pillar he lived on was 66 feet high. Others, who admired his life did the same and became known as stylites.

Well, there was a certain man, Anatole of France, who wanted to be a stylite. He was not able to set up this pillar and so he set a chair on the kitchen table in his

home and put on very uncomfortable clothes, intending to spend the rest of his days in prayer and fasting. Well, he found the Scripture correct which says no man lives to himself. His family made things so miserable for him that he later wrote, "Then I perceived that it is a very difficult thing to be a saint while living with your own family. I saw why Jerome went into the desert."

Now let me say quickly this morning that one does not become holy by asceticism. One does not become holy by removing oneself from people. God wants to make us holy and without blemish right in the midst of life. I also believe that right in the midst of life, especially family life, is where God wants to make us holy.

We have considered the word *holy*. Now we turn our attention to the word *blameless*. We said that holiness has to do with our inner character. Probably the greatest difference between holy and blameless is that holiness has to do with what we are on the inside, while being without blemish has to do with what we are on the outside. When others look at us, do they find something blameworthy? I am not talking about nit picky criticism. Even Jesus was blamed like that. I am talking about being actually blameworthy.

There is no better place to go than the OT to find out the significance of this word. You will recall that in the OT various animal sacrifices were required. The sacrifices pointed forward to the Lord Jesus Christ and since He was sinless and perfect, holy and without blemish, the OT animal sacrifices had to be without blemish (Ex. 12:5; Lev. 4:3,23,28,32 etc...). Now look at Hebrews 9:13-14 in light of these OT sacrifices.

Now, how did the OT Christian know that an animal was without blemish? Well, he made his judgement on the basis of what was visible. You can tell an animal that is without blemish by its appearance. When my daughter was looking for a horse we had one of our church members go with us to look at a certain horse. Here we began to learn that you judge a horse by its external appearance. If it has a certain shape that indicates a weakness in the animal. If, on the other hand, it has a different shape that indicates a good quality. I suppose that every one here this morning who was going to sacrifice an animal to God would be tempted to sacrifice an animal that wasn't the best quality. I suppose that everyone of us would find it difficult to find an animal without blemish and offer it to God. But you see, the animal pictured Christ who would be without blemish.

Now look at Romans 8:29. You see, God wants to make all of us like Christ. Christ was holy and without blemish. When God conforms us to the image of His Son, He works on our internal being (holiness) and on our external being (without blemish). The idea of being without blemish has to do with what others see in us. It has the idea of being blameless. Turn to John 14:30 to note this characteristic in Jesus Christ. Christ was holy, so Satan had no ground in Him there. Christ was without blemish and so Satan had no ground in Him at all. All areas of failure in holiness or blemishes are ground for Satan.

If we allow Satan ground in our life he has a beachhead from which he can work. So God seeks to conform us to the image of Christ in every area and in every area we overcome Satan loses ground. In every area we fail he gains strength. God wants to so conform us to the image of Christ that we

win in every area. As we age and face new things he seeks to guide us to be overcomers.

Let me ask you this morning, is there some area of defeat in your life? Some area in which you desire victory? Today is the time to acknowledge this to God and begin advancing forward again. When our life is over, the aim of Christ is to be able to present us holy and without blame before God Almighty Himself.

CONCL: God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus just as He chose us in order that we might be holy and without blame before Him. Let me ask you how its going in your life? Are you facing new things? Are there areas of defeat? Are there some victories? If those you live with the closest described your life would they immediatly think of a holy person? An unblamworthy person? Or would they think, "Oh if only he/she could get over this or over that?"

Maybe there is some particular area of need. Maybe as I close in prayer you would like to acknowledge a particular area of need.