

Sermon Title: He Chose Us In Him—Part 1
Scripture Text: Eph. 1:4 (Ephesians #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 5-16-21

I invite you to come back with me to the Book of Ephesians, where we have only just begun. We've been there twice. We've already seen a whopping three verses, and today I'm going to take us *well into* the next verse, but not to the end of it, and you'll see why.

You understand that the theme of this book is pretty clear: it's "Riches in Christ"—we are *incredibly* rich in Him. This letter was meant to be a circular letter, first addressed to Ephesus and then distributed through the Roman Empire and then recorded for us. It was written to explain to the believers in Ephesus and the other cities that it first went to—they were primarily Gentile believers—how incredible the riches are of their position in Christ, and how to live accordingly.

After the introduction, the first two verses—the normal greeting—Verses 3 through 14 in Chapter 1 is the first paragraph, and what a glorious one it is! As the Apostle Paul wrote it, it's *one sentence* in Greek: 202 Greek words, reciting the realities of who we are in Jesus Christ. Now, Greek is more sophisticated and precise than English; it's virtually impossible to make this sentence—Verses 3 through 14—into one sentence in English, and punctuate it appropriately. We'll do our best to explain it in a few messages, as we work our way through.

Here was the theme that we've already seen: Chapter 1, Verse 3—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with *every spiritual blessing* in the heavenly places in Christ" (NASB-1995; and throughout, unless otherwise noted). That's a *summary*—or, an overview, if you will—of everything else that is going to be said in this chapter: Every blessing available to anyone, relative to the Person and the power of the Holy Spirit and the salvation that we have in Christ—it's *all yours now!*

With that introduction and that summary statement, now we're going to see 11 verses delineating specific aspects of these blessings that are ours in Christ. Here's a bit of a big picture of where we're headed as we work through this long, long, complicated, glorious sentence: Chapter 1, Verses 4 through 6 deals with the Doctrine of Election; that looks back to the past. Verses 7 through 10 emphasize redemption; that's the present—we stand redeemed in Christ. And Verses 11 through 14 deal with our inheritance, which looks forward to our future. So there is connection and flow and synergy to all of this.

Today, we come to the portion on Election. Election is one of the loftier doctrines revealed in Scripture. Truth is, a lot of people struggle with the subject of Election (2 Pet. 3:16); and the main reason is that it is part of the expression of the mind of the infinite God (Is. 55:9; cf. Jb. 26:14), *and we are not infinite and we are not eternal and we are not unchangeable, but He is!* So, for us to get even a *glimpse* into the mind of God, it stretches us (Rom. 11:33). And if there were not things about God that are beyond you, you wouldn't need Him! He is "infinite" (Ps. 147:5), "eternal" (Deut. 33:27; Is. 9:6; Rom. 16:26), and unchangeable in all of His attributes all at once (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8)—and we can't *fully* grasp that, *but* He has told us what He wants us to know (2 Tim. 3:16-17). So, we acknowledge that we will never fully comprehend all that lies behind this subject in the mind of God. But I ask you to join me as we open up our pea brains and ask the Holy Spirit to pour into them understanding of what God has made known to us (1 Cor. 2:12).

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We have to realize that even if you don't get it all, God *does* expect us to understand what is here; so we come with reverence and humility, and we dig into this passage. Let's start by reading the first section of this sentence; we already read Verse 3, but I want to include that with Verses 4, 5, and 6. Here's where we're headed in the next couple of sermons: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved."

You'll notice that even in our very excellent translation that we use, that's broken up into two sentences in English. But remember: that's an accommodation to the English language. But let's see what we can learn from this passage. Frankly, I care not about anybody's opinions or the label that they want to put on their theological mindset. We're going to open up *this text*; we're going to deal with what is *here*, and then we'll build it all together as we work our way through this sentence.

Now, methinks that we will not quite finish the first point, but I have a wonderful seven-point outline for Verses 4, 5, and 6; but I wanted you to see it—as you read and reread this passage, I want you to have these things sink in, so every time I can give you a little hook that will let your memory catch on to something, I'll do that.

We're going to look at The Meaning Of Election, The Objects Of Election, The Time Of Election, The Purpose Of Election, The Method Of Election, The Relationship Of Election, and The Result Of Election.

Today, we're going to start with The Meaning Of Election. We won't even finish Verse 4—"Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him."

Notice: "just as" is the beginning of Verse 4, which is the continuation of Verse 3; that's a conjunction. As you talk about your "spiritual blessings in the heavenly places," *it starts with this*: "Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world." This is starting to introduce the elaboration of the blessings that are ours in Christ.

"He chose" is the operative two words here. That is the aorist translation of the Greek verb *eklegō*. Want to learn a Greek word? You stepped on a "Lego" on the floor—"Ek!" You just learned a Greek word: *eklegō*. *Ek* is "out of"; *lego* is "to speak" or "to call." The essence of the word comes from the component parts: "to call out." It means "to pick out" or "to choose." Various forms of this Greek word in the New Testament, depending on the context, are translated "elect," "election," "choose," "chose," "chosen," and a couple of others. The aorist tense that I mentioned—we don't have exactly an aorist tense in English—but that denotes that a definite act took place once; it's something *done*; it's completed, it's not going on anymore.

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I'll give you a little tiny grammatical hint here: In the New Testament, this word in its verb form is always in what we call the "middle voice," which means: He picked out—or, He chose out—for *Himself*. "Active voice"—the subject performs the action on the object: "I hit"—I'm the subject—"I hit my hand." Subject, Verb, Object. If it's "passive," it's "I was hit by the hand"—I *receive* the action of the verb. If it's the "middle voice," it's "I hit myself"—which is really stupid, but it's grammatically correct: "I did this *for* myself."

When used of God's choices, I need to let you know: there's a couple of ways in which this word is used in the New Testament. One is much more common than the other, but I want to explain them to you.

First of all: As it is in this passage, there is God's sovereign choice for salvation; this is the sovereign act of God, in grace, whereby He chose certain people from among mankind for Himself. Remember at the table around the Passover meal, the night before Jesus went to the Cross, He was talking to His men and He said this, in Chapter 15, Verse 19 of the Gospel of John: "If you were of the world, the world would love its own"—He's telling them, "You're going to be persecuted"—"the world would love its own, but because you are not of the world, but *I chose you out of the world*"—same verb—"because of this the world hates you." Mainly, that is how this verb is used in the New Testament (e.g., Matt. 22:14; Mk. 13:20; Jn. 13:18; Rom. 11:7; 1 Cor. 1:27-28; Col. 3:12; Titus 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:1; 2:9; Jas. 2:5; 2 Jn. 1, 13; Rev. 17:14).

But there is *another* sense in which it is also used for God's sovereign choice—always His choice—of some saved people for special service for Him; and *especially*, this is said of the disciples whom He chose to be His Apostles. Luke 6:12-13—"It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God." If you can remember back to our most recent series: that next morning, after He did what this next verse says, He preached the Sermon on the Mount. So this was a big deal; He spent all night in prayer, and then, "When day came, He called His disciples to Him and *chose* twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles." So again: "chose" for Himself, that these would be His Apostles (cf. Jn. 6:70; Acts 1:2, 24).

Then in Acts Chapter 9, Verse 15, this is spoken to a man named Ananias, whom God sent to be the first one to talk to Saul of Tarsus; after God knocked him to the ground and blinded him and called him to Himself, He sent Ananias to be His spokesperson, and "The Lord said to him"—to Ananias—"Go"—to Paul—"for he is a *chosen* instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel." God called Paul to be part of that circle of the Apostles (1 Cor. 9:1; 1 Tim. 2:7).

Now, I'll get a little bit technical, and then I'll—Lord willing—finish up really practical: The word *eklegō* is used 21 times in the New Testament; 17 of those occurrences describe the act of God in one of these two categories—*usually* God's sovereign choice in salvation; sometimes for a choice of God *subsequent* to salvation. The other 4 times, it's used for human choice (e.g., Acts 6:5). So, you—as a human being—you, too, can make choices. And you *did*: Today you chose for yourself what you were going to wear. You may have chosen Ford over Chevy. You choose for yourself the things that you wish to do.

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That's the verb. The adjective form of this is the word "elect." "Elect" can also be a verb, but we're talking about how it's translated in the New American Standard Bible. This adjective form of the same word occurs 22 times in the New Testament. It is used to describe the ones who are *the objects* of God's choice. God chooses for Himself; those whom He chooses are "the elect" (Mk. 13:20). In other words: "the elect" is synonymous with Believers (e.g., Lk. 18:7; Rom. 8:33).

For example, Jesus says this, concerning His Second Coming, in the verse right after the record of His prediction of His Second Coming: Matthew 24:31—"And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together *His elect* from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other." This is going to be God calling together all of His elect who have come to believe in Him during the Tribulation time, leading up to the Second Coming—Jews and Gentiles together, all one in the Body of Christ that will have been springing up during that time, after all the believers who are in the Body of Christ *now* have been removed (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

Or, the Apostle Paul says this concerning his ministry. Why did he keep on, despite all of this opposition and suffering? Second Timothy 2:10—"For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are *chosen*"—or, "elect" (NKJV, ESV)—"so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory."

So, circle back to Ephesians Chapter 1, Verse 4—the subject is Election to Himself. The meaning of this word *isn't* hard to understand: "chosen for Himself"—that's what God has done, chosen certain people to bring to Himself to be a Bride for His Son, to comprise the Body of Christ (Col. 1:24; cf. Jn. 3:29; Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 27; Eph. 3:6; 4:12; 5:23, 29-30, 32; Col. 3:15; Rev. 19:7).

Today, we're going to linger in this one verse, and not even finish it—but we'll get *way further* next Lord's Day. Ephesians 1:4—"Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him."

Now, the place where people go bonkers over this is in trying to understand all the subtleties of how this connects, how this fits together with other Biblical doctrines—*mainly*, the will of man, man's will. People ask, "Do you believe in Election?" Well, the answer is, "Well, yeah—I believe the Bible, and it teaches Election." So the answer is, "Yes." And then I say, "See Ephesians 1:4 for an example." (cf. 2 Thess. 2:13)

And then the follow-up question is: "Well, then, don't you believe in man's free will?" And that, my friends, is a question that comes up often, and it is *totally fallacious* in its reasoning; that's setting up a *false dichotomy*—as if the teaching of the Doctrine of Election somehow is incompatible with human choice, with the fact that *we have* the ability to make choices. We *definitely* believe in man's *will* (Jn. 5:40; Rev. 22:17). Every person—man, mankind—*every* person can make choices. But, the term "free will"—that's *fabricated!* It's not in the Bible! There's *no such thing* as someone with a totally free will; because think about it: Before you were in Christ, you were a "slave" to "sin" (Rom. 6:6). You had a master—you weren't free! (cf. Prov. 5:22; Jn. 8:34; 1 Cor. 2:14)

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A much better term than "free will" is "human responsibility." The Bible says many times that you were a slave to sin, but the Bible is *also* clear that you are responsible before God for every choice you make (Prov. 14:12, 32; Jn. 3:18, 36; Rom. 2:5; 2 Thess. 2:10), for every action you take (Ecc. 12:14; Matt. 12:36; Rev. 20:12-13), for every thought that you think (Ps. 19:14; Matt. 5:28; 9:4), and even for your inclinations (Ps. 52:7; Prov. 21:10; 2 Thess. 2:12).

It's also clear in the Bible that God sovereignly chooses people for Himself (Jn. 6:37, 65; Rom. 9:10-16; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:9). You have the sovereignty of God—His choosing people (Acts 13:48; Rev. 17:14). You have man's responsibility (Acts 17:30). How those two work together—*that's the hard part* to understand (cf. Prov. 16:9; 20:24).

So, that's where I'm going to slow down here. Get out your shovel—we're going to dig a little bit deep to try to help you understand this. But let me make a few comments to help you begin to grapple with this:

Number 1—The Bible does not teach "Double Predestination"; in other words: Election to salvation *and* election to damnation. Never in the Bible does that doctrine appear, specifically tied to God as if it says: "God chooses Person A to go to Heaven, *and in the same way* He chooses Person B to go to hell." The Bible doesn't say that! (cf. Rom. 1:18)

Now, I know all of the arguments for that: If you have ten pairs of socks in the drawer, and you choose out one, *you rejected the other nine!*" Well, that doesn't mean you *burn* the rest of your socks! Make a logical conclusion if you want to, but *don't go beyond what Scripture actually says!*

So, some people say: "Well, God chose—*game over!* Nothing you do matters! It's irrelevant what you do; we're just automatons in this world, and there's this cosmic game going on, and we're just pieces within the Matrix." That's what some people do with the Doctrine of Election. The Bible doesn't say that.

But, Number 2—The Bible *does* clearly teach Election (Jn. 1:13; cf. Matt. 13:11; Jn. 17:2; Acts 2:39; 13:48). And it *also* teaches that every person *has a will* for which he or she is responsible (Jn. 1:12; cf. Jos. 24:15; Lk. 13:3, 5; Jn. 3:19; 5:40; 8:24; Rom. 1:28-32; 3:10-18; 2 Thess. 1:7-8; 2:10, 12).

We must *believe* those two things (Ps. 119:128). We want to resolve them—but maybe we can't. We believe them both. We accept them both. And we have to leave to God the fact that, you know—He's a little smarter than I am! He knows "the end from the beginning" (Is. 46:10). He knows *all* of these things! And He knows all the "what ifs," and He knows all the motivations (Prov. 16:2), and He knows all the "hidden things" that we can't possibly see (Dan. 2:22).

Thirdly, I want you to understand that Election is not taught in the Bible *in isolation*. Election is taught *as well as* a universal invitation to salvation—and very often, *right in the same passage*, the two will be side-by-side (e.g., Jn. 8:24, 47; 10:9, 26-29).

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Let me just have you consider a couple of things that Jesus said; we'll put them side by side here. John 6:44—"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day." People who hate the Doctrine of Election say, "It says right there! *Nobody* can come to Him unless...*So, some people can't be saved!*" Does that verse say, "Some people can't be saved"? No. Draw conclusions—but never beyond what the Scripture says.

Jesus *also* said this, in Matthew 11:27-28—"All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." *But He didn't stop there!* In the next verse, He said: "Come to Me, you who are elect"...*He doesn't say that!* "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." There is *no exclusion whatsoever* on the *universal* invitation to salvation! It is wide open (Is. 45:22; Jn. 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:3-4). If you want to be King-Jamesey, it's true: "Whosoever will" may come (Rev. 22:17).

We'll pick that up in a moment; but now, I want you to pay notice to one more comment about this. Please—especially in the setting of this discussion—*don't get sucked into the trap* of believing that it's okay for *you to decide* what is acceptable or unacceptable for God to do! You hear people say, "Well, the God I know—*He* wouldn't do that!" Wow! Unless *He said* He wouldn't do that, don't you dare! Don't you *ever* think that you have *any right* whatsoever to make a judgment about which doctrine you approve of, and which one you don't! *That's not yours to do* (Is. 45:9; Ezek. 18:25; Rom. 9:20).

It is yours to *know* and *understand* everything that God has revealed, because *in that*, He gives you "everything" *you need* for "life and godliness" (1 Pet. 1:3). We have to understand it. We have to be aware that, when it comes to running the Universe, when it comes to saving people, *we can't comprehend everything!* You know the two famous spiritual laws; I've told them to you many times: Number 1—God is God. Number 2—You're not! And *if* you could comprehend every single thing there is to know about God, you wouldn't need Him. You'd have to *be* Him. He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. You are finite, mortal, and you're a mess. You *are* changeable. You *are* confusable. Your "heart is deceitful" and "desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9, NKJV).

You probably know the famous verse that any preacher worth his salt has committed to memory, for that time when somebody asks the question that you don't know the answer to: Deuteronomy 29:29. Very helpful. Remember where this is written: this is in Deuteronomy; Deuteronomy was given just before Israel entered the Promised Land; it is the reiteration of the things from the covenant that God had made with Israel, codified in the Mosaic Law. Moses was told to say this: "The secret things belong to the Lord our God"—and you say, "Oh, good! I don't have to know all this!" No, it doesn't say you don't have to know all this; it says there are things God knows that you *don't* know, *won't* know, and *can't* know. "The *secret* things belong to the Lord our God, *but the things revealed* belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law." God has given us His Word *so that* we can obey Him, believe in Him, trust in Him, and live for His glory.

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God is sovereign in saving people. Well, then, if it's this way, say the disciples, "Who then can be saved?" And what does Jesus say? "With men this is impossible"—*no one* can save himself—"but with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:25-26, NKJV); and the "all things" in that context specifically refers to somebody getting saved. God is sovereign in saving people, *and* all people are one hundred percent, completely, individually, personally responsible for their decisions (Rom. 1:19-20; 2:12, 14-15; 3:19).

Now I want to show you how tightly these two things are taught side-by-side in the New Testament, without contradicting. The classic chapter on the Doctrine of Election is Romans Chapter 9; I'll pluck out a couple of things from there. I commend it to your reading.

Romans 9:22-24—"What if God"—and this is, "Yes, and He *did* this—"What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known"—now, why would God do that? Why would God use His power to execute His wrath? Well, because He is "perfect" (Matt. 5:48); He is "holy" (1 Pet. 1:16); and all things imperfect and unholy *must* be judged, or God *wouldn't be good* (Ps. 119:137; Is. 5:16; Nahum 1:3).

So, He is "willing to demonstrate His wrath." "What if He...endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?" Notice that word "prepared," and hang onto it for a moment. "And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles."

Alright, here's what you need to catch: There in Verse 22, the first occurrence of "prepared" speaks of "vessels of wrath"—vessels destined for wrath—"prepared for destruction." That word "prepared" is in that middle voice, which means it's reflexive: They "*prepared themselves* for destruction." In Verse 23, it's *different!* Same verb, but this time it's "*He* prepared—it's in the *active voice*, which means *it's something that God did*. So, "vessels of wrath" prepare themselves for destruction; "vessels of mercy"—*God* turns them into something glorious.

So, if you ever find yourself in Heaven—and I sure hope you do; and I think, in every case that I can know of somebody I recognize here, you're trusting Christ to take you there—if you ever find yourself in Heaven, you can only blame God for you being there. You can't say, "God, thank You for helping me over the hump! That last few miles—that was tough, but You took my hand..." No! You can't even get *close* to the *beginning* of the path that leads to the *first step* of the steps to the gates of Heaven! *You can't get there on your own!* It's *all of God*—all for His "glory" (Ps. 115:1; Eph. 2:9; Rom. 11:36).

But if you ever find yourself in "the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:10, 14-15), you can *only blame yourself* for being there, because you prepared yourself for that (Prov. 14:32; Jer. 31:30; Matt. 7:23; 25:41-45; Rom. 2:5; 6:23; Rev. 21:8).

Do you see the two side-by-side, and do you see the difference? And it's those who "He prepared beforehand for glory, *even us*"—even we who are "in Christ."

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It's sad that many people who *otherwise* believe the Bible really *chafe* at the sovereignty of God when it comes to choosing to save people. There are some who go so far as to say, "Well, that can't be right, because *that's not fair!*" See previous comment: Don't think that it's okay for *you* to tell *God* what He can and can't do! Understand: The fact is that God is *completely fair!* (Ps. 9:8; Is. 5:16; Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:5b) But, He is also *amazingly gracious!* (Ex. 34:6; Joel 2:13; Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:1-2)

Genesis Chapter 2, Verses 16 and 17. Small side trip here; we'll get back to the path, and I think this will come together. How did physical death and spiritual death come into the human race? Genesis 2:16-17—"The Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.' " How did physical death and spiritual death come into the human race? Through our Federal Head, Adam (Rom. 5:12, 18a; 1 Cor. 15:22a; cf. Jb. 14:4; 15:14; 1 Sam. 24:13; Ps. 51:5; 58:3); we are *all* his descendants (Acts 17:26; cf. Gen. 3:20).

So, fast-forward one chapter to Genesis 3. Bad things happen. Verses 6 and 7—"When the woman saw that the tree was good for food"—the Serpent had come and done his thing—"and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings."

You know what happened: They disobeyed; they ate. *Immediately* they were alienated from God (Is. 59:2; Hab. 1:13a). Now, they're *ashamed* and embarrassed, and hiding from Him. They tried to cover themselves; their sewing together of leaves—that was the beginning of *all* false religions of works-righteousness: They, *on their part*, were going to take care of this problem of their shame before God. Read about it all in the rest of Genesis Chapter 3, including the curse that was brought upon Eve, the curse upon Adam, the curse upon the Serpent, and how the Earth is cursed because of all this (Is. 24:5-6; Rom. 8:20-22).

But notice that at the same time when God pronounced judgment—which was *good*, because *He* is always "good" (Ps. 119:68); it was *righteous* because *He* is always "righteous" (Ps. 7:11; 11:7; cf. 2 Tim. 4:8); it is *fair* because it is *exactly what He promised would happen* for disobedience (cf. Is. 66:4; Jer. 35:17; 36:31; 40:3; Ezek. 20:8; Dan. 9:7, 11-12)—at the same time that God pronounced judgment, He also *provided* a covering for sin! Genesis Chapter 3, Verse 21—"The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them" (cf. Heb. 9:22b; cf. Ps. 32:1; 85:2). God's *justice* is never apart from His *goodness!* (Hab. 3:2b)

Therefore, who is responsible for anyone who receives eternal damnation? I'm glad you asked! Our friend Ezekiel will answer that: Ezekiel Chapter 18, Verse 20—"The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself."

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Listen: God decreed—Genesis Chapter 2, and following—those who sin will die. How many have sinned? "All" (Rom. 3:23; cf. 1 Kings 8:46; Ps. 14:3; Ecc. 7:20). So, God's choice to save *anyone—even one*—is a *spectacular* display of His grace and His mercy and His kindness and His love!

Backing up a little bit from where we were before: Romans 9, Verses 14 through 16—"What shall we say then?" Here's the answer to the person who says, "That's not fair!" No, *it is* fair! "There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses"—Exodus 33:19 is where the quote comes from—" 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy." What's the "it"? Salvation. (cf. Jn. 1:13)

These two truths of Election and Human Responsibility—they are taught side-by-side in Scripture. Accept them. Believe them. But don't try to somehow knock the edges off of them, and try to make them into puzzle pieces that somehow fit together. Don't try to water them down—you'll wind up destroying both of them.

Thinking through this in Scripture is worth our time (Prov. 2:3-6). I want to take just a couple more minutes of your time; we have *plenty* of time, don't worry. I want to suggest to you that there are four basic errors that a lot of people make—one or more of the four—regarding the issue of Election. Let me explain, and I think you'll be able to see where many of the differences that you find in the Body of Christ come from. I think these are well worth our time, so I won't rush it; and we're going to run out of time before we get anywhere near through these four.

Election Error #1 is—this is probably the most common one—Ignore it. "Oh, this is *hard!* I'm just not going to *deal* with this!" Well, it may be one thing for you to say, "I barely survived Algebra. Geometry sent me down for the eight-count. I am *not* going on to Trigonometry!" It may be fine for you to say something is beyond you, but *you don't have that option* when it comes to the Word of God! (see Eph. 5:17) He said, "I do not want you to be ignorant" of these things (1 Cor. 12:1; 1 Thess. 4:13; NKJV).

But a lot of people just refuse to deal with it *because* they have trouble understanding it. And based upon how few Christians can even *explain* what the Bible *does* say about it, it's quite obvious: A lot of preachers *ignore it*.

I have an excerpt; I've saved this for years. It came from an interview with one of the most popular media preachers in the United States in the past century—but in our lifetimes. He's dead now. I would *like* to say he's with the Lord now; I *hope* he's with the Lord now; but based upon what he taught, I'm not sure I'm going to see him when I'm there, but I'd sure like to.

Listen to what he said: "I do not deal with issues unless I am totally sold on them." Okay—what's that saying? I will judge what in the Word of God is worthy of my time. That's one of the problems I mentioned.

Sermon Title: He Chose Us In Him—Part 1
Scripture Text: Eph. 1:4 (Ephesians #3)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 5-16-21

"I do not deal with issues unless I am totally sold on them. There are theological areas that I do not doubt. For instance: I am committed to the church"—and he named his denomination, which actually is a decent denomination—"I am committed to this denomination; to an orthodox, evangelical, historical Christian theology. The Apostle's Creed is one of the doctrinal statements." So far, so good. "I could not, in print or in public, *deny* the Virgin Birth of Christ, or the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ, or the return of Christ; but when I have something I cannot comprehend, I wouldn't call it a doubt—I just don't deal with it. By not dealing with it, I am showing respect for it as the Word. I assume it's true. And if I can't comprehend it, *I better not treat it!* I am *not* going to preach a sermon on it! So I just deal with issues that I can personally feel."

That's the same man, by the way, who—at a time very close to that interview—said that the *worst* prostitution of a pulpit that could possibly be committed is to teach through the Bible! He was the best known "evangelical" TV preacher for a long time.

So, imagine the Apostle Paul. Shortly before his death, he's writing to his beloved friend and understudy, Timothy; and he writes to him: "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach *only what you personally feel.*" Kind of deflates that passage, doesn't it? (2 Tim. 4:1-2)

We are not to judge what of the Word of God *we feel* is good enough to be taught! (Amos 3:8) We who are the preachers of the Word of God "will give an account" for the souls that we've shepherded; we "will give an account" for our faithfulness to the Scripture (Heb. 13:17; cf. Jer. 26:2; 2 Tim. 2:15).

But that attitude says, "Okay, God, You can say whatever You want, but if *I* don't quite understand it, *I'm not telling anybody else about it!*" My friends, I promise, we would have to skip the next section of Ephesians—we'd have to skip *the first three chapters* of Ephesians, in order to do that!

Paul sure didn't skip over the hard stuff! He told the people in Ephesus, when he came by there and met with the leaders, in Acts Chapter 20, Verses 26 and 27—"Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I did not shrink from declaring to you the *whole purpose* of God" (cf. Ezek. 3:18-19). I taught you *everything* (Ps. 119:160; Jer. 26:2)—"night and day" (vs. 31), "publicly and from house to house" (vs. 20)—I poured out everything there is! We don't have the option of believing or preaching only what we *feel good about*, personally (Matt. 4:4).

So, being not smart enough to run, I'm going to come back here next week, and we are going to go further on that seven-point outline.

I told you that I see four errors about Election. I'll give you a little bit of a teaser. Number 1 is: Ignore it. Number 2 is: Overemphasize God's Sovereignty. Number 3 is: Overemphasize Man's Will. Number 4 is: Average-Out The Two Teachings. I'll try to teach you how to avoid all of those errors.

Sermon Title: He Chose Us In Him—Part 1
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My friends, *why are we in Ephesians?* Because we all need to know—and we need to be *constantly reminded*—of our standing in Christ, who we are in Him (2 Cor. 5:17). And if you stand in Christ today, fall before God in humble thanksgiving that He gave you what *you do not deserve* by redeeming you (Gal. 3:13), *setting you free* from your bondage to sin (Rom. 8:2), calling you to Himself (Acts 2:39; 1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Thess. 2:14; 1 Pet. 5:10). And devote your life to spreading the great news of the death and burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and *begging* people to "be reconciled to God," as Paul did in Second Corinthians Chapter 5, Verse 20.

My friends, Election is *not* a hostile doctrine! It's not a *bad* doctrine. It's *the only explanation why any of us could ever be saved!* (Jer. 24:7; Jn. 3:3, 5; 6:65; 1 Cor. 2:14) And, did you notice: it's for "the praise of the glory of *His* grace" (Eph. 1:6; cf. Ps. 79:9). This glorifies God! (2 Cor. 4:15)

Now if you are *not* "in Christ" today; if you don't have total confidence that you are trusting in Him and Him alone (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12); by "grace" alone, through "faith" alone (Eph. 2:8-9); based upon the Word of God alone (2 Tim. 3:15; Jas. 1:21); if you don't have the confidence that *that is* your trust; if you don't have the confidence that, if you were to die and stand in the presence of God today, that He would accept you, and that He would accept you *only* because of what Christ has done—you have no merits of your own (Phil. 3:9)—if you don't *understand* that; if you don't *believe* that...come and talk to us, because you need to do that! Talk to me, talk to Pastor Scott, talk to Pastor Scott—I didn't just lose my brain there; we have a couple of them. Talk to the person who brought you. Talk to *anybody* who looked like they were understanding what I said earlier! Let us introduce you to this wonderful Savior. "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world!"

So, let's pray:

Our Father, again, our hearts just overflow with gratitude. And Father, we admit that some of these things are difficult for us to understand, because You are infinite, eternal, and unchangeable God Almighty! But we stand in Your grace, and we thank You for the redemption that is ours in Jesus Christ. And we know that You hear us when we call out to You. We know that You have given us to each other. We know that we are "members one of another" in the Body of Christ because we all belong to each other, because we all belong to Him; and we are those "living stones" that are being "built together." Thank You, Father, for that majestic work that is so beyond our ability to completely grasp! All we can do is say, "Thank You, Lord Jesus!" Have Your way with us, Father. Teach us where we need teaching. Convict us where we need convicting. And most of all, use us for Your glory. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.