

Chosen

Ephesians 1:3-14

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, 4 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, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, 9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, 10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth--in Him. 11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, 12 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. 13 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. (Ephesians 1:3-14 (ESV))

May we begin our message today with a reminder from the Book of 2 Timothy 3, beginning in verse 16 where we read that . . .

16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16)

I read these words last week as we began our study into this Book of Ephesians and I did it for a special reason. It is because it is within these first words of the Book of Ephesians that men, even the most scholarly in the scriptures diverge in their understanding, their beliefs and their teachings.

And may I say quickly that I am not making reference to the worldly secular scholars, those who have never truly tasted the gift of salvation through Christ, that who study these words purely for academic purposes. No, rather I speak of those most devout church scholars, men who have fully and completely surrendered their lives, their intellect, their wisdom to Christ, and are solemnly consecrated to the giving of a correct and accurate interpretation of these scriptures.

And I confess that I remain confused and dumbfounded that these most dedicated of scholars, those within the Reformed traditions, and those who follow after the Arminian doctrines, and all those who fall in-between those two diverse interpretations, can each somehow find a clear basis for their very different beliefs. It would seem that such a concise set of words, given in clear and plain language would settle differences that men have within their many questions. But much to the contrary, these words bring division, even to the point of bringing about the formation of many different and varied Christian denominations.

What exactly am I speaking about? . . . Simply put, it is the words of verses 4 and 5, 4 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, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. (Ephesians 1:4-5 (ESV))

And verse 11,

In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will. ((Ephesians 1:11 (ESV))

In particular, it is the implication that is put forth within the words, “chosen” and “predestined”, that bring controversy as to exactly “when” and “by whom” and “in what context” the salvation of men’s souls takes place.

In the message last week, we gave consideration to the “Spiritual Blessings” that God blesses us with in the heavenly realms. And we began by saying that at the first moment of salvation, God gives us His Holy Spirit to abide within us all the remaining days of our lives. And along with His Spirit, we receive all the many wonderful and precious fruits and gifts of His Holy Spirit.

I began with that message in order to say to us who believe, “this is where we are today”. “We are saved and we have God’s Holy Spirit abiding within us.” But these words of verses 4 and 5 and 11 and all those in-between provoke a question that God wants you and me to also know about. That question is, “We are here, but how did we get here, to this precious condition of salvation.” Was it simply as a result of a decision that we made one day, perhaps in response to some preacher’s words at a revival. Did we simply go forward and pray the “sinner’s prayer”, and now we are saved? Or was there something more at work, something so very powerful that it can only be explained with words like “Spiritual blessings in heavenly places?”

According to these words, that is exactly how our salvation took place. Yes, perhaps we did respond to a preacher's invitation and we prayed an earnest prayer asking God to reach into our hearts and to save us. But these words, here in Ephesians 1 tell us that there was also much, much more taking place "behind the scenes", somewhere out there in those heavenly places, "Spiritual Blessings" that began a long, long time before we had those first thoughts about bowing our knee and begging for God to save us, long even before time was time, before even the earth or the heavens or anything else was created.

Contrary to what many believe and teach, our salvation did not take place as a result of us first seeking after God and then Him responding to our cry for help and salvation. Not at all! The "Spiritual Blessings" spoken about here in these words clearly tell us that they had their beginnings first from deep within the heart and mind of God, as He, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit conversed and agreed upon this whole human adventure that you and I have become a part of.

We are not told exactly why God decided to "have other children" in His family, other than His beloved Son, but He did. Perhaps it was the same sort of desire that wells up within the heart of a husband and wife when they suddenly desire to have children. We do know that it was not because of any form of "need" within God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, because God has no real "needs". He is fully satisfied within Himself without need to add anything or anyone else.

His first family, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, are complete within themselves and are in perfect harmony and in perfect relationship with each other. And yours and my presence do not add to or meet anything of necessity in them. But they do love, and they do want to "love". And most likely, it was their desire to love that brought the plan for children, you and me, into God's mind. And so then, here we are! Listen again, and then let's begin to consider these precious words.

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, 4 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, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.

(Ephesians 1:3-6 (ESV))

Picking back up on the thoughts I was giving a moment ago, may we continue to consider these truths using an analogy from our human level. There was a very special moment in time, now some thirty-eight years ago, when a deep desire welled up within

my beloved wife and my heart to share the vast love that we have within us with a child, our child, one created by and within our own bodies. With that decision having been made, as the fullness of time for our first baby was taking place, we made all sorts of plans for him, with an eye not only towards the immediate life of our child, but also to the including of teaching him about the ways of the Lord and about eternity.

There was never a moment within our consideration and planning that we ever thought of not loving or caring for our coming child. We especially never once considered abandoning him or forsaking him. The plan that we committed too was a full-life provision of loving care. Not that we intended to keep our child hemmed up and confined for our personal pleasure only. We knew full well that as the time arrived, our child would venture out and begin a family of his own. And then, the same love that brought him into the world would start all over again with him and his children.

I know that this analogy seems far too simplistic to account for such a vast and far-reaching plan as the one that God devised for us, but I do believe that it might be at least somewhat close to the thing that took place in God's heart and mind. But again, the question that we began with, could our being where we are today in our salvation, children of God, destined for eternity with Him in heaven, be as simple as most of our Arminian friends believe, our Methodist and our Baptist brethren, that these things are mostly all as a result of choices made by us down here at our human level, or could there have instead been a much greater involvement coming from the hand of God?

May I give a simple conclusion that must be considered within these questions, and that is, if there was no other intentional choice being made, other than our own, and especially no intentional choice being made within the realms of God, then you and I are nothing more than the result of some random event that took place by chance both in our natural birth, and in our Spiritual birth, our salvation.

And I must say that these words here in Ephesians 1, literally cry out to us, saying to us that such human explanations fall far short of the truth. That is why, as we read these words, we must deal with that question, "Are you, am I, here by "chance" or are we here by "choice"? Because out of the answer to that question flows all of the other questions and answers that will ultimately have to follow.

And may I say that you and I must treat those questions and those answers from an intensely personal point of perspective! Was there a moment in time when God sat down with Himself, and with His Son, the Lord Jesus, and with the Holy Spirit, and said, I want to have other sons and daughters, other children like You, Lord Jesus, beloved children who will be born into the human race, children who will be much like all other

children of men, but whom I will personally and intimately love and care for and will bring to salvation through You, Beloved Jesus, my "Firstborn Son"? And I will name one of my children Bill! And I will born him into a family into which his mother will believe in Me, but his father will not, though I wish that he would. Bill will have to go through much of the first part of his life before he will finally turn and listen to my voice. But at the age of 29, he will finally have ears to listen and he will hear my call, and I will save him out of all his sins. He will be married to Sharon by that time, and I will bring her to Myself also. And from their first moments of salvation they will serve me. And yes, because they are mine, they will have Godly offspring, children who must also suffer the pangs of daily sin, but who will eventually also turn their hearts to Me and receive Me as their God.

And why will I do all of these things. It is because I chose Bill to be My son, from all times past, even before I ever laid the first foundation of the earth. And He will remain Mine throughout all times future. He is ever and always Mine! And it is because I am God, and I make choices, choices that not everyone will understand or agree with, but they are right choices because I am ever and always Holy!

15 For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." 16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

(Romans 9:15-16 (NKJV))

These words, and the words that we are studying here today from Ephesians 1, are not easily accepted words. They offend some and confuse others. But these words are written here, so we cannot discount them or want them to say something else. And they are really as simple as they seem. God is God and He makes choices.

The Lord willing, we will pick back up on these thoughts next week, especially to consider the alternative beliefs that are held by our Arminian friends, especially many within the Methodist and Baptist churches. But before we close, may we remind ourselves that God truly is always loving and caring, beyond any measure we could ever hope or imagine. And our being here today, and our being confident in Christ about our salvation, gives us encouraging proof that these words are true. We are His, chosen by Him and held securely within the palm of His hand. Praise be to God, He chose us.

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. (Romans 9:15-16)