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Sermon Notes

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God's Sovereign Election of the Saints

Ephesians 1:1-4

No other book in the Bible soars to the heights and probes the depths of divine wisdom as does this amazing little epistle of Ephesians. It is densely packed with truth, so densely packed that a handful of verses like the four we're going to look at today unfold easily into a full sermon... jam-packed with more concepts and more mind-blowing truths than we can ponder in days and days.

Specifically, at the very beginning of this epistle, Paul leads the Ephesian Christians in a celebration of worship on an infinitely deep topic: God's eternal election of the saints from before the world began.

So difficult is this idea to grasp that many have debated these ideas with tremendous passion, and even with some unholy intensity. Arguments have started over the ideas I'm going to share with you today. Many Christians, knowing this, have shrunk back from addressing these ideas, have shrunk back from having anything to do with ELECTION and PREDESTINATION... have shrunk back from reading the full document of the will of their inheritance.

They would like to steer clear of controversy, and to keep things simple... they actually pride themselves on never having had any discussion or perhaps any deep thoughts on ELECTION and PREDESTINATION. But I think it is a sin to willingly refrain from reading and thinking about passages of Scripture that may challenge our minds, that may expand our brains to the breaking point. God clearly INTENDED to give us this Scripture, because He wanted us to READ IT, PONDER IT, MEDITATE ON IT, and allow it to TRANSFORM US

It is a sin to fail to ponder God's action in election, and to shrink back from our full inheritance... and it would be a sin for me as a pastor, because I was afraid of controversy, to refuse to lead FBC in a thorough contemplation of Ephesians 1.

Acts 20:20 ... I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable

Acts 20:27 ... I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

WHAT IS THE RIGHT APPROACH to take here?

Preliminary Comments (from Martyn Lloyd-Jones)

1) We do not come with an argumentative spirit, loyal to one faction or party; we never come to this with HEAT or dogmatism

2) We do come with a spirit of UTMOST REVERENCE and a sense of PROFOUND WORSHIP... almost as if we should come on our knees, having removed our shoes because we're on HOLY GROUND

3) We come as though GOD HIMSELF were speaking these words to us, telling us deep and mysterious things that we would have no other way of knowing

4) We come based on our experience as Christians... knowing that the overwhelming majority of people in the world do not believe these doctrines; indeed that the majority of people in the TRIANGLE REGION chose to sleep in today and not go to church at all... their NATURAL MIND cannot embrace these truths

1 Corinthians 2:14 ¶ The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

So, how did WE come to believe in Christ? How did WE come to the place to be ready to hear about God's eternal election? How are we among those who woke up this morning and made the journey to church as believers? Why am I different than the unbeliever? Search yourself, examine your heart, ask yourself what is the origin of your faith, your experience as a Christian?

5) We come recognizing that eternal election is an INFINITE MYSTERY, something that soars well beyond any human being's ability to comprehend it... some accept it gladly, some struggle with it, some try not to think about it... but no one can fully explain it or fully comprehend it... this is a HEAVENLY DOCTRINE... no human being would ever have concocted it, no human mind would have ever philosophized it, no human author would ever have dreamed it up, that God could have CHOSEN HIS PEOPLE by free grace before the foundation of the world! This is nothing that man made up... so God wants us to ponder it and accept it by faith, but not to murmur against it or fight it when we do not understand it.

Isaiah 55:8-9 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. ⁹ "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

God actually REBUKES the argumentative human mind:

Romans 9:20 who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'"

What benefits come to us from embracing eternal election? Two immediately come to mind:

1) Humility: this doctrine has tremendous power to HUMBLE the arrogant human heart! To be told that you are a Christian today because God chose you before the foundation of the world, by grace alone, contrary to anything you deserve, is VERY HUMBLING!! All other systems of human salvation actually tend to elevate the pride of the one being saved... not this one!!

2) Security: the doctrine of eternal election of the saints by the sovereign grace of God has the power to ASSURE US of our FINAL SALVATION like nothing else:

John 6:37-39 All that the Father gives me (i.e. THE ELECT) will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, (i.e. THE ELECT) but raise them up at the last day.

God will NEVER LOSE ANY of His elect... but will most certainly raise them up on the final day... raise them up even from the GRAVE ITSELF

Philippians 1:6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

I. God's Trophies of Election: Paul and the Ephesian Saints (vs. 1-2)

Ephesians 1:1-2 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: ² ¶ Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

A. Paul a Trophy of God's Sovereign Election

1. No other person in history was so perfectly positioned to write this amazing letter and to talk about the sovereign grace of God in election as was the apostle Paul
2. Now there is a long debate over the authorship of this letter; but I believe the apostle Paul wrote it and will preach it that way; if any want to ask reasons for or against, I am happy to probe that with you
3. Paul's initial assertion: PAUL AN APOSTLE OF CHRIST JESUS BY THE WILL OF GOD
 - a. God the Father exerted His sovereign will in Paul's life and changed him forever
 - b. God the Father chose Paul and made him a Christian, and beyond this, an APOSTLE

c. It was simply God's will... Paul was exerting his own will in exactly the opposite direction day after day

Galatians 1:13-14 For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. ¹⁴ I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers

1 Timothy 1:13 Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy

4. The circumstances of Paul's conversion (told THREE TIMES in Acts!!)

Acts 9:1 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples.

HATED Jesus Christ and his followers... truly agreed with the stoning death of Stephen; began viciously persecuting the church in Jerusalem; dragging off men and women and putting them in prison...

Went to get letters from the high priests to the synagogues in Damascus so he could arrest the Christians there

On the road to Damascus, suddenly, everything changed for Paul... and for the world:

A brilliant light flashed from heaven, knocking Paul to the ground; a powerful voice called to him unforgettably:

Acts 9:4-6 Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" ⁵ "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. ⁶ "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

By the SOVEREIGN GRACE OF GOD the FATHER through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross and by the power of the Holy Spirit this vicious persecutor was changed in an instant from foe to friend, from dead to alive, from a hater of Jesus to one who loved him as no one has since

Clear implication: if God can save Saul of Tarsus, he can save anyone, anytime!

Paul's CALLING at that moment was to be an apostle to the Gentiles to preach this gospel of salvation by faith in Christ!!

Ephesians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God

Paul was a TROPHY of sovereign grace, the evidence of eternal election!!

B. The Ephesian Christians: Also Trophies of God's Electing Love

1. Paul writes “to the saints in Ephesus...”
2. “Saints” is a word corrupted by the Roman Catholic church... they have a very narrow definition of someone, a man or a woman, who qualifies for sainthood
 - a. The person had to have led a life of conspicuous holiness and exemplary service to the church; perhaps was martyred for the faith; an evidence of at least two miracles had to have been done by the person or by the person’s intercession
 - b. The canonization is done as a declaration by the Pope
 - c. From then on, the saint is added to the list of saints and is venerated along with them
3. BUT the New Testament clearly calls ordinary Christians by the name “saints”: *to the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus*
4. The word “saint” simply means those set apart unto God to be His holy possession; Christians are HIS, for He shed the blood of His Son to buy us, we are set apart from the corrupt world system to be holy and blameless in His sight
5. Now about Ephesus:
 - a. Ephesus was a city in Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey, near the coast of the Aegean Sea
 - b. It was on the postal route mentioned in the letters to the churches in Revelation near the Isle of Patmos where John was exiled
6. The Ephesians were won to Christ through the ministry of Paul in Acts 18-19, and the vital work of Priscilla and Aquila, and Apollos; it was at Ephesus in Acts 19 where there was a near riot over the Temple of Artemis; Acts 20 gives Paul’s moving charge to the Ephesian elders where he talks about his own ministry among them...
7. BUT ALSO that he will never see them again
8. Timothy was ministering to the church at Ephesus when Paul wrote him 1 & 2 Timothy
9. Jesus addresses them powerfully in Revelation 2 as a church amazingly faithful in doctrine and in works, but who had FORSAKEN THEIR FIRST LOVE!
10. Simply put: the Ephesian Christians are just as must trophies of God’s electing love and saving grace as was the Apostle Paul

11. NO ONE BECOMES A CHRISTIAN APART FROM GOD’S ELECTION and PREDESTINATION and SOVEREIGN GRACE in Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit!!

C. So... the Greeting is Appropriate:

Ephesians 1:2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Grace = God’s settled determination to do us good in Christ, we who deserved eternal wrath for our sins
2. “Grace to you” = clear indication that our souls need an ONGOING SUPPLY of grace to make progress in our salvation... this letter, the word of God, is part of that supply of grace
3. “Peace to you” = we are at peace with God by Christ, in a status of peace... but we need an ongoing ministry of peace to our hearts—peacefulness in the midst of suffering and trials; Ephesians ministers effusions of peace to our hearts
4. “from God our Father” = God is the source of every blessing, as we are about to discuss... so God the Father wills to give us GRACE and PEACE; and note, He is OUR FATHER, as we are his adopted sons and daughters
5. “and the Lord Jesus Christ” = Jesus is the mediator by which grace and peace come to sinners such as us; His blood paid for all these amazing blessings!
6. Apart from Christ, we have NO GOOD THING!

Now... in what follows, I want to walk through verses 3-6 with an eye to election as the organizing idea; there are many other ways to do this message and to look at these verses; but I want to see it in light of election

II. God’s Purpose in Our Election: Worship (vs. 3)

Ephesians 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

A. Paul Begins with Worship... and So Should We

1. As we saw last week, again and again, Paul is going to bring us to God’s ultimate purpose in our salvation: THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY
2. God created us to worship Him, to honor Him, to be amazed and stupefied and swept away in wonder at the greatness of Almighty God—the greatness of His person, the greatness of His works in history, the greatness of His plans for the future

3. We should begin every day with worship, just as Paul begins this letter with worship
4. “Praise be” = “blessed be” = “May God be honored and esteemed and worshipped and glorified....”
 - a. Blessed = spoken well of; may God get all the praise and honor He deserves for our salvation
 - b. May God be satisfied in the outcome of this majestic work
 - c. Heaven is a world of PRAISE... in which God is constantly being praised and honored for His person and His works
 - d. Paul desires the same praise on earth as it is in heaven
5. WHO IS PRAISED? *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*
 - a. This is a specifically Christian designation of God... very clearly celebrating the eternal relationship between the members of the Trinity
 - b. God is not merely the Creator of the ends of the earth; or the sustainer of all living things; or the King and Judge of all the earth; or the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God of the Jews
 - c. God is specifically the GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST... the First person of the Trinity
 - d. God is the one who LOVES HIS SON, and spoke this word in reference to Jesus: “THIS IS MY SON, WHOM I LOVE... WITH HIM I AM WELL PLEASED”

B. Every Blessing Comes from God the Father

1. Paul specifically praises God the Father for all the spiritual blessings of our salvation... they come to each one of us directly from God the Father
2. So easy for us as Christians to focus on Jesus to the exclusion of God the Father
3. But Jesus came specifically to reveal the Father to us and to assure us of the Father’s deep love for us

*John 16:26-27 In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. ²⁷ **No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.***

4. If you are a Christian today, you are infinitely, perfectly, and eternally loved by God the Father... the highest authority in the universe... the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is YOUR FATHER by adoption!!

C. We Will Spend Eternity Worshipping God

1. This is our destiny... our heavenly occupation
2. The New Heavens and New Earth will be staggeringly beautiful, a truly perfect world... free from all decay and corruption, free from death, exactly the world God wanted it to be before the Fall, but even far better
3. Every blade of grass and fragrant flower, every soaring mountain and lush valley, every glistening river and placid pond will GLOW with the glory of God... and we will see God face to face and see Him in everything He's made and we will worship Him
4. The more we worship Him NOW the better
5. Application: learn how to praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ
 - a. Learn how to thank Him for everything and praise Him for everything
 - b. Learn how to worship Him from your heart, and not live in terror of Him

III. God's Generosity in Our Election: Every Spiritual Blessing (vs. 3)

Ephesians 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

A. God the Father Has Blessed Us

1. The lavish grace of God the Father toward sinners like us should take our breath away
2. God has truly not dealt with us as our sins deserve
3. The incredible generosity of God is declared in many verses

Luke 15:22-23 the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate.

B. Every Spiritual Blessing

1. "Every" = everything we need

2 Peter 1:3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness

We are fully equipped for the Christian life and for godliness... and for Judgment Day and eternity beyond!!

2. "Spiritual blessing"

- a. Here Paul is not focusing on "common grace" blessings that God lavishes on all humanity, whether or not they love Him, whether or not they are His adopted children

Matthew 5:45 He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

James 1:17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

Psalm 104:13-15 He waters the mountains from his upper chambers; the earth is satisfied by the fruit of his work. ¹⁴ He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate-- bringing forth food from the earth: ¹⁵ wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread that sustains his heart.

b. NO! The focus here is on SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

- i) The blessings of salvation that he will enumerate carefully in this chapter
- ii) Election before the foundation of the world
- iii) Holiness and blamelessness in his sight
- iv) Electing love
- v) Predestination
- vi) Adoption as sons
- vii) Redemption
- viii) The forgiveness of sins
- ix) Wisdom
- x) Understanding
- xi) The sealing of the Holy Spirit

3. This list is thorough but not comprehensive

4. But the phrase EVERY SPIRITUAL BLESSING is comprehensive...
everything we need for eternal life, for salvation from sins
- C. Spiritual blessings; in the Heavenly Realms
1. Emphasize these words... many people misunderstand this
 2. God's blessings are SPIRITUALLY DISCERNED... understood BY FAITH
 3. Many Christians get deeply thrown back when they encounter trials of various kinds
 - a. They get a diagnosis of cancer
 - b. They lost their job
 - c. They lose a loved one
 - d. They can't get pregnant
 - e. They can't find a spouse
 - f. They are lonely
 - g. They lose their house to a flood or fire
 - h. They are seriously injured in an accident
 4. These folks question God's love; wonder why they have not been blessed
 5. The blessings we MOST NEED are "spiritual blessings in the heavenly realms"
 6. The "heavenly realms" = the place where God dwells in glory and power
 - a. Three heavens mentioned in the Bible

2 Corinthians 12:2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven.

- b. The first heaven = the sky above us; blue in the sunshine; where birds fly and clouds are formed
- c. The second heaven = the cosmos; where planets move and stars twinkle; where satellites orbit; outer space
- d. The third heaven = God's dwelling place; where God lives in unapproachable light; where Christ is seated on His throne in heavenly glory;

Ephesians 1:20 God seated [Christ] at his right hand in the heavenly realms

where 100 million angels serve God...

Ephesians 1:21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given

where the departed saints are absent from the body but present with the Lord;

Ephesians 2:6 God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus

it is also the invisible spiritual realm where Satan and the demons do their invisible work

Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms

7. Our blessings are in the THIRD heaven... the heavenly realms... invisible to the eye, spiritually discerns

8. PROSPERITY GOSPEL people tell you Christ has won blessing in the EARTHLY REALMS for you... name it and claim it; Joel Osteen speaks of "your best life now"...

"God wants us to prosper financially, to have plenty of money, to fulfill the destiny He has laid out for us," Osteen wrote in a 2005 letter to his flock [<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/opinions/outlook/worst-ideas/prosperity-gospel.html>]

According to Osteen, God wants to pour out his "immeasurable favor" on his human creatures, and this requires a fundamental re-ordering of our thinking. "To experience this immeasurable favor," Osteen writes, "you must rid yourself of that small-minded thinking and start expecting God's blessings, start anticipating promotion and supernatural increase. You must conceive it in your heart before you can receive it. In other words, you must make increase in your own thinking, then God will bring those things to pass."

Al Mohler's hard questions:

What about all those who are even now suffering persecution for their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? What about the loved ones of the martyrs in Mosul? What about the Christians forced out of their homes and threatened with genocide? What about the children of Christians slain in Iraq and Syria

just in recent weeks, or those martyred by Boko Haram in Africa? How does Prosperity Theology work for them? Can anyone look them in the eye and say that God's plan for believers in this life is to know *Your Best Life Now?* [<http://www.albertmohler.com/2014/09/03/the-osteen-predicament-mere-happiness-cannot-bear-the-weight-of-the-gospel/>]

9. This is not to say God doesn't bless His children now, on earth... He does! But the false promises of the Prosperity Gospel are a Satanic lie! Paul and Silas were singing and praising God in a Philippian jail... they knew that their citizenship and blessings are in the HEAVENLY REALMS and that they were ALIENS and STRANGERS in this present, Satanic world;
10. Brothers and sisters in many nations on earth are bitterly persecuted for their faith; but they have a supernatural joy because they know that they have EVERY SPIRITUAL BLESSING they could possibly need IN THE HEAVENLY REALMS in Christ Jesus

D. These Blessings are ours ONLY "IN CHRIST" (vs. 3)

1. These spiritual blessings are only for Christians
2. Joel Osteen makes no distinction between Christians and non-Christians; anyone who adjusts his/her thinking to be positive will get blessed
3. But Paul clearly limits these spiritual blessings by the vital phrase IN CHRIST!

IV. God's Timing of Our Election: Chosen Before the World Began (vs. 4)

Ephesians 1:4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

A. The Fact of our Election: Plainly Asserted

1. God chose us...
2. The Greek word "chose" here is used in many places to refer to "the elect"; the chosen ones
3. To choose means to select one or a few out of a larger group
4. This is one of the most valuable and yet most difficult doctrines in the Christian faith
5. The idea of election is taught in MANY places in the NT
 - a. Jesus used it in describing the events of His Second Coming

Matthew 24:31 And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

- b. Paul said the elect were in his mind constantly in his evangelistic/missionary work

2 Timothy 2:10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

- c. Paul openly asserts it to the Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians 2:13 But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

- d. Peter wrote his epistle to the elect:

1 Peter 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia

B. What Is “Election”?

1. God choosing from among the mass of humanity a people for Himself for the purpose of salvation
2. These elect are the focus of everything God did in Christ and by the Holy Spirit
3. This election is the ground of everything that follows...including our choosing of Christ

1 John 4:19 We love because he first loved us.

In the same way, WE CHOOSE GOD BECAUSE HE FIRST CHOSE US!

C. The TIMING of the Election

1. Plainly asserted here: BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD

Ephesians 1:4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world

^{ESV} Ephesians 1:4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world

2. The phrase “foundation of the world” = clearly refers to creation, the account written for us in Genesis 1:

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

3. Before God said “Let there be light,” he chose every Christian by name to be His own, His precious possession

4. Same thing taught in 2 Timothy

2 Timothy 1:9-10 This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, ¹⁰ but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus

5. Here is INFINITE MYSTERY!! Beyond our comprehension

- a. God has been knowing you and loving you throughout all the ages of human history
- b. When God formed Adam from the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, He was knowing you by name and loving you in Christ
- c. When God rescued Noah from the flood, He was knowing you by name and loving you in Christ
- d. When Alexander the Great was sweeping across the ancient world with his invincible Greek army, God was loving you in His mind
- e. During the entire span of the Roman Empire, through all the 170 Roman emperors from Caesar Augustus to the fall of Rome... through all that history, God the Father knew you by name and was loving you
- f. When your ancestors crossed the ocean on a boat or flew here to America on a plane, God knew you and loved you in Christ by name
- g. And after you were born, but before you came to Christ, God knew you were His future child, and protected you until you could trust in His Son

D. On What Basis Were You Chosen, and Others Were Not?

1. Only two possible answers here
2. First possibility: God chose you KNOWING SOMETHING ABOUT YOU... and ON THAT BASIS He chose you... this is a conditional election; usually people say God knew that someday you would believe in Christ and on the basis of FORESEEN FAITH God chose you
3. Second possibility : God chose you UNCONDITIONALLY... simply according to the counsel of His own will; not because of anything in the elect, but because of His love and His purposes ALONE
4. The first of these makes God the responder to us, even though we didn't even exist at all! It also forgets that faith is a gift of God... so why would God give faith to some and not to others if not based on unconditional election

5. Also, there is a clear Bible verse that teaches unconditional election

Romans 9:11-12 before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad-- in order that God's purpose in election might stand: ¹² not by works but by him who calls-- she was told, "The older will serve the younger."

^{ESV} Romans 9:16 So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.

This clearly removes the idea of election based on ANYTHING FORESEEN in us... actually, anything God would have foreseen, He puts in us to begin with

Romans 11:36 ¶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

6. So, our election is not based on anything God saw in us, but simply because of His own purpose in grace

7. This is the doctrine of UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION... and it is DEEPLY HUMBLING

V. God's Provision for Our Election: Chosen in Christ (vs. 4)

Ephesians 1:4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world

A. What Does it Mean "In Him"?

1. God the Father chose us IN CHRIST... that is, with an eye to Christ's death on your behalf
2. In the Eternal Covenant of Life, God chose you IN CHRIST, with an eye to Christ's work on the cross that had even happened yet when He chose you before time began... but your election, like every other spiritual blessing is only IN CHRIST... BLOOD BOUGHT!!

B. Jesus' Assertion

John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

We go beyond: apart from Christ, we HAVE NOTHING

Our election by the Father was made IN CHRIST...

C. Paul Repeats This Idea Again and Again

Ephesians 1:5 he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ

Ephesians 1:6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved

Ephesians 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses

Ephesians 1:9 according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ

Ephesians 1:10 to unite all things in him

Ephesians 1:11 In him we have obtained an inheritance

Ephesians 1:12 we who were the first to hope in Christ

Ephesians 1:13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit

D. We Cannot Be TOO CHRIST-CENTERED in our Understanding of Election...
and of ALL SALVATION

“Jesus paid it all; all to Him I owe!”

VI. God’s Intention in Our Election: Our Holiness (vs. 4)

Ephesians 1:4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight

A. God’s Purpose in Electing Us: Our Holiness

1. We cannot think too much about this concept!
2. There can be no separation between our faith in Christ and God’s purpose that we be HOLY IN HIS SIGHT
3. Some people try to say that any focus on lifestyle after faith in Christ is legalism
4. Some people try to separate out accepting Jesus as Savior from living for Him as Lord
5. There is a distinction between justification and sanctification
 - a. In Justification, God DECLARES US POSITIONALLY HOLY
 - b. In Sanctification, God MAKES US PROGRESSIVELY HOLY
 - c. In Glorification, God MAKES US PERFECTLY HOLY

But the intention was always clear: God elected us to be holy and blameless

B. What Is Holiness?

1. Holiness is total purity; love for what is right; hatred of what is evil
2. Patterned after God Himself

Leviticus 11:45 I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy.

1 John 1:5 ¶ God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

Christ the perfect pattern:

Hebrews 1:9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.

This is the clearest description of holiness: LOVING RIGHTEOUSNESS,
HATING WICKEDNESS... and doing it all IN JOY

Some people think of holiness as a sour disposition, a dour face; abstaining from a bunch of things and hating life

But true holiness is a life of BEAUTY and LOVE of what is right

Jonathan Edwards:

Holiness, as I then wrote down some of my contemplations on it, appeared to me to be of a sweet, pleasant, charming, serene, calm nature; which brought an inexpressible purity, brightness, peacefulness and ravishment to the soul. In other words, that it made the soul like a field or garden of God, with all manner of pleasant flowers; all pleasant, delightful, and undisturbed: enjoying a sweet calm and the gently vivifying beams of the sun. The soul of a true Christian, as I then wrote my meditations, appeared like such a little white flower as we see in the spring of the years; low and humble on the ground, opening its bosom to receive the pleasant beams of the sun's glory; rejoicing as it were in a calm rapture; diffusing around a sweet fragranc; standing peacefully and lovingly, in the midst of other flowers round about; all in like manner opening their bosoms, to drink in the light of the sun.

C. God Has Elected Us TO FINISH SALVATION... not merely to Start

1. We were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world to be HOLY AND BLAMELESS IN HIS SIGHT... or BEFORE HIM
2. It implies the final state of perfection in heaven, in a face to face relationship with God

Revelation 22:3-4 No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

VII. Applications

A. Election is the Basis of All Evangelistic Appeals

1. When the gospel is proclaimed to the elect, they WILL RESPOND
2. You may say, “How do I know if I’m elect?” You will know when the gospel appeals enough to you to trust in Christ

1 Thessalonians 1:4-5 For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵ because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.

3. So... COME TO CHRIST

- a. Acknowledge yourself to be a sinner, needing a Savior
- b. See in Jesus Christ a perfect life, one that you yearn to have as your own... in holiness and obedience to the Laws of God
- c. See in Christ’s death the ATONING SACRIFICE for your sins
- d. Throw yourself on Christ in the abandon of faith...
- e. Receive the gift of forgiveness of sins by His blood
- f. Receive new life in the pattern of His resurrection from the dead
- g. See the Holy Spirit begin to make you pure and holy in MIND and in LIFE

B. Praise God for All the Spiritual Blessings of the Gospel

1. Paul begins this epistle with Praise
2. How is your praise life??
3. Do you begin each day with a time of worship for your spiritual blessings?
4. Recount them... go through the list here in Ephesians 1:3-14, and thank Him daily for each one
 - a. “Thank you, God, that you chose me before the foundation of the world”
 - b. Thank you, God, that because of my faith in Christ, you see me as POSITIONALLY HOLY and BLAMELESS in your sight!”

- c. Thank you, God, also that by the Spirit you are making me PROGRESSIVELY HOLY in actual daily life”
- d. I worship you God, that, you loved me in Christ and predestined me to be adopted as your child
- e. I worship you that, in Christ, I am completely forgiven of all my sins, and redeemed through His blood

5. We cannot praise Him enough!

6. The more you praise Him, the more joyful and fruitful you will be!

C. Ponder the Mystery of Election

- 1. Don't shy away from it because Satan has kicked up some controversy about it over the centuries
- 2. God wanted you to know this doctrine!
- 3. God wanted you to know that every Christ was elect, chosen by God from before the foundation of the world
- 4. God wanted you to know that this election was NOT BASED ON ANYTHING God saw in you, but based on His own purpose in grace
- 5. Let this doctrine HUMBLE you... let this doctrine also give you FULL ASSURANCE! Your election is established in the heavenly realms, and was made before you were born or had done anything good or bad
- 6. God will never stop until you are finally saved in heaven

D. Focus More on “the Heavenly Realms” than You Do

- 1. Don't seek primarily blessing HERE BELOW
- 2. Ponder what is stored up for you in heaven already, where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves cannot break in and steal
- 3. If you are depressed and downcast now as a Christian, it is because you have set your heart too much on things below

E. Yearn for Holiness in your Daily Life

- 1. The mark of being elect is personal holiness
- 2. HUNGER AND THIRST for holiness
- 3. By the power of the Spirit put to death whatever darkness is in your life

4. Your assurance of election will be in proportion to your growth in holiness

F. Pray for God's Elect to Come to Faith in Christ

1. All over the world, there are trophies of God's grace yet to be saved
2. They WILL MOST CERTAINLY come to faith in Christ, since election has made it guaranteed
3. Pray for Unreached people groups!!