

TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY [PART TWO]

May 17, 2002

Ephesians 1:3-6,

"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 would be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

As we discussed last week, verses 3-14 serve as one long sentence of praise. Paul is blessing God, because He has blessed believers with every spiritual blessing, so that we might in turn bless and praise God. As we discussed, verse 3 serves as the main statement of blessing and praise. In verse 3, Paul praises God for blessing us with every spiritual blessing. In verses 4-14 Paul goes on to describe the various spiritual blessings that we have in Christ. He begins in verses 4-6 by focusing on the work of the Father.

- ***What works of the father does Paul praise God for in verses 4-6?***

Election:

The nature of election is bound up in the term, "*chose*" from verse 4. It literally means, "*to call out.*" It refers to picking or choosing a smaller number out of a larger number. Here it refers to God's election of some to be saved out of the mass of unholy and sinful mankind. The term here indicates God's totally independent choice.

- ***What is Election? Take a moment to write in your own words the definition of Election.***

Election may be defined as that eternal act of God whereby He, in His sovereign good pleasure, and on account of no foreseen merit in them, chooses a certain number of men to be the recipients of special grace and of eternal salvation.

Simply stated, *the doctrine of Election teaches that God sovereignly chose before creation those whom He determined to be saved.*

- ***The Bible clearly teaches the doctrine of Election. What do the following verses teach in regards to this great doctrine?***

Matthew 22:14-

John 15:16-

Acts 13:48-

Romans 8:28-30-

1 Thessalonians 1:2-4-

2 Thessalonians 2:13-

2 Timothy 2:10-

1 Peter 1:1-2-

2 Peter 1:10-

As we have seen through these verses, the teaching of the Bible is that God did not merely plan to give salvation to those who would choose to believe, but that God actually determined beforehand those who would be chosen for salvation. As a result, we respond in faith to God's choice of us and His election of us is not based upon anything that we do.

PREREQUISITES TO UNDERSTANDING ELECTION:

The biblical doctrine of election is difficult for the finite mind of man to accept. In order to accept this biblical doctrine, certain other biblical truths must be clearly understood.

First, Election must be seen in light of man's sin!

- *What do the following verses reveal about the state of mankind?*

Romans 3:10-18-

Ephesians 2:1-3-

Romans 1:18-21-

1 Corinthians 2:14-

These verses clearly reveal that mankind is sinful and totally incapable of having a relationship with God. Sin has affected our mind and we cannot receive the things of God. Sin has affected our emotions and our hearts are set against God. Sin has affected our will and we are enslaved to it.

Second, Election must be seen from God's perspective rather than man's perspective.

- *What do the following verses teach regarding God's perspective?*

Matthew 20:1-15-

Romans 9:6-24-

Ephesians 2:8-9-

OBJECTIONS TO ELECTION:

There have been throughout church history objections to the biblical teaching of election. It is necessary to answer two major objections to election.

Objection #1 *"Election is God looking into the future and knowing who would choose to believe and then electing them."*

Answer:

- *How do the following verses address this objection?*

Romans 11:5-6-

2 Timothy 1:9-

John 15:16-

The Bible does not speak of our faith as a reason God chose us. In fact it excludes it. Election based on something good in us, like our faith, would essentially be the beginning of salvation by our own worthiness.

Passages that speak about God's foreknowledge are concerning His foreknowledge of people, not His foreknowledge of facts about people. God is all-knowing about all facts, past, present and future. But when the term foreknowledge is used it is used to speak of God's selection of people in love, involving a personal and relational knowledge of them.

Objection #2 *"Election means we do not have a choice of whether to accept Christ or not."*

Answer:

Man clearly has a choice in salvation since God holds us accountable when we refuse to believe. Yet all people, apart from election, freely and willingly choose to turn away from God (Romans 3:10-18). The unsaved are dead in their trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1) and are slaves to sin (Romans 6:6). They express a free choice that leads them toward active rebellion to God, not faith in God.

BACK TO EPHESIANS 1:4-6:

- *According to Ephesians 1:4, what is the timing of God's Election? When did He choose those whom He determined to be saved?*

- *What do the following verses have to say about the timing of election?*

2 Thessalonians 2:13-

2 Timothy 1:9-

Revelation 13:8-

- *According to Ephesians 1:4, what is the purpose of God's Election?*

Cf. Colossians 1:22-

The term *holy* means "to consecrate, sanctify or to be set apart." It speaks of inward consecration to God. The term *blameless* means "without blemish or spotless." These two terms were used to describe the unblemished animals set apart for God as Old Testament sacrifices (Exodus 29:37-38). These two terms also speak of the perfect sacrifice of Christ on the cross (Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 1:19).

- *According to Ephesians 1:4, what is the motive for God's Election?*

Cf. Ephesians 2:4-5-

Many have said that election is not a loving act. How can God be loving and only choose to save some? But that is the wrong question and the wrong focus. The fact of the matter is that none of us deserve to be saved. All we deserve as sinful mankind is hell. As sinners, we were unrighteous and completely incapable of coming to the Lord in faith. In this light, the act of election is an extremely loving thing to do. In fact it is the ultimate act of love as He sent His Son to die on the cross for us.

- *According to Ephesians 1:5, what is the manner of God's Election?*

The word *predestined* literally means "to define, decide upon or determine beforehand." It appears only six times in the New Testament and is used exclusively of God's eternal decrees and serves to emphasize His sole initiative and authority in our salvation.

The terms *election/chose* and *predestination* are synonyms and can be used almost interchangeably. *Election* refers to God's selection in eternity past of those whom He will in time save by His grace through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. It focuses on the person being chosen. *Predestination* is the divine decision as to the form, which those blessings will take. It focuses more on God's plan and on the outcome, which He has predetermined.

- *According to Ephesians 1:5, what is the result of God's Election?*

In the Graeco-Roman world the term adoption was used to refer to the adoption of sons who were not so by birth. It signified entry into a privileged position. Under Roman law, an adopted son enjoyed the same status and privileges of a birth son.

This predestination to adoption as sons is through Jesus Christ. Notice also that it is according to the kind intention of His will that God predestined those whom He has chosen.

Remember that Paul is praising God for His work of Election, therefore we should too. The ultimate goal of this passage is recorded in verse 6- "*to the praise of the glory of His grace!*"