

Sermon Notes: *Chosen in Christ* (Ephesians 1:4)

Intro: In verse 3, Paul said that we enjoy every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. In and through and because of Christ we already have title to every spiritual blessing. But also we have already begun to enjoy them in the heavenly places in Christ. In communion with our Father and Savior by the indwelling heavenly Spirit we already taste our heavenly inheritance in some measure. We anticipate the day when our faith will become sight! But how have our heavenly blessings come to us? True it is by faith (2:8). But that faith cannot have originated with us since by nature we were “dead” in sins (2:1). In verse 4, Paul traces our spiritual life back to its origin in God’s plan for us conceived before time. Oh the blessings of God’s electing love! Three great implications:

#1: Election: God’s Choice, Not Ours. How great our hope when we know that our faith in Christ was not simply because of our choice, but more basically because of God’s. At the beginning of this hymn of praise, Paul says that all the blessings of our salvation come to us *because* God chose us. Here is a clear statement of the biblical doctrine of election: God mercifully selected out of the human race which he foresaw as fallen, sinful, worthy of condemnation,—individuals whom he would redeem, work faith in, justify, and glorify in Jesus Christ. Paul affirmed this doctrine to the Roman believers (Rom 9:15-16). Praised God for its realization in the Thessalonians (2 Th. 2:13). Strengthened faltering Timothy with it (2 Tim 1:8-9). Here is the deep foundation on which every Christian’s faith and life rests: God’s free and gracious choice of us in his Son. Paul defines God’s election with two modifying phrases. God the Father chose us in Christ. In this great hymn of praise, Christ’s person and work is mentioned no less than a dozen times (chosen, adopted, redeemed, etc. “in Christ”). Our salvation originated with the Father and everything he has done and will do for our salvation, he does in and through Christ—not according to our merits but Christ’s for us, not according to our power but Christ’s in us. God the Father chose us before the foundation of the world. The Father’s initiative in saving the believer from sin and death was not arbitrary or whimsical. Increasingly many (Open Theists) believe God works without a script, simply working things out as he goes along, changing his plans to fit changing circumstances. Some even say that he does not absolutely know the future. That he must be open to the possibilities. That is not the biblical picture of God! Without being the author of evil or coercing the wills of his creatures, God brings everything that happens to pass according to his eternal plan (1:11). Here Paul affirms that God planned the solution to our sin even before we first sinned. Believer take comfort and rejoice! The Father foresaw all your sin and ill desert—but his first thoughts of you were love which will not let you go! Paul refers to an eternal pact (“covenant of redemption”) between the three persons of our Triune God. The Father chose particular sinners to be redeemed. The Son redeemed these selected ones in time by his obedience and death. The Spirit brings those sinners selected by the Father and redeemed by the Son to saving faith (Jn 6:39; 10:29; 17:2, 4-10; Heb. 2:13; Rom. 8:29-30; Rev. 13:8). This is the deep foundation of our salvation which makes our faith stand firm and strong!

#2: Election: Humility, Not Pride. Will this truth lead to pride? No: We are humbled by our depravity. Sometimes when people have a problem with the doctrine of election their real problem is with the doctrine of human depravity which makes God’s election necessary. The basic question: How far did man fall by his sin? Upward (secular evolutionists)? No. Part ways down (Semi-pelagians and Arminians) so that he still retains some ability to repent and believe?

No. Man fell all the way down (i.e. Jn 11:11ff). He cannot turn to God in repentance and faith unless God first removes his heart of stone and replaces it with a heart of flesh (Eph 2:1ff; Jer. 17:9; Jn 6:44). We are humbled by God's sovereignty. Pink: "the truth of God's sovereignty...removes every ground for human boasting and instills the spirit of humility in its stead. It declares that salvation is of the Lord in its origin, operation, and consummation. It tells us that we are "born, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (Jn 1:13). Election humbles the believer with gratitude for grace!

#3: Election: Holiness, Not License. If my growth in holiness arises not out of my self-effort but God's unconditional mercy, won't I become licentious? No, for two reasons: Must be holy because of the Son's life in us. Our election is "in Christ." We are elect to commune with Christ and share in his life as a branch joined to a trunk—Christ's righteousness, Spirit, life. We are elect to be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29). Anyone who claims to have received God's electing grace and yet remains indifferent to holiness gives evidence of self-deception. Must be holy because of the Father's plan for us. Holiness isn't our idea but God's. He chose us to be holy in eternity past. He will complete his plan in us. Are we "in Christ?" Christ is the mirror of our election. We know our election not by trying to read God's mind but by knowing we are "in Christ" by faith (Jn. 3:16).