

Ephesians ch 1 vs 4-

I told you last week that the 1st 14 vs of the book of Eph could in reality be broken up into a couple of different subdivisions, dealing with 3 different subjects. In one respect we could develop a study concerning the Godhead and seeing the trinity at work in the scriptures and how they all work together in the salvation process and the developing of our spiritual growth and maturity.

But then we can also see in these vs one aspect of the fullness of God's plan as it pertains to eternity past, the present and the future. Vs3-4 speaking of the Father, and then we see vs, oh 5 through about 12 vs dealing with the Son and then in vs 13 and 14 we see mention of and one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit being brought to our attention, for us to understand. and Then we also see a certain unfolding of God's plan concerning eternity past (around vs 4-6), we see an aspect of what we have presently in Christ in vs 7-9 and then God's ultimate plan for the future, the culmination of all of these things in vs 10.

So I remind you of these things so that as we're studying these vs, though I might not draw your attention to each of these points as we go through them, now you're aware of them so that you can kind of take note of them for your own personal insight and understanding. Now last week we took an in depth look at vs 3 which says (read) blessing God, because He's 1st blessed us and He's blessed us with every *spiritual blessing* in the heavenly places, in Christ. and It's important that you keep your focus on that which is spiritual, we trust God for meeting our material needs again not our greed's but our needs. Those physical needs that we have in order to survive we are to trust God for, (Matt ch 6 beginning with vs 25) but we're to seek 1st the kingdom of God and His righteousness, we're to place Jesus Christ as our priority and we're to meditate on things above. and The things that occupy a person's heart and their minds and their time says a lot about the person.

Here we read where Paul is really thanking God and blessing God for the spiritual blessings. Now there's a whole lot going around and really in my opinion too much talk or emphasis about the material blessings. and There are these people who advocate the farce that every saint of God should experience material blessings and they testify of how God made them rich because of their great faith, and their testimonies are of the material blessings. and They insinuate, or implicate that godliness is a means of material gain. Yet the bible tells us 1 concerning those "*who suppose that godliness is a means of gain (or prosperity). From such withdraw yourself.*"

In other words don't have anything to do with those types of people, because the bible says that they are "*men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth.*" But, "*Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.*" The mature believer, the one who has his or her priorities right, will no doubt understand that anything they have is only by the grace of God, but their main focus won't be on the material blessings, but rather when it comes to the blessings of God, it will be on those spiritual blessings that we have in Christ. As Paul emphasizes to us here, and Paul is going to spend the next few ch listing out the things that God has done for you, those spiritual blessings that are yours in Christ. Now we so often hear about what we should be doing for God, those things that we ought to be about for the Lord. But understand that the bible never emphasizes what we ought to be doing for the Lord.

The bible emphasizes what it is that God has already done for you, and in this epistle it's not until he's written what's been divided into 3 chapters concerning those things that God has done for you that he says now walk worthy of it. Paul doesn't tell us what we ought to be doing for God until he 1st emphasizes what God has already done for us, and that's the proper order. Why, because we can't be what we ought to for God until we have 1st received that which He has done for us, until we've been properly equipped. In other words God's work has to be 1st in my life, before I can walk according to godliness, and you'll never find it reversed in the scriptures, nothing is required of you but that you don't 1st hear of what God has done for you. God initiates we respond, God equips, we do, God's part is always 1st. Which brings us to our current text let's read it now beginning with vs 3 so that we can grab the flow.

Vs3-4

So here we are confronted with the doctrine of election, the fact that God chooses those whom He has purposed to spend eternity with. and Let me just begin by saying that we have in the scriptures a paradox which is to say 2 equal truth's both taught emphatically that in our minds can't interweave and so it drives us insane to try and figure out the balance when in reality we never will, at least on this side of eternity. In certain parts of the scripture we are taught of the free will of man and how it's up to you to decide whether or not you want to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. But then in other areas of scripture we see the principal that we have before us this morning, and that is the sovereignty of God in choosing Himself who it is that He will spend eternity with. So the question is do we have a choice or don't we, and the answer is yes, yes we have a choice and yes God chooses, so how do those two relate?

That's the mystery, that's the part we can't understand, but what we do need to understand is that God never asked us to understand it, just believe it. Instead of trying to compromise one side or the other so that we can settle our own intellects, it's better just to believe the word of God for what it says and leave the harmonizing of these two truths up to God. Now, that having been said we will take some time here to examine this principal of election, and there are a lot of people who wrestle with this concept rather than simply rejoice in it. So many people don't think that it's fair that God should be able to choose whom He wants to spend eternity with, now these same people appreciate the fact that they can choose whom they want to spend their lives with, but they want to deny God that same privilege.

Now as for me I'm just excited to think that God would choose the likes of me, but one thing that we need to take note of in this vs is the fact that God doesn't choose anyone based upon what they do or don't do, what they've done or what they will do. He didn't choose me in and of myself He chose me in Christ. Notice, *just as He chose us in Him*, the election of God is in Christ, and it's not like He evaluates our lives and then after watching us for a while He says, OK I'll take you, He's not a divine scout for team players. Notice that He chose those whom He chose, before the foundation of the world, what does that mean, it means He chose you before you could ever do anything to merit it, or do anything to gain favor in His sight. It was God's sovereign choice, and you should be humbled before God that He would choose you.

The fact that God that God has chosen His elect since before the foundations of the world, indicates to us that His election process has to do with His foreknowledge. As a matter of fact Peter tells us that we're the elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. and You can't blame God for making choices based upon His foreknowledge, can you imagine what you could do with the capacity of foreknowledge, James said in Acts 15:18 that, "*Known to God from eternity are all His works.*"

In other words there is something that God can't do, someone would say is there anything that God can't do and the answer is yes, God can't learn, He already knows everything. If He could learn then He wouldn't know everything and if you had the capacity of foreknowledge would you make choices that were of no benefit, that had absolutely no advantage in them whatsoever. I've heard Chuck Smith use the illustration of Horse racing, if you had foreknowledge and you went to the track would you choose the loser or would you put your dollars down on the winner. and If you have the capacity to say well I wouldn't waste my time with the losing horse, how much more is God going to utilize His capacity of foreknowledge to choose those who are going to follow through, who are going to win the race.

Now listen, that means if you know Christ, you're a winner, God wouldn't waste His time choosing someone who wasn't going to win the race. You say but Jeff you don't know what I've been up to, you're right I don't, but I can tell you that He who has begun a good work in you is faithful and He will complete it. Now I don't want to spend all morning on this concept of God's election but I do want to say to anyone here who maybe doesn't know Jesus Christ and you're setting here saying to yourself well I don't know Jesus maybe I'm not chosen of God. Well it's that complicated and this simple, if you want to find out that you've been chosen of God all you have to do is give your heart to Jesus Christ and you'll find out God chose you to.

You see even though the bible teaches divine election it never excuses man's free will and his ability to choose to accept or reject Jesus Christ. So it's God who initiates but it's up to man to respond, so you have a responsibility before God to choose to accept His choice or reject it. The bible is filled with invitations to the unsaved to respond to the Lord. Josh 24:15 *"choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."* Matt 11:28-29 Jesus said, *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."* The invitation is open to anyone John 7:37 *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink."* In Acts 17:30 we read that. *"God now commands all men everywhere to repent."* Rev 22:17 *"And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely."* and Of course there's those famous scriptures like John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."* and 2 Peter 3:9 that speaks of the fact that God's *"not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."* Jesus said, *"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."* Now in that vs we see both in operation, the one's whom the Father gives Me speaks of election, and then the one who comes to Me speaks of the free will of man.

In other words whosoever will may come. You're not going to come to Jesus Christ and Him not receive you, He's not going to say what's your name again? Kingery, Kingery, sorry looks like you're not on the list, afraid I can't receive you. I mean you seem like a needy enough person, I'm not sure maybe there was a foul up in the paper work but there's nothing I can do you for you, I mean I'd like to save you and all but it looks like you're not one of the elect.

D.L Moody said, “the whosoever wills are the elect and the whosoever won’ts are the non-elect.” So if you’re soul is thirsting for more, if your soul is labored and heavy laden, you come to Jesus Christ and find out that you’ve been chosen from before the foundations of the earth. Jesus has a perfect record; He’s never turned even one person away, why, because He chose them. Well, if your mind is boggled you’re in good company, so I want to press on now concerning what you’ve been chosen for, what it is that you’ve been elected unto. and We find here in vs 4 that you’ve been chosen in Him before the foundations of the world that you should be holy and with out blame before Him.

God didn’t save you, or elect you so that you could go about your way and live in a way that feeds your flesh meanwhile you enjoy the fringe benefit of heaven. That’s one of the fallacies of eliminating the freewill of man due to the sovereignty of God, because it ultimately leads me to the resolve that if I’ve been chosen by God I can do whatever I want and I’ll go to heaven. Because I’m chosen, and if you’re not chosen it doesn’t matter what you do, you’re not going to make it, but that’s a misunderstanding of election, because you were chosen for a purpose and that’s that you should be holy and spotless or blameless before God. If your life is marked out and patterned by conscious willful and deliberate sin then you do well to question your position before God because odds are you’re not a Christian.

If your thoughts are consumed with hatred, and a determination not to forgive, I would encourage you to allow the Lord to search your heart to find out where you’re at with Him. If you’re consumed with materialism, your every waking moment is focused on the bigger better things this world has to offer with no regard for the things of the Spirit, or if you’re addicted to pornography and you’re ok with that you need to reconsider your position before God and get right with Him because if these are the types of things that characterize your life it doesn’t matter to me how many times you’ve gone forward, whether or not you’ve been baptized or anything else you’re not right with God. Because election, though not immediately, but ultimately culminates in holiness and blamelessness, these things will be being worked out in your life, not because of who you are but because of who Jesus Christ is in you and Him working in you and being worked out in you by the power of the Holy Spirit. Holiness and sanctification is a byproduct of election, it’s also your position in Christ, though none of us are perfected in it in the here and now, you need to understand that though it’s being worked out in your life presently, in Christ you’re seen before the Father perfectly.

Sure we all stumble, we all have isolated lapses by where we miss the mark, and we don't always practice holiness, nevertheless we've been given the position of perfect holiness and blamelessness in Christ. Because as we said last week, what is His is ours what He has we have, His righteousness is our righteousness, and His holiness is our holiness, all that is His is ours, we having become heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ Rom 8:17. So He has chose us in Him (finish vs 4)

Vs5

Now here we have another word that's related to this idea of choosing, the word "predestined" meaning to predetermine or to decide in advance, God has a predetermined plan for your life. and That plan is that you might be His child by means of adoption by Jesus Christ that He might take delight or have pleasure in your willful obedience to His will for your life.

God takes pleasure in His children, and it's for His pleasure that you and I was created, you say I don't think I like that, too bad. You were created for God's good pleasure and He delights in His children's willful obedience to His will for their lives, even as you delight when your child responds in obedience to you. Now I would have you take note of the fact that the word "predestined" is never used with reference to the unsaved, it has to do with the purpose for which He chooses. God hasn't predestined anyone for hell, that's your choice, people aren't lost because they haven't been elected, people are lost because they've chosen not to respond to God's invitation to everlasting life. So understand that the free will of man is never violated due to the election of God.

God has given you the ability to choose to receive Him and He will not be the cause of your choice to reject Him, so don't be confused concerning election or predestination because they definitely don't preclude man's responsibility. God has initiated a love relationship with all of mankind through the person and work of His Son Jesus Christ and so in essence He's thrown the ball in the court of humanity saying the door is open, the choice is yours. And so as where election would seem to have to do with people, predestination seems to have to do with purpose, the events connected with the crucifixion of Jesus were predestined, Acts ch 4 vs 27,28 tells us "*For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.*" 1 Peter 1:19-20 refers to Christ, "*as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Who indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world.*" Rev 13:8 presents Jesus as "*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*"

The plan for the life of Christ was mapped out, it was on a divine timeline having been predestined, predestination deals with the purposes of election, you've been predestined unto adoption as sons by Jesus Christ and along with that you've been predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ, Rom 8:29 and God has predestined your inheritance in Him as well as we see in vs 11 of this 1st ch. So predestination would seem to deal more with the plans of God's life for the elect, and it's all according to the good pleasure of His will. Now we spoke in Galatians concerning what it means to be adopted as sons by Jesus Christ and real briefly just to remind you adoption speaks of that place of both position and privilege. It speaks far more profoundly than oh look, a little baby with out a home lets adopt him, this speaks of being brought into the position of full son-ship where by all of heavens resources are ours in Christ.

The moment you give your heart to Jesus Christ this privilege is extended to you; now again don't get confused concerning your *condition* in Christ upon conversion with your *position* in Christ upon conversion. When you or I trust Christ and we are saved, as far as our *condition* is concerned we're spiritual babes, and we need to grow, we need to desire the pure milk of the word that we may grow thereby. But as far as our *position* is concerned we're adult sons who can draw upon the Father's wealth and can exercise all the privileges of adult son-ship. So we enter into the family of God by regeneration, being born again, but we enjoy God's family through adoption as by Jesus Christ. You don't have to wait once you're in Christ to begin to enjoy the spiritual riches are yours in Him. So the adoption we have in Christ is both a position and a privilege and again it's all according to the good pleasure of His will.

Vs6

All of these things that are at work for us and can be at work in us, all the blessings in heavenly places, having been chosen in Him, and holiness being worked out in our lives, being predestined as sons is to the praise of the glory of His grace. All of these things have been done to the honoring of His majesty and unmerited favor, so that He might receive honor and power and blessing, so that His grace might be both magnified and glorified. I know that my salvation magnifies the grace of God, and it glorifies the grace of God. If God can save the likes of me there's hope for everyone. You see before we were saved even for our own well being we were saved for the glory of God, to the praise of the glory of His grace.

1 Peter 5:10 tells us that God is "*the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus.*" What kind of grace do you need this morning, and what measure do you need it in, we serve the God of all grace, do you need to experience the saving grace of God, the electing grace of God in your life, God can measure that out to you, maybe you've erred and need to experience the grace of God that issues forgiveness to your life, we serve the God of all grace.

It's to the praise of the glory of His grace that He has made us accepted in the Beloved, that is in Jesus Christ there is nothing in and of myself that causes me to be accepted before God, I can't come to God based upon my own credentials desiring acceptance. "God, here's my list of credentials, this is what I've done, and here's how I've tried to live a pretty good life, I want in." God's not going to accept me on the basis of any work that I might perform or any lifestyle that I might live, my acceptance before God comes only from the same place as every other resource that I have and that is as I am in the Beloved, that is Jesus Christ God accepts me only in Christ.

If you are not in Christ you are not accepted before God, I am accepted only in the Beloved, God loves me as He loves Christ and that's because I am in Christ, Jesus said in John 17:23 in praying to the Father, *"I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me."* Why because I am in Him and He is in me, and this morning as we approach the communion table I'd encourage you to allow the Lord to examine your heart, and whatever type of grace you're in need of this morning you come before the Lord and be open and honest with Him concerning that. The bible says that if you confess your sin before God that He is faithful and just to forgive you of your sin and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness, Jesus said whoever comes to Me I will be no means cast out, so I don't care where you've been or what you've done if you want a fresh start this morning with Jesus guiding the reigns of your heart, you come to Him.