

GOD'S CHOSEN FAMILY: ELECTION AND UNITY IN CHRIST

Summary of what we will learn today: When a Christian hears of the “doctrine of election”, the teaching that God selects or chooses those whom He will save, he may begin to doubt. The Christian might ask, “What about me? Do I belong to God’s chosen family? How can I know? What are the marks by which I can recognize if I myself am one of God’s elect Children?” Such questions will always arise in the soul of one who is troubled by his sin and earnestly desires salvation. Chapter 1 of Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians answers these questions in a way that comforts consciences and instills confidence.

Ephesians 1:1-2 The Greeting and Address

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus *by the will of God*,

To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are *faithful in Christ Jesus*:

² Grace to you and peace from God *our Father* and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notes and Questions

What does the word “apostle” mean? Who were they?

Why does Paul’s apostleship matter?

What does “the will of God” have to do with Paul’s apostleship in Christ Jesus?

What does the word “saints” mean?

“faithful **IN** Christ Jesus” – through Christ, because of Christ, on account of – English “in” does not do the full job that the Greek does

“Grace to you and peace...” ten of Paul’s thirteen letters begin with this greeting

How does “God THE Father” become “God OUR Father”?

Ephesians 1:3-14 A Blessing and Doxology

English translations add a lot of punctuation to make it more readable, but it is one, long, liturgical prayer/blessing, so we will follow Dr. Winger's formatting to see the flow and structure

³Blessed be the God and Father of **our Lord** Jesus Christ,
who has blessed us with every ~~spiritual~~ blessing *of The Spirit* in the heavenly places ***in Christ***,
⁴even as HE CHOSE US **IN HIM** BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD,
that we should be holy and blameless before him,
(since) in love ⁵he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons **through Jesus Christ**,
according to the purpose of his will,
⁶TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORIOUS **GRACE**,
with which he has blessed us ***in the Beloved***;
⁷***in him*** we have redemption **through his blood**,
the forgiveness of our trespasses,
according to the riches of his grace, ⁸which he lavished upon us,
in all wisdom and insight ⁹making known to us the mystery of his will,
according to his purpose which he set forth ***in Christ***
¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time,
to unite all things ***in him***,
things in heaven and things on earth;
¹¹***in him*** we have obtained an inheritance,
having been predestined according to the purpose of him
who works all things according to the counsel of his will,
¹²so that we who were the first to hope ***in Christ*** might be TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY;
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,
¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance
until we acquire possession of it,
TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY.

The Berakah Prayer

-A type of Hebrew prayer in the OT (*barakah* is Hebrew for “blessing”)- how do they begin?

-How should we understand the adjective “spiritual” in the NT?

-Other than the intro to this **Berakah**, how else is it Trinitarian?

-Going back to our Summary – How can you know that you are one of God's Chosen Children?

THE MOST COMFORTING DOCTRINE – ELECTION TO SALVATION

(Other places in Scripture you might look to study this teaching: Isaiah 41:8; Romans 11:5; Isaiah 65:9, 15, 22; Matthew 20:16; 22:14; 24:31; 25:34, 46; Mark 13:20; Luke 18:7-8; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Romans 8:33; Colossians 3:12; and 1 Peter 1:20)

Eph. 1:4- “He (the Father) chose us (Christians) in Him (the Son) ***before the foundation of the world***”
From eternity – we are chosen (Elect). Chosen for what purpose?

The Eternity Is Comforting

George Stoeckhardt (1842-1913): “...Nothing can annihilate or frustrate that which God has decided upon before the beginning of the world. Nothing which occurs later in time can prevent or change what God has determined upon before the world began.”

The Election as Children Is Comforting

Stoeckhardt: “...We are to be taken from this world, we are to belong to Him, namely, as His children, that is to be our relation to Him, the relation of children to a father; we are to stand as close to Him as children stand to their father; God wanted children on this earth, children whom He could nurture, guide, love, as a father loves children, and these children were then also to hallow His name and walk before Him holy and unblamable in love.”

The Praise of His Glory Is Not Law, but Fruit of the Comforting Gospel Harvested in Eternity

Stoeckhardt on “acquiring the possession of our inheritance to the praise of his glory”-

“The last sentence of this section now opens up to us a perspective of the final goal of the eternal counsel of God and the ways upon which God now intends to execute His counsel. Those whom God has chosen from eternity from out of the world and has ordained, those whom He has in time removed from the ungodly world, cleansed with the blood of Christ, brought to faith, adopted as children, and whom through His Holy Spirit He has guarded against the world and preserved in a state of grace unto the end—unto them He will on that day present the great and beautiful inheritance of the children of God, ***they will be partakers of the glory of God and of Christ***. Then will be completed and revealed the childhood of God—world, sin, death, and all evil will lie far, far behind us, ***the glorified, transfigured children of God will then behold the face of the heavenly Father, in eternal joy and heavenly light and rest securely in their inheritance***. On that day, when the times of this world have closed, the entire number of the elect, who have been gathered from all the nations and tribes of this earth, will be completed; ***then the entire family of God***, the ‘peculiar people,’ the large, noble multitude of the perfected children of God ***will stand assembled*** before the throne of God and of the Lamb ***and united will sing*** with all the company of the elect angels the praises of the Lamb and ***give praise and honor*** through all eternity unto the God of all might and grace who has brought to a successful and glorious issue and end His wonderful counsel.”

LESS COMFORTING: THE QUESTIONS THAT ARISE

Stoeckhardt answers two important, ancillary questions that flow from the Doctrine of Election:

(1) What about those *not* saved? And (2) Does the Doctrine of Election make evangelism unnecessary?

Why Some and Not Others?

1. Beware of worldly inquisitiveness, foolish prying, and meddlesome questions.
2. “The Bible tells us expressly that it is given to make us wise unto salvation, not to satisfy idle curiosity.”
3. “Why are some Elect/Preserved and others not” is a question that Romans 9—11 responds to by placing it in the realm of knowledge hidden from us by God’s inscrutable will.
4. Humble Christians submit themselves to the direction and instruction that is offered in Holy Scripture, suppressing the urge to search out what God chooses not to answer.
5. Those who pursue these answers end up inventing conclusions that have no justification
6. Scripture does teach elsewhere that the cause for unbelief and damnation is man’s own sin, the paradox between these two teachings is the truly unanswerable part that we must humbly accept. “For our safety and for our peace and salvation it is sufficient that we teach both truths which the Bible teaches, retain both firmly without compromise, and leave the solution of the difficulty to God alone. True theology stops where the revelation of God stops.”
7. “The true Christian thanks God for his salvation which he has in his possession, and he commits to God the solution of the mysteries which the Christian himself cannot solve.”

What about Evangelism in light of Election?

“It is the Christian’s duty to be concerned about the fate of his fellow men...after a Christian has settled these questions [concerning his own salvation] and knows he is at peace with God, then his love for his fellow men moves him also to think upon their welfare. Wherefore, if we are dealing with people who do not know the way of peace, we certainly do not argue with them concerning the election of grace, we do not enter upon all manner of speculations concerning the election and non-election. A true missionary, and all Christians are called to be missionaries, has a far more important and excellent work to do than to brood upon and try to solve unfruitful questions and mysteries which he cannot solve. ***We tell the lost children of this world whom we would wish to save something concerning Jesus Christ, the Savior of men, the Savior also of the chief of sinners.*** We tell them that blessed truth which God has revealed to us: ‘*God will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*’ God does not wish the death of the sinner, but that the sinner might turn from his way and live. Therefore, repent and believe the Gospel! And when we are doing this, we are assured that these words have the power to convert the sinner and to soften the hard heart. If, then, in spite of all this, someone will not listen, then we tell him: You yourself are at fault if you are lost...But those who are touched and won through these invitations, admonitions, and warnings ***them we greet as our brethren among the elect children of God and rejoice in the increase in God’s holy family of which we also are members...***

“***The comfort*** which the election of grace gives to us Christians, the assurance of our eternal salvation, ***does not cause us to become idle, indifferent, or inactive in the work of the Lord.*** On the contrary, he who has become assured of his own personal salvation, he who believes with all his heart that before the foundation of the world God has provided absolute safety for his soul, ***he will use all time and strength of his life in order to assist others to find the same peace and safety.*** The election of grace teaches us to know just what is the content of this grace of God, and the more deeply this knowledge of God’s grace is rooted in us, the brighter the knowledge of it becomes in our soul, the more able, the more skillful and willing will we become in extolling this grace of God in the hearing of others and in making known to our fellow men the universal gracious will of God to save sinners, even the chief of sinners.”