

The Body Formed in Eternity Past, Part 1

Scripture: Ephesians 1:3-4

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One of the keys to unlocking the book of Ephesians is to understand that it is an epistle built around the concept of the church as the body of Christ. There are many metaphors in the New Testament used to describe the church. The church is called a bride. The church is called a family, a household, a kingdom. The church is called a flock; the church is called a building. The church is called a vine and branches. There are many ways in which the Spirit of God has designed to give us a picture of the church but uniquely the church is called the body of Christ. Because I believe above all other metaphors the one which most aptly communicates the unity and yet diversity and mutuality within the church is that of a body. As a human body functions in an incredible, multiple phase operation, as it functions totally dependent upon every muscle and tissue and nerve and everything else so does the church function. As the human body receives all of its direction from the head so does the church from the Lord Jesus Christ. And as the body manifests the person in the world so does the church manifest Christ in the world. And so I think uniquely the body is the most beautiful symbol for the church. And in fact all the other metaphors used in the New Testament to describe the church are also used in the Old Testament to describe Israel except the metaphor of a body.

That is the unique identification of the church. And thus it is the mystery of the church as the body, the hidden secret, never known in the past and now revealed in the new age.

And so the church, then, is the body of Christ. And as we go through Ephesians we're going to see how the parallels operate between the way a human body works and the way the church is to work. We'll see a little of that in our study tonight as well. Let me help you rehearse the scene in your mind for a moment. Look with me at chapter 1 verse 22.

And here, referring to what the Father has done for Christ, it says, and hath put all things under His feet and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church which is His body. There's that first introduction of the theme, the church as the body.

Look at chapter 2 verse 15. Christ has abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances to make in Himself of two - one new man so making peace and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body. There's the body again.

Chapter 3 verse 6, that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body.

Chapter 4 verse 16, speaking of Christ the antecedent in verse 15, "From whom the whole body fitly joined together."

Chapter 5 verse 30, "For we are members of His body."

Now in those five chapters we have the mention of the church as the body of Christ. Christ the head, manifesting His will through the proper functioning of the body. The church is not an organization. It is not something diagramed on a structure chart. It is an organism, something that functions not by structure, in terms of organization, but by the mutual flow of common eternal life. And so the church is best seen as a body.

Now in between the high points that we looked at in those five places in Ephesians the concept of the body is developed in the rest of the text of this wonderful epistle. So that the body concept really dominates the thinking of Paul as he delineates here the theology of the church. You might say that Acts is the history of the church, the book of Acts, the history of the church, and Ephesians the theology of the church.

Now some more introductory thought. In most of Paul's discussions of the church as the body of Christ, in most of his discussing that, whether in Ephesians or I Corinthians 12, he is referring to the present here and now operation of the church. That really dominates his thinking. Most of the time when he is discussing the church as the body he is speaking of how it came to be and in the death of Christ how He formed it and how it is to function. But in the first chapter of Ephesians he goes way back into eternity past and shows how God master-planned the church as the body of Christ before the world began. So this is really a look way back before history.

Look with me at verse 3 and let me read you through verse 6a. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him, in love having predestinated us unto the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will to the praise of the glory of His grace." Stop right there.

Now what we have here is God at work before the foundation of the world. It says it in verse 4, choosing out and forming His church, the body of Christ. So in the first part of chapter 1, actually going all the way through verse 14 from 3 to 14, we have the eternal forming of the body of Christ by God. We're not looking at the here and now operation; we're looking at God's eternal plan as He unfolds His purposes for His church. And this is an incredibly, exciting thing to study. Now we're going

to take several weeks just getting through those 14 verses, by the way. Just so you won't be in a hurry. But verses 3 to 14 contain literally volumes of theology that must be taken with great care.

In the first place I'll just mention to you that in the Greek verses 3 to 14 is one sentence, if you can believe that. One sentence of 202 words. Now any English grammar teacher would flunk you on that. But Paul is under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and once he starts ascending the glories of the marvels of God's eternal plan he can't stop and so he just keeps going and going and going and going. He probably ran out of gas and had to put a period somewhere. At the end of verse 14. But it's a glorious, glorious passage. And it is basically a discussion of God's eternal forming of the body. It takes us back into eternity.

Now I'm convinced that this is needful. It's needful for us to understand this. It's needful for us to see ourselves in the plan of God. It's important for us to get a grip on the fact that we are not some Johnny-come-lately. That we are not some flotsam and jetsam floating in some big huge stream and God is up there with sort of a divine fishing hook, throwing it down trying to hook one or two of us now and then just to sort of preserve His impact on humanity. I don't see God trying to fish around trying to catch some men. I don't see God sitting up there saying, "Boy, I hope some of these people will respond to the gospel and come along with me because I really have invested a lot in it." I don't see God doing that. What I see in Ephesians 1 is God master planning every single person into the church, who is to be in the church before the world began. And history is simply the outworking of His story already written and planned in eternity.

And it's a tremendous insight, people. By the time we're done with these chapters you're going to know who you are in Christ. Homer this morning sang so beautifully "How Rich I am." He must have known what I was going to preach on, that's it. How rich we are in Christ. In fact, by the time we get done with verse 14 - no question about it we'll have to preach a sermon on humility, just to get everybody back down to where they belong. You will have ascended such incredible heights in this section, to understand your position in Christ. And I think this is vital for today.

You know, I think people today are looking for a sense of self worth. I think they're looking for a sense of value, for a sense of self acceptance. They want to be somebody that matters. They want to have identity. And, man, this is the answer.

Now there are other answers being offered but I think they missed the point. Sociologically, you know, in our world, unconverted man, unsaved man, just the average man, sociologically man is seeking for meaning. He really is. He wants a sense of identity. He wants some purpose. He wants some value. He wants somebody to say - You're worth something. You matter. I think that's why there's so many love songs in our society because people need to be told they're loved. They need to have some sense of value. And when they can't find it, why society has to sociologically sort of provide it for them. So we produce all kinds of books that they can go and read like - I'm okay, you're okay. And

like things --- seminars that you can go to and they'll tell you how really wonderful you are and how to be a successful person and how to be number one and how to become an intimidator instead of being intimidated. And how you can get on top. And if that doesn't work you can go back to your roots and you can study roots. And if you're not anybody on your own maybe somebody once in your family was somebody and you can borrow their somebody stuff. And so if you can just find out that you're half Scotch and half Irish, you're alright because there have been some good Scotchmen and some good Irishmen and you've got an identity.

And then we've got the ethnic identification thing is coupled with the roots thing and really what it is is sort of a psychological gloss. It's just a way to kind of give yourself a sense of meaning when you really don't know where your meaning is. You don't know what your value is, you have no sense of worth. And like everything else, of course, when the world does something the church does it too so you can go to the Christian bookstore and buy a whole pile of stuff that's based on Christian psychology and Christian self-image and Christian self-worth and they'll give you a lot of psychology sprinkled with some spirituality and some Bible verses to try to get you to think of yourself differently and assert yourself and feel better about yourself, to say what you think once in a while, no matter what it does to somebody, you're worthy of it. And it's all good motivated good, I think; they want to rescue people with poor self-image. So we develop techniques to help people over guilt and fear and timidity and weakness and inadequacy. And we give them a little psychology, it might help them along. But we missed the whole point. You're never going to get a real sense of self-worth out of playing psychological games with your mind. Some people have realized that so they take another approach.

Some people look for their self-worth in a system of works righteousness. They set about to establish their own righteousness which gives them value. For example, this is the person who feels like he's not with it spiritually, that nobody really respects him, he's not a high class Christian and other people don't seem to give him acceptance and maybe God thinks of him as second class and he's just barely in by the hair of his chinny-chin-chin, you know. He doesn't have any sense of value or worth and so what happens is he says, "I'll have to show people that I am valuable." So he begins to kind of do a works external righteousness trip and people begin to say, "Boy, it's wonderful that you serve the Lord over here, and it's wonderful that you're doing this. Oh, my, you're doing so much, you're so dedicated," blah-blah-blah. And it begins to feed that need for self-worth externally. They have to have praise, they have to have commendation, they have to have someone extol them so they put their Christianity on the outside, I don't know what's on the inside, it might be less than it should be and they begin to function externally like the Pharisees so people will commend them and they go about to establish their own righteousness and thus get a sense of self-worth and acceptance. But what happens is in doing that they destroy the real spiritual life which is internal and they get into a system that has to be fed more and more and more because it has the law of diminishing returns. And what it does is it pushes the guilt deeper and deeper and the fear deeper and the anxiety deeper and the depression deeper because you know it isn't true about you. You know it's only a front. And

the sad part of it is it will work. If you do enough external things, people will commend you, it will feed this. But going about to establish your own righteousness doesn't do the job because you know the truth. You know it's only a game. And playing psychological games with your mind doesn't do it either because you know that's the same thing.

Now people don't need to understand psychology to get self-worth and they don't need to become legalists to get self-worth, what you need to have a sense of self-worth, a sense of significance and consequentially happiness and joy and meaningfulness is simply to understand your position in Christ. See? Your value comes because you're in Christ. That's your self worth. And listen to this, people, when I realized that I was chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, the conclusion is that I'm somebody. God selected me and placed me into His body before the world began. What a sense of significance.

It all began in eternity past - you, I mean you - you who are a Christian, God put your name down in His church before the world began. Did you get that? You say - Why? Because He wanted you, to be with Him in the Father's house for all eternity. Me? You! I don't understand that. Do you understand that? I don't understand it. I know me, I don't understand that. I know some of you and I don't understand that. I don't know what God has in mind. But I'll tell you one thing, what I don't understand I can still get excited about.

Now, Paul starts on the road to grasping this incredible truth by taking us back to eternity and letting us eavesdrop as the Trinity makes its plans. Plans that involve us. Nobody ever became a Christian as a surprise to God. It was all planned, all planned.

Let's look at the first verse that sweeps out of the heart of Paul, verse 3. We saw the introduction last week, let's look at verse 3. And he can't do anything but praise God before he gets into this discussion of His eternal plan. It's just full of praise. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ." Stop there.

He begins with just a glorious benediction, a fantastic state-ment of praise. He opens with praise for God's eternal purpose in revealing the mystery of the body formed in eternity past. And, beloved, as we get into verses 4 through 14, that's the history of every Christian, it's right there. It's just incredible. It's like walking through a treasure house. I mean, it just explodes on our minds. All that Christ has done for us.

You remember the guy who wrote the will - I being of sound body and sound mind spent it all. You didn't remember that guy, huh? Well, let me tell you something. Jesus didn't spend it all. Jesus paid it all. And then left it for us to draw on forever. Riches, incredible riches. And as Paul begins to talk about them from 4 to 14 he just sweeps through eternity. You can divide those verses into three sections based on the Trinity. From verse 4, well 3 to 6 really is the Father. "Blessed be the God and

Father." From verses 6 on it's the Son, accepted in the beloved, verse 6, we have redemption through His blood. It's the Son. Verses 13 and 14 it's the Spirit. The end of verse 13, the Holy Spirit of promise. So Paul takes us in to the very throne room of the Trinity and we see the Father's part and the Son's part and the Spirit's part, now watch, and it's all being master-planned before the world began. And we were part of it. And I'm saved today, I, John MacArthur, am saved today because God planned me into the church before the world began, so are you. What a reason for praise. No wonder he said, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Bless God."

I read Psalm 34 this morning to you when we began Bless the Lord, Oh my soul. I will bless the Lord at all times. He's full of blessing for God, full of praise. Why? Well, let's look. There are six aspects of blessing in verse 3, six aspects of blessing.

Let's see what they are. First of all the blessed one is God. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." What does blessed mean, *ulogetos*? We get an English word from that - eulogy. A eulogy is something that is usually recited at somebody's funeral and it means to speak well of someone. To bless means to speak well of someone. To speak good of someone. To say someone is good. And of God it can be said that He is good. In fact Jesus said in Matthew 19:17 there is none that is good but God. And we are to bless God because God is good. And so does Paul say good is God, good is God.

I remember a friend of mine in a conversation, one time, saying God is so good to me, God is so good to me, God is so good to me. I said - There's only one thing wrong with that, it ought to go like this - God is so good. period God is so good. period God is so good. Because you're His child it accrues to you. It's His nature. He's good. Blessed be God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And, of course, from Genesis to Revelation God is blessed. Melchizedek in Genesis says - Blessed be the most high God. And in Revelation you have that great song, Blessing and glory and honor and power be unto Him that sitteth on the throne and unto the Lamb. God is blessed from Genesis to Revelation. We are to continually bless the Lord. Whatever the adversary, whatever the foe, whatever the trial, whatever the trouble, whatever the pain, the struggle the need, we are to bless the Lord because He is good in the midst of all of it. God is the blessed one.

Second element I see here in blessing is that God is also the blesser. He's not only the blessed but the blesser. "Who hath blessed," who hath blessed. Where does all blessing come from? James put it this way, "Every good and perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights in whom there is no variableness neither shadow of turning." Every good thing comes from God. You know, even when it looks bad He makes it good, Romans 8:28. "Now we know that all things work together for," what? "For good to them that love God and are called according to His purpose." God blesses because God is the source of every good thing. Get that in your mind, will you? God is not the source of some good things; He is the source of what? Every good thing. He made creation, made the entire thing, got all done, looked on it and said - It is, what? Good, it's good. The bad things in this world come because

man is a sinner.

So we see that God is the blessed one and the blesser also. Who are the blessed? Right after the word blessed it says - us. That's us, folks. We're the blessed. In God's wonderful grace and His marvelous providence and His sovereign plan, He has chosen to bless us. Who are the blessed? Who are the us? Those who believe, Galatians chapter 3 and verse 9 it says; "So then they who are of faith are blessed." They who are of faith are blessed. You see, it's we who chosen by God have believed in faith, we are the blessed. And I'm telling you, folks, when you start to think about how rich you are in Christ, it's really incredible. We are blessed beyond our imagination. Blessed. He lavishes good gifts on His children.

When we bless God we speak good of Him. When He blesses us He does good to us. That's the difference. Our blessing is our words to Him. His blessing is His deeds to us.

How much blessing does He give us? Look at the fourth element, the blessings themselves, it says: "Blessed us with all spiritual blessings." Pnumatikos is spiritual, it doesn't mean spiritual as opposed to physical in the sense that it might mean a mental blessing. What it means is something attached to the Holy Spirit. Pnumatikos is always used in the New Testament to refer to the work of the Spirit. He blesses us with all that is possible to be dispensed to us through the agency of the Spirit of God. And, you know, it's so ridiculous for Christians not to think they have any resources. To say - Oh well, I don't know if I can really do that. Oh yeah - a lot of Christians like that.... Have you ever - I was studying Romans 8 one time and reading that text in 8:27 where he says - "We know not what to pray for as we ought." Do you remember that one? So the Spirit makes intercession for us. You know, one of the things we do is we constantly ask God for what we already have. Have you noticed that? Because we don't know our resources.

We go to God and we say - Oh God, I need more love, I just want You to give me more love. And the Bible already says - "That the love of God is shed abroad in your heart." You say - Oh, don't need that.

Lord, what I need is peace, I'm so distressed. And Jesus said when He left: "My peace I leave with you not as the world giveth give I unto you, never let your heart be troubled." Oh - I got that too? Right

Well, what I need is I need joy, I'm unhappy. No, read John 15, He said that He was going to leave His joy in us that our joy might be, what? Full. Oh, I don't need that either? No.

Oh, I know what I need, I need strength. No. You can already do all things through Christ who already strengthens you.

You see, we spend a lot of time asking for what we've got. You say - Well, What am I supposed to ask for? James said ~ ask for wisdom and wisdom is the sense not to ask for what you've got. You

see, God has already dispensed to us all spiritual blessing. All blessing connected to the Spirit. And people say - Well, have you received the second blessing? I always say - Yes. And the 5,000th too - all when I received Christ I received how many? All spiritual blessings.

Look at II Peter chapter 1 for a minute, it says this in verse 3; "According as His divine power." Now there's the source, people. "His divine power hath (past tense) given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." You see, He's already given us all things that pertain to life and godliness. There's no missing ingredient. The blessed One is the blesser who has blessed us with everything we need. All the resources are there. They're all there.

And in Philippians 1:19 Paul calls it the supply of the Spirit. The supply of the Spirit ... sadly, though, we don't always appropriate our possessions. But I want you to know, people, you're rich. Bless God; He couldn't give you more than He gave you in Christ. There's nothing else to get. I mean, there's nothing else to get. It's all there. All the pneumatikos, blessings, all the good things that the Spirit can dispense have been dispensed to you in the presence of the indwelling Christ, they're yours. It's not a question of finding something else; it's a question of using what you've got. So don't go stumbling around saying - Well, I don't know if I can do it. Oh yeah, you can do it. The resources are there. You're rich. You are rich, incredibly rich.

So, the blessings. You say - But where are these blessings? Well he tells us the blessing location - in the heavenlies, in the heavenlies. Now where is the heavenlies. Some people say - Well, that's heaven. Well, not strictly speaking, I think it includes heaven. But I think the heavenlies simply means the supernatural world of God, the domain of God, the divine realm. It isn't just heaven, it says, for example, in the sixth chapter we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies. So it's the domain of the supernatural. So we're not just citizens of the earth but we're citizens up there. We really aren't citizens here anymore, although we're roaming around here. We start out being citizens of this world, we're saved, we become Citizens of heaven according to Philippians 3:20, our citizenship is in heaven from which we look for our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ. So we're citizens of heaven, we live in the heavenlies. It is the dominion of God. It is that dominion by which we are able to understand the supernatural. The natural man understandeth not the things of God because he is of the earth - earthy. Jesus said in Luke 16:8 they are the children of this world. But we have been transformed into God's kingdom, the kingdom of His dear Son, our minds have been elevated. Colossians 3 says - we are ascended into the heavenlies, our citizenship is there and so we live in a paradoxical kind of two-level existence here on the earth and yet citizens of heaven. Let me illustrate it. Now I'm an American citizen. No matter where I go in the world I'm an American citizen. If I'm in an Arab country or if I'm in a European country or Latin American or Central American country or an African country or wherever I might be, whatever country I'm in - I am an American citizen and have all the rights and privileges pertaining thereto. And you are the same; you are a citizen of heaven. Just because you happen to be traveling in a foreign land doesn't alter your citizenship one bit. You have all the rights and privileges belonging to a citizen of heaven.

Our life is in the supernatural, in the heavenlies. We commune with God, our Father is there, our home is there, our Savior is there, our friends are there, our loved ones are there. Our name is there, our throne is there, our room is there. It's in the heavenlies that we live and we're trapped in the tension of being heavenly citizens with an earthly sojourn. It's like the king, you know. The king who by virtue of the right to rule is the king. Is still the king when he's not sitting on his seat. Right? I mean, the fact that he walks in the world and mingles with the common people and comes out of the palace and comes down and trips around with the folks on the street, the peasants, doesn't mean he's not the king. Because someday he'll go back and sit on the throne because he has a right to do so. And you and I are kings, the Bible says. And we're right now walking among the commoners of the earth but one of these days we're going to be going back to the home where our throne is and we're going to be seated with Christ in His throne.

In fact in Ephesians 2:6 it says we're already seated in the heavenly places, it's as good as done. And you see, we are citizens of an eternal kingdom. We belong there. Everything we love is there. And we're trapped in a tension of the earthly and the heavenly. That's why Paul could say in the midst of that paradox - I am sorrowful yet always rejoicing. I am poor yet I make many rich. I have nothing yet I have everything. I am troubled on all sides but I'm not distressed. I am perplexed but I'm not in despair. I'm cast down but I'm not destroyed. You see, it was the tension of being in two worlds. And you may have nothing and you may be poor in this world, but let me tell you, man, you're so rich in the heavenlies that it's uncountable.

You say- My problem is I pulling it down, to get it here where I need it. That's the work of the Holy Spirit. And listen to me, Galatians 5 says if you walk in the Spirit, now watch, if you walk in the Spirit, the Spirit will produce everything you need. Watch. Love, what are they? Joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control, all the virtues. You can pull all the riches right down by walking in the power of the Spirit of God. You're rich. You've been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies.

You say - How come? Why is God who is to be blessed becoming the blesser to bless me with all these things in the heavenlies and allow me to be a citizen of His world, why? The answer comes at the very end of verse 3 -because you are, what are the last two words? In Christ. You see, when you became a Christian you were placed in a marvelous union with Christ, I Cor. 6:17 says: "He that is joined to the Lord s one Spirit." And you became one Spirit with Jesus Christ. And as such all that is His is yours. Is that incredible? In case that boggles your mind you may need to affirm Romans chapter 8 where the Apostle Paul reiterates for us the truth that never ceases to thrill me, verse 17...16 says we are the children of God and 17 says - if children, then heirs, heirs of God and what? Joint heirs with Jesus Christ. All that is His is ours. We are in Christ; we are as rich as He is. All the resources He had, we have. Listen, beloved, you are a part of the church of Jesus Christ because you were planned into it before the world began. And in so being planned into it when you came to

know Jesus Christ, you became a joint-heir with God, a Joint-heir with Christ and God dispensed at your disposal all the riches of everything the Spirit of God could transmit. And by walking in the Spirit it all becomes yours. That's rich. No wonder he blessed God. Huh? No wonder. We are in Christ. I don't understand that - it's a fabulous thought - I am one with Jesus Christ so that His righteousness is imputed to me, so that His inheritance is my inheritance. Let me sum it up by saying it four ways:

I am in Christ so His position is my position. His privilege is my privilege. His possession is my possession. And His practice is my practice. I'll say it another way:

Where He is I am. What He has I have. And what He does I do.

And I'll tell you something. If I'm in union with Jesus Christ and to be so planned before the foundation of the world then I am significant. So are you. But only because I am in Christ not because of myself. Right?

Remember what Paul said in I Cor. 15:10 - I am what I am by what? The grace of God. Not because I'm worthy.

Well, having blessed God in that third verse he moves on to discuss how this blessed God formed his body in eternity past. Let's go to verse 4; "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him, In love having predestinated us unto the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will to the praise of the glory of His grace." Now, stop there.

That little section from 4 to 6a is the first part of this longer section through verse 14. And the whole section through verse 14 discusses the eternal forming of the body but that little section discusses the past aspect of it. The next section, the present aspect, the third - the future. The past aspect can be summed up in one word - election. The present aspect, verses 6b through 11 or so can be summed up in one word - redemption. That's the present aspect. The future aspect, the rest of it - inheritance. Election, redemption, inheritance, three key words that show the three different aspects of God's eternal plan.

Let's look at the first one and we're not going to get through it, just going to get through the first point of the first part. What is the past aspect of God's eternal plan? Well, we see in verses 4 through 6a seven aspects of God's past plan, seven aspects:

The first one is the method, which is election, verse 4: "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world... Stop there.

You know why he blesses God in verse 3? He blesses God in verse 3 because he's absolutely just overwhelmed that God has chosen him before the foundation of the world. That it isn't a question of saying Hey, you're a good guy, you deserve to be in My kingdom. Hey, you're a nice lady; you deserve to be in My kingdom. It isn't that at all. It's God, before the world began, setting His love on me. You see, the method - the method - by which God formed the body was election. You say - According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world? These people say to me all the time - Do you believe in election? I say - I believe in the Bible and the Bible teaches election. You mean you believe that God chooses people to be saved before they're ever born? The Bible teaches that. You believe that before the world even began Jesus wrote...Jesus and the Father and the Spirit wrote down in the Book of Life who would be saved already down there? And they planned that whole thing out? Absolutely believe that. You say - Well what about ... what about free will? In the first place free will is no biblical term, it's never used in the Bible because man may have a will but it isn't free, it's bound to sin but aside from that what about will? You believe that man has a choice? Absolutely. You believe that anybody who wants to can come to Christ? Absolutely. You say - But those are opposites? Absolutely. You believe in opposites? Of course. I believe the Bible teaches absolute sovereignty of God and election and I believe that Jesus said - Him that cometh unto Me I'll in no wise - what? Cast out. And I believe Jesus said - Whosoever will let him come. I believe that Jesus simply put it this way - Come unto Me all ye that what? Labor and are heavy laden, I'll give you rest. You say - But those are two opposites. That's right. And the only way they can ever be resolved is in the mind of God. And, you see, God has some things He can do that I can't do and that's fine. Listen, if I understood everything - I'd be God. And if I was God - we would be in lots of trouble. I don't need to resolve it but don't do this, don't take God's sovereignty and man's choice and try to find some middle ground or you've just destroyed both of them. Leave them alone. Let the tension be there. Let it be that God says He's sovereign. Don't worry about how He harmonizes that with people coming to Christ, that's His problem not ours. He just says - Come. Come.

Look, the terms here, He hath chosen, it's an aorist middle of eklego, which means to choose out, to pick. And the middle voice is reflexive which means that God is picking for Himself. And nobody else is involved in this. God didn't have anybody, you know, whispering in His ear - Well, I'd like it if You can include so-and-so. No. And there wasn't anything for us to do with it. God chose for Himself. He did it for Himself that it might be for His glory. It says that in verse 6, to the praise of His glory. It says it in verse 12, to the praise of His glory. It says in verse 14, to the praise of His glory. You see, when God chose the church, He chose it for His own glory before He ever chose it for the church's own good. In fact, it says in chapter 3 verse 10 that the reason He put the church together was that He might display it to the angels that they might see how wise He is. Not how wonderful we are.

And so we're elect. Before the foundation of the world we were chosen. In Revelation that is also stated in two passages, 13:8: "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world." The Book of Life, folks, was written before the world began. The same thing is true in 17:8 of Revelation, it says at the end of the verse:

"Names were not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world." The Book of Life was written from the foundation of the world. Listen, election - don't have a problem with election. It just means God chooses everybody who is saved. That's right. And it's always positive; you never see it in a negative sense. We'll look at that next time.

God chooses who will be saved. Jesus...for example, let me back up a little bit and show you another angle on it. When God chose Israel, He didn't say - All right, all you nations - we're going to have a contest, and the best nation gets to be My nation. Oh no ... if that were the case I don't think Israel would have made it. He says to them - I didn't choose you because you were the most righteous, I set My love upon you because that's what I chose to do.

And the Old Testament, it says - Israel, Mine elect. Did you know that? Israel Mine elect. God elected Israel. Listen, when it came to angels, I Timothy 5:21, God says - They are the elect angels. The ones that are still glorifying God. They were elect to that.

I Peter 2:6 says - I will lay in Zion a cornerstone elect, precious -Jesus Christ was elect. Jesus said to His Apostles You have not chosen Me but I have chosen you. And of Paul He said He is chosen by Me as an Apostle of the Gentiles. Israel was elect. Angels are elect. Christ is elect. Believers were elect for Apostleship. And, believe me, when it comes to the church He doesn't switch gears and now it's a free-for-all. God will be consistent with His nature, the church was chosen before the foundation of the world.

In II Timothy chapter 1 verse 9 it says - that He has saved us and called us with a holy calling, listen, "Not according to our works." It had nothing to do with us. It had nothing to do with what we did or did not do. Or what He anticipated we would or would not do but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ before the world began. Can you believe that, God set His grace on you before the world began. Your birth in this world was not incidental it was the consummation of the divine plan of God.

Listen, you don't need to go to some psychological seminar to get a sense of value, is that enough? You were master-planned by God into His eternal plan.

II Timothy 2:10; "Therefore," Paul says, "I endure all things for the elects sake that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus." In other words, he says - I'm trying to reach the elect. The ones who are already chosen that they might take hold of the faith that has already been granted them in God's sovereign decree.

II Thessalonians, I would just remind you of, 2:13; "We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord because God, (listen to this) hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation." Boy, it can't be any clearer than that. You're chosen. Chosen before the foundation of

the world. You are strategic. You are important to God.

In the book of Acts it says - And many believed, in chapter 13:48, because they were ordained unto eternal life. They were ordained unto eternal life

Now listen - you say - But if God chooses everybody what do we have to do with it? We have something to do with it too because the Bible presents that part of it. Just leave those two where they are. And believe them both. And let God resolve it in His infinite mind. But I'll tell you one thing, God is never a victim and it is the doctrine of election that lets God be God and God be the sovereign of history and it is the doctrine of election that says to me - You are a value eternally in the heart of God. You matter to Him. Jesus came to shed His blood to purchase you. You're important.

And so God has eternally formed His body. Beloved, you're a part of that if you're a Christian. Don't struggle with a sense of self-worth, you are worthy. And don't struggle with a sense of inadequacy; He has dumped on you all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. The resources that are available to you are unlimited and you need to use them. Capitalize on them in order to live on God's best level. Use them in order to administer with the greatest amount of power. Use them in order to build the church that Jesus purchased with His own blood.

Now this is a beginning of who you are. And also the introduction to the sermon that I didn't get to preach. But I'll preach it next week. Let's pray.

How wonderful it is, Father, to know when all the world about us seems so confused and sometimes we wonder where it's going. The Word of God tells us it's all according to plan. The blueprint is being followed. The church is being built and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. All that the Father gives to Me, said Christ, shall come to Me and I have lost none of them. You'll build Your church, we'll all be there because that's the way You've planned it. And, Father, help us to know that each of us is important. Important in the ministry we have toward You, toward each other, toward the world. Help us to realize that You have equipped us with all spiritual blessings, with all things pertaining to life and godliness so that we can do Your work in Your way for Your glory. We would pray, Father, this morning, for some who perhaps do not know Christ who are gathered in our congregation. They've never opened their hearts to Jesus Christ. They don't have this sense of eternal worth. Oh Father, I pray today that this will be the day when their own expression of will will be moved by Your Spirit to respond to You. We know that as well as You've elected, so You've called unto the souls of men to come unto You. And, Father, I pray that if there are any here that the Spirit of God is convicting, that they'll open their hearts and receive the One who died and rose for them. And enter in to the inheritance planned for them from before the foundation of the world. And, Father, for those of us who are Christians, who may not be living with all of our resources, help us to get with it, to tap what is ours in Christ, to walk in the Spirit to see the product that You want in us. We will I thank You, Father, for what You can do and what You want to do as we become available in Christ's name. Amen.

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