

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Body Formed in Eternity Past, Part 2

Scripture: Ephesians 1:4-6

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Father, as we approach Your Word, we are humbled, we feel less than adequate to deal with these grandiose and glorious truths that are beyond us. We are reminded that the secret things belong to the Lord. We are reminded that Your ways are higher than our ways. That we cannot understand all things. And yet, Father, we ask that the Spirit of God would give us a measure of understanding for the deep things of the Word, as we look at them this morning. And that it might be the voice of God that speaks and the power of the Spirit of God who delineates and applies the truth. To that end we seek Thee in this time, in Christ's name. Amen.

We're looking at Ephesians 1, Ephesians chapter 1, in our study this morning. We're not going to consider a lengthy passage but a brief one, but the depth of the passage demands that we dig in and I hope you have your thinking cap on, you're not going to be able to operate on half of your cylinders this morning, you're going to have to function on all of them because of the depth of what we want to say out of the Word of God.

We're looking at verses 4 through 6a of Ephesians 1 and I'll read them just to give you a setting for your thoughts:

"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." And we'll stop right there.

Now this is the third in our series looking at the book of Ephesians as we go through the book and I would just remind you that we have already emphasized the fact that Christians have a common source of life, a common kind of life and a common destiny. We all came in through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We all possess the same divine nature, partaking of that divine nature, as Peter says. We all are moving to the same ultimate destiny - the kingdom of God and glory in heaven forever with Christ. So there is a tremendous, basic life unity among believers. We've all been saved the same way for the same destiny and are carried to that destiny by the maintenance of the same common, eternal life. So we are one in a marvelous and unique way. And the message of the book of Ephesians is that we are one in Christ, that's the overriding message. The ramifications of that are

discussed in all the chapters of this book. We are one body in Christ. In fact, he calls us a bride, he calls us a building, but singularly he calls us here does the Apostle Paul, the body of Christ to emphasize our unity. As a body is one body responding to one head, so the church is to be one in response to the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a unity in the church that is more than just the unity of a common agreement on a philosophy or religion; it is the unity of commonness in life, the common eternal life of God pulses through the soul of every believer. And we are tied together. I Cor. 6:17; "He that is joined to the Lord has one Spirit; therefore all that are joined to the Lord are one Spirit with one another." The emphasis of Ephesians, then, is that we are a body.

Now in the theology of the body, which is basically what Paul deals with in the first three chapters of Ephesians. The practice of the body in the last three. But in the theology of the body Paul begins by taking us into eternity past to see how God designed it. This is like looking at the blueprint.' Into eternity we go, we find God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit, all three mentioned in the first great paean and praise that runs through verse 14, all having their part in the master-planning of the body of Christ. And we have seen at least initially, last time, how we are part of that marvelous body.

Look with me for just a moment at chapter 4 verse 13 because of all the verses we discussed last time about the concept of the body, this sums up its definition perhaps best. Verse 12 ends with the term - the body of Christ. The body of Christ, that is the intention of the book of Ephesians to instruct in the area of the body of Christ. Further it says in 13 the body of Christ can be seen in this manner, really, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith," that is there's a basic unity not in faith but in the faith, the content of the gospel, there's a basic unity, "And of the knowledge of the Son of God." We all come in through the same basic content, we all come in to the knowledge of the same person, the Son of God, but we are moving to a perfect man to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Now I want you to note something. God's purpose for the body is that it would manifest uniformly, totally, completely, corporately Jesus Christ. That's the intention. We are, as a body, to manifest Christ in the world. I call the incarnation - Body I, and the church Body II. God manifest in the flesh in Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh through His church. We are Christ in the world. We are to manifest Christ. We are corporately to give testimony to Jesus Christ. And the problem with that, of course, is that if any of us fails then the corporate testimony is hindered. When someone doesn't function in the area of his spiritual giftedness, when someone doesn't follow through on the responsibilities of fellowship, such as the responsibility to love one another, comfort one another, pray for one another, edify one another, rebuke one another, reprove one another, etc. When we don't do those kinds of things we cripple the body, consequently the manifestation of Christ is untrue and the world does not evaluate properly Christianity. All it takes is one person's testimony to undercut the credibility of the entire congregation. You see, it is essential that we understand, beloved, that we are

one in Christ. And as we understand the theology of it in the first three chapters, we can then move to the practice of it in the last three. But the foundation is here in these first three chapters. This is the rock bed understanding of our union in the church. Really important. I mean, it's more than just coming in and just sitting here and staring at the back of somebody's head and leaving. We are involved in a manifestation of Jesus Christ, individually and corporately.

For example, all the gifts that are listed in I Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 were true of Jesus Christ in His ministry. So that what you have in those spiritual gifts is the remanifestation of Christ in the corporate church. We are to be one in Him. It says in 4:13 "Until we come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," the world should see Jesus Christ in us composite Christlikeness.

Now this tremendous master-plan, this tremendous concept by God, this great plan Paul says, was begun in eternity past. Before time, before creation, before anybody existed. In the free and independent and sovereign will of God He set the plan in motion, a body was formed in eternity past. That's the message of chapter 1 verses 3 to 14. I want you to look at it with me. Chapter 1 verses 3 to 14. Now we're just taking 4 through 6a because that's where we've begun, 4 through 6a.

After a brief introduction in the first two verses in which Paul introduces himself and greets them in the common greeting - grace and peace - he then launches into that great doxology in verse 3; "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ." It's just a doxology and really he can't help but praise God because of what he's about to say. You see, it's literally a knockout to Paul that God has designed this entire thing before the world began and he's a part of it. I mean, I know how I feel when I think somebody likes me. I know how I feel when I know somebody loves me. But to imagine that the eternal God of the universe designed me into a plan before time began is an overwhelming thought. A plan that would ultimately culminate in me living with Him in His house forever. Incredible thought.

Listen, being a Christian is a super thing. God designed it before the world began. And once Paul gets this doxology rolling in verse 3 he can't stop and he rolls right on and never puts a period in the Greek sentence until the end of verse 14, 202 words in a row without a period. He just rolls just like a snowball going downhill and it just picks up more glistening glory as it goes. As he thinks about this master-plan in eternity.

Now, just a little footnote, there are three elements to the plan, he's looking at the past, we'll see the present tense when we get into chapter 2 of how that plan works out in here and now, but we're in eternity past, but even then there are three elements to the master-plan.

First element is what you would call election, from verses 4 to 6. The second element is what we call redemption, from verses 6 to 11. And the third one - inheritance, verses 12 to 14. We find election in verse 4 - He's chosen. We find redemption in verse 7 - we have redemption. We find inheritance in

verse 14 - the earnest of our inheritance. We also find it in verse 11.

So we find, then, that there are three phases to this master-plan. There's God's election. There is the working out of redemption which results in this incredible inheritance. That's God's master-plan.

Now I want us to look at just the first section, the section built around the concept of election, this morning. Now I realize the doctrine of election is a doctrine that is hard to be understood. And we must remember Deuteronomy 29:29 - "The secret things belong to the Lord." And Isaiah says - "That His ways are higher than our ways." We have to rest in that. Because we're not going to be able to understand this. Now I don't want you to get your head scrambled, I just want you to stay with the biblical text. Okay? Here we go.

Seven elements are here indicated in this concept of election. It has seven aspects or elements. The first one is the method, the method of election which I call sovereign selection - sovereign selection. That is the method. God had a method by which He chose, sovereign selection, verse 4; "According," and the according links up with the praise of verse 3 - the reason He is praising God in verse 3 is because God is the one who did this, "As He hath chosen." He hath chosen. Now there you are introduced to the method by which God formed His body in eternity past. Simple, independent, unaffected, sovereign choice God simply chose. By sovereign will, by sovereign decree He chose those who were to be the members of His body totally apart from the will of any man, totally apart from any human consideration and purely on the basis of His own will. Notice at the end of verse 5, according again to the good pleasure of what? His will. His will. Verse 9; "According to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself." Verse 11; "According to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the council of His own will." Now you get the message. Right? God freely, independently, unaffected by any human work, or any human choice, chose us to be included in His body.

Just to reiterate the emphasis here, look with me at the first chapter of the gospel of John and verse 11, John's gospel, chapter 1 verse 11. And you remember that this great statement was said in reference to the rejection of Israel of their Messiah, verse 11: "He came unto His own and," what? "His own received Him not." He came unto His own things and His own people received Him not. But in spite of the majority there was the minority. "As many as received Him to them He gave power to become the children of God even to them that believe on His name." And there's the human part of it. Faith, believing. But look at 13; "Who were born," born-again, "Not of blood," that is you're not a Christian because you're born into the Jewish race. Right? Not of blood, you can't inherit it. "Nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man but," what? "Of God." See, salvation is of God. And as many as received - received because they believed, because the will of God, in fact, infected their depravity with faith. It even says in Ephesians 2:8 and 9; "For by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourselves." That even is a gift of God. Saving faith.

And so it is that God chooses, not according to human will but according to His own will. The word eklego in verse 4 means to pick out for Himself, it's reflexive. God chose for Himself those who would be a part of His family.

In II Timothy 1:9, it says; "God who hath saved us, called us with a holy calling not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace," listen to this, "Which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Literally incredible. You and I who are a part of the body of Jesus Christ, who know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, who are in His church, who have been saved, been born again, are simply responding to the divine decree of the eternal God made before the world began. Nobody's a Johnny-come-lately in the body of Christ. Everybody was master-planned in because there is a vital area of responsibility that no one else can fulfill and because there is a unique purpose which God has designed in His own love to place upon you, some special and eternal blessing.

Now it's all of God. If we had anything to do with it, then verse 3 would say - Blessed be us. Blessed be us. But we don't. Our praise is to God because He's done it all.

Now some people will always say - Well, John, I don't believe in that election stuff. I believe that everybody chooses. Well, the Bible teaches that too. Jesus said, "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." Isaiah said, "Come - Come and buy - Come and drink." Revelation 22 Jesus says, "Come, whosoever will let him come." Romans chapter 10 says, "Whosoever believes on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Whosoever everywhere in the Bible. You say - But how can you have God choosing and a bunch of whosoevers? I don't know. I have no idea how you can have them but you have to have them because they're both in the Bible. And you let God resolve the problem. But I'll tell you one thing, I don't care what your theological background is - you believe in the sovereignty of God if you're a Christian I'll prove it to you. You say - Oh no I don't. Yeah you do. It's easy to prove. Are you ready for this? Do you pray? You say - Yes I pray. Every day. To whom do you pray? God. Why? Well, because God is the source of all good things. See, you believe in the sovereignty of God. Every --- how many? --every good and perfect gift--how many?--every... comes down from whom? The Father of lights in whom there is no variableness or shadow of turning - all of it comes from Him. And you seek Him for it. And in prayer you're asking for things and you're giving thanks for things - why? Because you recognize that God is the source of all these things. 'You see, prayer for the Christian is not an attempt to con God, it's not to try to force God's hand, it is a humble acknowledgement of dependence on His sovereign will. We pray for somebody who is ill and invariably say - Lord, we'd like so-and-so to be made well, but Your will be done. We acknowledge He is sovereign. We even were told by Jesus to say this: "Give us this day our" what? "Our daily bread," is even dependent on His sovereignty.

Now if God is sovereign in all things in our lives then God is no less sovereign in salvation. And I'll show you two other reasons why I think everybody believes in God's sovereignty. Number one reason is that you thank God for your salvation. Right? You don't go to God and say - God, I hope you appreciate the intellect that I have. I hope You realize that of all the options - I have chosen You. You don't say that to God. That's ridiculous. You didn't save yourself. When you talk to God about your salvation you thank Him, don't you? Because you know it was Him.

I'll tell you another way to look at it. When you love somebody that's not a Christian, and you've presented Christ to them what do you do? What do you do for that person? You pray for them, don't you? You pray ... why do you pray for them? Because you know that the source of salvation is whom? Is God. By virtue of prayer in general, by virtue of thanking God for your salvation, by virtue of praying for someone else's salvation you are constantly acknowledging who is sovereign, you see. You see, you really believe in the sovereignty of God, you just don't know that you do.

J.I. Packer in his book, *EVANGELISM AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD* says this, listen carefully to this: "What is true is that all Christians believe in divine sovereignty but some are not aware they do. And mistakenly imagine and insist that they reject it." What causes this odd state of affair? This is what he says; "The root cause is the same as in most cases of error in the church, the intrusion of rationalistic speculation, the passion for systematic consistency, a reluctance to recognize the existence of mystery and let God be wiser than men and a consequent subjecting of Scripture to the supposed demands of human logic." end quote. Boy, that's so good.

What he's saying is - we can't stand tension. We can't stand a paradox. We can't stand the antimony. We can't say the Bible teaches sovereignty and it also teaches choice, I can't handle it. So our perverse mind says - we must be like God, so we harmonize in the middle and destroy both. We're really dealing with depravity. And what happens is that you get people who want to systematize the Bible and they systematize it so it all fits together and what just fits beautifully into their system, and if it doesn't fit the way they want they explain it a new way and they remove all the mystery and God is no longer really mysterious in the Word of God, they've reduced it all to a system and in so doing they've eliminated much of its truth.

Packer goes on, he says: "People see that the Bible teaches man's responsibility for his actions, they do not see how this is consistent with the sovereign Lordship of God over those actions, they are not content to let the two truths, live side by side as they do in the Scripture but they jump to the conclusion that in order to uphold the biblical truth of human responsibility they are bound to reject the equally biblical and equally true doctrine of divine sovereignty and explain away the great number of texts that teach it. The desire to oversimplify the Bible by cutting out the mystery is natural to our perverse minds; it is not surprising that even good men should fall victim to it, hence this persistent and troublesome dispute. The irony of the situation, however, is that when we ask how the two sides pray - it seems apparent that those who profess to deny God's sovereignty really believe it just as

strongly as those who affirm it." end quote.

Besides, you can't solve the problem anyway. People say - Well, I just can't believe that God chose everything. But you see, that's just pure speculation because the Bible says He does. You say -Well, then, how can man possibly have a choice? Well, I don't know but he does. And you just let God figure out how that works. As soon as we start to systematize it we're in trouble.

So, the method by which God began the body was sovereign selection. Now let me show something to you. There are three kinds of election. And you need to distinguish these in the Bible or you get confused. We don't have time to go through all the verses on this, but I want to share some of them with you. There are three kinds of election in the Bible.

Number one is what's called theocratic election, what I call theocratic election. And that is, for example, in Deuteronomy, now theocratic theocracy was simply the title given to the nation Israel. Theo from the word Theos which means God rules. The nation of Israel was ruled by God. There was a theocratic election, that is, God chose a nation for a special place. Deuteronomy 7:6; "For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God, the Lord thy God has chosen thee to be a special people." God chose a nation that is theocratic election. God didn't say - Now all right, I'm going to look around and find the best nation. He says, I didn't choose you because you were the biggest nation, I just designed to set My love upon you. I designed to love you. That was My own free choice I chose you as a nation.

Now watch this point, that in no way had any effect on their personal salvation. Okay? The theocratic election, the choice of the nation of Israel had nothing to do with the individual salvation. Just because a person was a Jew did not mean they were a believer in Old Testament times. For example, in Romans 9:6, Paul says: "Not all Israel is Israel, not all those who are Jews are truly the Israel of God." So, there was theocratic election. And in a sense, even within the election of the nation there was an election of those who would be saved and that's what Jesus meant in Matthew where He says; "Many are called but...what? ... few are chosen." Within theocratic election you have specific election to salvation.

There's a second kind of election I want to mention and that's what I call vocational election, vocational. There are sometimes when God just on His own sovereign choice chooses a certain person or persons to do a specific task. That also is unrelated to salvation.

The first illustration of it is in Deuteronomy 18 where God chose the Levites out of Israel to be His priests. Because you were a Levite did not necessitate the fact that you were granted absolutely salvation. That was task choice. God called the Levites to a task that was vocational election.

The same is true in the New Testament where Jesus called 12 Apostles. He called 12 of them to a task only 11 of them were called to salvation. You see the difference? Judas was not.

So there was vocational election. Jesus said in John 15:16; "You have not chosen Me but ... what? ... I have chosen you." And He wasn't talking about salvation there He was talking about the task of being a disciple or an Apostle. This has nothing to do with salvation.

But now you come to the third one and that's salvational election. And this is the kind that you find in Ephesians 1.

He has chosen us, not in a theocratic way, not in a vocational way but in a personal way to come to know Him. You have a statement, for example, in Romans 16:13; "Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord." That's salvation. That God has ordained that we should be His people individually. He has chosen us.

And there are many scriptures on this. First Peter starts out where Peter says that he writes to those in Cappadocia and Ponti and Bithynia and Asia who are predestined, who are chosen. And we'll say more about this in a moment.

So the method is election. God's free choice. He chooses individuals to salvation. In fact, in John 6:44 it says; "No man come unto Me except ... what? ... the Father draw him." No one is saved unless they are--I think the word is *helkuo*, drawn. And it's used in ancient pagan writings, that word, to speak of an irresistible force. For example, some pagan writers used the word to speak of a hungry man being drawn to food as if by a magnet.

It is used to speak in other pagan writings of demonic forces drawn to animals when they're not able to possess men. It is used of the power of love that draws two people irresistibly together. It is a force, it is a firm and compelling and an irresistible force, is this term *helkuo*. A good way to illustrate it, I don't know if you've ever seen a scrap metal plant where they bring the boxcars in and the boxcars are jammed full of this scrap metal stuff and this great crane comes over and hanging from the crane is this huge electromagnet with all those big copper coils and it generates just an incredible field of force down into that thing. And as if rising from the dead, the metal that has any kind of iron in it just comes leaping out of that thing. And any of the nonferrous matter like tin and aluminum and brass and those kinds of things just falls to the bottom. And in such a manner Jesus says in John 6:44, the force field of God's free, sovereign elected power has drawn to Himself those that are predetermined to be loved for eternity. That's election. And that's God, an irresistible force.

But on the other hand, it is not without faith that we respond. Right? It is not without faith that we respond. Jesus said, "All that the Father gives will come to Me," and then He turned right around and said, "And him that comes to Me, I'll ... what? ... in no wise cast out." That's the other side. Anybody can come.

Romans 9 it says; "That the children were chosen before they were born so that nobody would think that salvation had anything to do with them." It was all of God so that the glory is all God's. But in the next chapter it says; "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." You have sovereignty, that's God's side. You have human choice, that's man's side. And from our side the benefit of the doubt is here folks because we can come just because we want to come. That's what the Bible teaches.

And so George Chadwick said at the end of the eighteenth century, "I sought the Lord and afterwards I knew He moved my soul to seek Him seeking me, it was not I that found O Savior true, no I was found by Thee."

He's right. Now some people are going to say - "Oh, you missed the whole point. You see, election is based on foreknowledge, and foreknowledge is why God chooses because He looks ahead and He says, 'Aha, so that's what they're going to do.

I heard guy say one time, it's like you're driving down the street, see, and some drunk comes driving by you. And he's weaving all over the place, you know. And you say to your wife, "If he keeps driving like that he's going to have an accident."

You go five miles down the road and sure enough, he's smashed into a post. Aha

And so I heard a preacher say, -"See, that's God. He's looking at the way things were going in a life as He sees it in the future." And He says, "The way they're going, they're not going to make it." And so on that basis He chooses the ones who will already, according to His foreknowledge make it.

That isn't what the Bible says. It's a nice story. It just isn't true. You can't pair that up with the Bible. It's amazing how you can teach off of illustrations that aren't biblical.

That isn't what it says. Listen.... people say, "Well, but look at Romans 8:29.11 All right, look at Romans 8:29. Romans 8:29 says, "For whom He did foreknow He did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son."

And people will say, "You see, you see, He only predestinates the ones He foreknows will come to Christ. See, He looks in the future, He sees who will believe and those are the ones He predestinates. It says that right there, whom He foreknows He predestinates."

Yes, yes, but you see ... you forget verse 28. You see, in verse 28 it says; "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God; to them who are the called according to His purpose." You get the point? He foreknew it before He predestinated but, listen to this, beloved, He called before He ever ... what? ... foreknew. You've got foreknowledge in verse 29 but you've got the

call of God according to His own purpose in verse 28.

Foreknowledge is an interesting word, *proginosko*, it does not mean to know something before it happened in the Scripture. The word know implies an intimate love relationship. For example, it says in the Old Testament, "Cain knew his wife and she bore a son." It doesn't mean he knew who she was, it means they had an intimate physical relationship and a child was conceived.

When it was talking of Mary and Joseph it says that Mary had never known a man. It means she never had a sexual relationship with a man. That word know carries with it a very, very, close.... Jesus said of His sheep, "I know My sheep and they know Me." And He wasn't saying - "We know who we are." He was saying, "We have an intimacy together."

Matthew 7:23, they said, "Lord, Lord He said, "I never knew you. I never had that intimate relationship with you."

In Amos 3:2 He looks at Israel and says; "You only have I known of all the nations of the world." They weren't the only people He knew about, they were just the only people He had a unique, intimate love relationship with.

And foreknowing is simply predetermining that love relationship and thus does Deuteronomy 7 say, "That God decided to love you before the world began." He decided to set His affection on you, that's foreknowledge. A preliminary love relationship established in the mind of God before time began.

And so, Romans 8 is really saying - that those He called, He predetermined to set His love on and the predetermination to set His love on them caused Him to want to make them become like Jesus Christ. That's the essence of it. You've got to unscramble your theology a little bit.

In Romans 11 he talks about Israel whom He foreknew. Is that the only people He ever knew anything about? No, no, it means Israel whom He predetermined to set His love on. Reads Romans 11, verses 2 and 5 and you'll see it there.

Now that doesn't mean that there's no human responsibility. I say that again, beloved, I don't want you to get confused. There is human responsibility but there is divine sovereignty. God is running things. Now I don't know how it harmonizes with my choice but I know this, I believe with all my heart that I can walk up to any man in the street, any day of the week and I can say to that man - Here's the gospel of Jesus Christ, and if you will in your heart to know the Lord Jesus Christ, you can be saved. I can say that to him. I don't know how that harmonizes with God's sovereignty but that's His problem and He can handle it.

So, the method - sovereign selection. Now real fast, we're going to go through the next six points. (chuckles) Oh ye of little faith.

Point number two, Point number two - the object. And this has become obvious now; they'll flow right out of what we said. What is the object of this marvelous election? The method we know; sovereign selection. The object; the elect, us. Verse 4; "He has chosen us in Him." He's chosen us to be in Christ. The us are the faithful, the use are the ones who believe. The us are the ones who respond. And you see, beloved, this is the human side of it. Nobody ever will go to heaven, ever, ever, in all of history who does not willfully, consciously, submit himself to obedience to God. There must be a response.

Jesus said "You will not come to Me that you might have life." You won't come. You remember in Luke 22:22? It says that Jesus was delivered, in effect, delivered to be crucified, "As it was determined." God had it all planned. And the next line says; "But woe unto that man by whom He was betrayed." Both sides of it. God's absolute sovereignty and yet Judas was responsible for every deed he did

That doesn't take you off the hook. It just lets God be God. And man man. We are the objects, us. You know I think about that, people, and it just really is amazing. I look at myself and you say; "You mean to tell me that God chose John MacArthur in Him before the foundation of the world in order that He might make me like Jesus Christ? In order that He might give me a room in the Father's house? And fellowship with me forever?" I don't know what that does to you but it's pretty exciting stuff, folks. I mean, being a Christian is pretty fabulous when you think about it in those terms. We are the chosen. We are the elect. There's no sense of time with God. We were His before the world began. We were the inheritors of His Kingdom before the world began. We were the choice to be in the Father's house forever before the world began.

Now by the time you get three chapters full of this, and you come to chapter 4, Paul is going to suggest that maybe you ought to live like it. And you're going to say he's probably right. If you're not saying it already. You ought to walk worthy of such a vocation, he says in 4:1. Such a high calling. This is cause for praise. No wonder he says, "Blessed be God."

You know, it's all of Him that He has chosen us. So the object - the elect. The method - sovereign selection. Thirdly, the time. We already know this. "According as He's chosen us in Him." When? "Before the foundation of the world." Before the foundation of the world. Before anything ever was. In theology we call it predestination, election, before the fall, before creation, before time, before anything. God laid it all out. You know, it says here that He formed the body before the world began.

In Matthew 25:34 He said, "It's the joy of the Father to give you the Kingdom which He prepared for you from before the foundation of the world." The Kingdom was ours then. In I Peter chapter 1 verse

19 it says this; "But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world." Listen, the body was formed before the world began. The Kingdom was formed and we were given a place before the world began. Christ was crucified, as it were, before the world began. The whole master-plan is simply being worked out and we're a part of it. Things don't happen by chance.

No wonder in 2:10 he says, "For you are God's masterpiece." You are God's masterpiece, "Created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God has before ordained that you should walk in them." See. 'Your style of life was preordained before the world began.

So, the method - sovereign selection. The object - us. The time -eternity. Fourth, the purpose. Why did He do this? "That we should be holy and amomos, without blemish, before Him."

"Oh," you say, "John, I think this is where the plan broke down. I can't make it. I'm a Christian, and I love Jesus Christ, but I am not without blame. I am not without blemish. I am not spotless, I am not holy."

Oh yes you are. You see, because Paul is talking about your position in Christ not your practice. Boy, if you don't understand positional truth, you'll never understand Ephesians. Positionally before God you are holy. Why? Go back to verse 4, "He has chosen us in Him." We are in Christ. The end of verse 3; "In Christ." I told you that that is repeated in this book at least 27 times. Because we are in Christ His holiness is ours. His righteousness is imputed to us. His spotlessness is our spotlessness. And thus does Paul say in 5:27; "He has taken the church to present the church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." Listen, before God you are holy and without blemish. Why? Cause you're one with Christ. And His blood covers your sin. It's hidden from God. His righteousness imputed to you as if you have a cape of righteousness covering you and when God sees you He sees only the righteousness of Christ. You couldn't stack up one sin in a row because they're all covered in the sacrifice of Christ. Because you're covered in the righteousness of Christ. That's your position.

Now your practice ought to match that, you see. The Christian life is simply making your practice equivalent to your position. Do you understand that? It's living like who you are, it's becoming what you are. When God looks at John MacArthur positionally, He says, "John MacArthur; holy, spotless, without blemish." And when He looks around the corner and sees me practically, He says; "Got a long way to go.

But you see, He's talking about your position. Beloved, listen to this. He's made a holy church, positionally. We're all as holy as Jesus. Can you imagine that? Before God. You say, "God, is very kind." That's right. That's what he's been saying through this whole book here. He's is very gracious.

It would be nice if He said, "Look, I'll take you half way, and if you've got what it takes, fellow, you'll go the rest of the way." He takes us all the way.

And so does it say in Colossians 2:10; "And you are complete in Him." And it says earlier, "And He is the fullness of God and you are complete in Him." He is the pleeroma of God and then Paul again says, you are pleeroma in Him. All that God is you become in Christ, just as holy, just as blameless, just as spotless, positionally. That's why I don't believe you could ever lose your salvation because it's secured to you in the righteousness of Christ. The only way we could ever be lost would be if Christ was lost, and that can't happen. Because we're in Him we're as secure as He is.

In fact, if you read the book of Hebrews you'll find that salvation there is even called perfection. It's called perfection.

And so, we are made holy in Christ. Now I don't know about you but...when I think of all that God has done for me in making me holy and imputing to me the righteousness of Christ as Romans 3 says, it causes me to want to live it. Doesn't it you? At least to be grateful and show it in my life.

So the method, the object, the time, the purpose, the motive is number five. Why did He do this? Whatever possessed God to do this? Very simple, the last part of verse 4 should be the first part of verse 5; "In love having predestinated us." You see, there's only one reason He did it. What was it? Love. What did I read you at the beginning of our fellowship this morning? "For God so....what?...loved the world." It's always love. It's always love. And what is love? It is a disposition in the heart of God by which He determines to sacrifice Himself to meet the needs of others. Love is not an emotion, biblically. Love is an act of selfless sacrifice. "Greater love hath no man than this; than that a man...what? ... lay down his life." That's love. Love is the act of self-sacrifice which seeks the betterment of someone else. God determined that He would sacrifice Himself for us. And in love He set His affection upon us before the world began and said, "For those people I will die," For those people I will go to a cross. For those people I will build a Kingdom that will never end. For those people I will pour out all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies.

Why? Why, God? Why do You care so much? Because God is...what? love. And we love Him because ... what? ... He first loved us. It was love. Chapter 2 verse 4; "But God who's rich in mercy for His great love for which He loved us, that's why He has made us alive together with Christ." That's why. Amazing, amazing that God would set His love on us.

Paul never got over it. He never could understand it. Never. I don't think any Christian can, who thinks of it. And so we see that God has planned this from eternity past.

We see the method - sovereign selection. The object - us. The time -eternity. The purpose - holiness. The motive - love. Sixth, the result. And the result is so beautiful. The result is sonship. In love having predestinated us unto the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ to Himself. Through Jesus Christ, God adopts us to Himself. What a fabulous thought. God doesn't say - Listen, you folks, I'm going to allow you to be subjects in My Kingdom, you can be My servants, I might even let you be My friend. That would be nice. But God says - You're not only not servants, you're not only not friends, you're going to be My ... what? ... My sons. You see, if God loved us then He would draw us as close to Himself as was possible. And the closest you can be is to be in the same family ... sonship. When you become a Christian you become a child of God. And Paul says you can cry Abba Father, which in the Greek means papa, or daddy, a term of closeness and endearment, a term of affection. Because you have access to Him. Daddy, God is on your side. God is one with you with the same common life. Do you realize that to be saved means to have the life of God in the soul of man? His life pulses in me. You know, I can adopt a child. And I could love that child as much as a child that was born to my wife and I. I could love that child more even. I could pour my love upon that child. I could make a home for that child, as many of you have. But there's one thing I could never do. The one thing I could never do would be to give my spirit and my nature to that child. I couldn't do that. And that's precisely where adoption into the family of God is different. When you were adopted into the family of God, at the moment you believed in Jesus Christ as it was predetermined before the world began, Peter said - You became a partaker of the divine nature. You have the very nature of God within you, not only that He granted unto you His Spirit. So when we were adopted, we were given God's nature and God's Spirit. He drew us as close to Himself as He could. And Jesus said, "I'm going to go away and make a room for you in the Father's house." And, as sons you have access to all that God has for you.

And so God formed the body.

Lastly, why? What was the end that He had in mind? Why did He want all of us to be His sons? Why did He want to do this? The reason is - glory, verse 5 at the end. "According to the good pleasure of His will to the praise of the glory of His grace."

You see, the reason He did it was because He wanted to do it to get glory. The reason, beloved, the reason for everything, the reason for everything that exists in the universe is that God may be glorified. The Old Testament says; "The beasts of the field shall give Me glory."

The psalmist said, "The heavens declare the glory of God." The only rebels in the whole universe are fallen angels and fallen men. Everything else glorifies God. And, believe me, the fallen angels have been removed permanently from God's presence and so will the fallen men who don't come to Jesus Christ. God will remove from His universe all which does not give Him glory. Leaving only that which glorifies Him. That's the ultimate reason for everything that exists. That's why it says to the Christian in I Corinthians whatever you do is mundane, as eating and drinking, do it all ... what? ... to the glory of God. That's the purpose of everything.

The reason the Lord chose the body before the foundation of the world, the reason He preordained it, the reason He laid it out, the reason He did it all Himself, with no human will and no help and nothing is that the glory might all be His. If salvation was half God and half man then God would get half the glory and man the other half. If salvation was 95% God and 5% man, then God would get 95% glory and we would get 5%. But salvation is 100% God so He gets all the glory. And just to make sure nobody ever got confused He laid it all out before any human being was ever born. So there's no question about it.

And so for His own good pleasure He said; "It's the Father's good pleasure," said Jesus, "To give you the Kingdom." If for His own good pleasure to seek His own glory. Well, what a thought. Fit into His body before the world began, to be to the praise of His glory.

I hope you are in practice what you are in position. Let's pray together.

Thank You, our Father, this morning again for the richness and the depth of the treasure of the Word of God. We realize that we're like little children playing around with the grains of sand while the ocean rolls at our feet and we can't really comprehend everything. We can't see the depth of all You are. Now and then when we get a glimpse of something deep like this it leaves our minds scrambled and uneasy partly because we're so frail in our understanding and partly because our depravity so wants ourselves to be exalted in understanding everything. Help us to be humbled, to be content with things we cannot understand but know that You are the One who does understand, who is too loving to do anything unkind or unfair, too just to do what is unrighteous, too wise to ever make a mistake. And that all will be well and in accord with Your love and Your absolute wisdom and justice. Help us to submit to who You are and to humbly bow understanding who we are. And in the mystery of why you would want us may our joy be overwhelming and may it motivate us in gratitude to serve You with all our capacity. We will thank You in Christ's name. Amen.

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