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C0419 -- May 12, 2004 -- Ephesians 1:4 -- Election: Doctrine

2. The Basis of Spiritual Blessings (1:4-14)

a. God's Election for Himself (1:4-6)

Greek Text: 1:4-5 kaqw.j evxele,xato h`ma/j evn auvtw/| pro. katabolh/j ko,smou ei=nai h`ma/j a`gi,ouj kai. avmw,mouj katenw,pion auvtou/ evn avga,ph|(5 proori,saj h`ma/j eivj ui`oqesi,an dia. VIhsou/ Cristou/ eivj auvto,n(kata. th.n euvdoki,an tou/ qelh,matoj auvtou/(

Translation: 1:4-5 because He chose us (for Himself) in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and faultless before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

By way of review we're looking at the longest verse in the Greek NT, spanning from v. 3-14. It's a complex of blessings related to the plan of salvation designed by the Trinity. Remember, God is blessed for two reasons, for His intrinsic character and for what He's done for us in salvation. We said last week that God's character is immutable. This means that God's character never changes. The example we used was *God is love*. But love needs an object. Self-love is not true love. So, we concluded that if God's character is immutable and yet God is love then God must be a Trinity and not a mere Unity. God did not pick up the attribute of love when He created (like Allah). There is an infinite eternal love expressed between the three persons of the Trinity. What this means is that *God is love whether or not there is a plan of salvation*. This is the main point that is going to protect you from flying off the handle when thinking about election and predestination of the Father (vv. 4-6). This is the concept that is going to give you new insight into the sacrifice of the Son (vv. 7-12). This is the concept that is going to reveal to you the why? behind the sealing ministry of the Holy Spirit (vv. 13-14). See, this entire plan is first and foremost about the Trinity, it is a revelatory device. It's not first about saving men.

It certainly does that, but God wants to reveal something to the human race and angels regarding His character. If you understand what I'm saying you'll understand why all men are not saved (Universalism). See, to save all men would not be the plan that revealed God's character to the utmost. What man needs is to see all of God's character revealed. If God were mere love then God's justice, righteousness, and holiness would be hidden. This is why Hell has a purpose in God's plan; it reveals God's attributes of justice, righteousness, and holiness. So, I want you to keep this concept in your thinking so that you can understand from the DVP the statement that ***God chose you for His own benefit***. That's an offensive statement to many evangelicals, but it's biblical. ***God chose you for His own benefit***. He elected you for a purpose. He elected you *unto* something. That something is revealed at the end of v. 4. God elected you ***to be holy and faultless before Him in love***. ***Before Him*** is the Greek word *katenopion* and it means "in His presence". God elected us before the foundation of the world ***to be*** (present infinitive ***ei=nai*** expresses purpose) ***holy and faultless in His presence***. The question is whether this is in the present on earth or in the future when believers stand in His presence? The answer is this is yet future, not in this life, not on this earth. Of course, we are called to a holy life on earth. The Bible teaches that elsewhere, but here in v. 4 it's talking about the future when we stand "in His presence". We're talking about an up close and personal presence ***before Him***. **So, the purpose of God's election is so that He will have holy and faultless individuals before Him eternally.**

Remember, v. 4 began with the word *kathos*, which is normally translated "just as" indicating *manner*, but should be translated "because", indicating *cause*, just like in Eph. 4:32. There we forgive others not in the *same way* Christ forgave us but *because* Christ forgave us. You can't forgive people the *same way* Christ forgave us. You can't go to the cross for someone else. What you can do is forgive others *because* Christ forgave you. That's what Paul is talking about in 4:32 and that's what he's talking about here in v. 4 too. The subject here is "why is God blessed in v. 3"? The answer is ***because*** God chose us. It's what He of His own free choice has done for us. He didn't have to do it, He did it out of His grace.

We also talked a bit about depravity last week. We said that man is comprehensively depraved meaning that **every facet of man "fails the test" in respect to pleasing God**. That word depraved is *adokimos* and means to "fail the test" (Rom. 1:28). So, man's character fails the test of pleasing God. We have no merit in God's sight. This means that nothing in our character obligates God to choose us. Remember that God wanted to secure individuals holy and faultless in His presence and that is why God

elected some. Again you might be wondering why not save all so that all could be in His presence. But again the answer is that God first and foremost wants to reveal His character and only secondarily save men. It's about God not men. If He didn't save some then no one would be able to be holy and faultless and in His presence. No one would be saved. I know this is a hard truth to accept because we struggle with our human nature since the Fall. *Depravity is our condition in history, election is God's plan to remedy such a condition before history.* This is why He is "blessed". This is why we praise Him, because He provided a means of escaping our depraved condition, being found fit for His presence so that we could spend eternity in His presence. Election should therefore be a fantastic comfort for the believer. Nothing can change the plan of God. That's a true source of stability.

We also looked at the Logical Order of Decrees in Eternity Past and the Chronological Order of Events in History Present (Rom. 8:29-30).

(Overhead)

Logical Order: Foreknew → Predestined → Elected

Chronological Order: Called → Justified → Glorified

Now let's finish looking at the 21 verses so we can conclude our definition or description of the word election. Last week we finished with Acts 15:7 so let's move on to Acts 15:22...Here are the verses we looked at last week so you can go back and review them (Overhead)

Acts 15:22, 25 READ. Here the elders and apostles chose men to go with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch. They had all known options before them and carefully, on the basis of knowledge chose which men to go. There is no arbitrariness here and no intimation of dislike for those not chosen.

John 6:70 READ. This reference is similar to Luke 6:13. Jesus chose the 12 yet one was a devil, Judas. Clearly Jesus chose from all His disciples, 12 to be apostles.

John 13:18 READ. Judas again. Jesus chose the 12 but one of them was betraying Him. Jesus knew when He chose Judas that Judas would betray Him. Jesus chose Judas to fulfill the prophecy. Jesus clearly had all known options before Him. His choice of Judas was not accidental or arbitrary but full of purpose. This clearly shows that election is unconditional. Judas' character was certainly not the kind of

character that would make him a good apostle. But Jesus chose him anyway, knowing his character and what he would do.

John 15:16 READ. Technically this reference is to apostleship not salvation. But, the idea is that the apostles did not choose to be Christ's apostles, Christ chose them to be His apostles. Middle voice again meaning Christ chose them for Himself with personal interest, not arbitrarily but for a purpose. Usually friends choose one another but not in this case. This choice was an aggressive choice. Christ chose them.

John 15:19 READ. Probably a reference to salvation because they were chosen out of the world, whereas they were chosen as apostles out of the disciples (cf. Luke 6:13). Additionally, Judas was chosen for apostleship yet he was not hated by the world. He was the betrayer that came from the world. Judas is long gone by this time (cf. 13:30). This is a direct reference to Jesus choosing the 11 for salvation. The result is that the world hates those who are chosen. The world hates you too.

1 Cor. 1:27ff READ. God knew all the things in the world and He chose the foolish things to shame the wise men. Notice particularly in v. 29 that it is "By His doing" that you are "in Christ Jesus" not by our doing. And God certainly knows what He is doing.

Mark 13:20 READ. Here the noun is used as well as the verb. There is a group of elect and God chose them. The verb is again in the middle voice indicating strong personal interest. Notice how personal God has designed history. The tribulation will be the worst time ever on earth and God will shorten the tribulation for His elect. Is election really an unloving choice? Or is it a deeply loving choice. It's because God lovingly chose the elect that He will shorten the horrible time of tribulation.

James 2:5 READ. Here God chose the poor of the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom? God therefore chose out of all known options. And what He has provided for those He chose is wonderful. What a great God we have.

CONCLUSION (Overhead)

First, we find that in all cases a choice was made out of a multiplicity of known choices (cf. Lk. 6:13; John 15:16, 19; Acts 1:24). The choice is not arbitrary but

based on knowledge. *Second*, just because one option was not chosen does not mean that the unchosen option is disliked (cf. Acts 6:5; 15:22, 25). *Third*, the fact that the middle voice is always used (with possible exception of Luke 9:35) indicates a personal interest. The middle voice is as personal as the language can express because it means literally “to choose for oneself”. The middle “calls attention to the whole subject being concerned in the action” (Mark 13:20; Luke 10:42; 14:7; John 15:16). *Fourth*, in most of the contexts the subject is God. Of the 21 instances, 16 of them have the subject as God or Jesus.¹ *Fifth*, election is clearly a loving choice. God wasn’t obligated to elect anyone. He of His own free choice decided to display grace and elect some. So, “why didn’t God elect everyone?” The answer is because it would not reveal all of His character. Another way of asking the question is “why did God elect anyone?” The answer here is the same. He certainly wasn’t obligated to save anyone but He chose to in order to reveal His character. The plan God chose is the plan that most reveals His character.

First let’s look at the exegesis and then we’ll look at the doctrine. You’ve got to be careful as a student to look at the structure and the parts of speech. Today we’ve got more people than ever that can’t figure out what’s being said or they like to manipulate what is said to conform to their own desires. I don’t want you to do this. I at least want you to see what is said. What you do with that is between you and the Lord.

evxele,xato h`ma/j evn auvtw/|, “He chose us in Him”. Who is the “He”? It is obviously God the Father. vv 4-14 outline the Trinity’s plan of redemption (Overhead) which was worked out in eternity past. vv. 4-6 outline what God the Father has done for believers in the plan of redemption, namely, *selection*. vv. 7-12 outline what God the Son has done for believers in the plan of redemption, namely, *sacrifice*. vv, 12-14 outline what God the Spirit has done for believers in the plan of redemption, namely, *sealing*. These blessings are a partial reason why God is blessed (v. 3). The rest of the reason has to do with the type of God who could carry this plan out successfully. So, the second reason God is blessed is because of His character. His character is essential to carrying out the plan of redemption and for that God is blessed (v. 3). Another God cannot meet the criteria to carry out this plan. Because of who God is this plan can never fail. This truth should give you great comfort as a believer. You cannot frustrate the plan of God. What part of speech is God the Father? God the Father is the Subject.

¹ Op. cit., 187.

The word **exelexato** is the Aorist Middle Indicative verb of the Greek word **eklegomai** (*eklegomai*). It comes from two Greek words, **ek** meaning “out of” and **lego** meaning “to say or speak”. The mood is *aorist* which means past completed action without any indication of the timing. In this verse the timing is revealed in the context which says “before the foundation of the world”. This means that **election** took place in eternity past. The voice is *middle* which means that God is both the actor and receiver of the action verb which is “choosing”. This means God is the one who chose and it was for His benefit, not ours. This is a point that is often missed. Election is not for you, it is for God! The believer is chosen for God’s own benefit. A literal translation of this verse would say, “He chose us *for Himself*”. That’s the force of the middle voice. The middle voice also indicates that God took a deep personal interest in His choice of you. God’s grace took the initiative. He freely chose the believer due to His grace and not because He was obligated to do so because the believer had some legal claim on Him. Hence, God, knowing all the options, chose with a deeply personal interest the believer, apart from any obligations on God, in eternity past. As we pointed out last week *eklegomai* is the only finite verb in a relative clause in this long Greek sentence of vv. 3-14. What this means is that **election** is *logically* subsequent to **predestination** (*proorizo*) and/or **predestination** is the *cause* of **election**. I think both are true. **Predestination** logically precedes **election** in the eternal counsels of God. **Predestination** is therefore also the logical cause for why God **elects**.

If God the Father is the subject and election is the verb then who is the *object*? The *object* is the 3rd person personal pronoun **us** (*emas*). God the Father chose **us**. At this point many commentators say that God chose Christ. However, notice that it does not say that God chose Christ. It says that **He chose us**. Christ is not the *object* of the choice, the *object* of the choice is **us**. This is basic grammar. Therefore, God the Father, of mere grace, knowing all options, apart from any legal ties, and with a deeply personal interest, chose believers for His own benefit. This is why God is to be praised (v. 3). God would not be deserving of praise if we had any obligations outside of Himself binding Him to choose us. It is precisely because God did not have to choose us but of His own free choice did choose us that He is to be praised. Why praise Him if he had to choose us because of something in us? If He chose us for some reason in us then we ought to praise ourselves.

The phrase **evn autw** (*in Him*) refers back to **in Christ** of verse 2 and means that God the Father chose us *in connection* with Christ. It does not mean that God chose

us through faith in Christ because this would destroy God's freedom of choice. If this were the case then faith would be the basis of God election. This would mean that believers, by their faith would have obligated God to choose them. Nor does it mean even as John Calvin asserted that God chose Christ and we are in Christ. Why not? Because the object is *us* not Christ. God chose us, not Christ in this verse. To cram such a complex doctrine into v. 3 is not possible. Nor is it that God foresaw or knew who would have faith and then elect on that basis. Such a claim is more than the passage says and v. 5 says that God's election was ***according to the good pleasure of His will***, not according to our faith. There are only two ways of understanding *in Him*. First, it could be a dative of sphere which would mean that we were chosen in Christ as the head/representative of the spiritual community just as Adam is the head/representative of the natural community. Second, it could be a dative of instrument meaning that God chose believers in connection with Christ's redemptive work. Contextually this is the best understanding because it is a *bona fide* fact that no one can ever be chosen apart from Christ and His sacrifice. That is why vv. 7-12 detail Christ's sacrifice for believers. Therefore, "*in Him*" means that believers are chosen *in connection* with Christ. The specifics of the connection are given in vv. 7-12 and have to do with Christ's sacrifice. Now for the doctrine of election. There are 3 views of election.

3 VIEWS OF ELECTION

1. GOD CHOSE THOSE HE FOREKNEW WOULD ACCEPT CHRIST

This view states that God has elected sinners on the basis of faith He knew they would have. In other words, God chose those He foreknew would accept Christ. God supposedly looked down through the corridors of time and saw who would respond by faith and He chose them. There are several problems with this view. *First*, the language of the Bible doesn't say that anywhere. *Second*, it implies that God gains knowledge based on time. So, it confuses knowledge dependent on time with God's knowledge independent of time. Foreknowledge is not based on what takes place in time. *Third*, this view confuses God's foreknowledge with foresight. Foreknowledge does not mean mere foresight or foreseeing what will happen. Of course God foreknows who will believe. He is omniscient; He knows all things actual and possible. But foreknowledge means more than mere foresight. *Fourth*, it does not adequately deal with man's depravity. Man is not able to take a single step toward God because all men were dead in their sins and walking according to the

course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:1-2). If faith was the basis of God's election then no one would ever believe and be saved.

What is foreknowledge? TURN TO Amos 3:2 – God knows all the nations around Israel, yada – to know not intellectually but intimately - piel stem meaning exclusively known - it's not *what* He knows it's *who* He knows. Foreknowledge is an intimate knowledge. I may know cognitively your wife, but I know intimately my wife. This is what foreknowledge is all about. Those God foreknows He knows intimately.

The real question here is how much relationship is in the word *foreknowledge*. Does God foreknow in the sense of foreseeing without any relationship? Or stated another way does God foresee faith and not people? Or does it mean that He related Himself to people before time in some way that makes a causative connection between foreknowledge and election? First of all, NT texts certainly do affirm a relationship between foreknowledge and election (1 Peter 1:1-2 READ). Clearly also is the fact that foreknowledge as mere foresight is not the basis of election (1 Pt. 1:2). This passage shows that there is some relationship between those who were chosen and the foreknowledge of God. That relationship seems to be the procedure for working out the choice. God's procedure for deciding the choice is inherent in the meaning of foreknowledge. But notice that no relationship is given between foreknowledge and faith. Finally, Scripture never says God foresees faith. It does say that God foreknows people (Rom. 8:29-30 READ).

2. CORPORATE ELECTION

This view states that God does not choose individuals but only chose Christ and that Christ is the sphere in which God's elective purposes take place. Thus, if one believes in Christ he is elect too. Is it possible for Christians to be chosen *in Christ*—that is, for Christians not to be elected individually, but only as a corporate entity? There are four reasons I reject this view of election as a total answer.

First, several adherents to corporate election argue that in every election context a group is in view, not individuals. Even if it did and it does not this is biblically and scholarly naïve. James Barr, in his *Semantics of Biblical Language* shows that just because the words aren't used doesn't mean the concept isn't taught in Scripture. But, what does the evidence say? Does the Bible anywhere speak of individuals being elected?

Acts 6:5 Here is the choosing of the first deacons. Notice that seven individuals who are named were chosen. The fact that individuals are named certainly confirms that individuals were chosen individually and not corporately.

Acts 15:7 Peter was the individual whom God chose out of all the brethren present to fulfill this task. This is not election unto salvation but it does show that God chooses individuals to fulfill certain tasks.

John 6:70; cf. Mark 1:16-21 When Jesus chose His apostles, He chose them individually. He chose them by name emphasizing that they were chosen as individuals to be apostles.

John 15:16 Jesus says “I chose you, you did not choose me”. The idea is that the apostles did not choose to be Christ’s apostles; Christ chose them to be His apostles. Usually friends choose one another but not in this case. This choice was an aggressive choice. Christ chose them. The same mechanics work in salvation as for service, cf. 15:19

John 15:19 —“I chose you out of the world.” This is individual election to salvation. He chose each individual apostle out of the world. Being called out of the world is for salvation. Election may have many individuals in view, but the initiative and efficacy belong to the Lord.

Second, to prove that corporate election is true does not mean that individual election is not true. They are not opposites. I believe both are true. For example in Paul’s thought corporate and individual election are intertwined. For example, in Romans 9 we have individuals mentioned by name as elect of God; Isaac and Jacob, and not Ishmael or Esau. Here individuals are named but these individuals also stand for corporate peoples. But Paul chose to use individuals to explain the meaning of election. If only corporate election were true then Paul could not have written Rom. 9 the way he did.

Third, the doctrine of depravity teaches that God must take the initiative. Man does not take one step toward God (Rom. 3:9b-11), he is bound to walk according to the realm of sin (Eph. 2:1), therefore God must take the initiative if anyone is to be saved. This initiative is individual not corporate. Eph. 2:1-10 outlines individual election and forms the base for Paul’s discussion of corporate election in Eph. 2:11-

22. But there can be no corporate election unless there is first individual election. Corporate election is, at base, a denial of total depravity because if total depravity is true and corporate election is the only true means of election then no one would ever choose God (because depraved) and no one would then ever be saved (because no one will ever freely choose to be in Christ).

Fourth, if election is only corporate then all the promises given to believers can only be claimed corporately and are not for the individual. One promise that is made to the elect is their eternal security (Rom. 8:33 READ). “Who will bring a charge against God’s elect”? If corporate election is as far as election goes then this would have to be understood as a charge being brought against the corporate body not against you as an individual believer. In this case eternal security would apply to the corporate church and not to individuals. But, this is of course absurd because 5 verses later (Rom. 8:38) Paul says, “I am convinced”. So, Paul took this promise of eternal security for the elect to be individually understood. “If election is only corporate, then eternal security is only offered on a corporate plane. No personal assurance can take place. The irony is that those who hold to corporate election often also hold to eternal security. They don’t realize the extreme inconsistency in their views. You can’t have it both ways: either we are individually chosen by a free act of God’s will and are eternally secure, or we are neither.” (Wallace, <http://www.netbible.org/docs/soapbox/corpelec.htm>)

Let’s return to Eph. 1:4 and deal with the *us*. The *us* here does not refer to a corporate election (I know what the Scofield bible note says), but this letter is written to the Ephesian Church (v. 1). Technically then it would refer only to Paul and his readers, the Ephesian believers. This is a group or body of believers. “Still, chosen individuals make up this group. As individuals receive the blessings in verse 3 and individually are sealed in verse 13, so individuals are the objects of God’s election. This should comfort the believer, for he chose “us” from among the whole human race. Yet the chosen individuals are united with one another as a new family unity, the church, the body of Christ (2:11-3:13; 4:1-16; cf. Rom. 8:29).” (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 176.)

3. INDIVIDUAL ELECTION

We’ve already interacted with individual election but for sake of clarity we’ll define the view. Individual election is the view that God, before time, chose those individuals who would be saved.

It is my humble opinion that both individual and corporate election are taught in Scripture. However, individual election is the basis for corporate election. Individual people make up a group. To teach only corporate election is a denial of total depravity and is inconsistent with eternal security and personal assurance. The promises of God can only be claimed corporately and cannot ever be claimed for the individual unless individually chosen by God. The view that God chose those He foreknew would believe is not taught in the Bible, contradicts God's omniscience, and distorts the depravity of man.

Let's conclude with Acts 13:48, "When the Gentiles heard this, they *began* rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed." Notice that their appointment to eternal life precedes their believing. It's because a certain number "had been appointed to eternal life" that they "believed". Not the other way around.

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