

## EXPOSITION OF EPHESIANS

### Message #3

### Ephesians 1:3-6

H.A. Ironside told the story of a man who was from Montana for whom a long search had been made. Apparently, years before, a British nobleman had died and since he had no children, he had left his estate to his nearest heir, which was this man in Montana. Now the man in Montana had been just eking out a struggling existence and when they found him they revealed to him that this estate was all his. He immediately went to town, bought a new suit and when he was asked where he was going, he said “to take possession of my estate” (*In The Heavens*, p. 21).

It is about time that believers who have experienced grace realize how rich they are. It is about time that believers take hold of the possession of their theological estate. As Paul starts this section that is exactly what he has in mind.

**Paul begins Ephesians by presenting fundamental doctrines pertaining to the Grace Age to show how rich believers actually are.** The doctrines he presents are not shallow, but deep. What we learn is significant if you want a church to realize how rich grace is so that it will truly glorify and praise God; you begin by teaching sound doctrine and sound theology.

That is so foreign to what many people think. Not long ago I was listening to one of the TV preachers who said to the audience that they probably expected him to say something theologically profound or deep. He said that is not what he was on TV to do. Fact is, in my opinion, he can't say things theologically deep because he is a theological imbecile who doesn't know how to study to rightly divide any passage. Anyway, he said that his goal was to get them to realize that if they sent in their seed money, they could receive his harvest blessing.

Paul did not agree with this perspective. When he starts Ephesians, it is deep, very deep. It is sound doctrine that produces sound faith and sound lives and Paul begins with sound doctrine and the doctrine he begins with is the doctrine of election. **The Apostle Paul NEVER thought of himself as having chosen God, it was the opposite; Paul ALWAYS said God chose him.**

### **GOD THE FATHER IS TO BE PRAISED BECAUSE OF THE WONDERFUL SPIRITUAL BLESSING OF HIS GRACE ELECTION TO SALVATION.**

Ephesians 1:3-14 is one long sentence which is designed to get us to praise God for three key theological themes that involve all three key members of the Trinity in this praise song:

1) The selection and election of God the Father (v. 4-6); 2) The sacrifice and redemption of God the Son (v. 7-12) and 3) The sealing of God the Spirit (v. 13-14).

**The beginning point of realizing how rich we are in grace to the point that we praise God is to understand truth about our election.** This is the foundational doctrine that Paul wanted each of us to grasp in this dispensation of grace. The first cause of our reason to praise God is because He has eternally elected us.

**Those religious systems of theology that want to begin with man, defend man, elevate man and glorify man do not glorify God.**

Now **verse 3** begins by making a statement that God is to be praised and blessed because He has blessed us with **every spiritual blessing** in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. The real focal point of this praise is the wealth we have because of what God has done for us in Christ. As John Witmer said, the list of blessings we have received in grace cannot be “comprehended by the human mind” (*Ephesians*, p. 116).

Dr. Chafer, in his chapter of theology called “The Riches of Divine Grace” that should be read by every believer, lists thirty-three “supernatural divine achievements which constitute the riches of grace.” Dr. Chafer said none of these are experienced, progressive, related to human merit and are only known by biblical revelation, not human imagination. All of the things are eternal, wrought by God and not wrought by man (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3, pp. 232-266).

Dr. Ironside was once asked by some misguided believer if he had received the second blessing. Ironside said I am somewhere in the hundreds of thousands of blessings and have actually obtained every spiritual blessing God has to give a redeemed sinner (*In The Heavens*, p. 20).

**Now the first blessing for which we are to praise God is for the doctrine that makes us rich and it is the rich doctrine of God’s election .**

Dr. S. Lewis Johnson said that it was his observation that individuals who believe in the sovereign election of God were much more stable Christians than those who do not, and those who believe in the sovereign grace of God are much more effective in their Christian outreach than those who do not believe in the sovereign election of God (*Ephesians* 1:3-6, p. 2).

Beginning in **verse 4**, Paul begins to trace the “spiritual blessings” for which we may praise God the Father and there are six blessed facts he presents:

**BLESSED FACT #1** – God the Father chose us to be in Christ. **1:4a**

That word “chose” (ἐξελεξατο) means to pick out or choose something and the middle voice means to pick out something for oneself (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 139). This speaks of a divine choice that God, Himself, makes. In fact, in every use of the word election a choice is made out of a multitude of options. This is very comforting and wonderful doctrine if you are a believer, but you should be squirming in your seat tonight if you are not.

Many people do not like this doctrine of election, but like it or not you cannot deny the doctrine. It is a God exalting doctrine. God was not obligated to choose anyone. No sinner deserves to be chosen by a Holy God. In fact, if we analyze our entire lives honestly we will be forced to admit we don’t deserve to be chosen by a Holy God. **So the real issue here is not why did He not choose some, it is why did He choose anyone at all.**

Some have said God elects the good. But the Scriptures are clear that God does not elect the good; He elects the bad and then makes them good.

Some have said God elects people that He foresaw would believe. That is not God's election, that is man's election.

Furthermore, since He knew this all before the foundation of the world, why didn't He prevent those from being born that He saw wouldn't believe?

Dr. Chafer said God "chooses whom He will. He neither sees, nor foresees any good in man which might form the basis of His blessings. Whatever good is found in redeemed man is wrought in him by divine grace" (*The Epistle to the Ephesians*, p. 32).

Jesus Christ reiterated the same doctrine when He said you did not choose me, but I chose you (John 15:16). Now God chose us to be "in Him," that is in Christ and it was Spirit baptism that put us into Jesus Christ. God did the choosing and God did the saving.

Now there is one other rich fact I want you to see. The verb "chose" is aorist middle. What this means is every believer in Jesus Christ had a moment in time when God took a personal interest in you and saved you. He was involved in the specific action and the results of the action. Your election was very personal for God. You are not some unknown number. He specifically chose you and saved you because of His plan. His grace makes us rich.

**BLESSED FACT #2** – God the Father chose us to be in Christ before the foundation of the world. **1:4b**

The salvific elective plan of God was fully known and fully developed before He created the world. He knew that humans would sin. He knew His Son would die. He knew who He would save. God chose us before He created the world, before He created man, before He permitted the fall and sin of man. He selected you before the foundation of the world. I don't care how you got into this world. You may have come from a nice Christian family or you may not even know who your parents are. Here is what you need to know. It was God who ordained your life and it was God who chose to save you before He ever let you be born.

What this practically means is that out of all of the mass of humanity who has ever lived in the world, God the Father chose and selected you as an individual. In fact, Paul made this very point concerning Jacob and Esau by stressing that He chose Jacob over Esau before they were born or before they had done anything to merit God's favor (Romans 9:11). Think about that point for a moment; you have been chosen by Almighty God to be given His eternal blessings.

**BLESSED FACT #3** – God the Father chose us to be holy, blameless and before Him in love. **1:4c**

These words describe what we are by virtue of the fact that we are in Christ and He has chosen us. The word "holy" refers to the fact that we are positionally set apart unto God by God. The term "blameless" means that we are free and will be free from any blemish before Him. The prepositional phrase "in love" means that this status that we have is because of God's love.

God is love (I John 4:8) which means He never acquired this attribute. His love does not need to be maintained nor does it depend on certain conditions. God loved before He created anything. He loved us before He saved us. He loves us after He has saved us. The ultimate goal of our election is that we will be in the presence of God the Father as holy and blameless and we will be in the full presence of His love.

The noun form of the word “love” (*αγαπη*) is used ten times in Ephesians and the verb form of the word “love” (*αγαπαω*) is also used ten times in Ephesians. This word love is a word that describes God’s love. It is the highest form of love that will always choose to do what is the highest good for the object loved. This love is extended to undeserving and unloving sinners and to wayward believers. God’s love is remarkable because He loved us when we were dead and deep in sin. This is part of the grace package we have received in Jesus Christ.

Now since we are sinful, not holy, and since we are not blameless, how is this status possible? By God’s election. He has elected us to be this way and to have these blessings.

From a practical perspective, it is true that God did not choose anyone because they were holy, but after He chooses us His desire is that we be holy and pursue holiness. God did not choose us because we were without blemish, but after we have been chosen we should pursue a lifestyle that is unblemished. John Calvin believed that any true holiness, purity, or any excellence that is found among any man was a result of election (*Epistle to the Ephesians*, p. 199).

We are positionally holy and blameless in His presence, and we should strive to develop these qualities before we get into His presence.

**BLESSED FACT #4** – God the Father predestined us. **1:5a**

H.C.G. Moule, the Cambridge Bible scholar of the late 1800’s and early 1900’s said this word predestine excludes all ideas of blind destiny (*Studies in Ephesians*, p. 47). Just by the word “pre destine” we see this word has something to do with the “destiny” of a person.

The Greek word “predestine” (*προοριζω*) means to mark out the boundaries before hand or to determine something before it happens. To predetermine something means you set the boundaries so that it happens.

Now understand the ramifications of this tonight. God determined before you were even born that He would save you. He set the boundaries so that you would come to Jesus Christ. Each person had different boundaries as to how He did it, but He did it with every person.

**BLESSED FACT #5** – God the Father predestined us to adoption as sons. **1:5b**

Now Paul brings out four critical grace realities concerning this predestination:

**(Grace Reality #1)** – He predestined us to adoption.

None of us were born children of God; we had to be born again to become a child of God and it was God who caused us to be born again. Being adopted by God is an amazing blessing of grace.

**(Grace Reality #2)** – He predestined us to an adoption of sonship.

Under Roman law, an adopted son legally had the same status and full privileges of a real son. The idea of adoption is that every chosen believer has received a full position as a child of God. Every believer has a right to be called a son of God the moment he believes in Jesus Christ. We have been taken out of the family of Adam and adopted into the family of God.

Every now and then you will run across a family who can trace their lineage back to Civil War times. There are commercials on TV for the internet that promote ancestry searches. In one of the commercials a black man went back into his roots and discovered that his great-great grandfather had been a slave, who eventually became a successful businessman. That is quite impressive.

Well we who know the Lord have a better ancestral line to trace that goes back before any family even came into existence. We are a member of the family of God and our historical roots go back to a time before the world was even created. We were all slaves to sin and God chose us and adopted us into His family.

**(Grace Reality #3)** – He predestined us to adoption through the work of Jesus Christ.

Everything we have in grace, we have because we are in Jesus Christ.

**(Grace Reality #4)** – He predestined us according to the kind intention of His will.

Let me share with you the contextual essence of what this says; God found great pleasure in using His specific sovereign will to save you. It brought God great satisfaction to use His will to track you down in your sin and save you (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 185).

Now your selection pleased Almighty God, and people who want to quibble about the doctrine of predestination or election are robbing God of something wonderful for which He should be praised.

Our salvation is all about God's sovereign purposes. Our election is because of the good purposes of God. We were saved because God determined we would be saved. It was all rooted in His love and His grace.

The most wonderful thing that God could ever do would be to select us from the masses of humanity and determine that He is going to give us full sonship status as an adopted son through Jesus Christ and then sovereignly supervise the work of our redemption.

**BLESSED FACT #6** – God the Father is to be praised for His sovereign grace. **1:6**

This doctrine of sovereign election and sovereign grace that He freely bestowed on us should cause us to praise God. The ultimate goal of the doctrine of election and sovereign grace is the glory of God.

Can you explain why you love someone? Can you give a solid explanation why you chose to love someone and didn't choose someone else?

Well if you can't explain your own choice, don't ever try to explain God's. Just accept it. Embrace it. Praise God for it.

When we were growing up as children, there were many good things we accepted even when we didn't have full knowledge or understanding.

Do you begin to sense how rich you are in grace? Do you begin to realize tonight how blessed you are to be in the family of God? Then you bow your head and you thank and praise God because He is the Heavenly Father worthy of all blessing and praise and worship.