

Ephesians 1: 3-6; “Just as He Chose Us”, Message # 2 in a series entitled “The Exceeding Greatness of His Power”, a Bible Study prepared by Pastor Paul Rendall on February 6th, 2019, for those who gathered at his home.

This evening we want to think together of the importance of every Christian coming to better understand and their freely choosing to believe in the doctrine of election because they are convinced from the Scriptures, and by the opening of the eyes of their understanding, to this great and wondrous truth. For this is what it takes to come to the doctrines of grace in your experience as a Christian. It takes the Lord's opening your eyes to the truth of what God does in salvation. This doctrine of election is very important to our understanding of how it is, according to God's eternal purposes, that any person is saved from their sins and inherits eternal life. Many persons who call themselves Christians and some who truly are Christians, believe that this doctrine, even though it is mentioned in the Bible, cannot possibly be true, according to their own reasoning, and so they refuse to believe it.

I want to open up this mighty doctrine to you, in such a way, that those Christians who are currently rejected this doctrine, might come to believe it. I want to do this by demonstrating from this passage, that 1st of all – It was God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who chose all of His elect people before the foundation of the world. 2nd – It was God's purpose in His choice that all of the elect should be holy and without blame before Him. And 3rd – One of the main reasons that this doctrine of election has been revealed to us is that we might praise God for the glory of His grace. O that we might think carefully and deeply into this precious doctrine and find comfort and encouragement in it which will motivate us to love and serve God more and more.

1st of all – It was God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who chose all of His elect people before the foundation of the world. (verses 3 and 4)

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” I want you to notice, brethren, that all the spiritual blessings which are given by God, come to His elect people through Christ alone. God choice in election is a choice of persons in Christ. He chose “us” in Christ. God's choice in Christ is not a hypothetical choice, it is a real and particular and definite choice, which is based upon a definite and particular redemption of those persons by Christ. If God has purposed to save, but does not really and actually work to save by sending Christ into the world, by determining to give Him up for us at the cross; if He did not purpose the certain and definite application of the great redemption which Christ accomplished to your particular person, you never would be saved.

If your salvation depended in any way upon you, you would not have been saved. Yes, it is true that you believe, and you repent. It is true that you will actually choose Him in your asking for the free gift of salvation. But what led you to that point for God's blessing you with the wisdom and understanding through your being born again, so that you would be able to make those choices. Further, we need to see, that the “us” who Paul mentions here, cannot be the “us” of all of all mankind, or that all of mankind would receive all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places. Everyone would then be automatically be brought into the kingdom of God at some point in their life; they all would all have conveyed unto them, all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places, in their actual experience.

Rather, we see, that the “us” in this passage is the choice of some particular persons out of the number of all of humanity, in all the generations of time. These persons are known unto God from all eternity. Turn over to Acts 15, verses 13-18. “Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.” “And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, “Men and

brethren, listen to me: Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: 'AFTER THIS I WILL RETURN AND WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID, WHICH HAS FALLEN DOWN; I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS, AND I WILL SET IT UP; SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD, EVEN ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME, SAYS THE LORD WHO DOES ALL THESE THINGS.' "Known to God from eternity are all His works." You can see here by the words of James, what I am trying to convince you of in the words that we are studying tonight is true. He is talking about the elect Gentiles who God had chosen to bring into the Church. He talks about Simon saying that God first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. God chose them out of the larger group of other Gentiles. He did so, not for their sakes, but for His own names' sake. All the Gentiles who were called by His name, would be saved and become a part of the New Testament Church. If a person is effectually called to faith in Christ, it is because they have been first chosen by God the Father. It is the Lord who does all these things, and they are all known to Him from eternity, all these works of saving grace that He does in time and space. It is God's choosing that makes certain His calling, and then most definitely saving a person by His conveying saving grace to them.

When a Christian reads such words from the Scriptures, which tell him of the straightforward declaration God's purpose, they ought to be able to see and to say, that not all men know and experience the reality of these blessings of salvation, that are mentioned here. And when we look around us, at the vast majority of people in this generation who are not saved, we should be able to conclude that all people by nature, apart from God's choice to convey saving blessings to their mind and heart, do not really want to hear the gospel of Christ without God's striving with them, to open their heart to hear and to respond to the gospel. They, by nature, do not want to hear that they need to be saved from their sins by believing in Christ. They do not want to hear the truth that their heart must be changed by their being born again spiritually, in order to see or enter the kingdom of God.

The real reason that this is a hard doctrine for even some Christians to receive, is that it does not seem fair that God would choose some, and not choose all. If we are all sinners, then why will God not mercifully save all of them; not simply some of them. It appears that God is showing partiality if He only chooses some. But the truth which the Bible clearly teaches, is that your being a Christian is not simply a choice which you made on your own, apart from God's choice and His grace. Your choosing Him to be Your God, and your choosing Jesus to be your Savior and Lord was only made because He had long before chosen you. The Bible doesn't speak of people first choosing God. It always starts out, as Paul does in this letter, speaking of election, and His choice of us. Now, every spiritual blessing, we are told here, is found coming to us from God the Father, through the Son and by means of the great and glorious work of redemption that He accomplished. This work is most thoroughly thought out and purposed in eternity past and most definitely applied then, in time and space, according to God's decrees, to all those chosen by God the Father from the foundation of the world.

2nd - It was God's purpose in His choice, that all of the elect should be holy and without blame before Him.

What were all the elect chosen to? Verses 4b and 5 tell us. It is – "That we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will..." The New American Standard Translation says, "That we would be holy and blameless before Him." "In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will..." In the NAS the word love is directly linked with God's predestination. I personally think that the NAS's rendering of this makes it more understandable to us because in the NKJV it seems hard to discern whether the love that is being talked about is our love for God, or His love for us. Is His divine purpose that we would be holy and without blame before Him, knowing and appreciating His electing love? Or,

is it like the NAS rendering has it; that that the word “love” should be thought of in terms of God’s predestinating love for us, His elect people? I think that it is the latter. But we need very much to consider the purpose for which God chose us. It was not that we were any better people than other sinners around us when God set His electing love upon us, based upon His choice of us, before the world began. We were not born yet, and so it was not because of our works, our good thoughts and intentions, or because of love when we had for Him. It was, that He loved us in Christ, according to His own predestinating purpose, and not because of anything good that He saw in us.

Turn with me over to Romans chapter 9, verses 10-16. “And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, ‘THE OLDER SHALL SERVE THE YOUNGER.’ “As it is written, ‘JACOB I HAVE LOVED, BUT ESAU I HAVE HATED.’” “What shall we say then?” Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, “I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOMEVER I WILL HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOMEVER I WILL HAVE COMPASSION.” “So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.”

Notice how the purpose of God according to election does not relate to anything good or evil which is done by the person elected. The choice to save that person, even Jacob, was made long before his birth, and before any works at all were done. God’s hatred of Esau was choosing to pass him by and leave him to the development of his own sinful heart. Once again, we do not see mention of nations here, although there was an election of a nation in the choice of Jacob, and a rejection of Edom and the Edomites in the passing by of Esau. And yet there is no partiality with God because Jacob was a sinful man by his works at many points. We are not told why God chose Jacob; it was sheer mercy based upon His own purpose to choose to have an elect people who He would spiritually adopt, and bring those whom He chose and call to the glory of knowing Himself and attending to all of their spiritual needs. The reason is not altogether explained, but what we are told is that salvation is entirely of God’s mercy and compassion. It is not based on the decision or will of the sinner, nor how well he runs the race of life, running by his own wisdom and determination. It is of God who shows mercy.

What is God purpose then? And why is it important to believe in this truth of the doctrine of election? It is important so that you will grow up into maturity in Christ, and be able to truly share in the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings as it says in Philippians 3: 10. The Christian life is not a matter of doing what is right by your own wisdom and power. It is about learning to understand God’s purpose for your life according to the grace which He gives to you. His purpose is that you would become holy and be without blame before Him. Holiness is living unto God and not unto the world, your flesh, or the Devil. Being blameless is when you are living your life fearing God and turning away from evil, so that both men and the Devil know that no charge of hypocrisy or inconsistency in relation to doing God’s will can be laid at your doorstep and prove you to be an insincere believer. Remember Job? In Job chapter 1, verse 8, the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?”

That is what God’s purpose in election is; to make every believer in Christ into a holy and blameless person. Not sinless in this life, but blameless. God’s purpose in election is that you will be a sincere believer, and be willing to suffer with Christ, according to the grace that He gives you, to prove that it is so. You are willing to suffer at the hands of the Devil and persecuting people, or people who do not understand who turn against you, for the word’s sake. Turn with me over to 2nd Timothy 1: 8-12. “Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been

revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.” “For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.”

Do you see what Paul is communicating to us here? The gospel is something worth suffering for, when that suffering is accompanied by the power and purpose of God. This is what Paul wants us to join with him in doing; learning to suffer for the forward progress of the gospel and the truth of the word of God. God has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us before time began. Both the purpose and the grace to be saved were given in the decree of election. Grace was there purposed in the Covenant of Redemption before time began.

God in that eternal covenant predestined every true Christian to adoption to sons and daughters; those whom He chose in eternity, He would call them to himself in due time during their life, and having adopted them, He would give to them eternal life and all the blessings of salvation in the wonderful order that He bestows them. He draws them to Himself based upon the everlasting love which He has for them. He calls them through the preaching and sharing of the truth of the gospel of who Christ is in His Person; the Son of God, and the only Mediator between God and men. He then causes them to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He then gives them the Holy Spirit to dwell in their hearts forever, He seals them with His Holy Spirit and then He places them in His own family, the Church, to learn and grow up into Christ in the family of God.

3rd – One of the main reasons that this doctrine of election has been revealed to us is so that we might praise God for the glory of His grace.

“To the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.” What we learn from this phrase is that God’s grace, being a very precious thing, it is therefore a very praiseworthy thing. Notice the wording? To the praise of the glory of His grace. The grace of God; both the God which God imputes to the believer in their legal standing before God which is perfect, and the imparted grace of God by which the believer is transformed by the Spirit of God’s working in their heart, both of these aspects of grace ought to be something that you praise God for on a regular on-going basis. Because we need to be thankful and to praise God for what Christ has already done, finishing and accomplishing the work of redemption, we are complete in Him. We are seen by God as clothed in Christ’s righteousness, wrapped in a robe of His righteousness. And because of that excellent and perfect work, we as believers in Him stand perfect and complete in the sight of God. He calls us His saints. He sees us as His holy ones. Christ’s perfect atonement justifies us in the sight of God, and is a covering for all of God’s work in our on-going progressive sanctification as well. How we ought to praise Him for the glory of this grace.

I think that we often think of praising God for our justification and our having come to Christ. That is good. But we should also be praising God for the glory of His grace in sanctification. I have been trying to teach you, over the past years, that we need to think of grace also as encompassing all the acts of our obedience; in that, we are able to do these things, not in our own power and strength, but by the power and strength of Christ. Yes, we have the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is within us, but we must not take that for granted; as though somehow the Holy Spirit does not help us at many, many points in our obedience to God. So in justification God calls us His saints. He clothes us in Christ’s righteousness and we are wrapped in a robe of His righteousness. And God sees us that way; accepted and acceptable; beautiful even, in the Beloved. He sees us as His holy ones. And Christ’s perfect atonement justifies in the sight of God, and is a covering for all of God’s work, in on on-going progressive sanctification as well.

But then we ought to praise God for the glory of His manifold grace in our being made progressively holy in our speech and conduct as we learn to live our lives to Him. There are many aspects of grace, in our being made progressively holy in our speech and conduct as we learn to live our life to Him, which we ought to praise God for. Will you praise God for the providential situations that God brings you into; leads you into, so that you will become a person who is more obedient to Him? You see, I think that sometimes we mistakenly think that because of justification that there isn't progress that needs to take place in us. But all of the progress that is taking place, is taking place by grace, and our responding to that truth and grace in obedience to the word of God. We really are being changed, and we are really being transformed, day by day, from one degree of glory to another by the Spirit of God.

2nd Corinthians 3: 17 and 18 – “Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Liberty, freedom, to do what? Freedom to obey God's holy word. But the process is very interesting here, is it not? It says in verse 16, when one turns to Christ the veil which lies on a person's heart, which conceals the glory of Christ is taken away. Their blindness, as it says in verse 14, is taken away, and so freedom comes to do what God says. But there is a process of transformation. And it is spoken of here, as when the veil is removed, what happens? What does our face do, in verse 18? It beholds the glory of the Lord and shines like Moses' did, not with visible glory, but with the inner glory of all the grace which Christ came to bring to us in our salvation; both in justification and in our progressive sanctification.

When one turns to the Lord, the veil, the spiritual blindness is taken away. We all with unveiled face behold as in a mirror, the glory of Christ, and are being transformed. Just as we look in a mirror we look at the glory of Christ, and then that glory is seen by us, and responded to by us, through and by means of grace. And when that happens, we are actually being transformed, in our mind and heart by the truth, and the Spirit's working in our mind and heart in relation to faith, obedience, the truth of His word, and all the different aspects of God's providence leading us into a greater obedience, greater holiness, and greater righteousness. In terms of justification it is all complete, and we are accepted in the Beloved. There are no degrees in that. You are either justified or you are not. But when you are justified you are holy in His sight, but you are also becoming more holy and righteous. Not that, in terms of Christ's righteousness, anything is needed to be added, because honestly you can't add anything to that. But in terms of your own righteousness, something is needed.

And that is why Jesus says, “Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:20) Because you have to be changed, you have to be born again, you have to be transformed by grace, and then you are a saved person. A person is not saved without justification or sanctification. But they have to be together. You should not confuse them, but they relate to each other, and they are very important to understand in connection with each other. Let me close by asking you this question: Do you praise God for the glory of His grace; that God has made you accepted in the Beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ? And not only accepted, but that you are being made holy; you who are already called holy and righteous because you are justified? If this is so, let us be a people who often praises God for the glory, the excellence, of His grace, and learn to walk worthy of the calling with which He has called us.

