



# Ephesians

(For access to all available commentaries and sermons of Charlie's click [HERE](#))

**...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, Ephesians 1:4**

The words here can be viewed in several ways. One view negates the thought of free-will in man, as if God has made a decision to choose specific individuals regardless of whether they do anything or not.

This is a *monergistic* view which basically looks at all things as directed by God to an ultimate end in such a way that there is no need to “receive” Jesus; there is no need to evangelize others; there is no need to anticipate that the things we do will affect our eternal destiny in any way. It is basically God’s plan being executed by automatons.

The other view is a *synergistic* view which says that the free-will of man is included in God’s purposes of election; that man is accountable for the actions and decisions he makes; and that receiving Christ is an active part of the redemptive process. The words of Charles Ellicott help define which view is correct (underlining added) –

“The eternal election of God is inseparably connected with the blessing of the Spirit. This passage stands alone in St. Paul’s Epistles in its use of this word ‘chosen’ in connection with God’s eternal purpose, ‘before the foundation of the world’—a phrase only applied elsewhere to the eternal communion of the Son with the Father (John 17:24), and to the foreordaining of His sacrifice in the divine counsels (1 Peter 1:20). The word “chosen” itself is used by our Lord of His choice of the Apostles (John 6:70; John 13:18; John 15:16-19); but in one case with the significant addition, ‘one of you is a devil,’ showing that the election was not final. It is similarly used in the Acts (Acts 1:2; Acts 1:24; Acts 6:5; Acts 15:7; Acts 15:22; Acts 15:25) of His choice

or the choice of the Apostles; and once (Acts 13:7) of the national election of Israel. In 1 Corinthians 1:27-28 (the only other place where it is used by St. Paul), and in James 2:5 it refers to choice of men by God's calling in this world. Clearly in all these cases it is applied to the election of men to privilege by an act of God's mercy here. In this passage, on the contrary, the whole reference is to the election "in Christ," by the foreknowledge of God, of those who should hereafter be made His members. From this examination of Scriptural usage it is clear that the visible election to privilege is constantly and invariably urged upon men; the election in God's eternal counsels only dwelt upon in passages which (like this or Romans 9, 11) have to ascend in thought to the fountain-head of all being in God's mysterious will. It will be observed that even here it clearly refers to all members of the Church, without distinction."

From this study, we see that the meaning of God's predestination, or choosing us, "in Him before the foundation of the world" speaks of an overall plan for the redemption of man, not the individual details of the plan. In other words, God would do something in the realm of space, time, and matter which He created, and which would bring about the redemption of the creatures He knew would fall from His favor. The plan was laid out and ordained before the creation of anything that existed, and that plan includes God's petitioning of men to turn back to Him voluntarily; the overall plan includes human free-will. This doesn't mean He doesn't know what choices we will make, but it allows for free-will from a human perspective.

In this we see that the details of that overall plan would come by the individual actions of man within the larger concept of "choosing" the elect. In the plan are set parameters which included "that we should be holy and without blame before Him." These words show us the object of the overall plan of divine election. They imply a synergistic cooperation between the Redeemer and the redeemed. Because of the fall, man is inherently unholy and unrighteous. However, in coming to Christ, man is justified before God. From that point we are to strive toward holiness so that we may be presented to God in holiness (see Romans 12:1).

Albert Barnes provides the following concerning the responsibilities of the elect –

"The tendency among people has always been to abuse the doctrine of predestination and election; to lead people to say that if all things are fixed there is no need of effort; that if God has an eternal plan, no matter how people live, they will be saved if he has elected them, and that at all events they cannot change that plan, and they may as well enjoy life by indulgence in sin. The apostle Paul held no such view of the doctrine of predestination. In his apprehension it is a doctrine suited to excite the gratitude of Christians, and the whole tendency and design of the doctrine, according to him, is to make people holy, and without blame before God in love."

God's plan neither directs nor chooses individual salvation apart from the giving of Christ (which in reality is what a monergistic view of salvation implies), nor does it direct individual holiness apart from the process of sanctification, of which the individual clearly participates. If

God chose the elect even prior to the fall, then Christ's work loses its significance. Such ideas conflict with the entire tenor of Scripture and are based on a faulty view of the overall plan. God's plan does not negate free-will. Instead God's plan relies on free-will; it anticipates it; it expects it.

And all of this from God is "in love." The final two words of the verse show us the nature of God's heart toward the objects of the plan. God would create in love. God knew that man would turn away from Him, but in love He devised His plan even before that occurred; even as He determined to create. Man did fall, and in love God continued with the plan of redemption for man; He chose to send Jesus. There is no other plan because the plan is based on the eternal counsel of God even before creation. Therefore, the use of the words "chose us" indicates all those who would be receptive to the plan, executed in love, which was devised in love by God who is love.

Life application: You may choose to accept this analysis of the doctrine of election or you may reject it. That is your choice. The important point is that as long as you choose to receive Jesus Christ, you will be saved. If you don't you will not be saved. Choose wisely.

**...having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, Ephesians 1:5**

As this is one long continued thought, let us review the last verse together with this one –

“...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, <sup>5</sup> having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will...”

Paul said that God “chose us” in the previous verse, and now he notes that this choice includes “having predestined us to adoption as sons.” The question is, “What exactly does the ‘predestination’ mean; when did it occur and by what means?”

There are several possibilities, three of which should be considered. Before doing so, it needs to be understood that God does not think either syllogistically (meaning He does not make deductions based on facts), nor does He think discursively (meaning going from thought to thought in a random manner as we often do). God knows everything immediately and intuitively. As He is outside of time, then there can be no time associated with the mind of God. Those (and other such) types of thinking imply the passage of time.

As God doesn't think things through in a pattern, our possibilities are only a reference for us to consider. They do not reflect the actual way that God predestined us, but they are laid out in sequence because everything that pertains to our predestination has occurred in time; in the process of redemptive history. Understanding this, the options we will look at are:

God “predestined” those for salvation from a point in time even before the fall of man. God, in essence, said, “I will choose these people and none other.” There is no act of the will on the part of the elect, but God willed them for salvation or condemnation from even before the fall. If this is so, then it means that God actually created all the others *for destruction* as a part of His active plan. In this view, He is saying, “I have created some to go to hell.” This crazy, unbiblical view is termed “hyper-Calvinism.”

God “predestined” those for salvation from a point after the fall of man, but before the point in time when He determined to correct the fall of man by sending Jesus. There is no act of the will on the part of the elect, but God willed each for salvation or condemnation from after the fall. He then decided to send Jesus to redeem those He chose. If this is so, then God selected those He chose for salvation and simply left all the others out of His plan. He ignored their fallen state and said, “They can go to hell. They are not a part of my redemptive plan.” This unscriptural view falls under the general teachings of modern Calvinism.

God “predestined” those for salvation after both the fall and the plan to fix the fall. This would mean that He says, “I knew that this would happen and I am going to fix this problem by sending Jesus. Anyone who calls on Him will be saved. My plan of redemption is one of ‘choosing’ those who are willing to believe, by faith, that I am a rewarder of those who diligently seek Me.” In this is seen the truth of John 3:16 – “...God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” He saw there was a problem; resolved to fix the problem; and sent Jesus on His mission to fix the problem.

The contents of Scripture clearly lay out that God allows man free-will. As this is so, the predestination of man falls into the third category. God “predestined us to adoption as sons” through a plan which reveals His love for His creatures, and yet an allowance for those creatures to willingly accept or reject Him is granted. And this is done “by Jesus Christ” and “to Himself.”

It is through the work of Jesus Christ that God has accomplished His work of predestination. It is the means by which man can and must be saved. As this is so, then it can be the only means by which this may come about; God has no other plan because God is God. Thus, the entire plan is “according to the good pleasure of His will.” This term doesn’t indicate merely a sense of a friendly feeling, but rather that it is what is pleasing to Him.

As has already been noted above from Hebrews 11:6, but which will be cited in its entirety, it is “faith” which is pleasing to God. The entire body of Scripture points to this –

“But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” Hebrews 11:6

What kind of nutty thinking would state that this faith is not of free-will? Why would it please God to make a being that was forced to believe that He existed in order to be saved? That is as nutty as a tennis puck. Rather, God instilled in man free-will. He also set the parameters by which that free-will would be pleasing to Him. When the free-will is in accord with those parameters, God is pleased with that.

This is the proper understanding of what God has done within the stream of time in which we exist. Again, as noted above though, God doesn't actually think in the way that is presented, but His thoughts are revealed to us in one of those ways as the stream of time, which He created, unfolds.

Life application: Where is God glorified in creating automatons that simply do what He wills? Other than reveling in something that He didn't even need to create in order to get exactly the same effect as if He did, He is not so glorified in any way. Rather, in creating free-willed sentient beings who willingly accept His offer of Jesus Christ, He is truly glorified. From that acceptance, He can then fellowship with those beings, redeemed by the blood of His Son, for all eternity