

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 3-30-14 PM NOTES
"WE ARE CHOSEN, PREDESTINED, AND ACCEPTED"
EPHESIANS 1:4-6
#2 in Series, "The Wealth, Walk, and Warfare of the Christian"

"[Election is] a great and profoundly mysterious subject."

—Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Acts 2:21b (NKJV) "...whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

"The mystery of divine sovereignty and human responsibility will never be solved in this life. Both are taught in the Bible (John 6:37). Both are true, and both are essential."

—Warren Weirsbe

"A God so small that He can always be understood is too small to be worshipped."

—Evelyn Underhill

Romans 8:28 (NKJV) "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose."

Romans 8:29 (NKJV) "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."

1 Thessalonians 1:2-4 (NKJV) "²We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers...⁴ knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God."

2 Thessalonians 2:13 (NKJV) "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth."

Acts 18:10 (NKJV) "for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."

I. We Are Chosen (v. 4)

Jonah 2:9 (NKJV) "...Salvation *is* of the Lord."

Matthew 11:28 (NKJV) "**Come to Me**, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Revelation 22:17 (NKJV) "And the Spirit and the bride say, '**Come!**' And let him who hears say, '**Come!**' And let him who thirsts **come**. Whoever desires, **let him take** the water of life freely."

Matthew 23:37 (NKJV) "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but **you were not willing!**"

2 Timothy 2:10 (NKJV) "Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."

1 Peter 1:19 (NKJV) "but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

II. We Are Predestined (v. 5)

Acts 4:28 (NASB) "to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose **predestined** to occur."

Romans 8:29-30 (NASB) “²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also **predestined** to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰ and these whom He **predestined**, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”

1 Corinthians 2:7 (NASB) “but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God **predestined** before the ages to our glory.”

Ephesians 1:11 (NASB) “also we have obtained an inheritance, having been **predestined** according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.”

Generally, though there are exceptions, election refers to people and predestination refers to God's purposes.

Mark 13:27 (NKJV) “And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven.”

Romans 8:33 (NKJV) “Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? *It is* God who justifies.”

Colossians 3:12 (NKJV) “Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering.”

Acts 4:28 (NASB) “to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.”

Ephesians 1:11 (NASB) “...predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.”

A. The Motive of Predestination (v. 4b)

B. The Purpose of Predestination (v. 5a)

Romans 8:15 (NKJV) “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’”

“In the Roman world of the First Century AD, an adopted son was a son deliberately chosen by his adoptive father to perpetuate his name and inherit his estate; he was no whit inferior in status to a son born in the ordinary course of nature, and might well enjoy the father's affection more fully and reproduce the father's character more worthily.”

—F. F. Bruce

In Roman culture and the legal system, there were at least four consequences of being adopted:

1. The adopted person lost all ties with his old family.
2. The adopted one became an heir of his new father and a joint heir with the other siblings.
3. The adopted person's past was forgotten, his legal debts cancelled, and he was given a new name.
4. The adoption was a permanent transaction; it could never be reversed.

III. We Are Accepted (v. 6)

Ephesians 1:6 (NASB) “to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.”

Hebrews 12:6 (ESV) “For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”

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One of the reasons that I believe God has led me to preach through books or sections of books of the Bible is because there are some really hard passages that I wouldn't otherwise choose to preach from. This text (especially verses 4 and 5) is one of those passages. Election (being chosen by God) and predestination are difficult to understand and very hard for some people to accept. Two of the words in the commentaries used to describe these two closely related doctrines are “mystery” and “tension”. One of my favorite Bible commentators is Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Here is what he said about election: “[It is] a great and profoundly mysterious subject.” Here is a summary of the mystery. Those saved are saved because God chose them before the earth was ever created and predestined them to be adopted as sons, and yet no one is saved apart from hearing the Gospel and repenting of sin and savingly believing on Jesus Christ. The tension is between the truth that God is sovereign in salvation (in whom He chooses) and the truth that all of mankind is responsible for how they respond to the call of God in **Acts 2:21b (NKJV)** “...*whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved.*” We must be very careful to never get these truths out of balance. We don't like mysteries and tension when it comes to Bible doctrine. We like to get everything tied up in a little neat package with a bow on top. We like Bible truth to be fully understood and to be without any tension. Certainly the majority of the truths of Scripture fit that description, but there are some things that we just can't put together in our little puny minds. Warren Weirsbe said, “The mystery of divine sovereignty and human responsibility will never be solved in this life. Both are taught in the Bible (John 6:37). Both are true, and both are essential.” [Warren Weirsbe, *Be Rich*, page 18]. I remember several years ago after I had preached on this subject that a man made an appointment and sat in my office and said something like this: “I have got to get this election and man's responsibility thing figured out! I can't sleep at night; I can't stop thinking about it; I have to be able to put it together.” The best I can remember, I told him that it was in reality pride to think he had to “figure everything out”. God is way bigger than we are and there will always be mysteries and tensions. Evelyn Underhill said, “A God so small that He can always be understood is too small to be worshipped.” We have a wise and powerful God and there will always be things that we can't figure out about Him and His ways.

While it is natural that Christians would disagree over such a mysterious doctrine, what is sad is that there is so much division over these truths. God revealed these truths about election and predestination to be a great blessing to us. These truths are given to us for our comfort. Paul assures the Romans who were undergoing many trials in **Romans 8:28 (NKJV)** “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.” In the next verse he tells them the reason that they can be assured that God is working all things together for their good. **Romans 8:29 (NKJV)** “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” Election and predestination are revealed to comfort us. Another purpose for God revealing these difficult doctrines is that they should give us a reason to praise and thank and glorify God. After proclaiming the glorious truths of election and predestination in Ephesians 1:4-5, look what **Ephesians 1:6a (NKJV)** says: “to the praise of the glory of His grace...” Listen to **1 Thessalonians 1:2, 4 (NKJV)** “² We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers. ⁴ ...knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.” **2 Thessalonians 2:13 (NKJV)** “But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning **chose you** for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.” When Paul was discouraged in Corinth, the Lord encouraged him by coming to him saying in **Acts 18:10 (NKJV)** “for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city.” The Lord was not saying that there were many Christians there, because there were not. He was saying that there were many elect there and Paul just needed to keep sharing the Gospel because he would

see some response. The doctrine of election is not a killer of evangelism and missions; it is a motivator of evangelism and missions. When we go into often dangerous areas to share the Gospel with unreached people groups, we are encouraged and comforted because we believe God has many people there – people He has chosen and is calling to Himself and they will come when they hear the Gospel. [Much of the preceding paragraph was taken from Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Pages 673-674].

I. We Are Chosen in Him (V4)

The “all spiritual blessings in heavenly places” in verse 3, are tied in to God’s election. It is because of our election that these spiritual blessings in the heavenly places are ours. When I look out at the congregation, I see people who are totally changed from when I first met them. Their transformation came about when they became a Christian. What led them to become a Christian? Why has their life been made new and they see everything differently? Our answer may be that they heard the Gospel and repented of their sin and totally trusted in Jesus Christ. That is of course a partial explanation of the transformation of their life, but Paul goes back further than that. Some would say, “It started when the Holy Spirit convicted them of their sin and of the truth of the Gospel.” That was certainly a major part of what brought them to where they are today, but Paul goes back even further. Paul goes back into eternity past, before God even created the Heavens and the earth and there in the distant past, God chose that person. That is the first cause of the transformation in their life. It started with God and His choice. In our doctrine of salvation, we must start with God and not man. The Bible is clear in **Jonah 2:9 (NKJV)** “...Salvation *is* of the Lord.”

The word “chose” in verse 4 is in the aorist tense and the middle voice. It indicates something that God did in the past and it was totally His independent choice. The grammar indicates that God chose by Himself and for Himself. Those who enjoy all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places do so because of God choosing them. They have nothing to boast about; they can only glory in His grace. Did they choose to repent and believe the Gospel? Absolutely they did! But they were able to see their condition and recognize the hope of the Gospel because the Holy Spirit opened their blinded eyes and convicted them of their condition and made the cross real to them. Do you see the tension of those truths? We who are saved can rejoice in it, but we can’t boast in ourselves because it was God who was taking the initiative even back before the earth was formed and choosing them for Himself. That makes me want to shout “Hallelujah” and pray “Lord help me to understand that” at the same time.

As we focus on this doctrine of election (God choosing us) let me dispel a misconception many have. [Much of this section is compiled from Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, pages 674-676]. Election is not fatalism. By fatalism I am speaking of a system where everything is predetermined. Much of Islam is characterized by fatalism. In fatalism, no matter what you do, everything is going to turn out in some predetermined way. That bears no resemblance to biblical Christianity. We have a will with which we can choose. The will of a lost person is in bondage to sin, but we still can make choices. After salvation, we have a “freed” will that can choose to obey or disobey God. Our relationship with God is not some mechanistic impersonal relationship, but a personal relationship with a personal God. When speaking of our response to the Gospel, Scripture views us not as robots, but persons who are called to respond to a God who loves us. Listen to a few of the calls of Scripture: **Matthew 11:28 (NKJV)** Jesus says, “**Come** to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” **Revelation 22:17 (NKJV)** “And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘**Come!**’ And let him who hears say, ‘**Come!**’ And let him who thirsts **come**. Whoever desires, **let him take** the water of life freely.” That doesn’t sound like fatalism. **Matthew 23:37 (NKJV)** Jesus in grief says, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but **you were not willing!**” My point is that the fact that God chose us does not mean that life is fatalistic and every detail is predetermined. Since we do not know who the elect are, we are to proclaim the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). If someone chooses to receive Christ and they become His disciple and give evidence by a lifestyle of walking with Him, we can assume that they are elect. If they don’t receive the Gospel that doesn’t mean that they are not elect; it may just be that God has not yet

opened their eyes that are blinded, the Spirit of God has not yet fully convicted them (Acts 9:15), and the Father has not yet drawn them to Christ. For these we continue to pray.

Another misconception about election is that since God has chosen those to save before the foundation of the earth, evangelism and missions are optional. That is not true. As we saw earlier, election makes sharing the Gospel more hopeful because we know that God has His people. Also, God who has chosen those whom He will save, has also chosen the means through which the lost will be saved, and it is through the proclamation of the Gospel. The Apostle Paul endured unimaginable suffering that the Gospel would get to the elect. Keep in mind that he didn't know who the elect were. **2 Timothy 2:10 (NKJV)** "Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." God has commanded us to go into all the world and make disciples, and we go with the motive of glorifying Him and bringing to the Lord Jesus the reward of His suffering on Calvary's cross.

Notice in verse 4 why God, before the creation of the earth, chose those who would be saved. **Ephesians 1:4b (NKJV)** "... that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" [most translators believe that the phrase "in love" goes with verse 5. The chapter and verse divisions weren't put in until several hundred years after the New Testament was written]. All too often we think that we were chosen so that we could go to Heaven. That is one result of being chosen, but the main reason is that we could be "holy and without blame before Him". The word translated "without blame" means without blemish or spot. **1 Peter 1:19 (NKJV)** tells us that we were saved, "...with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." In Christ, those worthy of blame have become blameless in Christ. He who was without spot or blemish became sin for us and took the wrath of God in order that we, in Him, could stand before God in Christ's righteousness without spot or blemish. Hallelujah! In Christ we stand holy and without blame. While we still live in these bodies of flesh struggling with that power called sin that dwells in our members (Romans 7:23), our task is to live out that holy and blameless position in Christ in our daily walk. The Christian life is living out in practice who and what we are in our position in Christ.

II. We Are Predestined (V5)

The word "predestined" scares people to death. I have heard dedicated Christians say, "I don't believe in predestination". If you believe the Bible, you don't have that option! You may disagree with someone's interpretation of what predestined means, but if you believe the Bible, you have to believe in predestination. **Acts 4:28 (NASB)** "to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose **predestined** to occur." **Romans 8:29-30 (NASB)** "²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also **predestined** to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰ and these whom He **predestined**, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified." **1 Corinthians 2:7 (NASB)** "but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God **predestined** before the ages to our glory". **Ephesians 1:11 (NASB)** "also we have obtained an inheritance, having been **predestined** according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will". I repeat: If you believe the Bible, you do not have the option of saying that you do not believe in predestination! The word translated "predestination" literally means, "to mark out boundaries or limits beforehand." When you begin to understand this word, it is not something to fear, but to embrace. Predestination and election are not synonyms, but they are very close. Generally, though there are exceptions, election refers to people and predestination refers to God's purposes. Here are some examples. **Mark 13:27 (NKJV)** "And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven." The focus is on the persons who are elect. **Romans 8:33 (NKJV)** "Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? *It is* God who justifies." The focus is persons. **Colossians 3:12 (NKJV)** "Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering". The subject is persons. Look back at some of the verses dealing with predestination. **Acts 4:28 (NASB)** "...Your purpose predestined to occur." **Romans 8:29** refers to persons, but the emphasis is God's purpose for the saved –

to be conformed to the image of His Son”. **Romans 8:30** is also speaking of persons, but the context is the process of salvation. **Ephesians 1:11 (NASB)** “...predestined according to His purpose...”

A. The Motive of Predestination (V4b)

As I stated earlier, many Bible scholars think that the phrase “in Love” fits better with verse 5. The ultimate motive for everything God does is His glory, but the further motive in God’s predestining work is His love for those He has chosen. The motive of God in predestining the elect to adoption as sons is because of His love. There is nothing other than love that could have compelled God to choose to save some and adopt them. He certainly wasn’t motivated by justice or our worth. It was His love. Do you see how foolish it is to fear or hate the word “predestination”?

B. The Purpose of His Predestination (V5a)

When we savingly believe on Jesus Christ, we become children of God. **Romans 8:15 (NKJV)** “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’” “Abba” was the Aramaic word for father, and it was perhaps a little more endearing than the Greek word for Father. Our relationship is not characterized by the fearful response of a slave to his master, but by the love of a son for his Father. Let’s examine this thing called adoption. What Paul is referring to is the Roman customs and laws regarding adoption. The Jews had no concept like this of adoption. New Testament scholar F. F. Bruce described the customs of Rome regarding adoption: “In the Roman world of the First Century AD an adopted son was a son deliberately chosen by his adoptive father to perpetuate his name and inherit his estate; he was no whit inferior in status to a son born in the ordinary course of nature, and might well enjoy the father’s affection more fully and reproduce the father’s character more worthily” [Quoted in John Stott, “Romans”, Page 232]. To summarize, in a Roman adoption, the one adopted was chosen by the father to receive a name and an inheritance. When we say that we have been adopted by the Father, we are saying that He chose us to bear His name and to be His heir.

In Roman culture and the legal system, there were at least four consequences of being adopted:

1. The adopted person lost all ties with his old family.
2. The adopted one became an heir of his new father and a joint heir with the other siblings.
3. The adopted person’s past was forgotten, his legal debts cancelled, and he was given a new name.
4. The adoption was a permanent transaction; it could never be reversed.

Notice why God predestined and adopted us. It was simply according to the good pleasure of His will. I like the NIV here: **Ephesians 1:5b (NIV)** “...in accordance with his pleasure and will”. That really needs no comment; He is God. **Psalms 115:3 (NKJV)** “But our God *is* in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.”

III. We Are Accepted (V6)

This verse is translated differently in different translations. **Ephesians 1:6 (NASB)** “to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.” I think that the NKJV is accurate even though the differences aren’t as great as they appear on the surface. The main focus of the verse is Paul’s being overwhelmed with such amazing grace bestowed on Christians. We have been chosen; we stand holy and blameless before a perfectly holy God in Christ; and in love we have been predestined to adoption as full grown sons into God’s family. The response of Paul is to give glory to God for His amazing grace that has brought all this about. It is this choice of us in Christ, this being made “holy and without blame” because we are in Christ, and our adoption as sons that makes us acceptable to God. Because we have been identified with Christ, baptized into Christ, and live in union with Christ (the Beloved) that God can accept us. We tend to accept people based on their performance and we make a false assumption that God also has a performance based acceptance. God, however, is not on a performance based acceptance; God is on a Jesus based acceptance. Only Jesus Christ has acceptance by the Father. The only way we can be accepted is to be in Christ. This is a liberating truth! If you are in Christ, the God who created all that is accepts you as His child and since your works didn’t gain your

acceptance, your lack of works can't take it away. Quit trying to earn God's acceptance. It is a gift of His grace in His son.

Let me hasten to add that there is a huge difference between God's acceptance and God's approval. While acceptance cannot be taken away, approval can. Our sin (which robs us of His approval) can't take us out of Christ and cancel our adoption. When we sin and refuse to repent and confess our sin, God our Father disciplines us like an earthly father disciplines His child. **Hebrews 12:6 (ESV)** "For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." Just as you don't cease being your earthly father's child when he disciplines you, neither do you cease being your Heavenly Father's child when He disciplines you.

CONCLUSION

Can you see why Paul gets carried away with God's grace? It is by grace that we are chosen. It is by grace that we are made holy and blameless before God because we are in Christ; it is by grace that we are adopted into God's family; it is by grace that we are totally and irrevocably accepted by the Father because we are in Christ. I must join Paul in saying "To the praise of the glory of His grace".