

EPHESIANS 1:4a
The Wonderful Work of Salvation
Message 9, December 20, 1998

Intro: In Ephesians 1:4 we meet the doctrine of election. Here is a doctrine over which Christians have battled for almost 2000 years. It has to do with what we know as Calvinism and Arminianism. It has to do with how God chose us before the foundation of the world. You see, the doctrine of election takes us into eternity past. It takes us back in time over 6000 years. It takes us back to before the world of mankind was in existence. It takes us back to the beginning of God's plan for man, even before He created man.

What I want to do this morning is see if we can discover why God created. Why did God create angels? Why did He create them when He must have known they would sin? And why did He create man? Without doubt, God knew man would sin and the majority of mankind would ultimately end up in hell. Furthermore, why did God not destroy the devil when he sinned?

I debated whether I should speak on this topic because the Bible only gives us clues regarding the questions we have asked. I have decided to speak on this matter, trusting it will give us a greater appreciation for Ephesians 1:3-14. On the back of your outlines you will notice a list of elements in salvation covered in Ephesians 1:3-14. (Explain list)

Now I would like to see how many of you have ever looked at the stars, or the world, or yourself and wondered why God made everything? I wonder how many of you have pondered the purpose of it all? If you look at our list of events in salvation you will notice that it begins in eternity past. Before God created the heavens and the earth He had already decided to create man. He had already chosen whom He would ultimately take to glory and who would go to hell. I wonder how many of you have ever wondered about this: If God knows everything and He knew in eternity past that I would or would not accept Jesus Christ then what choice do I have?

This morning I want to deal with some of those questions. I think it will help us answer the rest of these questions when we come to it in the doctrine of election and

predestination, which are the next matters we will deal with in Ephesians 1:4 and 5.

You will remain careful to remember that some of this is only speculation. What I am giving you today is what I think.

b. God chose us in Christ (1:4)

Introduction:

Now look at Ephesians 1:4. The text says God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. He elected us. Why? What is the purpose of man that makes it worth it for God to let millions of people go to hell with millions of angels? I trust you are ready to put your thinking caps on. This message will not be easy to convey and thus hard to understand unless you stay right with me.

The first question in our Catechism asks this question: What is the chief aim of man? That is, what is God's main purpose for man? The Catechism answers thus: To live in God's fellowship, enjoy His favor and obtain eternal happiness hereafter. I think the Westminster Shorter Catechism is even more precise. It says man's chief end or purpose is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Now there certainly is a Scriptural basis for that view, though the Scriptures do not mention that purpose often. I think that from that we can reason back and understand why God created angels. We need to consider Revelation 4:11 here which says, "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created."

Now let me explain *glory* to you. I have asked this question in many places and I would like to ask it here. How many of you have ever made

something, something you were proud of? Something that turned out as well or even better than you expected; and you were very happy with it? Say, like sewing a dress, building something, coloring a picture etc... How many of you? Now after it was all finished and you had a sense of satisfaction how many of you wanted to tell someone or show someone what you did? Can you remember how you felt when they said, "Wow. Amazing"? At that moment when admiration is sparked in that other person and they recognize some good quality in you that surprised them, that is glory.

Now glory is appropriate, and being fulfilled with what you accomplished is proper. Only when you start to think you are above others, or better than others does it become sin. So glory happens any time some good quality in one person is revealed to another and stirs admiration in the beholder. The exact opposite is shame. I have built some things I did not want anyone to see. When others see it and they say, "Ugh, who made that" that is the moment of shame.

Now come with me to eternity past. Come with me to the time before man was created. Come with me to before angels were created. And here we are. Only One Person is in existence. It is the Triune God. There must have been a time like that. Now consider this God. He is good. He is holy. He is love. He is everything desirable a person could possibly imagine. But the Triune God is alone. There is no one but Himself to appreciate all He is. He simply exists alone. It is like accomplishing something great with nobody to appreciate it!

Now here is my speculation. God said, "I want to make some being who is a personal being. Someone who can appreciate all I am. I want to create some being who will glorify and honor me." And so God created angels. Angels, like man, are free moral agents and created by God. They have the power to reason and choose. How do I know angels are free moral agents?

Because they could choose to disobey God and fall from their position. It is very important to realize that God did not make robots to worship and honor Him. You see, He could have made robots by the zillion who would just ascribe honor and glory to Him all the time. But let me show you how empty that would be. Let us say you wished to be a hockey star that everybody admired. And you wished for people hear people tell you how good you are at hockey. So, because you could not play hockey like Wayne Gretzky, not even as good as Flury, you pay a bunch of people to tell others how good you are. And then you record that and every time you want some glory you turn on the recording. Quite fulfilling don't you think? Well that's what worshipping robots would have been like to God.

Now, since God made angels to worship and glorify Him, it had to be of their own free will, otherwise it would have been empty and useless. But it had to also allow the angels not to glorify and worship Him. The angel had to be capable of sinning, which is missing the mark of what God made them for. It had to be an actual possibility or otherwise all the glory and honor was simply a recording. Well, the Bible tells us in two passages of that event. You see, there was one angel called Lucifer son of the morning. Here was an angel of angels. He is the anointed cherub that covers. And this angel decided he wanted the glory that belonged to God alone (Read Is. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:11-17). Now most theologians are agreed that here we have a window into eternity past, and a description of the fall of Satan.

And so, Lucifer, a free moral agent and a very high angel, probably the highest, fell into sin. We wonder why God did not destroy Satan right then and there. But first, remember that angels as well as people are free moral agents and they have endless existence. (Not eternal.) They must exist in one form or another forever. But consider the angels for a

moment. Let us say God had cast the angels that fell into sin, into hell right then and there. Would angels truly be free moral agents? Not really. If God had cast Satan and the angels who followed him, into hell as soon as they sinned the rest of the angels would no longer be free. They would have to worship God because the moment they stop, God would cast them into hell. They could say, "Some free moral agents we are. As soon as we seek a little glory for ourselves we get the axe."

Now consider God's dilemma. How can He punish fallen Lucifer and his fallen angels and still be worshipped and glorified by the other angels? He has to punish them because He is just. Here is my second bit of speculation. **I believe that is why he created man! That is why He made you and me! Through mankind he will justly be able to banish Satan and all his followers to hell forever and ever and still be worshipped and glorified by the will of free moral agents.** Man who trusts God by faith and lives by faith is God's greatest treasure.

There are a few verses in 1 Corinthians 6 that have greatly exercised my mind. (Read 6:1-3.) It is through man who lives by faith and walks by faith that God will some day judge all unsaved mankind and all the fallen angels. Think of this for a moment. In that time of judgement, before you will stand many unbelievers. Think of this. Some saint will judge Adolf Hitler. Some saint will judge people like Yassar Arafat, and Saddam Hussein. Before you will stand people who have been unfaithful in this life. Some unfaithful wife, some unfaithful husband. Some cheat. Some liar. Now you say, "I couldn't do that! I don't qualify." You will do that and you will qualify, if you are a born again believer and faithful. You will qualify because you lived by faith. Interestingly, Revelation 20:4, (if the pronouns refer to these judging believers, and I think they do) tells us judgement will

be committed to the believer by God and the believer will do the judging.

Come with me now to the future. We are going to go to heaven as it is during the tribulation time and see what is going on in heaven when you and I and all believers of the Church age will be there with the angels who did not follow Lucifer (Read Rev. 5:8-14). Now take a look at the final element of salvation on the back of your outline. Three times in this short passage we find God's ultimate aim in salvation, and that is ever existing to the praise of God's glory. God will accomplish His goal. Glory, Hallelujah!

Free will of man.

Now we are shortly going to enter into the great debate of Calvinism and Arminianism. It is before us in the text in verse four and we are not going to skirt around it. I am Arminian in theology with no apologies. Arminians believe in the free will of man. Calvinists say man has no free will. I say man can choose. The Calvinist says man cannot choose. And so, before we get into this whole matter I want to show from Scripture why I believe man has a free will.

First of all, God created man with a free will. In Genesis 2:16-17 the Scripture says, And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat of it, for in the day you eat of it you shall surely die." Now, there, very obviously man had a free will. And to this the Calvinist readily admits. But he says that once man sinned he no longer had a free will.

Well, we go to Joshua 24:15 to show man's free will is still in force long after the fall. Joshua instructs Israel with regard to their desire to worship false gods saying, "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve,

whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Going on to the NT Jesus said in Matthew 11:28, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest..." Now it is simply ludicrous, in my estimation; to command something that cannot be done. And if a person cannot choose, certainly he cannot come to Christ either.

God has created man with an awesome power. It is the power to reason and choose. The ability to choose was not lost after the fall. Actually it then became much more necessary than before. Everybody makes choices every day. It is innate within man to be able to choose. Man needs only to be presented with the options and the choice he can make. I know that our sinfulness heavily influences the choices we make but when presented with facts we have the capacity to choose. As a matter of fact, it is the only thing that makes us able to truly bring glory to God.

When man does not accept Christ it is not that he can't. It is that he won't. The condemnation lies in the fact that he can and won't. This seems to me such an elementary, fundamental truth, but it is battled tooth and nail by the Calvinists.

Concl: Well, in this somewhat introductory message to the beautiful passage before us, we have considered the possibility that God has created man for the purpose of being able to justly punish Satan and all his followers, while at the same time maintaining worship by free will. I believe the key principle through which God will accomplish all this is the principle of faith exercised in a free will. From God's side, the key word in salvation is grace. From man's side, the key word is faith. Faith is key in every aspect of salvation, and it must be exercised by free will.

After Lucifer fell and became Satan, God planned to create man. He had a plan to create free moral agents who could choose to follow Him or Satan. In His omniscience, He knew man would sin and follow Satan. And out of the fallen race of sinful man, God chose, way back in eternity past, certain individuals for His own glory.

In the next message we are going to see, whom He chose for His glory, when He chose them and on what basis His choice was made. The doctrine before us will be the doctrine of election.