

EPHESIANS 1:5a
The Wonderful Work of Salvation
Message 12, February 28, 1999

INTRO: I want to change the order of the words of our text just slightly. I have mentioned to you already that I believe that the words *in love* at the end of verse 4 belong to the following verse. The Greek language may differ from English in sentence structure. Our English sentence pattern is generally subject verb, or subject, verb then object. The Greek sentence has no such pattern. They would place first that which they wanted to stress. The reason why the words "in love" precede the verbal, "having predestined us" is, I believe, because stress is being placed on how, or the context in which God predestined us. He predestined us in love.

c. God predestined us in Christ (1:5-6)

-The meaning of predestination

It is our joyful task this morning to come to an understanding of the Biblical doctrine of predestination. It is an error, in my humble estimation, of many or most theologians to mix together the doctrines of election and predestination. When I teach the Bible doctrine course on salvation I teach them as two separate doctrines. It has happened on a number of occasions when I was teaching on predestination that students would take exception with my teaching, appealing to Romans chapter 9. My answer always is this, Romans chapter 9 does not deal with predestination. Only in one verse could there be any glimmer of predestination attached to Romans 9 and even there the word predestination is not used. So I tell students, "Sorry, wrong text." So my first point to you this morning is that predestination and election are two different doctrines, though closely related, especially in time.

The doctrine of election has to do with whom God chose in eternity past. The doctrine of predestination has to do with His plans for

those whom He chose. The Greek word in our text this morning is *proorizo*. The first part of the word is *pro*, meaning before. The second part is *horizo*, meaning to mark out. So it means to mark out beforehand. We get our word horizon from this word. The horizon marks out the contour of earth from where one is viewing it.

Permit me to continue my soapstone illustration. When I did my carving, I had chosen what I wanted to carve. Here is a loon. We bought this in Jasper, BC. When I got the soapstone, I decided to carve one like it. So I chose (doctrine of election) a piece of soapstone the right thickness from which to carve this loon. After I had chosen the stone which looked like the right size, I marked out the outline of the loon on it (doctrine of predestination).

Now let me tell you something that predestination does not mean. Predestination does not mean that your plans will materialize. There are two things that determine the final destiny of this soapstone. First, the one doing the carving. Now I can show you where my carving is not exactly like the loon I copied. The second area that can affect the outcome is the material used. You may take a look at my work if you like and you will find some faults. They are quite small, but nevertheless they are there. Now if there faults in those God has chosen, they are not the fault of workmanship, they are fault of the material. When I finished my carving, there were both faults of workmanship and faults of material. This is not pure soapstone. There are small hard rocks in the soapstone. This is a fault in the material and keeps the carved loon from ever fully being what it was predestined to.

-What we are predestined to

When God predestined us and began to work in us, there was no fault in workmanship. But I

tell you this morning, the material He has to work with has many faults. Let me show you this morning what God has predestined us to. Let me preface that with these statements: God never predestined *unbelievers* to anything! Furthermore, God has not predestined anyone to heaven or to hell before salvation actually takes place!

And what is the believer predestined to? Three things and three only, does the Bible say the believer is predestined to. The first is given to us in Ephesians 1:5. The believer has been predestined to adoption. There are some great truths in this doctrine which we will consider in a later message. Then in Ephesians 1:11-12, although speaking about the Jew, I think this passage tells us what God has planned for all believers. It is that we should be to the praise of His glory. Christians are to exist to the praise of God's glory. The third and last thing the believer is predestined to is found in Romans 8:29 where we are told that we have been predestined to be conformed into the image of God's Son.

Now look at my soapstone illustration again. Let us say this first bird represents the image of God's Son. This rough rock represents us at salvation. This bird I have carved pictures the outcome. I have mentioned earlier that predestination does not guarantee that the final result will be what the workman desires to accomplish. And so I pose a question for you this morning: God has predestined every believer to be conformed into the image of Christ. Does that mean every believer who goes to heaven became fully like Christ by the time he died?

1 Cor. 3:10-15; Those who lose rewards

1 Cor. 11:28-30; Those who die prematurely

1 John 2:28; Those who are ashamed before Him at His coming

Did these people go to heaven? Yes. Were they perfectly like Christ when they died? No. Had God intended for them to become fully like Christ? Yes. You see, predestination does not guarantee arrival. It simply tells us what God wishes to accomplish.

1) How God predestined us

I think it is now that the words, "in love" will come to us with greatest benefit and force. You see, when God predestined us He knew that many ugly lumps would need to be chisled off. God knew man would go through the deepest agony. God knew that many times the pain would be almost unbearable. God knew that if He would accomplish His will, and achieve what was best for man it would involve great pain. But God, who in His perfect character is love Personified, would rather bring about the pain in order to do what is best.

There is the false notion in our country nowadays that the loving parent does not discipline. The loving parent does not inflict pain. The loving parent explains and pardons and explains and pardons. The fruit of that philosophy has turned loose on our generation a bunch of rebels that we will probably never tame. The blindness in that view does not allow parents to see that true love disciplines. I want to tell you this morning that if the parents in our country would inflict enough pain in love we would see a big turn around. And yes, I do realize that we would not turn them all around. There is still the free moral will of man involved. Nevertheless, the infliction of pain in love is God's chosen method of curbing such things for God predestined us in love.

In the last years I have come to realize how great God's love for man is. I have seen this in tragic car accidents and in

deep painful suffering. Oh, the mystery of suffering! Oh the paradox of pain in love.

I want to take you to the first passage of Scripture that deals with this. It is Genesis 3:17 and it is found in these words, "Cursed is the ground for your sake." God knew right then and there, when man sinned, that apart from pain and problems man would merrily go to hell and never listen to Him at all. It is there that the love of God went to work in producing a climate in which pain would be a primary element. And if you will look around in the world today you will see pain in every place man is.

Ah, yes, God predestined us in love to be conformed to the image of His Son. I can tell you of a surity this morning that if it were not for pain and problems none of us would become Christians. And if it were not for pain and problems, none of us would be conformed to the image of God's Son.

In this world people say, "If there is a God and He is a God of love how can there be such things as famine and hunger and untold deaths?" But the very thing upon which they reason to deny God, is found the proof that there is a great and loving God.

God has predestined us to become like Jesus and it will only come through a life beset with difficulties. What circumstances are in your life right now that if you had the power to change things you would change those circumstances? It is right here that God has predestined you in love. Right there He wants you to find Him sufficient.

Henry Teichroeb, from Canadian Revival Fellowship gives the following little story in a tract, *The Committed Way*. "A

mother of two children was married before she came to know Christ. She then began to pray for her husband. Frequently she requested prayer for him in the small church she was attending. Soon there was much sympathy expressed to her about the state of her divided home. Her husband remained quiet and unresponsive to her attempts in persuading him to accept Christ. As years went by the situation remained unchanged. She was determined that he must become a Christian and she remained equally unresponsive. There were conflicts about the children's church attendance, his example as a father, and other matters. Bitterness toward each other slowly crept in until finally a thin veneer of courtesy was all that prevented complete family breakdown. One day this lady heard the testimonies of two women who had committed their husbands to the Lord. These testimonies so gripped her heart that she was constrained to confess to the Lord her self-centered way of attempting to persuade her husband to become a believer. She sought forgiveness and committed her husband to the Lord. Finally she said, "Lord I take my nads off this matter; I commit my husband to Thee; I give myself to Thee. Salvation is of the Lord, not of me. Use me as a channel, a vessel for Thy honor and glory." **A commitment was made.** The Lord was the custodian of the matter and she was free. She simply had asked the Lord to take charge. On her return home she asked her husband to forgive her for attempting to play God in his life. She wanted to love him for Jesus' sake. Several days passed and her husband was amazed at the change that had come over his wife. A new peace and joy had come into her life. Finally he asked if he might come to hear the message which had made such a change in her! Two nights later he literally bounded to the altar to give his life to the Lord and accepted Him as his personal Lord and

Savior. There was great rejoicing as a family was united in Christ!"

God has predestined us but He has done so in love.

CONCL: If you are here and you have not accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, there is no plan for your life that I know of. The Lord waits for one thing from you and one only, that is to receive Christ as your personal Savior. This morning, if you are here as a believer, you can rest assured that God has a plan for your life. This is taught us in predestination. God has the blueprint of what He wishes to achieve in your life. The end result of that plan is that you and I should be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. God wants you and us to come out being like His Son.

In my carving illustration there are two weaknesses. You see, there is the weakness of the workman. I cannot do a perfect job. This is not true in God's great work of salvation. God can do a perfect job. Secondly, in my illustration, I cannot make this think beautiful from the inside out. As a matter of fact, I cannot change the inside. But God can change us inside. All those ugly things we hide inside and others do not know they exist, God knows and can change.

But I want to tell you that God too is limited to what He can do with us. If we resist His will and refuse to trust Him, then even He cannot change us (Psalm 78:41).