



Over the past weeks we have been coming back and forth to Ephesians Chapter one. There are many connecting themes between Paul epistle and the words of Christ to John concerning the Ephesian Church. During the course of that first introductory message we observed in part the reason as to why Paul wrote this Epistle to the Ephesian Church. Paul's intention was to draw back the minds of believers who had been drawn away from the Gospel of Grace. You may recall that I said Two things occur when a believer is drawn away [becomes distracted] from the Gospel, (a) **Firstly** - he loses sight of the fact that there is peace between him and God (His knowledge of the relationship between him and God is affected), peace in the soul is lost. (b) **Secondly** - His faith in God wavers so much, to the point where he begins to question the workings of grace in his soul - Am I saved at all? Since that was happening at Ephesus that explains why we have strong allusions, profound statements that relate directly to Grace (unmerited favour) in Ch1, 'grace has chosen', 'Grace has elected', 'Grace has predestinated', 'Grace has adopted', 'Through Grace we have the forgiveness of sins.' Grace beats at the heart of this epistle. While Grace is a principal theme, there is present an overarching, altogether transcendent theme, 'the will of God.' Grace owes its formal entry into the history of mankind to 'The Will of God.'

In v1 Paul relates his own calling as an apostle and the calling of the Ephesian Believers as Saints, to the Will of God. That God's will is a gracious will (determination), is seen by how Paul relates the Will of God to all that the believer has received by way of Sovereign Grace. If you look at Ch1v4-5, Grace is seen to have chosen, made holy, predestinated, adopted sinners as His own children, that is grace, but it is all according to "The Good pleasure of His will." v8-9, It has pleased God in His wisdom and prudence to make known unto us the 'Mystery of His will.' v11 We have obtained a gracious inheritance in Christ, this Paul says is "According to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." All that these Ephesian Christians were was according to the Gracious will of God.

Our purpose in looking at this chapter is that we might have our hearts drawn more to Christ. As was with the Church at Ephesus there is much to draw away the Child of God from Christ, to cause his relationship to be affected and have us question the very work of Grace. Distraction and backsliding is remedied, growth in grace is encouraged by looking to Christ. Paul's focus is theological [theology], In John's Revelation, the content of the letter to the Church is primarily Christological [Christology].

1) His Will is Characterised by Absolute Sovereignty.

In v4-6 Paul reminds these Ephesian Christians of particular benefits, blessings that could only have their initiation (starting point) not with them but with God. In v4 he says that they have been Chosen in Christ before the Foundation of the World (Election), v5 they have been predestined to be a Holy people, and they have been adopted by God to be His own dear Children. Paul particularly selects those subjects to show to these Ephesians that they are the recipients of all these gracious manifestations of grace, because of Grace, they did not merit them, nor did they deserve them - Please Note, Paul states ye were Chosen in Him - that infers that their being in Christ was not the product of their own determination, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." He says, God has chosen you that 'ye should be holy...' - The inference being that if men are chosen to be holy, then they are not chosen because they are holy! God takes unholy men and makes them holy. They were predestined unto the adoption of Children, without predestination admission to the household of faith cannot take place.

All is attributed to "The Good pleasure of His will." The term 'Pleasure' can be rendered 'will' as in **Luke Ch2v14**, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will to all men." Applying that to Eph Ch1v5, we discover that what God does when He elects/chooses, predestinates, adopts sinners according to the good pleasure of His will, is God carrying out 'the will of His will.' God is free to 'will whatever He wills' as He sees fit in accordance with His own nature (**Matt Ch11v26**). Even so...for it seemed good in thy sight.

Our salvation is not a response on God's part to anything within or performed by us (man), but God being moved by His own good pleasure to graciously bestow salvation upon us. He is the God before whom "all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing, and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him what doest thou." **Daniel Ch4v35.** The will of God is irresistible, what He wills will come to fruition.

Paul by setting forth this glorious truth intended to strengthen these Christians, that God had of His own good pleasure effected their salvation, since that was the foundation of their redemption, those things that threatened their experiential relationship with God, could never alter or threaten the foundation of their actual faith relationship. God's sovereignty means that He is infinitely above all that would militate against your faith. God's sovereignty guarantees your perseverance as a Child of God. **Isaiah Ch46v10**, "My counsel shall stand and I will accomplish all my pleasure." His determination can't be thwarted. He controls the gates of hell, nothing can prevail against his church. No matter how strong, or determined the will of the enemy be, "I will defend my Church." One of the most hellish insinuations against

the Grace of God is that God has in grace saved you, but it is within your power, your will, to keep you. Synergism vs. Monergism God's will and Man's will coalesce (salvation is the result of interaction between man and God). Monergism is the position that the grace of God is not only the efficient cause in the beginning and effecting of conversion, but also in the sustaining of salvation. That is the teaching of the Jehovah's Witnesses, sadly it is the same with many professing evangelicals. God's will is that you will be in heaven not as a result of your own works, but that of his son alone!

2) His will is Characterised by Absolute Goodness.

While God's will is Sovereign and free, what He purposes and what He wills is always marked by goodness! Stephen Charnock who penned that marvellous treatise on the Attributes of God states that, "All the acts of God are nothing but the effluxes (flowing forth) of His goodness." Sovereign Goodness beats at the heart of God's nature, what is God? God is Good! Remember How Moses in Ex Ch33v18 sought for the Lord to reveal Himself to Him, "Shew me thy glory", "And He said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee." His goodness is His glory and Godhead, "There is none good but one, that is God..." Matt Ch19v17.

Like the world's oceans and seas, though it be all one mass of water, yet as it meets with certain shores, we distinguish it by different names (*North sea, Irish Sea, English Channel, Indian Ocean, Pacific, Arctic* etc). So likewise the Goodness of God, it being right at the foundation of God's being, it encapsulates all of His acts (*all that He wills*), yet His goodness manifests itself in so many ways. When God's goodness confers happiness without merit it is grace, when Goodness bears with sinners it is longsuffering, when Goodness pardons the sinner it is mercy. Again Ex Ch34v6-7, prior to the Law being given to Moses the Lord descended in the cloud and proclaimed, "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth." God is entirely good! Paul in Ch1 applies that truth to the Ephesian Christians, to have them see that all that they are is due to the Goodness of God. He hath chosen you, He has adopted you, sanctified you according to His goodness. The word 'good' can mean 'benevolent', 'to show benevolence.' He has acted benevolently towards sinners though under no compulsion to show the slightest degree of goodness to man, but He saw it good! His goodness is covenantal goodness, it begins before time, (Covenant Of Grace) "He (who is the embodiment of goodness) hath Blessed us." Before there was any inclination in our hearts to obey God!

3) His will is Characterised by Absolute Delight.

William Hendrickson said, 'God's will is not only a will of sheer determination, but one of supreme delight' God is sovereign in His determination, He wills according to His own good pleasure, but that will is characterised and communicated to men with supreme delight, "I take delight in doing mine own good pleasure." Turn please to Deut Ch10v14-15 In v14 Moses speaks of God's ownership of the earth, the whole universe (all things), "The heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's...the earth also, with all that therein is." Yet in v15 against the backdrop of God's rightful ownership of all things He describes the election of Israel, God's choosing them to be His own people. Moses is telling them that to God belongs all things in heaven and in earth - hence possessing all things He did not need you! V15 "it was only...that the Lord had a delight in thy Fathers to love them, and He chose...you above all people..." May I say it that the condition of God's loving His church is the same condition that was applied to Israel. Deut Ch7v6-7, "The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people...the Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you because you were more in number than any people...but because the Lord loved you..." (Lloyd Jones - interchangeable with Love). The Lord's people are a people chosen by Sovereign Love, dealt with by Super-abounding Goodness & will always remain the objects of Supreme delight!

Note that the Father's good pleasure, His delight does not only relate to that which He has willed for us in eternity past, i.e. His choosing, loving adopting us as His own, but He continues to take supreme delight as He works out His good pleasure in us, Phil Ch2v13, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure (will/determination)." Are you taking pleasure/delight in the Lord? What have you planned for the Sabbath day, to be with God's people that evening? I remind you that God has been so good [eternally good] to your soul, he chose not only your soul but every member of your body, with which you must glorify God! Isa Ch58:13, "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath from doing thy pleasure on my holy day and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure nor speaking thine own words."

Christian What value do you place upon God's Sovereign Good Pleasure? Do you value the goodness of God in the same terms as God values us! Before God chose to create the world, before He purposed to create the very stars in the heaven, He chose you, that shows me the value that God places upon every one of His elect. What a thought!

Earnest meditation on this thought, will revolutionise your praying as your soul spontaneously searches for new words to describe your vision of God and His good pleasure, it will humble you soul, pride will not find a crevasse through which it can enter, a soul filled with God is a praying, humble, praising soul, one puritan minister once said when he discovered that Grace had saved him, he was on his knees in thankful prayer, when he discovered, that God had set His love upon him because it pleased Him to do so, I was on my face in the dust, in humble adoration before the God to whom I owe everything. How good is the God we adore! "Daily (He) makes His sovereign goodness known." Unsaved the Lord has been Good to you!

The LORD Bless thee, and keep thee:
The LORD make His face shine upon thee,
And be gracious unto thee:
The LORD lift up His countenance upon thee,
And give thee peace. Amen. Numbers 6v24-26

The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
And the love of God,
And the communion of the Holy Ghost.
Be with you all. Amen. 2 Cor 13:14

Very often in presenting the doctrines of Election and predestination, preachers are guilty of so setting them forth, to give the impression of 'ill will' with God. Had God not chosen anyone, He would have continued as He was, perfect forever blessed in Himself, but out of His goodness He choose them!

Oh to think that God should take delight in me! that God took delight in me before I came into existence, His delight in me then was not due to anything that I had done or performed. The reason as to why Good delights in me is because of His Own Good Pleasure.

Yochannah Jehovah is Gracious.
27th July 2008