

The Mysteries of Salvation

1 Thessalonians 1:4

Strong! (Books of 1 & 2 Thessalonians)

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livinghopechurch.net

Listen to the words of the 20th century Chicago Pastor, A. W. Tozer:

“Salvation is from our side a choice; from the divine side it is a seizing upon, an apprehending, a conquest by the Most High God. Our “accepting” and “willing” are reactions rather than actions. The right of determination must always remain with God.” - A. W. Tozer

Introduction: Open your Bible to 1 Thessalonians 1. I want to bring a teaching to you tonight entitled: “The Mysteries of Salvation.”

I. The Mystery of God’s Love, 1:4a

LOVED

Past Salvation: God’s Love

1 Thes. 1:4, “For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you.” To understand why you are saved, you must begin in the heart of God.

We begin with God’s love. You are “loved by God.” Isn’t that amazing? You don’t deserve to be loved, but you are.

Jeremiah 1:5, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

Jeremiah 31:3, (NKJV) “The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying: ‘Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.’”

II. The Mystery of God’s Election, 1:4b

CHOSEN

Election

1 Thes. 1:4, “For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you

Deuteronomy 7:6-8, “For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ⁷It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that

the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”

To the Praise of His Glorious Grace

Ephesians 1:3-6, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.”

Jesus instructed the disciples, “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit” (John 15:16). The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit elected not only the apostles but also all who have believed throughout history¹

God has chosen us – elected us. Before you were born, before your father or mother, before the creation of the universe, God chose you.

Back to Our Decision

Most of us go back as far as the decision we made for Christ at a certain point in time. That’s natural and valid and important. All that you have in Christ was made real to you on the day you were converted. Your heart became aflame for God—your eyes were opened. You repented of your sins. That’s what we first remember—experiencing the blessings of our new spiritual birth.

Tozer Quote

Listen to the words of the 20th century Chicago Pastor, A. W. Tozer: “Salvation is from our side a choice; from the divine side it is a seizing upon, an apprehending, a conquest by the Most High God. Our “accepting” and “willing” are reactions rather than actions. The right of determination must always remain with God.” – **A. W. Tozer**

Our Salvation Began Long Ago

But our salvation was planned long before we made any decision for Christ. If you want to understand what has happened to you, you need to go farther back—back before you were born—before your parents’ birth.

We were chosen before the Cross, before the Fall of humanity into sin, before the angels! You’ve got to go to the creation itself, and then you’ve got to go before that. We’ve got to go so far back. Back when there was nothing but God Himself! And God has always been. And in that time when there was nothing but God, nothing but the fellowship between God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Back then, God chose us. The Father planned it all, the Son died to make it happen, and the Spirit was sent to illuminate us to the truth of it all. Yet it was all planned in the eternal counsels of the holy Trinity. Do we realize that our salvation was planned before even the world was planned?

God’s choice was not based on anything God saw in us. The language here is absolutely clear that this was God’s choice based on nothing outside of Himself. His choice of us is not explained by any goodness he saw in us.

¹ MacArthur, 20.

An Example: Jacob and Esau

Romans 11:11-13 (NLT), “But before they [Jacob and Esau] were born, before they had done anything good or bad, she [Rebekah] received a message from God. (This message shows that God chooses people according to his own purposes; ¹² he calls people, but not according to their good or bad works.) She was told, “Your older son will serve your younger son.” ¹³ In the words of the Scriptures, “I loved Jacob, but I rejected Esau.”

Verse 14-15 (ESV), “What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! ¹⁵ For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”

Verse 19-26, (ESV), You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?” ²⁰ But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” ²¹ Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? ²² What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—²⁴ even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? ²⁵ As indeed he says in Hosea,

“Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’
and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’”
²⁶ “And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’
there they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’”

The point is, if you want God to be just, the Lord could have left us all designated as “vessels of wrath.” He didn’t! Some are designated as such. But understand this, people don’t go to eternal destruction because God didn’t elect them. They go there because they are sinners. They would not be going there had they not chosen their own way.

Remember, **2 Peter 3:9**, “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”

God is not cruel. He takes no pleasure in punishing the wicked. **Ezekiel 18:32**, “Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?”

Comforts from the Doctrine of Election

From J.I. Packer:

In Scripture the doctrine of election is a pastoral doctrine, brought in to help Christians see many wonderful things.

1. We see the magnitude of God’s limitless grace that forgives our sins based on nothing in us!
2. This doctrine moves us to humility, confidence, joy, praise, faithfulness, and holiness in response.
3. This doctrine moves us to evangelism, for God has promised to save a “multitude which cannot be numbered.” It is the family secret of the children of God. We do not know who else he has chosen among those who do not yet believe, nor why it was his good pleasure to choose us in particular.

4. This doctrine moves us to deep gratitude and love for God and others. Had we not been chosen for life we would not be believers now (for only the elect are brought to faith).

5. We may be sure that God will grant us daily grace to persevere to the end. As elect believers we may rely on God to finish in us the good work that he started (1 Cor. 1:8-9; Phil. 1:6; 1 Thess. 5:23-24; 2 Tim. 1:12; 4:18). Knowledge of one's election thus brings comfort and joy. By continuing in holiness, we "make our calling and election sure." In fact Peter says in 2 Pet. 1:10, that we should be "**eager to make [our] calling and election sure**" (2 Pet. 1:10)—that is, certain to us.

Election is known by its fruits. Paul knew the election of the Thessalonians from their faith, hope, and love, the inward and outward transformation of their lives that the gospel had brought about (1 Thess. 1:3-6).