

Election Pure and Simple pt 2

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Bible Text: Ephesians 1:1-4
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All of God's people said, amen.

Ephesians 1. Let's go back there. Ephesians 1. "Election Pure and Simple." I know I'm not going to be able to answer all of your questions because that would be impossible. Maybe when we get in heaven we'll understand these things more thoroughly, but as we begin looking at this, we were looking basically at Ephesians 1:4 using it as a foundation stone to elaborate further both within the context of Ephesians 1 and to some degree a systematic overview of what the New Testament says about this doctrine of election.

He says in Ephesians 1:4, "just as He chose us," and when did he do that? He did it "in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love." Now, very quickly, let's run through what we've already said. First of all, we talked about this glorious unpacking of the blessings we have, the heavenly blessings. Now, again, everything about your salvation was wrought in heavenly wisdom and perfected and performed in heavenly power. Your salvation is nothing of the lower powers. Your salvation owes nothing to lower wisdom. It all came from the heavenlies. It was brought down to us but it didn't come out of us or from the earth at all.

It's heavenly wisdom and heavenly power so when we see these things listed in Ephesians 1 that he chose us to be holy and blameless before him; verse 5, we have adoption; verse 7, redemption and forgiveness; verse 8, lavishing grace, wisdom and insight upon us, an inheritance; verse 12, a hope in Christ; verse 13, sealed by the Spirit; those are all wrought by heavenly wisdom and heavenly power and we said to ourselves, "Well, how do we get these? How does a person possess these? Can we force our way into it?" No. "Can we earn them?" No. "Can we somehow inherit them just because we're human?" No. "Is it as simple as only asking for them?" No, because Ephesians 2 and other texts tells us we're dead men. We have no capacity to seek God or ask for anything good. Romans makes that explicitly clear.

So we looked at verse 4 of Ephesians 1 and we focused on that word, "He chose us," and we talked, again, about how that word "chosen" or "chose" is the same as God's eternal election. Charles Hodge, the theologian, again said, "Election is the cause or source of all subsequent benefits. The benefit of your repentance came from his first electing you. The benefit of your faith came from him first electing you." We flipped over to Romans 8:29-

31 and we looked at the word "foreknew" which is the same as choosing or election. And so it's interesting that the New Testament writers use a lot of different words to emphasize the same basic truth. So we have choosing; we have electing or elect or election; and then we have the word foreknown or foreknew in the Bible. Then, of course, predestined is very akin but predestined means that once God chose, foreknew or elected you, he predetermined to do a certain thing with you, that is, according to Romans 8:29-31, to conform you to the image of his Son and he called you as a result of that purpose to make you to the image of his Son. He justified you and then one day he will glorify you. However, Romans doesn't say it in future tense, Romans says he has glorified you. All of that in God's eternal might is finished, it is in past tense, it's done. That's a powerful thing to think about.

So, trying to move on a little quickly as a one armed bandit here, we talked about some various views of election. First of all, we said some folks just out-and-out deny election. They say, "Well, God sent his Son. We spread the Gospel and God sits back and sees what happens." Other say, "Well, God just knew beforehand who would believe. The power still resides in man to enact the new birth." When you think about it, it's really atrocious that the Bible uses all this terminology of being quickened by the Spirit, born again, Jesus says, and to think that somehow we have the power to enact that. You didn't birth yourself the first time and you can't birth yourself the second time. But that's what the Bible says, that God did that, but the more Arminian view would be that, "Well, God just knew beforehand and it's just up to man to work this out." They would say when man sinned in the garden of Eden, man and all his posterity are born into sin but they're not completely fallen; they do not have what we believe and that is total depravity. They would teach a partial depravity that there is still some good in man and man has a virtue whereby he is enabled to choose Christ and do what's good. Well, Romans 3 says there is no one good, no one, not one, no one seeks for God. No one. It's so emphatic and clear there. But what we believe is we do not deny it, of course, we do not believe it's as simplistic as God knew beforehand who would believe and that's the elect, it is election pure and simple. That is, God chose those whom he would save and he made that choice effectual. That is, he chose those he would save and he effected, completed their salvation.

Now, all this is in the divine mind of God so there are parts of this we can't wrap a little tiny gray matter in our brains around it. So as it's lived out down here, it's a different perspective, but the Bible is a divine book. It gives us a weighty exegesis or proclamation of God's view of how he does his work for his own glory.

Now, new material: objections to election. Some people say, "Well, it's beneath the character of a living God to do this. This would just be an arbitrary choice," they would say and they would add, "A loving God would not do that." But I would argue it's not an arbitrary choice, it has a purpose. He didn't just pick some out, he picked some out for a purpose and that purpose is his own glory. Verse 6 of Ephesians 1 as he is again unpacking these glorious truths of God's sovereign election, he says in verse 6, "to the praise of the glory of His grace." Then you go down to verse 12, "to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory." Then in verse 14,

speaking of the Spirit "who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory." So God, as we talked about in the earlier session today, who is enamored with his own glory and his own glorification, has chosen to elect some and that he would effectually procure their salvation all to the praise of his own glory. It has a purpose. It's not just arbitrary.

You know, it's interesting that most men who would say they are Arminian and that is they believe that man's basically in the driver's seat of his salvation, would argue that, "Yes, the Holy Spirit has to convict people or no one can be saved." And you'd ask, "Well, does he convict everyone exactly the same?" I mean, if you grow up in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, you're much more likely to be exposed to the truth and experience conviction than if you grew up in New York City. Does not a sovereign God know any of that? So God is choosing some things even from an Arminian perspective. He knows who would be born in Muscle Shoals and who would be born in New York or who is born in Papua, New Guinea who hears nothing of the Gospel their entire life.

So if you want to go to this fairness doctrine, that's not fair either, is it? Of course it wouldn't be if that's what you're looking at, but God's choice and I think there's a great phrase up in verse 4 of Ephesians 1, I'm sorry, I think it's verse 5 actually, "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself." Why did he do this? "According to the kind intention of His will." That basically means God says, "I want to do it that way. I chose according to my will to do it that way. I chose to cast this unmerited favor on some undeserving sinners because I wanted to do it to glorify myself." That's what Paul is actually saying.

So it does have a purpose. God didn't just arbitrarily just, "Okay, this is what I'm going to do." No, he's saying, "I have a purpose to save for myself a people to display the wisdom and power of my love and grace to save wretches like you." So it has a purpose. Secondly, another objection would be: it's not just and God is just. Again they would say, "Choosing to save one and not save another is not fair. All deserve an equal chance." Now, I got ahead of myself because I want to use the illustration here again, if you use the chance notion that God just did it and it's all a chance whether or not you hear the Gospel and are saved, that's not fair either. How can it be fair if you want to ride the fairness doctrine out, that you're born in Papua, New Guinea, again, and you have no preacher, no church, no Bible, no literature, no radio, no Gospel, nothing? Versus you're a child born in the Bible belt and hear all kinds of things about Christ and the Scriptures all their lives.

Thirdly, they would say not only is it beneath the character of God, they'd say he's not just and it's not just if he's choosing one and doesn't choose another, thirdly they would say it would lead to unholy living. If you teach people they're elect, then they'll just decide, "I'll do what I want to do and I'll act the way I want to act." I think that's quite the contrary. I think the Bible teaches that a man who is truly saved will be known by his fruit. You're not declared elect because you just have a certain spot on you somewhere or something, you're declared elect because you have the inward and outward characteristics of a true child of God.

I apologize for my voice. I'm doing the best I can. I don't know what's going to come out of my mouth every sentence, so I might be a baritone and I might be a soprano. I have no idea from one moment to the next.

But God is changing people that he elects and so what we do is we preach the Gospel and then examine men by the biblical text to discern, "Are they ones God has added?" and if they are, they are God's elect. So I just don't understand that. The Bible talks about those who know the Lord are those who would lay down their lives for the brethren. They're changed. There's a new desire put within the elect of God once they're genuinely converted.

Claire brought a friend with her on friend day, basically brought several friends, and one of those friends is one of her teammates who has been genuinely converted; gives good evidence of real conversion. A sweet girl, and I was so curious to ask her because I knew she had not been in a church like ours and probably hadn't heard a sermon like I preached that morning. As you know, I preached on "Be saved from this perverse generation." And I asked her, I said, "What did you think about the service?" I don't remember exactly what she said but in essence she said this: it was different but it felt like home. It was different but it felt like home. That's the difference election and regeneration makes in a person's life. They're drawn to the truth. They're drawn to a true church. They're drawn to a true doctrine. They're drawn to a true Gospel.

Well, another objection people may have is, "Well, it's not Baptist doctrine." Well, first of all, I'd say who cares? I mean, Spurgeon is the most prominent Baptist pastor of history and Spurgeon used to say, "Down, down, down with the name Baptist and up, up, up with the name of Christ." And by the way, I for one didn't grow up Baptist. I don't know that I've got hardly any Baptists in my family. I think there were some French Huguenots way back there who were basically French Baptists but I'm quite thankful and in a right sense proud of our real Baptist heritage. For example, if you go all the way back to the 17th century, probably the most prominent Baptist of that era was John Bunyan. He wrote "Pilgrim's Progress." John Bunyan was a powerful Gospel preacher; spent 13 years in the Bedford jail for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and was an unashamed, 100%, five point Calvinist. He believed these great doctrines. As far as you want to go back, John Gill, a great pastor of the church Spurgeon actually took over. He wrote the commentaries that have been so prominent in evangelical life for, what, a few centuries. He said, quote, "This eternal election of particular persons to eternal salvation is absolute and unconditional." Andrew Fuller, the great English pastor of the 18th century; a strong Calvinist and believer in these doctrines. W. B. Johnson, the first President of the Southern Baptist Convention; very reformed in his theology and held to this doctrine. R. B. C. Howell, a Southern Baptist Convention President from 1851-1859 strongly affirmed the doctrine of election. Richard Fuller, the third President of the Southern Baptist Convention. To those who would reject the doctrine of predestination he said, quote, "It is practical atheism and it contradicts the express assertion of the Bible." John Dagg is the Baptist who wrote the first theology book among Baptists in America, so he's kind of the scholar of American Baptists, if you will, the foundation stone, if you will.

John Dagg said, quote, "God bestows the blessings of his grace not according to the works of the recipient, but according to his own sovereign plan." That's election. Basil Manly, Sr, a Baptist leader of the early 1800s, the founder of Furman University and also a presiding President over the University of Alabama from 1838 to 1855 and is credited as saving the University of Alabama from going under financially; strong Calvinist who believed in the doctrine of election. James Petigru Boyce, the founder of Southern Seminary, today the largest seminary in the world and the largest Baptist seminary in the world in Louisville, Kentucky; strong believer in the doctrine of election. B. H. Carroll, the founder of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Carroll insisted that Southwestern be founded, quote, "On the rock of predestination."

Folks, I'm not making this up. I'm giving you, you can read books full of their writings and teachings on this doctrine. A. H. Strong, the professor of theology who wrote that great "Systematic Theology," a strong proponent of reformed theology. And the New Hampshire Confession of Faith which is our confession of faith. We've done some little addendums to it but it's basically our confession because it was the earliest confession of faith of Southern Baptists in America and it has a whole paragraph affirming the doctrine of election. By the way, every Southern Baptist church in America still holds to it. Some of them will run out the door screaming with their hands over their ears if you mention the doctrine of election and in their office in the filing cabinet is a doctrinal statement that states they believe in the doctrine of election. I can prove it to you. Go look it up. Look up the Baptist Faith and Message and look at Article 5. It's on election. The problem is we've become atheological. We don't even believe hardly anything. We don't know what we believe and we haven't worked through any of it.

Actually, you don't find Baptist folks in America in any organized way having a view other than a Calvinistic reformed view until the early part of the 19th century when the free will Baptists broke off from our forefathers, the Southern Baptists, and the free will Baptists said, "We just believe that you can lose your salvation. We just believe that man has more of our own in salvation so we're going to break off and go our way and y'all can go another," and that's why you've got free will Baptists today and Southern Baptists today. Now, we're not asserting they're not brothers, we're not asserting they're not saved, but we are asserting we think they went astray.

Now, a full bore, full blooded Arminian is going to believe in partial depravity, in other words, man's not completely fallen, he has some good virtue in him; he's going to believe in conditional election, God elects you if you choose to believe; he's going to believe in unlimited atonement, that means when Jesus died he redeemed everybody in some sense, I guess. Now, I don't want to be too simplistic there but, in other words, everybody is saved through the death of Jesus somehow and, by the way, it's very interesting how this view can very easily slosh over into universalism that everyone everywhere is saved because Jesus had to die the same for everybody. So if Jesus died the same for everybody and wrought out and completed an effectual redemption for everybody, then Hindus, Buddhists, whoever, they're just already saved. So that's, I have a problem with the concept of unlimited atonement from that perspective. They would believe in resistible grace, that man holds the power and God's grace does not overcome those and bring them

to brokenness and repentance whom he's going to save. Then finally, of course, they would hold to conditional salvation; you must keep working to maintain and earn your eternal salvation because you can lose it.

Well, A. B. C. D. E. The fifth, the fifth objection: they say it will diminish evangelistic fervor. Well, one of the things I'd like to say is we do what God tells us to do without trying to figure out everything about it all the time. Why did God give us the ordinance of baptism? Could he not have done that a dozen different ways? Why did he give us the ordinance of the Lord's Supper? We don't argue that, we say it's what God said to do. It's a part of the ordinances of the local church. It's a grace to us. It's a strengthening element. It honors our Lord to do it because he told us to do it. So folks, we're evangelistic and we urge, listen, all men everywhere to repent and believe and we tell all men everywhere if they repent and believe God will save them. Amen? You say, "What if they're not elect?" Then they won't repent and believe, but I'm going to tell them all to repent and believe, and after they get saved, we're going to let them in on the family secret. Alright?

Jerry Falwell, who I was privileged to spend a whole day with Dr. Falwell not too long before he died and Dr. Falwell, he was a populist preacher. Dr. Falwell didn't mess too much with doctrine and I wish he had. You know, he did a lot of good things, by the way, especially for our country, but he wasn't much of a theologian in his pastorate, but Jerry Falwell wouldn't hold to election as we do, but nevertheless he said a good statement. I've used it many times. You've heard me say it before. He said, "You know, it's interesting, the more doors I knock on, the more elect I find." His point is: let's just be evangelistic and we don't know who God's going to save. We just keep going after all men everywhere, urging all men everywhere to repent and believe.

Paul used the message and the methods that God ordained to convert the elect and Paul stayed true and pure because God saves not through our creativity, not through our style, not through our charisma, but through his Gospel, and he has chosen or elected those who will be saved by the hearing of his Gospel. So, you see, this pure and wonderful old Bible doctrine helps guard us from a lot of the worldly, faddish, shenanigans that go on in the church to try to help the Gospel save people. But if you hold to the doctrine of election, you know, wait a minute, God's ordained this from the foundation of the world and not only that, he's ordained the means to see his elect come to faith.

So clothing the Gospel in drama, rock music, flashy packaging, is questionable to me, if not completely wrong and I think what you'll find, that's one thing about being a pastor for 35 years in the same place, you learn some stuff, they'll find that a lot of the converts that come out of this new wave of packaging and redoing church, they're not bearing lasting fruit. They're getting a lot of quick decisions. Jesus said, "Go and get fruit that remains." Remains.

So I just reject that in any way it's a detriment to evangelism, it encourages evangelism. 1 Corinthians 1:21, "For since in the wisdom of God," in other words God said, "This is what I think is smart. My wisdom says this." "In the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God." Now think about that. God says, "You take all the

virtue, merit, worth, ingenuity, wisdom of the world and get it all together and see if they can find God." He says absolutely they'll never do it. Man can get all of his power and wisdom together, he can't find God. But God said, "I think it's wonderful that the world by adding up all their wisdom and ability could never come to God." "God was well pleased," 1 Corinthians 1:21, "God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." God says the sophisticated Corinthians and the sophisticated Ephesians and the sophisticated Galatians and the sophisticated Romans may think preaching is a primitive and ineffectual way to reach a modern generation but we don't mind. That just shows God's wisdom. He saves his elect his way.

So if you believe God ordained it from the beginning, then you'll trust his means. Aren't you glad that Grace Life Church's effectiveness to reach the lost doesn't depend on David Young's creativity. What about Bill Newman's creativity? Bill Newman's the best man I know but he's not creative. He's an accountant, an extremely proficient, excellent, precise accountant, but he's not creative. He's not exciting. And neither is, Tom Clay is pretty charismatic but I would hate to know the Gospel depends on the ingenuity and the creativity and talent of Tom Clay or the charisma or dynamic personality of Jeff Noblit. You don't have to laugh, just chuckle out loud about that, actually.

But isn't that a relief to all of us? Just give me a man that believes the book and preaches it striving to do so in spiritual power and I know I can raise my kids there and that's the best I have to reach them for Christ. Are you with me, church? Is that not a relief? Thank God for that. I mean, you see Baptists sitting around and they're just wringing their hands, "Oh, we don't have the whizbang creative pastor, the guy down the street. Our kids may go to hell." Are you kidding me? Are you kidding me? But do you know what, folks? If you believe the old doctrines like we believe, if you believe in that great and glorious doctrine of election, if you believe in God's means of salvation, then you can send a 19 year old boy that loves Jesus and is called to preach to the most remote spot on the earth and he can open a Bible and preach the Gospel and God will save them just like he'll save somebody in the middle of Atlanta with all the whizbang stuff in the world going on. As a matter of fact, I think he'll save them quicker because that's his method than the whizbang stuff. Do you see how this doctrine purifies evangelism? Purifies it. Keeps us on what matters and what works, what God has ordained. That's why Paul said in Romans 1:16, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

Now, in closing here, John 10. You'd better be thankful I'm struggling of voice or you'd miss the last half. John 10:24. This section of Scripture is just so powerful and just need to look at it at this point. John 10:24, "The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, 'How long will You keep us in suspense?'" They're saying, "We just don't know the truth about who you are. We don't know if your message is true or not." So they say, "'If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.'" Verse 25, "Jesus answered them, 'I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me.'" In other words, "If you had the capacity and the wisdom to see and understand, you'd already seen it and understood it." "But," verse 26, "you do not believe because you are not of My sheep." Now, don't read that backwards. He did not say, "Since you do not

believe, you're not my sheep." He said, "You do not believe because you're not my sheep." Then he goes further, verse 27, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."

Now, everybody in Israel knew exactly what he was saying. Often those sheep would just be roaming around on those hillsides and they could be all mingled in together, sometimes the shepherds would bring all their master's sheep together, they'd get them in a pen but those sheep were trained to their shepherd's voice. He could stand at the gate of that sheepfold and he could call out and the sheep that belonged to his master would just respond to him and separate from the others and come to him. And Jesus said, "That's exactly what happened. You guys don't understand, I don't have anything else to prove to you or anything else to show you. I'm going to preach this truth and watch my sheep respond to me out of the masses." That's still what we're doing today. He said, "My sheep will hear it and will respond."

Then, now he was talking to Jews in this context but he tells the Jews and this was a fascinating insight for them, they couldn't believe there were non-Jews who could be truly God's sheep. Look over in verse 16 of John 10, he says, "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold," that's Israel, "I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd." So he says there's only one true church. It's made of all peoples of all nations, all nationalities, and all backgrounds. We preach the Gospel. Those God has ordained into eternal life from the foundation of the world, his chosen, his elect, his predestined, his foreknown, they will respond and be saved.

Now, I want you to know not one that God ordained in election will be lost. Not one. No, of all, Jesus said it, "of all that the Father gives me, I lose not one." From the foundation of the world, the Father said, "I've got a whole host of sheep, of people I'm going to give you, Son. You've got to go to the cross, purchase their pardon, intercede for them, and they'll all be yours." And Jesus said, "Of all that the Father gives me, I lose not one." Bill Stafford used to say, "You're so saved it's pitiful." You're just saved from eternity past to eternity future.

Now, some view salvation in a man-centered way. They'll say you are the captain of your own ship sailing through the waters of this life. When a storm arises, you welcome Jesus aboard your ship to steady the ship. Maybe a little simplistic but basically that's what we see in so many churches today, but in reality salvation is better viewed this way: your ship has sunk to the bottom of the sea of God's judgment and it's rotting there on the bottom. Your body is deteriorated and nothing is left but a few bones, but Jesus comes sailing out on that ocean of judgment in the old ship of Zion and by his power, he miraculously resurrects you from the dead and raises you out of the pit and places you on his ship and secures you all the way home to heaven.

Now, in a full bore Pelagian or Arminian view, they see God as glorified in heaven. Remember when we looked at Ephesians 1, it was for the praise of his glory, to the praise of his glory, to the praise of his glory of his grace. That's what it's for, that God can show

us off as the trophies of his grace, "Look what I can do with wretches and sinners." Well, the full blooded Pelagian or Arminian would agree with that, that God's going to be glorified in heaven for his grace in saving the believer but they would have to also say beside God is the believer also sharing some glory because he had the inherent virtue and goodness possessed within him to make the wise choice and choose Jesus. Jesus gets the praise and the believer does too.

Well, I'm going to tell you something: as long as I live that will never be preached from this pulpit. There will only be one praise for our salvation in heaven and that is Christ and Christ alone. We have absolutely no merit, no part, nothing that we have added to it whatsoever. It's wrought of heaven and not of us. There will be none of that in this pulpit. There will be none of that taught in this church, and I can guarantee you they'll be none of that in heaven. Nobody will be walking around in heaven high-fiving, "Hey, weren't we cool? We chose the winning team." No, you won't. You'll be walking around in heaven saying, "O God, isn't it wonderful that we could be here? Wretched sinners like us." Even from the moment we had the first notion that we needed God, we found out God initiated that in our hearts because somehow in God's infinite wisdom, by his infinite power and, listen, for his own glory, he marked me out as one that he would cast his incomparable love toward. I didn't earn it. It's unmerited favor, so that he could demonstrate what his love could accomplish for a wretched sinner like me.

And all of God's people said, amen. Let's stand together, alright?