

EPHESIANS 1:4a
The Wonderful Work of Salvation
Message 10, January 24, 1999

Intro: Let me say something here about the slowness by which we are going through Ephesians. We are not only learning to understand Paul's letter to the Ephesians. We are learning many concepts in Ephesians that open large windows into other Scriptures. Now you may question whether we are spending too much time on some areas. Last summer an event took place in our own town, that if I had known this could even possibly be questioned by our own people I would spent even more time on one topic we have covered already. But when I heard of this, I was glad I had given the topic as much time as I did because I don't think anyone from here would be open to the same error. Then I was encouraged again to be thorough.

This morning we are going to deal with election. Now I had a problem in preparation for this message. It is how to do a sufficient job of it in one message. So I encourage you this morning to not pay so much attention with the speed at which we are proceeding but at the comprehension achieved when we are through. What is the use of working through this letter and not understand many of the concepts dealt with? If we will concentrate on the subject matter and not on the speed with which we are moving, we will learn well. And when we are done you will understand to some depth, not only Ephesians, but many other sections of Scripture.

This morning we have before us the words, "...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world..." We have already given considered the first part of this verse, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ..." And in the words before us this morning we have one of the reasons why we should bless Him. Before God even created the world he chose me. If you are a believer He chose you to! This morning we are going to see from the Bible how God chose us in eternity past.

Max Lucado, in his book, *And The Angels Were Silent*, writes a short chapter that has to do with election. It seems he grew up where oil field work was common. From the book I understand that if one could not get on full-time one could always enter the position of roustabout. These people would show up at the oil field hiring station and wait in case extra workers were needed that day. Max was 15 years old

and his dad required him to find work whenever he was not in school. At the roustabout shack he made friends with a 70 year old man who worked whenever he could. And so they would sit in the shack and wait to be chosen for work. The company truck would come and the best were picked first and off they would go to work. Ben would say to Max, "Shor do need the work, today, boy. Shor do need the work." But everybody else was chosen. And so they would sit in the cold shack and wait for a morsel of work. As time dragged by and the best had already been picked, some fella, who wasn't among the most wanted list would say something like, "Well, its a bit cold too work. Didn't really want to work today anyway" and then would saunter off home. And so they would wait.

Some days the company truck would come back. This day they are in need of more workers than usual so some of the unwanted become wanted. The company pickup comes and the boss yells, "You guys still need some work?" Max says Ben would jump off his barrel and answer for himself and Max, "Yes, sir." And as they would drive off old Ben would say, "Shor feels good to be chosen, don't it, boy?" And Max would say, "Sure does, Ben. Sure does."

This morning, if you are a Christian, you rank among the chosen of God. I can tell you one thing, "Shor feels good to be chosen, don't it?"

This morning we want to see what the basis of election is, how God chose us, how we remain His elect and when He chose us.

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

On what basis did God choose some and not others? Here, there are only two options. No more and no less. Calvinism says God chose randomly. The best way to describe it is the way we choose when we put names in a hat. According to Calvinism, when God chose all the names of all people of all time were in a hat, so to speak. Then out of all those, God dipped His hand in the hat and chose a few names out of the many. Whichever name happened to be in His hand, these would be saved and the others would all be condemned to hell. This is what is called unconditional election in Calvinism.

After He chose those names He sent Christ to die for those few. According to Calvinism, Christ did not die for the whole world. This is called limited atonement. Then when those people are born at God's chosen time He sends irresistible grace and those people get saved. And once those people are saved, they will never be lost because they were elected, chosen by God.

Now there are many fine Christians who hold to this view, like John MacArthur for instance. Most of the commentaries I have are written by Calvinists. I have one commentary on Ephesians by Oliver B. Greene. Listen to what he has to say on Ephesians 1:4 and election: "Election, predestination, and the foreknowledge of God is to be taught to spiritually-minded believers -- never to be preached to unbelievers in a mixed multitude. God pity the preacher who will stand before an audience made up of believers and unbelievers in a mixed audience and preach to that mixed audience that some are elected to be saved, and if they are elected they will be saved; but if they are not elected they cannot be saved. God pity such stupid spiritual ignorance!" (pg. 35).

I suppose one ought never to preach election then. Who knows if some of those who claim to be elected are professing only? But I tell you this morning, that if there is one doctrine that needs to be preached to unbelievers, it is the doctrine of election. I know of only a few verses that seem to teach Calvinism and none of those verses even mention the word election.

1. The basis of election

We want to see first what the basis of election is. In Calvinism it is *predeterminism*. It is a matter of chance. There is another view with better Scriptural support and better rational

support. It is election based on God's *foreknowledge*.

This view says that God chose in eternity past such people as would choose Him of their own free will. This view is further based on God's omniscience, which simply means God knows everything. You see, the Bible gives us much prophecy. Prophecy is based on God's omniscience. This view of election grounded in God's omniscience and based on man's free will says that God knew in eternity past those who would choose Him when presented with the Gospel.

Now notice how God's omniscience is found in our passage. It says, "...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world..." We see here that God knew man would sin and that He would send His Son to die for man and that some would be found in Him... God chose the believer in Christ before man was created. Of course God knew all this.

This view has sound Scriptural support. 1 Peter 1:2 says, "...elect according to the foreknowledge of God..." Here is the basis of election. God knew in eternity past who would choose Him. On a lighter side with regard to being chosen before the foundation of the world, J. Vernon McGee says CH Spurgeon said, "God chose me before the foundation of the world because if He had waited till I was here He wouldn't have chosen me."

On what basis did God choose? He chose on the basis of His foreknowledge of those who would respond to Him by faith of their own free will. We say in German, *Gott vell kjeen jedvungnut Hoat*. God does not want a forced heart. We might go further and say God will not have a forced heart.

2) How we were elected

Now if God chose us "in Him" we need to find out how we get to be in Him and then we know how God chose us. We know that in order for us to be in Him we must first hear the Gospel. And when we hear the Gospel the choice to accept Christ or not is ours. We get "in Him" by believing in Him and accepting Him as our personal Saviour. Paul writes in Eph. 1:13, "In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation."

3) How we remain elect

Did you know that we have something to do with our own election? Look at 2 Peter 1:10. We are to be diligent to make our calling and election sure. After we hear the Gospel we have been called. After we accept Christ we have been elected. But this verse sounds a note of warning regarding our election. The inference is there that our life could jeopardize our election and certainly this is the case.

Come with me to another interesting verse (Matt. 22:14). The parable in the context tells us very clearly how a person is chosen. It also clearly tells us how a person is called but not chosen. It also tells us on what basis we are chosen. Why are many called but few are chosen? The answer is very simple: Few are chosen because few choose Him.

Yes, many are called but few are chosen. And of those chosen, not all reach heaven as their final destiny. In Revelation 17:14 we have a very significant verse. Here we find ourselves in the tribulation. This verse speaks of a time when the Lamb, Jesus Christ, will battle the ungodly forces of the world and overcome them. This takes place at the end of the tribulation. We have already learned who is with Him in the end to battle these ungodly forces. It is the raptured Church.

(Read Rev. 19?). Now Revelation 17:14 tells us three things about those who are with Him are. 1 They are called. 2 They are chosen. 3 They are faithful. How do we make our election sure as Peter exhorted us? We remain faithful to Him.

In my life as a Christian now for some years I have come across people who are unfaithful. Recently we visited my Mom. A lady came to visit. She was from a certain church in town. We learned the sad story of this woman. Her husband, who preached in their church from time to time also worked in the oil field. Here he found another woman and I don't know how long, but he lived the lie. Last fall he divorced his wife and now he has another woman. I do not know this man. I do know he must have professed to be a Christian. If he was, he was called and chosen, but my Christian friends, he is unfaithful. I tell you on the authority of the Word of God, that if this man does not repent his final destiny is not heaven. The reason is he failed on the third count. He is unfaithful.

4) When we were elected

Now the apostle Paul tells us when we were chosen. It was before the foundation of the world. It is noteworthy that it does not say that it was before the foundation of the earth. The word world has numerous connotations but according to Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich, the most comprehensive lexicon I have; it refers to "...the sum total of everything here and now..." In other words, the universe.

When the Bible speaks of the foundations of the universe it is not speaking literally but figuratively. In my understanding the foundation or foundations of the earth are the laws that govern it. The earth keeping its place in

the universe, the rotation of the earth and day and night; gravity; the polar fields etc... in my understanding are the foundations of the world. Move or change those foundations and our physical existence immediately ends.

Now God chose us in eternity past. It was not only before He created the earth. It was before He put in place those laws that govern the universe. Man, as we have seen in Genesis, is the crown of God's creation and the central purpose of it. And way back there God said I will create a being capable of personal choice, a free moral agent; and I will give him the truth but he will have to trust me by faith and of his own volition.

CONCL: Let me say in conclusion that if there is one doctrine that ought to be preached to the unsaved, and to the mixed multitude, it is the doctrine of election. Every person ought to know that Christ is only a decision away and anyone can make that decision!

We have seen that God chose us on the basis of His foreknowledge that we would accept His gracious offer. We have also seen how we are chosen. We are chosen by choosing Him. Our Gentile system of marriage is the best illustration I know of using this system. I have asked in numerous groups of young people how they would like someone else to choose their life partner. That idea flies like a lead balloon. We all want to choose our own life partner but we also are not fulfilled until that person chooses us. Then we saw that in order to finally reach heaven we must remain faithful. So the Scripture exhorts us to make our calling and election sure. Last, we saw the time of election. It took place in eternity past, before the foundations of the world.