

Chosen for Holiness

By Pastor Matt Black

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Lord's Day morning

Ephesians 1:4

Introduction: Open your Bibles to Paul's letter to the Ephesians. The title of this morning's message is "Chosen for Holiness." We will be looking today at how God has chosen us so that we might have the holiness of God living in us and pulsing through us each day. We are the children of a holy God if we have been born again. Our souls are stamped—engraved with His holiness if we are truly His. That is precisely what verse 4 tells us. Let's look at this text this morning. Every word is so vitally important. This sentence was breathed out by God, and in every word there is the power and punch of the Spirit of God. Look at it now.

Ephesians 1:4

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love"

It is amazing to me that many who call themselves Christians think they can live the way they want to live. "It's no big deal. I know I'm in sin, but I'll repent later," you say. "I'm saved, but I'll serve God later." I am praying this morning that God will awaken you out of your calloused and casual slumber about a true and vital Christianity. There is no Christianity without a white hot holy heart for God. Without a holy life, you have no claim or title to wear the name "Christian."

2 Timothy 2:19

Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

Psalm 97:10

Ye that love the LORD, hate evil.

This is the mark. If you are saved, you are infused with the holiness of God. If God has elected you to salvation, He has chosen you for holiness. He will stop at nothing to make you holy. When God saved you, holiness indwelt you in the Person of the Holy Spirit. You are filled with a Person who is:

"of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity"

Habakkuk 1:13

That is why He is called the "HOLY" Spirit!

Don't you hear the voice of the Lord this morning? If He has called you out of this world, He has called you to be holy. How can you keep on sinning? How can you go on with your heart hardened? If you have been chosen by God, then you are called to be holy. Stop what you are doing and wake up to the holy life God has prepared for you.

1 Peter 1:15-16

[For] he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation [LIVING]; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

Every one of God's elect people will be shown to be genuine Christians by this one mark: a life of holiness. The mark of our election is holiness. That's what our text says here in verse 4. We are "chosen...that we should be holy."

God's design, his purpose is that we should be holy! How hostile sinners be made into holy saints? It takes the miraculous act of God in our Justification.

- I. We will see first of all from our text that our journey to holiness begins with our Justification. "chosen...that we should be holy..."

Ephesians 1:4

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love"

- A. The means to accomplish our justification is bound up in God alone. This is clear in our text, because we were chosen to be holy at a time when we had no power to justify ourselves. God chose us long before anyone could even see our need to be justified—to be made holy—He chose us to be holy *before the foundation of the world*.

Justification is not something that we can do. It is a miraculous act of God's mercy that begins before the foundation of the world. The words "that we should be" have the idea that God has chosen us with a "design" for holiness. It is something that God does.

Jude intimates this in the 24th verse of his book:

Jude 1:24

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory...

It is God who has the power to keep us from falling and to present us faultless on the Day of Judgment! Not one man on this earth has the ability to justify himself. Try as you may, you cannot stop sinning—you cannot keep yourself from falling. And even if you could, you are still guilty. It was God's idea and God's initiative that takes away your guilt.

If you tried to remove your sin, you wouldn't get very far. It takes an almighty act of a gracious God to remove our sins!

Psalm 103:12

As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

- B. We see also that we are Powerless to justify ourselves. We cannot make ourselves holy! You have no power to do anything that is holy. All that you have done, and all that you will ever do will always come short of God's mark. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). We are so far from God's mark of perfection because we have a nature that is hostile toward holiness. We run from the light—we hide from God for the precise reason that He is pure and holy. We are born as sinners with the mark of the beast in our right hand and in our forehead. Our right hand—all that we do—is marked by the works of the devil. Our

forehead, all that we think and are, demonstrates that we are born as the enemies of God. We cannot justify ourselves. We are powerless to do so. We are marked as children of wrath, and that stamp, that mark of the beast is our sinful nature. We have no ability to please God. It is so clear; it is marked in our very soul.

Romans 8:8

They that are in the flesh [those OUTSIDE OF CHRIST, UNREGENERATE, LOST] cannot please God.

Do you understand how strange it is that God would call His enemies to holiness?

1. We can only admit that we are the most Wicked of people. Why should God choose you for holiness if you are already ok? The fact is that you are not ok. You a law-breaker. You have sinned against God continually. Perhaps you don't agree with me. Just look inwardly and you will see that you have a lying, blasphemous, adulterous heart. You may not see this now, but when God awakens you and begins to draw you to Himself, you will be disgusted and amazed at the wickedness of your own sin. You will never come to Christ until you see your sin as God sees it. Your sin is an abomination to God's holiness. If you have never felt this way about your life, then I can assure you that you have not yet come to know God and that you still belong to the devil.

Do you want to be made holy before God? Then you must acknowledge that God would be just to give you damnation in hell and cut you off forever. Have you ever felt this way? Have you ever felt so strongly about your wickedness that God would be just if He sent you straight to hell? You would never think something like that on your own. It is the Spirit of God that reveals to us that by nature we are children of His wrath. He convinces us of the judgment to come. If you have thought this way, then I can tell you with certainty that the Spirit of God is working in you to justify you. You see until you are dead to yourself, you will never be made alive to God. Until you agree with God that you deserve damnation in God's eternal burning refuse pile (Gehenna), then there is still a great gulf fixed between you and salvation.

2. Secondly, if you are to be justified, you must admit that even your own Righteousness is an abomination to God. Why should God choose you for holiness if your righteousness is already acceptable to God? The truth is that God hates our righteousness. It is a counterfeit. It is full of pride and arrogance. God resists it—He despises it. All those who have been justified in God's sight have been justified "not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Galatians 2:16).

You might be thinking "I will do all that I can—I will be good from now on, and then Jesus Christ will have to have mercy on you." If you go that route, then you are nothing but a robber and a thief.

John 10:1

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

Like a thief, you want to go to heaven a different way than God has proposed. God has proposed that you are so wicked, so filthy, so unfit and unclean that you cannot stand for a moment in His presence, and even your so-called "righteousness" offends Him.

Isaiah 64:6

But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Do you understand that God should give you damnation for the best prayer you ever prayed. For all your best discipline and duties, and all your good works, you deserve the Lake of fire. God says they are all abominable in His sight. Does that offend you? God speaks very clearly and vividly. He says your very best that you can offer him—you all—the best you ever did is like a menstruous cloth in his sight. He cannot even look upon you. Even in your best state—even on your best day—you are an abomination. Your best is vile in His pure eyes. We have deceived ourselves into thinking that because we are "pretty good" that God will accept us. This is not the case. Do you understand that you are powerless to do that which is right? You cannot justify yourself? Your righteousness is as filthy rags and that in the flesh you cannot please God—by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified!

C. And so we see thirdly, that our justification is entirely a Miracle of God.

"Without blame" in the Greek LXX [the GREEK translation of the OLD TESTAMENT] is used to speak of sacrificial lambs that could be offered because they were spotless! God didn't accept just any sacrifice. It had to be spotless—acceptable. He chose us to present us spotless!

How can you present someone holy and spotless who is initially worthless, broken, and filthy? It takes a miracle of grace!!

"Before Him" The issue is not how we look to each other. The issue is, are we accepted by God? It doesn't matter what you think of me as long as I am accepted by God. But if I'm accepted by God all that any one could think of me won't matter, will it?

You know, when we have an accurate view of salvation, these false doctrines and heresies that have come into the church they're just swept away aren't they? This idea that you can lose your salvation? What a gross underestimation of what God does when He saves someone. You can lose whatever you do. We lose things all the time. God has never lost one of his sheep. He will not because He cannot or He wouldn't be God.

So God does this miracle of grace in our hearts and we are saved. We are so secure that it is as if we have already been finally redeemed and we are in heaven. Look at Romans 8. The end was in view even before you were born!

Romans 8:28-30

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called [effectual—John 6:44] according to *his* purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow [preplanned love relationship], he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Do you notice something about these verses? They're all in the past tense. This is all a finished thing. This is all what God has done. When He saves someone, it begins with foreknowledge, it ends in glorification. From beginning to end, God's choice encompasses it all.

Ephesians 1:4

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love"

1. Our Salvation is a gift—it's a miracle! The word "chosen" has the idea of something that God did. What our text tells me is that in verse 4 there is justification by grace. We were chosen to be justified—to be the recipients of God's justifying work. Our text tells us that salvation is entirely a gift of God. Justification is a gift. Look at Ephesians 2.

Ephesians 2:8-10

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Not only that, but we are saved on the basis of our faith. It is not of ourselves. Faith is the result of the work of God in our heart.

So not only is our salvation a gift, but...

2. Our very Faith is a gift from God—it's a miracle! How does God save a sinner? On the basis of faith alone in Jesus Christ alone, for God's glory alone! Faith is believing what His Son accomplished for sinners—believing that He lived a perfect life—that He was God in human flesh—died on a tree for sinners as a substitute—has been raised from the dead—ascended—and preserves those whom He saves—understanding that, and trusting the Son of God to save me. The Bible teaches that at the moment that there is that genuine faith turned toward Christ, the sinner is justified in God's sight. All his sins are washed away on the basis of that faith alone, apart from works. It means that God not only forgives your sins, and comes to live inside you in the Person of the Holy Spirit, but he takes all the perfect righteousness of His Son and imputes it to your account so that you don't have a zero balance on your account, you have positive righteousness—the very righteousness of Jesus. By this act of God, we are set apart, positive righteousness, all the righteousness of Christ now on your record. And yet, even this faith is a gift of God.

Ephesians 2:8

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God

You see faith is what pleases God. Without this regenerating faith, we cannot please God.

Romans 14:23

For whatsoever *is* not of faith is sin.

So if whatsoever is not of faith is sin, and in the flesh we cannot please God, then the only thing we can do when we believe is to praise God for granting us faith. But God not only grants us faith, he grants us repentance.

3. Repentance is a gift from God—it's also a miracle!

2 Timothy 2:25 tells us that it is God alone can "give [anyone] repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." God is the one who turns the heart.

The Bible says that "God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18).

If anything good is in you, then it is from God!

Philippians 2:13

For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.

How does God bring repentance and faith and salvation? God reveals Himself to the sinner through the Holy Spirit of God and through the word of God. The Holy Spirit reveals to the sinner his sin, his lack of righteousness and the judgment to come (John 16:8). It is faith that "cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). "The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul" (Psalm 19:7). The Spirit of God through the Word of God justifies the sinner.

As our text says, God has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love!

When God sees His Son, He sees someone holy and blameless, and now because you are in His Son, when He sees you He sees someone holy and blameless. That's substitution. That's justification. And at the very beginning, before time was, when God made His choice, the end was already in view. He didn't choose you based on foreseen faith, sort of elevate you, sort of get you started, and now God's waiting to see whether you'll pan out or not. No His choice of you included everything from the beginning to the end, so that when He chose you, you were as good as glorified in the heart and mind of God. He did not choose you because you were holy—He chose you so that He would make you holy!! Our completed redemption was in view when He made His choice.

Now let me make an important point here: Election doesn't justify anyone. You say what, I was saved before I was saved? No, election doesn't save. Election means you are chosen for salvation. But you must be saved by God in the realm of time, in your own personal history in a point in time when you trust Christ. No one is saved apart from hearing the Gospel. No one is saved apart from understanding the Gospel. No one is saved apart from believing the Gospel—trusting Christ. When you trusted Christ, that's when you were saved. But, your salvation was a sure thing because God chose you for salvation before time began and guaranteed by Himself that He would bring you to faith, and not only that, but He guaranteed by Himself that He would deliver you to Heaven, and have you stand before Him one day, holy and blameless! It's what you were chosen for.

Ok, so we see that our journey to holiness begins with our Justification.

- II. But we must also see that our justification is evidenced by our Sanctification.
"chosen...that we should be holy and without blame"

Christians were chosen to be holy and blameless before Him. That he would present us before His own presence acceptable.

1 Thessalonians 4:3

For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification,

We not only have justification, we also have sanctification. God does not simply justify you; it is His will that you would be experiencing holiness and blamelessness here. Not sinlessness—but blamelessness. Those whom God has chosen, He's given them His Spirit, from the time they believed to the time they are delivered into glory, there is a work called sanctification that is going on in the lives of everyone whom the Lord has justified. And that work of sanctification is the Lord progressively changing you for the rest of your life more and more into the image of His Son. We are not only a changed people—praise be to God—we are a *changing* people! He changed me when He saved me, and He's changing me today, and He'll be changing me for the rest of my life because I have not arrived, I never will arrive until the day comes that I'm glorified and with the Lord forever. So the rest of my time on this earth is going to be a time of growing. It's a time of being in school, it's a time of being purified, it's a time of the Lord changing me more and more into the image of His Dear Son and my Saviour. That's Christian growth, and that's what the Lord is doing in the life of every person that He's chosen, once he's saved them and brought them to faith in Christ.

- A. Be Diligent in your sanctification.

2 Peter 3:14

Be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

This can't be talking about justification, because you don't have to be diligent to be justified. Justification is what God does; here Peter is talking about sanctification. This is what happens in the lives of people whom God has chosen. They are diligent—do you hear the urgency in that word? Do

you hear the effort in that word? Don't ever believe that grace means that we don't work. No we don't work to save ourselves, but after we are saved, grace means that we work in the power that God provides. We work, assisted by, led by, empowered by the Spirit whose come to live in us, but it doesn't mean that we don't work. Paul was able to say, that by the grace of God "I laboured more than them all" (1 Corinthians 15:10). There are words used in the New Testament that refer to coming to the point of exhaustion as you labour in the power of the Spirit. Be diligent in your sanctification!!

Have you grown lackadaisical in your walk with God—kind of dull, you lack passion and feeling in your walk with God? Are you just going through the motions? Could it be said of you that there is a real, holy diligence in your life? And you are diligently pursuing the holiness and the blamelessness that you are destined for in Christ? Understanding that it's not you whose ultimately doing it, understanding the true nature of it, you are pursuing holiness and blamelessness by the power of the Spirit because you love God, and you don't want to engage in anything that would grieve Him.

Revelation 14:1-4

And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty *and* four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. 2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: 3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. 4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, *being* the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. 5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for *they are without fault before the throne of God.*

You see we are not naturally blameless. In fact, if the full scope be scene—we are to blame for all the sin in the world. It is mankind that chose to sin. It is God that chose to forgive man in the person of His Son. And yet we are called to be as these 144 thousand were—actively blameless—not sinless, this blamelessness speaks of the mercy and the grace of our God. When one of God's own has a heart set on pursuing holiness, a heart set on pursuing that blamelessness, and diligently pursuing that holiness and that blamelessness, God looks at that and sees it as it is. It is not sinlessness, but someone who has a heart that was true toward Him. That person is not sinless, but he is blameless. He is diligent to love and obey God out of a sincere heart. Does that describe *you*?

Galatians 6:9-10

Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. 10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

We were chosen to be holy and blameless before Him. Again, this speaks against the foreknowledge theory because God did not chose us based on any holiness or blamelessness in us. No, any holiness or blamelessness in

our lives is *due* to God's choice of us. It's the result of God's choice and grace. It's not the cause of it. There was no goodness, or holiness, or blamelessness in any one of us. No man has ever had a tender heart to seek after God. God chose us despite who we were, not because of who we were.

- B. Be Transparent in your sanctification. God chose us that we should live holy and blameless lives "BEFORE HIM" in love. We are to live every moment in His presence. Are you living transparently? Are you living every moment with God's eyes upon you? Is there anything you are hiding from the brethren today? What is it? You are not blameless. Christians do not hide things.

We confront sin; we do not hide it under the carpet.

James 5:16
Confess *your* faults one to another,

III. Finally, we see the Passion that fuels our Holiness "in love."

- A. Love is the Fruit of Holiness.

John 14:15
If ye love me, keep my commandments.

Christians were chosen to love God. There is a tremendous truth here. Love is the fruit of Holiness. We think of holiness as some legal thing—almost in an antiseptic way—hard, harsh, emotionless. But here we see that God makes our holiness tied to Him—tied to a relationship. It is not some distant concept or some far removed thing for only the most self-denying people. No, holiness has more to do with the commitment of your heart than it has to do with the strength of your will.

If I say to you someone is living holy, what kind of image comes to your mind? Stern, hard, harsh, legal, toe the line. But this verse tells us that when we are perfected in holiness, and perfected in blamelessness, what will we be left with? As we stand before God, we will stand there loving Him! And it points to the fact, that the reason we don't love God more than we do is because of our sin! And if we could just get sin out of the way, oh how our love would increase!

The great commandment "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God..."
Every ounce of everything that is in you! How many of us here are loving God that way? Well, don't you want to? Well, why don't you? What's the answer? Sin. What is it, that we could be preaching about such profound things, and some of you, if you'll be honest, you're not really moved by it. Well it could be that you don't know the Lord, but it could be that you are a believer and you are living in sin. Sin can take things that ought to be exciting to us, and they become dull. Sin can take things that ought to capture our hearts, and capture our imaginations, and capture our priorities, and capture our lifestyles, and we sort of push them off into a closet. That's what sin does. But praise be to God, there will come a day when the deepest desire of our heart which is to love the Lord with all that we are will become a

reality in heaven. We will experience the fullness of holiness, the fullness of blamelessness, and we will be standing there in perfect love toward Him!

That also teaches me this:

- B. Love must be the Fuel for holiness. What must motivate me is not Law but love! Why is it that Christians struggle so often in their walk with God? Could it be that they have misunderstood what the motivation for holiness is? It's not law, it's love! Love will never ignore the Law of God, love will confirm it, and establish it and walk in it. But law is not what motivates the Christian. Ask the average Christian, "Well, why don't you do that—well because I'm not supposed to!" Why are you not supposed to? "Because the Bible says I shouldn't." Oh, I see, so you would if you could. I mean you really want to, but you just can't. And then you ask someone else, why don't you do that? Because it doesn't please the Lord, and because I love Him, and because the deepest desire of my heart is to please Him. And because I don't want to do one thing that would grieve Him. Now you've found the motivation for holiness! Love is the fuel for holiness.

Conclusion: We were chosen to be holy... We can never be holy in ourselves. We are justified by the grace of God, and we are sanctified by the grace of God. But when a person is justified, he knows it. There is a love in the heart that consumes him and fuels him to higher and greater service for God. We were chosen to be holy!

Closing Hymn: 68 Holy, Holy, Holy