

Pentwater Bible Church

Ephesians Message 2 Predestination



The Book of Ephesians
Message Two
Predestination
Pentwater Bible Church
Daniel E. Woodhead Ph.D
September 12, 2010



Map of Ancient Ephesus

Today's Message:

Doctrine:

I. THE BELIEVER'S POSITION IN CHRIST. 1:1-3:21.

A. Paul's Apostolic Authority. 1:1,2.

Ephesians 1: 1-2 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints, which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul spent a considerable effort to remind his hearers that he was an apostle. Paul affirmed the apostolic authority that Christ gave him on the road to Damascus. Paul was indeed the apostle to the Gentiles. This epistle begins with the highest authority in the universe certifying his apostleship. It is therefore appropriate that he forcefully asserts the origin of the words he is about to convey. They are not his opinions or suggestions. They are God sent and must be understood if a Christian church is going to walk in the will of the Lord as well as experience the peace that surpasses all understanding. Our position “in Christ” is that important. God wants us to understand it as well as a human being living in time and space can understand it. His apostleship was divine and he wanted the Ephesians to realize this as he began to introduce *extremely important doctrinal* material related to salvation.

Paul needed to make these declarations as the skillful lawyer that he was in order to establish his authority for teaching these people. If there was a self serving sense within him the congregation would quickly identify it and turn away from him not realizing God’s will in the salvation of mankind.

From verse one we can see that he is directing this letter to two people groups. It is important to understand this audience because he is going to immediately discuss some fundamental aspects of the doctrine of Soteriology.

1. The Saints at Ephesus, which are *the believers* who have been regenerated in Christ.
2. The sub-group of the believers who *kept their faith* in Christ without wavering.

Finally in verse two the text turns to the author of salvation, God the Father and the perfecter, our Lord Jesus Christ. “Grace” expresses God’s steadfast unmerited love toward man and “peace” shows the relational state as a result of that grace. In other words after one believes by the Grace of God the peace of God enters our spirits and enables us to end the long war against God. Notice how the text introduces the first two persons of the Trinity. This will be followed by an introduction of the Holy Spirit, the third person in verses thirteen and fourteen. So the entire Godhead is present in the first chapter of this epistle.

B. All Spiritual Blessings. 1:3-14.

1. Chosen by the Father; Predestination. 1:3-6.

Ephesians 1: 3-6 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 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: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

This verse begins one long sweeping statement in Greek and goes without a major stop from the beginning of verse three to the end of verse fourteen. Paul touches on all the great biblical themes in that complex sentence—sanctification, adoption, redemption, and glorification—and they all rest on one foundational doctrine, the doctrine of election also known as predestination. We will discuss adoption and glorification in subsequent messages. The highest spiritual blessings stand on Ephesians 1:4 where the text says that God has *chosen us* in Him before the foundation of the world. It also says that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. God didn't look down the corridor of time to see who would choose Him before He decided or even acted in some random way to select us. Rather, by His sovereign will He chose who would be in the Body of Christ. The construction of the Greek verb for "chose" indicates God chose us for Himself. That means God acted totally independent of any outside influence. He made His choice totally apart from human will and purely on the basis of His sovereignty.

The term *predestination*, which follows those words, simply means to determine ones destiny *beforehand*. This term has produced much division in the Church of Jesus Christ since He departed back to Heaven. Mostly though this heated up with the reformers in the sixteenth century. Many theologians and Bible teachers have engaged in intensive debate over this term and entire denominations have been formed around it. We will provide a comprehensive explanation so that we can understand what the Bible teaches on this subject and also what some denominations teach that is actually outside the biblical text. Most discussions of this topic produce too little light and too much heat. It is taught in seminaries as a part of Soteriology (the doctrine of salvation) within systematic theology.

Four very important truths must be first advanced.

1. God is entirely sovereign over His creation, is in complete control of it, and He can do whatever He likes (II KI 19:15; Job 26:13; 38:4; Psalm 103:19; Prov. 3:19; Isa. 42:5; 44:6; 45:12; 66:2; Jonah 1:9; Rev. 1:8; 3:14; 4:11).
2. Man, living in time and space is incapable of realizing a full understanding of God and all His ways (Job 38 & 39 etc.).
3. Because He lives outside of time and space He can look down the long corridors of time and see all events and decisions simultaneously. He knows what will be decided in the human heart and what will happen in the future before it happens (Isa 44:7-8; 45:21; Psalm 139; Gen 3:15;)
4. Prior to salvation all humans deserve to enter Hell. Without God we cannot change and save ourselves.

Jeremiah 13: 23 Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil?

Romans 3: 10-12 according as it hath been written -- `There is none righteous, not even one; There is none who is understanding, there is none who is seeking after God. All did go out of the way, together they became unprofitable, there is none doing good, there is not even one.

Jesus said to His disciples, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you” (John 15:16). And in the same Gospel, John wrote, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12-13). And Paul said, “But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth” (2 Thess. 2:13).

Those statements defining God’s sovereign choice of believers are not in the Bible to cause controversy, as if God’s election means sinners don’t make decisions. Election does not exclude human responsibility or the necessity of each person to respond to the gospel by faith. Jesus said, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out” (John 6:37). Even though a simple reading of this verse appears to mean that God has chosen people to salvation before the world was formed, other verses indicate that mankind has to choose God in order to be saved (John 3:15; Acts 16:31 etc.). The dichotomy grows wider with Predestination seemingly tightening to mean that God has chosen *some people* but not all to salvation (Romans 9:18; John 10: 25-29). On the other hand some verses indicate that God wants all people to be saved (John 12:32; 2 Corinthians 5: 14 etc.).

You must understand that your faith and salvation rest entirely on God’s election (Acts 13:48). And yet the day you came to Jesus Christ, you did so because of an internal desire—you did nothing against your will. But even that desire is God-given—He supplies the necessary faith so we can believe (Eph. 2:8). If your salvation depends on you, then praise to God is ridiculous. But, in truth, your praise to God is completely appropriate, because in forming the Body before the world began, He chose you by His sovereign decree apart from any of your works. The doctrine of election demonstrates God being God, exercising divine prerogatives. For that we must praise Him.

Some are shocked to find that God seemingly didn’t choose everyone to salvation. Jesus said, “And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day” (John 6:39). God the Father chose certain individuals to form a Body as a gift to Jesus Christ. Every believer is part of that love gift to Christ—a gift of the Father’s love to His Son.

To those who say that is unjust, Paul answers: “What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion’” (Rom. 9:14-15).

So why does God still find fault in unrepentant sinners when He didn’t choose them? Doesn’t this deny human responsibility? Is it fair for God to still hold them accountable? FAIR? What is fair? Humans all have a different vision of fairness depending on our experience base. God is in control of His creation and as such can make His own rules. Paul answers all such questions with a rebuke:

Romans 9: 20-21 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?” Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? (NKJV)

CERTAINLY IT DOES!

Some believe that is terribly cold and calculating. But that is only one side of God's sovereign election. Paul continues in the next chapter by saying: “

Romans 10: 9-13 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.” (NKJV)

These two sides of God's truth; His sovereignty in choosing us; (Romans 9) and our responsibility to confess and believe (Romans 10) is impossible for us to reconcile and understand. But Scripture declares *both aspects of salvation are true* (John 1:12-13). It's our duty to acknowledge both and accept them by faith.

This seemingly unsolvable difference in two truthful biblical concepts that can't be reconciled is called an *antinomy*. It is not a paradox or a contradiction. Those concepts require that one or the other is untrue. This situation is when *both* are true. Another biblical antinomy is the Trinity. God is one God in three persons. Both of those imply that either one or the other is true, not both. However, both God's Divine Sovereignty and man's ability to choose are true. Hence, they provide antimony. The human's problem is that we are unsettled with antinomies and try to take one side or the other.

Many denominations take the predestination verses in the Bible as fact and while they can't reconcile predestination with man's choice they say man has no choice. In taking this position they must invalidate the verses that clearly show that man has choice. Others take the opposite position and say man has all the choice and God does not choose. They then relegated the verses, which clearly state that God has chosen us to obscurity, or restate them to mean something else. When we don't accept both ideas as fact and choose one or the other we are engaging in heretical acts. Reformed churches historically take the total predestination position and Baptist churches usually take the other. The total predestination position is usually called Calvinism after John Calvin the French reformer of the sixteenth century. The entire emphasis on man's exclusive choice in the matter of salvation is usually called Arminianism after Jacob Arminius a sixteenth century Dutch theologian who advanced this concept. The problem for us is that both concepts are true and we must accept them as such.

Somewhere in the councils of God this makes sense. It never will on this earth and many have tried to no avail unless they take one side or the other. This then results in heretical teaching. The Doctor of souls will do all he can to keep heresies out of the church. They are to the Church of Jesus Christ what disease is to a Medical Doctor that cares for human bodies in time and space. Both legitimate Doctors will do all they can to prevent or stop heresies/diseases in their respective bodies. Unfortunately there are more quacks in the spiritual realm than in the physical temporal one. This is because the prize for pure spiritual truth is eternal life. It is the greatest prize on earth to receive. Nothing

has greater value. As evidence of this we see many false prophets, corrupt denominations and seminary teachings. As a result few find eternal salvation. Then Satan has accomplished one of his goals; the eternal destruction of human souls.

Matthew 7: 13-15 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

The deception and leading into heresy by religious authorities is not new. Jesus condemned the religious authorities of His day for leading the Jews away from eternity.

Matthew 23: 13-15 But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves (ESV).

What is important for us is to clearly explain the antimony and continue to witness for Christ. We never know who will accept. We also cannot take the position that God has chosen those who will accept His call and stop telling others. We must always praise the God of the universe for who He is and stay humble for allowing us to believe. Never, never, never, never, give up.

2. Redeemed by the Son, Grace. 1:7-12.

Ephesians 1: 7-12 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

Christ delivered us from slavery to Satan. The cost of Christ's blood is the measure of the wealth of God's unmerited favor to every believer. It was accomplished not "out of" but "according to" the wealth of His grace. We are redeemed through His blood from our sin. That is, while we might continue to have sin in our lives we have been saved from its spiritual recourses and have the means (Holy Spirit) by which we can stop sinning. Further if we do sin we are already forgiven (at the cross) and can confess it to reestablish our closeness to the holy God we serve. We do not lose our salvation when we sin; we

temporarily stop our sanctification (growth in Christ becoming more Christ like) and closeness to Him. If we continue to sin we jeopardize our position in the Kingdom (Matthew 25: 14-30) when that is set up and lose rewards but, we do *not lose* our salvation (I Corinthians 3: 15).

The mystery Paul speaks of here is the Body of Christ (the Church), which was not revealed in the Old Testament. God only revealed it in NT times according to His divine providence. This mystery is God's good pleasure to purpose in Christ to bring all things in heaven and on earth under Christ's headship in the consummation of time. The words to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment are literally, "unto the dispensation of the fullness of the times." The "dispensation" (*oikonomia*) is an arrangement or administration. This dispensation discussed here is the Millennial Kingdom when "the times" in God's purposes will be completed (fulfilled), and all things both spiritual and material will be under Christ and His rule. This does not mean that everybody will be saved; only that sin's chaotic effects will be removed. The last verse refers to Jewish believers and not Gentile believers because the Jews did precede the Gentiles chronologically in the faith (Acts 1:8; 13:46; 28:25-28).

Christ has set the sinner free from his sin and has revealed His will that all things will be headed up in Christ at the end of the ages, including the Jewish believers who first trusted in Him.

3. Sealed by the Holy Spirit. 1:13,14.

Ephesians 1: 13-14 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

When we believed and fully trusted that Jesus of Nazareth is exactly who the Bible says He is we received the Holy Spirit. One way of expressing the certainty of the Christian hope is to say that the people of God have been "Sealed with the Spirit." The term occurs three times in the Epistles; (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30). In the Old Testament the literal meaning of *sphragizo* is somewhat more common, but in the New Testament (at times also in the Old) the term is used only metaphorically, in the sense of 'ratify', 'confirm', 'attest'. In the three texts in which Paul uses the term it refers to the marking of the believers as God's property. The Holy Spirit is the mark of the child of God. But the sealing has a reference to the end of the age, for God will deliver all those who have his stamp on them (Rev. 7:4). However, sealing with the Spirit is an assurance of the hope of the believer and can be seen as the "earnest" (deposit) of the Spirit (2 Cor. 1:21.).

Looking at 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; and Eph. 1:14, we have the three passages in which the Spirit is spoken of as the "earnest." The word *arrhabon* is a Semitic lending term meaning "surety" or "pledge." As a rule the word occurs as a verb in the Old Testament, but always with the basic idea of *surety or guarantee*. Nowhere, however, does it signify the partial payment of a money debt. It is as a word used by those who grant loans so that

in Greek that ‘earnest-money’ becomes more than a pledge; it is a partial down payment. A pledge is taken back when the contract is fulfilled, but earnest money is payment in advance of future full payment. God who has promised us to redeem us will never take back His promise. It is against His nature.

Therefore, when we believe, the Holy Spirit seals us with Himself. This sealing is the earnest deposit that God gives the believer as a pledge that the believer has eternal security and God will redeem His chosen at the “Day of Redemption”. We can’t lose our salvation once we truly accept Him and Holy Spirit enters us at the point of true belief.

Please Call or e-mail with any questions or comments.
Pentwaterbiblechurch@scofieldinstitute.org 616-928-0974