
The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON V : OPENING EULOGY PART ONE: THE ELECTIVE PURPOSE OF GOD THE FATHER (1:3-14)

Greeting

¹ Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,

To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus:

² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Blessings in Christ

God the Father

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

God the Son

⁷ In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace ⁸ which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, ⁹ having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, ¹⁰ that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth — in Him. ¹¹ In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, ¹² that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

God the Holy Spirit

¹³ In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. (NKJV)

The Selection of the Father (1:4-6)

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. (KJV)

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will — to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. (NIV)

according as He did choose us in him before the foundation of the world, for our being holy and unblemished before Him, in love, having foreordained us to the adoption of sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, in which He did make us accepted in the beloved, (Young's Literal Translation)

“Having stated that God is praised because he has enriched the believer with every spiritual benefit for his spiritual well-being, Paul now explains that these spiritual benefits are based on the work of the three persons of the Trinity: the selection of the Father (vv. 4-6), the sacrifice of the Son (vv. 7-12), and the seal of the Holy Spirit (vv. 13-14). This division is obvious in the text because of the inclusion of the three persons of the Godhead and also because there is a similar refrain at the end of each person’s work (vv. 6, 12, 14)... The action described in these verses is assigned to the Father. Although there is no specific mention of the Father in this passage, it is certainly implied. First, certainly God is the subject of the whole passage. Since the verses following this section explicitly mention Christ (vv. 10, 12) and the Holy Spirit (v. 13), it seems safe to assume that in this section Paul is referring to the only remaining person of the Trinity, the Father. Second, God is already called Father in verse 2. Third, immediately after the pæan of praise, Paul prays on behalf of the Ephesians to God (continuing to be the subject of the present passage) who is called the Father of glory (v. 17). Fourth, this epistle is known for the abundant references to the Trinity (1:17; 2:18, 22; 3:4-5, 14-17; 4:4-6; 5:18-20) and hence it seems unlikely that the Father would be left out in this context.” [Hoehner, 174] **“The salvation is according to a well-ordered plan, and worked out without accident or confusion to a glorious end. What love desired, that wisdom planned, intelligence chose, will decreed, and Providence worked out, making contributory thereto the whole universe with all its material laws and spiritual intelligences. No detail is left to chance; all means are included, whether friendly or hostile. Each link of the chain is forged by infinite wisdom and power, and the whole chain, infallibly strong in all its parts, extends from eternity to eternity.”** [Carroll, 74f]

V. 4 — Just as — καθὼς [kathōs] This could be understood in a comparative manner (“*just as*” – NASB, NRSV, “*even as*” – ASV, RSV, or “*according as*” – AV) or in a causal sense (“*because,*” “*since,*” or “*inasmuch as*”) as it is used later in this epistle (5:3). The differences are slight, the sense being either “*the manner in which God blesses believers is through the Triune Godhead; election, redemption and the sealing of the Spirit is the spiritual benefit and are sufficient for the well-being of the believer*” (comparative), or “*election, redemption and the seal of the Spirit are the basis for all other spiritual blessings*” (causal).

he chose us — ἐξελέξατο ἡμᾶς [exelexato hēmas] from ἐκλέγομαι [eklegomai]. In classical literature it almost always had the sense in the active of “to pick, to single out” and was especially used of rulers, oarsmen, and soldiers. Passively it meant “to be selected, to be chosen.” In the Greek middle voice it means “to pick out for oneself, to choose or select for oneself,” e.g., it was used to pick or pull out one’s gray hairs. It appears 125x in the LXX with basically the same meaning: “*a carefully conceived choice.*” It was used of David selecting stones for his sling (a Sam 17:40), God’s choice of a people (Deut 7:6-7), the selection of the priesthood (Num 16:5, 7), or the choice of a king (1 Sam 10:24). In the NT the verb is used 22x, again, with the same meaning. Some lessons from this word:

- **God is most frequently the subject** — this is true in both the OT and NT.
- **the choice was made not in a vacuum but with all options known beforehand** — God did not choose us in a vacuum but in the light of all known options: “*He chose us*” from the whole human race. E.g., Lot surveyed the land and chose the Jordan valley (Gen 13:11); Moses presented the options and asked Israel to choose blessing or cursing (Deut 30:19); Samuel chose David after seeing all of Jesse’s sons (1 Sam 16:11-13); God chose Israel from among the nations (Deut 14:2); Jesus selected His disciples from among the other disciples (Luke 6:13); the church selected seven deacons (Acts 6:5); Paul and Barnabas was chosen to represent the Jerusalem council to others (Acts 15:22, 25), and so on. **Note this is not to imply God’s choice rested upon any action of those He chose; rather this is stressing the fact that God did not just haphazardly or randomly pick those chosen. There was great wisdom exercised in His selection, but that wisdom and reason for choosing is wrapped up in the Godhead, not contingent upon His creatures. “Nothing that has happened since creation led God to elect his people; his election was not a response to human sin or the failure of Israel, but was intended from the time he intended the universe. God is not a chess player who makes his next move only after he has seen the last move of his opponent.”** [Best, 120]
- **this election was of individuals** — This is not “collective election” as some argue (*contra* Best, 120). The “us” are individuals out of humanity. To argue that Paul would have written “you” (singular) if he had meant individuals is invalid, because Paul was not writing to an individual but to churches in the area of Ephesus. Nor would he have written “you” (plural) and thus isolate it to the recipients of the letter. Rather Paul wrote “us” which included himself as well as his recipients. It is individuals who receive the blessings (v. 3) and it is individuals who are sealed (v. 13) so one cannot argue election is not personal. “Here in Ephesians, the object of God’s choice is *us*, that is, believers, who now belong to the people of God and praise *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. There is clearly a corporate dimension to God’s election. It was God’s intention to create for himself a people perfectly conformed to the likeness of His Son (Rom 8:29-30). **It is inappropriate, however, to suggest that election in Christ is primarily corporate rather than personal and individual.** We have already seen that throughout the paragraph the recipients of ‘every spiritual blessing’ are mentioned again and again (vv. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14) — in what has been called an ‘ecclesiological focus’. The same group of people is clearly in view. Some of the divine gifts, for example, redemption and the forgiveness of sins in Christ (v. 7), together with the sealing of the Holy Spirit following belief in the gospel of salvation (vv. 13, 14), must be understood as coming to believers personally and individually (without thereby denying the corporate element). The plurals (‘we’, ‘us’) are common, not corporate. **God has chosen a people for himself in Christ, and this includes members of that people.** Further, to suggest that election in Christ is ‘not related primarily to individual salvation but to God’s purpose’ introduces an unnecessary ‘either-or.’” [O’Brien, 99] “He hath chosen *us*. By *us* is not meant the apostle alone, because there is nothing in the context to indicate or justify this restriction. The blessings consequent on the election here spoken of, are in no sense peculiar to the apostle. Neither does the word refer to any external community or society as such. It is not us Ephesians, as Ephesians, nor us Corinthians, nor us Romans, as formerly the Jews were chosen by a national election. But it is us believers, scattered here and there. It is those who are the actual recipients of the blessings spoken of, viz. holiness, sonship, remission of sins, and eternal life.... Others say the meaning is, ‘He hath chosen us because we are in him.’ The foresight of our faith or union with Christ, being the ground of this election. This however cannot be admitted. (1) Because faith, or a living union with Christ, is the very blessing to which we are chosen. (2) Because it introduces into the passage more than the words express. (3) Because in this immediate connection, as well as elsewhere, the ground of this election is declared to be the good pleasure of God.” [Hodge, 29f]
- **the word itself bears no negative connotation towards those not chosen; they were not passed over because of anything inherently different in them, nor did those who were selected have a claim or legal claim to be chosen** — e.g., choosing David meant rejecting his brothers but not necessarily despising his brothers; when God chose Levi for the priesthood it does not mean He despised the rest of the tribes; when Jesus chose His disciples it does not mean He despised the others. Therefore reprobation is not explicitly contrasted with God’s choosing in and of itself. This is not to say there is not animosity towards the non-elect, but the animosity towards the non-elect is no different than the animosity towards the elect if it were not for the sacrificial death of Christ. **“In fact, it is clear in Scripture that human beings come short of his glory and do not even seek him (Rom 3:10-11). God did not choose anyone because they were holy**

and thus had a legal claim to be chosen. On the contrary, all people are sinners and deserve rejection. There was no obligation on God's part to choose anyone but he freely chose some and this is evidence of his great grace. The point is that God had not taken the initiative, no one would have his everlasting presence and life. The real problem is not why he had not chose some, but why he chose any. No wonder God is to be praised." [Hoehner, 176]

- **God election involves love and intense personal interest** — in the NT the middle voice is always used when referring to God choosing His own. Moule states this *"calls attention to the whole subject being concerned in the action; it shows personal interest."* [Moule, *Idiom Book*]. A. T. Robertson says "The only difference between the active and middle voices is that the middle calls especial attention to the subject. In the active voice the subject is merely acting; in the middle the subject is acting in relation to himself somehow." [Robertson, *Grammar*] "Hence, *God chose with great personal interest rather than a random impersonal choice.*" [Hoehner, 175f]

- **the choice brings both privilege and responsibility** — Paul continues in this verse to state one purpose of our election was to create a holy and blameless people for the Lord. God chose Abraham so that in him the nations of the earth would be blessed. God chose Israel was not for self-indulgence but for the blessing of the nations: it was a privilege but also a summons to service. *"Election does bring privilege, but it also carries with it responsibility. The divine purpose in our election was not simply to repair the damage done by sin but also to fulfil God's original intent for humankind, namely, to create for himself a people perfectly conformed to the likeness of his Son (Rom 8:29-30)."* [O'Brien, 100]

- **election is a balance of the sovereignty of God and human responsibility** — note the sovereignty of God in these verses do not negate Paul's request for prayer for the saints in 6:18f. "As with the Old so with the New Israel the choice is emphatically sovereign; 'not according to our works' (2 Tim 1:9). On the other hand, *it takes effect through means; a truth perfectly harmonious with sovereign purpose, while often conveyed in the language of ordinary contingency.* Cp. 2 Tim 2:10; and, by way of illustration, Acts 27:22 with 31." [Moule, 46] *"Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory."* (2 Tim 2:10 NIV) *"Because we cannot stand the tension of mystery, paradox, or antinomy, we are inclined to adjust what the Bible teaches so that it will fit our own systems of order and consistency. But that presumptuous approach is unfaithful to God's Word and leads to confused doctrine and weakened living."* [MacArthur, 12f]

- **the results of God's choosing His own is thanksgiving** — "It is significant that the language of election before the foundation of the world occurs here in the context of thanksgiving (cf. also 1 Thess 1:4; 2:13). It is part of an expression of gratitude for God's inexplicable grace, not a logical deduction about the destiny of individuals based on the immutability of God's decrees. And, unlike the language of Rom 9:13, 18, 22, Eph 1:4 provokes absolutely no speculation about the negative side of election, reprobation. *Overwhelmed by the blessing of being chosen in Christ, the writer does not attempt to find explanations but can only praise the God who is the source of such blessing.*" [Lincoln, 24]

- **election itself is not the dividing issue** — much to the surprise of some, election itself is not the divisive question. The first five years of my Christian life I attended Dayton Baptist Temple, a high-evangelism "easy-believism" church. The pastor during that time was Pastor Gerald Fleming, a man with whom I may disagree but to this day hold in high regard. Yet while at Dayton Baptist Temple I heard sermons on election on several occasions. Pastor Fleming believed in election. It could even be successfully argued that the Pope himself believes in election. That is not the issue. **The question which divides Christianity is this: upon what is election based?** Does God choose based upon our good works and our remaining faithful unto the end? Does God choose based upon Him looking down through eternity and "fore-seeing" those who will accept His Son when given the opportunity (e.g., Pastor Fleming's teaching)? Does God actually only "chooses Christ" and therefore anyone who is "in Christ" one of the elect? Does God only choose corporately but not individually? Does God choose the elect based upon anything found within themselves? If you answered any of those questions "yes" then theologically you are an Arminian (or Pelagian). But if you believe God chose the elect based upon no merit within themselves but that the reasons is based upon His good pleasure, then you are a Calvinist (I realize the terms are weak and often misused but they are the accepted division within theology and I use them as such).

- **election and man's free will** — Those who deny the truths taught here in Eph 1 often do so on the basis of the ability of man to choose or reject God based upon their own will. There are several manners by which we can approach this question; allow me to first give an illustration prior to explaining my own position. To begin: I would not hesitate to admit that *man's will is as free as the will of God.* If one would consider that last statement, they would admit that concept is truly astounding. After all, of anyone in the universe, God must truly have a "free will." I cannot think of anyone who would ever deny such a statement. But accepting the free will of God, let us ask ourselves several questions: can God sin? (Isa 6:3) Can God lie? (Titus 1:2) Can God not be faithful? (1 Tim 2:13) Can God be tempted with evil? (James 1:13) The answers to all these questions are obvious but how can we reconcile that with the "free will" of God? The reason God has a free will yet cannot sin is because *the will of God is in bondage to His nature.* God is holy and therefore, even with a "free will," cannot sin. In like manner we can answer the question: does man have a free will? The answer is *"yes, man's will is free to act within the constraints of his nature."* That raises the question of the nature of man which we will not take time to develop at this time but is without question fallen and depraved (Eph 2:1-3; Rom 3:10-18, 23). *It is for that reason that theologians speak of only Adam truly having a "free will" in the sense used by most people today.* Adam was created innocent from sin yet capable of choosing. Only Adam truly could have chosen to

follow the Lord or disobey and sin; but since that initial choice of Adam, all his progeny has a fallen nature and therefore cannot willingly choose to obey the Lord without the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit.

● **why did God decide to rescue sinners from their just judgment?** — The question as to why the Lord decided to save some out of fallen mankind has several answers: for His own glory, because of His love for sinners, et. al. But I believe there is another reason which is not too often discussed. Follow along:

*“Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, **promised before time began**” (Titus 1:1,2 NKJV)*

Paul states part of his ministry is the evangelism and edification of sinners, being used by God to bring the elect to salvation. Since no one knows who the elect is, Paul preached to everyone, knowing the Lord would save some. But notice specifically Paul’s comment of a promise which occurred *“before time began”* (NKJV, literally *“before time eternal”*). Others translates the phrase as *“before the world began”* (Geneva, KJV); *“before the ages began”* (ESV); *“before the beginning of time”* (NIV). So if in eternity past the Lord made a promise to save, sanctify and glorify sinners, the question is to whom did He make the promise? Not to sinners because there were no humans in eternity past. It probably does not refer to angels because at this time there were probably no angels either, as well as the fact that there are no saved angels (there are angels who never fell and angels who departed their original state but no angel will ever be saved). So to whom was the promise made? Let us look at another verse:

*“who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us **in Christ Jesus before time began**” (2 Tim 1:9 NKJV)*

Here is the same wording *“before time began”* as in Titus, the only two times this exact phrase is used in the NT. This I believe may give us the answer to our question: ***before time began, before the creation of anything else, God the Father made an inner-trinitarian promise to the Son to save, sanctify and glorify sinners, and He was going to do it for the Son. “Why would He do that? Because He loves the Son and the Son celebrates the mutual love that He has with the Father and because love gives, the Father determined in his eternal love within the trinity to express His love for the Son by giving His Son a gift. That gift is a redeemed humanity; i.e., a bride.”*** (from a sermon on election by John MacArthur) In the Semitic culture of the OT the father always chose the brides for their sons. This pictures the Father choosing a bride for His Son to express His love for the Son. ***“That in the covenant of redemption from eternity such a promise (of the Father to the Son in the interest of all the elect) was actually made is clearly implied in the fact that believers are viewed as ‘given’ to Christ by the Father, in order that they may inherit life everlasting in its most glorious manifestation*** (John 17:6, 9, 24; cf. also Ps 89:3, based on II Sam 7:12-14; cf. Heb 1:5).” (William Hendriksen, NT Commentary: Thessalonians, Timothy and Titus [Baker Book House; Grand Rapids MI] 1987; p341)

“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.” (John 6:37 NKJV)

*“Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: ‘Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, **that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.**”* (John 17:1,2 NKJV)

*“Father, I desire that **they also whom You gave Me** may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”* (John 17:24 NKJV)

“We are being saved because we are caught up in a glorious divine expression of love between the Father and the Son. It is WAY beyond us. We are in a sense saved not as ends in ourselves but as a means to an end. We don’t deserve to be saved, hell is not unjust, hell is just. Eternal punishment is just. But God is merciful to us, not because of some value which we possess but because He so values His Son as to give to His Son a redeemed humanity who will adore him forever for saving them, adding a dimension of adoration and praise that angels cannot give. And the Son having received his bride will give himself and his bride back to the Father in a reciprocal act of love (1 Cor 15:25-28). This is where it all finally ends.... Election is not some philosophical thing, some abstraction but it is the heart and soul of all redemption.” (from a sermon on election by John MacArthur)

● **why has God revealed to us election?** — There are many things about God that we cannot understand nor has He felt obligated to reveal to us (Deut 29:29). That being so, then why has God chosen to reveal the truth of election to us? Negatively, this is not revealed to make us sit back and make us lazy, leaving the work of salvation to God. It was not revealed to make us complacent; Paul says he endured all things for the sake of the elect (2 Tim 2:10). Nor was it revealed to make us hard-hearted and unconcerned; Paul says he had a great burden, so much so that he could wish himself accursed for his brethren’s sake (and he said that in the greatest chapter on the sovereignty of God: Rom 9:1-3). Positively:

Election is pride-crushing. And that pride-crushing is at the heart of all true worship.

Election is God-exalting. Salvation comes all from God and nothing from us. Unto Him belongs all glory.

Election is joy-producing. Our hopelessness strengthens our joy since the Lord has chosen us. We are loved

with an everlasting love.

Election is a privilege granting truth. Eph 1:3

Election is a holiness-producing doctrine. Nothing produces thankfulness as a motive for holiness than this doctrine.

Election is a strength-giving doctrine. This gives us peace about everything.

I can still remember my struggle with this doctrine (which lasted several years) and clearly remember the night that it hit home with all the force of the Holy Spirit. I could have gone to hell and could not have done anything to change that fact (not that there was anything stopping me other than my own sinful will but until that will was broken, I could never come to Christ). It is not that God has a plan that involved the death of Christ for sinners, and upon hearing the gospel I responded and accepted it after considerable thought. No, it was rather that the offer of the gospel was given and I willingly rejected it, having no desire for God and not willing to turn from my sinful life. But it was then that the Holy Spirit (the “Hound of Heaven”) pursued and wooed my rebellious heart until “in the day of His power” I yielded to the Risen Saviour. That evening when God opened my eyes to this truth was one of the most worshipful times I have ever had as a believer.

When one realizes the immense importance of life, the dire consequences of one’s decisions which effect eternity (either with or without God), and the awesome burden of the seriousness of death, it can be overwhelming at times. Sometimes when the weight gets too heavy, it is good to rest on the sovereignty of God. “*Who is sufficient for these things?*” (2 Cor 2:14-16)

Supernaturalistic									Naturalistic	
Evangelical						Sacerdotal				
Particularistic			Universalistic							
Consistently Particularistic		Inconsistently Particularistic								
Supralapsarian	Infralapsarian	Amyraldian	Lutheran	Wesleyan	Pure Universalistic	Anglican	Roman	Orthodox Greek	Remonstrant	Pelagian
Election of some to eternal life with God.	Permission of Fall — guilt, corruption and total inability.	Permission of Fall — corruption, guilt and moral inability.	Permission of Fall — guilt, corruption and total inability.	Permission of Fall — guilt, corruption and total inability.	Permission of Fall.	Permission of sin.	Permission of Fall — loss of supernatural righteousness.	Permission of Fall — loss of original righteousness, involving loss of knowledge of God and proneness to evil.	Permission of Fall — (physical) deterioration (followed by moral).	Gift of free will by virtue of which each may do all that is required of him.
Permission of Fall — guilt, corruption and total inability.	Election of some to life in Christ.	Gift of Christ to render salvation possible to all.	Gift of Christ to render satisfaction for the sins of the world.	Gift of Christ to render satisfaction for the sins of the world.	Predestination of all to life.	Gift of Christ to make satisfaction for the sins of all men.	Gift of Christ to offer satisfaction for all human sins.	Gift of Christ to reconcile sinful mankind with God.	Gift of Christ to render gift of sufficient grace possible.	Gift of the law and gospel to illuminate the way and persuade to walk in it.
Gift of Christ to redeem the elect and ground offer to all.	Gift of Christ to redeem his elect and ground offer to all.	Election of some for gift of moral ability.	Gift of means of grace to communicate saving grace.	Remission of original sin to all and gift to all of sufficient grace.	Gift of Christ to expiate the sin of all.	Establishment of Church as living agent for communicating God's sufficient grace.	Institution of the Church and the sacraments, to apply satisfaction of Christ.	Establishment of the Church "for the continual supply of the benefits of the cross."	Gift of sufficient (suasive) grace to all.	Gift of Christ to (expiate past sin and to) set good example.
Gift of the Holy Spirit to save the redeemed.	Gift of the Holy Spirit to save the redeemed.	Gift of the Holy Spirit to work moral ability in the elect.	Predestination to life of those who do not resist the means of grace.	Predestination to life of those who improve sufficient grace.	Gift of the Spirit to apply the expiation of Christ to all.	Communication of this grace through the sacraments as indispensable channels.	Application of satisfaction of Christ through sacraments, under operation of second causes.	Instruction, justification and edification through the ordinances of the Church.	Salvation of all who freely co-operate with this grace.	Acceptance of all who walk in right way.
Sanctification of all the redeemed and regenerated.	Sanctification of all the redeemed and regenerated.	Sanctification by the Spirit.	Sanctification through the means of grace.	Sanctification of all who cooperate with sufficient grace.	Salvation of all.	Salvation through the sacrament of baptism imparting life and of the Eucharist nourishing it.	Building up in holy life of all to whom the sacraments are continued.	Building up in grace through the seven sacraments.	Sanctification by co-operation with grace.	Continuance in right-doing by voluntary effort.

(from B. B. Warfield's *The Plan of Salvation*)