

**Blessed Beyond Measure:  
The Sovereign Work of the Father  
Ephesians 1:3-6**

**INTRODUCTION**

Last Sunday we began a study of Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus under the banner of **Ephesians: In Christ**. We presented a good (general) working outline for this letter would be:

**Emphasis:** \_\_\_\_\_ *foundation – Ephesians 1-3*  
(the \_\_\_\_\_: *what God has done or accomplished on behalf of His people*)

- **Sovereignty & Grace: The Foundations of Our Faith (1:1-2:10)** Salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone to the glory of God alone
- **Reconciliation & Peace: The Results of God's Grace (2:11-3:21)** The mystery of the church revealed

**Emphasis:** \_\_\_\_\_ *application – Ephesians 4-6*  
(the \_\_\_\_\_: *what we are empowered and motivated to do by virtue of what God has done or accomplished on behalf of His people*)

- **Walking & Growing: The Believer's Lifestyle (4:1-32)**
- **Following & Submitting: The Imitator's Path (5:1-6:9)**
- **Clashing & Conquering: The Warrior's Strategy (6:10-20)**
- **Final Greetings: Glad Benedictions (6:21-24)**

When we read **Ephesians 1-3**, we are to be impressed with the magnitude of God's work for us, awe-struck at His grace toward us, and filled with gratitude for His gift of life to us. Then, when we read the imperatives of **Ephesians 4-6**, we will understand why we are to live righteously. We will want to. And by His grace we will.

For this morning, we focus our attention on **Ephesians 1:3-14**. Most of Paul's Epistles begin with an expression of thanks to God for certain spiritual qualities produced by divine grace and power in the readers' lives (cf. **Rom. 1:8ff.**; **1 Cor. 1:4ff.**; **Phil. 1:3ff.**; **Col. 1:3ff.**, et al.). **Ephesians**, however, is different. Here, instead of the customary thanksgiving, there is what more appropriately may be called a **doxology**—a majestic hymn of praise to God.

Two matters should be considered before we attempt to interpret it. *The first is its* \_\_\_\_\_.

*The second matter to consider is the* \_\_\_\_\_.

The entire eulogy (vv. 3–14) can be considered as identifying the **work of the Father** in choosing, predestining, and adopting; the **work of the Son** in redeeming, forgiving, and granting an inheritance; and the **work of the Spirit** in sealing and serving as the pledge of our inheritance.

*Let's dig in...please note...*

**I. Divine Blessings: their** \_\_\_\_\_ **(1:3)**

**II. Divine Blessings: the** \_\_\_\_\_ **in which they are** \_\_\_\_\_ **(1:3)**

Two expressions define the sphere in which God's people are blessed. **One** is the phrase "*in the heavenly places*" (literally, "*in the heavenlies*").

*The other phrase defining the sphere of Christian blessings is "in Christ."*

### III. Divine Blessings: the \_\_\_\_\_ on which they come (1:4–6)

The present passage deals with the point-of-beginning in spiritual matters—both for the individual Christian and for the whole body of Christ—and traces it back to eternity, to the sovereign will of God.

The two key expressions are “\_\_\_\_\_ *us in Him*” (v.4) and “*he* \_\_\_\_\_ *us*” (v. 5).

Since all else in the passage revolves around these two ideas, it is necessary that we understand their meanings. “*Chose us*” means that God has chosen Christians to be His people, to be the means of carrying out His purpose in the world. The root meaning of the Greek word is “*to pick out*” or “*select*” (*for oneself*). It is used in various connections in the New Testament—for example, of Christ’s choice of the apostles (**Luke 6:13**), of the early church’s choice of deacons (**Acts 6:5**), and of the selection of official delegates by the Jerusalem conference (**Acts 15:22, 25**). **In the present passage, where the word relates specifically to God’s selection of sinners for salvation and service, there is a connotation of kindness and love.**

“*He predestined us*,” the other focal term in our passage, translates a Greek word that literally means “*to mark off in advance*” The idea is that of determining in advance. In the New Testament it is always used of God as determining from eternity (cf. **Acts 4:28; Rom. 8:29-30; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:11**). NT scholar Leon Morris writes: “*We should not see predestination as a grim process whereby God condemns great numbers of people to eternal loss. Rather, it is the outworking of a loving purpose whereby he delivers great numbers of people for salvation.*” (Morris, *Expository Reflections on the Letter to the Ephesians*, pp. 17-18)

Both of these expressions (“**chosen**,” “**predestined**”) are key terms for what is known as the **doctrine of election**. *This doctrine [of election], in a broad sense, may be defined as an act of choice whereby God selects an individual or group out of a larger company for a purpose or destiny that He appoints. In a more*

*restricted sense, it is God’s gracious and sovereign choice of individual sinners to be saved in and through Christ.* (Vaughan, *Ephesians, Founders Study Guide Commentary*, p. 20)

Here’s another **definition**: “*Election is the sovereign act of God before the foundation of the earth by which he chooses a certain number of people to be the special objects of his grace resulting in their eternal salvation, not based on any foreseen merit or faith on their part but simply because of His good pleasure*” (“**Unconditional Election**,” in *Whomever He Wills: A Surprising Display of Sovereign Mercy*, eds. Matthew Barrett and Tom Nettles, p. 41)

Here’s John Piper weighing in on this **subject**: “*Your salvation did not begin with your choice to believe in Christ — a choice which was real and necessary. Your salvation began before the creation of the universe when God planned the history of redemption, ordained the death and the resurrection of his Son, and chose you to be his own through Christ.*” (<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/god-has-chosen-us-in-him-before-the-foundation-of-the-earth>)

**The doctrine of election is an affront to human pride.** It removes man from the equation. If God chooses and God saves, then man really has no part in his salvation at all. Some would argue that man has the responsibility to believe. Yes, he does, but he is incapable of believing until he is given faith to believe by God, **Eph. 2:8**. So, it all comes back to divine sovereignty in salvation.

**Most people have the image in their minds that God is up there in Heaven just hoping that someone will come to Jesus.** He sends His Gospel into the world, and He anxiously waits for people to hear the Gospel and repent. God is doing His best to save people and sometimes people cooperate and sometimes they don’t. When they do, He is happy, when they don’t He is disappointed.

**This view makes God subject to the will man.** If this were true, it means that God wants to save some people, but He really can’t do anything about their salvation. Sure, He gave His Son. Sure, He gave us His Word. Sure, He opened the door of salvation to men, but He has no guarantees that any will ever be saved. So, He sits there in Heaven, watching, waiting, and hoping that someone will come. **He drops His divine hook of grace into the teeming school of humanity, hoping that He**

**will get a bite.** Every now and then He get lucky, and someone believes the Gospel and is saved.

**That is not what the Bible teaches!** The doctrine of election says that every person chosen in Jesus before the foundation of the world will be saved. **God is not just hoping some will respond; He knows they will, and He is purposefully and actively calling them to Himself.** He will not miss a single person! **Every seat at His table in glory will be filled!**

Both of those views cannot be correct. Either God is sovereign in salvation, or man has the final say in whether he is saved or not. Either salvation is rooted in the will of the Lord, or it is rooted in the will of man. We need to find out which it is. So, instead of trusting human feelings or reasoning to help us understand what Paul is teaching here, we should instead look to the Word of God.

## **CONCLUSION**

What can we take with us this morning? Four things about election (divine choice) are brought out in the present passage.

**1. God's choice is \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ.**

**2. God's choice was \_\_\_\_\_ "before the foundation of the world" (v. 4).**

**3. God's choice was \_\_\_\_\_.**

This truth is brought out in two statements. ***The first statement of purpose is "that we should be holy and blameless before him"*** (v. 4). This expresses the purpose of divine election as to our \_\_\_\_\_.

**The second statement of purpose is put in terms of our \_\_\_\_\_ before God: "*he predestined us to adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ*" (v. 5).**

**4. The \_\_\_\_\_ of God's choice is "*to the praise of His glorious grace*" (v. 6).**