

## Predestination

Ephesians 1:3

“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.”

In our last two studies of this epistle, we looked at the introduction, and saw that Paul was writing under the direction of the Holy Spirit with a message "to the faithful in Christ Jesus." In other words, the things contained in the epistle are directed to "the saints," for they contain the "meat" of the word of God.

When the apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Christians in Ephesus, that city had one major claim to fame. It was the site of the enormous temple of Artemis. This was a building known throughout the ancient world, and it was a great draw-card for tourists and pilgrims – it was a real tourist attraction.

In their temple worship, the Ephesians looked back in history and spoke of a meteorite that fell from the sky and was eventually shaped to form the idol that stood in the temple of Artemis.

Paul, on the other hand, looked back beyond history, into the origins of the universe. And right there at the beginning of time he saw God skillfully and purposefully planning for the coming of the church.

This week, we are going to take a look at a deep and precious doctrine that we sometimes back away from, but not so with God, and not so with the Word of God. For, you see, it is through the “predestination” and “election” of God that this world stands and by which the kingdom of God abides forever.

Look with me as we study this great doctrine together. Ephesians 1:3-14 gives us this insight, “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, 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, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, 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. 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, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. 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, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”

**As we come to the place of looking at the doctrine of "election" and "predestination," we must realize that this is not just a New Testament doctrine.** Look at Deuteronomy 7:7, “The Lord did not set his love upon you nor choose you, because you were more in number than other people, for you were the fewest of all nations. But because the Lord loved you...” And Hosea 11:7-9 reminds us, “My people are bent on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, None at all exalt Him. How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboiim? My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God, and not man, The Holy One in your midst; and I will not come with terror.”

**The problem that we have when we start thinking about this doctrine of election and predestination is that we have no other choice than to look at it from the human standpoint.** But God looks at it from His viewpoint, as seen in Hosea 11:7, “My people are bent on backsliding from Me.” And in verse 8 God ask the question, “How can I give you up...?” And in verse 9 God says, “ I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not man.” This is almost the very same thing recorded in Malachi 3:6 where God said, “I am the Lord, I change not, therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.”

**Whether the nation of Israel, or our own election, love is the bases for election.** Look at Romans 9:15, “For He says to Moses, I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.” Hold on to that thought as we look back to Deuteronomy 7:6, “For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, because the Lord loved you...” And in John 3:16 we are told, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." And in 1 John 4:10 we are told, “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

**Many times we think of the cross as the greatest symbol of God’s love in our Christian experience.** But think of this for a moment – when Christ died on the cross, the world was already populated. Human misery was well known by experience. **Poverty called out for help. Hunger called for food. The sick called out for healing. Orphans called out for love. The mentally ill called out for help and understanding. But most of all, sin demanded a Savior.**

**But when “God so loved the world,” there was nothing to call out for the plight of man, but the desire of God to love.** The Babe was still unborn, but the plans were made, and we are given this amazing insight in 1 Peter 1:20, “He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.”

It is not hard for us to comprehend the doctrine of election, when we understand the great truth of 2 Peter 3:9, “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” And it is because God is “not willing that any should perish” that the Spirit of God calls, woos, and pleads with the human heart, and calls men to salvation, all because of the fact that “God so loved the world.”

**Predestination is a great doctrine when it is properly understood, for it is a revelation of God's love for his own.** It includes every act of *providence* in *protecting* and *guiding* the Christian from the “new birth” until we reach heaven’s glory.

Look again at verses 7, 12-13, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace...that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. 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.”

**We will never get a handle on this great doctrine until we realize who it is that has been sealed and predestined.** Paul tells us that these are those who “heard the word of truth” (the Gospel), and “trusted in Christ,” and then he says they “were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” In other words, the Bible very clearly teaches us that the predestined for heaven are the born again, blood-washed, saints of God. Therefore, Ephesians chapter one gives us these following ten characteristics of those who are predestined for heaven.

**First, we have trusted Christ as our personal Savior and are blessed with every spiritual blessing.** Verse 3 says, “Blessed be the God of Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessings, in Christ.” It is sad that many believers live in insecurity, not praising God for all the good things they already possess in Christ. Sometimes the world sees us as poor, naïve and ill-

equipped, but according to Philippians 4:13 we can be confident that we can do everything through Christ who gives us the strength and power.

**Second, we are holy and blameless, having been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.** Verse 4 says, “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.” Many believers, who do not understand this wonderful doctrine, will live with a gnawing sense of guilt feeling that they have to earn their forgiveness, acceptance or belonging through good works.

**Third, we have been adopted as His sons and daughters deserving all the privileges of being in His eternal family.** Verse 5 says, “Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.” As believers, we are “heirs of God, and joint heirs of Christ,” no longer have to be slaves of sin, but made free through the blood of His cross. Unfortunately, too many believers are living under the stress, strain and imprisonment of sin because they do not understand the wonderful truth of this great doctrine.

**Four, we live primarily for the praise of His glory.** Verse 6 says, “...to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.” Our greatest purpose, joy and sense of fulfillment comes through pleasing the Lord in *everything*. Yet, there are carnal believers who think that their great purpose is gained through their own selfish satisfactions. Yet, Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:31, “Whatever you do in word or do, do it all for the glory of God.”

**As we praise God for His attributes we are infused with a greater understanding of His power and splendor.** In other words, as we praise Him, He fills us up with revelations of Himself. Peter put it this way in 2 Peter 1:3-4, “Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises so

that you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped corruption that is in the world by lust.”

**Five, we enjoy being eternal redeemed (purchased, bought back from condemnation) through the His blood.** Verse 7 says, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” **As believers we have the privilege of replacing our anger, hurt, pain, fear, and feelings of rejection for the rich grace that is found in the loving arms of Jesus Christ.** In fact, Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:22-32 to make a conscious choice to replace our anger, jealousy, wrath, fear, and feelings of pain for the compassion, encouragement, and affection, consolation of love and fellowship of the Spirit, found in Jesus Christ.

**Six, we are equipped with great wisdom and insight.** Verse 8 says, “Which He lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight.” James 1:5 says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” **Because God wants each of us to reach our full potential, He generously gives wisdom and knowledge and discernment.**

**Seven, we have an understanding into the mysteries of God’s great will.** Verse 9 says, “He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him.” This is the same thing we are told in 1 Corinthians 2:9-10, “But as it is written: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” No wonder Paul said in Philippians 1:9-11, “This I pray that your love would abound still more and more in real knowledge and depth of insight. So that you may discern what is best having been filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.”

**Eight, we have obtained an inheritance in Christ.** Verse 11 says, “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.” Even though the world thinks we are fanatics, extremists, or second-class simpletons, we can be assured that He is working out His will through us as rich inheritors of His nature, power and Spirit.

**Nine, we been brought under Christ’s authority, protection and responsibility.** Verse 10 says, “And this is His plan. At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ – everything in heaven and on earth.” It is the will of God for Christians to be strong, bold, and walking in the authority that they are given in the name of Jesus, in the word of God and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Ten, we have been given the Holy Spirit.** Verse 13 says, “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.” Children of God need to see themselves as empowered, equipped and enabled by the power of their resident Holy Spirit. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 tells us that it is the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us, teaches us and comforts us with His all sufficient grace.

What a great joy it is to know that God through His marvelous grace and determined that, through His great love, has established a plan whereby we constantly walk in His divine watch-care.