



Elected unto holiness

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

Ephesians 1:4

How elated Paul is! He seems to be overwhelmed with some special, happy thought and experience. Listen, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Let Him be praised. But why? Because we as Christians have been blessed with heavenly blessings, by God changing our darkness into light, our sorrow into joy, and by bringing life out of death. Through these blessings we are restored as sinners to that exalted level of heavenly glory with the Father.

And then Paul comes to the point he wants to make in the next thought. All this is according to the election of His people. In other words, God's people may be the recipients of such marvelous blessings only because they were chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world.

Notice that Paul reasons by way of deduction. We now are Christians, we may now believe and receive these spiritual blessings because behind it all, and the source of it all, is God's election. This means of course that all Christians were elected. All our faith, confidence and love for the Lord is the fruit of election. No child of God may therefore seriously doubt his election.

The truth of election surely should make us humble Christians. If some were elected it simply means, as also taught in Scripture, that others were not elected. It implies that others were not "picked out." And Paul says in another place that this is God's good pleasure. God did not choose certain conditions which, if people would meet them, would entitle them to be elected; neither did God choose the best of the human race. No, he chose people, individuals, sinners. Others, no more sinful often, or less worthy, He did not choose. Why some and not others? The final answer is that it so pleased the sovereign Lord.

He chose us before the foundation of the world, i.e. from eternity. Where were you and I when all this took place? We simply weren't there, the world had not yet been made. But already then He knew us in love, knew us by name, and chose us forever to be His — all in and through Christ. We had absolutely nothing to do with it.

How then can we know if we are elect? In time God first of all comes to men with the Gospel, with the call and offer to believe. All men respond, either by believing or rejecting that Word. "*He that is not for me is against me.*" But when some sinners do believe and then ask themselves for the deepest reason for their faith, the answer is and has to be, that it was by the Holy Spirit according to Divine election.

But why?

That's the big question in this verse. What may be the purpose of it all? Do you believe in election? Wonderful, if you do. Do you believe that God has chosen you in love in Christ, in the eons of eternity? What a blessed mortal you are! But did you ever ask yourself why He did it? That question Paul answers here.

Did God do this "merely" to save you? Are election and resulting faith a ticket to heaven? This would mean that you don't have to worry about the time you're going to die because you have a reserved seat over there. That's how some people conceive of it. And isn't it strange that such people often speak so little of holiness, love, and godliness! The big question for them is, if only we know that we are elect.

Notice the beautiful but also very significant language of Paul here.

We are elected that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. This is really tremendous! And so beautiful. He loved us with elective love so that we would in turn love Him above everything else. The Bible so often speaks of godliness in connection with election. Notice, for example, Romans 8:28. "*All things work together for good.*" For whom? Paul characterizes these people with two statements. They are those who love God (holiness), but also they are the ones who are the called according to His purpose (election).

Notice also John 15:16: "*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and **bring forth fruit**...*" Peter also uses these two concepts when he tells the people of Asia Minor that they are elect according to the foreknowledge of God *unto obedience*.

In the text before us Paul says that we are elected to be holy and without blame before Him in love. The expression "*without blame*" no doubt is borrowed from the Old Testament customs and laws. The Levites had to be sanctified and without blemish. One with a physical defect simply could not serve in the temple. God would use only the best, the perfect. All the animals sacrifices also had to be without blemish; no cripples, blind or defective animals might be brought for offerings. God wanted the best.

So the Lord wants His people to be holy, without blemish before Him in love. What overwhelming thoughts! First of all, Paul speaks of us being before God. This means that we must stand before Him, He must see us and will scrutinize us with His all-knowing and all-seeing eye. In that kind of setting God wants to see us as holy, consecrated to Him. In our conduct we must be without blemish. All must be in His service, *in love*. In love for God and love for the neighbor. He wants wholehearted love, self-sacrificing love, the love of complete self-denial. After all spiritual love is that kind of action in which we lose ourselves in the fear of God, in trying to keep His commandments. And we can be sure that only those who are new creatures in Christ, and who daily try to live such lives with their old sinful and hateful natures begin to understand all the implications of such a life of love.

We are elected in Christ unto holiness and love.

Do you believe in election? Also that God has chosen you? Thank God for such marvelous grace. But always remember that that is not the end of the matter. It surely is not a ticket assuring you of heaven. No, it's a means unto an end, namely, that as His people who will be saved we are to be holy and godly people.

Christian people who know these truths surely should be good Christians. In the past and present there surely are and were people who are saved but knew little or nothing of election. I don't think that the Ethiopian eunuch knew much or anything about election, or the Philippian jailor. At least not at first. But surely they were elected from eternity. In other words it is possible to be saved, as elect, without knowing much or anything about it.

But for the church in general, for those who have been raised "with the Bible" it is different. Such people, like most of us, knowing more of the why's and wherefore's, surely should be better Christians. We know why we are children of God, we know more of that infinite, indescribable and marvelous love of God, as the source of salvation. What godly people we should be! How we should live in love! With that He is pleased, and His name is glorified.

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