



Chosen For Blessing to Bless His Name

Series: The Most Remarkable Run-On in Holy Writ

Ephesians 1:3-14 (3-4)

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Introduction This is a text that reveals the hearts of men and women when it is preached. It will either bring forth a heartfelt praise and delight in God in the hearts of regenerate men and women or it will bring forth rejection and rebellion against the God who is. The reason for this is simple. On his own, man does not desire the God of the Scriptures. They want a god whom they can control, a god they can define according to their tastes and sensibilities, a god who answers their every whim, a god who only does what seems reasonable to them, a god who makes sense to their fallen reasoning, a god who is all about making much of them, a convenient god who is submissive to them, a god who never actually acts like God. They can call him whatever they want. Most people in America call him “Jesus,” but He is no more the God of the Bible than a dog is a horse. And this invented god had better supremely please them in this life, because he will be of no use on the Day of Judgment. Every moment is a Joshua moment – Joshua 24:14-15.

Beloved, we do not have the luxury of defining who God is nor should we want to have it. What kind of god can a fallen mind produce except a god who just a little bigger or better than us? We do not define God; God defines Himself in His word and rather than it being a cause for Paul to gnash his teeth or reject the Word of God, it brings forth in Him great worship, a cascade of praise, a waterfall of rejoicing. In this unapologetically God-centered, God-magnifying, God-focused text, Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, puts forth a description of the acts of the glorious God, which reveal His character and nature and which is to be a catalyst for deep worship. This sentence, from the very beginning is all about God, about His will, about His glory. In fact, Paul is so filled with amazement that, as you may have surmised from the title of this short series, these verses, 3 through 14, constitute one extremely long, extremely passionate, extremely glorious sentence in the original Greek – in fact, it is the longest sentence ever found in ancient Greek – 202 words. And it begins with

Paul’s declaration of praise (v. 3) “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” Paul shouts. This word bless, means to speak well of someone. It comes from the Greek word

“eulogeo” from which we get the word eulogy. And that is what Paul is going to do in this sentence -- he is going to speak well of God. Paul is going to worship joyfully. And do you know what is going to motivate this worship of God? It is doctrine. It is the truth. It is the declaration of Who God is and what He has done that Paul is going to make in these 12 verses that we have read. Here is something we need to understand -- Doctrine leads to doxology. The fuel of worship is Biblical truth. Some people don't like that word, doctrine. They think that it is bad thing. Doctrine divides they say. “I don't want to learn doctrine, I just want to worship.” But, worship, Jesus said in John 4:24 – must be in spirit and in truth. How can you worship without the truth? You can't. You need to know the truth in order to worship God. It is the truth about Who He is that drives your worship of Him. It is when we know who God is and what He has done for us, we will bless Him.

What does it mean for us to bless God? We bless God when we declare all that is true of Him. We bless God when we declare His greatness, extol His virtue, declare His faithfulness, magnify His holiness, desire all honor for Him. We bless God when we ascribe all goodness to Him, when we declare the glory of Christ's full work of redemption on the cross, when we sing unto Him the greatness of His glory, the perfection of His will, when we tell of His wonderful goodness. We bless God when we revel in His power, when we thank Him for all that He has done. We bless God when we declare His deep and incredible wisdom. We bless God when we proclaim the glory of His gospel and the greatness of our Savior. But beloved, in order to bless God, you have to know God – it is rooted in truth, rooted in theology – not just grasped with mind, but held fast in the heart. The Psalmist encourages us: **(Psa 96:1-9 ESV)** How can we do that if we don't know who God is?

Without truth, worship is empty of worth. Just look at how men try to engineer some experience of worship – skits and plays, mood music, gimmicks and tricks, comedian preachers, slick marketing – it is all a worthless attempt of fallen men to compensate for the absence of any real knowledge of who God is and to manufacture something – worship – that only comes from the true knowledge of God.

So, Paul begins with blessing God and the reason that he blesses the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is because He **“has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”** What are these spiritual blessings that Paul tells us are true of the church and causes such praise to well up within his heart? Paul lists them for us and we will look at them more extensively in the coming weeks: adoption, redemption and forgiveness, being taken into the

secret councils of the Almighty, being given the honor of living to demonstrate the glory of the Lord, of being the trophies of His grace and the testimony of His loving faithfulness, sealed with the Holy Spirit, marking us off as His own, authenticating us as truly His people, and guaranteeing that none of His promises will fail. But all of this comes from as the **fruit** of what Paul tells us here...that God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings just as, or as the result of, this great truth that:

God has chosen us for blessing in Christ before the foundation of the world (v. 4)

How is it that we ever enjoy a single blessing that is listed for us in verse 3-14? Paul begins to answer that question in this verse, and the answer that he gives is far different from the one that most Christians would offer to that question. Doubtless, most Christians would say that we receive all of the blessings of God by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, but notice that is not the first thing that the Apostle Paul says. He does not say that we are enjoying these blessings because we have believed in the Lord or have received Christ as Savior and Lord -- that, of course is involved -- we must believe in Christ, we must believe the gospel to be saved, but that is not where Paul begins. Neither does he start with the work of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Paul goes back into eternity, before the foundation of the world, and he starts with what has been done by God the Father. What has God done? Paul writes, **“He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.”** This is the biblical doctrine of election. What does that mean exactly? The doctrine of election is the teaching that God, before the foundation of the world, chose out for himself from among all of the people of the world a group of people whom He would redeem from their sin and make His own special possession, by His grace, whom He would bless with every spiritual blessing and upon whom He would lavish His love.

The word that is translated “He chose,” comes from the Greek word, “eklegomai” It is an aorist middle reflexive verb which means “to select out, to single out, to choose out from among a greater number a select group for oneself.” In other words, what Paul is saying is that God chose out from among all of sinful mankind, before this world was made, before stars and the moon were hung in space, before we were alive and could do anything to make God notice us, God chose out for Himself, apart from any outside considerations or influences, those individuals whom He would bless with salvation, whom He would make holy and blameless, children of the Living God, to the praise of the glory of His grace. If you are saved, if you are a Christian, you are one because God chose you before the foundation of the world to be His own, not because of any merit in you, not because of any wisdom in you, not because He needed you on His team, or because you were worthy, but out of His love He chose you. Your

salvation did not begin with your choice to believe in Christ – a choice that was actual and essential. Your salvation began before the creation of the universe when God planned the history of redemption and the creation of the church and ordained the death and resurrection of His Son, and chose you to be His own through the cross of Jesus Christ.

This concept of God sovereignly choosing out His people is found throughout all of the Scripture, not just here. Noah was chosen by God. Abraham was called by God. God chose Isaac over Ishmael to be the child of promise. He chose Jacob over Esau. Moses was chosen of God. God chose Jeremiah -- **(Jer 1:5 ESV)** God chose Isaiah. There is no avoiding this truth in the word of God. In John 15:16, Jesus said to the disciples, **"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit."** In Acts chapter 9, you remember the Apostle Paul was confronted by the Lord on the Damascus Road and the Lord said in verse 15 to Ananias in commanding him to go and lay hands on Paul for the restoration of his sight, **"Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine."** In the thirteenth chapter of Acts, in verse 48 we read some astounding words. Paul and Barnabas are preaching the gospel and the Bible says, **"And when the Gentiles heard this,"** that is the gospel, **"they began rejoicing and glorifying the Word of the Lord, and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed."** Who believed? Those who had been appointed to eternal life believed. They were chosen of God to believe. In 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2 verse 13, **"But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth."** **(2Th 2:13 ESV)** 2 Timothy 1:9 say, **"who saved us (speaking of God) and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began..."** **(2Ti 1:9 ESV)** He called us not according to our works but according to His purpose, His grace, granted to us in Christ from all eternity. When God chose us, it was not because of anything which He saw in us, that drew Him to us. God does not find the basis or motivation for election deep within us; He finds it within Himself because of His own purpose. It is because of His mercy, compassion and grace that God has chosen us. And what we need to see is that

God has made us His own in Christ (v. 3, 4) God has blessed us "in Christ;" He has chosen us "in Christ." Now I want us to understand this phrase, "in Christ," because it has with it a wealth of meaning. In Romans 5, Paul describes a great contrast between being in Adam and being in Christ. Originally all of us were in Adam. Adam was the first man and he was also the representative of all of us. Everyone who has ever been born into this world was in Adam, has part of Adam, is joined with Adam and as a result all of us suffer the consequences of Adam's

sin – death, judgment, separation from God, and we, ourselves are sinners. But Paul is saying before the foundation of the world, God chose us in Christ, to be in Christ, to be joined to Christ and to receive all the blessings of being in Christ. In other words, God chose to place us in Christ and to count us in Christ so that we would be the recipients of the blessings that come through the work of the perfect God-man alone. If God saw us only in Adam, then we would be without hope – destined for destruction. But God sees us in Christ and so everything that God in His sovereign will and by His infinite grace and according to the riches of His mercy and the mystery of His will – everything that God has purposed and carried out for our salvation, He has done in Christ and we have benefited from our being counted in Him so that when Christ was crucified, we were crucified with Him; when He died, we died with Him; when He was buried, we were buried with Him; and when He rose again, we rose with Him with a new life. As He is seated in the heavenly places with God the Father, **“God has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ.”** We are in the place of honor, “in Christ,” not because of what we have done, but because of what Christ has done.

God has chosen us to receive incredible blessing that we do not deserve, because of what Jesus has done on our behalf. Christ’s riches are our riches; His resources, our resources; His power is our power; and His righteousness is our righteousness, His life our life. Apart from Christ our condition is hopeless, but in Christ, our condition is glorious. And Paul is saying that God has chosen us, church, in Christ. We enjoy spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ because they have been chosen by God to do so.

Why does God have to choose us for salvation and spiritual blessing? God has to intervene, God has to initiate our salvation because on our own we would never seek Him. Man by nature rebels against God. He does so as a result of the Fall. He is under the “wrath of God” as a result of what theologians call the “depravity of mankind.” Sin has affected our entire being. It has affected our *mind*. **(1Co 2:14 ESV)** A person who is living without the Spirit in him actually cannot understand saving truths. Sin has affected our emotions -- **(Joh 3:19 ESV)** Naturally, we love the darkness rather than the light. Our emotions have been ruined by the fall of mankind in sin. Sin has ruined our will -- **(Rom 3:10-11 ESV)** How is it that any individual person comes out of that pit? The answer is that God has chosen His people to be delivered from it unto salvation. Paul offers this, not as an argument to be debated, but as a statement of divine fact. God has to choose us if we are to be saved, because we would never choose Him. We could never choose Him. God had to rescue us and He did – out of His grace, out of His love, out of His desire to save a people for His own possession, a people for Himself from amongst sinners

who all deserved death and hell. . That is the clear teaching of the Scriptures, but still people rebel.

But what about...Some people try to weaken the force of the these words by saying something like, "Well, God can foresee the future, so he looks down and sees that we are going to make a choice, and on the basis of seeing what we will determine to do he then says, 'All right, I'll choose them to be part of my church.'" In such a scheme, God is not sovereign; He instead submits His will to the will of fallen man and agrees with what he foresees. This is patently unbiblical. It reduces God to being dependant upon the whims and desires of man and furthermore imagines sinful, spiritually dead man to make a choice that men, according to Paul do not and cannot make.

Still others say, "God's choice is based in the value that we will have toward Him, and for his kingdom after we are saved. Again, nothing could be more unscriptural than that idea! 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 dismantles that idea thoroughly.

One other human, homespun idea is that, as some preachers say: "I believe in Bible election. God votes for you; the devil votes against you, and you cast the deciding vote." But think about the implications of this kind of a statement. God, in this plan is not Almighty, but weak and ineffectual and needs help to accomplish His glorious plan. God is trying, but He is battling with the devil and He is unable to overcome Him. Worse, the mighty will of man comes in to break the deadlock between God and the devil. How God- dishonoring and shameful can false doctrine become? The truth of Scripture is that God chooses men for salvation.

Do we make any choice? But what about us? Don't we make a choice to believe in Jesus Christ? Compare Paul's words in verse 4 and verse 13. In verse 4 Paul writes that God chose us. We see that reflected throughout the Scriptures, right? But then in verse 13, he writes "In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit." Here Paul says, "You heard and believed," and in verse 4 he says, "He chose us." Do we have a part in this? Yes, we do. Our part is to believe. Paul does not see this as a contradiction at all. He just states all of this as a fact. So which one is it? God chose or we believe? It is both.

How does election come to fruition in salvation? Since Scripture describes fallen man as having no spiritual life and being spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1-3; Col. 2:13), as not having the moral ability to come to Christ apart from the Father drawing him (John 6:44, 63-65), as rejecting and hiding the knowledge of God and creating idols, not seeking for God, and not doing any good according to the standard of God's law (Rom. 1:18-25; 3:9-12), in order for anyone to be saved, God must be the divine initiator of his salvation. The question in regard to our response to the gospel is: how can a person who is dead in sin, who is at enmity with God, who does not have the moral ability to come to Christ apart from the work of God, respond to the call of the gospel and be saved?

This is where the work of the Holy Spirit comes in. Jesus said in John 3: **"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."** (Joh 3:3 ESV) That is not a figure of speech. We need a new heart, a new heart to believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is what the new birth is – it is the sovereign work of God to give to a sinner a heart of flesh in place of their heart of stone, to change their nature and change their desires – **Ezekiel 36: 25-27**. How important in the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit? It is this truth that explains how two people can sit under the exact same preaching and teaching and one be touched in His soul and come to repentant faith in Christ and another be completely unmoved, view it as foolish, or even more be more thoroughly hardened against the gospel. What is needed to change the heart and to make someone receptive to the gospel of God in Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit. No one will love God unless God first changes the character of their heart by the work of the Holy Spirit. No-one will respond to the gospel in faith except God do a work in them.

In the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, God touches you on the inside and raises you from death to life so that you can respond to God. God makes us spiritually alive, opening our hearts to the things of the Spirit, which were foolishness to us before (1 Cor. 2:14); where He convicts us of our sin, makes our eyes to see the all-sufficiency of the Savior Jesus Christ as he is offered in the gospel, renews us in our will, making us willing and able to embrace Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. He makes us alive to the truth of God and gives us the faith to receive Christ as Savior. Is that not what Ephesians 2 teaches so clearly? **(Eph 2:4-9)** Man must repent of His sin and believe in Jesus Christ and His saving work on the cross – that is true. But did you see it? Even the faith that you have to believe came from God. Even the faith to believe is a gift of God that He grants to those who are His chosen before the foundation of the world. From our perspective, when we receive Christ as Savior and Lord, it seems as if it is a desire that began

with us. But the truth of Scripture tells us something much different. In the Scripture God clearly tells us – you are mine. You have always been mine.

Chosen to be holy and blameless (v. 4) Paul says that God chose us in Christ “that we should be holy and blameless before him.” God elects us to salvation, but He also elects us to holiness and blamelessness before Him. That means that a man cannot say to himself, "I am chosen by God, therefore I have no concern for how I live," because the very promise of election is that the same unconquerable wave of the grace of God that brought them from death to life also is the promise that they will reflect the image of the Son of God. Those chosen by God cannot live under the dominion of sin. Those chosen by God cannot live in opposition to Christ. Those chosen by God cannot live in rebelliousness to the will of their Savior, because being chosen by God means that God is determined to make them holy, to make them blameless. What an amazing promise of salvation is found in these verses.

Do you see it beloved? God in His mercy chose us and then made His choice come to pass. First He made the way of our salvation by sending the Lord Jesus Christ to die for our sin. Then He made us capable of responding to Him by sending the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to the truth and glory of the Gospel and giving us the faith to believe. As a result, all the blessings we enjoy must be traced back to this sovereign electing purpose of God toward us in Jesus Christ. And Paul does exactly that in these opening verses in Ephesians. How should we respond to these verses today?

First of all, this truth causes us to worship God and do away with our pride. Salvation is all of God and none of me. This truth exalts and lifts up God and who He is. If you are a Christian, before the creation of the universe God thought of you, fixed His gaze on you and chose you for Himself. He did not choose you because I was already in Christ of your own doing, but that you might be in Christ. He did not choose you because he saw you as a believer, but so that you might become a believer. He did not choose you because you chose Him, but so that you might choose Him. He did not choose you because you were holy or blameless but so that you might become holy and blameless. Everything you are and all you hope to be is rooted in God's freely choosing you. And so there is no ground for boasting except in God. This doctrine causes gratitude and reverence to well up within us and worship of Him for who He is and for what He's done.

Second, the doctrine of election encourages love for God. If we believe that we had a part in salvation, then our love for God is diminished by just that amount. If it all of Him, then our love for God must be boundless.

Third, it should create in us assurance of our eternal hope of heaven. The doctrine of election teaches us that we can be comforted and we can have great assurance that we'll reach heaven. Our salvation rests in God, not in us. He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it. Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

Fourth, it motivates us for missions. There is no truth in the Bible that is more motivating to me to share the Gospel than this truth. We don't go out into missions hoping that maybe somebody will believe. We go out into missions knowing they will believe because God has said so. And we don't continue to share the Gospel with our neighbors and people in our workplaces in a powerless attitude of "I hope it works." We go out there confidently, sharing the Gospel, knowing that there are going to be people who will respond. They will believe because God has chosen that it will be so.

Last, we must realize and respond to God's grace. God in sovereign grace has chosen to save those He has set His love upon; He has called them to belong to Jesus Christ from out of all the nations of the earth. The way that we must respond is not with wondering whether or not we are chosen. No one can know before salvation. The question that must be answered is this: Have I heard and responded in faith to the gospel call of Christ to repent and believe in Him?

Do not take for granted the grace that has been given to you today to hear the truth of God's Word? Untold multitudes live and die and never hear the true gospel, the Word of God. You are not here today by chance you are here by the sovereign grace of God so that you might hear the truth and respond to it. Jesus' words in Matt 11 are clear: **(Mat 11:25-29 ESV)** These words are an invitation to life and they will either be the words of your salvation or they will witness against you on the Day of Judgment. Come, repent, believe, follow Christ and live. If you know your need for mercy, if you are ready to repent of your sin and to receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, to know the hope of eternal life, to live for God's glory and not your own, then come to Christ and be found in him. Come to Christ and sing with Paul: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual

blessing in the heavenly places. God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him.” Come and find that you have been chosen by God to be His own from before the foundation of the world.

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