

## Predestination and Election (Part 1) – Eph 1:3-6

Eph 1:3-6. Last week we began our study of the book of Ephesians, with an encouragement to prepare yourself. Because some of the topics are difficult. Difficult to understand and difficult to accept. And this is one of them: predestination and election. Big words, and even bigger concepts. Affecting every single one of us, and putting our minds in knots at times.

So we're going to spend a few weeks here and break it down. Using a bunch of sub-headings and supporting points to help you keep it straight and follow along.

Starting with the . . .

### FOUNDATION

The basis of these concepts.

Far from something I'm just making up; far from some theological mumbo-jumbo . . .

- **Predestination and election are biblical concepts**

Explicitly. Like it says in Eph 1:4 – *he* [God] *chose us in him* [in Christ] *before the foundation of the world*. That's election. It's biblical.

And not obscure. Paul spends 2 full chapters on it in Romans. Romans 9 and 11.

Explaining that God chose some and not others, that his *purpose of election might continue*. Rom 9:11. It's biblical.

As is predestination. V5 – *he predestined us for adoption as sons*. That too is biblical.

Like it says in **Rom 8:29** – *Those whom he foreknew* [those whom he chose, elected] *he also predestined* [determined beforehand] *to be conformed to the image of his Son*.

Those whom he elected, he predestined to be saved.

And the list goes on. From the mouth of Jesus in the Gospels, to Peter and Paul in the epistles, to John in Revelation. (Mk 13:20; 1 Pet 1:1; 2 Thess 2:13; Rev 13:7-8)

Even in the *Old Testament* we find election. Like in **Deut 7:6** where Moses is speaking to the ancient Israelites.

*The LORD your God has chosen you* [he says; past tense] *to be a people for his treasured possession*. That's election. The Bible is explicit.\*\*\*\*\*

Which I want you to know, so that you don't think I'm making this up, or preaching a doctrine that I'm *inferring* from Scripture, but isn't there.

It is. Both implicitly *and* explicitly. Predestination and election are *biblical* concepts.

That's our foundation. And it's very important to keep in mind.

That said, let me give you some . . .

### DEFINITIONS

To make sure we're on the same page.

First, predestination. Predestination is the broader term, and means foreordained; predetermined. So that in the Bible . . .

- **Predestination is God's predetermination that something will happen in the future.**

His foreordaining that something will be; something will come about.

Like saying all the way back in Genesis, that someone from Adam and Eve's *lineage* would crush the head of Satan. It was predestined.

But most of the time, predestination refers to God's determination that some will be saved and others not.

Meanwhile, election is God's actual *decision* in the past to save us. Or even more specifically . . .

- **Election is God's decision to save us before time began.**

His decision to save our soul and make us whole, before we ever existed. Before he ever created the heavens and the earth. We'll see that in our passage today.

So predestination is the broader term, referring to God's *determination* that we will be saved, and election is his actual *decision* to save us.

But they're often used interchangeably and together because they're so similar. Like I'm doing here. Definitions.

Next is the . . .

### PURPOSE

The *purpose* of predestination and election. Which goes well *beyond* knowledge for knowledge sake. Well *beyond* intellectual curiosity.

Like trying to figure out how many angels can fit on the head of a pin.

The purpose of predestination and election is about as practical as it gets. In 3 main ways. And they may surprise you.

- **Predestination and election are meant to bring comfort, encourage evangelism, and elicit praise.**

True. When Paul comforts us in Romans 8 by saying *all things work together for good*, he cites predestination and election as the *reason*. The reason for such comfort.

Because just like God fulfilled his promise to save those he *chose*, he will fulfill his promise to work all things together for good.

So predestination and election are meant to bring us comfort.

Second, they're meant to encourage evangelism. Like Paul says in **2 Tim 2:10**.

*I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*

Paul was bound in chains when he wrote that, and facing *death* for his evangelism.

But none of that mattered. Because the elect needed to be saved.

And to be saved, they needed to *hear* the Gospel. And to *hear* the Gospel, someone needed to preach.

In other words, knowing that the elect will believe if we only tell them; knowing they're just *waiting* for the Gospel whether they know it or not, spurs us on to tell them.\*\*\*\*

So contrary to the careless thought that *some* express, election doesn't *negate* the need for evangelism, it encourages it.

Because it increases our conviction that God's Word won't return void; it reminds us that we are the *means* God uses to save the elect . . .

And it steels us for whatever *suffering* our evangelism might require.

Predestination and election actually encourage evangelism on our part.

And 3<sup>rd</sup> here, they are meant to elicit praise. Praise for the *greatness* of God in election, the *grace* of God in election, and the blessing it is. It's all *to the praise of his glory*.

The very thing we find in our passage today (v6,12).

So let's get to it. The . . .

### PASSAGE

Eph 1:3-6. You follow along.

[3] *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, [4] even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love [5] he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, [6] to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.*

The primary thought here is to praise God.

That's the idea of the first verse and last verse. Bookends, to the predestination and election in between.

V3 says – *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. An expression of praise. And v6 says – *to the praise of his glorious grace*. Another expression.

Both, for the election and predestination in between.

Paul praises God for them. And we should too.

First, for our salvation.

#### • **Praise God, he chose us to be saved. (v3-4)**

He elected us. That's what it says. V4. *He chose us in him* [in Christ].

And that's worthy of praise. Especially when you consider the fact that we didn't *deserve* to be chosen. We're sinful. Deserving condemnation.

Praise God. What grace.

But before he gets to *that*, in v4, Paul starts with some *general* reasons for praise in v3.

Saying – *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* [praise God], *who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places*.

God has blessed us, Paul says – *graced us, favored us* – 4 different ways. Starting with Jesus and our relationship with him.

We are blessed **in Christ**. Do you see it? Don't miss that.

That 2 word phrase, or a form of it, is repeated 10 times in v3-14. Which is one sentence in the Greek. It's *the* common thread that holds it all together. In Christ.

And notice it doesn't say, *with Christ*. God has blessed us *with Christ*. As if he just sent him our way to do his thing, and that's it.

No, we're blessed *in Christ*. Conveying our communion with him. Our connection to him. Our relationship with him.

A relationship of peace, joy, goodness, power, provision, and protection.

No wonder Paul says praise God.

Second, God has blessed us **with heaven's riches**. And I'm not talking about money.

V3b – Praise God, *who has blessed us in Christ, with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places*.

By virtue of our union and *communion* with Jesus, we have everything heaven has to offer. Everything we need for life to the full and life forever.

*All things that pertain to life and godliness* as Peter says it (2 Pet 1:3). Redemption, forgiveness, justification, the Holy Spirit – we have it all. Heaven's riches. And if that's where it stopped, that would be cause enough to praise God for all eternity.

➤ But there's more. God blessed us, v4, *even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world*.

Talk about cause for praise. We were blessed **before we even existed**.

Before we were ever a gleam in somebody's eye. Before somebody was ever created.

Before we did anything right or wrong. Before we did anything noticeable. Anything good. Anything at *all*.

That's amazing. Amazing grace.

Who are *we* that God would so bless? Who are *we* that God would so choose?

Nobody. We're sinners. Enemies of God. Haters. Cheaters. Liars. Lusters. Gossipers.

And yet he *chose* us before we even existed, knowing that full well.

What a blessing. And what cause for praise.

➤ But there's one more qualifier here, in v4b. He chose us in Christ, *that we should be holy and blameless before him*.

God didn't bless us with election so we could live like the devil. Or as cheap means of fire insurance.

He chose us **to live right**. Holy and *blameless* before God.

We've been chosen for a purpose. The only question is, are you living it?

➤ Now, about this time, you might be wondering, "How do I *know* if I'm elected? What if I'm not?"

The answer is this: you know you're one of God's elect, if you believe in Jesus and live for him as Lord.

Whoever calls upon *the name of the Lord will be saved*, the Bible says. (Rom 10:13)

Whoever confesses with their mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believes in their heart that God has raised him from the dead, will be *saved*. (Rom 10:9)

Whoever believes in him will not perish, but have eternal *life*. (Jn 3:16)

Whoever receives him, he gives the right to become children of God. (Jn 1:12)

You're one of God's elect if you love Jesus and live for Jesus.

So instead of wondering or doubting, start praising. Start living.

Because we're blessed with everything heaven has to offer. Including the decision of God to *choose* us. Praise God.

That's the first reason, from v3-4.

The second, is that we're adopted.

#### • **Praise God, he predestined us to be adopted (v5-6)**

Not that this is a completely *different* thought from v3-4, but a slightly different *twist* on it. After saying God chose us, Paul expands on it in v5-6.

*In love [5] he [God] predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, [6] to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.*

Paul packs no less than *6 aspects* of our predestined adoption into 2 verses.

Starting with the fact that . . .

### 1. We're family

That's the idea of the word *adoption*. Just like kids are taken into *earthly* families to be a part, we're taken into *God's* family to be a part.

Which makes us family. Brothers and sisters. Complete with a few weird uncles and crazy aunts.

### 2. We're his

V5 says that God *predestined us for adoption to himself*.

Not someone else – another dad, another father, a guardian, a group home.

No, he determined beforehand that we would be *his*. That *he* would be our father.

### 3. We're privileged

*He predestined us for adoption to himself as sons*.

Implying that we are full-fledged members of his household, with all the rights and privileges of *heirs*. Heirs of eternal life. Sons *and* daughters.

### 4. We're connected

*He predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ*.

It's through faith in *Jesus* that we're adopted. He's the *means*. Like a judge is the means of earthly adoptions. Connecting children to their new parents.

Same here. Only he *remains* in the picture. Acting as our mediator and advocate the Bible says. Our go-between. Connecting us for all time.

### 5. We're loved

*In love [5] he predestined us for adoption*. Oh, don't miss that.

This wasn't some *pragmatic* decision on his part; because we needed a *roof* over our heads. It was driven by God's *heart* for us. His love for us.

Just like all the other aspects of our salvation.

In love, he gave his one and only Son (Jn 3:16). In love, Christ died for us (Rom 5:8). In love, God gave us his Spirit (Rom 5:5).

And in love, he adopts us. Why do you think I say "you are loved" every week?

It's not just that *I* love you, but *he* loves you.

### 6. We're blessed

He predestined us for adoption *according to the purpose of his will, [6] to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved*.

We're blessed by God's purposes, God's will, and God's grace. All three. Right there.

His purpose to adopt us, his will to do it, and his grace to make a way.

We're blessed.

6 aspects of our adoption. **(Summary)** Predetermined before the foundation of the world, when God chose us to be saved.

*All to the praise of his glorious grace*. His grace to bless us with everything heaven has to offer. His grace to elect us before the foundation of the world.

His grace to predestine us for adoption. His grace to bless us in the Beloved. **(Summ)**

The only thing left, is to praise him. *Praise* the name of the Lord our God.

**Prayer** – Father, that's our heart. We bless you. We praise you. For who you are and all you've done. Especially in choosing us. Saving us. Adopting us. Loving us. Blessing us. Every blessing you pour out, we'll turn back to praise. And we look forward to doing so for endless days.