

] Before the Foundation of the World [

Ephesians 1:4

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~ If I were not attempting to teach the entire Bible, including every chapter and every verse, then this is the section of Scripture I would definitely bi-pass completely. This is the most difficult portion of Holy Writ our expedition has traversed thus far; although we will have even more difficult passages to deal with later in Jude and Revelation. However, I *am* teaching the entire Word of God to the entire world, and this just happens to be part of sound doctrine; and, as most of you readers know, I don't shy away from teaching *any* part of the Bible; irrespective of how offensive or insulting God desires to be as He speaks through me. Make sure you pray for understanding before proceeding.

In our previous report, I warned explicitly (a) not to read this extremely difficult report and (b) if you do read it, I don't expect you to agree with what I am going to teach. So, proceed at your own risk; and if you don't agree, then don't bother writing me and telling me you don't agree, because you have an absolute right to be wrong. I am not going to argue with anyone about this doctrine. Just be aware: you are wrong if you disagree. I likely won't even respond to comments on this one because, friends, I just happen to know what I believe; and it isn't going to change without direct intervention from the Spirit of God – I can *PROMISE* you that. So, if you have the Holy Spirit speaking through you, and you honestly think I'm wrong about this, then you'll want to pray about that, too.

In our last report, we learned how we are presently '*blessed with all spiritual blessings in the Heavenlies.*' All spiritual blessings are wrapped in the Heavenlies, and are packaged *IN* the larger setting of Christ Jesus. Our responsibility is to open our gift, see what God has done for us, and determine His will accordingly — according to His Word; thereby properly laying hold of our faith. *ONLY* then can we begin to move and act upon '*working our salvation out.*' *Then*, and only then, can we begin to live on the high plane to which God the Father has called us. God has made us sons and we need to live like that in the world today.

See, God has chosen us – and we looked very briefly at verse four in our last report. God demands we be holy; and we considered that ad infinitum in Leviticus. If you have not read our last report, I suggest you go back and do so now. There is a whole lot of false and utterly misguided teaching today on the doctrine of election. It causes churches to not only divide – but to literally *splinter* into factions and cliques that go off in every imaginable wild-tangent and misguided direction. So, let's pray again for wisdom and understanding in this most disturbing, troubling and misunderstood doctrine....

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

~ God the Father planned the church; and His Son — the Lord Jesus Christ — paid for the church with His Blood. The Holy Spirit of God protects the church. Our Father in Heaven is the source of all blessings we ever have. Verse four carries our mind back to eternities past and forces us to realize that salvation is one hundred percent of God. There is absolutely *NOTHING* in and of ourselves in salvation; we're not the originator, we're not the promoter — and we're not the consummator of our salvation. Being born again is like being born physically; none of us had any input whatsoever into that miracle. One day, we merely realized we are alive. God did it *all*, my friend. God told Moses that He would hear Moses' prayer – but not because Moses was Moses the deliverer — no, God said *"I'll have mercy on whom I'll have mercy and I'll have compassion on whom I will have compassion."*

God also told Moses, *"so then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."* An old hymn reads, *".... tis not that I did choose Thee – because that just cannot be – this heart would still refuse Thee – if Thou hadst not chosen me."* There's another rather popular hymn that goes something like this, *".... Jesus sought me when a stranger – wandering from the fold of God – He did rescue me from danger – and interposed His precious Blood."* Make no mistake about this, friends, God is the One Who planned our salvation — since before the foundation of the world. The Lord Jesus Christ is the One Who worked it all out for us

on the cross when the fulness of time had come. Jesus said on the cross, *"it is finished."*

Today, the Holy Spirit convicts us, and brings us to a saving faith in Christ; and to a saving knowledge of the grace of God the Father. Those things can only ever be revealed in Christ Jesus by the grace of our Father in Heaven. That is utterly all-important to understand if you ever desire to draw close to God. There was a young boy who wanted to join a fundamental conservative church many years ago. The deacons were examining him and one of them asked the boy, *".... how did you get saved?"* The boy replied, *".... well, I did my part and God did His part."* So, these deacons thought they had him trapped and they asked, *".... what was your part and what was God's part?"* The boy replied, *".... my part was the sinning. I ran from God as fast as my rebellious legs would carry me and as far away as my sinful heart would lead me. Then, God came after me and He ran me down. He stepped on my neck, dragged me back home and He beat me within an inch of my life! That's when I surrendered."* There is no theology book that can explain it any better than that. See, friends, God is the one Who does all the saving. You can just write that all down.

Someone asks another, *".... have you found Jesus?"* Well, Jesus isn't lost. We are lost – and God found us! You can search every page of the Bible and you're not going to find Jesus. You can memorize every word the Lord said, and you won't have any idea what it means. You won't remember half of it. Further, God didn't choose us that we might do some good for Him – He chose us so that we *COULD* contribute to advancing the cause of Christ. The entire choice of our salvation is thrown back on the solitary sovereignty of the goodness, mercy, kindness — and love — of God. Actually, I am glad God chose me before I came into the world because, if God had waited until I got here, I seriously doubt He would have chosen me. In fact, I am sure He would have passed by this old, damaged bill of goods known as Andrew, friends. I'm sure that doesn't apply to you. It does to me.

In the Upper Room, Jesus said to the apostles, *"you have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you."* That places the responsibility for every fiber of my existential being squarely on God. That makes it quite wonderful; if you ask me! Regarding the children of Israel, God said, *"hear this word that the*

Lord thy God hath spoken against thee: you only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore, I will punish you for your iniquities." God chose Israel out of Egypt in the fulness of time. God chose the church in eternity. Nothing has happened that would ever cause God to revamp or reconsider His plan, purpose, and program for the church in eternity. God isn't going to change His mind because He already knew the end from the beginning; and He did it — and He did it this way — and for a definite purpose. That purpose is that we will be *holy* and blameless when we stand before Him! We were chosen to be sanctified holy — which means we are set apart for His use; that's all sanctification means. That's all the positive side of election; and we're dealing with the inner-life of a believer here.

Let's be clear, though: election demands a *holy* life! If you think you can be the elect and just live any old way you choose to live, then you're entirely misguided; and that thinking reveals that you are *NOT* chosen as the elect. Grace is not a license to sin, and Paul has already answered that when we studied the epistle to the Romans; he said, "*.... shall we continue in sin that the grace of God might abound? Heaven forbid.*" No, if you continue to live in sin and disobedience to the commandments of God, then you haven't been elected. The sinner who has been saved is going to change his way of life — *BECAUSE* they love Christ — and no other reason. If we are dead to sin, then how shall we live any longer in sin?

Now, the negative side of all of this is that we are to be *without blame*. The believer in Christ is seen by God with no blame and no condemnation. Remember, God did not permit Balaam to curse Israel, nor to find fault with the children of Israel. Balaam said, "*.... God hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them.*" That's Numbers chapter twenty-three verse twenty-one, by the way. Interestingly, if we were to go down into the camp, we would find that God *DID* find fault with Israel. That's when God judged them, and God was sanctifying and purifying His chosen people in the process. See, if God has chosen you, it is for one reason: to make you holy and without blame! That necessarily means a change in your life; no change — no election — there's no other way around this subject, my friends.

God wants a life from us that is not marked or spotted by sin. Every provision and path has been made for a clean life to be possible, too. John said, *".... my little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not, but, if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."* We're going to sin, but Christ Jesus is the propitiation for those sins *IF we confess them*. That is applicable for the whole world, too, by the way. This also completely destroys the doctrine of *"limited atonement"* – meaning Christ died only for the elect. That's heresy; and this passage makes it crystal clear that Jesus died for the sins of the world. I don't know who you are, where you are, how you are, or when you are – but you have a legitimate and sincere offer of salvation – whoever you are. You can't hide and say you aren't the elect, my agnostic and atheistic friends – because merely contemplating if you are the elect, by de facto, reveals you are.

So, there is an elect according to the foreknowledge of God; and yet, the sincere offer Jesus extends is: *"whosoever will may come."* Jesus also said, *"whosoever will come to Me, I will in no wise cast out."* Now, if you think you understand that paradox concerning the doctrine of election, then you don't understand half of what you think you understand! There's something else you can just write down. It's actually mind-boggling that God would save anyone. I told you dear readers in the very first report from Ephesians that I don't pretend to understand all of this. What I do understand is that I believe the little bit that I do understand; and what I do know about election and free will is: both are true. I also understand how you will never reconcile these truths — because God isn't providing you a list of the elect.

You and I start out in this life on a very broad road; one that becomes narrower and narrower until it finally dead-ends and strangles the life out of us. You can stay the course and die, or you can turn off of that highway onto the narrow exit ramp called Christ Jesus. It's hard to see. It's easy to miss. But once we turn-off, then the way opens up, and becomes wider and wider with endless horizons forevermore. Jesus gives us life, and life more abundantly! The choice of election is ours. The *"whosoever will"* are the elect; the *"whosoever won't"* are not the elect. There's no mention of them in Scripture. It's truly that simple of an equation. Some agnostics say, *"....*

how can I believe when there is no evidence?" Well, you don't have an intellectual problem, my atheistic friend – because you're not smart enough to have intellectual problems. No, the problem you have is: sin in your life that the Bible condemns, but you refuse to give up. *NO* other reason – none whatsoever. Don't over-think it. Turning to Christ would mean you have to turn from those sins, but you love them too much to do that. Even you can understand that you're only kidding yourself, right?

Remember, Paul was caught in the storm, and everyone thought the ship was going to sink. They had cast most of the cargo overboard to lighten the ship, but that wasn't working. Paul spoke to the captain and said, *".... be of good cheer, for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you. For there stood by me this night the angel of the Lord Whose I am and Whom I serve, saying, 'fear not Paul, for thou must be brought before Caesar and, lo, God hath given thee all that sail with thee.'"* That just happens to be God's revealed foreknowledge, friends. God elected that nobody on that ship would be lost. However, there was a small group of sailors who were making a little boat, and they were going to go overboard in an attempt to reach land. Paul said, *".... except these abide in the ship they cannot be saved."* See, God had already told Paul that all would be saved – and that was God's side of the problem; but, they had to stay in the ship – and that was *their* responsibility. You'll have to stay in the ship to be saved, friends.

Alright, God knows who the elect are – you and I do not know who the elect are, we cannot, and will not ever know who they are down here, either. We're told to go into the *whole world* and preach the whole Gospel – not just preach parts of it to the elect. That's because anyone can be saved. That's why I just throw these safari reports out there so that whosoever will can be found by God. Only God places these reports in the paths of His elect. Many of you stopped reading a *LONG* time ago – and, guess what? – You're not the elect; but not because you won't read my stuff — because you don't — likely won't — hear God.

See, friends, I told you that you weren't going to like this report, and that I didn't expect anyone to agree with what I am teaching here today. Well, I have another admonition if you're still reading: if you don't care for what I just said, then you *REALLY* do not want to read the next report. If you

thought this was arrogant, proud, and narrow-minded as I boast in the cross of Christ – you ain't seen nothin' yet. God has the right to plan and execute His church His way – and that's exactly what He is doing in this Spiritual Safari. Is that quite a claim? – You bet your life it is ~

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P.S. ~ It would be easy to avoid these difficult lessons and just talk about the comfort, peace and love of God on safari, friends. This is strong medicine, I know that. I know some of you cannot take this medicine — and I'm very sorry about that — because it means you are going to die in your trespasses and sins. If you can take this in the prescribed dosage, then it will heal. We need something strong for our spiritual cancer; and I just happen to be the doctor who doesn't mind administering the cure. We live in a flabby age of false teaching; and very few people know that they have been chosen in Christ. Only when we know that can we stand for God; only then will it make any difference in our life; and only then will we make any difference whatsoever to this world.

To conclude this leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God I want to leave you with this thought: we're coming to some high-water marks in the epistles of Paul; teaching us to look to God and wait upon Him. When you don't know what to do, then don't do it. When you encounter a spiritual bank of fog, don't accelerate and drive recklessly into it; slow down the machinery of your life. Turn up the lights so you can see clearly. Proceed with caution. If necessary, anchor your boat for a night or two. We are simply to trust God and, when we do, then God can work in our lives. Worry prevents God from doing anything for us, and blocks His blessings in our lives.

If our mind is distracted and our heart is distressed from the darkness that shadows us — and all of that strikes fear and terror in us — causing us to run hither and thither looking for some way of escape from our trials; where divine providence has placed us in the first place — then the Lord can do nothing to help us. I know that truth is despised. The peace of God must quiet our minds and rest our hearts, friends. We must place our hand in the Hand of Almighty God with the complete assurance of a little child

depending upon their earthly parents in the middle of the night. That's when God can *and will* lead us into the bright sunshine of His eternal love! The bite of grief always tests the coin of belief ~

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