



## Chosen Means What?

Ephesians 1: 4 NIV

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

### Have You Been Chosen?

The small Christian college I attended in the Midwest had a tradition each year called TWIRP Week. For seven days, girls asked guys out on dates and the girl had to pay. It was a great boon to those of us guys who were chosen. I was completely caught off guard by the psychological and sociological dynamic of this. It was strange to me to be asked out on a date by a girl and even more odd to have five or six girls wanting to go out with me on consecutive days and all happily covering the cost of the dinner. I must say I had a wonderful time of it, and it was a great feeling to be chosen. There was nothing more humiliating than being turned down for a date and so I empathized with my classmates who drummed up the courage to ask me to dinner. Our verse for today tells us that God has chosen to do something amazing for us!

The revelation in this verse is actually astonishing. Let's put verses three, four and five together to get a clearer picture of what is being said. **Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—** (Ephesians 1:3-5 NIV) Too many read this passage and worry about who the "us" is of God's choosing. Was it just the members of the Ephesian church? Was it the Gentiles? Let us not force God or the Bible into a box of our preconceived ideas. Us is whoever is reading the passage! Us is the one hearing the declaration. Us is the one receiving the message. Ephesians was not written for a small group of Christians living in Asia Minor. It is for the entire world; for all of us who gain access to the Bible. The Bible is God's word to the world. It is bigger in its reach than one small community in a parenthetical part of history. It is for us; yesterday, today, and tomorrow!

There is a detail in our key verse that we could just ignore because it is difficult to process. The when of God's choosing is before literally "the foundation of the world". Notice that it is God who chose what to do about your condition well before you ever chose Him. The foundation of the world was still ahead when He decided. For the Greek scholars out there, the verb translated "chose" is in the aorist tense. It properly means some time in the past, but also speaks of a specific time, a particular moment when God's choice was made. The implication is that this determination of what God intended to do with us was not always in place. This of course is beyond our ability to process as it deals with the Father and the vastness of Him with the Son and the Spirit and their thinking, but we let the Scripture speak for itself.

Notice, you are chosen "in him". This is a profound declaration and takes some untangling to grasp. Who is Him? It might be the Father, and no one could argue that. Yet, it seems best to take it as a reference to Christ who is the source of every spiritual blessing and the means by which you are adopted as God's child. Christ is chosen to make you holy and blameless. How is that to happen? Once again the tense of being

holy and blameless is aorist which means it is something that happens in a moment in time rather than a progressive movement forward. Holy and blameless is what Christ has done for you by dying on the cross. You don't, at least as it refers to the choosing of God, do your best to be holy and blameless; God, through the Son decided to do that for you.

When we think of salvation, we don't typically give much consideration that it involves becoming holy and blameless. Eternal life and the removal of the guilt of sin take a front seat to nearly all discussions of salvation. Yet here we see that the priority of God is that you have a right kind of life rather than an everlasting one. His determination is that everything about you is made perfect and God does that through Christ. What God knows and certainly the Bible teaches is that you cannot fix your personality on your own. Faithfulness, integrity and rightness do not come to you through hard work and discipline. You can only be made perfect through Christ making you that way. Sin is not something you can by sheer will get rid of on your own. Only Christ can take it out of you so that you can be completely pure in every single one of your relationships. Goodness is not a skill-set, it is an act of God in you.

If there ever was a human being set to be blameless and pure, it was ancient Samson. His parents knew before he was conceived that their son was built by God to be the leader of Israel. To prepare him for this calling, Samson was raised without wine, never to eat anything that God said was unclean and to not cut his hair as a sign of his divinely appointed mission. Of course, his parents taught him the law of God and everything necessary to be aligned perfectly with the Lord. Give the parents credit, they sure tried to raise Samson properly so that he would be loyal to God. The Lord even gave Samson special attention so that he would have every resource, physical as well as spiritual to be perfect for the job of leading Israel and freeing them from slavery to the pagan nations that surrounded her. It was much like a baby, from conception, being prepared to enter into the medical field. Mom never eating anything unhealthy as long as she carried the child and every bit of training and experience dedicated to helping the girl become a physician. Samson was groomed by God and his parents for the high calling of leading Israel and yet his life became a moral disaster. Samson consorted with prostitutes and gave himself to the women of the very countries Samson was to defeat and conquer. He did almost nothing to lead Israel spiritually and gave no effort to helping his people follow God and turn away from the pagan practices of the surrounding nations.

Just consider Judas Iscariot and how blessed he was to be with Jesus as one of His disciples, but because he never let his life be transformed by God, he had an empty spot within that Satan happily filled and satisfied. We cannot become good and holy and blameless on sweat and effort. Holiness does not come that way. Only through Jesus Christ can you be made perfect and it is God's choice for you to become perfect. Much is made of God choosing some and not others for salvation. That may or may not be so, but that is not the purview of this verse. We are told here that God chose, from before the world was started, for Christ to do the work of making you perfect and holy and blameless. Christ would bring you salvation and you would never have to get it done yourself; It would not be you doing that work. It was Jesus who would transform you and make you perfect for heaven and eternity. You see this precisely in Zacchaeus, the spiritually wrecked and morally corrupt tax collector who when he met Jesus, immediately came apart and was remade. He famously declared the instant Jesus invited Himself over to Zacchaeus's house for lunch that he would give half his possessions to the poor and anyone he cheated by collecting too much in taxes he would pay back four times the amount.

What did Jesus say about this circumstance of a radically transformed disposition? He announced, **"Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too is a son of Abraham."** (Luke 19: 9 NIV) The change in Zacchaeus is just a hint of what is in store for you as Christ works His way through your total personality. Salvation is impossible without Christ, including the perfecting of your life. God has chosen Christ to rework you and as you live in Christ, more and more of His perfection will be manifested in you. The best way to join God in this wonderful work of Christ in you is to always remember that God loves you

and in every way has your best interest at heart. By trusting Him completely, you will speed up the process of having all of Christ showing up in all of you!