

# Studies

In

# Ephesians

## Lesson 06

## Chapter One

### Notes On Chapter One.

#### II). Every spiritual blessing vss.3-14.

a). The work of the Father vss.3-6.

#### Introduction.

“The sweeping blessings of vs.3, which are said to be ‘*in Christ*’, are now amplified through the ‘*just as*’ clause of vs.4 and the following verses.” (O’Brien). These blessings reveal God’s goodness towards His elect people. From vss.4-14 Paul details for us what is involved in being blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Paul began with election from before the foundation of the world and moved to predestination to sonship, redemption through Christ’s sacrificial death, the forgiveness of sins, and so on. These blessings relate to the past, the present and the future.

In **Lesson 05** we noted that the recipients of these blessings are “**us**”. I want you to note the repetition of “us, we, you” in this section :

Vs.3 – “blessed us”.

Vs.4 – “chose us ... that we.”

Vs.5 – “predestined us”.

Vs.6 – “bestowed on us.”

Vs.7 – “we have redemption ... the forgiveness of our.”

Vs.8 – “lavished on us.”

Vs.9 – “made known to us.”

Vs.11 – “we have obtained.”

Vs.12 – “we who were the first.”

Vs.13 – “you were sealed.”

**Verse 4. “Just as”** : (1) expresses the manner in which God blesses believers – through the working of the three persons of the Trinity; (2) expresses cause. “Just as” can be translated “because; since; inasmuch as”. “God has richly blessed us *because* He has chosen us in Christ, predestined us for adoption, and so on.” (O’Brien).

In dealing with our salvation Paul focused on what God did and when He did it. Paul wrote, “**He (God) chose us in Him (Christ) before the foundation of the world.**”

“**Before the foundation (or creation) of the world**” means “from all eternity”. This expression also appears in Jn.17:24; 1Pet.1:20. *Katabole* (foundation) is the act of laying or putting down a foundation. Stott wrote, “Paul reaches back in his mind *before the foundation of the world*, before creation, before time began, into eternity past in which only God Himself existed in the perfection of His being.” In eternity God planned and decreed our salvation in Christ. The first step was election in Christ.

“**Chose**” (Gr. *eklego*). “The great theme of divine election is the first to be introduced as Paul’s mind reaches back

before creation, before time began, into eternity in which only God Himself existed.” (O’Brien).

Two other N.T. words are derived from *eklego* :

*eklektos* : Matt.22:14 (chosen); 24:22, 24, 31 (elect or chosen ones).

*ekloge* : Acts 9:15 (chosen); 1Thess.1:4 (choice); 2Pet.1:10 (choosing).

*Eklego* expresses the basic idea of choice. It means “to choose; to select; to choose for one self.” It is both preferential and individualizing in its force. (Uprichard).

Exod.17:9, Moses told Joshua, “Choose men for us and go out and fight.”

1Sam17:40, David “chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook” to go and fight Goliath.

Isa.40:20, “he... selects a tree that does not rot.”

But there is more than the basic idea of choice in this verb. *Eklego* involves preference and selection from among many choices. But it does not necessarily imply the rejection of those who are not chosen. Its focus is on the giving of favor to those chosen. It keeps in view the relationship to be established between the one choosing and the object chosen. (Zodiatas).

### **God is a God who chooses.**

Neh.9:7 – God chose Abram (Abraham).

Deut.7:7 – God chose Israel.

Deut.12:11 – God will choose the place of worship.

1Kings 8:16 – God chose David to be king.

(cf. 1Sam.16:1).

Rom.9:10-13 – God chose Jacob over Esau.

As human beings we are created in the image of God. When we make choices, we are reflecting the image of God in which we were created. Our lives are filled with basic choices we make every day. And then there are the choices that are more complex and more important. We choose our friendships and relationships. We choose schools, careers, and place to live. We choose a spouse. In choosing, we may face many questions and challenges. But the right to choose is never questioned. And if this right is challenged, we defend it and may do so with passion, even vehemence.

Yet, time and again, many are ready and willing and do challenge God's right to choose. Furthermore, God's morality in exercising the right to choose is also questioned. We ask : how can a loving God make choices that exclude others? How can such choices that exclude others be just?

The question is this : can a person, who is created in the image of God, manifest that image by exercising the right to choose and defending his right to choose but, at the same

time, deny God the right to choose and / or question the morality of God's choices? (cf. Rom.9:20-21).

**“[God] has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”** In the context of vs.4-14 **“every spiritual blessing”** focuses specifically upon the salvation God has graciously granted us in Christ. Vs.4 focuses upon our election in Christ unto salvation in Christ.

In eternity God did something. He chose us in Christ. The verb **“chose”** points to a definite choice. The verb is middle voice and emphasizes that God chose us in Christ for Himself. (cf. 1Pet.2:9 “you are a chosen race ... a people for God's own possession.”). We did not choose God. In eternity we did not exist in order to make any kind of choice. We existed only in God's mind, plan and purpose. Our existence in God's mind was real (decretive), hence His definite choice of us. In election, the focus is upon God. He is the primary actor. He is the first cause and He has set out the purpose. (see : Jn.15:16, 19; 1Cor.1:27-28; Rom.8:33; Col.3:12; 2Thess.2:13).

**Snodgrass** wrote, “Election means that God chooses people, and this teaching cannot be turned around to the thought that people choose God. Election means that the existence of the people of God can be explained only on the basis of God's character, plan, and action, not on some

quality in the people who are chosen. The initiative is always God's based on His "grace"... Salvation is not some accident or afterthought on the part of God."

**Snodgrass** added, "the doctrine of election removes the idea that we are in control. We must never think that we do all the choosing and assume God is waiting like some wallflower to be chosen. We want to be in control; election says otherwise."

**"He chose us"**. The focus is not corporate or ecclesiological. We are not chosen as a body or as a church. The focus is personal and individual. God chose you, and you, and you, and you, ad infinitum. And He took the individuals He chose and constituted them into the body of Christ (corporate) or into the church (ecclesiological).

**"He chose us in Him (Christ)."** We note two points here :

(1). What does this statement tell us about Christ? It tells us of His presence in eternity. **O'Brien** noted that God's election of believers *in Christ* before creation presupposes Christ's pre-existence.

(2). God's choice of His people "in Christ" is the new element in election. It is in connection with Christ that we are chosen. This connection with Christ is linked to His redemptive work on our behalf in time. **F.F.Bruce** wrote,

"He is [the] foundation, origin, and executor : all that is involved in election and its fruits depends on Him." Election is always and only in Christ.

Let us keep in mind that Christ's death (redemptive work) was decreed in eternity. (Lk.22:22; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 1Pet.1:18-20).

**"That we would be holy and blameless before Him."**

Literal : to be holy and blameless in the presence of (in the sight of) Him.

**"To be"** – present infinitive expressing unchanging purpose. In this context the stated purpose of our election in Christ in eternity is that we are to be and to live as a holy and blameless people in the presence of God. The goal of election is ethical.

**"Holy"** – (Gk. *hagios*) related to "saints" (vs.1; **Lesson 04**). The God who chose us is holy and we are commanded to be holy because God is holy. (Lev.11:44; 19:2; 1Pet.1:15-16). God did not choose anyone because they were holy but He chose them in order for them to become holy.

**"Blameless"** is literally "unblemished". It was used to describe the absence of defects in the sacrificial animals. (cf. Lev.22:17-22; Deut.15:19-21). Jesus is God's "lamb

unblemished and spotless”. (Jn.1:29; 1Pet.1:19; cf. Heb.9:14).

In the O.T. “holy and blameless” were cultic terms that were also employed to describe ethical purity. In Eph.1:4 & Col.1:22 the cultic overtones disappear. Instead they refer to ethical holiness and freedom from moral blemish.

“**Before Him**” (in the presence of Him; in the sight of Him.) The question before us is : does “before Him” focus on time (here and now) or in God’s eternal presence in the future? The answer is that the focus is on God’s eternal presence in the future. So what about here and now?

**O’Brien** wrote, “God chose His people in Christ with the ultimate goal that they would be holy and blameless before Him when they appear in His presence. But this is not to suggest that there is consequently no concern for holiness and blamelessness in the here and now. The *‘holiness without which no one will see the Lord’* (Heb.12:14) is progressively wrought within the lives of believers on earth by the Spirit, and will be consummated in glory at the *parousia*, the time of the *‘redemption’* anticipated in Eph.1:14; 4:30. And the clear implication for believers is that even now they should live according to the divine intention.”

**Hoehner** wrote, “there is a necessary correlation between what God is going to do in the future for the believers and what He is presently doing for them. Since He is preparing believers to go into His presence holy and without blame, certainly that is what He desires for them now, as seen in Phil.2:15 where Christians were to be blameless in a crooked and perverted generation (cf. Rev.14:5). Hence, the purpose of election is that believers are to be holy and without blame before God, which presupposes that humans are unholy.”

### **Points to Ponder.**

**1).** God must be blessed (praised) because He chose us for salvation in Christ. Calvin noted that the name of Christ excludes all merit, and everything which men have of themselves; for when Paul says that we are chosen in Christ, it follows that in ourselves we are unworthy.

God’s did not choose us because He saw something good in us. When He chose us in eternity He already knew that we would be totally undeserving of His choice. He already knew that we would be unholy and blameworthy. He already knew that our moral character would completely contradict His holy character. Let the truth grip you if you are “chosen and ... beloved” (Col.3:12; 1Thess.1:4; 2Thess.2:13) that God is for you (Rom.8:31; Psa.118:6).

**2).** Paul's teaching on God's election of you in Christ from eternity is not for the purpose of debate. It is for the purpose of praise. The doctrine of election is a divine revelation and not a human speculation. But there are those who will always be ready to engage you in speculative debates over election and predestination. It will serve you well to study Paul's approach to this debate in Rom.chap.9 before attempting to engage anyone in debate.

**3).** Your faith in Christ is not rooted in time but in eternity. It is not rooted in what you did but in what God did. It is God who began this good work in you in eternity past. And it is God who is perfecting it in the present. And it is God who will complete it in "the day of Christ Jesus" . (cf. Phil.1:6).

**4).** **O'Brien** wrote, "To say that election took place before creation indicates that God's choice was due to His own free decision and love, which were not dependent on temporal circumstances or human merit. The reasons for His election were rooted in the depths of His gracious, sovereign nature. To affirm this is to give to Christians the assurance that God's purposes for them are of the highest good, and the appropriate response from those who are chosen in Christ from all eternity is to praise Him who has so richly blessed us."

**5).** **Hoehner** noted, "He chose us" are very comforting words for the believer. In the study of the word "choose" several observations can be made.

**i).** In both Old & New Testaments, God is the subject. (cf. 1Kin.8:16; Neh.9:7; Jn.15:16, 19; 2Thess.2:13).

**ii).** God did not choose in a vacuum but in the light of all known options. God chose "us" from the whole human race.

**iii).** Reprobation is a real subject in the Bible. But when election in Christ unto salvation is taught it is not contrasted with reprobation. Election speaks only of those who are chosen and says nothing of those not chosen.

**iv).** The verb "chose" is in the middle voice and indicates personal interest in the one chosen. God chose with great personal interest rather than with a random impersonal choice. Consider these verses :

Neh.9:7, "You are the Lord God, who chose Abram."

1King.8:16, "I chose David."

Psa.106:23, "Moses His chosen one."

Psa.135:4, "The Lord has chosen Jacob for Himself."

Acts 9:15, "he (Saul) is a chosen instrument of Mine."

When God chose you in Christ, you were an individual person with a name. God's choice of you was not random and impersonal.

v). The one who is chosen has no legal claim on the one who chooses. It is clear in Scripture that human beings come short of God's glory and do not seek Him. (cf. Rom.3:10-11). God did not choose anyone because they were holy and thus had a legal claim to be chosen. On the contrary, all people are sinners and deserve rejection and the lake of fire. There was no obligation on God's part to choose anyone but He freely chose some and this is evidence of His great grace. The point is that if God had not taken the initiative, no one would have His everlasting presence and life. The real problem is not why God chose only some. The real problem is why did He choose any at all! No wonder God is to be praised.

6). It should be absolutely clear to you that Divine election is a stimulus for humility and worship, not a ground for arrogance, argument and boasting. (cf. 1Cor.4:7).

7). Unconditional election emphasizes God's absolute sovereignty and His right to do as He pleases. (Psa.115:3; 135:6; Dan.4:35). It preserves God's freedom to choose without any kind of influence outside of Himself.

8). Unconditional election is an act of sovereign grace. God chose in Christ, sovereignly and graciously, completely undeserving sinners for salvation in Christ. A person may ask the question : why did God graciously choose me? The

answer is : because He loved you. Why did He love you? And the answer is : because He loved you. Deut.7:7-8 teaches us concerning God's choice of Israel : the Lord loved them and chose them because He loved them.

9). **Snodgrass** wrote, "The responsibility election brings in this text is ethical.... Paul's discussion of God's choosing has nothing to do with fatalism or a determinism that diminishes human action and responsibility.... Christians are to live in a holy and blameless manner before God. This is not an oppressive weight, but as much privilege as it is responsibility. We are called to live in keeping with God's intent for us.

"Whatever else the church is, it must be a community of *changed* people, a community focused on ethical living before God. The concern is not "do-goodism" or keeping rules, but being people who live out their relation to God. People both inside and outside the church have the right to expect changed behavior from Christians. Purity – or right living – is not an option.... For Christianity, religion is *grace and ethics is gratitude.*"



