

Sermon Outline

THE YEAR IN OUR LORD, 2011-2012

CHRIST JESUS: OUR ELECTION AN ADVENT MESSAGE (EPHESIANS 1:4)

- I. **Not the Survival of the Fittest, but of the Chosen**
- II. **Review: God Is the Blessed One and the Blessing One (Ephesians 1:3)**
 - A. God is blessed because he has blessed us with the gift of Christ, in whom every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places is found.
 - B. Once we have Christ, our lives would be impacted in two ways.
 - 1. We are reconciled to God.
 - 2. We can experience real contentment and even joy even in the midst of our very real sufferings.

***Questions for reflection:** Time for a review. On what grounds does Paul ascribe blessing to God in 1:3?

III. **God Chose Us in Christ**

- A. The first words in verse 4 are “even as” (*kathōs*). How does it link verse 4 to the previous verse?
- B. One way to understand “even as” is as a comparative conjunction.
 - 1. It sets up a comparison between verses 3 and 4.
 - 2. God has chosen us *in the same way*, or *by the same means* that he has blessed us, namely, “in Christ.”
- C. But “even as” may be understood as a causal conjunction.
 - 1. Verse 4 is the cause of verse 3.
 - 2. God blessed us in Christ *because* God has chosen us in Christ long before the world was made.
 - 3. This way of using “even as” is seen in Romans 1:28: “And since [*kathōs*] they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind...”

- D. While both understandings can work in Ephesians 1:4, we will go with the causal meaning because Paul seems to be listing the blessings from ground up, until the climactic blessing in 1:10.
—This is also the understanding of the NIV translation of 1:4: “*For* he chose us in him before the creation of the world...”
- E. Altogether, God has blessed us because God chose us in the first place.
- F. What does it mean for us to be chosen in Christ?
—It means that we are chosen in union with Christ. It means that God selected you and me for his purposes together with Christ Jesus.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) How may the phrase “even as” be understood? (2) Why are we (and the NIV translators) going with the causal meaning of “even as”? (3) What does it mean to be chosen in Christ?

IV. Before the Foundation of the World

- A. When did God choose us in Christ?
—He chose us “before the foundation of the world.”
- B. When God beheld his Son, he could behold—*at the same time!*—all the precious faces of those who would eventually become his people.
- C. Ephesians 1:4 and John 1:1 go together: The deity and eternity of Christ are necessary conditions for God’s choosing us from the beginning of time.
- D. Given that God chose us before the world was made, we can infer that God’s choice of us was not based on anything in us at all.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) When did God choose us in Christ? (2) How do Ephesians 1:4 and John 1:1 complement each another? (3) What can we infer from the fact that God chose us before we even existed?

V. That We Should Be Holy and Blameless before Him

- A. God has also chosen us for a purpose: “...that we should be holy and blameless before him.”
- B. What is the meaning of “holy and blameless before him”?
 1. “Holy” means “set aside or reserved for God.”
 2. “Blameless” means “without fault.”

3. This is a condition of life that is best summarized as “God-centered” or “theocentric.”
—It is a way of life that is utterly devoted to God alone.
- C. This phrase “that we should be holy and blameless before him” shows why it cannot be that God chose us based on our good deeds in the future.
 1. Paul says that God chose us *to be* “holy and blameless before him.”
 2. Therefore, we are not holy and blameless *before* God chooses us; but *because* God has chosen us.
 3. It is the all-powerful choice of God which creates all the good qualities that we see in our lives.
- D. The truth of God’s sovereign choosing is a fundamental doctrine in Scripture, because it is a necessary condition for the Gospel.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) According to Paul, why did God choose us? Where is God’s choice of us leading to? (2) What are the meanings of “holy” and “blameless”? (3) This phrase “holy and blameless before him” is why it cannot be that God chose us based on our future good deeds. Why? (4) God’s sovereign choosing is a necessary condition of the Gospel. Why?

VI. Yet Again, in Christ

- A. Like his blessings, God’s sovereign election is also in Christ.
- B. Even if our names were known by God from the start, the fact that only Christ’s name gets mentioned is telling: *Christ is the nucleus of all of God’s plans for us!*
 1. We were chosen (and later created) for the sake of Christ, not for ourselves.
 2. Colossians 1:16: “...all things were created through him and for him.”
- C. The Baby who was born to Joseph and Mary is the One on whom everything hinges.
—His coming would bring about transformation at the deepest levels of society.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) Where is God’s choosing work located? (2) “We were chosen (and later created) for the sake of Christ, not for ourselves.” How does this statement make you feel? And why? Discuss.

VII. Living under the Power of God's Election

Since God the Father has chosen us in Christ, we are to find our comfort for life as well as purpose in life in his sovereign choice in Christ.

- A. If God chose us in Christ, we need to base our assurance and encouragement for life in God himself.
1. In order to know if you are one of God's chosen ones, you would need to exhibit faith in Christ.
—By trusting in Christ, you are not getting God to choose you. Rather, the fact that you put your trust in Christ is evidence that God has chosen you.
 2. Once faith is evident, however small and weak it may be, our Father invites us to strengthen our faith by taking a step further and finding our encouragement in his sovereign choosing.
 3. Aside from the Gospel, the other source of encouragement that bears us in our earthly pilgrimage comes from trusting in God's choice of us.
 - a. Philippians 1:6: "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."
 - b. Philippians 2:12-13: "...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."
 4. Have you seriously reckoned with the fact that God has chosen you in Christ? How would your outlook on life be different if you did that? Make a list of ways in which you would behave differently at work and at home because of this truth.
- B. If God is working in us, our life should begin to reflect the direction of God's work, holiness and blamelessness.
—If God chose us in Christ to be holy and blameless, then we must make holiness and blamelessness our primary ambition in life.
1. God wants Christians to be a living statement of godly protest against the values of the world.
 2. But the final purpose of holy living is not to protest the world but to please our God!
 - a. Our holiness and blamelessness is "before him."
 - b. The Christian's supreme motive in life is to please the Lord, who chose him or her.
 3. Because God has chosen us, we should expect to see holiness in our lives.
 - a. Where in your life do you see the glory of God?
—Look and take encouragement from that! Praise the Lord!

- b. But where in your life are you still resisting the holiness of God?
—Look and take action! Fight for change!

***Questions for reflection:** (1) How does your faith in Christ relate to God's choosing you? Is it the cause of God's choice of you or its evidence? (2) How is God's choosing us an encouragement to us? (3) How would making holiness and blamelessness your primary ambition affect the way you study, parent, work, and befriend others? (4) Where in your life do you see the glory of God? Where do you still see sinfulness? How do you plan on working on those areas?