

Ephesians 1

The Purpose of Election

Context of Ephesians

1. The people and the city
 - a. It was a wealthy (manufacturing and trade) and important political center in Asia.
 - b. City held entertainment in high regard – they had the largest open-air theatre of the time (it could seat 25,000), and they had another stadium which held chariot races and gladiatorial fights.
 - c. It was a center for the pagan worship of Artemis (Roman name is Diana) which was an extremely immoral form religion and worship.
2. Outline – very simple, containing 3 parts:
 - a. Election and the believers in Ephesus (1:1-2:10)
 - b. The church of Ephesus and the body of Christ (2:11-4:16)
 - c. The responsibility of election (4:17-6:24)
3. Paul’s purpose for writing – Paul wrote this letter to the church in Ephesus in order to explain to them that they were counted among God’s elect and to explain to them the responsibilities of election. The doctrine of election stands at the heart of the message of Ephesians and gives the epistle its structure.

NT Wright (Anglican theologian) explains election in this way:

“Election is for the purpose of making us God’s people for the world, it is not for our own sakes.”

There were two purposes for which man was made:

- a. To reflect the image of God in this world; which included ruling, subduing, filling and cultivating this earth (Genesis 1:26-2:25).
- b. To do all this for the glory of God

Election is the means by which man fulfills the mandate of creation – I believe that Paul will make this fact evident in the text of Ephesians.

The Text of Ephesians 1:1-23

- I. Introduction (1:1, 2)

A. Author – Paul an apostle...

1. Apostle – one sent out with authority
2. By the will of God – Paul possessed God given authority to instruct the church of God (even though he himself believed that he was the least of the apostles because he persecuted the church). Paul is laying a foundation for what will come – the Ephesians, like Paul, were also called because of the will of God and therefore God had a plan for them.

B. Recipients – Paul will identify the recipients in 3 ways:

1. Saints – one who is set apart or consecrated (this is true of all believers).
2. At Ephesus – the local church is the means by which God will fulfill His plan for this world.
3. Who are faithful – one who possess faith and one who acts on that faith by being faithful.
4. In Christ – in union with Him, joined to Him.

II. Election Explained – The Work of the Trinity in Election (1:3-14)

A. The work of the Father in election (1:3-6)

1. Blessed believers with every spiritual blessing (1:3)
 - a. God's work of election should create in believers an attitude of praise. Election is not ultimately about those who are elected, but rather it is about God receiving glory.
 - b. The overarching blessing of election is found in verse 3 – “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”
 - This is not some esoteric, intangible blessing that we cannot put our hands on. To best understand what Paul is saying we need to look at a couple of other verses in Ephesians:
 - **Eph. 2:6, 3:10, 6:12** – the heavenly places aren't far off realities that we will see one day. The life we live on earth corresponds with our spiritual life that we cannot see. It is in the heavenly places that the battle for this earth is being waged; this battle however can be seen in the world around us.

- Paul is revealing that in Christ we have everything we need for this battle. In Christ we possess everything we need in order to reflect the image of God and to do it for the glory of God.

How is it that we came to have every spiritual blessing bestowed upon us? Paul will now explain it is because God elected believers to salvation.

2. God chose us (1:4)

- a. The grammar of this sentence is clear. God is the one acting. Chapter 2 will make it clear that there was no intervening factor or condition that obligated his choice. Scripture nowhere supports the belief that God chose us based upon foreseen faith, and it certainly negates any thought that God chose us based upon some foreseen righteousness.
 - b. "In Him" – this is now the third time in these few verses that Paul will use this phrase. Christ is the one who satisfied the righteous demands of God's law and therefore is fit to represent man before God. Paul will belabor this point in Romans 5, when he compares Adam and Christ.
 - c. The time when we were chosen was before the world was created.
 - d. Understanding the reason God chose us is essential. Most think of salvation only in terms of the forgiveness of sin and eternal life with God in heaven. Paul explains God's purpose as being much more comprehensive:
 - Holiness – set apart (this I believe explains our relationship to the world). We are to bear the image of God – be God's people to the world.
 - Blameless before Him – We were created to live in fellowship with God and bring Him glory – our election makes this a reality.
- ## 3. Predestined us (1:5-6) – while the two terms are closely related, Paul is emphasizing different aspects of election when uses the word predestined as opposed to chosen. In verse 4 Paul was emphasizing the change in our nature that election brings about while the word predestined emphasizes a change in our relationship with God.
- a. God's work of predestination was done because of His love – not as a response to our love.
 - b. The word is easy enough to understand – God determined that the elect would live in righteousness and not rebellion. The Greek literally means *pre-horizoned* or *pre-encircled*. Everything about our lives was the work of God within us to bring us to a point of righteousness and obedience in accordance with His eternal plan.

- c. God's purpose in predestination is explained "*to adoption as sons*" – here we see the change in relationship. We now have a legal standing as the children of God and not children of wrath.
 - d. The result of our being chosen and predestined is that God is glorified – we become what we were created to be.
- B. The work of the Son in election (1:7-12) – God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world – Paul will emphasize three benefits that believers have received as a result of the work of Christ.
1. Redemption (1:7-8a)
 - a. Paul once again uses the words "in Christ" to describe the state of believers. We don't have time to do a more thorough examination of these words but to say that in all ways our salvation and life are intimately tied to Christ.
 - b. Redemption – purchased from the slave market. Paying the ransom price.
 - c. Through His blood – the wages of sin is death, to undo the curse and return man to the place of reflecting the image of God and bringing Him glory, death needed to be overcome.
 - d. This redemption was accomplished by the grace of God and resulted in our being restored to God and our sins being forgiven.
 2. Wisdom (1:8b-10) – In redeeming believers God integrates them into His plans and purposes. In Christ we are given access to the inner workings of this plan. The exact nature of this wisdom will not be explained until later in the epistle – the point is that in Christ we have access to the plan of God.
 3. Inheritance (1:11, 12) – the inheritance will be the final realization of God's plans for us. This inheritance will be done in completion of our predestination – God working all things according to His will.
 - Even the inheritance we will receive is for the purpose of our bringing glory to Christ. The purpose for which we were created.
- C. The work of the Spirit in election(1:13, 14)
1. The means by which these blessings are received – because we chosen in order to reflect the image of God and to bring Him glory, God uses certain means to bring us into this relationship with Him. Paul is not indicating our part but rather the means God uses:
 2. Listening to the gospel of salvation – there is no salvation apart from the word of truth – this is the only means God has ordained to save His elect.

3. Having also believed – but there is also a change that takes place as that message is proclaimed – it is and must be believed (in chapter 2 Paul will teach how the elect come to believe)
4. The blessing of the Spirit
 - a. Sealed – this is the language of a king making his mark with a signet ring. This mark guarantees the genuine character of the document, protects against tampering or harm and marks ownership.
 - b. Given a pledge of our inheritance – the giving of the Spirit of God is the down payment of our future inheritance.
5. Once again we are reminded that all of this occurs in order that we would bring glory to God.

III. Prayer for Understanding (1:15-23)

Having finished explaining the work of God done on their behalf, Paul will tell them how he has been praying for them. The prayer can basically be divided in two parts.

A. Prayer for wisdom and understanding (1:15-19)

1. Paul begins with a word of thanks – he can see God’s work in them because of their faith and the love they have for one another.
2. You will notice that his prayer is for understanding:
 - a. A spirit of wisdom
 - b. Revelation in the knowledge of Him
 - c. Eyes of your heart be enlightened which results in:
 - Knowing the hope of your calling
 - The riches of the inheritance
 - Surpassing greatness of His power

B. Prayer that they will understand God’s power to accomplish His purposes in them (1:19-23) – the power mentioned above is now explained.

1. The resurrection as a demonstration of God’s power – death, as the enemy of man, has been overcome.
 - a. Christ reigns in the heavenly places, where we receive every spiritual blessing and where the battle is taking place. Our victory is sure because Christ is king.

- b. Christ is seated at the right hand of God – His work was accomplished on the cross.
2. Exaltation as king over all things.
- a. We do not need to wait for the kingdom of God – it is a present reality
 - b. The manifestation of that kingdom takes place through the church which is His body.

Conclusion

This brings us back to the beginning when I said that election is for the purpose of our being God's people to the world – this is exactly what Paul has presented in Ephesians 1:

1. In all ways our salvation results in our bringing glory to God (1:6, 12, 14)
2. Our salvation makes us a part of the body of Christ which is the means by which the fullness of Christ will be made manifest in the world.