

## Theme: Chosen!

### Text: Ephesians 1:3-14 (EHV)

<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup> even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, <sup>8</sup> which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup> making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ <sup>10</sup> as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. <sup>11</sup> In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, <sup>12</sup> so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup> In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup> who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Over the past couple of months I've been having pre-marriage classes with a young couple who are going to be married in Southern California at the end of August. As "homework" for their next session I asked them both to write down 5 things they love about their future spouse, or to put it a different way, 5 reasons they are marrying their future spouse. Those are important things to think about, because, as you probably know, getting married is one of the most important choices a person can make in their life. It's also a very blessed one—not just because *you* are making the choice to be with someone for the rest of your life, but also that this other person has chosen *you*, and only *you*, for the rest of their life! What an amazing thing that is! What a blessed, comforting feeling that is to be **chosen** in that way. To have that secure sense of belonging, a sense of being wanted, a sense that someone cares deeply enough about you to commit themselves to you for as long as they live.

In our text we hear the Apostle Paul speak about being **chosen**. However, he's talking about a choice that was far more important and long-lasting than even being **chosen** for a lifetime of marriage. He is talking about an eternal choice that actually wasn't made by anyone—at least not by any human being anyway. What Paul writes about in our text is being **chosen** by God. That choice has all the spiritual blessings we'll ever need and all the comfort we could ever hope for!

Now that fact might not seem all that amazing or comforting at first, but when we take a look at our situation when we came into this world and we compare it with what the Bible says about us and all people we'll realize pretty quickly just how incredible it is that God Himself has **chosen us**! We'll realize just how amazing God's grace—His undeserved love—really is!

Think again of that young couple and the list of reasons they are writing out as to why they have **chosen** the other as their future spouse. Chances are they would be able to list more than 5 reasons why they are marrying each other. If I were to ask those of you who are married to give me some reasons why you have **chosen** your spouse you could probably (hopefully!) give me a pretty good list of things that led you to make that choice: They are caring and compassionate. They are trustworthy and faithful. You find them attractive, you like their personality, or their sense of humor, or any number of other good qualities that led you to choose that person as your spouse for life.

But if we were to ask ourselves the question, "Why did God choose us to be with Him for all eternity in heaven?" what kind of a list could we come up with that would have led Him to make such a choice? Was there anything in us that God—the holy, almighty creator of the universe could have found "attractive"?

Not if you believe what the Bible says about us in our natural state; the state we were born in when we entered this life. The very next chapter of Ephesians says we were **“dead in sins” (Ephesians 2:5)**. Would you go looking for someone to “choose” as your own from among dead people? I don’t think so! The Bible also says that by nature we were enemies of God; hostile towards Him **(cf. Romans 8:7)**. Would you even dream of choosing as your life-long companion someone who is your enemy? No! At least, not on purpose!

Why in the world, then, would God have chosen us if there was nothing desirable or attractive about us by nature? If we don’t measure up to the standard of holiness that He demands in His Law then what could have possibly moved Him to have **chosen** you and me to be His very own *forever*? We can answer that question with just two words: Because of His **love** and because of **Christ!** Verses 4 and 5 of our text tell us this, **“He [God the Father] chose us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love<sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will” (v. 4-5).**

Did you catch all that? **“Before the foundation of the world”** God **“chose us in Christ” (v. 4)!**? Before God ever said, “Let there be!” He chose you and me!? Let me ask you, “How much did you have to do with that choice God made?” None! You didn’t even exist yet. **Nothing** even existed yet! Do you realize what a great comfort that is? It means that our salvation is not dependant on us or our “choosing,” but rather it is dependant on God and His choosing of us, which, as Paul says here clearly in our text was done even **“before the foundation of the world” (v. 4)!** He is simply that good, gracious, and loving. Paul says in the end of verse 5 of our text that He chose us to be His own essentially because He wanted to: **“according to the purpose of his will” (v. 5).** Paul goes on to say that God gives us His grace so that we would be led to thank and praise Him, **“to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved” (v. 6).**

This teaching of God’s “election” or “predestination” usually brings up one other question in our minds: “How do I know for sure I am one of the **“chosen”**? Have I been adopted into God’s family? How do I know for sure?” The Bible tells us that God sent His one and only Son Jesus into this world to suffer and die to forgive us our sins, and that **“whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16)**. Do you believe this? If yes, then you are one of the elect; you are an adopted Child of God in Christ. It really is as simple as that! If you can say by faith, “Jesus is Lord” then you already have the Holy Spirit living inside of you. The Bible tells us, **“No one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3)**. Paul tells us in the last verses of our text that the Holy Spirit who has been given to us by Christ is our “guarantee” that we have been adopted and **chosen** as God’s children, **“In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him [Christ], were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,<sup>14</sup> who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory” (v. 13-14).**

“Now wait a minute pastor. That seems too simple. After all, sometimes, I’m just not so sure I even believe. How can a **true** Christian act the way I do? I think that sometimes my faith isn’t genuine at all, that it’s all just a charade, a mask I put on. Maybe my faith is just a sham. How do I know **for sure** that I am one of the **chosen**?”

If you’ve had these thoughts before, or thoughts like them—and if you’re a human being you probably have—let me remind you that our assurance of our salvation doesn’t come from inside of us. When our hearts and minds unsettle us with doubts and fears don’t turn inward for your answers. Turn outward. Turn to the eternal truth of the Gospel of Christ. Turn outside yourself to the cross of Calvary, which is far above all thoughts and feelings and moods of our heart and mind. That is where our assurance of salvation lies!

Paul began our sermon text by praising the **“God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (v. 3).”** One of those spiritual blessings we already mentioned: our adoption as sons of God. Another one of those blessings is the assurance that we have been adopted by God in Christ. Listen again to **v. 7** of our text, **“In him [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses [sins], according to the riches of his grace” (v. 7).** When our faith is shaky, when doubts rise in our hearts about our standing before God we *“rest on His unchanging grace!”* In the **“riches of God’s grace”** we have been given **“redemption”** and **“forgiveness”** by the blood of Jesus. These are among the greatest spiritual gifts we can be given. Christ’s blood was the ransom price that paid for all our sins and redeemed back us to God. Forgiveness is what we’ve received, and the Greek word here for forgiveness literally means, *“to let go, to send away.”* Isn’t that a great picture? Christ’s sacrifice on the cross has *“sent away”* all our sins. Every sin we have committed, or ever will commit, has been *“let go”* and been nailed to Christ’s cross.

You and I have been **chosen** by God, in Christ, to be His sons and daughters and inherit His kingdom of heaven—not just for a lifetime, but for all eternity! What a blessing! What a comfort! Now, let’s live our lives **“to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved” (v. 6).** Amen.