

Church, Praise God The Father!

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Preacher: J.D. Edwards

[0:00] Here are verses 4-6. One more time, our focus for today. Ephesians 1, 4-6. Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.

In love He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved. The Word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God. Please be seated. The grass withers and the flower fades, but the Word of the Lord stands forever.

Please pray with me. Oh Lord, we praise You for revealing Yourself to us. We praise You for the ministry of the Holy Spirit through whom You breathed out these words, written down by the Apostle Paul, under divine inspiration.

And how You've preserved these words, Lord, for Your church, for our good, for our edification, so that You can cause our faith to grasp hold of the triune God.

[1:21] And even though our minds are limited, Lord, we can receive Your Word like a child, with childlike faith. What You have made so clear and so simple, we pray that You'll cause us to understand this now, Lord.

I pray that as a minister of Your Word, I won't hinder Your people, that I won't make it more complicated than it is. I pray that You'll guide my words, Lord, through the preparation and now through the delivery, to build Your people up.

But more than what may be visible, Lord, we pray especially that Your Holy Spirit will take Your Word, Your truth, that You've revealed and work it into our lives.

Work Christ into us. Cause us to grasp You, Lord, through the faith that Christ has opened up for us and that the Spirit applies to us.

Bring us, Lord, into the throne room of heaven. From Your presence, help us to behold better today who You are. And being in Your presence, Lord, there will be no response for Your people other than to fall down on our faces before You and praise You and glorify You.

[2:32] We ask that You do this work in us, Lord. Lord, maybe there are those who are lost in darkness still, Father. We pray that You'll open up their ears to hear the good news of salvation from God, our Creator, through Jesus Christ, His only Son.

And that they won't stay far away, Lord, that the enemy won't deceive them, that You will draw them into Your presence, into Your kingdom, that they can know this precious adoption that we have in Christ.

We ask all of this for the precious name of Jesus. Amen. It's the design of a clock to tell time.

It's the design of a chair to bear weight, even that lawn chair that you're sitting in there. It's God's design for the sun to cast forth light and warmth so that there can be light.

What's your design? For what did God design you and me? The Bible tells us it's the design of every person to give praise.

[3:42] Many will reject the words of the Bible, the words of the Creator, but we can also point out to the examples all around us. Evaluate if this is true. People can't help but praise.

Probably right now there's someone praising that peach, that Palisade peach they got at the farmer's market. They're praising the creature. People love to flood into museums and praise artwork.

We flood into theaters and halls where we have musicians in the sympathy. And what they're doing is they're praising the composer or the skill of the musicians.

We praise the food at a restaurant. We praise athletes at a stadium. We're created as people to praise. I thought of one more example, and it's a fire hose.

A fire hose is designed to gush out water that can be aimed at the right target to put out a fire. Every single human being, you and I, we look around, we're really like those fire hoses.

[4:47] We are designed to gush out praise. But these hoses are always pointed downward at earthly things. And the Holy Spirit causes that to be steered in the right direction.

Here's one more example. This letter comes to us from a church in the city called Ephesus. And you remember what we read about the people of Ephesus.

The whole city, one of the biggest cities in Asia Minor, had gathered. And they had erupted in the praise of a demon goddess named Artemis or Diana. They have to praise something.

And here comes the gospel into a city like Ephesus, a city like Parker, Denver Metro, into lives like yours and mine. And God calls us to worship him, the only worthy object of our praise.

This is how this letter begins. Look at verse three. Paul, writing to the church in Ephesus and to all churches who will receive this, including you and me. Look at verse three. Blessed be God.

[5:52] Praise God. And now he walks through each person of the Trinity. He says, first, praise the triune God with me, focused on God the Father, from whom all spiritual blessings flow.

So that's our focus for today. Church, praise God the Father. Oh, church, praise God the Father today. And I want to point out in verses four, five, and six, four reasons we should praise God the Father.

Number one, oh, church, praise God the Father, who, in verse four, look at the first few words. God the Father chose us in Christ.

Praise God the Father. Why? Here's the first reason. Because he chose us in Christ. Verse four says that he, meaning God the Father, chose us, writing to a local church, in him, meaning God the Son, Jesus Christ.

Someone pointed out how an accurate understanding begins with accurate grammar. So let's do some grammar for ourselves here.

[7:06] What's the subject of that statement? What's the subject of that statement? The subject means it's the active agent, and it's God the Father. What's the verb? The verb is the action.

He chose. That word means he picked out. He selected. He elected. Who? Who? Us. The object. That's the person acted upon.

It's very clear and very simple, isn't it? God chose us in Christ. Yet our flesh and our fallen minds, many throughout church history have tried to twist the clear words of Scripture to say that it's fallen man who chooses God first.

That God chose those whom God knew would choose him. They've said that election is based on God foreseeing a faith that certain people would have in the future and that others would not have.

The reason they give is because Jesus said, come unto me, whosoever will. Well, how do we respond to that way of thinking, that way of interpreting this very clear statement?

[8:20] Well, let's start with that reference to Scripture. The Bible says, in the words of Jesus, come to me, whosoever will. And our response is, yes, whosoever will.

But the question is, who does Jesus say will come to him? Jesus said in John 6, 44, no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

John 15, verse 16, Jesus said, you did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain.

You see, that's the problem. Under the curse of Adam, we will never choose God. We are imprisoned to our own sin. That's why 1 Corinthians 2, 14 explains, the natural man born according to this fallen nature than Adam does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, nor can they know them because they are spiritually discerned.

God has to reveal to fallen man the mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ. So the real question is, who does God draw to himself?

[9:47] And according to our passage in Ephesians 1, God draws to himself those God elected. Outside of time and space, before the history of planet Earth began, the Lamb of God, we're told in the Bible, the Lamb that was slain before the foundations of the world, has a book of life with names written on it, not a hypothetical category, but names of those to whom he would give eternal life.

Titus 1, 2 says that eternal life comes from God, who cannot lie promised before time began.

Revelation 17, 8 says there are others whose names are not written in this book of life of the Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world, who will receive judgment from God, whose names are not written in the book of life.

So the question is really, on what basis does God elect some sinners to be saved? In Romans 9, 15, the Holy Spirit answers this exact question.

God says, I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy. And I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.

Is this unjust of God? By no means. The Bible says, do not lean on your own understanding.

[11 : 29] You and I will either receive God's grace in Jesus Christ, or we will receive God's justice outside of Jesus Christ.

If election were based on God, forcing a future faith determined by a man, then the final basis for salvation would be the man's choice, not God's.

Then at least part of the glory, in fact, the deciding part would rightly be claimed by the one who chose God. But the Bible says, look for yourself.

Verse four. We were chosen in him before the creation of the world. Now look at verse six. Why? To the praise of his glorious grace, not for man's glory.

The one who chose God's grace, not for man's glory.

[12 : 56] Loving this child based on something this child may or may not do in the future. It's simply an expression of their love. Because this baby is the fruit of their good pleasure.

And that's how God chose you before the foundation of the world in Christ. You are the fruit of God's good pleasure in Christ.

Your salvation does not depend on anything you have done or will do in the future. God loved you and picked you.

He elected you before you ever had a chance to earn even the smallest part of it. 2 Timothy 2.19 presses this glorious truth on us.

The solid foundation of God stands having this seal. The Lord knows those who are his. The Lord has known you who are his in Christ before the foundation of the world.

[14 : 00] Why? So that you as his church would praise God the Father for choosing you in Christ. Here's the second reason to praise God.

O church, praise God the Father who purposed, look at the rest of verse four, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him.

Church, praise God the Father who purposed that you and I would be holy before him. He's using a metaphor describing the cosmos, the whole world, being built like a big construction site.

The first thing you do in laying out a big construction project is to pour out the foundation. Think about the church in Ephesus.

They're thinking of this magnificent building, this huge construction. It's the temple to the goddess Diana. And think of how that came to be. All the work cutting the marble and laying the foundation and building it up.

[15 : 08] The almighty God, way before that temple ever started to take shape. He is the one who stood as the master architect of all the creation.

The entire world, including the spiritual realm. And he pledged to build it from start to finish. Every single detail. Because he is God.

As we receive this glorious truth that God designed your salvation. That you would be before him, holy and blameless. From start to finish.

All his plan. We need to remember which God it is that did this. Who is this great God of our salvation? I did a wonderful study. I looked up, where does the Bible talk about what it was like and what happened before the foundations of the world?

What else does the Bible say about that? That moment in eternity past, so to speak. And here's a few of the wonderful truths we know from the Bible. Number one.

[16 : 11] Outside of time and space, before the history of planet Earth began, the triune God has always existed as sovereign Lord over all.

Psalms 92 says, God will do as God wills because he is the sovereign Lord.

God was, he is, and he forever shall be the almighty creator of all who reigns as absolute, undisputed Lord over all that is and all that ever shall be.

What else? Number two. Outside of time and space, before the history of planet Earth began, God declared his wise counsel, his eternal decree to accomplish all that he pleased.

Isaiah 46 10 says, God declared the end from the beginning and from ancient times, things that were not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand and I will do my pleasure.

[17 : 30] This is the God who saves. According to the counsel of his own infinite wisdom, God's eternal decree was set to accomplish his good will.

Because he is God, he will do as he pleases. Why else? Number three. Before time and space, God the Father purposed that his grace would be put on his elect in Christ.

In addition to verse four of our passage, 2 Timothy 1 9 and many other places testify to this. It says, Who has saved us? This is God who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.

Before God said, let there be evening and let there be morning. The very first time God had already locked his love upon his people in Christ.

The hope of our salvation rests upon God's sovereign purpose, upon his divine decree that he has covenanted in Christ Jesus for you and me before the world began.

[18 : 50] Our passage says, God designed that we would be able to come before him. And we would be able to stand before God in Christ as blameless and holy.

That word before God, Corum Deo, is the Latin. And it means together with God or before the face of God, in the presence of the holy God.

To be Corum God in that way. It means that you're not just standing in front of them, but that he is actively looking at you. You're fully exposed before his holy gaze.

And that God foreordained that in Christ, that's how we would be positionally before God in Christ. God is all-knowing, and he is all-seeing, and God is everywhere present.

And still, people like you and me with remaining sin, if we are in Christ, we already stand in his presence, before his face, without any blame.

[20 : 03] He sees us as blameless, as holy. We are already set apart. We're already blood-sprinkled vessels for his sacred purposes.

We are being sanctified for this special purpose he has for his people. He causes us to live in accord with that purpose, to live for his glory.

This is what it means that God purposed before the world began for his church, in verse 4, to be holy and without blame before him.

We are set apart. He considers us pure, consecrated. We're blameless. He looks at us, and he sees us as he sees his own son, Jesus Christ.

He sees us as unblemished, faultless, unspotted before him. It's very important that we, we put this together.

[21 : 04] So, he chose us in Christ, before the foundations of the world, that we would be holy and blameless. What's the relationship between him, choosing us in Christ, and being holy and blameless?

John Gill helpfully, made the distinction. God does not elect men because they will believe and be holy, but they believe and he makes them holy because he elected them.

That's the relationship. Faith and holiness are the fruits and the effects of our being elected in Christ. Therefore, they cannot be the causes or the conditions of our election.

Would it be helpful if I ran that one by you one more time, by John Gill? God does not elect men because they will believe and be holy, but you and I believe and are made holy by God because God elected us in Christ.

Faith and holiness are fruits and effects of election, and therefore cannot be the causes or conditions of election. Amen?

[22 : 20] Amen? This is confirmed in God's word. Receive this as an encouragement of your assurance by God's grace alone. 2 Thessalonians 2.13 We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

All glory be to God. So church, praise God the Father who purposed before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him.

Amen? Here's our third reason to praise God the Father from our passage today. O church, praise God the Father who loved and predestined us for adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself.

This is verse 5. Church, praise God who in love predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself. As we speak of this glorious doctrine of predestination and election before the foundations of the world, we need to be just as careful to be clear and accurate as we do with the

way in which we talk about this.

I love how our confession of faith actually warns us that these are high truths, these are high mysteries and doctrines that must be handled with good pastoral care.

[23 : 59] they are to stir us up to worship God but never meant to be destructive or divisive within the body. If you and I were brought to help restore the stained glass inside of an old beautiful church building, it would be wrong for one of us to bring along our sledgehammer to do that delicate work, right?

Let's let ourselves meditate now and bask on the tone of how God describes this wonderful doctrine of choosing us. In love, we read in verse 5 at the end of verse 4, it was in love that God predestined us, that he chose us in Christ and he speaks of it as being brought into his family as ones who were orphaned, alienated from God but are now adopted as sons by Christ Jesus to God himself.

It's language of love and family. We must speak of these glorious truths and we need the Holy Spirit to train our minds and our hearts and our attitudes and even our voices and our tone as we do our best to put words to the great mystery of our salvation.

It's a tone of love, of family, of a generous, free offer to all who will come to Christ. Think of how the rest of Scripture talks about this loving predestination by God for all who will be adopted in Christ.

In love, God the Father was pleased in the words of Galatians 4 to send forth his Son when the fullness of time had come so that we might receive adoption as sons.

[25 : 45] And because you are sons, God has sent his Spirit, the Spirit of his Son, into your hearts crying, Abba, Father. In love, God the Father is pleased in the words of John 1, 12 to give you the right to become children of God to as many as who will receive him who believe in his name.

In love, God the Father was pleased to call you and me his children. Romans 8, 17 presses this on us even more. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ if indeed we suffer with him that we may also be glorified together with him.

In love, we have the words of God from 2 Corinthians 6, 18. I will be a father to you and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.

In love, God the Father was pleased to answer Christ's own prayer in John 17, 24. Jesus prayed, Father, I desire that they also whom you gave me may be with me where I am that they may behold my glory which you have given me for you have loved me before the foundation of the world.

And that's what I want for my people, my church, those you have given to me. Our second London Confession of Faith, chapter 3, paragraph 7, says, this glorious doctrine deserves one response from God's people, praise.

[27 : 23] This should stir us up to revere God, to admire our Savior, and it should also cause us to be humble, to be diligent in studying his word and growing in the faith, and then to rest in the rich comfort of his promises to his church.

So church, praise God who in love predestined us for adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to himself. Here's the fourth and final reason the church is called to praise God from our passage today, focused on verse 6.

O church, praise God the Father who authored your salvation according to the good pleasure of his will to the praise of the glory of his grace with which he has made us accepted in the beloved.

Church, praise God the Father who is the author and finisher of your salvation from start to finish for his praise. The word in focus in verses 5 and 6 is the word predestined, predestined.

This word means there is a destination, but that destination is determined beforehand, in advance. You have been appointed to end up at a final point, a final destination, and it was God the Father who predestined this for you in Jesus Christ.

[29 : 00] Some of you have gone to Central Station in Denver. You can catch a train and go west, or you could go east. The destination of one train is going to take you to the Atlantic Ocean.

The destination of another train is going to take you to the Pacific Ocean. You are bound for one destination or the other. Verses 5 and 6 tell us that in love, God has predestined you, church, to be bound for the destination.

And the final point of this destination is you belong in the family of God, and you live before His face. The other destination is you are outside of Christ.

You're destined for a life now of misery and eternally for judgment that you deserve and I deserve because of our sin.

God has predestined for His people to be with Him forever and ever, adopted in His family, taken off of that train, so to speak, and instead of heading off of a cliff of eternal judgment and torment, you are put now in Christ.

[30 : 16] And the destination is locked and secure. God predestined you, and He did all of this for His glory. Because the destination is secure, every step along the way to accomplish what He has predestined, He also controls, He also secures forever.

Let your eyes drop down in the passage to verse 11. Look at Ephesians 1 verse 11. Or this word is picked up one more time. Ephesians 1 11 says that God predestined you according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His own will.

So the Lord is working all things to accomplish that for which He has predestined you. Think about this. You know you are in Christ now, but how did that come to be?

You were born outside of Christ, headed toward condemnation and misery and judgment. How was it that the Lord brought you now into Christ? In our flesh, in our worldly way of thinking, we can twist it this way.

We can say, I must have just gotten lucky enough to hear the gospel preached by a person who was persuasive enough that I then chose God, and that's why I'm in Christ.

[31 : 38] That's not what these verses teach. You and I heard the gospel, and we believed this good news for us because God works all things according to the counsel of His will.

God was working all things so that you would hear the gospel. No matter how unclearly or unpersuasively it was preached, He was working it so that you would believe in Him according to the counsel of His own will.

And for what purpose? Why you? It's simply because God the Father predestined you for adoption to Himself by Jesus Christ, that you would be considered accepted in the Beloved.

That word accepted in the Beloved, it means God would show you His favor in Christ. God would bestow His grace upon you in Christ.

God would consider you one with His beloved one, His highly honored one, Jesus Christ. God holds Jesus Christ so dearly in such high esteem.

[32 : 53] Jesus Christ is the object of divine love and God predestined you to receive that same love and favor from God the Father in Jesus Christ.

God is working all things so that your salvation and mine will come true. My prayer in preparing for today has simply been that God will stir us up with these simple truths as much as our minds struggle to receive it or understand it, that we'll grab hold of it truly, if not fully.

May His grace stir you to praise Him and fully aware there may be some, very likely are some, that in God's providence are hearing the gospel today who do not know salvation in Christ.

If you're here today and you don't know what is the destination of your life now and for all eternity, or if there's someone here who is very unsure of what their final destination will be, then we pray that the Lord will draw you to Himself, that you will receive Him by faith.

Run to Jesus Christ. If He's causing you to believe this and to accept this, it's because His Spirit has already gone before the word that's being preached today.

[34 : 21] His Spirit had already arranged that you would be here today, that this would be our sermon passage, that you would take time to hear this good news of your salvation because God is the one who is working all things according to the counsel of His will.

And to those who know this loving God the Father through Jesus Christ, you need to be reassured that God declares you already, right now, this moment, accepted in the Beloved.

He views you as blameless, as holy in His sight. You can praise the glory of God's grace for your salvation from start to finish.

That's the response that we owe Him. We will praise something. Give Him the praise today that He is due. God the Father adopts you in Christ.

Praise the glory of God's grace for your adoption. Your salvation is sure because God the Father has pledged Himself to fulfill your salvation by His unbreakable oath-bound covenant.

[35 : 34] Praise the glory of God's grace. God the Father so loves you that He sent His beloved Son to open up this way and bring you directly into the Holy of Holies so that there you will praise the glory of God's grace.

God the Father unites you and me intimately to Jesus Christ and He makes us forever secure in Christ who is His beloved. Praise the glory of God's grace.

God the Father actively orchestrates every detail of history to fulfill His purpose for you and for all those who will trust in Him for life to the praise of the glory of God's grace.

Do you understand what the Bible says about God's great salvation? On what basis He has lavished this grace on you and me in Christ? It's according to the good pleasure of His will.

Why? For what ultimate end? Look at verse 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace. It is God the Father's design for us as human beings to praise Him.

[36:49] Praise His glorious name, the name above every name, the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Church, praise God for the glory of His grace.

Let's pray. Lord, we give you all the glory. There is no glory that man can grab for ourselves. We repent of this, Lord. We confess, Lord, that we are lost without you.

You alone are worthy of all praise. Our salvation, Lord, is your design. It's your purpose for your people who you chose in Christ. It's a truth that's too glorious for us to be able to make up or explain with other words beyond those words of the Bible.

And we just pray, Father, that your word will run forth, that you'll press this onto the hearts and the minds of your people, that you will seal us again in Christ, Lord, trusting your promises, that your spirit will let us know we have this assurance.

and I pray, Lord, that those who you are drawing to yourself, you will do that more and more powerfully. Make it so, Lord, that they will run to you now, that they will look back and see your good hand of providence leading them all the way and give you all the praise for this great salvation.

[38:10] Help us as a church, Lord, to live lives of humility before you, to speak of our great salvation with the same tone that you have of love for your family.

And we pray, Lord, that we will get to see your family grow, one soul at a time, in a way that brings you all the glory. Amen.