

Ephesians 1:4-6

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[0:00] We all want to be chosen, don't we?

Whether you're a third grader standing on the side of the field hoping you get picked first for the kickball game. Whether you're a junior in high school hoping you get asked for the prom.

Whether you're the tenor who never gets noticed hoping that you might get picked to sing a solo in the Christmas Cantata.

Or whether you're waiting for someone to get down on the scene, open up a little box and say, you're the one. You're the one that I love. I choose you.

I think a part of our human experience. To long to be chosen. To long to be seen and known and cherished and loved in that way.

[1:26] Maybe it's because it makes us feel special when we stand out in the crowd. Maybe it's because we feel like we're seen and recognized for our uniqueness.

Maybe it's because we desire so desperately to belong somewhere. And when someone says, I choose you, it helps us to sense that.

I don't know what your life has been like. Some of you probably feel like you've never been chosen for anything. And so when you raise this question, it's pain that is your response.

Nobody's ever chosen for me. I've lived my life feeling more abandoned, overlooked, or orphaned.

Some of you here have probably always been chosen. Some of you have felt like you've grown accustomed to being seen as special.

[2:30] If you go to that big university process, you can see it in the street. They will tell you that you are the best and the brightest. And that of course, you were chosen. My guess is most of us are somewhere every two.

We have a little bit of both. Maybe a lot of one. Maybe a little bit of the other. Tonight we look at a passage. We're continuing in our series of the Word of Ephesians.

And we're going to look at the very beginning of the letter as Paul launches into his message to the church. To the church of Egypt Minor, certainly the emphasis, but probably more than that.

We're going to explore for a few minutes the wonderful and glorious truth. And to be a Christian is to experience the deepest and most profound sense of being chosen.

In fact, all of these other longings that we have in our lives are nearly signed books that point us to this. To this truth.

[3:38] That God has chosen his people for wonderful faith in us. If you haven't been here for the last two weeks, just to remind you, Ephesians seems to be a book written almost generally, probably to more than one place.

Or more than one place was in mind. But it was written almost a primer of what does it mean to be Christian? How do we understand who God is and how are we meant to live in the world in life of that?

So we're going to look at the beginning. I'm going to read a bit of the section from chapter 1, verse 1, walk away through verse 10, just to see if we get a little bit of context.

We're going to be focusing on verses 4 and verse 6 this evening. So let's read this together. Paul, the apostle of Christ Jesus, by the Lord of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus, Praise to you and peace from God our Father and Lord Jesus Christ.

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, Even as He chose us in the hymn before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.

[5:01] In love He predestined us for adoption 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 blood.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His purpose, which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in Him, things in heaven, and things on earth.

Let's pray together. Let's pray together. Lord, we ask tonight that you would be amongst us to look at your word. We pray that you would teach our minds to know you rightly and truthfully.

We pray that you would train our hearts to love you as we ought to, as we see your loveliness. And Lord, that you would train our goals to surrender to you to a way of you to our lives as a spinning person to rise to life.

Lord, use me in that prayer. We speak your words in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. It's striking as Paul launches out verse 3.

[6:31] If you haven't listened to Pastor Nick's sermon on verse 3 last week, it was a beautiful big picture approach to what Paul is doing in his book. So I recommend you on the Rack4 website, you can click find it in the list and click on it and get some of the big pictures.

But part of what he said is, Paul is launching us into an exploration in the richness of what God has done for us in our salvation. And he said, we find our place in God's story.

We see God's purposes for us and for his world. I don't even remember the other two, but those are the big picture parts that I remember. And it's interesting as he transitions out to verse 3, which is sort of this sweeping statement.

God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ. God has blessed us. And then he says in chapter 4, he focuses in 4-6, particularly on the work of the Father.

And he focuses particularly on all the things he could have said about God the Father. What he says is, he chose you. This is the very core of what you see.

[7:41] Look at me again in verses 4-6. Even as he chose us in him. And then you see again in verse, at the end of verse 4. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons.

Let's think a little bit about what Paul is actually saying. Look at this passage. There are a number of things that Paul says about the nature of God's choosing of his people.

He says first, it was before the foundation of the earth. And friends, we could spend an hour or 24 hours talking about whether God is in time and out of time.

And some of the high level philosophical discussions. And you know, those are worth explaining. But what I want you to hear tonight is that I think Paul had a purpose in sharing this. Paul wanted you to know that God wasn't responding to you in your goodness or your madness when he chose you.

He chose you before the foundations of the world. And Paul is reminding us of that so that you would know that you can't look it up. God didn't choose you because you were good enough.

[8:58] Because he saw something intrinsically in you that compelled him to respond to you personally in a particular way.

No, in fact, it's the other way around. It's the very thing that's in him that caused him to choose you. This is why he says, in love, he predestined you.

Look at verse, again, verse 4, right? In love, he predestined us for adoption to his sons. And he goes back to the beginning.

He chose us in him. His love for us is what caused him to choose us.

And he chose us to come and be to himself, to be a part of his family. And it was a very personal and it was a very relational action that God did.

[10:01] When he chose us. You may have heard, this is a commonly talked about in evangelicalism, that what it means to be a Christian is to have a personal relationship with God.

And some people wonder, why do we say that? The Bible doesn't always talk about it that way. There are lots of different ways for us to talk about it. Well, here is where you see it. God has called you to be adopted even in his family.

And that's the personal of the guests. Not only has he adopted us to be a part of his family, but he's adopted us to come in as full members.

When he uses the imagery of being adopted as his son, part of it is simply continuing the father-son image that he uses. But it's clearly not gender specific because God has always been calling men and women into his family for all time.

But in this context, always using this metaphor because to be adopted in a Roman context is the most mind-blowing thing. You are brought in from outside where you are a nobody with no family, no inheritance, no standing in society, no family homes or women.

[11:20] You have done a ton of those things that you have done in a family, which usually happen only in the wealthy, if I understand it properly. But in this context is to be brought into the riches of a home where every need is met and where you are standing in society as now being still upon you, fully and completely.

And that's why he uses the image of a woman here. Because that's what a myth for a Roman to be adopted as a son. And this is true for all men and women who God chooses.

That when he brings us into this family, we experience the richness and riches of this household. And finally, he chose us in him.

Nick talked about this last week, but I want you to see it again and again and again. In this whole section is Paul reminding the Ephesians of the work of salvation that God has done.

The centerpiece, the context of all of that work is in Jesus Christ. And every time you see him, in Jesus, in Jesus, in Jesus, God did this for me.

[12:50] And so this family connection is really rich. We'll come back to that at the end and explore it a little more. But what I want you to see here is that Paul launches into this.

What do you need to know about the Father and his work in the world for you? What he's emphasizing is he has chosen you. He has chosen you, believers in Christ, to be a part of his family.

Okay. Now I know that I've used the word chosen, and that's a great word because it doesn't use the word election. And it doesn't use the word predestination.

And these are the words that we all step on and blow up in terms of our intellectual trying to work out how in the world do we understand this?

And how do we process the question of how do I work in the world? And what about my experience? It felt like I chose to believe in God. One day I didn't, and then another day I did.

[13:56] And isn't that true? And what about other people? Can I tell them that they can choose to believe God? Is that okay? Or does this mean that they can choose to? And there are all these questions out there about the doctrine of predestination and election.

Okay. I'm going to in some ways bracket that. Because at the core of it, there is a philosophical question that is actually quite difficult to know the question of God's real and our will and how they intersect.

And in fact, I might even argue that part of the reason why I'm bracketing it is because I think that that is important. There's a bit of mystery here. Human minds have developed into it for centuries and have struggled to be able to express it in a way that doesn't.

In some way, when you resolve it logically and rationally, what we end up is something that's unbiblical most of the time. We somehow violate something that's clear from Scripture when we resolve it.

And so there's something that's unbiblical most of the time. And so there's something of a mystery here that I want us to say, okay, we have more work to do to understand God and how He works. But I want something that's unbiblical most of the time.

[15:10] But I want to be right in the book because I want to, as a pastor, I want to give you a pastor's heart for how I think God wants you to receive this truth.

Okay? So a couple things I want to say. First of all, it seems very clear actually that this is how God works. When you read this passage, when you read Romans chapter 9, when you read some other places, even the passage that I read to you in the regular service in Yurani, this is a pattern.

In the book, God is working freely without compulsion in this world. And He is not integral to us at one level for His actions.

He does not make Himself dependent upon us to accomplish His will in the world. And this is the witness of Scripture.

At the same time, Scripture also continually calls on human beings to respond to God. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

[16:15] Trust in the Lord. Do not be afraid. And so on and so on. And over and over and over again, we are treated as moral agents who are meant to respond to God properly.

And this is the witness of Scripture. There is a sovereign God who does what He wants and therefore He is not dependent on us.

And yet He calls us over and over and over and over and over again to respond to Him and to act and to do things. And these things are both true.

It does not make us a real heart. Or it does not guide us over and over again to say that God is sovereign and that in salvation He has chosen us before the foundation of the world.

The reason why we see this doctrine taught more and over again to the New Testament is not to will out who's in the news out. Jonathan, I think you're okay.

[17:20] You're in. Jane, really sorry. I don't think so. So, you know, that's why Christians are so often talking about that because of this idea that God has chosen some, well now I need to figure out who He's chosen.

And then I sit in His seat as his sort of subordinate chooser. And that's a terrible place for us to be in. And that's inevitable the place that Scripture has to say be in. We are not called to take on to that.

Instead, this is held out again to those of us who have been orphaned from God by our sin as a comfort and a security.

You aren't abandoned. You aren't alone. You're alone. You're alone. The God who made the heavens and the earth calls you to come to Him. And all who come to Him will come to Him because He has chosen them.

And if you are thinking you want to come to Him, He will never turn you away. So then you will rest in the comfort that He has chosen you.

[18:27] There is surely, there is delight, and there is assurance in knowing that God has chosen us. The place that stings the most is our pride.

Because in our pride, we long to be independent. And we long to be able to say, God chose me because I'm kind of special.

In some way or another. And we want God to do that. And even if we feel heaped on by condemnation and God will never choose me, there is still a pride under that that says, well, God can never choose me because I'm not good enough, or I should be good enough, and that's my pride again.

Because I want you to accept me based on how good I am, or what I can offer, or what I have to do. And it is one of the most humbling truths of the New Testament.

That the reason why God loves us is not because of us, but it is because of him. He has loved us first because he is a God of love.

[19:45] He has chosen us. And our helplessness, our neediness, our dependence before God is actually a beautiful place to be in.

It's very comforting. It's comforting only, though, because of the character of the one who has chosen us, and the one who oversees our lives.

If we were in a world where we had to prove ourselves, and we were helpless, that would be a terrible thing. But in fact, God has put us into a place where we have nothing spiritually offered to him in our sinfulness.

And he says, you will write where I need you to be. Now you can receive my grace, my undeserved favor. Now you can receive my love. It's not because of who you are, but because of who I am.

Now you can receive my patience, and my kindness, and my peace, and my strength. Because this is what I created you for.

[20:58] To depend on me. And to find me to be the source of your life and your mind. Let me just delay one final fear that is out there.

I've already addressed it a little bit, but I want to make it very clear. We fear sometimes, if God has chosen some to be his people, that there might be someone out there who really, really, really wants to know God.

But God has chosen them. And I guess he's left out. And we have this deep, stiff fear that that might be true. And friends, logically, that is a possibility as we lay it out before us.

But biblically, it is an impossibility. There is never, ever, ever in Scripture someone who longs to know God who cannot know him. In fact, what we see instead is God constantly coming to people who don't care at all about him.

Saying, I love you. I love you. Turn back to me. Forsake your other ways, your other cause, your foolish life. Come to me. Stop living out on your own.

- [22 : 16] Where you're getting beat up by the world. And come back into my family where you were created to be from the first place. And never has God turned away one who has turned to him with a humble heart and a sense of his desperate need.

And so this doctrine of being chosen is a beautiful thing for us. Let me just play this out quickly in three little applications.

The fact that God has chosen his people in Christ, believers in Jesus, that he's chosen them, means that when we know it, as Christians, and I mean really know it, not some respectable little, oh, I do have my tax return, or I mean something heinous and awful.

When we think this is the worst thing and now I'm done. I am no longer chosen. I am outside the family. He can never forgive me of this.

When we fail on a grand scale. Just like, by the way, Moses and David and Abraham and Peter and a few other people in the Bible did.

- [23 : 41] And might have felt this way. The knowledge that God has chosen us gives us a place to come back into the house. Just like the prodigal son who came to his senses.

He said, my father's house, that's where I belong. And he came back in. And so in the face of our worst failure, there is still hope.

Because God has chosen us. And he won't forsake us. Secondly, in the face of uncertainty. When you are wondering about your life.

When your plans have fallen apart. When, if you were in New York City on Friday night and you're wondering, how can I ever know that I will be safe again.

When you are on the brink of a job change or a graduation or a transition to a new place. And you're wondering, how in the world can I live? Here is an anchor for your soul.

- [24 : 46] God has set love on you in Jesus Christ. He's chosen you. And he will go with you. And he will be with you.

And he will walk with you. And he will walk with you through all of that uncertainty. And he will not be abandoned or orphans or alone. And finally, because we know that the greatest, according to the Bible, the last enemy is death itself.

When we are facing the enemy. Some of you may be near to that than others. Your brother in the city died yesterday in the answer.

Some are wrestling with these questions. Here is the hope. If God has set his love on me. If he has chosen me to be adopted as his child.

And to be a part of his family. Then even death, which seems like the worst in the world. Loses its power in its sin. Because I know whose I am.

- [25 : 53] And I know where I belong. And even death will be just a transition into an eternity with him.

So friends, it is good news to be chosen to be adopted as his children in his love. There are two implications from this in this passage.

I spend most of our time simply sitting in this truth of being chosen by him. There are two implications that I want to draw out. Because they are in there in verse 4. Look with me again.

Even as he chose us in him before the foundations of the world. That we should be as holy and blameless before him. One of the purposes of him choosing us and bringing us into his family.

Is so that we might be set apart from the world that we live in. And all of its fallen dynamics. And destructive minds.

[27:00] Spiritually and personally destructiveness. That is what sin is like us. And what Paul is pointing to here is to say.

He has brought you into his family. And now he wants you to act like a family member. Act like someone who belongs to God. I remember when I was in 9th grade.

I was able to get on to a traveling soccer team. And it was a different world. And I had ever lived. I always lived in like a full-wrecked soccer place. And suddenly I was in this bigger world.

And I remember looking at the guys who had done it before. And the older guys. And I was thinking, I want to learn from them. How do I behave? Now that I belong to this team.

How do I do this well? And I learned everything from what's the coolest shoes I should be wearing. To how do I practice. To what do I do with my time off.

[27:56] I didn't always see good things, to be honest with you. But I had this deep impulse of, I'm a part of a team. I want to live in light of that. I want to live according to that.

So that I'm going to live out of this reality that I'm a part of a team. And that's what God is doing here. God is reminding us that when we've been brought into God's feeling.

We don't just say, now I can do whatever I want. Like sort of the rich millionaire heir. Who is a playboy. Who just slaughters his parents' money.

And does whatever he wants. No, instead it's as we realize the incredible privilege and honor it is. That God has chosen us. And brought us into his family.

It inspires us. And draws out of us. This new life. Of I want to live as God's child.

[28:53] I want to live fully and blameless in this world. It is the status of sonship that produces this kind of life.

When someone who can reverse it and say, God can only be a son of God or a child of God. Right to the right. But Paul is saying, no, no. God has chosen you for this.

And this is part of the purpose. That you live like a family member. And the beautiful thing is the book of Ephesians is going to give us all sorts of really practical ways of what that looks like.

Chapter 1 through 3 is going to lay out for us the riches of what it means to be part of this household. And chapters 4 through 6 are going to say, in this time you should live in life that.

So stick around. And you'll get all the allocations from this point. And I'm not going to spell that now. Come back in the middle of October and start talking along through the fourth year.

[29:51] I don't even know. Maybe this January or maybe we can get there. Anyway. But the reality is that the book of Ephesians gives us all sorts of practical advice on how to live as God's people.

But it springs out of this being adopted into his family, into his household. Thirdly, we see this in verse 6.

He repeats, he loved, he predestined us for adoption, for adoption as sons of Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace.

So this is the second implication. And that is that we who perceive this love, this choosing, that had nothing to do with our deserving it. That is the definition of grace, right?

God's grace is his undeserved favor and blessing and bestowing of love. And ultimately, it's saving us from our sin.

[30:57] When we couldn't save ourselves from him. And we are now given the purpose of living to the praise of his glorious grace.

I don't know if your high school had a trophy case. We had one in our gymnasium. We had soccer trophies and wrestling trophies.

And individuals who were super special, superstars who got whatever kind of accolades, who got little plaques and all that stuff. Friends, you know what God wants us to be?

A trophy case where the content of those trophies is God's grace. Where people look at our life and they see, this is what God has done in our life. This is what God has done in our life.

This is what God has done in our life. This is how he saved me from sin. This is how he's shown himself faithful to me. This is how he has sent his love on me. This is God's grace to me over and over and over again.

[32:01] And that's what it means to live, to be to the praise of his glorious grace. It's that our lives become a display case whereby God shows his grace to the world through us.

And this is an incredible privilege. And we are that when we go back into the, but I want credit. I want to get this my way.

I'm going to do it myself. Thank you very much. When we fall back into those patterns of pride and independence and performance, we tarnish the trophies and the kings.

As we live this life of independence and humility and rejoicing in what God has done for us. And that he has chosen us and set his love on us.

Then we are in his way of his way. For his glory. And this is for us exactly what we all need, isn't it? We need God to do what we couldn't do for ourselves or else.

[33:11] And having done that now. And having done that now, for all who have trusted in Christ, God calls us to then live out this calling. Be different. Because of where you belong now.

And have a purpose. Not about yourself. But about this gracious God who is blessed so much for you.

And he closes the phrase in verse 6. To the praise of his glorious grace with which he has blessed us in the beloved.

Friends, this is the most amazing thing about what God has done. As he has chosen us, the way that he actually did the work so that he could bring us into his family.

It's an intensely personal and intensely costly action. Because God the Father and God the Son were together in this predetermined before the beginning of the world.

[34:10] That he would do this. That the beloved of the Father. The second person of the Trinity. The Son would take on human form.

And Jesus Christ would guide him. The beloved who was perfectly obedient. And live as a child. A son of God. His whole life in perfection.

When he hung on that cross. He cried out, My God, my God. Why have you forsaken me? He Bore the price of being outside of God's household.

Outside of God's family. Forsaken by God. So that we, who had chosen to forsake God in our sin.

Who had chosen to live independently from him. Who had chosen to live in our pride and our performance. Could be humbled and brought back in.

[35:15] With him. As he rose for the dead. Into the family of God. What a beautiful, beautiful thing he does.

Friends, this is the gospel. And it calls on us for a response. For those of you who have placed your faith in Christ over here tonight. I pray that you will rejoice in the riches of what God has done.

That you will be glad. That you will be glad. Not wrestle with it. Not fight against the fact that God has chosen you. But that you will rest in the helplessness. Before your sovereign king.

Loves you like that. And that you will be able to praise his grace. And if you will be able to praise his grace. If you were here tonight. And you were wondering. Could God choose me?

Friends, this is the invitation. To admit your sinfulness. To admit your inability. To gain God's faith on your own.

[36 : 18] To say, I have nothing to pray. But what you have done for me in Jesus is not. And to trust in that. Say, God, I want to be in your family.

I want to be adopted as your child. And this is the invitation for you. Let me pray. Lord, we pray tonight.

That you, by your spirit, reward among us. Lord, that we would succeed. And be captured by the greatness of what you've done for us. That we are restored. Always to have a word of promise.

Even now. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's continue to worship this amazing Jesus.