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Ephesians 1:4 – 6  
**Chosen in the Beloved**

We're moving along in our study of the book of Ephesians and I'm actually going to try to cover three entire verses today. Lets just read the verses and then we'll look at them in more detail.

"...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace by which He made us accepted in the Beloved."

Once again I feel somewhat overwhelmed and incompetent trying to explain such an indescribable spiritual reality.

First of all, remember that this verse follows on the heels of Paul telling the church that God has given them every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ. So he tells them that there is this accomplished reality that is now finished in Christ. The blessings promised to Abraham and the Fathers, are now ours in the heavens, in Christ.

And now, here in verse 4, he sort of rewinds and begins to describe that this isn't just some random act of kindness God performed. This was, in fact, the very thing that God foreknew, predestined, and purposed before He even created the world. This isn't like a spontaneous Valentines present. This is the culmination of everything that God had in His heart before there was even a planet called earth. This was his ultimate intention before anything was made.

What was it? What was on God's heart? That He would have a people living in His Son, living in and by the life of His Son. A people who are in fact adopted into that one Son, placed into that Son, not becoming that Son, but sharing His life, holy, that is purified, of the same nature and kind.

His plan was according to His good pleasure, in other words, it made Him exceedingly glad to establish and execute this plan. This wasn't a plan B because the garden of Eden thing didn't work out. This was plan A. This was the only plan that God ever made with regard to humans. This plan wasn't a reaction to man's shortcomings. This plan was made with the full knowledge of man's deficiency and defection. That is why the book of Revelation speaks of Jesus as the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.

God's plan has never been, nor could ever be, based upon the faithfulness or cooperation of humans. God's plan has forever been based upon the faithfulness and cooperation of His eternal Son. So He doesn't altar or adjust his ideas contingent upon our response. He plans salvation, the Son finishes salvation, the Spirit reveals salvation, and it is there for whosoever is interested.

God knew the beginning from the end. But the end was worth the beginning. The second was worth the first. The end would be a people accepted in the Son of His love, accepted in the beloved, living as a praise, a tribute to his glory and grace. And the entire plan is born out of, and is the expression of, love. This is what love is. This plan is the reality of God's love for you. We'll get into that shortly. It is mentioned twice in these few verses.

First I want to just deal briefly with these words "chosen" and "predestined". I am very aware that there has been a raging debate for centuries as to what these words are referring to. My personal opinion, however, is that it is a debate that began because of a very man-centered, human-focused, self-inflamed blindness and fear that exists when one misses the reality of the cross, and therefore has God choosing and damning individual humans rather than choosing His one and only Son.

I'll explain what I mean. I just want to make clear that the question of God's choosing here has nothing to do, in my opinion, with individual people. The question of His choosing, both here and in Romans 8 and 9, is the choosing of One, and therefore the choosing of all that come to live in that one. And the rejecting of another one, Adam, and all who are found in that one.

God does not select between "Adamites". There is nothing to select, they are all the same. What are you going to use as your criteria when it comes to the natural man? When it comes to the flesh? God Himself says that "in them dwells no good thing", "the flesh profits nothing". God Himself says that all their "righteousness is filthy rags". God Himself says:

Rom 3:10-12 according as it has been written, "*There is not a righteous one, not even one!*" (11) "*There is not one understanding; there is not one seeking God.*" (12) All turned away, *they* became worthless together, not *one is* doing goodness, not so much as one!"

What would God use as his criterion for selecting somebody? There is, however, a Beloved Son. And if we by grace come to live in that Son then we are chosen by being found in Him. We become the elect, by sharing the life of God's Elect. And our predestined purpose is to be conformed to that Son's image.

The only thing mentioned in this verse with reference to the word predestined is the **Son** in which we would live, and the **plan** to have a people adopted in that Son. You can go back and read it 50 times, and you are not going to find anything else.

"He chose us IN HIM", and He "predestined us to adoption as sons BY JESUS CHRIST to Himself". Here you have the **where** and the **what** of the predestination, and nothing of the who. The **who** is whosoever will come.

Mat 7:24 Therefore **whosoever** heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

Mat 12:50 For **whosoever** shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

Mat 16:25 For **whosoever** will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

Mat 21:44 And **whosoever** shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

Mar 8:34 **Whosoever** will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Mar 8:35 For **whosoever** will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

Joh 3:15 That **whosoever** believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Joh 4:14 But **whosoever** drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

Joh 11:26 And **whosoever** liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

Act 2:21 **whosoever** shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Act 10:43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name **whosoever** believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

Rom 10:13 For **whosoever** shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

1Ti 2:4 God desires all men to be saved and to come to a full knowledge of truth.

2Pe 3:9 The Lord of the promise is not slow, as some deem slowness, but is long-suffering toward us, not having purposed any to perish, but all to come to repentance.

I know there are verses where God speaks of believers as the "elect" or the "chosen", but that is, in my opinion, only because we have come to partake in the one life of the one Son who is elect and chosen. I don't think there is any merit apart from Christ that could ever make me elect or chosen of God.

So what God predestined was a specific salvation consisting of a people adopted, that is receiving "son-placement" in Jesus Christ. That is a literal translation of that Greek word we have as "adoption". Son placement. What a perfect word for those who have been placed in His Son.

Nowhere in Scripture does it say that God chooses some to be saved and others to be damned. I don't usually get into theological controversies. My point in doing this is twofold. First and foremost to establish that Christ is the only one chosen of God, and us only as participants of Him. And second, to ease some burdened hearts that have wrestled with this issue.

There is nothing in a son of Adam that merits a special choosing or a special damning. In fact, apart from our choosing to be of the one Beloved Son, "the wrath of God abides on us".

**Joh 3:18** He who believes on Him is not condemned, but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.

**Joh 3:36** He who believes on the Son has everlasting life, and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides upon him.

And again, in my opinion, it is only a complete misunderstanding of Romans 9 that causes people to believe otherwise.

Romans 9 is not about God choosing one individual person to be saved, and choosing another individual to be damned. Romans 9 (in fact the second half of Romans 8 all the way through chapter 11) deals with the children of flesh versus the children of Spirit. Those who have come to be chosen IN the one Seed. (This is also what the entire chapter of Galatians 3 is about) And those who have stubbornly refused and rejected that Seed. He is speaking with specific reference to Old Covenant Israel refusing their messiah in these three chapters, and the reality that God had long before chosen the Gentiles to be fellow partakers of the promises spoken to Israel.

He goes on in chapter 9 to demonstrate that God has always had a chosen Son, a chosen Seed, **in which** a people would be blessed. We looked a bit at that last week in referencing the blessing of Abraham. And he writes in Romans 9 "Jacob I have loved, Esau I have hated". That is where everyone gets tripped up. But He is not referring to the individual people, but to the first and the second covenant, the son of promise vs. the son of the flesh.

That is why in that same passage he mentions both Sarah, Abraham's wife, and in that story it is Isaac vs. Ishmael. And then Rebecca, and in that story it is Jacob and Esau. Long before Abraham was even born, God already had his chosen Son. Jesus says "Before Abraham was born, I Am". But then Isaac came to represent the Seed of promise, and Ishmael the seed of flesh. Same thing with Jacob and Esau. Jacob, the second born, came to represent the seed of promise who inherits both the birthright and the blessing, and Esau came to represent those who became enemies of the Seed.

The election described in chapter 9 of Romans is an election of God's Seed, God's Son over against the natural seed, the natural Son. It is Isaac over Ishmael. Jacob over Esau. Not the individuals. Both individuals were actually quite blessed in the natural. But what they spoke of was far beyond their own natural lives.

This is no different here than Paul's reference to Sarah and Hagar in Galatians chapter 4. Paul comes right out and SAYS that he's not referring to the individual women, but says that he is referring to the two covenants which they represent. (See Galatians 4:24) One represents the bondage that exists in the flesh. The old covenant. **The first.** One represents the freedom of the spirit, the new covenant, the covenant of Spirit. **The Second.** The one received His love through the promised Seed. The other became a nation that rejected His Seed and His love.

So God says to Moses, and Paul quotes this in Romans 9 "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion". That mercy, that compassion exists only one place. It exists towards only one people – the people that come to live in and by His Son.

That is why the next verse in Romans 9 is "So then, it does not depend on him who wills, nor on him who runs, but on God who shows mercy". Well, I should say so. It has nothing to do with the will of man or the determination of Adam, but everything to do with the One Seed He has chosen and the vessels of mercy who chose to live in and by Him. His mercy is only extended, in this analogy, to Jacob. And Esau represents all who try to take that blessing, that mercy, without having the birthright. And Paul refers to that same thing in Hebrews chapter 12.

So then...and I realize this is turning into a commentary on Romans and not Ephesians, but I felt led to go this way in helping us understand Ephesians 1....Paul says "you will say to me "that's not fair!" And Paul's reply, in my paraphrase is "who are you, O man, who accuses God of injustice for fixing the terms on which, and choosing the One in whom He will show mercy. Why do you say "why did you make me like this...? Paul are you saying that I am capable of honor and immortality only in Christ and deserving of wrath in and of myself?"

Paul's answer is yes. By nature, he says, we are all children of wrath (Eph 2:3). But by Christ, we become joint-heirs, and joint-sons in the Father's house. And that is exactly what our verse in Ephesians says, we have become "accepted IN the Beloved".

And then Paul wraps up the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans showing that he was, and then will continue to, talk specifically about the natural seed of Israel rejecting the true Son, the true Seed, by faith, but trying receive the promise based on works of the law. They, in fact, having become the Esau who rejected their birthright. And the Gentiles becoming the Jacob who receive the love of God and, in essence, took the birthright and blessing from Israel. (Obviously, not all of Israel rejected Christ. But the vast majority did. He came to His own, and His own received Him not.)

Maybe none of that interests you in the least. But there are multitudes of people in the body of Christ that teach that God predestines some individuals for salvation and some individuals for damnation. My main point isn't just to say that I don't believe that to be true. I certainly don't believe that to be true. **My main point is to exalt Jesus Christ as the chosen one, the elected one, the predestined Person and Place in which we come to be accepted of God.**

You'll notice that in verse 4 it speaks of him choosing us to stand before Him in love. The Greek word there translated "before" quite literally means "to be directly in front of" or "in the sight of" Him in love. And then in verse 6, that we are accepted in the Beloved, or more literally "accepted in the One being loved".

I want to spend the rest of our time this morning talking about the love of God for you and I. There is no question that we could remain on this topic for quite some time. But since we only a few months ago did a 4 part series on the love of God, I will keep this relatively short.

First of all let me just point out that this plan that existed in God's heart from before the creation of the world is said plainly here to have to do with love. Now that's not just a feeling that he felt for us. Remember, we weren't even created. This love wasn't just a feeling, an emotion...you know like God saying "I sure love Billy, he's a good ol' boy". It was something far bigger than a feeling and an emotion. This plan of love had to do with the sharing of Himself, the giving of life.

You see, love, in its true form has to do with the pouring out of life. It has to do with the outpouring of self, the sharing of self, the giving of life without thought of gain. Love seeks not its own. Love gives life, and gives it without measure, and without compensation or repayment. Love is the giving away and sharing of life, and it is something that man cannot truly do unless the love of God is perfected in you.

Sure, man can do nice things. Man can become part of philanthropic causes. But behind each of those, apart from Christ working in you, is some sort of self-gain. Some sort of self-love. Natural love, rather than pouring itself out, pulls things to itself. Our love demands and gathers to ourselves the things we perceive that we want or need or find beautiful. God's love gives away all that he knows we are in need of and will find beautiful.

Now, contrary to nearly every wedding sermon and bumper sticker I've ever seen, God's love is not all-inclusive. God's love is certainly real, it is certainly substance, it is certainly beyond all comprehension, but it is experienced and realized only in the Son of His love. Now let me be clear, God's love is offered to all. But God's love is only experienced, realized, enjoyed, and received when we come to live in the Son of His Love. If you refuse His Son, then you've really refused His love.

God does not "love everybody the same". God *offers* His love to everybody the same. But God's love is only an offer and invitation outside of Christ, but becomes a reality, experience, and relationship with those who are in Christ. Those who are accepted **IN THE BELOVED**. God's love is not something He gave you because of Christ. God's love is the giving of Christ to you.

"For God so (Gr. "in this manner") loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son". That is the way that God has loved the entire world. He gave them a new life. He gave them the opportunity to leave one "life", and dwell in Another. To lose their life, and find life in Christ. That is the manner in which God loves the entire world.

1Jo 4:9 In this the love of God was revealed in us, because God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him.

Here is how God's love is made manifest: He gives us the Son of His love, that we might live in Him and partake of that love. And yes, we partake of that love as individuals. But we do not partake of that love independently of Christ. It is individual, but not independent of the Son of His love.

**Col 1:13** who delivered us out of the authority of darkness, and translated *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love,

You see, you must realize that the relationship that we are invited into with God is **Christ's** relationship with His Father. Its that way in all things spiritual. Do you think that God gives you your own righteousness? No, God gives you righteousness, but it is the righteousness of Christ. Do you think that God gives you your own wisdom? No, its is Christ's wisdom, the mind of Christ working in you. Well, do you think that God gives you your own adoption? No, you are given the "son placement" of Christ. You come to share in Christ's relationship with His Father.

**Rom 8:15** ... but you received the Spirit of adoption by which we cry, Abba! Father! **Rom 8:16** The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.

Christ is the one that was loved of God before the foundation of the world. You, the individual soul, are made to partake of that life, and therefore that relationship. The love of God is for you, but the love of God is for you IN CHRIST. You have heard that nothing can separate you from the love of God. Romans chapter 8. But have you noticed that it is the love of God **in Christ**.

John 17:24. Jesus says "Father you loved Me before the foundation of the world".

And then just two verses later He says

vs. 26 "Father, I have declared to them (that is, 'made known' or 'caused to understand') Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which you loved Me may be in them, and I in them".

So again, God does love the world, but that is by inviting every single one of them into the actual relationship and experience of being accepted, known, loved, in the Son of His love. It is an invitation we can refuse or accept. If the "dead hear His voice", then they will live by Him. But whether we accept or refuse, we know from this verse in Ephesians that it was God's predestined, pre-determined plan to have a people directly in front of Him, in His sight, living in His Son, sharing the life of that Son, sharing the Son's relationship with His Father. Accepted in the Beloved.

**Heb 2:10** For it was fitting for Him, because of whom *are* all things, and through whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect *Him* as the Author of their salvation through sufferings (of death). **11** For both the *One* sanctifying and the *ones* being sanctified *are* all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brothers,

Why are we brothers? Because we have all been baptized into one Spirit, gathered through one death, and living in one resurrection. Why are we loved of God? Because we are accepted in the Beloved, made to dwell in the kingdom of the "Son of His love". And nothing can separate us from the love of God that is **in Christ Jesus**.

So this is what Paul is speaking about in Ephesians 1:3-6. I'll simply paraphrase it, combining this week and last week's verses, and then we'll close.

**Verse 3.** Every blessing that God promised to Abraham with reference to His Seed, and all that would come through that Seed, He has given to you. He has given it to you **not** in the natural, material, first creation. But He has given it to you in the heavens, in Christ, where you now have been made alive, raised, and seated.

**Verse 4.** In fact, that was the very predestined and pre-ordained purpose of God before the foundation of the world, that He would have a people seated in His Son, purified and blameless, eternally in His presence, before His face, sharing the love that He has with His Son. **Verse 5.** This is what you were predestined for. It is an adoption. Son-placement. Your placement into His Son – transferred out of the kingdom of darkness and made to dwell in the Son of His love. That was according to the good pleasure of God's will. **Verse 6.** And it is so that for all eternity you will become a praise, a tribute, a rejoicing recipient of this grace by which He has made you accepted in the Beloved, accepted in the One having been loved.