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Chosen in Him

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 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.” Ephesian 1:1-6

How are the saints chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world? Are we selected individually, or did God ordain a plan of salvation? There are several passages that give us just a glimpse of the way the Father, Son and Holy Spirit work together. In Ephesians 1:4, the Father declares the plan to be carried out on behalf of mankind, “...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.”

The son is the one through whom the plan is implemented, Ephesians 1:7, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”

The Holy Spirit applies the work of the son to the daily experience of the saints in Christ, Ephesians 1:13-14, “In Him

How are the saints chosen in Him?

you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”

There are numerous passages that teach us about the work of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The three worked together in the Creation: Genesis 1:1-2, 26, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters... Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’” “Elohim” is the plural form of “Eloah”. This passage presents God in the plural form and not the singular. We know

WE
ARE
CALLED
TO BE
SAINTS

that Christ was there in the beginning and we read about the spirit's presence as well.

John 1:1-5: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit all work together as one.

things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it."

The word translated "Comprehend" is from katalambanó: to lay hold of, seize (Strong's 2638); in its usage it means: (a) I seize tight hold of, arrest, catch, capture, appropriate, (b) I overtake, (c) mid. aor: I perceived, comprehended. Some translations render it "overcome". The darkness could not overcome the work of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit in the work of creating the world.

We notice the three are present at the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3:16-17, "When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'" In this passage the Father declares that he is well pleased with what the Son is doing. Jesus identifies with sinful Israel in submitting to baptism, and the Holy Spirit descends as a sign for those who would believe.

In 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 we see the Father, Son and Holy Spirit working together to guide the ministry of the church, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all." While the saints at Corinth may have felt that certain gifts were better than others, the truth is that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were working in all the gifts to benefit the body of Christ, as we read in 1 Corinthians 12:7, "But the

manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all."

We see a similar passage in Romans 12:3-5, "For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another." We must understand that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit always cooperate together for the good of the saints, the chosen ones, the faithful in Christ Jesus, the predestined ones, those who are adopted as sons by Jesus Christ. And it is all "according to the good pleasure of His will" and "to the praise of the glory of His grace."

Verse 4 introduces us to the reason and purpose for which God chose us in Christ. He has chosen us in Christ for sanctification. As Burton Coffman

What is the reason and purpose for which God has chosen us in Christ?

states, "Inherent in this is the fact of God's calling and electing people before the foundation of the world; and very few theological questions have demanded more attention and interest than this. Clearly revealed in this is the fact that the coming of Jesus Christ into the world for the purpose of taking out of it a people for himself and redeeming them unto eternal life was no afterthought on God's part. Before the world was ever created, the divine plan of the Son of God's visitation of the human family existed in the eternal purpose of God. That body that Christ would gather from the populations of earth is destined to receive eternal life, because what God purposes is certain of fulfillment. Such a calling and election of those "in Christ" to receive eternal glory, however, is not capricious. Every man may decide if he will or will not become a part of it and receive the intended blessing."

Note that we are chosen in him that we might be "holy and without blame before him in love." What is in view here is our sanctification in Christ.

God's purpose is to redeem us in Christ. It is God's intention to save us from ourselves. If just left to our own purposes, we might wind up putrefied but never sanctified. Putrefied means to be rotting, decaying, and producing a foul smell. Sanctification is our redemption from the rotting and decaying process. Instead of becoming fiends we are called to be saints.

We must understand that being chosen in Christ is not like winning the lottery. In fact, it is more like joining the army. We are enlisting to become like Jesus, and this involves discipline and self-denial. Jesus taught, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 16:24-25). "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it" (Mark 8:34-35). "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:23-24).

Being chosen in Christ is not like winning the lottery.

Coffman writes this about our becoming perfected in Christ, "The most preposterous heresy of all ages is that a wretched sinner can "believe in Christ" and BINGO God accredits that stinking sinner with RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PERFECTION! The New Testament does not have even a suggestion of such a doctrine in it." God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. Our perfection is in Christ and not in ourselves, and we must be in Christ in order to be transformed from a lost sinner into a saint.

We must remind ourselves that this whole process is initiated by God and is "according to the good pleasure of His will" and "to the praise and glory of His grace." It is planned by God the Father; it is implemented by God the Son; and it is made effective in our live by God the Holy Spirit.

We have been predestined to adoption in Christ. In order to be adopted by someone, we must first belong to someone else. We find ourselves in a lost condition, but by the gospel we are redeemed and are saved in Christ. Paul describes our condition this way in Romans 6:16-18, "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness? But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."

God's plan from the beginning was to adopt us by Jesus Christ to himself. We call this the plan of salvation, and it is revealed in the gospel. The doctrine referred to in Romans 6:17 is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The form of the doctrine is given in Romans 6:1-6, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin."

As we have stated in this study, the purpose of God in choosing us was that we might be holy and without blame. To accomplish this God does not just ignore his own standard of righteousness and declare us blameless despite our rebellion and sin. We are called in Christ to be sanctified; we do not just continue in sin. In baptism we die to the man of sin and he is buried. We rise to walk in newness of life in Christ. We are not perfect, but we are in the process of sanctification by the Spirit of God.

We conclude this study by looking again at the questions we asked in the beginning: How are the saints chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world? Are we selected individually, or did God ordain a plan of salvation?

Sometimes people conclude that God predestined each individual to either be saved or lost and we do not have any power to choose differently. When we look at the word "predestined" here is what we find: Strong's word

4309 *proorízō* (from 4253 */pró*, "before" and 3724 */horízō*, "establish boundaries, limits") – properly, *pre-horizon*, pre-determine limits (boundaries) predestine. Strong's 4309 (*proorízō*) occurs six times in the NT (eight in the writings of Paul). Since the root (3724 */horízō*) already means "establish boundaries," the added prefix (*pro*, "before") makes 4309 (*proorízō*) mean "to pre-establish boundaries," i.e., *before* creation.

The word means to establish boundaries. We might illustrate it this way. Suppose we determined beforehand that we were going to give a free ham to everyone who brought their water bill to a designated location on Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon. What we have done is set the boundaries. It is an open invitation to those who will respond and comply with the stipulations we placed on the gift. They must bring a water bill; they must come on Friday; and they must come between 8:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon. If they choose to come on Monday or Tuesday or any other day, they will not receive the ham. Not because we did not want them to have one, but because they made a bad choice. If they show up on Friday at 3:00 p.m. they will also miss out because they have made the wrong decision. If

they show up on Friday at 9:00 a.m. but they fail to bring a water bill, they will not be among the "chosen" because of their own failure to follow the directions given.

This is a quite simple illustration, and it cannot perfectly duplicate what God has purposed and planned from the foundation of the world. Hopefully, it helps us to understand the difference in pre-determining a plan and pre-determining an individual. If I just call ten people on the phone and tell them to come get a ham, I have pre-determined the individuals who will be given the gift. If I set boundaries, or we could call them rules or stipulations, and invite everyone to come, then I have pre-determined the plan but not the individual.

Before the foundation of the world, God predestined a plan and not the man. This plan is called the Gospel of Jesus Christ and it is God's power for the salvation of all who choose to come in obedience to Christ. Paul states it this way in Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'"

L Scott Gage

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Spiritual Flossing

I'll come clean up front: it was finances that pushed me over the edge. For years I dreaded going to the dentist because I knew I would be lectured (while in a condition in which talking back is impossible) about the need to floss. At times I tried flossing, but never with any consistency. My fingers were too clumsy to hold that line at the needed angles to get in between my teeth.

After handing over another large sum of money for another cavity repair, I decided the time had come to confront the problem. I discovered floss picks, handy little gadgets that make it easier to get the floss into the inner recesses of one's mouth. I believe I can now declare that I've formed a new habit, having flossed nightly for the past few months (with very few exceptions).

Finances are a concern, but one's health should be a greater motivation. The folks at MayoClinic.com share their findings: "Although the eyes may be the window to the soul, your mouth is a window to your body's health. The state of your oral health can offer lots of clues about your overall health. Oral health and overall health are more connected than you might realize." I've heard it said that our armed forces recognize this link, and invest much money in soldiers' dental health.

Flossing is an example of going the extra mile. Brushing one's teeth is basic, but if you really want to do your best, flossing is a must. Thus, it leads one to think about "spiritual flossing".

No, there's no mention in Scripture of dental hygiene, but the idea of diligence can be found everywhere. Take, for example, 2 Timothy 2:15: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

"Diligent" is translated from a word that means giving it everything you've got, as a runner straining to reach the finish line.

Jesus dismissed the idea that religion can be casual: "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able" (Luke 13:24). He was not speaking of pagans or atheists in that verse, but people who regard themselves as spiritual. They want to enter the gates of heaven. But they won't be able because they didn't "strive".

The state of your oral health can offer lots of clues about your overall health.

Jesus told a parable of one who scattered seed in various types of soil. One of those soils was "stony" ground, not a good environment for crop production. What was lacking? "But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while ..." (Matthew 13:20-21).

We're responsible for the type of soil we each represent: hard, stony, thorny or good. If my interest in Christianity is only casual, how can I prevent the spiritual decay that will inevitably come?

Those who neglect their teeth have a safety net called "dentures". But what happens when a person's neglect leads to spiritual illness and even death? Our Lord posed that challenging question in Matthew 16:26: "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Our souls, even more than our teeth, are worth the effort. Take time each day for spiritual flossing!

Timothy D. Hall

LightGrams

July 8, 2010

Reflections of the Psalms:

Psalm 3

Psalm 3 includes a subtitle "A psalm of David. When he fled from Absalom his son". The event that led to the writing of this psalm may have come from the time when Absalom was trying to take the throne away from his father David. When Absalom began his revolt, many people followed him and rejected David's rule. Verse 1 described what was happening to David, "O LORD, how my adversaries have increased! Many are rising up against me. Many are saying of my soul, 'There is no deliverance for him in God.'" The reasons for the writing of Psalm 3 was simple - betrayal, rejection and humiliation.

Probably no one today can specifically understand what David faced, but most people, most Christians, have faced betrayal and rejection. The actions may have come from a "good" friend, a "close" associate, or a loved one. But the results still lead to pain, shock, disbelief, and anger. Suddenly, an apparently well-ordered life is thrown into turmoil. What was supposed to be the truth turns out to be a lie. So, how does a person deal with this? What is an appropriate response? The world says to strike back, seek revenge, dwell on what happened, feed and nurture the anger and bitterness.

How does a person deal with a situation in which what was supposed to be the truth turns out to be a lie?

But verses 3-6 show that David's response was different. "But You, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the One who lifts my head. I was crying to the LORD with my voice, and He answered me from His holy mountain. I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the LORD sustains me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me round about."

Was there an obvious solution to the problems when David wrote this Psalm? No. But in spite of the situation he was facing, David's faith never

wavered. What incredible faith! His words were not a man complaining to God in a petulant manner. In fact, in verses 5-6, he declared that he was still able to sleep in spite of the trials he was facing!

Some people sleep soundly out of ignorance or arrogance. Other people's spirit has been so seared by sin, that they feel nothing and sleep. But then there are others who sleep because of their confidence in the Lord. How many today can make that claim? How many Christians, upon experiencing even a small amount of what David was describing, could echo his words?

David's words were inspired, but he had no magic tricks for his faith.

Remember the words that James wrote in James 1:2-4, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." How many Christians intellectually understand what the words say, but do not believe that they really work? Yet, the foundation of a Christian's spiritual strength is faith in the Father and His Son - Jesus

Christ. And that faith grows and matures through prayer.

David's words were inspired, but he had no magic tricks for his faith. In fact, he had less information than people have today. Today, the "Good News" has been proclaimed. The "mystery of the ages" has been revealed in Jesus Christ. Sins CAN be forgiven. Eternal life IS obtainable through Jesus Christ. How much greater should be the faith of a Christian today?

Verse 8 is a fitting conclusion. "Salvation belongs to the LORD; Your blessing be upon Your people!" Like Jesus, Christians can face physical suffering and adversity, but nothing in this world can separate a Christian from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. Christians live in the world, and things will happen that will cause pain, sorrow, and anxiety. But life is NOT this world. Life is not things, position, or health. Life is the sanctified relationship that can exist with the Eternal God and Creator of the Universes through the love, courage and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Indeed, God's blessings are upon His people!

Jim Shelburn

San Antonio, TX

Psalm 3

*Lord, how they have increased who trouble me!
Many are they who rise up against me.
Many are they who say of me,
"There is no help for him in God." Selah*

*But You, O Lord, are a shield for me,
My glory and the One who lifts up my head.
I cried to the Lord with my voice,
And He heard me from His holy hill. Selah*

*I lay down and slept;
I awoke, for the Lord sustained me.*

*I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people
Who have set themselves against me all around.*

*Arise, O Lord;
Save me, O my God!
For You have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone;
You have broken the teeth of the ungodly.
Salvation belongs to the Lord.
Your blessing is upon Your people. Selah*

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