



DUDLEY'S MONTHLY MESSAGE

EPHESIANS 1

OCTOBER 2021

CHOSEN

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I've had several personal conversations recently that centered around questions and problems related to the doctrine of election. For centuries, Bible students have debated the Calvinist/Arminian positions regarding this precious doctrine. Whole denominations have been created because of a particular position, and, sadly, some Christian brothers and sisters have treated each other like enemies because of their inability to find common ground. This article is not trying to settle the propositional battle, but is an attempt to present the majestic perspective that we are His because we are chosen.

Since the Enlightenment, humans have been encouraged to embrace life with a confidence that we can solve our problems by understanding our world and how it works. Many wonderful inventions have made life more comfortable because the amazing mind of mankind has the ability to observe, analyze, reason, and understand. The downside is that we put all of our eggs in that basket and thus concluded that the human mind could understand everything. We discounted what only the divine mind could comprehend. The truth is that there is a limit to what we can understand by observation

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and reason. God is bigger than we can think, and His truth extends beyond our reach. We can only know some things by His gracious revelation (*see 1 Corinthians 2:9-16*).

The preaching of the gospel is more than a proposition that we can understand. It is the proclamation of a story that presents the person of God in His justice and mercy in perfect symmetry. God is an Artist who paints a picture that entices us to enter it and captivates our heart with a love that transcends our rationale. The rational mind alone will conclude that God is more like a technician who fixes our broken machines. The truly illumined mind will see that He is an artist creating a realm of relationship and fellowship that transforms us as we gaze at His work and encounter Him.

When the apostle Paul writes to the church at Ephesus, he begins not with propositions of truths to believe, but with a prayer of worship. He presents a picture of God who has acted in history to reveal Himself and His purpose for everything. Various doctrines fit into this overall picture of His original

purpose and His mysterious ways of bringing it to fulfillment. Until we see who He is and what He has done, we are not ready to receive any instructions. If we start with instructions, the message is muddled. It becomes a proposition of: "If you will follow these instructions, God will bless you and fix your broken machinery." Instead, look at the picture Paul paints with his prayer of praise:

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, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan

for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (Ephesians 1:3-10 NRSV)

Paul sets forth the purpose of God who is acting out of His benevolent sovereignty. His nature is justice and love. He cannot act contrary to who He is. He will never act out of character. Whatever He does reflects a personal God who is the Father who does whatever is necessary to accomplish His goal of blessing His creation with the greatest possible delight. He is working in and with His creation to fulfill His plan to have a cosmos that is captivated with the glory of His grace. Everything is designed and destined to acknowledge and praise His matchless mercy forever. If His various acts of redemption are interpreted by how they fit to accomplish His purpose, we can worship instead of judge whether or not they seem fair or understandable. In order to give the greatest glory to God and the greatest satisfaction to humanity, God has purposed to redeem the human messes with His mercy.

He has chosen by His own initiative to send His Son to achieve all that humans were designed and required to achieve. He has blessed Him with all the blessings that heaven contains. There are no other blessings to be earned. All are in Him. Any efforts to get such blessings by our own acts of devotion are futile. All the blessings have been placed on Christ. He also chose us to receive those blessings by adopting us into His family so that we could be related to Him as sons and daughters of God the Father. Because of His choice, we can stand before Him blameless and set apart. This is something that pleases Him. He gets great pleasure in bestowing on us those blessings we could never earn. In turn we get pleasure in praising Him for His matchless grace. As more people see the picture, they begin to praise His glorious grace and find a fulfillment that fits His original purpose. God is pleased. We are pleased. One day, the whole cosmos will join the praise. Everything will be summed up in worshipping Jesus as the Lord. He will not be denied what He planned. Every step of the way will be marked by His love and mercy. Justice will be done

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without fail. No one will ever be able to accuse Him of acting unfairly or out of character.

A few verses later in Ephesians, Paul prays for the recipients of his letter to have their eyes opened to see what they couldn't see without revelation (*see Ephesians 1:15-23*). It is important for us who have been trained by the Enlightenment to reduce things to the rational, understandable, and solvable propositions, and to see that picture in front of us before we begin to conclude our theology of God and His redemption. We have the edges of the puzzle all put together by the presentation. Now we can begin to insert the pieces to fit the frame. We are not left to judge whether God is fair in His choices or how we are to get in on His plan. It is clear. We hear, see, perceive, and then we believe. We are sealed with the Spirit as the down payment of the full inheritance. While we wait for the day of final fulfillment, we enjoy a giant taste of the future now. We are already children of God, forgiven, redeemed, blameless, and set apart. We are part of His colony on earth while we hope with confidence in the fulfilled promise of full redemption.

We can enjoy being chosen even if we can't explain how or why we are. It is all to the praise of His glorious grace. We ought to tell someone about this. This news is too good to keep silent. Let's tell them they, too, can see such a masterpiece as the story of redemption. They can be saved from the boredom of human depravity to live in awe of His glorious grace. The more we praise, the more we enjoy. The more we see others praise, the more we enjoy. It is time to show up and speak up. God has done something worthy of telling everyone.



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