

Ephesians 1C

- It's our third week in this study, and we're barely four verses into Paul's letter to Ephesus
 - There are 155 verses in this letter, so I'm 2.5% done
 - At this rate, we would finish the letter in Spring 2018
 - While some of you aren't surprised to hear me say that, to the rest of you, let me assure you my intention is to pick up the pace eventually
 - But some parts of this letter require extra attention, so we'll go slower than usual at times
 - Then in other places the material will permit a faster pace
 - As it turns out, the first three chapters, where the doctrine of the letter resides, will go more slowly
 - Doctrine can be tough to chew on, and there are few places in the New Testament with deeper doctrine than in Ephesians 1-3
 - We'll speed up in later chapters where we'll study Paul's instructions for living in the light of this doctrine
 - So if you're wondering whether you will live to see the end of this study, don't worry
 - You will...probably
- Last week I ended our study at the beginning of a controversial passage, on the topic of God the Father choosing us for salvation
 - Let's reread that passage

[Eph. 1:4](#) just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love

[Eph. 1:5](#) He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

[Eph. 1:6](#) to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

- There is hardly a topic more hotly debated in the church than the doctrine of predestination
 - Did God choose us to believe or did we choose to believe in the Gospel? Or is it some combination of the two?
 - Practically anyone whose been a Christian longer than about a day is at least aware of this debate
 - And most believers have planted their flag on one side of this divide or the other
- But this isn't a sporting event, and we're not rooting for a winning team
 - This is a question of truth, of knowing what the word of God truly says on important matters of faith
 - And clearly, one side of this debate is wrong
 - So let's return to our study determined to hear from the Spirit and to set aside pride and preconceived ideas
- Last week Paul explained that we can be confident in our riches in Heaven because the Father has chosen us to receive them
 - He chose us to be in Christ, that is to be a born-again child of God
 - Today as we move forward to the next verse, v.5, we find Paul doubling-down on his statement that we were chosen
 - In v.4 he said we were chosen before the foundations of the earth
 - And now in v.5 he adds we were predestined to become a child of God
 - I wonder if there is any word in the Bible that causes more discontent, disagreement and dispute than the word predestined (or predestination)
 - It's such a shame, because there is no more beautiful nor comforting word in all scripture
 - And the meaning of the Greek word is easy to define
 - The word in Greek is *proorizo*

- The definition of proorizo – its only definition – is “to determine an outcome beforehand”
- So on the matter of our salvation, Paul says (twice now) that the Father determined beforehand, before the foundations of the earth, that we would be saved
 - That decision was specific to you...God chose you personally
 - And it was for the purpose of bringing you to salvation
 - Paul says you were predestined to adoption as sons and daughters of God
 - The Bible frequently uses the concept of adoption to explain our salvation
 - Adopting a child means taking someone who was not born naturally into your family and making them family
 - Before the adoption, they were strangers
 - After the adoption, they are equal in every way with natural children
 - This picture fits our situation perfectly
 - Later in Chapter 2 Paul will explain this idea further, reminding his readers that they were strangers to God and children of His wrath
 - Likewise, Peter says we were once not in the family of God

1Pet. 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

1Pet. 2:10 for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

- But then the Lord adopted us into His family
 - Like all adoptions, the child doesn't choose the parent
 - The parent chooses the child personally, just as the Father chose you personally to become His child by faith

- And His choice of you had nothing to do with merit...children don't audition for their adoptive parents
- The child is simply the beneficiary of a decision made by the parent
- This is exactly what the Bible teaches happened to you and me
 - We were originally born into the family of Adam
 - But the Lord determined before the world began that in a day to come we would be adopted into His family by faith in Jesus Christ
 - And when that day came, the Father sent His Spirit to carry out that plan
- Still struggling with this concept? Then consider what Paul says in Romans:

Rom. 8:29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

- In that verse, Paul introduces another controversial term: foreknew
 - In Greek it's the word *proginosko*, which means to know beforehand
 - So the Lord had us on His mind before the first day of Creation
 - Having us in mind, He then determined that we should become His children
- Some Christians, who reject the idea that God chooses us for salvation, have tried to confuse the meaning of these two words
 - Some would tell you the word predestination means God *knew* beforehand that *we* would choose to believe in Christ
 - So then they say God simply confirmed our choice by predestining us
- As you can probably tell, this is circular logic
 - If God is merely confirming our own choice in advance, then He isn't choosing us at all
 - Under that interpretation, the word predestination no longer means determining an outcome beforehand

- They redefine the word predestination to mean the same thing as foreknowing...God knowing something we would do before we did it and then confirming it in some sense
- It's like taking the word "cat" and deciding it means "dog" instead
- In reality, to predestine means something different than to foreknow
 - And we can see these words mean different things by looking at Roman 8:29
 - Paul uses both words in the same verse to represent completely different yet complimentary ideas
 - Predestination means to decide the future in advance, to determine an outcome before it comes to pass
 - While foreknowing means to have a thought in advance of an action
 - So God had us on His mind before He acted to choose us
- More importantly, as a result of God's choice to adopt us, we now have the promise of sharing in the riches of Christ's inheritance
 - Notice Paul said in Romans 8:29 that we are predestined to follow in Christ's footsteps, Who was the firstborn of many brethren
 - Jesus was the firstborn of Creation, meaning he was the first to resurrect into an eternal body
 - As children of God, we share this same future, to receive a new, eternal body that can never die
 - But more than that, as children of God we will share in God's inheritance
 - The Bible says that Christ as the Son of God received an inheritance on the occasion of His own death
 - An inheritance is something a person receives on the occasion of a death
 - A person's wealth is transferred to someone else at the moment they die
 - When your rich uncle dies, he leaves his inheritance to his heirs
 - That transfer of wealth couldn't happen until he died

- Normally when a person dies, his Last Will and Testament dictates that his wealth be transferred to a living relative
 - But in the case of Christ, He died but then He lived again
 - So at His resurrection, He received His own inheritance back
 - The irony is Christ's own death produced His inheritance
- Paul says Christ is the firstborn of the Father, and we are likewise children of God by faith
 - So Christ's inheritance will be shared among all the children of God
 - Because we are all children of God by faith, then we are also heirs who share in the inheritance of God
 - As Paul says in Galatians

Gal. 4:6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

Gal. 4:7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

- Notice, Paul says because you were already predestined to be a son or daughter of God, He sent His Spirit into our hearts leading us to confess Christ
 - And then as we confess, we realized God's plan for our life
 - We ceased being a slave to sin and became an adopted son or daughter of God
 - And if we are a child of God, Paul says we are also an heir
- Hebrews explains how we can share in Christ's inheritance

Heb. 9:15 For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

Heb. 9:16 For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it.

- The writer of Hebrews says that those who have been called (again, those chosen of God for salvation) receive the promise of an eternal inheritance

- That inheritance is the consequence of a covenant
- The word covenant in Greek can also be translated “testament” as in a Last Will and Testament
- When someone makes a Last Will and Testament, they specify who receives their wealth when they die
 - That’s why the writer of Hebrews says a covenant always necessitates a death
 - You can’t gain the inheritance of a covenant (or testament) until the one who made it dies
 - Jesus established His covenant (or we could say His Last Will and Testament) at the cross
- Jesus’ covenant comes with an inheritance to pass along to His heirs
 - God owns everything in Creation
 - So when God dies, the estate He passes along to His children is the Earth and all it contains
- Then God (Jesus) rose from the dead, and claimed the right to receive His own inheritance back
 - Since God’s children are also heirs with Christ, then we too share in the inheritance Christ gained by His death
 - So Hebrews says Jesus shares His inheritance with those who have been called to be like Christ, to be God’s children...you and me
- Now you see the significance of the Father choosing us before the foundations of the earth
 - Paul says we were chosen to receive a portion of God’s Creation as our inheritance in the coming Kingdom
 - When God died on the cross in the Person of Christ, God’s riches were inherited by all God’s children
 - But you and I weren’t alive on the day Christ died, so does that mean we aren’t eligible to receive our portion?

- We qualify to receive a portion of an inheritance only if we are specifically listed in deceased's Last Will and Testament, in their covenant
- That's why Paul emphasizes that God foreknew and predestined us to be His child and heir before the foundations of the world
 - Paul is saying that Christ's Last Will and Testament, His covenant, was written before the world began
 - So that covenant had the names of everyone predestined to become an heir from the very beginning
 - Even as Christ was dying on the cross, your name was already included in the covenant as an heir of Christ
 - You were chosen from the beginning to become a child of God so that your inheritance would be assured
 - Therefore, Paul says confidently we have already been blessed with spiritual blessings in heavenly places
- And finally, just in case there is still someone resisting the idea that God brought us into the family of God by His choice and not our own, Paul adds this plan was the kind intention of God's will
 - In Greek, that phrase could be literally translated God's good pleasure or desire
 - This entire plan is God's desire for us, and it's a good plan
 - Don't let someone tell you that a "good" God wouldn't dictate the outcome of salvation
 - That it would be "wrong" of God to determine to decide for us
 - That a loving God respects our right to choose or reject salvation
 - It's a bizarre and nonsensical statement
 - Would you rather be assured of salvation by the kind intention of God's will?
 - Or would you prefer to take your chances with your own fickle, sinful will?
 - I define a loving God the way the Bible does:

[Col. 2:13](#) When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,

- A merciful God chose me before I knew I needed a Savior
- Before I was even alive, before I had even sinned, He knew I would need the salvation He was prepared to grant me
- Finally in v.6, Paul says this predetermined plan of the Father was designed to ensure He would be praised for the glory of His grace
 - Now we come to the biblical definition of “grace”
 - I’m sure most of us already know the definition of the word itself: unmerited favor
 - But have you ever heard someone describe God’s grace as something that comes in the form of an offer?
 - They tell you God offers His grace to mankind in the form of the Gospel message
 - Like a wrapped present, you have to accept the gift, you have to receive God’s grace
 - That notion certainly seems to fit with our perception of how we came to believe in the Gospel of Christ
 - Someone delivered the Gospel message to us
 - We heard it, considered what it said and then accepted it
 - So to us it may seem that God’s grace comes as an offer, one we have to choose in order for His grace to manifest in our life
 - But now, by the word of God, we come to see that this is not the definition of grace
 - Grace is not an offer or an opportunity
 - God’s grace is the predestined and finished work of God choosing us for salvation
 - We didn’t merit God’s choice; we receive it purely as a matter of the kind intention of His will
 - Grace is not the offer...grace is God choosing us in Christ

- So as we come to understand the Father's role in choosing us for salvation, we will find ourselves praising Him for His grace
 - Anyone who truly understands the sovereignty of God in our salvation will naturally feel even more desire to praise the Lord for His grace
 - God looked down the corridors of history and chose you from among the billions of people who walked the earth
 - He chose you, not because you deserved it, but because he determined to do it
 - Paul says the Father freely bestowed His grace upon us
 - He didn't owe it to us
 - It wasn't His obligation to grant us salvation because we said the sinner's prayer
 - Or walked the aisle or got baptized
 - Nothing forces God's hand or obligates Him to save anyone
 - He says those He predetermined to save, He does so freely by His grace
 - Understanding this truth rocks your theological world like nothing else
 - It turns everything upside down
 - It puts God where He deserves to be: in control of all things
 - And it puts us back where we always were: completely dependent on God's mercy
- I wonder how these truths impacted that materialistic culture in Ephesus?
 - They were so busy at work to maintain their status in a status-conscious society
 - They were taken with doing work to earn the praise of their employer or neighbor
 - They left their first love, serving Christ
 - And they succumbed to the pressure of the rat race
 - But now they hear that they have a portion of the earth reserved for them

- Without working for it, without deserving it
- They have been saved from the penalty of their sin
- And beyond that, the Father has reserved for them a share of the eternal inheritance
- So then why work for things that perish? Why not redirect that effort to things that are eternal?
- When you were a child, did you get excited for Christmas?
 - To see what presents your parents gave you?
 - You knew they would find a way to get you something special
- Well then, can you imagine what the Father has in store for you in the Creation to come?
 - What part of this beautiful earth, what kind of home, of farm or hillside?
 - Maybe you'll get an island all to yourself
 - Maybe a mountain top
 - Obviously, we don't know what exactly the Lord has in store for His children, but do we expect it will be disappointing?
- As Jesus says:

Luke 11:11 "Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he?"

Luke 11:12 "Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he?"

Luke 11:13 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"

- Our Father in Heaven is perfectly good
 - And by the kind intentions of His will, He has predestined you to share in the inheritance of Christ as a child of God
 - Knowing this gives us cause to praise Him for the incomparable glory of His grace
- This grace was bestowed upon us in the Beloved, Paul says at the end of v.6

- The plan of the Father to extend us grace centers on the Person and work of Christ
- So next week we move forward to the Second Person of the Godhead
- Each Person of God played a role in securing an inheritance for us
 - The Father chose us to be included in His plan
 - But without the obedience of the Son, the plan of the Father could never have come to pass
 - So it required Christ enact the plan for our behalf
 - That's what we study next week