

• A new realm – in a new kingdom

Paul begins his letter with what I can only call a burst 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’* ^{□1}. God blesses us by putting us ‘in Christ’. He puts us into a new realm, a new kingdom. We are transferred so that we are ‘in the heaven-lies’ – ‘in the spiritual realm’.

□1 1:3

Now Paul comes to explain more fully what he said in verse 3. First of all he makes the point that God’s plan of salvation began before God’s creation of the world.

1. Chosen for holiness

1. **We are chosen for holiness.** *‘He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless’* ^{□1} *before Him in love’* ^{□2}.

□1 1:4

□2 1:5a

• Predestined

Predestination is a great mystery. I make no claim to understand it. But one thing is sure. There really is such a thing as God’s predestination working in the lives of God’s people.

• In Him

Salvation did not begin from anything in us. Paul’s point in saying that God’s plan is ‘before the foundation of the world’ is to make it clear that God’s plan was not based on anything we did. Before we had done anything good or bad, God was deciding to have a people for Himself. He determined to get them to be separate and distinct in the way in which they lived.

God never had any plans for us except in connection with Jesus. We are chosen ‘in Him’. Christ is chosen by God as well. He is God’s elect One, precious to Him ^{□1}. We were always chosen in relationship to Him.

□1 see 1 Peter 2:4

This plan of God revolves around getting a people to be holy. Paul uses four phrases.

• Holy

(i) ‘Holy’ – separate, positively consecrated to God,

• Blameless

(ii) ‘Blameless’ – being honest and sincere in every area of our life so that people cannot easily criticise us, and we are enjoying the approval of God,

• Before Him

(iii) ‘Before him’. Holiness is largely a matter of being conscious that God is watching us.

• In love

(iv) ‘In love’. This phrase could go with verse 5 (‘In love He predestined us...’) but I think more likely belongs with verse 4 (‘blameless before him in love’).

2. Chosen for Sonship

2. **We are chosen for sonship.** *‘He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, for Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will’* ^{□1}, *to the praise of the glory of His grace’* ^{□2}.

□1 1:5b

□2 1:6a

• The privileges of sonship

It was not only servanthood that was God’s plan for us (although that is one way of putting the matter). It was also sonship. Once we were not God’s children, but there came a time in our life when God’s purpose for us was fulfilled and we were adopted as His sons and daughters. Think of the privileges of sonship. Constant access to our Father. Provision and protection. The Holy Spirit’s gives us a consciousness of sonship, the Spirit of adoption. Representation. In biblical thinking a son is a representation and representative of a father. We are chosen as God’s companions before we are chosen to be God’s servants.

God makes us His sons and daughters ‘for Himself’. God wants companions. He chose us ‘for Himself’.

• “through Christ”

• God’s own wish – not our deserving

3. Chosen for worship

• Predestination - a reason to be encouraged and confident

• Depends not on our cleverness but on our cooperation

• Praising now

• Cooperation straightaway

Paul says again that this spiritual adoption came ‘through Jesus Christ’. Paul will not let us forget this. He comes back to it again and again.

God’s salvation arises purely out of God’s own wishes. It is ‘according to the good pleasure of His will’. It is not deserved by us. He loves us because He loves us (as Deuteronomy 7:7–8 puts it when referring to the nation of Israel).

3. We are chosen for worship. God does all of this ‘to the praise of the glory of His grace’ ¹. God especially wants us to see His graciousness. There are many aspects to God’s character: His power, His anger against sin, His all-sufficiency. But we are not chosen to adoption as sons to the praise of the glory of His power, or to the praise of the glory of His holiness. What God wants us to see – more than anything – is His grace. The Bible never speaks of the treasures of God’s power; it does speak of the marvellous treasures of His grace. God wants our praise and our worship because we have experienced His grace.

Why does Paul want to tell us about this ‘predestination’ of God? Because if God has determined that I should be holy then there is some encouragement for me. If God is determined to do this, then I can be confident it is going to happen. If God has resolved before the foundation of the world that I am going to be conformed to His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, then I have reason to believe that He is going to do what He has determined to do.

If God has decided that I am going to be His child ‘according to the good pleasure of His will’ and not ‘according to the good pleasure of my will’ then I can be sure that God is going to go on working in this way in my life. It is His good pleasure. It is what He wants to do. It is not dependent on how good and clever I am. All I have to do is co-operate with Him and He is determined to achieve His purposes in my life.

If back behind my salvation are certain things that God is determined to do with me, then I may start praising the glory of His grace now! The image of God’s Son is to appear in me. God has predestined it. All of His mighty power is set upon fulfilling His purpose in my life. If this is what we are chosen to be, we may as well start co-operating with Him straightaway.

¹ 1:6a

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