



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Chosen By God

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Ephesians 1:4

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⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love

(Pastor prays)

Today is “Sanctity of Life Sunday” and tomorrow is Martin Luther King Day. We should not view the two as being independent of one another. Since 1973 (Roe vs. Wade) when abortion was legalized, it is estimated that over 50 million little boys and little girls have been killed in their mother’s wombs. Seventeen million of these little boys and little girls were black when at the core of what Martin Luther King stood for was sacredness, the sanctity of human life. These ideas have not been born in a vacuum. They emerge from the pages of the Bible like a suppressed chorus, calling us to see the sacredness of God. It is God’s timing that we would be at verse 4 on this Sunday that says, “*even as he chose us in Him before the foundation of the world*” and next week verse 5 says, *he predestined us for adoption as sons*. It’s woven in this passage how God has placed supreme value on his chosen people and according to verse 5, *he has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places*. The controlling theme of the Bible is what God has done to make life sacred, how He has come down to man, and to explain these things. The Bible always starts with God the Father. All the blessings, all the benefits that we enjoy come to us from God. In verse 4, Paul takes the whole theme, the whole Bible, and reduces it to one verse. In this

verse, we see the sovereignty and love of God, the sinful helplessness of man and the overwhelming saving power of Christ. In this passage, Paul tells us about our salvation, what it means to be Christian and what these heavenly treasures are and that every bit of it centers around Christ. And just as an aside, if you are at a church and the preacher doesn't use the Bible and Christ is not the centerpiece, it wasn't a Christian message. We believe that...

Jesus Christ is Not Only the Key That Opens the Treasures of God, He is the Treasure

Every point of this sermon starts with Paul's phrase – In Christ.

In Christ, God saves us

Verse 3 tells us that he has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places and in verse 4, Paul is telling us how those spiritual blessings become ours. In other words, how are we connected to these spiritual blessings. Verse 4 tells us, even as he chose us in him, in spite of the fact that we were enemies and aliens and haters of God. This word, *chosen*, gives us what is known as the Doctrine of Election. And God's choosing us in Christ is the foundation and first cause of all our blessings. This truth of God's choosing runs throughout the Bible. We call Israel God's chosen people. Deuteronomy 7:6 says, *The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession out of all the people who are on the face of the earth.* Then in vs. 7-8, He will say it wasn't because you had anything winsome about you; it is only because of God's love. This verse tells us that God chooses people and not the other way around. When we choose people, we make decisions based on some merit. You choose a car because it is fast, women because they are pretty, food because it tastes good to you, and neighborhoods because of the schools. We make a choice because we see value. That's not how God chooses. God's gift is completely grace, based on nothing in us. Let me explain it like this. Man by nature rebels against God. Romans 3:23 says, *All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* Romans 6:25 says, *and the wages of sin is death.* In our sinful state, we are under the wrath of God. If that's true, none of us outside of Christ could ever be good enough to get to heaven; all are going to Hell. On top of that, Ephesians 2:1 says, *You were dead in your trespasses and sins.* Dead men don't make

decisions for Christ, they're dead. The question is, how does anyone ever come out of that? Verse 4 says, He chose us in him! You see, the real question isn't how can a loving God send anyone to Hell? The real question is how can a Holy God allow anyone into Heaven? Some will argue this is against free will. Absolutely not. We don't respond to God's grace against our own will. God's grace makes us willing to respond. Paul tells us in Romans 3:10-11, *None is righteous, not even one - no one understands, no one seeks for God.* Left to ourselves and our own devices, we don't seek God. Instead, Jesus says in John 15:16, *you didn't choose me, I chose you.* A seminary professor once said, if you try to explain this doctrine, you may lose your mind. But if you try to explain it away, you might lose your soul. God says to us in Isaiah 55:8-9, *For my thoughts are not your thoughts neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. Verse 9 says, For as the Heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

This verse teaches us that in Christ, God in His grace saves us. So what are the implications? The first thing is humility. This teaching deals a crushing blow to human pride. It strips away any trust you have in the flesh and brings us to the point of wholly relying on the grace of God in Christ. We also gain confidence. When you are awakened to your own sinfulness before God and believe and repent, it's a work of God, you don't ever have to question. You didn't choose God, he chose you. It creates grace in you when you understand this and realize that God loved you and saved you even when you were such a sinner. It makes you a lot less judgmental and much quicker to extend grace to people. This verse gives us a quickness to forgive. When you think how God chose you and forgave you for the thousands of times you ignored and rebelled and sinned against him, it makes you much quicker to forgive people. You don't hold unto stuff! And finally, it gives us a Christ-centeredness. When you think on this doctrine, your life takes on a Gospel flavor. You want to live for Christ. You want to share Christ. You want to see others come to Christ. In Christ, God saves us.

In Christ, God anchors us

Notice in verse 4, *even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world*, does that not boggle your mind? That if you are a Christian, God chose you before Creation. If you go to the mountains and see how old they are, think how God loved you before they existed, or the ocean. This baffles me. I am moved when Paul says in Romans 11:33 – *Oh the depth of the riches and wisdom and Knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable are his ways*. This passage reminds us that our salvation is not wrapped up in a decision or an act on our part. Our salvation is anchored in Christ before the foundation of the world. Let's think about the implications of this truth.

This teaches us to focus on what matters, our life is fleeting. We are here one moment and gone the next. And too often we spend our time, energy and emotions on things that don't matter when this passage reminds of an eternity with or without Christ. Every person in this city, every person in this church will either bow before Jesus or burn in Hell. This is no small thing! If that's the case, why are we wasting time, hours and hours, on T.V. or apps, or phone games? We are amusing ourselves to death.

This verse reminds us of our own mortality. You are going to die and in the grand scheme, you are going to die soon. But we don't fear that or worry about death because in Christ, God anchors us. Our salvation is secure, our life is wrapped up in Christ. To live is Christ and to die is gain. Christ is the key that opens the treasure of God. In Christ, God saves us. In Christ, God anchors us. Think of it like this to understand how the entirety of the God head is engaged in our salvation. In eternity, God the Father, chose you; at the cross, God the Son, redeemed you. At the present, God the Spirit convicts, seals, and secures you. In Christ, God saves us. In Christ, God anchors us.

In Christ, God changes us

We go back to the verse, ⁴ *even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love* Let's deal with how he changes us.

He makes us holy. That word means, set apart, different, not like other people. Our habits are different. Our speech is different. Our teenagers are different. Our home, business and entertainment are different. One reason the world is not impressed with the church is we are different. There's another word, blameless. Holy had to do with lifestyle externals. Blameless is the condition of what is on the inside. It comes from the Old Testament sacrificial system. A sacrifice had to be without blemish. Since we are sinners, we need a substitute. That substitute is Christ. Holy and Blameless. Before Him. This carries with it the idea of an ongoing fellowship with God. It is an awareness of His presence and the reality of living each day before the Lord. And this is done in love. This verse shows us the unfathomable love of God in Christ. Robert Robinson wrote in *Come Thou Fount*, Jesus sought me when a stranger, wandering from the fold of God. He to rescue me from danger, interposed his precious blood. You're looking for God's favor or blessing and Jesus Christ is the key that opens God's treasure. Christ is the treasure. Come to Christ and rejoice the salvation he secured for you from the foundation of the world.

(Pastor prays)