

Sermon Notes on Eph. 1:3-7, Advent I

1. The teaching of the believer's eternal election in Christ Jesus is found in the NT at Eph. 1:3+14; Rom. 8:28-39; II Thess. 2:13-17; Acts 13:48; II Tim. 1:9; I Pet. 1:3-7. The term "the elect" is applied only to believers in Christ. Mt. 22:14; 24:24; 24:31; Lk. 8:7; Rom. 1:7; Rom. 8:33; Tit. 1:1; II Jn. 1:1. The term "elect" is used interchangeably with "Christian" "believer" "saint" or "child of God".
2. God loves all people alike. Jn. 3:16. He truly wants all to be saved. I Tim. 2:4. Man is solely to blame if he rejects the Gospel. Mt. 23:37; Lk. 7:30; Acts 7:51; 13:46. God did not choose or elect anyone to damnation.
3. The teaching of election is only and always only for the comfort and strengthening of Christians who grow weak in their faith, fearful of the sins they've committed, doubting whether the Gospel is true. The teaching of election is meaningless to the unbeliever.
4. In our text Paul praises the Father for what He has done for us in Christ: He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing, every heavenly blessing. This happened because the Father chose us in Christ before the world was created. This resulted in our being holy and blameless in our faith and living, despite our many sins, while we live on this earth. What prompted the Father to do this? The good pleasure of His saving will. His glorious grace which He showered on us in His beloved Son is to be praised. The first doxology is found in vs. 6. Have you become a Christian? If so, then rest assured that you are one of God's children forever and ever. You did not choose Him. He chose you in Christ and ordained you to eternal life. Election is simply the true understanding of the grace of God in Christ Jesus.
5. Note how often Jesus Christ is referred to in vss. 3-14: In vs. 3 twice; in 4 once; in 5 once; in 6 once; in 7 at least twice; in 9 once; in 10 twice; in 11 once; in 12 once; in 13 twice, for a total of fourteen times. If ever a person comes to you, worried about whether or not he is one of God's elect, ask him this simple question: "Do you believe that Jn. 3:16 applies to you?" If to this he answers "yes", assure him that he is one of God's elect. This assumes, of course, that his attitude toward the remainder of Scripture is like that of his attitude toward Jn. 3:16. This assumes that he is fighting sin. This assumes that he does not use his freedom to live in sin.
6. At the end of vs. 4 of our text the older English translations made the phrase "in love" go with vs. 4. That is also found in the older Russian translation. This makes "in love" refer to our Christian living. However, in the newer English translations the phrase goes with vs. 5. That is found in the newer Russian translation. That makes "in love" refer to what God did for us. Neither interpretation will militate against what the Bible says about these matters.
7. The Formula of Concord in the Book of Concord says (Tappert 626.65): "We should accordingly consider God's eternal election in Christ, and not outside of or apart from Christ. For according to St. Paul's testimony we have been elected in Christ 'before the foundation of the world was laid' (Eph. 1:4), as it is written 'He has loved us in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6).'"
8. At Jn. 10:27-30 Jesus said: "My sheep hear My voice and I know them and they follow Me and I give to them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will take them out of My hand." After Paul discussed election at Rom. 8:29-30 he wrote: "If God is for us who can be against us? . . . Who will accuse God's elect of anything? God is the One Who justifies. Who condemns (us)? Christ died (for us). Yes He rose for us. At II Thess. 2:13 Paul tells us not to fear the Antichrist because God has chosen us for salvation. In I Pet. 1 the writer comforts the Christians who were suffering because of their faith. He addresses them as "the elect". I am God's from eternity to eternity only because of His grace and love in Christ Jesus. Praise the Lord!

Sermon Outline on Eph. 1:3-7, Advent I

Theme: PRAISE THE LORD FOR HIS SPIRITUAL, HEAVENLY GIFTS TO US!

Introduction: Happy New Year! Today is Advent I, the first day of the Church Year. For the next six months we will concentrate on the great things God did for us at Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. Our text for today is a very fitting text to introduce these great things which God has done for us.

I-What these spiritual, heavenly blessings are.

A-The Word of truth, the Gospel of salvation. Actually our text goes to vs. 14. In vs. 13 Paul mentions the Word of truth, the Gospel of salvation. That is given to us through the Word of God. Only there do we find the truth about mankind and also about God. The Word shows us the vanity of man, his inability to save us. But the Word also shows us the good news of our Father in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit uses this good news to seal us to eternal life.

B-Redemption through Jesus' blood, the forgiveness of sins. This gift is mentioned in vs. 4. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. I Jn. 1:7. We see the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world. Jn. 1:29. He was made sin for us so that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. II Cor. 5:21.

C-Adoption through Jesus Christ. Vs. 5. We are no longer foreigners and strangers but fellowcitizens of the saints and members of God's household. Eph. 2:19. Our citizenship is in heaven. Php. 3:20. Satan is no longer our father. Now God is our Father and we can say: "Our Father Who art in heaven."

II-What caused these spiritual, heavenly blessings.

A-God chose us in Christ before He laid the foundation of creation. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Rom. 8:39. That is so because God chose us in Christ Jesus. Jesus said: "No one can take My sheep out of My hand." Jn. 10:28. That is so because God chose us in Christ Jesus from eternity. Absolutely nothing can hurt us lastingly. Lk. 10:19. That is so because God chose us in Christ Jesus.

B-The basis for this choosing. It was the good pleasure of His will. Vs. 5. It was the riches of His grace. Vs. 7. "By grace you've been saved." Eph. 2:8. Your birth did not depend on your will and choosing. Only God did that. Your membership in God's family did not depend on your choosing or goodness. Only God did that. And that is why the Lord wants us to repent, to confess our sins, to confess our unworthiness. Because we earned absolutely nothing except hell and punishment. No wonder the Lord said: "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself but in Me is your help!" Hos. 13:9. No wonder David cried: "Remember not the sins of my youth!" Ps. 25:7. No wonder Paul exclaimed: "Not having my own righteousness which is of the Law but the righteousness of God which comes by faith in Jesus." Php. 3:9.

C-The purpose of this choosing.

-So that I live a holy and blameless life before Him. Vs. 4. God did not choose me so that I could go and live a life of sin. As Zacharias said: "That we should serve Him without fear in righteousness and holiness all the days of our life." Lk. 1:75. Jesus chose us that we might go and bear much fruit. Jn. 15. A Christian is like a tree planted by the rivers of water. It brings forth its fruit in its season. Ps. 1:3. On the last day He will say to you: "Well done, good and faithful servant." Mt. 25:23

Conclusion: Happy New Year! Welcome to your Lord Jesus Christ who died so that you might live. Welcome to your Father who chose you from eternity because of His grace in Christ Jesus. Welcome to the Holy Spirit Who sealed you to eternal life.