



# *Bible & Life*

## Bible Teaching Newsletter

**BIBLICAL DOCTRINE & NEW TESTAMENT ASSEMBLY LIFE**

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### **“According As He Has Chosen Us”**

By Dr. Lehman Strauss

“According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Ephesians 1:4).<sup>1</sup> We must see at the outset that all that God had done for us in Christ is “according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Ephesians 3:11). In eternity past, God had certain settled purposes which He accomplished at various times during the dispensations of human history.

#### **God’s Eternal Choice**

Now in Ephesians 1, we are carried back into the remotest ages of past eternity where, says Paul, God was loving us and planning that all who are “in Christ...should be holy and without blame before Him.” God’s eternal choice, then, was that all who are *in Christ* should be a holy people.

The phrase “chosen us in Him” could be rendered “chose us for himself.” Chose for what? Not to everlasting life, but that we should be spotless for Himself! The election in the Divine Mind was that all those in Christ should be “holy ones” free from every defilement of sin.

#### **The Purpose of God’s Heart**

It is not difficult to see how God should purpose in His heart, before the world came into existence, that He was going to have a holy people who would be to the praise of His glory and grace. To that end God created Adam, and despite the fall of man, God is still going to carry out His purpose in Christ. The divine choice will find its consummation when Christ returns for His bride “to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24). Temporarily we are in this world, but not of it. We were chosen to be holy before its foundation was laid; we are merely passing through it to another world. We might fail to practice holiness here, but the eternal purpose of God will be fulfilled when our Lord returns and “we shall be like Him” (1 John 3:2).

God has selected a people to be His holy habitation. So believers will be a part of the true Church of God’s creation and design which, on the great

***“Believers are elect, as being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, all of them being foreknown and foreseen as such by God, those whom He foreknew He chose, and that always for specific purposes. The source of their election is God’s matchless grace...”***

**W. E. Vine**  
(1873-1949)

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presentation day, will be presented a glorious Church, “holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:25-27).

### **Holiness: The Purpose of the Christian Life**

The ultimate purpose of God’s choice is not salvation but sanctification. John Calvin once stated that it is wrong to say that “any of us may attain perfection in this life;”<sup>2</sup> nevertheless, this is the goal to which the whole course of our lives must be directed, even though we cannot reach it till we have finished our course. Let us grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, saying with Paul: “...neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy” (Acts 20:24). And let us praise God that we have been chosen to be a part of the completed structure, a perfect Church throughout all eternity.

### **Predestination: What Does It Mean?**

When God designed His church in eternity past, He “predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will” (Ephesians 1:5). The American Standard Version Bible makes it clear that the verb translated “predestinated” is “foreordained.” It means, to *appoint, or to determine beforehand*.

To what have we been predestinated? Neither this verse nor any other verse in the Bible teaches that God decrees that some men are foreordained to everlasting life while others are foreordained to everlasting death. Christ “gave Himself a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:6), and “this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

### **What Is the Doctrine of Election?**

The word “Chose” or “Election” (Gk. *Eklektos*), means to select, pick out, or to choose. This doctrine has divided the Church down through the centuries. The division revolves around the two ideas relating to the sovereignty of God and the responsibility (or free will) of man. Some Christians cling to one view and violently oppose the other. The Bible teaches both the sovereignty of God and the power of man to make choices. Election according to Scripture, is God acting entirely apart from man and according to His own purpose. Election does not mean the elect will be saved whether they want to or not, and the non-elect could not be saved even if they wanted to be.

### ***ELECTION IS BASED UPON GRACE***

Election is God's choice, (John 15:16), based upon His grace, and not upon human works. The choice is further based upon God’s foreknowledge (1 Peter 1:2) and is absolutely certain of fulfillment (Romans 8:28-29). All God’s choices were made before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). And God’s choices and judgments are always right. The words “elect”

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**Dr. Lehman  
Strauss  
(1911-1997)**

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and “chosen” are used synonymously in the Bible. The idea of election is used in reference to Christ (Isaiah 42:1), who was chosen for the work of salvation before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). Angels are said to be “elect” (1 Timothy 5:21). The term “elect” is applied to individuals chosen to salvation in the tribulation and, to all the saved in the present dispensation of grace. The church as a corporate body is God’s elect (Ephesians 1:4, 1 Peter 5:13), chosen as was Israel to holy living and special service.<sup>3</sup> This leads us to the next topic in this section: adoption.

### **What Is the Meaning of the Adoption of Sons?**

Notice, please, that we have been predestined unto adoption as sons (Ephesians 1:5). The word “adoption” (*huiiothesia*) is used only by Paul. To understand its meaning, you must lay aside the idea of the word as it is used today when by legal act, an adult person takes a minor, not his own, into the relation as his child. In the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul explains how Jesus Christ secured our adoption for us by His death at Calvary in order that “we might receive” it (Galatians 4:5). Our present standing is that of sons; for, “beloved, now are we the sons of God.” And how a wonder this is! But, adds the Apostle John: “It doth not yet appear what we shall be” (1 John 3:2). Yet the full manifestation of the believers sonship awaits the resurrection, change, and translation of saints, which is called “the redemption of the body”(1 Thessalonians 4:14-17).

### **The Future Manifestation of the Adoption of Sons**

There is a future manifestation of the believer’s adoption, whereby God sets a goal for the believer. This aspect of adoption does not mean son-making, for in eternity we shall be no more sons than we are now, rather, at that time, we shall be placed in God’s showcase and displayed as sons.

Therefore, His sovereign act of adoption can have nothing whatever to do with His choice of us. Paul states clearly that our adoption is something for which the believer is “waiting” (Romans 8:23), having been foreordained “unto” adoption. Although we do have here and now the “Spirit of adoption” (Romans 8:15), His presence in us is merely a seal, or guarantee of a future act of son-manifestation. The fact of our present “son-placing” and our future showcasing were all “according to the good pleasure of His will.” Our future position, which was God’s choice, was not only His will but also for His enjoyment. The mightiest angel in heaven will not share in the glory of the believer’s future position.

Ephesians chapter one teaches us that every true believer has been foreordained to be such a trophy of the grace of God as to cause men to praise the glory of His grace. Paul writes: “To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:6). These words, not to be considered by themselves, are just a link in the golden chain of thoughts beginning in Ephesians chapter 1:3-14.

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***“Someone once tried to persuade me that God has chosen some people for salvation and chosen other people for damnation. Such an idea is monstrous. God does not arbitrarily and sovereignly damn the greater part of the human race.”***

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**Dr. John Phillips**  
(1927-2010)

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## INFORMATION

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## The "Great Presentation Day"

God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing because He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him, one day to place us on display as His glorified sons. Then His holy unblemished Church will cause men and angels to acknowledge the wonders of His infinite love and grace toward sinners.

God has foreordained that men shall extol and praise His grace in all its eternal glory. This is the terminus of His kindness toward sinners. Today this is demonstrated only meagerly in the lives of His true followers, but in the end of the age "He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" (2 Thessalonians 1:10).

## Conclusion

The Lord of heaven and earth will be wondered at by all when the Church Age has run its course and the last member has been added to the Church. With mingled surprise and admiration, the spectators of earth and hell will marvel at the monument of divine grace. All who have put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ are certain to be present and a part of that magnificent exhibition, for, adds the apostle: "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." We are already accepted in the Father's presence because we are in Christ. What condescending love and grace! We are accepted, but only because the Father "made us" so. Let us continue to praise God, not only for what we have been saved *from*, but for what we are saved *to*.

## Endnotes

1. Compiled from Dr. Lehman Strauss, *Ephesians*, (Loizeaux Brothers: Neptune, NJ, 1987), p. 119-122
2. John Calvin, *Sermons on Ephesians*, (Banner of Truth; Carlisle, PA, 1974), p. 10
3. Lehman Strauss, *Key Bible Words*, (Biola University, La Mirada, CA, 1981), p. 22