

1. Introduction:
 - a. Planning a proposal/vacation for the ones you love
 - i. Seems perfect in your mind, but never goes as planned
 - ii. Doesn't matter b/c knowing you are loved is the important part
 - b. But what if we had the power to make it happen according to our will?
 - i. What if we were sovereign → in control, like God?
 - c. God has been working a grand act of love planned since before creation
 - i. We are going to look at this doctrine (teaching) these next few weeks
 - ii. How it should **shape our identity**, how it should mold us, encourage us
 - d. Sadly, this is a controversial doctrine, and in the midst of the controversy, we end up missing out on the beauty that God and Paul intended for it
 - i. The way it should shape our identity so we know who and whose we are
 - ii. These next few weeks, I want you to see the beauty of it
 - e. I want you to see that God chooses, that he has a plan, and that he is in control to fulfill the plan, unlike us, where we have a plan and hope things work out
2. *[1] Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus*
 - a. **God's got a plan and it directly impacts you and your identity**
 - i. "by the will of God" Paul is doing this work
 1. God's plan for Paul defines his identity → an apostle
 - ii. Notice this is God's plan, not Paul's
 1. Not b/c he put in the most time
 2. Not b/c he got voted in after some political back-scratching
 - iii. That's how things normally work so we assume God works in the same way, but he doesn't
3. *[2] Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*
 - a. This is the message of God → grace and peace
 - i. Mankind has been at odds w/ God since the first humans
 - ii. It's not that we start off good, and mess up
 - iii. Or we start off with a fighting chance
 - iv. We are spiritual DOA → ****Bridge illustration?***
 - b. This is the identity that we were born with - spiritual dead, separated from God
 - i. We are desperate for peace → with God, with one another
 - ii. We are desperate for grace → God giving us what we don't deserve
 - c. **God's plan is to bring grace to people who don't deserve it**
 - i. **God wants to give them a new identity**
 1. Here in this next verse, we see a major characteristic of this new identity → being chosen by God
4. *[3] 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, [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].*

- a. God has showered blessings on all people, but showered spiritual blessings on those who are followers of Jesus.
- b. More incredible than the blessings is this crazy fact:
 - i. He chose us in Christ even before the world was created
- c. **God chose you**, if you are a follower of Jesus, before the foundation of the world, to shower you with ridiculous, crazy blessings that you don't deserve
 - i. Think about that for a second → the "chosen one" (ex??)
- d. If you are sitting here and claim to be a follower of Jesus, then you have a story
 - i. How you first met Christ
 - ii. It might seem that you were searching, but this verse tells us the opposite!
 - 1. God chose to draw you out, call you, drop hints
 - 2. This is consistent w/ Jesus' teaching
 - a. Nobody comes unless the father draws him (John 6:44)
 - b. You did not choose me, but I chose you (John 15:16)
 - 3. Peter called Christians a "chosen people" (1 Peter 2:9)
 - iii. God determined, before an aardvark roamed the earth, that he was going to choose to save me. That God chose me. Thought of me long ago.
- e. **God has been planning this love story since before the world was created...for you specifically.** Not generally like a number, but by name
 - i. Planning how he was going to make (name) holy → moral purity
 - ii. Planning how he was going to make (name) blameless → free from guilt
 - iii. Before you melt your brain, realize how beautiful this idea is meant to be
- f. Cultural characteristics: People plan or react → God plans, he never has to react
 - i. God didn't wake up in his hammock one day and frantically enlist Jesus
 - 1. This doesn't mean that God ordains every event in exactly the same way. Some events God causes and some he allows
 - ii. It does mean that the Trinity never had to call an emergency session to revise heaven's master plan and figure out how to save mankind
 - iii. Not at the Fall, not at the flood, not in slavery, not when the kingdom fell, not when Jesus died on the cross...
 - iv. **Jesus isn't God's Plan B**
 - v. Jesus was ALWAYS the plan and God had already planned in advance who would receive his love
 - vi. Jesus knew, in advance, and chose, in advance, to die for you
- g. The natural question is this: why me?
 - i. **God's plan is to choose people with whom he wants to share completely unmerited, undeserved grace.**
 - ii. Why? Because he wanted to. Because it gave him joy.
 - 1. Not because you deserve it
 - iii. That this passage teaches us that God chose particular individuals to have faith in Jesus Christ. This means:
 - 1. Salvation is based on God's sovereign choice, not man's will
 - 2. It also means that God allows others to follow their own way

- iv. Perhaps the best picture of this in our own world (as Paul says in vs. 5 and we will flesh out in two weeks) is adoption
 - v. You don't adopt because you "like that kid better" or that one "had a nice jawline," or that one "did more chores" or was "more appreciative"
 - 1. That sounds crazy, but that's the way we view God, isn't it?
 - vi. Unconditional election, what Paul is describing here, means that **God chose you despite who you are not because of who you are**
 - 1. You didn't pursue him, he chose you
5. But this idea that God chooses people bothers a lot of people
- a. Here are some common questions and responses that come up...
 - b. **"Well, how do I know if I am chosen?"**
 - i. I have had people ask me this so many times. "What if I want to be a Christian but I'm not elect/chosen?"
 - ii. If you are resting in Jesus alone to be made right before God, that's sure and certain proof that God's plan includes you
 - iii. All of your plans may fail, but God's won't → his love never fails
 - iv. There will never be someone who "wants" to be born again, but God says no. (*repeat this*) - that's why he says "whosoever will may come"
 - 1. The ones who come are the ones he enabled, willed to come
 - 2. He removed blindness, deafness, the spiritual veil
 - c. **"What about Free Will?!"**
 - i. Who chose your house, your spouse, your striped socks, that dumb knife-making hobby? You did
 - ii. Historically, free will meant the human ability to be the one who pursues God, but thanks to bands like Rush and modern vernacular, we have confused Free Will w/ Choice
 - iii. You have choice, but "free will" isn't free → it is sin's captive
 - d. **"That's not fair! What kind of God would do that?!"**
 - i. I wouldn't do that if I were God. I would base it entirely on merit
 - ii. You're right, it's not fair. It's not fair that anyone should be forgiven
 - iii. Fair = death. Merit-based = death. **Unconditionally electing to save enemies, captives, God-haters, insolent idolaters is very unfair.**
 - 1. Thankfully, God isn't fair; he is grace-filled
 - iv. The picture isn't of God going through the house throwing people out, but of God going through the trash pile choosing to save some
 - e. The real reason we struggle is idolatry
 - i. "I just can't believe in a God who does that."
 - 1. A God who saves people? Who loves unloveable people? Who shows grace to idolaters? That kind of God?
 - ii. We are still trying to eat from the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil and tell God what is good and what is evil instead of letting him be God
 - 1. Wrath would be righteous/good
 - iii. Impossible to accept? Your God is too small. You're too big.

- f. It is hard, and we need to realize that we won't understand all of it this side of heaven → his ways are not our ways → don't unscrew the inscrutable
 - i. Steve's pearly gates description
- 6. A lot of people are bothered by this doctrine, but when the authors of the Bible use words like chosen, predestined, elect, they are doing it to bring comfort, hope, and identity
 - a. Matter of fact, for Paul and for the Ephesians, this foundation of being chosen is the key to finding lasting purpose and meaning in the midst of suffering
 - b. Imagine how trivial approval idolatry is when God chose you!
 - c. Comfort in Trials**
 - i. The doctrine of being chosen, elected, and predestined begins with a loving God who chose us personally and specifically before time began
 - ii. Nothing will stand in the way of that love. No trial, no suffering, no hardship. Sin couldn't break it. Nothing can thwart God's plan nor his love
 - iii. So with that in mind, as a follower of Jesus Christ, you can have incredible comfort in trials → no matter how grievous
 - iv. Why? Because it really is going to be alright. God's in charge. His love is guaranteed. It's not going anywhere!
 - d. Motivation for Praise**
 - i. Paul says that God be praised because of these things! In this first section alone he has three doxologies → "To the praise of His glory!"
 - ii. We shouldn't look at this with a sour face and lament over how awful it is, we should praise God for the beauty of sinners reconciled for no reason.
 - iii. Rejoice! God is in charge. God is sovereign. God is good! God's plans work out even when yours are junk. God planned for thousands of years to love you! That is reason for praise.
 - iv. You think you're worthless? God doesn't! **He planned to die for you at your worst, not at your best.**
 - e. Encouragement for Evangelism**
 - i. Paul said he endured everything for the elect (2 Tim 2:10)
 - ii. Predestination, being chosen, doesn't pardon us from work, it spurs us
 - iii. *"How refreshing to know you don't need me. How amazing to find that you want me!" - Casting Crowns*
 - iv. God uses us to bring chosen people to faith and repentance. What a privilege!
- 7. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, God chose you.
 - a. How would that revolutionize your life, your self esteem, your identity if you embraced that fact?
 - b. It would encourage you, it would comfort you, it would motivate you, it would break idols of approval, and so on and so forth.
 - c. Is it a hard doctrine to accept? Yes, it can be, but realize that is the enemy trying to undermine the beauty of God, the majesty of his love, the glory of his sovereignty.
 - d. Jesus planned to die for you. He chose you. Embrace that.**