

EPHESIANS

2. PAUL'S PRAYER PART 1 EPHESIANS 1:3-6

Before Paul gets into his specific prayers for others, he establishes the appropriate context for all Christian prayer, reflection, and exhortation: **The worship and adoration of the God who has lavished His love upon us.**

- ♦ **What do you think prayer is?**
- ♦ **If you pray, what is normally the focus of how you pray?**

Many commentators call Ephesians 1:3-14 the *ordo salutis* (*the order of salvation*). The very first thing Paul talks about is God choosing us...*then* redeeming us by Christ's blood...*then* how we are forgiven and adopted... *then* how we are kept safe forever...*then* how we are brought into glory. It can be heavy and sound kind of esoteric, but it is also practical.

- ♦ **Have you ever thought about your own order of salvation (if you have trusted Jesus)?**
- ♦ **Why would the order of these things be important?**

Only in Christ do any true and real blessings come, but the important part for us to understand is *why* they come.

Read Ephesians 1:3-4.

- ♦ **Why do blessings come based on these verses?**
- ♦ **What does it mean to be chosen by God?**
- ♦ **Read 1:3-6 slowly with your community. How does it feel to receive such spiritual blessings? In what ways are you prone to forgetting those blessings amidst your everyday life?**
- ♦ **Spend time in prayer thanking God for His love, adoption, and glorious grace.**

God chooses us. Paul says in 1 Cor. 15:9, "I was the least of the apostles... but by the grace of God I am what I am." We cannot make ourselves a Christian; we can't even *want* to be a Christian unless God has begun to open our heart. Pride and superiority are excluded, and we are what we are by the grace of God alone. Paul says there are no qualifications we have that makes us Christians; our choice is secondary to God's, and we

DISCUSSION NOTES

should be devastated by His grace. The doctrine of the sovereignty of God is a doctrine of absolute graciousness, and we can't help but have a deep, abiding joy and gratitude when truly understanding it.

- ♦ **Do you have joy and gratitude when understanding God's sovereignty?**

There are a few reasons that people object to the idea of election:

1. **Free will** - The Bible doesn't say a human being *can't* choose God; what the Bible teaches is that human beings don't *want* to choose God. We're not incapable of choosing, but we're incapable of wanting it. Romans 3 says no one seeks God. Romans 8 says unless God comes and does something in us, we will continue to be hostile toward Him.
2. **It is not fair** - C.S. Lewis says that Christianity is being decided upon by God. Eternal life is a gift. To be a Christian is not to decide to adhere to certain beliefs and move in the general direction of moral values; it is being decided upon. God opening the eyes of some is grace; it is not unfair. True fairness would be each of us receiving what we deserve in our sin—death and separation from God.
3. **If everything is predetermined, why do my actions matter?** - God has given us His love; that is the reason we live a life telling others about Jesus. While Jesus is over all, He calls us to partner with Him in His mission. If we lose incentive because of God's sovereignty, then we have misunderstood His rescue of us.

- ♦ **Do you have objections to the idea of election? What are they?**
- ♦ **How do we tend to confuse how God acts with how a human would act?**
- ♦ **Is it hard for you to trust God's sovereignty?**
- ♦ **How have you seen God's sovereignty in action?**

Kathy Keller once said, "*The stars may fall from heaven, but His love for me will stand because His love is older than the stars and it will outlive the stars.*" That truth enables us to freely share the good news because ultimately it rests in God's hands. We get to serve the world through acts of love in response to God's great love for us.

Write down any question(s) you or your GC may have that cannot be answered in your gathering and send them to questions@ourelement.org.