

## God Chose Me!

### Ephesians 1:3-14 (CSB)

<sup>3</sup> Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ. <sup>4</sup> For he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in love before him. <sup>5</sup> He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace that he lavished on us in the Beloved One. <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace <sup>8</sup> that he richly poured out on us with all wisdom and understanding. <sup>9</sup> He made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he purposed in Christ <sup>10</sup> as a plan for the right time—to bring everything together in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth in him. <sup>11</sup> In him we have also received an inheritance, because we were predestined according to the plan of the one who works out everything in agreement with the purpose of his will, <sup>12</sup> so that we who had already put our hope in Christ might bring praise to his glory. <sup>13</sup> In him you also were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and when you believed. <sup>14</sup> The Holy Spirit is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of the possession, to the praise of his glory.

There's always a strategy, an agenda, in picking people for a team, isn't there? You prioritize what is most important to you, and then pick accordingly. Maybe you pick your team based on talent, that these are the people who are going to help you win. Maybe you pick based on chemistry, that these people will work well together. Maybe you pick based on friendship, that this team will enjoy each other's company. Maybe you pick based on availability and proximity. Or maybe a coach or a teacher tries to make it fair by picking the teams for you. But, even then, they have to pick based on what they observed as the talents, the chemistry, the merit, or simply the starting letter of your last name or some other arbitrary thing about you.

God chose you, me. That's what the Apostle Paul tells us. So, what did he choose us for? "He chose us... to be holy and blameless in love before him. He predestined us to be adopted as sons..." (verses 4,5) He picked us to be pure, to be a part of his family forever.

Okay, cool, but what was his strategy? Why did he pick you and me to be a part of his team? God explains through Paul: "For he chose us in him, *before the foundation of the world*, to be holy and blameless in love before him." (verse 4) God's choice of us was made before the world was made, before people even existed. This means that he did not pick us because of who we are or even what we would do. His choice was made before we had any chance to prove to God that we would be a good teammate, that we had the talent and the skills to make him proud of us, that we would work well with him, would obey his commands well, help other, be receptive to him and his message. There was nothing in us that compelled God to pick us.

Then why did God choose us? "He predestined us to be adopted as sons *through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he lavished on us in the Beloved One.*" (verses 5-6) God chose us because he wanted us. Just soak that in for a minute. God wanted you, you specifically, you by name, you. We seek for the why and we think it has to be either something in me or that he picked us because of some kind of advantage to him, because that's how we pick teams. But that's not God. He picks us because he wanted to. It was good to him to pick us to belong to him, to be on his team, part of his family.

Still seems a little baffling because, honestly, we're not maybe the best teammates. We're not the most skilled nor have the most heart nor work the hardest. We're not even the most faithful. In fact, we're often lazy and apathetic. We brush off "practice" as we don't do all the things we know we should do and then do the other things that we know people as part of God's team shouldn't do. Sometimes it even feels like we do things that hurt God's team, almost like scoring a goal for the other team by these sins that we do. It kind of feels like we are second or third string players at best, not the top picks. Maybe we weren't his first choice. Maybe we were leftovers.

It's true that we are not the best teammates God could ask for, but that's why in choosing us he also made sure to make us into perfect members of his team. He chose us to be holy and blameless, but not by our efforts. He made us holy and blameless through Jesus Christ. "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he richly poured out on us with all wisdom and understanding." (verses 7-8)

Jesus did everything to make us the perfect teammates. He is the all-star by being holy and blameless, but not for himself, but for us. He put in all the time and effort. He never missed a practice or a game, so to speak. He played and won where we don't. He kept all God's commands perfectly for us. He defeated the undefeatable. He made us holy and blameless by taking our faults, flaws, and

failures on himself. He took them on his shoulders and killed them on the cross. With his life, his blood, he bought us away from our laziness, our bad play which helped the other team. That's our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses. He chose to be rich to us, knowing that we could never pay him back, nor does he want us to. This was his plan in choosing us according to his good pleasure. This brings us all together to him on his team, his family. He made us the top picks, the perfect members of his team, not second string, not leftovers. God chose you and me and made us holy and blameless!

Part of me wants to just leave it there for you, but another part of me knows that your mind probably also has this thought, like mine, that it's great that God chose me, but what about all those other people. Why doesn't he choose all people? Then we can all go to heaven, and no one is left out. Wouldn't that be a more loving choice? Wouldn't that be fairer?

As we entertain that thought, we take this good gift from God, that he chose me to be holy and blameless, to belong to him, and then getting upset about it because we want to dictate to God how he should give his gift of being on his team. It's like resenting a Christmas gift from your Mom and Dad because they didn't give the exact same gift to your brother or sister. Instead of enjoying your gift, you decided that because they didn't get it too, that you didn't want it either. We get upset about God's choice instead enjoying that God chose us. Instead of getting upset about it, we should share with them what God has done for them as well so that they too can enjoy it.

So, why does God choose some and not others? Doesn't that mean that by not choosing people he is making sure that they aren't a part of his team, that they go to hell instead of being with him in heaven? The answer God gives us is a paradox, meaning that what he tells us is seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense, but yet it is true. If we are a part of God's team, made holy and blameless, adopted as sons, have the forgiveness of sins, are given the inheritance of heaven, then this is all credit to God. If we are not a part of God's team, that is our choice, not God's lack of picking us. We can reject what God has done for us. We can quit or never even join his team. That's on us.

Which gets us to the reason why God even tells us that he has this plan to chose us, to predestine us, according to the good pleasure of his will. He shares this mystery with us to help us when we don't see the plan coming together. Paul wrote these words while he was in prison for telling people how Jesus did everything to make us his perfect teammates - holy and blameless, redeeming us through his blood, and forgiving our trespasses. Paul had been bounced around in jails with those in charge finding reasons to not try his case but also not to throw out the charges. As the years went by in prison for a crime he didn't commit, the thoughts creep in, wondering if God really is in control, if he really is working his plan out for us, if he really will save me.

God has "made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he purposed in Christ as a plan for the right time—to bring everything together in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth in him." (verses 9-10) He purposely gives us a peek into how he is working his plan not only to choose us but also to save us so that we can rest assured that God really is in control, no matter what else is going on in this world. He does this so that we have a sure hope, a rock-solid confidence, that, yes, he is working the plan that he chose you and me to be holy and blameless, adopted as his children. We really will be saved because of his choice. This teaches us to rely on him instead of ourselves and instead of on other people.

So, how do you know if we are chosen by God? You heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, that Jesus has done everything to make you holy and blameless. Do you believe that Jesus actually did those things? Were you baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit? Then you were adopted as his son and were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is "the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of the possession, to the praise of his glory." (verse 14) Your belief through the Word of God, through what God has done for you, lets you know and assures you that God did choose you.

God chose you, you specifically. You're not just a number on a jersey or a face in the crowd. This was his plan for you. He worked his plan, brought you the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. He gave you the Holy Spirit, causing you to believe it so that you belong to him, his team, his family, adopted as his child – now and in heaven forever. This is what God chose you for. Amen.