**In God’s Hands**

Based on [Ephesians 1:3-14](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Eph1.3)

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Any and all of us have, in the event of some extremely unfortunate calamity in our lives, shouted or sighted the proverbial cry, “**Why me?**” Your running late to an extremely important appointment, you get in the car and decide to take scenic drive thinking it’ll be faster, when, “oh no” road construction. “**Why me?”**

You know that feeling…as though the universe is working against you? Why does it seem so personal sometimes? Parents I know you’ve been in this situation before. Your child is monkeying around *while all the other children*--in church, or at the supermarket, or in the waiting room--are sitting quietly, patiently, like obedient little darlings. You think, “**Why are my kids so unruly and not theirs?**” And immediately you ask, “**What do those parents know that I don’t know, what do they do that I haven’t done, where have I failed my children, and they have succeeded theirs?”**

Now it’s true, there are better and worse ways to parent; but it’s also true that kids are who they are. You don’t choose your children, God chooses them for you. And you could have read all the latest parenting books; applied all of the latest “child-development” techniques; and still some children are going to be easier to raise than others. It doesn’t seem fair; but as you’ve no doubt told your children, “**who said life is fair?”**

When it comes to life in general, some people are going to have more problems than others, some more crosses to bear, some more success than others. **And at some point, either you are going to live in constant anxiety, searching for that “silver bullet” solution that will solve all your problems and make you like the Joneses--buying book after new book that promises to disclose to you “the secret”, the *secret* to a successful \_\_\_\_\_\_ - (fill-in-the blank), or you’re going to have to trust God**. Someday you’re going to have to start taking control of your life, *or* you’re going to have to give God a little responsibility and a little credit. Either you’re going to have to search frantically for success and self-improvement, or else realize that some things are actually out-of-your control, and that is not a catastrophe, but a comfort. It is a comfort to entrust things that you worry about to the Lord; and to commend yourself into the more-than-capable hands of God.

Christian friends, today we have some good news from Ephesians chapter 1, that the most important thing in the world, the thing that you don’t want to mess up, the thing that will either lead to an eternity in heaven or an eternity in hell, is 100% in God’s hands. **Your salvation, your eternal destination in the everlasting arms of God is not something that you choose for yourself or that you have to work hard at if you want to attain it or to be assured you don’t lose it, but rather is something God has chosen for you**. In today’s Epistle lesson from Ephesians, we are promised that as Baptized and believing Christians, we have been singled-out, targeted, elected and chosen by God for adoption into his family and for an eternal inheritance of his kingdom.

In today’s Epistle lesson, we see Paul speaking to the Ephesians on a particular teaching: the predestination and the eternal election of God to salvation in Christ. Paul speaks with confidence that the people he’s speaking to, members of the church in Ephesus are “predestined” for an inheritance from God; that God chose ***them*** from eternity. God has chosen you from eternity to be partakers in the sacrificial death and the resurrected life of Jesus Christ that will preserve you for the day of judgment. What an honour!, what a blessing!, and yet…what makes me so special?

Paul says, **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.** What comfort! God chose us, elected us before the foundation of the world. Before the foundation of the world, he chose us out of the world to have salvation in Him. He elected *us* ...but what about "not-us"? He chose us...but, what about them?

Friends, as a Pastor I’ve been trained in the bible, went to seminary for four years, studied God’s word thoroughly and I can tell you, the bible doesn’t say why God elects some and not others to salvation. Why are some saved and others damned? **Because of faith! Well then...why do some *believe* and others harden their hearts?** Why are many called, but few chosen? Why the sheep, and not the goats? Why do some have faith while others harden their hearts to God? What gives God occasion to save some and not others?

We come to the bible with that question, and friends, we still don't know. St. Paul speaks of the comfort of God’s election as a fact and a guarantee, but he takes us no further. **We know nothing of salvation except what our Lord has said.** And so, we can eat of any tree in the Garden of Scripture, but of the knowledge of the hidden things of God. We are beggars. We can't be choosers. God alone holds that distinction and we are to allow him his privacy, for what need have we of things that God has not shown us, since in his mercy, he has already shown us our salvation in hearing the voice of his Son.

We want it all, to have all things, to know all things, to be in charge of all things. We think we need to rule the universe before we can have any comfort. We are back-seat drivers that can’t stand it when somebody else is behind the wheel. According to the flesh, we are “control-freaks”, we simply cannot rest until we hold the reigns on all things; because, according to our old nature, we trust ourselves more than God. **But friends, who is more trustworthy than God? What greater comfort can there be than to know that God is in control; and from the captain’s chair he chose you for salvation in Christ?** You are baptized into Christ, made to stand holy and blameless before him on the last day.

We cannot know all things about God, but what we do know is enough; because the love and mercy of God is revealed for you in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus. That's what Paul has to say to the Church in Ephesus. **When Paul speaks about predestination, he can't help but add Christ to everything he says. Paul is a broken record in these verses.** You should read them again, and just count the number of times he uses phrases like "in him", "in the Beloved", "in Christ" "through him", and you'll see him herding us like sheep away from what we don’t know about God to what has been revealed in Christ Jesus. This God desires that all men be saved and come to knowledge of the truth. In him we have our comfort, strength and assurance of the forgiveness of sins and life eternal.

So what must I do to be saved? Peter says in Acts 2 :38, Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit. “Oh so what I have to do is have faith?” Yes you must have faith; but then again that is not your own doing, but the gift of God. You can’t choose to repent anymore than a blind man can choose to see. Physical sight and spiritual sight are gifts from God, that come through his power not yours. Oh, so what I need to do is get baptized? Yes you need to be baptized; but baptism is not your own doing. God baptized you through the hand and the mouth of his servant.

Paul regards predestination "**as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth."** Election is a plan to unite all things in Christ, how? By spreading his word and his gifts to the end of the earth in the hope that all would believe and come to a knowledge of the truth. But not everyone will believe. We leave that in God’s hands for it is His plan, not ours.

Why do some have faith? -- Jesus is their righteousness. **Why do others not have faith -- Jesus is their scandal**. All things work in Him, and through Him. He is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. And to give us assure you that you are a chosen one, he gives us spiritual food, his own body and blood, a pledge and a guarantee that you are in Christ, and that he is in you. And when Christ is in you, you have the certainty of your salvation and peace in Christ…the peace of knowing that your failures, your flaws, and your sins cannot separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus. We can rest God’s Word, abide in sacraments in this life assured of His protection. For there is no safer place to be, than in God’s Hands.

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