

Bible chat week starting 23 7 23

Ephesians 1: 1 - 14

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

To God's holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:

2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will – 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace 8 that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, 9 he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfilment – to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, 12 in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of his glory.

1. Point out the parts of this reading that teach that believers were chosen by God before they were even born. (This belief is called predestination.)
2. Does that imply a grim fate for those who are not so chosen? See also Philippians 1: 27 - 30. (The belief that some are chosen for heaven and some for hell or destruction before their birth is called double predestination.)
3. List all the other benefits and blessings that come to the Christian according to this passage.
4. John Calvin taught that there was nothing at all that a person could do to bring about their own salvation. The list of the saved and the damned was set by God at the beginning of time. Respond to this idea. Calvin knew this was an unpalatable doctrine. Why do you think he taught it? Is it supported by our reading?
5. Jacob Arminius argued for conditional election. God calls all people to salvation, and people are free to respond to him, or not. What are the merits of this idea? Is it supported by our reading?
6. Part two of the sermon this week invited us to read this passage with our hearts. If we were to live on the basis of the truth of this chapter, how would that change us?