 1 : 3 & 4 ‘you are cHosen’

For our ‘ALL-IN’ Services this term (1st Sunday of the month), we will be looking at this wonderful chapter that Paul wrote to Christians in Ephesus. It tells us a lot about who we are in Christ and the blessings we will receive.

The idea that God ‘chooses’ has caused Christians problems over the years. They may say that God is unfair to choose some people and not others. This can be really difficult if you have someone close who appears not to be chosen. Let’s look at it another way. If you received an invitation to dine with King Charles, would you go along your street asking if others have been invited? – Unlikely!. You would probably make sure you looked smart and made certain you were there early – in other words your response would be to the one who invited you.

1. How do you respond to the idea that God has chosen you?

You are not primarily a Christian because you chose to follow God – you are a Christian because God chose you and you responded to his invitation.

The initial burst of verse 3 is an outpouring of praise. Paul says the reason for praise is that we have been ’blessed in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ’. ‘In the heavenly realms’ does not mean our blessings have to wait for heaven. It’s not about a location but refers to a spiritual reality. It’s saying this present world is not the only reality. What starts for us when we become a believer is a time of real blessing and that will be continued with Christ forever.

1. Does it sometimes feel that we are going to have to wait for blessings until the next life?

How does it change our outlook on life if we know God is blessing us right now?

How have you experienced his blessings?

The last two words of v3 are ‘in Christ’. They are very important in Paul’s theology.

1. What do you think it means in reality?

Is it confusing because sometimes we say we are ‘in Christ’ and other times we say ‘Christ is in us’?

Probably the best understanding of the phrase is to say that ‘Christ’ is the place where believers live in which they find God’s salvation and blessings. It’s as if Christ is a vast storehouse and, if we stay in it, we will receive everything God has for us. He is a person but within whom our whole life is framed. He gives us the parameters by which we live in a fallen world. Living in Christ helps us deal with others who have a different world view because we know who we are and how God wants us to live.

1. Is it too easy to take Jesus out of our way of life?

Are we sometimes too self-reliant and think we can live our lives OK with Jesus as a nice extra?

How can we learn how to live in Christ more easily?

What difference will it make to the way we deal with life?

Do you remember those gut-wrenching moments at school where you were the last one chosen for a team and the whole class knew you were rubbish. We start from the idea that God chooses people - not the other way round. But you should forget the idea that God is putting the human race through quality control – it’s not God choosing his best team. God is the kind of God who loves and seeks a people (Deut 7:7 to 9) His choosing is based on his nature and character which cannot be faulted. Let me illustrate with a trivial example – do you know who will be the next leader of Sri Lanka – of course not, your knowledge is finite. God chooses on the basis of infinite knowledge.

1. The doctrine of election should produce two main responses
2. Incredible gratitude and praise (v3) that you have been chosen by God.
3. A passion to see others experience God’s love and grace in election.

Do you find it hard to let God do the choosing? Are you ever tempted to suggest names to him?

Well, you can as you pray for another person to become a Christian.

One of the dangers of the doctrine of election is that we think we are privileged. We are ‘great’ because of what God has done not because we go around with a big badge saying ‘chosen by God’. Interestingly Ephesians 1 focusses on those who are collectively one in Christ. It does not focus on individuals – the letter is about the church. Election always brings responsibility. God has chosen us to do something – he’s not given us a status symbol but a charter to ‘live holy and blameless lives before him’ (1:4). God’s choosing enlists us in his work force and gives us the job of living for him and telling others about him. (Matthew 28:20)

1. How does the fact that we have been chosen by God, given his salvation, experienced his blessings and guaranteed an eternal future with him change our attitude to service?

Two responses are allowed

1. Thank you so much
2. So, what now?