

# Gamma 11

## Study 1

Ephesians 1:1-4

### Section A (Exegetical Questions)

#### **1. For what ultimate purpose has God chosen and predestined us before the foundation of the world? How does this impact the way we live today**

A) In his divine love and grace, God ultimately predestined us to be saved, set apart and made holy to worship, praise and glorify His name. (Eph1: 4, 6, 12)

This purpose somehow eludes us today because in many churches the emphasis is on what God can do for us. He is called upon to heal us to meet our needs to mend our hearts and pour blessings over us. The center of our lives in this kind of thinking is still a man centric view of what our lives are supposed to be , it revolves around our needs. Hence the lack of commitment , lack of willingness to sacrifice and the constant navel gazing into out own problems ten to predominate our prayers and occupy our time. We have lost sight of our true purpose in life. Our true purpose in life is to be god like...like God made in His image to reflect who He is who created us to. That is what is meant by being holy ...it means to be set apart to be like God. To reflect and mirror Him is the highest calling any human being can be called to do. Hence in our daily lives it should instead be preoccupied with how we view the world through His eyes, through the lens of the kingdom's progress and purposes. We need to see the bigger picture we need to be compelled by the bigger purpose of our lives and not be mired in the distractions that our petty desires and problems.

#### **2. What are the implications for us if the doctrine of predestination is true?**

Great joy because it is an eternal incomparable gift and we anticipate the final inheritance we will one day receive in Him

Humbled because we never did anything to deserve it and hence we cannot look down with condescension on others who have not come to faith yet or are younger in the faith because even our faith has been predestined.

Confident because if He had chosen us before the foundation of the world, He will surely bring us safely to completion His work which He had begun in us

Emboldened because He has a purpose and a specific mission for us in regard to our part of His mission to bring the gospel to the world. Hence no matter the challenges and the set back and the chaos that is in the community we live in , His purpose will be fulfilled and we are emboldened to attempt great things for Him knowing it is His path for us.

Zealous to spread the good news of the gospel, to sow many seeds in eager anticipation of a response due to God's election because Jesus promised that the harvest would be plentiful and in each city He has already predestined people to be saved and we are so privileged to be made part of this mission.

### **3. Can someone who insists that salvation depends in part on us consistently believe that our salvation is eternally secure? Why/ why not?**

No, if it depended in any way on us, we could never be eternally secure of our salvation. - Because then no one can ever be sure to not lose it, to never jeopardize their salvation because no one can live a perfect life, without sin. (Rom. 3:10)

### **4. Look at Acts 27:21-26 here Paul tells the centurion that despite the storm God will ensure they will be saved. In Acts 27:31 the soldiers want to abandon ship on life boats but Paul warns if they do this they will all die and in Acts 27:42-44 the centurion prevents the soldiers from killing the prisoners and proactively instructed the able bodies to abandon ship and swim whilst the rest floated on planks. Can you discuss the role of human responsibility and action in the light of Divine predestination?**

God's sovereignty does not does not eradicate human responsibility. (Acts 2:23, Luke 22:22)

"Man is a responsible moral agent, though he is also divinely controlled" (J.I.Packer) God's Will is supreme despite and through all circumstances

Hence on one hand God had already predetermined that they would be saved so Paul will be in Rome to present the gospel to the capital of the Roman Empire. Yet God's sovereignty works through the will of man. He works in such a way that the soldiers will stay on board and not kill the prisoners. How He does so is through the prophetic warning by Paul. Paul assures them of salvation but warns them not to let the soldiers abandon ship. Without the warning the ship and her crew would have been lost hence God gave the warning through Paul. Divine sovereignty and human free will are in essence two sides of the same coin it's how one sees it. One might ask the question what if the centurion had ignored Paul's warning would they have perished? The answer is yes because Paul's prophecy said they would if they abandoned the ship. So hypothetically, if they had abandoned the ship all would have died and Paul would have died and not reached Rome. Yes theoretically so, looking at it from one side of the coin from the human side the centurion had a choice or free will choice. On the other hand the centurion of his own free will heeded the warning and they did not perish. It worked out as God had planned and Paul made it to Rome after all. That's looking at the other side of the coin in retrospect it is God's predestination. Hence in every situation God is sovereign but humans are able to have their choice and be responsible for their choices for good or for evil and will be

judged on their choices they have freely made. In no situation does God's predestination compel or force men's choice and yet hold them morally accountable.

How does this work out practically for us, well we draw comfort that we have been predestined and in every situation God will work it out for our eternal good and His glory. On the other hand we are very careful and accountable to heed His warnings through His Word to obey and like the centurion not "abandon ship" for the tendency is to say, well since God has got it all planned out, I really don't have to put very much thought in to what I do because He has predestined everything. Instead it is precisely because He has planned it out that we are to be very careful and make the right decisions in accordance to His will and warnings because we are involved in His plans and His kingdom. It's like working for a very wonderful and big company and we are given heavy responsibilities to make decisions according to the guidelines and warnings the CEO has given to us, it's a privilege to have His trust.

## Section B

### Reflection Questions

- 1. Do you think God chose you because He knew you would believe in Christ, or was it "unconditional election," not based on anything that he foresaw in you that made you worthy of his love? How does this make you feel when you think about yourself in relationship to God.**

Not worthy of his love but he chose me nevertheless. (Eph2:1-5)

To rejoice and worship God and live a holy life of thanksgiving, praise and humility, worthily honouring his gift of grace and bringing glory to his name.

(Answers as in A1)

- 2. Does it diminish your sense of individual personhood or make you feel somewhat like a robot or a puppet in God's hands? Do you think it should make you feel this way?**

No. I was heading for eternal death and destruction until God rescued me. Now I am able to live a worthy of the purpose I was created for. (see A4)

We are expected to live responsibly and make choices for which we are still accountable because God's sovereignty works through our choices. We are never coerced or forced to make these choices

- 3. How does the doctrine of predestination affect your motivation for evangelism? Is this a positive or negative effect? Can you think of ways in which the doctrine of**

**election can be used as a positive encouragement to evangelism (see 1 Thess. 1:4-5; 2 Tim. 2:10)?**

Good. Positive effect. Predestination is a guarantee of results from the many seeds I sow; some plants will grow because God chose it so. Men should then excitedly go. (See A2) . Confident because the person's response to the gospel will not discourage me because I know it is a spiritual work of God in his heart and not a function of my own eloquence or cleverness. However it is also a function of my responsibility that because I am given the privilege of being co-opted to be a partner with God in evangelism , I must therefore do my best to equip myself to share the gospel and to live my life as a testimony of that gospel. If we are in multilevel marketing then the results of our endeavours would be directly correlated with our own efforts and skill. We would be constantly worried and stressed especially if there is little response. We would be constantly second guessing our own presentation of the gospel because it would all only depend on us.

## **Section C**

### **Case history**

**There was a new church in Sungei Besi which was the talk of the town. They had a dynamic young pastor who captivated the audience with his mesmerizing oratory skills. More significantly, he preached that obedience to God will bring considerable blessing into the lives of the members. He preached that God has only just begun to bless us, the best is yet to come with abundant finances and great health with healing from diseases in this life now not later on. It was up to the members to be faithful to appropriate those blessings. God offers them for everyone by grace but it would depend on their faith. The more they trusted God the more He will accept them and make them whole. The more they had faith the more the Lord will forgive their sins.**

**When someone pointed out that Ephesians 1 stated that we were chosen and predestined before the foundation of the world he countered that that referred to the church in general and not to individuals. For individuals it all boils down to faith now much faith they had. The church grew by leaps and bounds and they even had miracle healings and prophecies by the pastor. He even prophesied that he would be the pastor to lead a revival of the whole of KL.**

- 1. What are some aspects of this pastors preaching that might give you concern?**
  - A) Over realized eschatology, based on signs.
  - B) Works based gospel- The atonement act for salvation was accomplished on the cross. We are forgiven by believing and accepting Jesus' finished work. This pastor however is saying it all is based on how much faith we have to appropriate the blessings

C) Man centered focus not on the grace of God not we in terms of being part of a greater purpose for God's glory here we have God is on hand to serve us and give us blessings and this is based on our faith.

**2. Why did this church grow so rapidly?**

People were seeking health and wealth, not God (2 Tim 4: 1-4)

**3. Do you think he is actually preaching the gospel**

No. Prosperity/false teaching

**4. In the long run what are the risks to the spiritual lives of the members who attended this church?**

They will be disappointed, disillusioned, depressed.

Not saved. Only the truth in the whole counsel of God can bring revelation, repentance and salvation.(john 14:6)