

Ephesians 1:3-6 (King James Version)

I do not make a point of doing verse studies. Occasionally I will, but generally, I do not as it is largely a waste of time. I have found that how men think to approach the Scripture, is not at all how the LORD God intended for one to learn from His word. Without going into detail, the following passage suffices for instruction:

Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken. (*Isaiah 28:9-13*)

However, if all that men did was stumble at the word, that would be bad enough, but that is not the worst that men do with the Scripture. Rather, at every opportunity men find a way to warp and twist parts of Scripture into things the LORD never said, and would not ever say. The amazing thing to me is how they justify such utter nonsense. It is unfortunate that something which was supposedly placed in the Bible to aid in finding things, which would be the numbering of the verses, is more frequently used to justify doctrines that could not be justified any other way. Though the verse numbers are really only there to help us find things in Scripture, far too many individuals use the verse numbers as a way to build and support doctrine.

Unfortunately, that is certainly not the way to approach the Scripture: verse by verse, number by number, regardless of sentence structure, thought pattern, principle, or any other known and properly recognized way understand what idea is being presented. Of course, following those properly recognized methods will inevitably lead one to certain conclusions about what the Scripture is stating that will nullify virtually all doctrines out there which masquerade as "Christian" doctrines. What you will be left with is one certain doctrine, and none other. Well, almost. One does have to be intellectually honest as well, and be willing to receive instruction from the LORD God.

With that understanding, let us examine Ephesians 1:3-6.

Though this more properly belongs in Primary school English class, what I wish to present here is something which is necessary for anyone studying the Scripture in English – English grammar and sentence structure. In this case, it should be more profitable simply because we will use the King James Bible as our workbook. Beside that, by using the Scripture, we might actually be shown something we have not seen heretofore.

Regardless of how we may feel about English grammar, the ability to read and write in an understandable way, without error, is essential to the accurate communication of ideas. How else are we supposed to prove out things, preserve the record of events, our thoughts, ideas, etc.? How else can we instruct someone without having to actually be in front of them? In all, despite the fact that primary and secondary English teachers seem to strive to make English a bore, it is truly a necessary subject, and excelling in it equips one well for communicating, at least in the technical part of it.

However, there are those who seem to think that the rules of grammar can be summarily dismissed if they get in the way of proving a point they believe to be valid. For example, the

Calvinists ((Though those holding the doctrine labeled "Calvinism" take exception at having that label applied to them, it is nonetheless true that John Calvin did more than anyone else in defining the doctrine and promoting it. Whether an individual chooses to be identified as "Reformed," "Augustinian," "Sovereign Grace," or "Primitive Baptist," the doctrine remains the same.)) think the following passage "proves" something about their doctrine of "*predestination*" and "*unconditional, sovereign election*":

4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (*Ephesians 1:4-5*)

Now, you can Google the term "*Eph. 1:4-5*" or find any number of Calvinist/Reformed writings and the above passage will figure prominently. In short, they depend on it heavily to "prove" their doctrine.

But, we have to ask the question(s):

Why does the thought of verse 5 end with a comma (,)? That's not how English sentences normally end, is it?

And the answer:

No. In fact, that is not how sentences in English end at all. Rather, sentences in English end with a period (.). Questions (a class (or type) of sentence) end with a question mark (?).

This being the case, we have cause to determine whether the verse citation is actually whole and correct in its context. Or, we could just blindly accept what the Calvinists tell us and unquestioningly trust them. After all, they wouldn't lie,

would they?

In any case, we find that the sentence starts in verse three, not verse four, and ends with verse six, not verse 5:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Now, we need to note the actual punctuation of the sentence, and note what that punctuation means as pertaining to the structure of the sentence, and the context(s) defined therein.

We find that verse three ends with a colon (:); verse four has a comma (,) in the midst, and ends with a colon (:); verse five also has a comma (,) in the midst and at the end(,), and, verse six has a comma (,) and ends with a period (.) ending the sentence.

Now, most of us readily understand that a period ends a sentence, and a comma separates phrases or clauses in the sentence. But the colon and semi-colon are not so commonly understood. However, as we can plainly see, the colon figures prominently in the structure of this sentence in Ephesians, Chapter 1. Hence, we need to have the colon defined somewhat. The following citations explain the function of the colon in grammar and sentence structure:

Using Colons to Create Compound Sentences

We all know that we can use a semicolon to join two sentences to create a compound sentence when the two sentences are closely related. But when the first sentence of the pair creates an expectation in the reader that the second sentence fulfills, then the correct punctuation to use to connect them is a colon. In other words the second sentence illustrates, explains or exemplifies the idea expressed in the first sentence. ((<http://www.uhv.edu/ac/grammar/colons.asp>))

Colon: a colon introduces a formal list, long quotation, equation, or definition. ((http://writing.umn.edu/tww/disciplines/biological_sciences/research/errors.pdf, page 13))

dependent clause-clause that is subordinate to, or dependent on, the independent clause ((<http://www.grammarbook.com/punctuation/colons.asp>))

What this all means is that the passage of Ephesians, Chapter 1, verses 3 through 6 is quite the complex sentence that cannot have sections lifted out and arbitrarily used to support doctrine. Instead, what must be done is break down the sentence and analyze it, without regard to verse numbers. This does bring us to the point of addressing verse numberings, and why they exist. After all, the verse numbers likely have a greater influence on how people read the Bible than any other single factor.

To shed some light on verse numbers and where they come from, it is essential to note that William Tyndale's 1534 New Testament, and his partially completed Old Testament do not have verse numbers. According to one source I have, ((Landmarks of English Bible Manuscript Evidence, Pastor Robert J. Sargent, Bible Baptist Church Publications, 1989)) the Geneva Bible, published in 1577, was the first English Bible to have verse numbers. What this means is that verse

numbers are not necessary to understand the Scripture, (Yes, some think they are indispensable for understanding the Bible.), and they are very much like “letters in red” in the Bible – very misleading at times. The problem here is that the “helps” placed in the Bible to help us find things, cease being helps to a high percentage of folks and become equal with Scripture itself for determining doctrine. So it is with the verse numbers. They are there to “help” us reference particular places in Scripture, much like the line numbers in a legal document. That is all they are for. We should never allow the verse beginnings and endings to override the rules of language structure and grammar, as that will – sooner rather than later – lead to errors in doctrine.

With that stated, we should now know that the citation of Ephesians 1:4-5 in support of doctrine is entirely in error. Even if the doctrine supported by those verses was indeed legitimate, it would still be wrong to pull the verses out of the context of the sentence, and use them alone to support the doctrine. The only possible exception to this that it has been firmly established the context of the sentence that they do state a certain thing, and that has been shown prior to citing the verses only, with appropriate citation to indicate quotation of partial sentence.

Why be so nitpicky? Precisely because of this:

4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (*Ephesians 1:4-5*)

If we indent to show dependency, we find very quickly that verse 4 is dependent upon verse three, and verse 5 is dependent upon verse 4 – as we see here:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Now it becomes very apparent that verses 4 and 5 are only applicable within the context of "*in Christ*" as established in verse 3. Now, the term "*in Christ*" means specifically "*one who is born-again in Christ*" and has no application to anyone not born-again. We find confirmation of this in I Corinthians, Chapter 15:

For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. (*I Corinthians 15:21-22*)

What I Corinthians 15:21-22 confirms for us in this context, is that the term "*in Christ*" means expressly to have been "*born-again*" or saved. Hence, in the passage in Ephesians, Chapter 1, verses 4, 5, and 6 are all framed within the context of addressing someone who is already born-again, or saved. It is not addressing anyone who is not saved, as the term "*in Christ*" is expressly used immediately prior to the colon in verse three.

Thus, verse 3 sets the context of "*in Christ*" which verses 4 and 5 are only viable within that context, and not viable outside the specific context of "*in Christ*." Hence, everything in verses 4, 5 and 6 do not apply to any predestination to

salvation, but apply to what will happen after salvation. Moreover, verses 5 resides even further within the bounds of salvation in that it explains that after we are saved, we are predestined to adoption, which is beyond simple salvation. Verse 6 continues the thought and states that the adoption is "To the praise of the glory of his grace . . ." and that we are "accepted in the beloved."

If we then go back and examine the rest of Scripture to see if support for this exists, we should not be surprised by what we find. After all, a brief examination of the structure and grammar does show that the predestination spoken of here is predestination to certain changes in us at salvation, and to promises made to us in eternity past. Now, in accordance with the grammar of verse 4, we find the clause broken into two phrases, separated by a comma:

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world,

and:

that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

As we can see in the above clause, it is separated into two distinct phrases by the use of a comma. Immediately following the comma, is the word "that" which is indicative of the purpose of the statement before the comma. We can know this by the following citation:

That, conjunctive

2. Used to introduce a clause expressing purpose; as, they died that we might live. ((Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary, copyright 1983))

What is shown by the dictionary definition, is a clear statement of purpose for everything going before the comma:

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world . . .

To the end:

we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

In which I have replaced the word “*that*” with the equivalent phrase “*to the end*” for the purpose of clarification. Hence:

He (the LORD) hath chosen (chose or “did choose”) us (the saved) in him (in Christ) before the foundation of the world (before the world ever existed), that (to the end) we (they) should be holy and without blame (we/they should stand blameless) before him (the LORD) in love.

Rewritten:

The LORD did choose the saved in Christ before the world ever existed, to the end they should stand blameless before the LORD in love.

Thus, what the clause is stating is not “*chose to salvation*” before the foundation of the world, but “*chose to be holy and without blame in Christ.*” This conclusion is directly supported by other Scripture:

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. (I Peter 1:13-16)

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. (Titus 2:11-14)

There are not, no matter how much the Calvinist/Reformed adherents would like there to be, any verses that directly support predestination to salvation (*unconditional, sovereign election*) like the passages above support predestination to be holy and without blame in Christ. In fact, there are no passages in Scripture that support predestination to salvation at all, as a proper analysis of the grammar, sentence structure, and context of the passages do demonstrate.

Now, in the case of verse four, we have it doubly reinforced that this "*predestination*" spoken of is to be "*holy and without blame in Christ,*" as verse three set the specific context of being in Christ, and all clauses and phrases of the sentence which follow fall expressly within that context due to the presence of the colon (:) at the end of verse 3. This context is expressly having been saved or being in Christ. Additionally, we also now have verse four showing us plainly that the "*predestination*" is for the purpose of making the children of the LORD holy, without sin, and without blame before the LORD God. However, the sentence does not end with that thought, but continues to take us further into understanding what the LORD has done for His children as it continues by use of another colon, plainly indicating that verse 5 is yet another subordinate clause:

Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

Here we find, in yet another subordinate clause –

predestination, and the definition of what that predestination applies to. In breaking down the clause, we see that we are “*predestinated unto*,” which is the same as being “*predestinated to*” which the simple word “to” is defined thus:

to –prep.

1 *expressing direction or position in relation to a particular location, point, or condition. ->chiefly Brit. (in telling the time) before (the hour specified).*

2 *identifying the person or thing affected.*

3 *identifying a particular relationship between one person or thing and another. ->indicating a rate of return on something: ten miles to the gallon.*

4 *indicating that two things are attached.*

5 *governing a phrase expressing someone’s reaction to something: to her astonishment, he smiled.*

6 *used to introduce the second element in a comparison.*

7 *placed before a debit entry in accounting.*

–infinitive marker 1 used with the base form of a verb to indicate that the verb is in the infinitive. ->(about to) forming a future tense with reference to the immediate future.

2 *used without a verb following when the missing verb is clearly understood: she said she didn’t want to.*

–adv. so as to be closed or nearly closed.

-ORIGIN OE tM (adv. and prep.), of W. Gmc origin. ((Oxford English Concise Dictionary, Wordperfect integrated edition.))

Hence, by senses 1, 2, 3, and 4, the “*predestination*” spoken

of is directly attached to "*the adoption of children by Jesus Christ.*" If we understand salvation, we should also understand that the LORD God did not have to adopt us. He could have simply saved us and left us saved, without any sort of adoption. He did not have to make us His children again. After all, we departed from Him, and were not His children spiritually. However, it is expressly a part of salvation that we become His children by adoption, as we are subject to the new birth in Christ. Nonetheless, we would never understand this were we not expressly told.

Now, we see also here that this was done "*according to the good pleasure of his will,*" which some make much out of as if to say that what the LORD God did was either arbitrary or a mystery. However, it is neither, and we should understand this was done in righteousness, fully consistent with everything else the LORD God does. Thus, it is a matter of righteousness that we are created in Christ Jesus to be holy and without blame, zealous of good works, and adopted into the family of God to be the children of God, as we are the children of Christ, for it is written:

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. (*Hebrews 2:10-13*)

Which is taken from Isaiah, Chapter 8:

Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion. (*Isaiah 8:18*)

And indeed, the children of Christ, are a wondrous thing to behold as the world cannot understand what motivates them to do the things they do, and be dedicated unto a Lord they have never seen. This was the mystery that Nicodemus could not understand, which the Lord Jesus Christ had to explain to him:

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. (*John 3:5-8*)

But I digress.

In returning to the subject at hand, we find also that all this was done to this end:

To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

That the LORD God can take wicked, sinful man and change him completely into a holy, righteous creature is almost quite beyond belief, were the LORD God not diligent in repeatedly instructing us that He has done so.

Thus, the sentence ends with the statement that the children of God are accepted in Christ, and this is to the praise of the glory of His grace. It is oft forgot that grace is indeed greater than sin, and thus the argument is speciously made that only certain individuals are predestined to be saved and all others lost. Instead what we find in Scripture is quite the opposite:

Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through

righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.
(Romans 5:20-21)

And again:

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. (I Timothy 1:12-15)

The Scripture cannot be so express and plain about grace "much more" abounding than sin, and Christ coming into the world to save "sinners" and not mean that salvation is freely available and intended for every last person on the face of the earth. We can confirm that by the following passages from Isaiah:

Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. (Isaiah 45:20-23)

And again:

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for

that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee. Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. (*Isaiah 55:1-7*)

And from Jonah:

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live. Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry? (*Jonah 4:1-4*)

And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle? (*Jonah 4:9-11*)

You know, I don't want to mock the adherents of Calvinist/Reformed doctrine, but it really begs the question

when it comes to Nineveh and the LORD God's mercy on Nineveh:

If the LORD God were so merciful to Nineveh, that utterly wicked city, that He sent His prophet to preach to them so they could be spared, would not the LORD God desire to save everyone on the face of the earth so they would not perish in Hell?

I dunno. What does the Scripture state?

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. (*I Timothy 2:1-6*)

Hence, what the Calvinists and Reformed adherents believe is a passage that supports their heinous doctrine, is nothing more than a sentence deliberately ripped apart and pulled totally out of context and then grammar totally ignored on the parts that are lifted. As can be easily seen, even if verses 4 and 5 are set by themselves, it is abundantly clear that the "predestination" spoken of applies only to what happens to the believer AFTER they are saved, not who will be and who won't be saved.

Those who hold to Calvinist/Reformed theology remind me of the wicked Haman. . .