

Election Pure and Simple pt 1

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Bible Text: Ephesians 1:1-4
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Would you turn with me to Ephesians 1? Ephesians 1. I think one of the things that you need to keep in mind when you look at the Scriptures is that God used Jewish men to write them, and he did not take them out of their cultural context or background; they wrote from that perspective and when you deal with the doctrine of sovereign election which the amplifier, sovereign is not necessary if it's God's election, it is sovereign but, when you deal with a topic like that, I think it's important to understand that the writers were writing from an Orthodox Jewish perspective and what am I getting at? I'm getting at the Jews always believed in God's election. Any Jew of any time period who is halfway Orthodox will say, "Yes, God in his sovereign purposes for his own glory looked down and chose Abraham. He didn't choose anybody else. He chose Abraham just for his own purposes and his own glory. Period. He chose Abraham and Abraham's descendents to be his chosen people." So the New Testament writers building on that, often write to a church as if, "Of course, you understand election. We've always understood election. You just got it wrong in that it's not that God elects a nation of people, he elects those who are saved through Christ uses." So the election purposes of God stand, you just have to have a spiritual understanding of the truth, not a nationalistic view of the truth of election.

So what I found in my pilgrimage, we're talking, what, 36, 37 years ago, and I'm first converted and I begin to study the Bible and hear preachers preach, I brought that natural born, Arminian predisposition to the Scriptures. I brought it to the Bible as I read it instead of letting the Bible just say what it says. You do understand before you're converted you're an Arminian. Arminianism in its simplest form is God has given you certain virtues and abilities and you can, in your own ability, out of your own goodness and virtue, choose God or reject God. You have the merit or the capacity, the virtue, to choose God if you want to. And we all come into life that way. I mean, we're all full of ourselves naturally. We're all full of pride and, I think, one of the journeys of sanctification is God bringing us into the truth of the word of God as it's written and taught in its grammatical historical context, and stripping away that pride and letting God be God and the truth be the truth. And that was my pilgrimage. I remember debating in my own mind and with other people about those great doctrines, and I realized when I would read one of these texts, I had already established a position and I would interpose it. That's called eisegesis instead of exegesis. I would interpose it on the text, and there can be a good in that if you are predisposition is biblically sound like the Jewish concept of election. They had the truth of election down; they knew their nation was elect, they

just needed to amplify and modify what that actually meant that it was those who were in Messiah, not those who were of the lineage of Abraham.

Well, that's just a preface thought as we begin. I want to look at Ephesians 1 and we'll just look at a tiny bit of it. We'll go to Romans a little bit and try to develop this message that I have entitled "Election Pure and Simple." Ephesians 1:1, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus." Can I just stop right there? Isn't it interesting that no matter how ardent an Arminian Baptist is about we decide ourselves to get saved, we're responsible for that, no matter how adamant those people are, they would all agree that God elects pastors. They would tell you, "Boy, God's got a call on him. If God didn't call him, he's not a real man of God. God has to call him." Well, what do you mean? Does God look down and see who did better at Bible drills in high school and junior high and then call him to preach? No, they would all tell you, "No, God just chooses some and gifts them to be pastors," just like every one of you has a spiritual gift mix you received at conversion and you had nothing to do with it whatsoever. You didn't sign up and say, "I want a big dose of mercy." Some of you men say, "I want my wife to get a big dose of mercy. A big dose of service." No, you didn't get to pick that and she didn't get to pick you as far as your spiritual gift mix. And so it is with God calling preachers, and here Paul brings out the concept of sovereign election in his office of ministry because in verse 1 of chapter 1, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus," here it is, "by the will of God." God did this. We're never going to get through this text, are we?

Verse 2, "Grace to you," and I've got my clock here right here. I brought my calendar tonight. We're in good shape and we'll keep up with how many days we go here. Verse 2, "Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." What a power packed, pregnant verse of Scripture. Verse 4, "just as He," here it is, "chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love."

Now, as Christians, if you're a true regenerate born-again child of God, you are one who has been blessed beyond comprehension. In verse 3, he words it this way, "through the Lord Jesus Christ, you have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Now, here's what that means: true Christianity means you have blessings bestowed upon you, blessings given to you, blessings you possess that are all of God's initiative and God's doing. They are heavenly. They are not earthly blessings. They didn't come of you, they didn't come out of you, they were not drawn forth from any lower level like earth. All the true blessings of true Christianity are heaven wrought. Jesus was sent from heaven. He returned after he died on the cross to heaven. He presented himself and his precious blood in the Holy of Holies in heaven, Hebrews tells us. He is returning again to receive us unto himself from heaven and when Jesus went up to heaven to ever faithfully intercede for us in heaven, he sent the Spirit from heaven to bless us while we're down here on the earth. So it is the heavenly Holy Spirit that comes and brings the power that enables us to come to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. What's my point? It's all out of heaven. It's not of us. It's not of earth. It's not of

man. You see, that's what so radically sets true evangelical Baptist Christianity, biblical Christianity, apart from all other religions. They all at least mingle man with it. Christianity does not. We are those who have been invaded by a power from outer space. It's all from heaven.

So when Jesus builds his church, it's not about who we can amuse, who we can entertain, who we can browbeat, manipulate or whatever, talking into, "Join us. Join us. Join us." As a matter of fact, that's kind of dangerous. Though we welcome all who possibly will to seriously consider membership in our church and all are welcome who are believers in Jesus Christ who are heaven born, who are the recipients of heaven's power, and heaven's spiritual blessings. So everything we are as Christians came from heaven. Now, we still live it out down here and we're certainly not a finished product yet, but these wonderful heavenly blessings came to us through heavenly beings and they were wrought and devised in heavenly places and they were put on us and changed us by heavenly power.

Now, some of the things we could just glean from Ephesians 1 that where Paul begins to describe some of these wondrous blessings and each of these could deserves several sermons, you understand. He says in verse 4 we're going to be holy and blameless before him in love. Verse 5, he says we have been adopted into God's family. Verse 7, we have redemption, what a rich truth that is. And we have forgiveness. In verse 8 he says he has been lavishing grace, wisdom and insight on us. After we get saved, we begin to have a capacity to grasp and understand Bible truth that we couldn't grasp before. Verse 11, we have an inheritance, even we are joint heirs with Christ Jesus. Verse 12, we have a hope in Christ. In verse 13, we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit.

Now, the point is how do you get all that? Where do you get all of that? Is there a secret code? Is there a secret formula? Are there certain rights or rituals? How does that happen? Is it by force? Can we just manhandle this thing and take it by force of might? Is it by earning it? Is there some code of works or ritual or ordinances that we can observe like our Church of Christ denominational friends or the Catholic Church would maybe teach, and even some Baptist churches would teach? Someone said when thinking about trying to earn our way to a right standing before God that since it's all heavenly blessings, we've got to realize we've got to have a heavenly currency to earn it and we don't have any heavenly currency. Jesus is the only one who has that. The Bible didn't say to us, "With you I am well pleased." He looked at his Son Jesus and said, "With you I am well pleased. You qualify. The rest of them are disqualified," and that's us. Do you get it by force? Can you earn these great spiritual blessings by earning them? Can you get these great spiritual blessings by inheriting them? Do you finally ask for them? If you just grab up your heart and mind and ask for it? But the Bible says we're dead in trespasses and sins, how can a dead man ask anything? Well how then? God begins to explain it for us in verse 4. Here's how, "just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world." In other words, when we were absolutely completely uninterested, absolutely totally and completely uninvolved, had taken no initiative, did not desire to take any initiative, God was taking an initiative toward us. He chose us.

The word "chose" there is what the word chose has always meant, it means "to pick out or to select; it means to choose for one's self." The fundamental first cause of all the benefits and blessings of salvation is God's electing choice. His eternal election. That's where Paul says, writing to the Ephesians, it all starts, just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world. Charles Hodge, the great theologian in his "Systematic Theology" says, quote, "Election is the cause or source of all subsequent benefits. Anyone who has ever believed, believe because election from God's perspective started first." Now, one thing that's always true and I want to remind myself, I want to remind all of you is that election properly understood, never brings haughty intellectual arrogance. It breeds humility. It brings, "Oh God, I'm unworthy."

A couple of cross references. Turn in your right over to 2 Timothy 1:9 as Paul here is writing to his understudy, Timothy. 2 Timothy 1:9, and how this is so very thorough and very clear in this very text. 2 Timothy 1:9, "who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity." Is that not rich? All of this, you've been saved and it's not your doing; it's not your work. It was granted in the means and in the person of Christ Jesus through his provision and capacity that you would be God's and be saved from all eternity past. Wow, the thing that this causes you to love God because you have to think before the world began, listen to me now, God had you personally on his heart as the object of his special delight and favor. Can you think about that? It's almost like, "God, did you not have anything better to think about?" He said, "I just want you to know I chose to point my heart, my affections, and my purposes on you before there was even a human being. You were in my heart. I was going to love you. I was going to see to it that you were mine for all eternity. Nothing would deter me. I am God and I had my heart on you from eternity." It gives me goosebumps from eternity past. Powerful. Powerful stuff.

2 Thessalonians 2:13, writing to the church of the Thessalonians, Paul again in a nutshell just lays out this truth of sovereign election. "But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord," because you chose to believe in him. No, that's not what it says. We should always give thanks to God, he said, "I'm thankful to God for you because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth." In other words, Paul says, "I preached in Thessalonica and you guys began to leave Gentile paganism and Gentile wickedness and ungodliness and idolatry and you began to embrace and love the true living God and you became dear to me as brothers and sisters, as a spiritual family and so I raised my hands towards heaven," Paul is saying, "and thank God that he has made clear you were the ones he has chosen from before the foundation of the world, from the very beginning, to be his own." Now, Paul could have said this a thousand different ways and, by the way, there are times when the Bible comes from the man-ward perspective. You believed and that's, we preach that when it's there, but this doctrine of God being the initiator and the provision for our salvation from all eternity is so clearly, clearly taught in Scripture. Election, God says, is the cause or source of all subsequent benefits.

Well, another verse, let's go to Romans 8. I really don't know why I've never preached through the book of Romans. Maybe, if you'll pray for me God will give me heart and strength and mind to do it. I've asked God as I grow older for one thing specifically, that I'll just grow old effective for him and so pray that for me. Say, "God, help our pastor to grow old effective for you." If that's okay, everything else will be okay. I really don't care about really being here if I'm not effective for him.

Romans 8:29-31. Now, everybody puts Romans 8:28 on their car bumper, "we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." I double dog dare them to put Romans 8:28, 29 and 30 on their car bumper. Just double dog dare you to put it all on there. I mean, they'd say, "That's a guy that goes to Grace Life. Look at that right there. I guarantee you he does. He put the whole biblical context on us here."

Verse 29, "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren." Let me stop right there. God the Father is saying, God the Father is at least implying and it's very clear in the balance of biblical truth, "My Son is going to be human. He's going to come, he's going to put on human flesh, and he is going to go to the cross and I will not let his work go in vain. I will make sure he will have a family of people he wins through his work on the cross." God did not, that's why it says he is the firstborn among many brethren. Jesus is a type of us, though he is, of course, infinitely superior to us, and that he became flesh and is glorified and will live forever. Therefore he's going to have a whole bunch of children, God said. He's going to be the firstborn and there is going to be a whole bunch more of them born because, "I would not send my Son to Calvary's cross without a certain and sure outcome. He will see the rewards of his suffering. He will get his church, his bride, his people." You see, you're eternally secure from eternity past through eternity future because God is not going to let his Son be denied of anything he deserves. He died to get for himself an eternal people that he could share his glory with who would worship him and honor him and glorify him and love him and he would love them, and the Father is going to be absolutely certain Jesus gets what he deserves, and you just get in on it. Your salvation is just a byproduct of God wanting to bless his Son and glorify his own name. Do you get that? Well, it's a little hard. Maybe a little bit more than the byproduct, but the centerpiece of it all is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit fulfilling their own will for their own name's sake, and we are getting in on what he does and accomplishes.

Romans 8:29, "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined," verse 30, "He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified." Now, what you cannot do is make these verbs anything other than past tense finished work verbs all the way through: foreknew, predestined, predestined, called, justified, justified, glorified. In God's eternal mind, if you've got one of them, all of them are done in God's eternal, it's one package deal. God has never, ever, ever foreknown, predestined or called anyone he didn't get all the way through to justification, sanctification, and glorification. He is just

not going to do it. He's not going to see his Son die on the cross for his sheep and not get them all. God the Father is just not going to do that.

Now, the word "foreknow" here in verse 29 is a word that has the same basic meaning as when other times Paul or other writers would use the word "choosing," or use the word "election." A verse that displays this sovereign purpose of God though men are active in it is Acts 2:23. You might want to jot that reference down if you're taking notes. Acts 2:23 where Peter is preaching and referring to what's happened to Jesus and he says, "this Man," referring to Jesus, "delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God," God chose beforehand to do this, "and you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death." God predetermined it; God had foreknowledge and ordained it; you carried out what God had predetermined and foreordained and you nailed him to the cross.

Well, let's move forward in Romans 8, not only did he foreknow, same idea as choosing and election, he predestined. Predestined is the idea of to mark out or determine beforehand. So God from eternity past chose some and marked them out beforehand for a specific purpose. By the way, just for your information, this church from the day the door opened has held to these doctrines. From the day the door opened. Bob Pittman thoroughly and exhaustively taught me and all of us these doctrines. He was our pastor for the first eight years that I was here and he was pastor and he taught these things clearly to me and to us. So, now he didn't get the chance to build on them and implement policy and methodologies as we've been doing for many years now but these doctrines are thoroughly foundational to this body anyway.

Predestined, to mark out, determine beforehand. Then he says, "to be conformed to the image of his Son." So God says, "I chose some. I foreknew some. I marked them out for this particular end that they would become or be made to the image of my Son." That speaks of glorification. So God from the very beginning had already predetermined to decide it, "These certain ones are going to get all the way to glorification. They are going to be made in the image of my Son ultimately."

Then he goes on and he uses another word, it's like Paul can't amplify this enough. Verse 30, "and these whom He predestined, He also called." Scholars will tell you that word "called" means, "an effectual call." Effectual means it accomplishes the purpose which it set out to accomplish. It achieved the ends it set out to perform. Now, I may, "Hey, come over here." I may call out to you and you may not come or not, that's not what this means. God's calling and election are sure. When he calls one of those he foreknew and predestined to be conformed to his Son, it has the effect or the result rather, the end is accomplished every time in that calling. John 6:44, Jesus is speaking and he says, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him." That's the same idea. God reaches out in his grace and draws some. Is it not an amazing thing?

And that's why, these doctrines, friend, are the reason why though we will do some fun things and we have picnics and our kids do some fun stuff, but we do not build our church on that because God has ordained the preaching of his word in the power of the

Spirit is the means whereby he calls his children to himself. You either believe that or you will resort to gimmicks. You will either believe the word of God and the Spirit of God builds the church, changes men, does what, or you will go to everything in the world and every three, five, eight years the church will have a different emphasis and a different direction and a different bunch of gizmos and sensational stuff to keep people interested in coming. So while we want to be careful and not just carte blanche condemn people who use creative stuff, I think what you're going to find though when the dust settles, here's what I always say, "Call me in 35 years of doing that stuff and tell me how it's going." I don't want to know how it's going in three years. I don't want to know how it's going in eight. I don't even want to know how it's going in 12. Call me in 35 years and tell me what it has wrought. Either you believe that or you don't.

I mean, are you kidding me, are you telling me by implying that we have to, I mean, some churches have staffs of four, eight people or whatever, and they're greatly gifted. I mean, they're like engineers. They're greatly gifted in multimedia and special effects and the message may be somewhat sound and biblical. They put on this amazing presentation on Sunday morning but here's the thing, folks: you put that much juice, time, energy and creativity into a superduper Sunday morning production, where's the time for church discipline? Where is the time for conserving true or having meaningful membership in the church, and biblical standards in the church, and holiness, and biblical conflict resolution? And you'll find that these churches get real, real weak on small groups or Sunday school. As a matter of fact, that's almost gone today because that's where people have to have some sort of maturity and really minister and care for each other, and you're not going to build many mature people on sensationalism. And what I'm getting to, when you hold to these doctrines, it holds you to God's methods. Are you with me? God has not ordained, it's almost like to hear some of these guys teach in their conferences of how to make church relevant and effective and reach this latest generation, to hear them talk you would almost think that God sits in heaven and is kind of wringing his hands hoping there's enough creative, energetic, talented people to make his message flashy and appealing. But when I understand these doctrines, it makes all that, though I don't want to be too harsh and say everything like that is totally wrong, what I do find is it begins to get out of balance, it begins to put the emphasis on what God has not ordained to save men's souls and it takes such energy and effort and talent and time and money, you don't get to the things God does say are essential, or they're done rather shoddily and with a lack of emphasis and you become a spiritual entertainment center, not a church. All right, getting off my hobbyhorse.

Called means God effectually, he sends out the call and it achieves what he sent it out to perform. Then the last thing he says here, I'll read verse 30 again, "and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also," here's the word, "glorified." Glorified. Past tense, from before eternity, God is what the Scripture is saying, God put his heart on his elect children. He predestined them from before eternity that they would become like Jesus Christ, his Son. In time and space history, he through his own initiative, sent the power of the Holy Spirit through the means of the preaching of the Gospel and called them to repentance and faith. They became a child of God. They believed on Jesus Christ. He sealed them with the

Holy Spirit and he kept them, and he will keep them all the way until he brings them home and glorifies them one day in heaven.

So, sort of further summarizing: we are conformed to Christ's image through the means of God foreknowing, predestining, calling, justifying. I left justification out, didn't I? How could I do that? I'll just have to for right now. Justifying and then glorifying. Thus his eternal election or his choice or his foreknowledge or his predestination was to the end of some being called, justified, and ultimately glorified.

Now, how do people deal with this? First of all, a lot, it's just such a crazy, crazy world of thoughts about these doctrines. It's just, I mean, you can't really discuss it out in public or with professing Christians. It's just a marvel of miscommunication and misunderstanding about it and they immediately go to, "Oh, you think babies are going to hell." You think, "Where did that come from? We're talking about the doctrine of election." Just all these assumptions that are totally wrong about those of us who believe in this doctrine.

So some of the views that you see out there, the first view that you see very often is just abject denial. "I reject it and I just will not receive it. I will not believe it." Just to show you God's providence in my life, my first pastor, Charles Dinkins at First Baptist Church of Lawrenceburg, Tennessee, believed in these doctrines and taught them. Now, he was in a church environment where he probably couldn't be as bold and clear as I am but he believed them and he taught them to me personally and I thought, "What are the odds of me being saved from an agnostic home life with no church background and my first pastor and my second pastor and all my theologians in seminary and graduate school held to the doctrines of grace, what is sometimes called Calvinism or sovereign grace?" And they are all Baptists. It was kind of funny that years ago when there was this big conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention about "Calvinism," like it was a new thing. Well, they don't know our history. Our history is chock-full of it. But nevertheless, there was this big conflict, "Oh, some guys are turning to Calvinism." Well, I didn't grow up Southern Baptist. I became a Baptist when I was 19 as a new believer and every pastor I knew taught these things and I thought, "What do you mean, Southern Baptists, there is a controversy because some of them are believing it, these are the people who taught it to me. It's all I know." Which is probably the way some of you feel, like, "Is this bad stuff to some people?" I think it's wonderful, good stuff. Well, some people just deny it. They basically say, "God sent his Son, God told us to spread the Gospel, and God sits back and waits and sees what man is going to do." In a sense, God is limited and he doesn't know what's going to happen. We are in charge. We're in control as if the bride of Christ is determined, is going to be determined by the merits, virtues and abilities of men.

Some would say, "Well, election, choosing, predestination, calling, those doctrines simply mean that God knew beforehand who would ultimately believe and be saved." So God foresees a future response of faith and those are the ones he elected. And again, I just cringe at the thought that we are in the driver's seat and God waits. We are determining who and how his church will be built and God waits to see who is going to do the best job. That view that God just looks out into the future, sees who's going to believe and elects those people is the classic Pelagian or Arminian view. Now, Baptists,

free will Baptists would be more Pelagian and Arminian. Southern Baptists, even those who cringe over this doctrine, are not full-bore Arminians, though they are more Arminian certainly than we are. Arminian and Calvinists are the two different views in evangelicalism that's been going on through the years and most people are something of a mixture of both.

So the Arminian/Pelagian view that God just looks, saw who was going to believe, and those are the ones he elected, this teaches that man fell in sin in the garden of Eden but he didn't fall all the way. Man fell but there is still some good, some holiness, some divine virtue left in man and so he has within him the capacity to do some good things, now, I'm talking about good in the ultimate sense of in God's sight, and one of those capacities to do good is to choose Christ as Lord and Savior. So there is some good inherent virtue in men, thus he's able to choose on his own out of his own strength and own ability to believe on Christ, and God just knows in his omniscience who those are and then he chooses to elect them.

But, let's go back Ephesians, if you would. At this time, instead of go to Ephesians 1, look at Ephesians 2 and look how Paul describes what we are able to do before we are made alive by the Spirit of God. Ephesians 2:1, "And you being dead," that's what the Greek literally says, you being in the state of spiritual death, not on your deathbed, not weak, totally dead. "You were being dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived." In other words, this is what we were. This is the composite, the totality of what we are. "We all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind." It's like Paul says, "Every part of you, the flesh and the mind." Here he goes again with the exhaustive inner nature included. "And were by nature children of wrath." You're very core nature called for God's wrath because you were that bad. "And were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."

So when I see a verse like that and that's where we get our reformed doctrine and thoroughly Baptist doctrine of total depravity or radical depravity. Total depravity or radical depravity does not mean that every man is as evil as he could be in his actions. It means that there is no part of man's constitution spiritually, morally, emotionally, physically, no part of him whereby there is some goodness so that he might do good on his own in God's sight. That's total depravity. The Arminian does not hold to total depravity. He holds to somewhat depraved but not completely depraved. He has a capacity and a goodness in him to save himself. And here's what you find through the ages, whenever men, wherever men have left these doctrines of sovereign election and veered over to start giving man some credit, they veer away and start giving man some accommodation, some value, some goodness, listen, when you start veering into man-centered error, the dominoes never stop there. One domino falls, then the next one falls, and before you know it, man is not very bad at all. Before you know it, why, man's really not a sinner and really all sin is is when you're not fully fulfilled, reaching your self-actualization and enjoying life to your fullest, and you get preachers like Joel Osteen who really see no need to preach about man's sin because sin is just you're not happy enough.

Where did that come from? It came from Arminianism. It came from a drift from there is some good in you to there's all good in you. You give man an inch on saying he's good, he'll take 100 miles and that's what's happened through the ages. About 100 years ago a group, was it Bart and some of those theologians, came up with what's called neo-orthodoxy. They said, "Here's the new orthodoxy," and it was full of this kind of nonsense. You don't find liberalism and liberal theology and liberal concepts coming out of reformed theology because we start with worthlessness; we start with total dependence on God.

So the question is, looking at Ephesians 2:1-3 and the description there, not to mention Romans 10, "there is no one who does good, no, not one." That's very clear, isn't it? No one does good, no, not one, Paul says to the Romans. So what good could God see in us? Romans 3:11, I said 10, it should have been Romans 3. I'm sorry. Romans 3:11 continues and says, "There is none who understands. There is none who seeks God." There is none who seeks God. You do not have the virtue, the capacity, the goodness, to even desire to seek God on your own. Now, you might come up with a religion and a god of your making and a good Baptist membership and performance that's all flesh, but that's not seeking God, that's seeking your way to serve God in a church that fits you, and there's a lot of that going on. But only if God enlightens you will you desire to seek him. He has to take the initiative. You don't have that much goodness in you.

Again, John 6:44, "no one can come to Me," Jesus says, "unless the Father who sent Me draws him." Do you know what the context of that is? His enemies are saying, "Who are you? We don't believe in you. We don't believe you're telling the truth. We believe you're a false teacher. We believe your father is the devil." And Jesus said, "You don't get it because you can't come to me unless the Father who sent me draws you. You are left in the dark because my Father hasn't given you the capacity to grasp who I am and love me and seek me." That's what Jesus said. You can't make the context any different. That's what he said and that's what it means. All the way back to the time before the flood, Genesis 6:5, "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart," listen, "was only evil continually." Only evil continually, not mostly, only. So in many ways and in many parts, the Scripture talks about our total inability to look to God, to choose God, to believe on his Son Jesus Christ left to ourselves.

Now, that's part 1. You have to come back next Sunday night and get part 2. It's just too much to try to cram in tonight. I know for a lot of you it's review but isn't it good review? Isn't this good stuff? And would you reject any notion of walking out this church door and it's just the truth, 95% of the folks you'll run into who are active in church have heard less teaching on the doctrines of sovereign grace in 10, 20 years of faithfully going to church than you heard tonight; have heard less teaching on these great thoroughly Baptist doctrines than you heard tonight. But don't you dare go out there to your friends and neighbors as if, "I know stuff and you don't know it." No, this doctrine humbles us and causes us to say, "Oh God, I'm an unworthy sinner. And how in the world and why in the world in eternity past would you cast your heart of favor and love toward me and, listen, determine all the powers of the Godhead to make sure that I get to the end of being

conformed to the image of your Son and share his glory one day in eternity." God ordained the entire Godhead to do that for you. God the Father, formulated the plan. God the Son, achieved the redemption. God the Holy Spirit, comes and applies it through regeneration and seals you and keeps you until glorification.

Let's pray together.