

Saved Through the Sovereign Work of the Father

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Bible Text: Ephesians 1:4-6
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Let's go back to the book of Ephesians on this Sunday night. I don't know how long I'm going to preach out of Ephesians, I just keep going back there and it keeps grabbing me and there are so many wonderful things. When we went through the book of Ephesians many years ago, it was a time of reformation and transition in our church and really the book of Ephesians was sort of the crown on the journey of reformation for us. And thinking of a lot of families and individuals who have come to be a part of Grace Life in recent years, I just felt the need to at least go through parts of Ephesians and proclaim afresh the great great wonders and glories of salvation as they are presented in this text. I call this being "Saved Through the Sovereign Work of the Father." And Lord willing, the next time we're together on Sunday night, "Save Through the Sovereign Work of the Son," and then "Saved Through the Sovereign Work of the Spirit."

Let's look at it together, Ephesians 1:4-6, "just as He chose us in Him." Now, the first "He" is the Father, and "in Him" is the Son, Jesus.

4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love

Now, stop just for a moment. He didn't chose us in him that we would have the opportunity to be holy and blameless before him in love. He chose us in him that we would be holy and blameless before him in love. Verse 5,

5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself,

Why did he do it? Last part of verse 5,

according to the kind intention of His will,

Basically he's saying, "That's what I want to do." Verse 6,

6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

I love the word "balance." Early on in my ministry, we had Manly Beasley here, I mean early on, and he was a much older man and esteemed as one of the more rich, thoroughly biblical itinerant ministers in Baptist life. He was opposed to a lot of what was happening in Baptist life 25 years ago as we were increasingly becoming more shallow and worldly and veering from sound doctrine in our beliefs and practices, and he was such a sweet man and such a blessed man to have here. I remember taking him to the airport and I said, "What one word would you have for me as a young pastor?" Immediately it came out of his mouth, "Balance." Balance. He said, "If you'll study the Scriptures, there is rich balance and as a young man you're going to be very tempted to get on this ditch and then run over into this ditch." By the way, I've cleaned out a few ditches and dragged a lot of you with me and I'm sorry. Forgive me. I've meant well. I wasn't trying to be unbalanced but I was often. Some of you who are younger than me, if you'll have at least enough grace to be humble under maybe a pastor who's a little older than you and let me catch you before you get in some ditches on one side or the other. Balance.

Manly Beasley also said one time, "Blessed are the balanced." And that's very true. Spurgeon had that famous saying when people would ask him about the sovereignty of God and man's responsibility, Spurgeon again and you've heard it many times and I'm going to say it again, would say, "If you ask me who is responsible if a man goes to heaven, I'm going to give you the Calvinist answer: God is. God is the only reason any man makes it to heaven." Then he says, "If you ask me who is responsible if a man goes to hell, I'm going to give you the Arminian answer: that man is responsible. He chose to sin and chose to refuse Christ." Blessed are the balanced. By the way, Spurgeon, the most famous Baptist preacher of all time, was a five point Calvinist. He held to all the truth of the doctrines of grace. Spurgeon would say, "Calvinism is the Gospel." And if you haven't read or heard much of Spurgeon, you must do that. You must get his sermons and you must read them. Even if he wasn't such a rich godly man, I say rich, well, he did have a lot of money, by the way, but that's not what I'm talking about. He was rich in his grasp of the Bible and doctrine. Spurgeon was an absolute certifiable genius. The man could read a book on engineering and sit down with an engineer and debate with him. He could read a book on medicine and sit down with a doctor and debate with him. He just had a brilliant mind. He would often say that when he was preaching, he could have eight different lines of thought in his mind and pull up any one he wanted. I barely can stay on one line of thought and not get messed up. His mind was just uniquely created by God. This guy would have been a monster of iniquity if left in the flesh because he would have been so brilliant, he'd have been so far above others people would have bowed down before him but God broke him in a little Methodist chapel in London and he was converted. His family was not Baptists. He studied the Scriptures and became Baptist out of conviction. His mother who set him at the table one day and when he was a young boy and used to tell him, "Charles, I'm telling you, you're going to go to hell and I'm going to bear witness against you at the judgment because you're a sinner and you haven't come to Christ." Now, that's the kind of momma you want right there. She loved her boys but she told them the truth and urged them to Jesus. Then later he got saved and she said, "Well, I'm thrilled that you became a Christian but I can't believe you've become a Baptist." And Spurgeon said, "Well, I did because I've studied the Scriptures and they were the closest to the word of God." But Spurgeon was one who I think was very balanced. What a bold

and fiery and dynamic evangelist he was but never shrank at all on the great doctrines of grace that is God who does all the saving.

Well, let's look at this together and under I. We'll ask the question: whom does he choose? Whom does this sovereign God choose to save? Well, the answer, verse 4, those who are in him. He chooses to save those who are in him. Let's look at it there in verse 4, "just as He chose us in Him," and when did he do all this choosing of us in him? "Before the foundation of the world." Now, I know our Arminian brothers would like to take that and say, "What that really means is God chose those who would believe in Jesus before the foundation of the world to be saved." But you cannot run the balance of this text interpreted in its grammatical, contextual, systematic context and come up with anything other than God chose those whom he would save through the merits, through the sphere, through the capacities of his Son, Jesus, and he did all that before the foundation of the world.

The phrase "in Him" that Paul uses here is a phrase the Apostle Paul uses 164 times. Let me check that, not Paul, but the New Testament uses it, mostly Paul, 164 times, "in Him," or "in Christ." It's much like the Israelites were chosen, God's chosen people, but they were chosen in Abraham. It was a big deal to be of the lineage of Abraham and if you were one of Abraham's descendants, then you got all the subsequent blessings that God promised Abraham: the covenant, the law, the prophets, the ministry of the priest. And likewise, all of those who are in Christ – listen now – received all the benefits and the blessings promised to Christ. You see, there is a sense in which you don't just get what Christ provides for you, because of what Christ provides for you, you get what God has promised to his Christ. Did you get that? It's a little bit like the garden of Gethsemane, this morning where I promise you, I can sit down for five minutes and contemplate that scene and it just honestly brings trembling to my soul. It's just so unbelievable what God has done, unbelievably wonderful, unbelievable blessings. So God has chosen to bless us in Christ.

Romans 8:17 speaks of us being fellow heirs with Christ. Notice the connection there. 2 Timothy 2:12, we're going to reign with Christ. Ephesians 1:3, we've been given every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places – now listen – every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. And the point being: these are blessings that are heavenly blessings, these are blessings that are spiritual blessings so they are incalculably superior to any blessing you might ever know on earth and he has given you every blessing. Why? Because you're in Christ. It's not that Christ got them for you, it's that you're in Christ and he got them for Christ and you get all that Christ gets. It's an amazing thing.

By the way, I think it's important here to look at this verse and note what the text does not say. It says we are chosen in him – listen now – it does not say we are chosen in ourselves. It does not say we are chosen in works. God does not sit in heaven and say, "Okay, I see your works, now I'm choosing you in the works you've performed." It doesn't say that. Amen? Hallelujah? Praise God for that? It does not say, "I have chosen you in merit." It does not say, "I've chosen you in faith." It doesn't even say, "God says because you had some inherent virtue that made you wiser than other men therefore in

your inherent virtue and superior wisdom you knew to trust Jesus by faith and therefore I choose you." Wrong! That gives you merit and work before God. That gives you a platform for boasting before God. That's not what he says here. Sure, faith is the conduit, the vehicle that gets us to God but in God's perspective, from God's sovereign perspective, he's making it very clear, "I didn't choose you in yourself, in your works, in your merit, even in your faith, and I certainly didn't choose you in your religious ritual." None of these things are acceptable. Listen, there is only one being and one standard that ever has been or ever will be acceptable to God the Father and that is the righteousness of his Son, Jesus Christ. Only Jesus, only Jesus, only Jesus is or forever has been acceptable to God so the only way you can be acceptable to God is get in him. How are you going to get in him? He chose you in him before the foundation of the world. "But, Jeff, I can't wrap my brain around that." Well, there's not a whole lot of brain to do when you're wrapping with, first of all. This is beyond us.

You know, I've told you this before but they haven't been to my door in a long long time but the Mormon's come to the door and they want me to join up with their system and if I really want to get it right, go out to Utah and do something in some building out there and me and Pam could even, I think you can even get married again in the Mormon faith so she could inhabit a planet with me one day and be pregnant eternally. That's when Pam slams the door when they say that right there. That's part of their doctrine. That's part of their doctrine but those guys will always, "We're going to do this." And I would say, "Just to really be right with God, now fellas help me, to really be right with God, what do I need to do?" And the moment they begin saying, "Well, you need to do dah, dah." I say, "Look, I'm already out. If I have to perform any standard acceptable to an infinitely holy God, it's done. I'm over. I'll fail. I will fail." And they'd say, "Well, wait a minute." I say, "But look, you don't understand something, you don't know what a wretch I am. You don't know how exceedingly offensive and vile I am before a holy God. The moment you say do, I'm wrecked." And they have no response. They have no response. Any time you witness somebody start with how wicked you are, they love that. People like to hear about how bad you are and, brothers, it's the truth. It's the truth. Tell them, "It's all of Jesus because you don't know what I am." You see, people want to bring God down to a man's standard of how people look at each other, "Well, you're okay. Well, sweetheart, you're not so bad. Oh, hogwash and slop." You're worse than you ever thought about being. Some of you ladies need to be careful in the way you try to build sometimes your children's self-esteem. You need to tell them, "Sweetheart, you don't know how bad you are before God, but Jesus makes you righteous and Jesus can help you, sweetheart. By the way, momma needs a Savior too and daddy needs a Savior too. It's all about Jesus."

None are acceptable but Jesus and those who are in him. In Matthew 5:20, "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." Man, I used to struggle with that verse. I would read that and I had read about how diligent the Pharisees were at doing works. I mean, they were amazing in their discipline. They even made up hundreds of additional laws outside the biblical laws and imposed them on themselves and on others because that's how hard they worked. And then when Jesus said, "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and the Pharisees," I would just get, as a young Christian, I would get full of

anxiety and grief. I thought, "There's no way I can work harder than those old Pharisees. What am I going to do? How is this going to work?" But that's not the point Jesus is making. He's not saying evaluate how hard the Pharisees work. What he's saying is you must have a whole radically unique and different type of righteousness. They were looking at a self-righteousness that they might through excessive diligence somehow obtain before God. He's saying, "You've got to throw away, the righteousness the Pharisees have is nothing before God. If you're trying to exceed that, you're not going to make it. As a matter of fact, if you do not have the righteousness of the standard of my Son, Jesus Christ, you can't be acceptable to God." So Jesus just cast out a gauntlet, if you will, that every man fails under.

So there was a sense when they first heard Jesus say that, they were all bowed down, "Oh, my goodness, we thought you were the true prophet from God and you're telling us we've got to somehow outwork all these Pharisaical laws and we're dying under those laws and fail them everyday." But Jesus' point was you have to have the free gift of righteousness imputed to you in grace. It's a righteousness that far exceeds what those turkeys ever worked in their flesh. It's a righteousness inherent in only God the Son and the Son of God, Jesus Christ. And you can stand before God in that righteousness. You see, you're either – now listen to me – you either stand before God in your father Adam's works or in the second Adam, Jesus' works. Every single one of you right now, right now where you sit, you're either in a standing before God in the first Adam's work or the second Adam, Jesus Christ. There is no exception to that. No exception. Every single person, you're either in Adam's works or in the second Adam, Jesus Christ's works. Aren't you glad that the Father looked down at Jesus at his baptism and said, "This, this one and only one, this one is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased"? If you're not in Christ, you're in Adam, and if you're in Adam, you're sunk because you have a righteousness that a holy God cannot accept. As a matter of fact, when Jesus uses the term "the righteousness of the Pharisees," it's a misnomer. It's actually an impossibility. They had no type of righteousness. It was not even a true righteousness at all.

Well, we've asked the question: whom did he choose? And we answered the question: those who are in him. Now, let's go further and say: when did he choose us? Or when did he choose them? We answer that question in verse 4: before the foundation of the world. He says it very clearly there. We've hit on it already, "just as He chose us in Him." When? "Before the foundation of the world." Now, the Triune God in order to illustrate the great glory of grace, chose those who would be the objects of grace before the world began. You see, God is a multifaceted glorious being and perhaps I could say this, one of the most glorious attributes of God is what's called grace and it's something you and I have no capacity in naturally whatsoever. God's grace is that capacity where God – now listen to me – God can be so radically and fully offended and be so completely in a state of abhorrence at your wretched sinfulness – listen – but just choose to love you and in choosing to love you, he casts unmerited favor, that's unmerited favor toward you, and unmerited favor means, "I'm going to bless you and favor you though you in no way and in no shape and in no capacity have earned it, merited it, or deserve it, and I am going to withhold holy retribution that should be against you, though there is no way, shape, fashion, by work, merit or otherwise whereby I ought to withhold that. I'm just the kind

of God like no other so-called god in the entire universe who has the capacity of grace like that." And what Paul is writing to the Ephesians is that God desires – listen – more than God wants to keep you out of hell, God wants to manifest forth the greatness of grace. It just so happens it keeps you out of hell and that's wonderful too. God wants to manifest the glory of his grace.

So that's when he did it, he manifested all of that on you before the foundation of the world. Now, 2 Thessalonians 2:13 says we were chosen for salvation from the beginning. Revelation 13:8 speaks of the saved who are recorded in the Lamb's book of life from the foundation of the world. There are a few theologians as esteemed as Charles Hodge, Charles Hodge said, "From eternity, the whole scheme of redemption with all its details and all its results lay matured in the divine mind." Let me say it again, "From eternity, the whole scheme of redemption with all its details and all of its results lay matured in the divine mind." It's as if God before anything was but God, when there was only God, he sat there and in his mind he had the entire scheme of redeeming sinners in his mind including how he would do it, whom he would do it to, and how he would bring it – now listen to me – how he would bring it to a perfect conclusion without one tiny imperfection or error. You're getting into heaven because an infinitely holy, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent God has determined to illustrate the absolute precision and perfections of his ability to save wretches like us.

Brothers, if you don't grasp something of that, you don't get our old Baptist doctrine of once saved always saved. That's why we're so saved. That's why we can't lose it because the infinite God ordained it of himself and through himself and based on the merits of his Son before the foundation of the world. When did he chose us? Before the foundation of the world and blessed are the balanced. What does that mean in your evangelism? It means you witness to all men everywhere, urging all men everywhere to repent and believe and if any man anywhere repents and believes, they are one of God's chosen. That's the human viewpoint. Amen? But aren't you glad God just lashes us down to the divine viewpoint every now and then like Ephesians and says, "Son." It's almost like granddaddy gets you on his knee and says, "Son, let me tell you what it was really like back in the war. I was there." And he gives you a perspective nobody else can give you. Well, God says, "You're my child. I want you to sit on my knee here. Let me tell you how it really is from God the Father's perspective." These are just treasures. You know, every week when I study to prepare a sermon, it's like I go into this vast warehouse of treasures beyond compare and I get to bring out a couple of them every week for God's children. It's just wonderful beyond compare.

3. Why did he chose us? So that we would be holy and blameless sons before him. Why did he chose us? So that we would be holy and blameless sons before him. Look at verse 4, "just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love." Let me say again what I said earlier when I was just reading the text, he didn't choose us in him before the foundation of the world that we would have the opportunity to become those who are holy and blameless. You cannot make this text say that.

To our Arminian friends, quit raping and doing eisegesis of God's holy word. It's not there. Now, there are some difficult texts, this is not one of them. This is clear. Don't interpolate. Don't press into the text what's not there. He didn't say, "I'm going to go die and I'm going to die for all the world and I'm giving all the world an opportunity." That may have a truth in a sense in it but that's not what this text is saying. This text is saying he foreordained for those he chose that they would come to the end conclusion of being holy and blameless before him in love.

Now, holiness or holy. Let's mention just a word or two about it. You know I mention some things about holiness often because I think our culture and our churches have lost almost all concept of holiness. Holiness, among other things, means that in every respect God is immeasurably superior to all others. In every way you can, that the Scriptures reveal, a good attribute of God or let's say what a good attribute is, God infinitely exceeds everyone in that good attribute. You may have something of goodness in God's grace but he's good like you can't compare. You may know something of love but he's loving like no other being can possibly be. He's holy. And then, of course, there are those incommunicable attributes of God, so many things that God is like that no other being is like, like omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, eternity, he's a spirit, and on and on we could go.

So here's what's just startlingly amazing about this: God chose through the work and the merits of his Son that those who are his would one day be holy like he's holy. I can't wrap my mind around that, that you and I are going to be in such a lofty, high and esteemed state in eternity because we are journeying to that state from such a deplorable, unfathomable depth of wretched unworthiness. Do you know what my thought is right now? How can pastors preach anything but the Bible? What in Sam Hill is an Elvis impersonator going to give you that this right here isn't much better? Can you explain to me why pastors do that nonsense when they've got this? Are you kidding me? They've got this and they settle for the wretched, worthless, faddish gimmicks of a lost and dying and hell-deserving world in God's church. My stars.

Here's the problem if I could chase this rabbit a little bit further. They don't believe the Spirit of God will build a congregation that wants this. They don't believe that. They really don't believe it. I believe there are some good men, but they don't believe the Spirit of God will apprehend men's souls and cause them to have an appetite for God and God's word that only God can put there. And here's where I am: if God doesn't give you that appetite, I'm sunk. I have nothing else to give you. I'll preach in a ditch to a wino alone before I'll leave this for the counterfeit fluff and worthlessness of the modern philosophies and so-called Gospels of this world.

We're going to be holy. Friend, can you grasp that? Holy. We're going to be holy like God is holy. You won't be God, now don't go there. That's perverting the doctrine. But you will have his holiness. Mind boggling. Blameless. Back up on holiness, one quick phrase. You know, what was it, 1 John were John said, "We don't know what we'll be like but when we see him we will be like him." That's holiness.

Now blameless. Blameless here, he says, "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love." "Blameless" means "no blemish," but it means more than that, it means when examined by the eyes of the omniscient God, God will declare we are blameless. Unbelievable. When the Scriptures tell you that every thought, attitude, motivation, every type of deed or behavior that is less than the standard of the righteousness of his Son, Jesus Christ, is sin, yet God will take one like you who has fallen short overwhelmingly with repetition and consistency you have fallen short in sin, and yet he is going to cause you to stand before God in such a state that when God objectively with his omniscience examines you, he will declare without any prejudice but just on the objective truth, "Blameless. Blameless. Blameless. You're one of my blameless ones."

Holiness and blamelessness are the fruits of election. Now listen, they are not the results of human effort. Let me say that again: holiness and blamelessness that he's going to give us are the fruits of being elected by him; they are not in any capacity the fruits of human works. One thing I would like to add, though, though we're talking primarily of an eternal perspective of what we will be like when we're glorified, let's remind ourselves in balance that this fruit should begin in this life. Galatians 5:22 talks about the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Those things we find beginning in our lives at conversion and hopefully as we're being sanctified, we find them maturing and being more ever present in our lives. And by the way, and we find also when we fail in one of those fruits, we're grieved and troubled by it in a new and different way. We're grieved and troubled that we are not living up to the true fruit of the Christ who lives in us.

Matthew said, "You will know them by their fruit." John Calvin said, "Election does not depend upon the righteousness of works but it produces the righteousness of works." Holiness of life flows from the grace of election. One thing we want to thunder and make very clear, you know, one might argue, "Well, if you just teach that doctrine of election, people will do just whatever they want to do." Here's my response: have you checked my congregation out? Examine my folks. Far from perfect but I believe if you put this church by any other thousand in attendance church out there, I believe you guys would look good. Nothing to brag about but I believe you'd look good. I believe there is fruit there that shows you're God's elect. So this is not a doctrine of permissive sin and of wickedness. Paul presents it to show the infinite goodness and glory of God and to excite in us a deep gratitude and a new fervency to please him, to honor him, to love him. Choosing and electing among other things, shuts the mouth of the proud man. Shuts the mouth of the proud man. I've said it many times and I hope it starts with me, whatever else we are, brothers and sisters, we must be humble. This is so humbling. God forbid, it is such a contradiction to hold to these doctrines, to hold them with a haughty, arrogant, know-it-all spirit. We hold it with a broken humility of, "O, dear God, we're undeserving."

He said, "holy and blameless before Him. In love," he continues on in the text in verse 4, the last four words, "before Him. In love." I believe this means the love that's produced in our hearts by regeneration. This love that's coming to us which starts giving us a kindling

of love for God and a kindling of love for believers. We find ourselves drawn and I believe that's why some of you have become members of Grace Life Church in recent days, the Spirit of God has kindled in you a love for others who love the same God and love the truth. The motions of love in this life are far too often twisted and tainted by our fallen, self-consumed flesh. So often in this life what people call love is just human and base sentimentalities, human and base lust, and it has in it a disregard for any truth. Oh, I just abhor our modern culture that wants to promote vile wickedness and say, "If you don't support and celebrate these people in their wicked sexual perversions, then you're unloving." It's a warping of what God calls love. Love is always in agreement with truth. Always, or it's not love. That's one of the ways you know the regenerate, they are compassionate, they are humble, they are long-suffering, but they're not dogmatic but bull-dogmatic on the absolute moral standards that God makes clear in the word of God. Love does not compromise truth. Of course it can't. Love and truth come from the same being.

When we are one day completed in him and made perfect in him in love, we will only possess that true agape love that comes from him anyway and all the glorification of the flesh and all the worldly based sentimentalities and lusts will be removed and we'll have what I would call a thorough moral excellence. This is all that God chose us in him before the foundation of the world to achieve. There will be no mere ceremonial consecration like the Jews, how they would go through all these external rites and rituals so they could say, "We are holy and blameless before God." There will be no ceremonial freedom from blemish; they would have a series of washings, the Jews would, especially the Jewish religious authorities and ceremonially they would be clean before God. No, ours is a true full and whole consecration because our election is unto holiness. It begins now, it continues on in heaven. One way to look at this is right now you're pregnant with holiness and you're going to come to full term. God is going to see to it.

From the day of our conversion, we're given a new nature. Under the truth of God's word, this new nature, this new life begins to be lived out and this new lasting holiness will begin to endure in our lives and when it does begin to endure in our lives, it becomes further evidence that we're one of the elect ones. You could say one of the saved ones. You could say one of the ones who has believed on Jesus. But not in this text. This text, it's about who he chose or elected so that's what I'm referencing it to. 1 John 5:18, "no one who is born of God sins." It's a present linear active. It means and I believe this is an accurate way to amplify that, no one who is born of God has as their purpose and pattern of life to live in sin. You sin but it grieves you. You have a new purpose and pattern and that is to live for Christ. And if it is your avowed purpose and pattern to live in wickedness and sin, then you're not born of God, you're not one of the ones he chose before the foundation of the world.

Now, another aspect of this: being adopted as sons. "He predestined us," verse 5, "to adoption as sons." This is an additional and very precious part of our being the elect. Note again, he did not choose me to be a captive, that is, one that was captured and ruled by his iron fist. He did not choose me to be a bondsman, that is, one required to work for him apart from his love and acceptance. He did not choose me to be a servant, that is, one

who obtains his favor on a conditional basis. No, he chose me to be a son before the foundation of the world. Now, by the way, he could have chosen you to be any of those and been just in doing so, he just didn't do that. He chose you in him to be an adopted son. You see, I'm not just on God's side, I'm not just on God's team, I am God's son. We read this stuff and we don't stop, we don't stop and let that sink in. Romans 8:15 says, "we can cry out, 'Abba! Father!'" But even more than that, not just God's son but God's son made in the image of his special, unique, one and only Son, Jesus Christ. Romans 8:29, "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to," what? "To become conformed to the image of His Son." It's as if in every way God exceeds what you'd expect infinitely.

Why did he choose us? Did I mix it up? You note takers, what was my last point? What did he choose us for is what I should have said. What did he choose us for? Alright, now number V. Why did he choose us? I got excited and mangled my words. Why did he choose us? The answer: to the praise of the glory of his grace. Verse 5, he says, "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will," verse 6, "to the praise of the glory of His grace." God has this attribute called grace that could only be known, only be manifest, could only be seen if he caused wretched, wrath-deserving sinners to become holy and blameless and adopted as sons. And what God did in causing that to happen manifests an attribute of God that would not be seen had he not done that. And more than God wants to keep you out of hell, God wants to show off his attribute of grace. Now, I don't want to minimize that God loves you personally and wants you to avoid wrath. He does, but the Scriptures require us over and over to go back to a God-centered, glory of God focused perspective. God did this saving work for you in Jesus to the end that beings, us included, for all eternity would marvel, praise him, worship him and glorify him for the greatness of a grace that could save wretches like us. That's what it's for, for him. It's for him. He saves us for him, for his own glory.

Luke 12:32, "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom." Chosen gladly to give you the kingdom. In other words, God delights to do this. God delights to do it because in doing this, it displays the glory of his grace and he personally desires to see himself glorified. You think, "Well, has God got some kind of ego issue going on here?" No, because here's the dilemma God's in, if I might word it that way: God with his infinite perfections is looking for something to get excited about and he looks everywhere and nothing is to get excited about until he looks in the mirror because his standard is so high, only his infinite perfections can arouse any delight in himself.

So he wants all that he is to be known and seen. Now, here's the marvel of it and look, in God thinking about himself, in God desiring to manifest his glory and be worshiped for his glory, it is best for all of his created beings also. It's not like you're left out, it's that if God does this for himself, it's far better for you than if God did anything else. If God did something for you that wasn't centered on glorifying him, it would not be best for you. But when God does what's best for him in his glory, it's automatically and eternally radically best for you. But you must start with God and that's what Paul makes you do.

He grabs you here in Ephesians 1, he gets you by the neck, he grabs you, he takes you to the ground, he squeezes you tight and says, "Do you see? This is about God." I'm telling you, he's not going to let you up for a long time. He's just going to make you cry uncle and say, "I die to me. I die to pride. I die to man-centeredness. I die to self-glory. May God get the glory. It's all about him."

Philippians 2:13, "God is at work in us for his own good pleasure." God saves me because he looked down from heaven and saw I was just so desirable. Oh, I was just so precious to him. No, God looked down from heaven and saw a wretch that he should smash into eternal wrath and oblivion and says, "But I'm such a God, I'm going to use that one to manifest something about me." Is this not incredible stuff? That's the word of God, folks. It's been there the whole time in three verses right there in Ephesians. Incredible.

2 Thessalonians 1:12, we'll end there, "that the name of our Lord Jesus might be glorified in you." Listen to that, "name" being the attributes. "Name" means it's about the character of a being; that his character might be made much of through you. I'm going to tell you something: you just might as well mark it down, etch it down, be settled with it, God is going to be glorified. God is going to be made much of because he's worthy of it and you'd better be glad that he has chosen that to be made much of and be glorified he's chosen to make righteous unrighteous wretched being like us. There is nothing on tv close to being as good as that. There is better preaching but there's not better truth. And all of God's people said, amen.

Let's stand together.