

# Chosen

*Ephesians*

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**Bible Text:** Ephesians 1:3-4  
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Well, it's the particular joy of our Fellowship these days to be going through the book of Ephesians on Sunday mornings and we are delighted to go back there again today. It is a book that presents a high and exalted view of salvation. It is a book that we need to know if we are going to become the Christians that God would have us to be. So, I invite you to turn to the book of Ephesians chapter 1, for our message this morning and in broadest summary you could say that the Apostle Paul wrote the book of Ephesians to encourage Christians to appreciate the greatness of their calling in Christ and to see its implications for their present conduct on earth.

In the first three chapters you see salvation lifted high and attributed to the good pleasure of God. In the final three chapters, chapters 4-6, you see the implications of what that means for how we live. And one of the wonderful things about the book of Ephesians is, is that as it lifts us to a noble sense of our calling in Christ, it also brings us low before a sovereign and holy God. It teaches us that our salvation is a result of the good pleasure of God, not of anything that we sought to do on our own. And today what we want to do is we want to focus on the purpose of God in eternity past when he chose us for salvation in Christ.

We are going to consider the doctrine of election this morning because that's where the text has brought us to here today. And to frame this message we must remember a basic principle that underlies all of biblical truth about the doctrine of salvation. This basic principle can be stated very simply, salvation belongs to the Lord. Psalm 3:8 says that, Jonah 2:9 says that. Salvation is a realm. It is a gift that belongs to our Creator God. It is his realm that salvation finds its fear. The Lord Jesus Christ is the author and the perfecter of our faith. It originates with God. It originates with Christ. You could say it in an alternate way, as well, to help frame your thinking properly about it. The Bible says that salvation is the gift of God. John chapter 4:10, when Jesus was speaking to the Samaritan woman he said, "If you knew the gift of God you would've asked and I would've given you streams of living water," paraphrasing it loosely. Ephesians 2:8 says, "Salvation is the gift of God not as a result of works lest anyone should boast."

And so, beloved, as we come to this great area of understanding salvation and where it came from and how we are to think about ourselves in relationship to our God, if we are to think rightly about the lost people around us, if we're going to approach that biblically, if we are going to think and speak truly, we must understand a really basic fundamental principle and it's this: the realm of forgiveness of sin, redemption and heaven belong to God. He owns them. They are his possession. Stated from the opposite direction in a truth that humbles all of us: there is no human entitlement to the blessing of God. Men have no claim on that realm. The creature has no intrinsic right to what the Creator exclusively has. If we are to enter into that realm of blessing, that realm of salvation it must be because God desired to extend it to us not because we deserved it. Scripture teaches that we forfeited all claim on God when our first parent in Adam sinned. And we ratified Adam's sin, we ratify Adam's sin in rebellion with every sin that we commit. We are born with a nature that deserves nothing but condemnation. And so, if we are to think rightly about the realm of salvation, we must realize that just as you own the possessions that are in your purse and no one has a claim on them, or in your wallet, and no one can come and demand that you surrender that righteously, no one can demand that you give them what belongs to you. In the same way, in fact, in a much greater way God is the owner of the realm of salvation and if we are to come to him it must be as those who are seeking favor not those who are demanding what we deserve. That fundamental principle, that fundamental understanding will set the trajectory of your entire spiritual life. And it is what Scripture teaches us in the passage that is in front of us. God has the prerogative as the Creator to give what is his to whom he wishes and he is under no obligation to give it in a realm where he does not wish to do so. He is perfectly free. He is perfectly sovereign to do what he wants. And we must recall that fundamental principle as we come to our text this morning.

Look at Ephesians chapter 1:3-6, this will be our text not only for this morning but also for next week but I want to take these verses together and we will deal with them in two parts this week and next week. We saw the whole paragraph 3-14 last week and now we're going to come back and look at it with a closer attention to detail. Ephesians chapter 1:3-6,

“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, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.”

Now, let's just take a moment to take a moment to think about what this passage is saying in general in light of what we just said. We as Christians are the recipients of God's salvation. Whatever else we say about anyone else in the world, we find ourselves positioned having received the greatest most incalculable blessing from God imaginable. God through his Holy Spirit has given to us every possible spiritual blessing that exists in the universe. And he did it because it pleased him to do so. In Christ, in the indwelling

Holy Spirit we have all that God has to give to his people. He has withheld nothing from us. He has blessed us with salvation. He has adopted us though we were unworthy into his family. It's because he is kind. It is because he is gracious. It is because it is what he wanted to do. And so, as we approach this subject with very broad principles in mind, that God is the owner of the realm of salvation and he can give it to whom he wishes, when we remember that we have sinned and forfeited all claim on him, and then we realize that Scripture reveals: here we are in the realm of Christ having been saved and forgiven of all of our sins, we realize that a a gracious God has bestowed on us blessings incalculable, far beyond anything we could think or ask. In fact, it is the diametric opposite of what we deserved. We have received great blessing when actually we deserved great judgment. And that is why the Apostle Paul, as he opens this letter to the Ephesians, is praising God. Look at verse 3, "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."

Now, as you go on in this passage as we are going to do in just a moment, what you see is, is that this is something that God determined to do for us before the foundation of the world. This was the purpose that was in God's mind before Genesis 1:1. He purposed us and he purposed Christ together in a way that would result in our ultimate blessing and would result in the glory of Christ being displayed. God from eternity past carried out a purpose to bless us as his people. No wonder we praise him. No wonder we bow in adoring worship to him. It's because this is an expression of such great wisdom, of such great purpose, of such wonderful grace that all we can do is bow in wonder at what is being displayed before our minds here in this text.

What we have just read is a cornerstone text for the biblical doctrine of election. And I want to give you a definition of election as we begin here. Definitions are critical as you consider a doctrine such as this. And so, let me give you a brief definition that will help you know exactly what we are saying and what we are not saying as we teach here this morning. Election is the act of God before the foundation of the world in which he chose some individuals in Christ to receive salvation. I'll say that again, it's good if you're taking notes on this. Election is the act of God before the foundation of the world in which he chose some individuals in Christ to receive salvation. Now, there's another sentence to go along with it. This clarifying sentence is most important. God chose those individuals based solely on his purpose, not any merit or foreseen faith in men. Let me say it all together one more time: election is the act of God before the foundation of the world in which he chose some individuals in Christ to receive salvation. God chose those individuals based solely on his purpose, not any merit or foreseen faith in men. And we'll go through this definition more to come here in the next hour or so.

But I just want to set that in front of your mind right from the start so you know exactly where we are going and exactly what we are teaching and in this passage, especially in the first two verses 3 and 4, we are going to see four aspects about the biblical doctrine of election and understand it's impact on Christian living. This is a most practical doctrine. There is probably no teaching that more defines the way that you will approach all of your spiritual life than the doctrine of election and a proper understanding of it because

what is at stake is nothing less than this: was the determinative choice for you to be saved made by God or by you? That's what is at stake here. Ultimately, was it God who chose to receive you and give you salvation or did you have the deciding vote? Did God leave it up to you in your unaided power to choose whether you wanted to be saved or not? Well, what this Scripture is teaching us quite clearly is that the choice was God's and that is why, beloved, we say that there is no boasting for those of us who are Christians. There was not anything in us who had not yet been born, there was nothing in us to prompt God to save us. God did not, we'll look at this later, God did not look down the corridors of time and see that we would agree to Christ and then come back into eternity past and say, "I will affirm the choice that they will one day make." That is not the case. Now that's the way probably most people would like to understand the doctrine of election. That's the way that most of us are probably, we're originally taught to receive it but that's not true. That is inaccurate and it is a falsehood that greatly changes the trajectory of life. That false view leads you inevitably, ultimately to this if you think it through rationally all the way to the end. In the end, what that false view of foreseen faith does, is it lets you take the credit for having made the choice. "God saw me and what distinguished me from the others was that I made a choice and God ratified my choice." And no matter what else you say about the cross of Christ and the grace of God, at root, at the bottom of it you were saying, "It comes down to me. I am the one who accomplished this and God ratified it." That's not true. That is not the biblical teaching of election. The biblical teaching is that God made an unconditional choice known for reasons within his own person, he said "I want to save some. I want to save this body of people. I want to save these individuals because it pleases me to do so." And that changes everything as we will see.

Well, let's look at these four aspects about the biblical doctrine of election. First of all, I want you to see the praise for election. The praise for election. Look at verse 3, as we said last time, this passage verses 3-14, is one glorious burst of fireworks of praise and Paul opens up verse 3 and he can't even get into his sentence before he is blessing God and praising God. He says in verse 3, "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." Paul in this verse opens up and he is ascribing praise to God. He is calling attention to the name of God and lifting it up and saying, "That name is to be blessed. That name should be honored among men. I give the affection and devotion of my heart to the name of my God and Father, the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." And so, right from the very beginning, Paul puts the name of God on the very pinnacle of his thoughts and praises and honors him and then he goes on to unfold why it is that he is praising God. Why would we do this? Why would we praise him? Why is it that our thoughts should be captivated by the glory of God rather than immersed in the goodness or difficulty of our earthly circumstances? Why is it that we should care more about the glory of God than our own earthly life? Why is it that martyrs shed their blood rather than betray the name of Christ? Why? Why? What was the earthly benefit to them to do that? There is no earthly benefit because this transcends earth. This is about the God who has given us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

Look at verse 3 with me again, notice how a form of this word "bless" is used three times in the one verse. "Blessed be God," and so it's an ascription of praise to God. Then it goes

to a verbal form, "he has blessed us," he has bestowed favor and goodness upon us. And then he's bestowed that favor, and you see it used as a noun, "with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." God, has given us real blessing, real favor that has been deposited to us and that is why we come back and we bless him and we thank him.

I don't know if you remember the time where ten lepers came to Jesus and he healed them all and they went away. One of them turned around to give thanks to God and Jesus said, "That's good. Where are the other nine?" Beloved, we need to be the ten percent in that story. We need to have the mindset that God has given us so much in our salvation for us to have the forgiveness of our sins, to be relieved from the threat of hell, to have our guilty conscience silenced against us, to know that as we walk through this life we have the comfort of the Savior, we have every blessing, we know that one day we will be in heaven with Christ. That is so much goodness poured out upon us all because of the loving kindness, the loving purpose of God to do that for us. And of course, we come back and we bless his name. Of course, we stop and thank him for that. We would be the most miserable, ungrateful people if we didn't have the praise of God very near the front of our lips at all times. At the very least, we have forgotten, we've lost sight of what has been bestowed upon us. Beloved, the gratitude becomes boundless. The fountain never dries up. The fountain of thanksgiving never runs dry. When you realize that God did not have to do that for you. It is not that you came to God with some measure of righteousness or this highly exalted purified faith that you brought and God says, "Oh, now I have no choice. I have to give this to you because you've met my standards." That's not true. We have not met God's standard. We have all sinned and fallen short of his glory. The Bible says that, "The hearts of men are filled with insanity, day after day." And so, if we have been brought out of that realm of sin and guilt and judgment and curse, it must be because God is really, really good. Because we're not like that. And so, here we are the recipients of great blessing. The Apostle Paul who wrote this, remember is one who persecuted the church. He didn't deserve it either. He said he was the chief of sinners. And here he is on the receiving end of the goodness of God and so, we give thanks because God has freely given to us everything that we need for our spiritual benefit. We ascribe glory to him. Right at the heart of this spiritual blessing as Paul unfolds, as Paul opens up the envelope and starts bringing out the blessings for us to see and to consider, right at the start we see in verse 4, he goes all the way back to eternity past and he says exactly what it was that God did for us.

Now, you know what's coming so let me just say this by way of introduction: this is all before we had any knowledge of it. We had no influence. We weren't there to even ask God to consider us. You realize that? That before time began God had taken care of us spiritual. He had determined, he had purposed, he had ordained that we would one day receive salvation in Christ in such a manner that his purpose would certainly come to pass in our lives. When you weren't there to ask for it, when no one was there to council him or to tell him what to do, God said, "Out of the goodness of my heart I'm going to separate out this people and give blessing to them that they will one day give praise to me for that will echo throughout all the halls of eternity. And they will experience the realm of blessing and they will see that I have been good. That will bring joy to their hearts and

they will worship me and they will be the partner for eternity for my Son, recognizing his glory in honoring and worshipping him.” And God did all of that, determined, purposed all of that before the foundation of the world.

Beloved, stop and think about something really basic here. We could never have guessed at that kind of truth. We know this only because God has revealed it to us in the Scriptures. You would never guess at this. What men get when they guess at religion is a religion of self-righteousness, of works and things that they can do in order to make themselves acceptable to God. You don't guess at this. The pride of man doesn't allow him to say, “Okay, I'm going to make up something where I don't get any credit for it.” No one lives their life that way especially apart from Christ. We're too tied up in our own thoughts about ourselves to come up with something like this. And so, divine revelation reveals this to us in the nature of pure unadulterated, perfect grace testifies in a subsidiary, auxiliary way to the truthfulness of what we're discussing. No man would make this up. Certainly, no man who persecuted the church like the Apostle Paul did. And so, look at verse 4 with me now, as we're seeing the praise for election. Paul is praising God and he hasn't broken his thought, "Blessed be God," verse 4, “just as” in accordance with the fact that, “He chose us in Him,” that is in Christ, “before the foundation of the world.”

Now, more men than not hate this truth. I realize that. And I'm completely undeterred and uninterested in what they think about it. What matters is what God says. And what Scripture teaches is that God chose you for salvation before you had done anything good or bad. What Scripture teaches is that prior to creation God had settled his purpose to bless you. That is what is in front of us here in verse 4. Look at it with me again, I want you to see the text and let it sink deep into your heart. “He chose us, in him before the foundation of the world.” This is the teaching of Scripture and so, if I can suggest an immediate reaction in your heart to what we're seeing here right now it would be something along the lines of this, especially the way we opened and framed the message, there should be going in your mind something that says along this line, “But God, salvation is your gift. Why are you good to me? Why would you bless me this way?” That is the question the answer to which we must think very carefully about. Say, “Lord, it can't be me. I've sinned and fallen short of your glory. Why would you do that? It must be something good about you.” God chose you, get this, God chose you for salvation not because you are good but because he is good. And that's why we praise him and not ourselves as we consider this.

Now, we've looked at the praise of election. I want to bring you to a second point here, the proof of election. The proof of election. Unconditional election, by which we mean that God chose those who would be saved apart from any merit in those persons. Unconditional election is woven into the fabric of God's word. And let's look beyond Ephesians 1 to verify that. You need to see multiple Scriptures so that you can know if you're not persuaded of this, that I am not making this up. That this is not something that was invented by our church; it wasn't invented by the drafters of the 1689 confession; it wasn't made up by John Calvin; it wasn't made up by Augustine; the doctrine of unconditional election comes from the pages of Scripture. That is the authority for this

and you can learn about unconditional election even if you do not know any of the names of those theologians.

Turn back to the gospel of John chapter 15, gospel of John chapter 15:16, Jesus speaking to his disciples in the Upper Room said, "You did not choose Me but I chose you." I don't know how to make it any more clear than in the words of Christ himself. This is true of the disciples who were gathered around in the Upper Room. It is true of everyone who comes to Christ. You did not choose Christ but he chose you. It was his sovereign pleasure to bring you into his family. It was not your sovereign pleasure to bring him into yours. Scripture says that, "We love because," he what? "He first loved us." The initiating cause, the originating source was found in God.

Turn over to the book of Acts chapter 13:48, the gospel is now being brought to the Gentiles by the Apostle Paul and in verse 47, "For so the Lord has commanded us, 'I have placed you.'" Notice this, God did the placing, God placed Paul, "As a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the end of the earth." And then verse 48, "When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord," and watch this, "and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed." They believed, but they had previously been appointed to eternal life and they did not appoint themselves to that because no man of temporary flesh could appoint to himself eternal life. God appointed them to eternal life. And in the realm of time they heard the gospel. The Spirit worked in their hearts and they believed. They were appointed to eternal life. That explains why they believed.

Now, look at a couple of other Scriptures going back to letters of Paul again. 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, we're really just taking representative texts here, not looking at all that could be cited. 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2, verse 13 says, "But we should always give thanks to God for you," why do you give thanks to God? "brethren beloved by the Lord," we should give thanks to God for you, "because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth." We thank God because he is the one who had the idea, who set the purpose to bless you with salvation and so we thank God for you, you Thessalonians, because he determined to do good to you and we give thanks to the one who delivered the gift. And he chose you from the beginning. And, beloved, these things are basic grammar: the subject is God, the direct object is you. God did the choosing upon you not vice versa. That is the clear teaching of Scripture.

One more passage that stands out in it's clarity on this issue. Turn over a few pages to the right, or scroll down a couple of books to 2 Timothy, chapter 1, verse 8, where Paul tells Timothy for the good of the Christian church and strengthens Timothy to fulfill his calling about which Timothy had become fearful. Paul speaks to him, to strengthen him, to encourage him, to help him to stand and he says in verse 8, "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works," not by anything that we did, not that we deserved it, not because of our merit, not in response of our faith. That's not the initiating cause. "He

saved us and called us according to his own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity."

Why can Timothy be bold? Why can he be unashamed? Why can he go from fear to courage in the face of opposition? It's because he is operating in the power of the choice of God, the predetermined eternal purpose of God, to give success to the gospel. Because God is working out his eternal purpose through his people, through the proclamation of the gospel and Satan and all the hosts of hell cannot stop, it is immovable force of power. "And so, Timothy, be strong, stop looking at the world around you. There is an eternal purpose at work that God the Father will most certainly bring to pass." And so, we see that God is the initiating cause in salvation. We believe in response to his choice of us. His prior choice of us. Election was unconditional. It was based on the purpose of God.

Now, some people will resist this and say, "You're saying that you're better than everyone else. You're God's elect." No. No. That's the exact opposite of what we're saying really. What we're saying is that as Christians, we were never better than everyone else. And if we're in the family of God, it's not because of anything in me, it's because God had distinguishing grace to save me. He was good to me when I did not deserve it. I am not better than the next man. If I'm in grace, if I'm in Christ it's because God did something gracious to me and I give him thanks for it. It is not a ground of boasting at all except to boast in Christ and to boast in God and his goodness and favor on an unworthy sinner like me. It's not because one man was better than another that God made his choice. It was according to his purpose.

Now, some people say that's unfair. What about those who never had a chance? Well, that objection forgets a couple of things. Three things at least, first of all: it forgets that salvation belongs to the Lord, that salvation is God's gift to grant. And so, we have no claim on the gift of salvation. No one does. God would have been perfectly just to have folded his arms as it were and says, "I'm not going to give it to anybody." And no one could have complained about that. No one has the right to bring God to the bar of their justice and put him on trial. Perish the thought. Repent of the wickedness that is implicit in that, is what I would say. Who's man to say, "God, you should have done it differently." Are you kidding me? Salvation belongs to the Lord. It also forgets, that objections forgets the biblical teaching that all men are corrupt. It forgets that there are none who seek for God. That all have turned aside, together they have become useless. Men reject, it says in Romans 1, they reject the testimony of creation that is around them and says, "I will not give thanks to this God." And their culpable for that. Well, if they reject the testimony that is given to them, how can anyone say that God is being unfair to them? The ground for their refusal to come to Christ is found in their own desire. "I don't want that. I will not have him reign over me." And their choice is in perfect, consistent character with what they want. There is no such thing as somebody coming and knocking on the door of heaven and God saying, "No, you're not elect. I won't let you in." There is no one like that because no one seeks for God. And so, salvation belongs to the Lord. All men are corrupt. And so, God is not unfair.



Can you imagine? Think about this with me. We'll say this is the third point. I think I forgot the third thing that I was going to say there in that little triad of thought. But think about this with me. I want you to see if that objection is sustained, if people refused to back away from it and deliberately and high handedly accuse God of unfairness, that God is somehow unjust in choosing some for salvation. I want you to see how upside down that is. Here in Scripture, in Ephesians chapter 1, what we as the people of God rightly do, is we see that God has been gracious where he didn't have to be and we give him thanks and praise for it. That's the right way to respond to what the Bible says about this. "God has been so good to countless numbers of people. How good and how gracious he is, bless his holy name." And that's the right biblical response to this teaching. Comes along someone who rebels against this and says, "That's unfair! God is unjust." And the very thing that should cause men to praise him for undeserved grace they turn into an accusation of injustice against him. That's wicked! That is utterly wicked to speak that way about God! And that which should cause him to be praised becomes that which men blaspheme his name for. Fairness, justice, a violated law would require all of us to be judged eternally. That would be fair. That is what would be just. That God saves any testifies to his grace. That God saves many testifies to his abundant grace that he saved us in this room. Brings us to praise. "God, thank you. Whatever else you did with the rest of the world, you've been good to me and I bless your name for it. You've washed me of all my sins. You determined before time began to be good to me and you carried out your purpose and you'll keep it to the end. Oh God, thank you!"

Let's go to a third point, the power of election. The power of election. Let's just zero in on this point here. The power of election. Here is what I mean by that. Who's power was behind election? Who's power was behind the choice? Was it ours or was it God's? Look at verse 4 and just let the text speak for itself. Leave aside presuppositions, leave aside questions that you can't answer and just look at the simple monosyllabic clarity of the text itself. "He chose us in him." God is the subject, we are the direct object. Your status with God depends on the choice that he made, not on the choice that you made. The fact that we are in Christ receiving his blessing, points back, there is an unbroken chain stretching all of the way back, behind that black curtain, reaching into the foggy mists of ancient history and going further beyond the horizon of eternity past and woven through all of that is God's purpose to bless us in Christ because he chose us way back then. We didn't do that, we had nothing to do with determining, influencing his choice. And so, your status with God depends on the power of his choice, not yours. People become Christians because God ordained for that to happen. Not because, we've taught on this in first John 2, if you want to go back and look at those messages on the first two verses of first John 2:2. It's not that Christ died and then left it up to men to decide and stood back and wasn't involved in it. Christ died to secure redemption, to make it certain for us. Christ's death was a carrying out of that purpose of God. I say this reverently and boldly at the same time, God would have been foolish to have approached salvation that way. God would have been foolish to say, "I have this eternal plan and Christ is going to die and now I'm going to leave it up to you to decide if you want it or not." No one would've done it. No one would've come because no one seeks for God. And so, the power of salvation from beginning to end belongs to the God who ordained it. And to reverse that understanding is to turn the spiritual universe on its head. It is to reverse where praise belongs.

Many, many years ago, at a church that none of you know except my wife and a vocalist that none of you know except me and my wife. Many years ago, in Illinois, I remember a special music number sung with this line, speaking about salvation and in the dramatic crescendo of the music, I won't sing it for you. That's another reason you can thank God this morning because I'm not going to sing it for you. "I made my choice and my choice set me free." It sickens me to say that, even to quote it, to refute it. It sickened me to hear it. "I made my choice and my choice set me free" "I did it through my choice. I chose Christ. I freed myself from my sin because of what I did. Praise be to me. I celebrate me. I celebrate my choice this morning because I chose to be free." I hope that that thought nauseates you like it's nauseating me right now. "Jesus, let me knock you out of the way so that I can put myself on display. God let me close what the Bible says that I did not chose you but you chose me. Let me close that and I'll say something the exact opposite. I made my choice and my choice set me free." No, no, no, I'll restrain the desire to pound the pulpit here and just say no with an exclamation point. Not praise me, praise the Father who chose me. His was the power. We sung that just a moment ago. Actually we didn't, I was singing that earlier this morning. "Thine is the glory risen conquering Son." The glory belongs to the God who is the author of our salvation. He gets the credit. We get none and we like it that way if we're true Christians.

Now, what about that view that we alluded to earlier that God looked down the corridors of time, saw that we would choose him, came back and confirmed it. Well, there's two aspects to that, let's look at the text itself in Ephesians chapter 1, you must see basic language in the text. God did not make this confusing. God did not make this unclear or complicated. It is right there for simple eyes with a simple believing heart to read and understand. Verse 4, "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world," verse 5, "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself according to," what? Here it is, it says it right here, "According to the choice that we would one day make?" No, no, no, no, no. That is not what the text says. That's what people like to insert into the text but that's not how we receive the word of God. We don't make it say what we want it to say, we receive it on its terms and let it dictate to us what is the truth and what we should believe. He predestined us to adoption according to the kind intention of his will, not mine, not yours. It's according to the intention of his will that he predestined us, that he chose us and because his will was kind therefore we bless his holy name.

There is another aspect to that view that shows that it can't possibly be true. This is a theological observation. But, step back with me into the imaginary universe of that view. God looked through the corridors of time. We're going to step into an imaginary world view to show that it can't possibly be true. You step back into eternity past according to that view and here is God saying, "I have this plan of salvation. I don't know who is going to accept it." So he gets on binoculars and he looks down and he says, "Okay, I see Paul and I think I see Bill back there. Yeah, that's Bill, that's Bill." And then he says, "Okay, I'm going to choose them for salvation. Now I know and now I can make my choice." Do you realize that that view violates the omniscience of God and it violates the immutability of God? Those are profound theological issues. It says, "There was a time in

eternity past where God did not know something.” Is that the God of the Bible that says that there was a time where God was one way he didn’t know and then he changed in order to respond to what he saw what men would one day do? That can’t possibly be right. I don’t know who that God is that they’re talking about but it is one of their own making, it is not the God of the Bible. It is not the God I know. It is not the God we worship. Our God knew the end from the very beginning. Our God never changes. Our God never grows in knowledge because he always knew everything from eternity immemorial. That can’t be true. Not only can it not be true, it’s not true. It is a pathetic effort to reserve to man at least a little bit of credit. It’s not true. Stepping back into this imaginary universe for just a moment, where would that person down the corridors of time, where would he get that faith to begin with if his heart is thoroughly corrupt, there’s none righteous, no not one, there’s none that seeks for God, where would his faith come from? For God to see it and confirm it and elect him on the basis of that? This totally falls apart. I don’t want to be in an imaginary universe. Do you? I want to be in the universe where the Bible says is true. I want to be in the realm where Scripture speaks and says, God gets all of the glory. And I gladly say, “God forbid, that I should boast of anything, Of anything. Of anything.”

Can I show you one more verse just to reinforce this in your mind? John chapter 1, whose will was determinative in salvation. John chapter 1:12, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born.” Where did it come from? Where did their spiritual life begin? What was its originating fountain? They were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man. The will of man is excluded but of God. So, you say, “But I believed.” Yes, that’s right you believed. In time, you believed. Somehow, someway the gospel was brought to you in the deadness of your sins and the Spirit of God worked and opened your heart and worked faith and repentance in your heart in a way that you willingly responded to God. But that response of faith was a result of a prior choice and a prior work of God on you that left to your unaided, wicked will you would not have chosen on your own. And so, we believed willingly, gladly but we believed because God was carrying out an eternal purpose that he had set in motion long before and if he had not helped us we would have not have believed. That’s the point. And so, God gets all of the glory. One hundred percent to zero. And I can’t speak for you but that is exactly where I want the scorecard to read. To God be the glory, great things he has done. As the great man John the Baptist said, as you recognize and as you understand and embrace these things, “He must increase and I must decrease.” That’s the proper response to this truth.

Now, how should this impact us? So what? Why did God choose us? Point number four, the purpose of election. The purpose of election. Go back to Ephesians chapter 4 and we’ll wrap it up here this morning. We’ve seen the praise of election, all goes to God; the proof of election in various texts of Scripture. We’ve seen the power of election, now we see the purpose of election. Verse 4, “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that” here’s the purpose clause, here’s the explanation that shows why God did it as much as we can understand. He did it so that we would be holy and blameless before him. He did it, beloved, to set us apart for him. So, that we would belong to him one day

in eternity without any moral defect. Totally perfected in love we would belong to him then in perfection and we would be his. We would be the bride of his Son Jesus Christ forever and ever. Amen. To be holy and blameless in his presence, that's why. Here on earth we get a foretaste of it. The power of sin has been broken, not eradicated but it's broken, we now love him, we now respond to him with a heart of flesh instead of rejecting him with a heart of stone. It's started now, it's going to be perfected in eternity, that's why. Salvation transforms you now and ultimately brings you to perfection in eternal glory, that's why he did it. It pleased him to do so. He has made a people for his Son and that people of which you and I who are Christians are now a part, we belong to him. We belong to Christ. We will love and glorify and ascribe praise to him because he is so preeminently worthy. That is the greatest privilege of salvation. To, as it were, take the crown off and fling it at his feet. "Oh glory to you oh Christ, not to me. Praise you for your gracious choice, not for mine."

Now, we'll study this more next week and consider other objections that are raised against the doctrine. We're not done here this morning but time constrains us. But as we finish today I just want to help you see a couple of other ways that this should shape you. Okay? How this shapes us. How this makes us better Christians. This is all preeminently practical in the end. Big picture again, here we were lost in sin, God plucked us out, set us apart, and made us his own. We who were destined, in one sense, left to our own devices were plunging into eternal destruction, now we are plunging toward eternal perfection. Do you see, beloved? I beg you. I'll spare you the theatrics of any further physical expression of it. But I beg you. Do you see how that shapes your priority in life? If God has given us such a great salvation, our first and singular defining priority in life is to praise and worship him. Nothing else matters by comparison. Our God, my God, has been good to me and therefore he has complete ownership of all of my affections and all of yours. He has claim on all of them and it should just be our desires to make our affections evermore line up into a single desire to praise him. Loving this God who chose us and saved us becomes the defining priority in life.

Secondly, this speaks not only to our priority of worship, it also speaks to our security and I know that some of you particularly need to hear this as you wrestle with past bad teaching that you've had that made God's love conditional on your performance. Understand that this doctrine of unconditional election means that you're perfectly secure. God chose you before you had done anything good or bad. Therefore there is nothing good or bad that you could do to alter the direction of his purpose for your existence. God chose you before your birth. He will keep you after your death and he won't let anything in between reverse his choice simply because your Christian obedience is imperfect. It was never about your obedience to begin with, beloved, this was about the choice of God that he determined to set his affection upon you. The very root of why we can be confident is found in the fact that God's purpose for us was outside of anything in us. It was rooted in his will, it pleased him to choose us. Since it pleased him to choose us, it obviously will please him to keep us. Nothing will separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Can you imagine how schizophrenic any other view makes God? "I chose him. No, I don't. Yes, I do. No, I don't. Did you hear that word that came out of his mouth? I've had it. Okay, he repented. He's back." God isn't like that.

God is not a man that he should change like that. He said his purpose from eternity and now he's carrying it out and if you're in Christ you're secure. Nothing can change that. God has already settled his purpose and determination to bless you forever. Praise be to his name.

Thirdly, and finally, alluded to this. Our priority is worship. Our security is perfect. And now thirdly our humility. How you think about yourself. How you think about yourself in relationship to God. If you're a Christian today, it's because God gave it to you. He took what was his, what belonged to him and he said, "I will share this with you. I will give it to you. Because it pleases me to do so." You did not earn it. You did not influence his choice. You didn't slip him a note in the pre-eternal councils of the godhead and say, "Hey, think about me at the time. Okay?" No, no. An omniscient, holy, gracious God said, "You will belong to me." And so, set aside any sense of pride, any sense of merit, any sense of, "I deserved this." Set all of that stuff aside. Repent and say, "Oh God, I just bow low in worship before you. You did this out of the goodness of your heart and I'm grateful." That's where the true doctrine of election will lead you.

We will talk in days to come about how evangelism plays out in light of this, how our obedience plays out, how we call men to faith in light of this. Those are not the issues that we're talking about here today. Those are implications that Scripture deals with. Today we're just focused on one primary point: God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world and as a result we gladly, humbly bless his holy name.

Let's bow in prayer:

I would say a word to those of you who are not Christians here this morning. If you're not a Christian, God does not want you to speculate about whether you are one of the elect or not. That's not the point, that's not revealed. He simply says to you, "Come to Christ and be saved." The gospel offer is free to you. You can come to Christ for salvation. God calls you, indeed he commands you to repent and believe in the gospel, to trust the crucified and risen Christ for your salvation. I call you to Christ in light of God's word this morning. For the rest of us,

*Our Father, those of us who are in Christ and we know that we are in Christ, we humbly say thank you for choosing us. You saved us because you are good not because we are good and as a result of that, Father, we gladly bless your name. For the sake of Christ we pray. Amen.*

Well, I'm glad that you can join us on what I trust will be a very practical time of teaching from God's word here this evening. We need realistic expectations about the spiritual life. All too often, churches are not very faithful to give us a sense that sometimes the spiritual life can be a struggle, it can be difficult even for those who know Christ. Psalm 34:19, says that, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." Acts 14:22, says that, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." The idea that you would come to faith in Christ and then have a smooth glassy sea until you enter the

port of heaven is a falsehood, it is fiction that can only serve to ultimately discourage sincere believers as the realities of life eventually come and make their presence known.

Psalm 7 is a Psalm that looks at these challenges realistically. One of the difficult trials that we eventually face is the realm of slander. Someone has a false or uninformed statements that they make that injure our reputation. We are made low in the sight of men through things that are untrue, sometimes said by those who were supposedly our friends. Charles Spurgeon said, "It is a meanness, most detestable to stab a good man in his reputation. We must be ready for this trial for it will surely come upon us." Continuing on he says, "If God was slandered in Eden we shall surely be maligned in this land of sinners. Gird up your loins, you children of the resurrection, for this fiery trial awaits you all." And we can think about that either individually in our own private lives and probably be able to look back and see examples of it that we have known from past experience. I know that I can, I'm sure that most of you can to one degree or another. And the truth of the matter is that it would be wise for us to be prepared for something like this to come upon us corporately as a church. It is inevitable that as we proclaim God's word and we seek to be uncompromising in that, that it will someday arouse opposition and there will be those who will malign us simply because we're trying to be faithful to God's word. And if that happens we will come to the spirit of Psalm 7 and respond to it with humility and with confidence in God.

Now, the problem with slander is what is at stake here in Psalm 7 as David is expressing himself. The word refers to an emotional poetry. David comes with an agitated heart as he is writing this Psalm. The inscription there says it's concerning Kush, a Benjamite, but there's no other reference in the Old Testament to this man. Perhaps, he was somehow connected with King Saul when Saul was pursuing David. We just don't know. What we do know is that David was being falsely attacked. If you look at verse 14 of the Psalm for just a moment, you see that he's speaking of his enemy and he says, "Behold, he travails with wickedness. And he conceives mischief and brings forth falsehood." There was a real man who was of the tribe of Benjamin who was causing difficulty for David. He was lying. He was saying things that were untrue and accusing David in ways that was a great threat to his reputation. David alludes to this a little bit in verse 4 when he says, "If I have rewarded evil to my friend or if I have plundered him who without cause was my adversary." Apparently he was being accused of taking advantage of people in his position. David says it's just not true. So here is the situation: a man of influence is accusing David and slandering him with falsehood in his character and David is threatened by this. The possibility of harm is real and he writes Psalm 7 and he sings Psalm 7 in response to that situation. If you're a victim of slander in an ongoing sense right now, I'm glad that the Lord has brought you here. I believe this time will be an encouragement to you and perhaps you're like me and you don't really feel the weight of such accusations at the moment but this message will help prepare us for that time when it comes.

You know, one of the things that I'm just very grateful because it's pretty much the same group Tuesday after Tuesday and I'm grateful for that, glad to have visitors with us as well. But the benefit of this time on Tuesday nights studying the Psalms is not so much

found in each particular Psalm or in any individual Psalm but it's the cumulative impact of this teaching from the Psalms over a period of time that will prepare us and build a foundation for us to stand firm when difficulties come, when they inevitably come. It is very difficult to respond well to trials if you have not been prepared for them in advance. Even as a Christian, it's just a little bit too late to caught up, it's a little bit too late to put plywood up on the windows when the hurricane has already hit and so, we prepare in advance and we prepare our hearts as we would prepare our homes for a storm. We prepare our hearts in advance and then when it comes, we're ready to respond and then we can dig down into what we have previously put into our hearts and watch the Lord bring it to mind and bring it out of our character in the time when that happens. And so, I'm grateful for you and I'm grateful to Lord for the work that he's doing in your heart to set this into place because I fully expect in the days and months and years to come we will find and we will watch each other go through difficulties such as described here in Psalm 7 and we'll say, "Ah, he's living out what we have already seen from God's word," and that will be a stamp of God's approval on your life and upon our fellowship. Let's aspire after that, wont we? Let's be like this. Let's sink the foundation deep in our hearts as we hear God's word taught this evening and say, "This is what I want to do. When I am falsely accused, this is how I want to respond."

Well, what we are going to see here first of all, is David as we have seen is in the midst of slander and what we want to see first of all is the prayer of the slandered in the first 11 verses. The prayer of the slandered. How is it the David went to God in the midst of this slanderous assault on his character? His reputation was endangered by the false words of whoever this man was. There are three aspects to the prayer in these first 11 verses that I want to show to you. The prayer of the slandered, when you are falsely accused, when your reputation is under attack, what do you do? How do you respond to that? David shows us the way here in Psalm 7 and the first step that you take, the place were you immediately go is first of all, you declare your trust. If you're taking notes, the big heading is the Prayer of the Slandered, the first aspect of that prayer is to declare your trust. David at the start of this Psalm entrusts himself to God's hand no matter what the outcome may ultimately be. Look at the first two verses with me, he says, "O LORD my God, in You I have taken refuge; Save me from all those who pursue me, and deliver me, Or he will tear my soul like a lion, Dragging me away, while there is none to deliver." He comes immediately into the presence of God and he says, "God, I am taking my shelter in you. I am coming to you for the defense of my life in this time of slander, in this time where I am being met with men who are all too happy to speak falsely about me."

Now, there is a temptation that all of you can relate to when people start to speak badly about you. Every one of us can relate to this, every one of us has done this in one degree or another. There is a temptation when you are falsely accused to go on the counter offensive. You talk to strategic people who might be able to influence the situation for your benefit. You go to friends who you know will be sympathetic and you explain the situation to them and you court their sympathy and their support. You figure out, you calculate in your mind perhaps, how it is that you could strike back and get your own digs in. Well, what we will need to see is that the word of God right here is correcting us from that and is calling us out of that kind of carnality. As understandable as it might be on a

human level, the word of God calls us to higher ground in the midst of such accusations, in the midst of human assaults on our character. And what David does is he runs to God like we run to shelter from the rain and he takes his protection. He goes to God directly for his protection and he expresses his trust in him.

Look at it there in verse 1 with me again, he says, "God in you I have taken refuge," and right from the very beginning of this Psalm you see that true spiritual life, speaking as a New Testament believer, true Christianity is intended to be a very practical, personal, deep level of trust in the God who saved us. We do not simply go through the motions of rituals as true Christians. There is an element where the circumstances and the pressures of life draw us and push us into the reality of what we believe about the God of our salvation and we believe him to be strong, we believe him to be real, we believe him to be sympathetic with our cause and therefore we go to him for our protection rather than trying to gather human support around us to help us and to tell us how good we are and how wrong it is that somebody would say those things. David leaves all of that behind and goes into the presence of God and says, "God, right here you're my refuge. I am not trusting in man. I am trusting in you to be my help." Its an expressive metaphor that he uses there in verse 2, he says, "This man who is after me, he will tear my soul like a lion." He says, "He's going to rip me apart like a lion goes after a lamb and just breaks its bones apart." He says, "My life is threatened by this accusation, by this one who slanders me."

If we're going to enter into the sympathy of the Psalm we need to realize that this was no mild threat, the very existence of David's reputation and life was at stake. And so, that's very important, we're not excused from seeking refuge in God, we're not justified in seeking human relief as a Christian simply because the threat is great. The greater the threat all the more we go to God as our trust and our refuge in the midst of it. And so we go to God in prayer and the first words that come out of our mouth, what we have prepared our heart to say in the midst of that kind of slander is, "God, I trust in you in this situation." And there is a resolve, there is a commitment of heart that says, "I am going to trust God through this. I am not going to give in to fear. I am not going to retaliate. I am going to commend my case to God and let him defend me. I trust him that much. I trust him so much that I don't have to speak on my own behalf. I can simply bring it into his presence and trust him there even if I'm about to be mauled like a lion."

Now, secondly this Prayer of the Slandered, and this next section is very, very, searching. You not only declare your trust, you define your innocence. You define your innocence. David, as we read through this Psalm, we see that David was examining his life as and even before he prayed for help. This is so greatly important. Look at verse 3, he says, "O LORD my God, if I have done this, If there is injustice in my hands, If I have rewarded evil to my friend, Or have plundered him who without cause was my adversary, Let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake it; And let him trample my life down to the ground And lay my glory in the dust." What is going on here? David is protesting his innocence as he prays. He's coming to God and he's not starting with an attack on, he's not calling imprecation upon the one who is accusing him, he starts by an expression of self examination. He shows that he has examined his life, watch this, he shows that he has



examined his life before he asks God for help. The point of his prayer here, in verses 3-5 is not that he wants God to take his side no matter what, it's not that he is simply consumed with the thought of the one attacking him and is only concerned that God would strike that person down and stop the carnage spiritually that is taking place, David here humbly lays out his life before God and he says, "Lord, I've examined myself in this situation. I have not done what they have said I have done. I am innocent of the accusation."

Now, let me clear something up here, when David says, "If there is injustice in my hands," and he goes on and he defends himself, David is not claiming absolute sinlessness as he prays here in verses 3-5. He is not saying that, "I am utterly and completely without sin and therefore I am before you in my own merit." He is not talking in those terms. He is simply talking in a more narrow sense. He is limiting it, he is speaking in the context of these accusation and he says, "God, this slander is false. I have not done what they have said that I have done. I am not guilty of what is being said about me. I am unjustly accused." And so sincere is his self examination, so clear is his conscience that he says, "God, if I have misrepresented this before you, if I am guilty, if I have betrayed my friends, if I have taken advantage of my position, then Father let the enemy come and lay me down in the dust." That is one bold prayer. And you know what? A man doesn't pray that way unless he is examined himself and he's made awfully sure that he is not speaking rationally in the presence of God. And so what you have here in front of you in verses 3-5 is David has checked his conscience, he has examined his life before he comes and prays to God about the slander that he is suffering from. He has reflected on his own conduct before he began to pray. He can offer his life to the dust because he knows that he is free from wrongdoing.

Now, let's take ourselves in hand in response to this passage of Scripture and let's deal firmly with ourselves before we think about those who are making accusations against us. Even when the external pressure from human assault is great and you have this sense of injury that has been inflicted upon you because of what others are saying about you, you must have the humility of mind, the lowliness of spirit to be willing to look in the mirror and ask yourself whether there is any truth to the accusation. Because it stings doesn't mean that you can simply avoid looking to yourself because sometimes even though we don't like it, sometimes our critics are right. And even when they are unsaved critics, sometimes they are saying things that are true enough about us that we should take note of them and rather than praying against them, we should humble ourselves and repent because they've identified something true about us. The Christian church as whole would do well to humble ourselves before the critics that mock us for the way that we let obvious charlatans continue and we don't call them out. I'm just speaking very broadly about the church, not about Truth Community at the moment. But, when people point out obvious charlatans, people who are obvious frauds taking advantage of weak and unsuspecting people, we need to have the humility to say, "You know what, you're right. That is shameful." And to not insulate ourselves under a Christian bubble just because the critic is speaking with unkind motives. If the critics are right, we need to humble ourselves and repent. Whether that's corporately or whether that's individually and what God is looking to bless is a spirit that is humble enough to say, "Lord, I've examined

myself before I've come to you, before I invoke your power to help me I've cleared my conscience, I've confessed my sin. I have examined my heart and I am holding nothing known of wickedness in my own life."

David has examined himself and he says, "Lord, there is nothing there, and therefore, Lord, I can be so bold as to say if I'm lying to you now let me fall to the dust, let my reputation be shattered if I'm lying here." That is a very bold prayer to make in the presence of God. Look at it there in verse 5, "Let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake it; And let him trample my life down to the ground And lay my glory in the dust." There's a level of boldness that comes from having examined your heart and having cleared your conscience and knowing that there is no truth to the accusation but, here's the point, beloved, here's the very practical point for you and me, is that, before we start asking God to help us against our human opponents, we have to step back and we have to turn the search light on ourselves before we proceed in prayer. Now if we do that, and we can say with a reasonably clear conscience, "God, their assault is untrue. I have not done what they have accused me of doing. This is an utter fabrication that is designed to harm me." Then what you see David doing in verses 6-11 is this, having examined himself, having defined his own innocence, now he depends on God's righteousness.

So what's the Prayer of the Slandered? Let's just review real quickly. You declare your trust in God. That is the framing, defining aspect of this prayer. "God, I trust you. You have saved me. You have brought me into relationship with yourself. I am resting in the merits of Christ as my righteousness before you and, God, therefore I trust you. You say you will be my God, you will be my protector, I am resting in that and that frames everything else that follows." Then you examine your heart, you define your own innocence and you say, "God, there is nothing against me here. There is nothing true to what's being said, and yet this attack carries on and this attack is starting to be persuasive with others and it is turning other against me."

What then? Well, that's where you come to the third aspect of this Prayer of the Slandered as we've called it. The Prayer of the Slandered. You depend on God's righteousness. You rest in the fact that God is a God of righteousness. He hates wickedness and he loves justice and truth. He is opposed to falsehood. He arraigns himself, he arrays his power against those who violate his holy standards of truth and righteousness. God evaluates things honestly, he evaluates them fairly in accordance with his own holy character. There is no shadow, there is no variation in his character and when people are doing wrong they find themselves on the wrong side of the power of God. God is opposed to the proud but he gives grace to the humble. That's who he is. That's who he has revealed himself to be. That's who we know him to be and we trust that. Now, listen to me: it is one thing for you to affirm that theoretically in your mind, it is one thing for you to read the "Knowledge of the Holy." by A. W. Tozer or "Knowing God" by J. I. Packer and say, "Right on, Amen. I believe that," or whatever, whoever else your favorite good theologian is. It's one thing to view it that way and to embrace it theoretically. It is another thing altogether for you to say, "I am going to shape my life response by what I know to be true about the character of God. I am going to shape both my internal reaction and the way that I interact with human beings around me because of

what God has revealed about himself in Scripture." And you say to yourself, "I'm going to depend on God's righteousness. I'm going to trust in that alone to be my source of hope."

And as you go on in this prayer beginning in verse 6, you see that God's righteousness is the ground of David's appeal, its what he points to, to justify his prayer before God and to motivate God, as it were, to respond to his prayer favorably. Look at what he says in verse 6, he says, "Arise, O LORD, in Your anger; Lift up Yourself against the rage of my adversaries, And arouse Yourself for me; You have appointed judgment. Let the assembly of the peoples encompass You, And over them return on high." He says, "Arise, Oh God, lift up yourself, arouse yourself." What he's saying is, "God, you have not intervened in this situation up until now and it has gotten progressively worse. I am now threatened. I am under assault. I am vulnerable to these accusations that are being made against me. They are not true. I am willing to suffer the consequences if they are. But, God, I now appeal to you as a God of judgment to step up, to intervene, to help me because you are a God who judges against wickedness. And God, I am being accused wickedly here and so wake up, as it were, arouse yourself, get yourself involved in this situation." He's asking God to exercise his providential control of situations and to turn it to his advantage. He said, "God, don't let this situation continue unchanged. Vindicate me before the peoples. Help me display the truth of this matter publicly so that my character can be vindicated."

Look at verse 8, he says, "The LORD judges the peoples; Vindicate me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and my integrity that is in me. O let the evil of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous; For the righteous God tries the hearts and minds." David is saying, "God, you will judge the nations in righteousness. You'll judge nations. God, you also will judge individuals. You try the hearts and minds," and for those who are not Christians, they need to come to grips with the fact that God knows not only their external conduct, he knows the thoughts and intentions of their heart. And those who harbor wicked desires find themselves exposed before a holy God as much as they murderer on death row does and God looks not only at external conduct, he examines the heart. And David says, "God, you are that kind of God. You are a God of universal rule. You are a God of universal justice. Nations will come and give an account to you, just like individuals do." And so he is appealing to the righteous judgment of God to be the motivating factor that causes God to intervene on his behalf. He's saying, "God, you're a God of truth and you see these lies going on. This can't go on for long. You can't be indifferent to this. You can't be a passive observer forever about this because you're a God of truth, you're a God of righteousness and these lies and this sin against me surely can not go on unchecked."

And so look at verse 10, he is so confident of this, he is so assured of God's ultimate justice that he says in verse 10, "My shield is with God." "God, you're going to protect me like a shield over my vital organs in close combat. You will defend me. You are my shield, my shield rests on you because, God, you're the one who saves the upright in heart. You deliver them. You assist them. You aid them. You're not indifferent to the obedience of your people. You're not indifferent to the sincerity of our hearts." And so

that is the basis of David's appeal. He is appealing to the righteousness of God to be the reason that God would intervene and help him here. Look at verse 11 there, he says, "God is a righteous judge, And a God who has indignation every day."

Now, here's what I want you to see. We've said this so many times about David in these first several messages from the Psalms. David here is not appealing to God from a self centered desire for ease. This is not simply David saying, "God, get me out of this tight spot." You must see this, beloved, you must understand the level at which David is praying. All kinds of people who know nothing about Christ and his shed blood for salvation, all kinds of people pray to a God they don't even know, "God, help me out of this situation." That's not how we pray. That's not why we pray. That is not the motivation of our seeking God. David's prayers are always tied to elements of God's character. He is appealing to the righteousness of God. He is aligning himself with the holiness of God and saying, "God, because of who you are, I appeal to that to be exercised so that your own purposes could be advanced." He was a man of integrity who rested in God's righteousness. He is not trying to use God to get his pound of flesh from the person who is assaulting him. He is not calling on God out of self interest and self motivation. He's saying, "God, there is a principle of righteousness that motivates everything that you do. Ultimately your righteousness is going to set forth the clarity of the universe. Its on that basis of who you are that I appeal to you in this time of need." His prayer is not at the level of pure self interest. He has brought the character of God to bear and is praying in accordance with what he knows God, himself to be like.

Verse 11, "God, you're righteous. God, you get angry over sin everyday. There is a fence against you over and over again. I know that you're like this and what's happening to me invokes your anger as well and so, God, because you don't like it, I ask you, intervene, help me, assist me." And so, step back for a moment, and lets just think about what he's done here. He says, "God. I trust you. God, I've examined my heart. God, you're a righteous God. On those bases, Father, from my position of trust and my knowledge of my character, I ask you to help me." This is not the superficial prayer of a man who wants out under affliction. It is driven by a deep knowledge of God that is forming the content of his prayers.

Now, we've looked at the Prayer of the Slandered. Let's look at the protection of the slandered. The protection of the slandered. That's the second main point in your notes if you're taking notes today. And if you're not taking notes, it's the second main point in my notes anyways, it comes out the same. The protection of the slandered. What you see in the following section of this Psalm is David is warning the wicked that their falsehoods will not stand. He's asserting the fact that while temporarily their accusations may seem to be taking root, it's a shallow driving of the plant in the soil that will easily be uprooted. And so, he's confident of the ultimate outcome. How can he do that? Why is he so sure? Well, notice that it's not because he's about to take vengeance into his own hand. He is furthering his trust in God as he speaks here. Look at verse 12, he's now turned away from the focus on his own innocence and he's now focusing on the wickedness of those who are opposing him. Look at verse 12, he says, "If a man does not repent, He will sharpen His sword; He has bent His bow and made it ready. He has also prepared for

Himself deadly weapons; He makes His arrows fiery shafts.” What’s he saying here? He’s saying, "What is the basis of his protection?" He’s not praying so much anymore, he’s not asking God for something here, he’s reciting things that define his environment and the protection of the slandered, if you are in the midst of false accusations that are making your life very difficult, here’s where you find your refuge. This is where you draw your spiritual strength from. First of all, God judges the wicked, God judges the wicked. The righteousness of God guarantees their doom. God will not allow unrepentant men to go unpunished forever and if they are exercising their wickedness to your harm, you can step back and take refuge in the knowledge of what God does with wicked people.

What he does here in verses 12 and 13, is he uses different metaphors to talk about the inevitability of God's judgment. Look at it with me in verse 12, “He will sharpen His sword; He has bent His bow. He makes his arrows fiery shafts.” These are all expressing the inevitability of judgment. He is saying, "God is a warrior for righteousness. God will fight. God will defend his principle of righteousness. He will not allow sin to go unchecked forever." The image of a fiery arrow has the idea that the arrows were sometimes dipped in oil or pitch and then set on fire and then they would be set off to inflict their damage. What he’s saying is, God is going to bring to bear his powers of judgment upon his enemies who dwell in sin without repentance. He will judge the wicked because he is a God of righteousness. Now listen, David is taking refuge in that in the midst of a personal result. Their doom is appointed, this can not possibly come out well for them because God is the ruler of the universe, he is the most high God and he will not allow sin to go unanswered. God himself, will step up and exercise judgment on wicked people. And so he says, "In the long run I am secure here. In the long run this cannot go badly for me, it can only go bad for them," and that defines his perspective.

Secondly, its not just that God judges the wicked, he makes a somewhat similar point in verses 14-16, and it's this, that wickedness backfires. Wickedness backfires. Look at verses 14-16, he says, “Behold, he travails with wickedness,” now he’s referring to the wicked people, “he travails with wickedness, And he conceives mischief and brings forth falsehood.” It’s a very vivid picture that he’s using here. He’s picturing the wicked man as somebody who is pregnant, heavy with child only he’s not heavy with child, he’s heavy with evil and that evil comes forth, it comes out of him. He says that’s what he’s like, he’s pregnant with wickedness but it can't go well for him. Verse 15, “He has dug a pit and hollowed it out, And has fallen into the hole which he made. His mischief will return upon his own head, And his violence will descend upon his own pate,” the crown of his head. He’s saying that like a boomerang, wickedness returns to those who practice it. He’s full of evil. It has to come out but it will not succeed. He’s digging a pit for me to fall in metaphorically speaking, but actually what’s going to happen is that that pit will be his own destruction; his own wickedness will be his own downfall. That which he meant to harm someone else will eventually harm him.

My favorite biblical illustration of that is in the book of Esther. Do you remember when Haman was after Mordechai and built the gallows that he was going to have Mordechai hung on because Haman was second in command and he hated the Jews and he hated

Mordechai because Mordechai wouldn't bow down to him? And you remember how the story turned, his evil plot was exposed because he didn't know that the queen was a Jew, that was his primary miscalculation there and they came, the king's assistants came and said, "Haman has built the gallows," and the king said, "Hang him on it," and Haman was hung on the gallows that he had built to destroy Mordechai on. His own wickedness became the source of his own downfall. And Scripture tells us over and over again this is the way it works out. We don't always see it in this life, sometimes God allows it to play out for a very long time that tries our patience deeply but in the end, their wickedness comes back upon themselves and we trust in that. This is the principle upon which God operates the universe. And even if it doesn't seem like we see that outcome in this life, its certainly going to be true in the final judgment when God brings all wickedness to account and settles every score. There will be no wrong that is done to you as a believer that is not ultimately corrected because you are in the hands of a righteous God who is faithful to his people. That is the outcome. What Scripture intends to happen in your heart as a result of that is for you to rest in the outcome and be patient while the wickedness plays itself out. For you to be willing to rest in the goodness and the knowledge and the ultimate favor of God instead of getting worked up about it, instead of retaliating, instead of taking vengeance into your own hand. This banishes worry when we embrace it fully, when we work it all the way through. It deals a death blow to our own worry. It let's us be peaceful even when we are being attacked.

And we see, that the reality of God's character, the reality of his sovereign control over good and over evil, the reality of his faithfulness to his people and his opposition to the proud and the wicked, all of those things are not abstract theological attributes. They're not things musty in a book of theology that doesn't have any impact on real life. Beloved, what we know to be true about God changes everything about life. This defines the way that we interpret everything that happens to us, everything that goes around us, everything that could possibly come to bear upon us in life, we must interpret through the righteousness and the grace and the sovereign majesty of God. And the better we know him, the more truly we are going to see things for the way that they really are. Show me a person who is consistently, greatly agitated, show me someone who is plotting their own revenge against those who have hurt them, show me people like that and I'll show you people who have not yet drunk deeply from the character of God.

This should resonate with your heart, beloved. Say, "I want to be a person who lives in light of the character of God." And if this is just utterly, totally foreign to you and you have no concept of what it is that I'm talking about, let me invite you to the Savior Jesus Christ who shed his blood for sinners. It could be that you need to be reconciled to God for the very first time, that you need to come and confess. "I've been one of those wicked people who has rejected your rule over my life. I come and confess my sins and ask Christ to receive me." Do you know what? He will receive you. He will receive you and forgive all of your sins if you come to him like that. And for those of us who have come to him like that, we do know him, then our lives should be a reflection of what we know to be true. That's the standard, that's the high and lofty standard that we aspire to and we demand it, as it were, from our own souls. I demand it for myself, you should demand it from yourself. I'm not going to live at this low level of anxiety and distress over what's

happening around in life. We come up to the character of God. We let that pull us up so that our minds and our thoughts and our reactions are different than if we were unsaved. That's what David did.

Look at the last verse in Psalm 7, Psalm 7:17, we've seen the Prayer of the Slandered, we've seen the protection of the slandered, here in verse 17 we see the praise of the slandered. You know what David's doing at the end here? Nothing has changed. This is so often the case, the circumstances don't change but the attitude does because it has been brought into submission to the character of God. David started out saying, "Lord, I'm at risk of being mauled like a lion," and in verse 17 he ends on this note, "I will give thanks to the LORD according to His righteousness And I will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High." In the midst of the slander, David is singing praise to God, the Lord Most High, has the idea that God has a universal reign, he will remove evil and suddenly what would have caused David to despair has been transformed into his hope. The affliction of his soul, the accusations of his enemy have actually driven him ultimately to praise. That is what happens every time we respond rightly to our trials, beloved. When we respond rightly to our trials, they lead us to the throne of God where we bow in worship and we praise and we sing.

I don't say that lightly. I don't say that superficially, especially knowing some of the deep waters that some of you are trying to treat through right now. But, beloved, your trials are designed to be a current, perhaps a white water bare knuckles clinging on kind of current, but they are a current that is designed to deliver you to the throne of God where you can worship and sing because it has caused you to bring his character into focus, to trust him above all else and to rest. Despair is transformed into hope.

David is slandered by a wicked man and apparently people are receptive to the falsehoods but David is singing. He's singing. He's singing praise because he trusts the God who reigns over all. What should we take away from this? Just to wrap this up. Beloved, you're quite likely to be slandered and to be hurt by it before this life is over, if you're not going through it right now. Rather than retaliate, rather than worry, rather than seeking sympathy from men, I invite you, I challenge you in light of this Psalm go to the Lord and pour out your heart to him and leave it there, leave it with him. Don't try to recruit people to your aid in a battle of gossip. Go to God and say, "God, I'm going to trust you. I'm going to leave this with you. I'll manifest my trust by not raising my hand in my own defense, by not opening my mouth to defend myself." Trust him that much, beloved, and watch him honor it in time. Christians shouldn't be known as those who are prickly and always out to defend themselves. Although further, Christians shouldn't be known as those who are always promoting themselves. That's a sermon for another time. Just go to the Lord with a humbled heart, "Lord, I'm examining my life in your presence." Get alone with him, be quiet with him and remember his righteousness and ask him to help you and while you wait for his help to manifest itself, which it most certainly will, sing. Sing his praise. Worship him. Beloved, let's be a people that are committed to praising God before we see how our trials come out. Let's not reserve our truest worship until we see the outcome. Let's praise him now because of his inherent

worth and trust him like that. Let's be Christians like that at Truth Community. Let's sing his praise while the questions are still unanswered.

Let's pray together.

*Father, help us to trust you when we are slandered. Help us further, Father, so that we would not be one who slanders with our own tongue. And then help us even further to defend those who are wrongly accused because, Father, as we move along that spectrum, as we slide along that scale, we will be more and more reflecting your righteousness and that's what we want to do as your people. Help us, Lord, to live righteously for the sake of our righteous God. And Father, for those who do not know Christ here today, I pray that you would just be merciful to them, lead them to the cross of Christ. Lead them to the Savior who says, "Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." To the one who said, "Believe in me," cast your cares upon him because he cares for you. Father, may the one troubled with sin go to Christ who bore the sins in his body on the cross and rose again victorious over the grave. The perfect sacrifice that can silence a guilty conscience and the one alone who can reconcile us to a holy God. We love you, Lord. We love your word, we're grateful. And we thank you that you've given us this time together. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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