

# Ephesians 1:1-6

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[0:00] Take your Bibles, go with me to the book of Ephesians. We finished up 1 Corinthians. Last week we were together and we finished up the book of 1 Corinthians and I know a number of you were hoping that I would just go right into 2 Corinthians.

Some have expressed that to me and some have shared that with me and we may. Lord allowing us to, Lord permitting us to, we will make our way back to that. I just really have been in prayer the last few weeks about where God would want us and I try to be intentional in my preaching.

I don't plan. I'm not very good at planning my preaching schedule. I do not do that as well as some pastors do. Some can plan a year's worth of sermons.

I tend to be, Lord where do you want me and I tend to try to lean upon the leading of the Spirit there and really just seeking where He would have me to be but I also do that with wisdom too knowing that the full revelation of the Word of God is well and good for us.

We need all of it. So I don't want to miss a part or skip a part or to stay in my favorite passages so I do keep up with where I have been. In the past seven years since I've been here as pastor and I know not many of you have been here not, I mean several of you have but not all of you have been here the entire seven years.

[1:12] We have been very blessed that the Lord has allowed us to work our way through on Sunday mornings, Sunday nights and Wednesday nights nearly, if I'm not mistaking in my counting 25 books of Scripture and that to me is really astounding because some of it I have not done it justice.

We've made our way through it a little quick. Some of it we haven't and we tend to focus a little bit more on Sunday mornings in the New Testament. The reason being is because Sunday nights and Wednesday nights I'm making my way through Scripture so we are deeply ingrained in the Old Testament on those nights and I try to balance that.

One book that we have never looked at together is the book of Ephesians. We've never spent any time and I know some of you say well wait a minute we spent some time in that at last year's church retreat and you're right, we did.

We spent some time looking at Ephesians chapter 4 that one passage and we got a general overview of the entire book. The book of Ephesians is a powerful book. As a matter of fact I base my entire pastoral ministry upon Ephesians chapter 4 starting verse 12 and following.

When I sat down with the pastor search committee here the very first thing that I shared with the pastor search committee was you can find the job description of what I believe a pastor should be in Ephesians 4 verse 12 and following.

[2:24] We'll get to that. But the book of Ephesians itself is very powerful and we need to understand it as we make our way through it. And I know I'm giving you a long introduction but it's fitting too to look at it this way.

I think the Lord just allowed it to work out properly because when we finished up 1 Corinthians 1 Corinthians chapter 16 Paul said he had a desire to go to Corinth but he said that he was going to stay on at Ephesus for a great wide door of effective ministry had opened to him and there were many adversaries.

Paul spent more time at Ephesus than anywhere else. Paul spent almost three years ministering at Ephesus and for an itinerant church planning ministry that's pretty amazing.

Paul spent a significant amount of time there and not only did he minister in Ephesus it was from the city of Ephesus that it was said all of that region of ancient Near Eastern region, Asian Near Eastern region there had heard the gospel.

Ephesus became a hub for the gospel moving out. As a matter of fact when you open up the book of Revelations and you read the letter to the seven churches and you understand when John is writing the book of Revelations he is sending it as a letter that would circulate among seven

churches.

[ 3 : 37 ] We find those seven churches introduced to us in Revelations chapter 2 and 3 and the first of those churches mentioned is the church at Ephesus because it was from Ephesus that the gospel began to spread.

Ephesus not only more than likely it was founded by Priscilla and Aquila because Paul left them there later it was strengthened by a man named Apollos you should know him from the book of 1 Corinthians who was eloquent of speech and had to be helped along it was there that Priscilla and Aquila showed him what it was about the baptism not just of John but the baptism of Christ and the fullness of the Holy Spirit and he came to a better knowledge of the word and he was a great help to the saints.

It was there that Paul came back and spent a number of years so now you have Priscilla and Aquila and Apollos and Paul later Paul would leave Timothy there Timothy became the pastor of the church at Ephesus and a little bit later after that the apostle John himself the author of the gospel of John 1st, 2nd, 3rd John in the book of Revelations the author who wrote more verses than any other author of scripture that is John the apostle became the pastor of the church at Ephesus. It's a pretty important church. It was very important early on in church history because just about every early church father of the true Christian faith had his roots.

So this is an amazing city a city state that was ruined. I know I'm giving you this introduction this is normally what we do when we open it up so that we can understand exactly what's going on. If you were to go there today you would see the significance of the ancient cities seems to be really fading.

[ 5 : 15 ] There's nothing there. It seems to be a little bit of anything because it really fell just like every other major port city did because of great deforestation and animals and things like that because Rome needed to build ships and they were taking all these timber down and you know when that happens land begins to move and the land always goes into the river and the river always flows to the canal so now what would have been the shipyard is some seven miles away from the coast because so much silt went down and really just made Ephesus really insignificant.

But at the time it was a major port city. You need to understand it at Ephesus it was there that the great riots start because Paul was taking work away from the silversmiths if you open up the book of Acts and they had this great temple to the goddess Artemis there.

It was actually said that this great stone fell from heaven history shows us that they had what they considered a heavenly stone more than likely it was an asteroid that was there that was in the temple which was one of the ancient seven wonders of the world it's great in its colonnades and great in its construction it had marble lined streets it had columns it had street lights it had all these things as a matter of fact the goddess of Artemis' temple was so important to the Roman world it was a bank because the rich of the Roman empire deposited their money in that temple.

It was a place of commerce it was a place of trade it was a place of prosperity and it was there that God called with a number of other people also Paul to plant a church and it was there that the author of the book of Revelations John told the Ephesians they had lost their first love that they needed to go back and it was there that really they were forged in the fire so to say because a weak Christianity would not take place in Ephesus because it would not have endured it was there it didn't take very long before we get into it was around 600-700 AD that the church is no longer existent there but it was so instrumental in the early stages of the church and it was so important because true faith was put on display in this church because it had to be because you had to know what you believed and you had to really live out what you believed because if you didn't you weren't going to make it.

When Paul writes this letter to the church at Ephesus when he writes the letter of Ephesians he's in jail in a Roman prison we're getting to the text stay with me and he writes this and many of the ancient manuscripts do not contain what is there for us in the first verse to the saints who are at Ephesus some of them have a blank there when we read the book of Ephesians you will notice that Paul does not address any problems in the church that Paul does not dictate any behavior that should be taking place which is completely different than what happened to the book of 1 Corinthians and even 2 Corinthians Paul does not try to correct any malpractice Paul does not try to encourage any greater practice as a matter of fact Paul spends the first three chapters in why Ephesians is so good dealing with theology that is who you are in Christ and then he deals in chapters 4 5 and 6 about how you should live because of who you are in Christ if you have to have

a key verse your key verse is going to be Ephesians chapter 4 verse 1 which essentially says therefore walk worthy of the calling which you have in the Lord

[ 8 : 40 ] Jesus Christ you ought to walk worthy of your calling and so in order to walk worthy of your calling of who you are in Christ the first thing you need to understand is you need to know what your calling is you need to know who you are in Christ right because your walk will always be dictated by your position you know that from the book of 1 Corinthians so until you rightly understand who you are in Christ and your calling in Christ you cannot properly address how you live out life in a daily activity as a matter of fact I would go so far as to say that much malpractice and malbehavior of the believers is rooted not in intentional wrong living it is rooted in a really unclear understanding of who they are in Christ that if we can address the calling then we can change the walk so we need to understand the first three chapters really well who we are in Christ so that we can do the last three chapters how we should live because it will deal how you should live within the church body what does it look like to be a pastor an elder a leader a deacon what does it look like to be a church minister what does it look like for husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church and he gave himself up for her and wives ought to submit to the husbands what does that look like what does it look like for children their parents what does it look like for slaves that would be workers right to obey their masters that is your boss what does it look like to live out daily life well it only looks right if we know who we are in Christ because without the first thing we cannot do the second thing and we'll get to all the practical aspects of it but we have to make our way through the first three because until we understand the theology we cannot really deal with the practice and that I think is the danger in the church today is we won't practice without theology we call that weak Christianity and biblical illiteracy reigns within the church body at a rampant amount when the church is biblically illiterate then we should not be surprised when the church is not biblically accurate in how they live we ought to know what we believe and we know what we believe and we believe what we know then we'll behave like we believe right you also notice in the book of Ephesians that Paul is writing this some say it's more than likely a letter that was intended this would be why Ephesus has left out some of the earliest it was a letter that was intended to be circulated among those churches which sprung forth from the church at Ephesus that is this book does not have application just to the believers at

Ephesians this was a letter that Paul was writing to all believers of that region therefore it is a letter which is written to us it is not addressing something going on in the local church this is addressing the church and it is very applicable for us as well today as is all scripture so if you are physically able to desire to do so I'm going to ask if you will join with me as we stand together and we're getting to our text we're going to read Ephesians chapter 1 verses 1 through 6 we're going to stop at verse 6 this morning the word of God says Paul an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ 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 let's pray Lord we thank you so much for this day we thank you for your faithfulness and your goodness we thank you for your word Lord we pray as we have read your word Lord that you would open our hearts and minds to a true understanding of it that the understanding of it would have application how we live our lives Lord that we would not leave here the same as which we came Lord that an understanding of the word of God would directly impact our lives for your glory and we ask it all in Christ's name amen you may be seated Ephesians chapter 1 verses 1 through 6 Paul very quickly gives his introduction you say well pastor is it wrong for us to read to the saints which are at Ephesus no because the reason we can find early manuscripts with that blank and I'll tell you these things because I anticipate that you are going to be like the Berean saints and you're going to go home and you're going to study these things to see if they be so and then you're studying them you will run across someone who says well it doesn't have that as a blank there some of the early manuscripts or you'll have a footnote in your scriptures in your bible that says early footnotes have this as a blank and the reason it would be a blank is that it was intentionally left open so that when the letter went to a certain church they could put their name in to the saints which are at

Caesarea to the saints which are at Philippi to the saints which are at Ephesus but it was directly sent to the Ephesian believers so it's not for us and not wrong for us to read it to the saints which are at Ephesus they would have been the original recipients of it and therefore they would have circulated around as they made scribal copies of it and it would have went from here to there but yet we read this Paul gives a very quick introduction and then let's just go ahead and admit it he jumps in deep really quick right he jumps in deep really really quick you need to understand that Ephesians chapter 1 verses 3 through 14 are one big run-on sentence we broke it up okay we stopped at 6 Paul got carried away in his writing after he said hello he says hey I'm Paul hey you're the saints guess what and he just got really carried away right he didn't spend a whole lot of time with cordials he didn't spend a whole lot of time with well you know I hear things are going well there he just says hey I'm Paul I'm writing to you and this is what I'm saying and he gets right into it really quick and in that long sentence verses 3 through 14 you'll notice a breakdown of it's pretty amazing because each one of them verse 6 I believe it's verse 12 and then it would be no let me just go back I'm looking at the wrong one come on it's going to be verse 6 it's going to be verse let me let's get here I'm going to give it verse 12 and then verse 14 yeah see I had to do that right verse 6 is 12 and 14 all give this declaration of praise and that's why we broke it here at the sixth one I don't know where we'll break the next one at because there is a three thrice repeated praise refrain in this long sentence and if the good Bible student pays attention to it you'll see that in that thrice repeated praise there is praise to the father there is praise to the son and then there is praise to the

Holy Spirit so the first one verse 6 praises God the father verse 12 praises Jesus Christ the son verse 14 praises God the Holy Spirit praise father son and Holy Ghost see that I told you that that doxology so much more than something that was written many many years ago for the church it was actually a refrain of a declaration that is recorded for us in scripture and so we see that Paul in this long sentence is really directing all praise to the fullness of the deity of Godhead the trinity and he's really just directing it at the very beginning now let's go ahead and admit this reality there are things in this text which we cannot understand we learn in the rest of scripture there are some things that are hidden to us but we are called to understand the things which are revealed there are things in this text which are very deep there are things in this text I mean really let's just go ahead and say it I believe it I believe it was maybe Spurgeon or Dio Moody I can't remember my mind fails me right now and you'll have to forgive me for that one of the two said it this way try to explain the predestination and election and you're going to lose your mind try to explain the free will of man and rest everything on the free will of man and you may lose your soul so be careful there's things we cannot explain but on the other side of that there are things that we must accept because the words are there okay there are things that we have to say it says it we accept it and we move on and we will accept it by faith until God continues to open up more and more and more and more of it I don't think it's quite as deep we want to make it here because we'll see in just a moment but there are words I think that at times that we hear them man we shut our minds off and we shut our hearts off and all of a sudden we are beginning to label let me just go ahead and say this on the front end please please please I don't care what you I do care there are a number of things you can call your pastor and you can you can call him all these other things please do not ever put a label across my name okay don't ever say what he is and end it with anything I'm not going to give you the words some of you know what I'm talking about I want to be biblical

[ 17 : 29 ] I want to be a biblicist so if you have to label me label me biblicist do not label me anything else I'm just going to go ahead and say that and I will argue that from the very beginning but I'm also going to be accurate so we notice here the foundation of our calling I say these things because I want you to be prepared this is foundation the calling is only as strong as the foundation on which it rests and if we're going to only walk according to the foundation which we are standing upon so if we're not careful and we're on shaky ground and our foundation then when the trials and the struggles and tribulations come all of a sudden our walk begins to look different than it should because our foundation doesn't rest on the right foundation so we have the foundation of our calling recorded for us in the first six verses here as Paul introduces himself to the church and he's leading somewhere he's going somewhere right he is telling the church how they should live he's telling the church how they should behave do you want to know how you can be a good husband do you want to know how you can be a good father do you want to know how you can be a good wife do you want to know how you can be a good mother do you want to know how you can be a good church member do you want to know how you can serve accurately do you want to know how you can be a

good employee do you want to know how you can be a good boss do you want to know how you can live in the world in a God glorifying honoring way well then you have to understand your calling and the first thing you need to understand about your calling is the foundation on which it rests you have to start from the bottom up and we see here the foundation of our calling.

Number one, calling is connected to a person. You say, Pastor, you're a long way into the sermon, and you're just getting to the first point. That's fine, I only have 10. I'm just joking, I don't have 10, because I know you've got to go home and cook.

But anyway, the foundation, our connected, our calling is always connected to a person. There is a very popular refrain in this letter, the book of Ephesians, and it is in Christ, in Christ, in Christ, in Christ, in Christ.

I want to think of something like 20 to 21 times Paul says, in Christ, in Christ, in Christ, in Christ.

There's this thing in Scripture. When the Word of God repeats itself once, we need to stand up and pay attention.

When it repeats itself twice, then we ought to do that thing, because now God is really trying to get our attention, right? We're told three times, for the Lord our God is a jealous God, He is a consuming fire.

[ 19 : 46 ] It's one thing if that was a Deuteronomy 4.24 passage, oh, that's a pretty good passage back in Deuteronomy. But when he says it two more times in the book, when he says it two more times in the New Testament, they ought to go, whoa, wait a minute, maybe we ought to pay attention to this, because he's repeating himself.

As a parent, you understand, if I say something once, I hope my kids listen to me. If I have to say it again, you better listen to me. If it comes the third time and you haven't listened yet, then we have a problem, right?

What if he says it 20 plus times in one book with only six chapters? That's something we need to grasp a hold of, right? Because our calling is connected to a person, and you can never separate your calling from the person of Jesus Christ.

It is so foundational. You say, well, yeah, I believe in Jesus Christ. No, you are called in Christ.

Well, you know, yeah, I accepted Christ. We'll get to that in just a minute. No, your calling is directly connected.

Everything about who you are as a believer flows from and through and to Jesus Christ. That is, everything about our position, everything about how we behave, everything about where we stand as believers goes back to the person of Jesus Christ.

[ 20 : 56 ] Look at what it says. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He's already introduced himself as Paul, who is called the apostle of Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are faithful to Christ.

And then he reminds them that we are blessed to be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. You say, amen, yes, yes, yes, I am a blessed believer.

You're right. Your blessings don't always display themselves in this world because you are blessed in the heavenlies, but you are blessed in the heavenlies in a person. The greatest blessing you have is Christ Jesus.

You say, well, yeah, I know that. You know, one time I remember I stood up and I was reading, and it upset an individual.

I was preaching through, and it wasn't here, so don't look around until I find out who it was, okay? It wasn't here. I was preaching through the gospel of John, the final saints of Christ there, the Last Supper, John 13, 14, 15, and 16.

[ 21 : 59 ] You got the high priestly prayer in John 17. And there's a series of messages called Promises of Hope. And I remember in preaching through that, I come to the portion. Many of your translations say, for I go to prepare a mansion for you.

New American Center says, for I go to prepare a dwelling place for you. And I asked the question in the middle of the sermon, and somebody got really upset about it, that what if it's not a mansion? What if it really is just a dwelling place? I mean, would you be content if it was a broom closet? They said, well, no, there's a mansion built for me on a street of gold. And we go back to the hymn. You know, you love that.

I've got a mansion. What if you don't? What if really, because, by the way, the little interpretation of the word is a dwelling place. Man really wants it to be a mansion. But what if it's just a dwelling place?

They said, no, no, no, I have a mansion. Well, then all of a sudden, the mansion becomes more important than the greatest treasure you have, because the greatest treasure you have in the heavenlies is Christ Jesus. See how we have to be careful here.

[ 22 : 57 ] Instead of using Christ for the mansion on the street of gold, we ought to be content to live in a broom closet as long as Christ is there. Because the greatest treasure we have is Christ.

He says, we are blessed in the heavenlies in Christ. Everything that I have. Now, he may have a mansion for us. That's okay. I'm content with that. I really don't want to. I hope there's no dust there. I hope there's nothing like that.

But maybe we're not. I don't know what it is. There's some things I don't understand. But if Christ is there, I'm good with that. Right? Heaven is wherever Christ is at, because we are blessed in Christ. And we ought to understand our calling here, and everything about our calling is connected to that person. Try to separate your calling from the person of Jesus Christ, and you have nothing.

Because we are redeemed in Christ. The hope of our calling is in Christ. The empowerment of our calling is in Christ. The relationship we have with the holy God is in Christ.

[ 23 : 58 ] He is the mediator of our calling. He is the propitiation for our sins. Everything. Friend, listen to me. The believer is desperately, gloriously abandoned to the person of Jesus Christ, because without Christ, we have nothing.

And when that becomes a reality, guess what? When your walk lives like you're really abandoned to the person of Jesus Christ, then you will walk different. Because you realize that everything I have, everything that I am, everything that I've been given, my forgiveness, my redemption, my blessings, all these things are connected to this one person.

And oh, I don't want to fail that person. Person, by the way, he is flesh and blood and bones, and we can handle him and touch him and put our hands in the scars in his hands.

We can put our hands in his side. Ask Thomas. He was there, right? He'll be able to eat with and talk with and talk with. He is a person. It's not just a figment of imagination. Everything we have rests in that person.

Don't lose sight of the person of Jesus Christ and what you believe and how you walk. Because calling is connected to a person. Number two, calling is a fulfillment of a purpose.

[ 25 : 21 ] You say, oh, I have a purpose. Stop right there. Pump the brakes a little bit. This isn't about your purpose. Your calling is a fulfillment of a divine purpose.

Look at what the text says. 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. Everything is connected to Christ. Now, read the text with me.

Just as he chose us in him, as in Christ, just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world. It is the purpose of God that is fulfilled in the calling of man.

Some refer to that as predestination. But we see the reality of the text says this way. You are those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Those who have accepted him. Those who have committed their life. We would say those who are saved. I mean, genuine, salvific faith. They're forgiven. They're restored.

[ 26 : 25 ] Lord, here's the reality. God chose them before the foundations of the world were laid. You say, well, how did he do it? It's a great question.

You got all of eternity to ask him. But I can tell you how he didn't do it. He didn't look at the portals of time and say, oh, this person's going to be good. He didn't base it upon any character trait you have or any character trait that I have.

Because while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly, right? He didn't do it because he saw goodness in us. Because how could he see goodness in us when the foundations of the world aren't even laid yet? No work has been done.

No sin has entered into a world because there is no world. The divine purpose of God was that some would be called to accept Christ as their Lord and Savior. And they would be called in a culture connected to that purpose.

You say, well, then that purpose goes against my free will. No, not really. Because you are not believing contrary to your will. Those of you who have accepted Jesus Christ, this is one thing I

guarantee about everyone of you.

[ 27 : 29 ] Those who genuinely accepted Jesus Christ want to believe in Jesus Christ. You desire to believe in Jesus Christ. You came to him and cast all your hopes and ambitions upon the person of Jesus Christ.

All of a sudden, the will of man begins to work in cooperation with the purpose of God. You say, well, how in the world could that happen? How could God choose me before the foundations of the world were laid? And all of a sudden, the will of man works just perfectly along with the God of choosing.

Because no man comes to the Father lest he be drawn by the Father. So this is the beauty of it all. Now, we're going somewhere. But this will stay with me. Don't just discount me and say, oh, he's talking rubbish up there. God has a purpose.

And God's purpose is he chose us before the foundations of the world laid. God began to woo us and draw us and to call us unto himself. We were drawn by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. You didn't come to God because you thought it was a good idea.

You didn't run to a holy God because you thought it was an amazing idea. As a matter of fact, you didn't do it because you thought he would accept you. Because the very depth of your being, you know that you wouldn't accept you if you were God as well. And the reason you know that is because you know yourself better than anyone else knows you.

[ 28 : 32 ] You never run into the presence of God because you say, oh, I want to be there. If you ever want to be into the presence of God on your own, then you do not understand the God of Scripture. Because the God of Scripture is a God of wrath and judgment and righteous judgment.

He is not a God who looks lightly upon sin. He is a God who declares that none can be in my presence lest he be holy. And we do not run there because to the very depth of our being, we know we're not holy.

I don't need anyone to tell me that I have a problem. I don't need anyone to tell me that something about me is wrong. There's something within me that declares to me that I am not acceptable in the presence of a holy God.

Everything I do outside of that is trying to suppress that feeling. Right? I want to, I like how S.M. Lockridge said, S.M. Lockridge, the greatest sermon ever preached. Look that up, by the way. Don't look it up and compare your pastor to it, but just look it up because that man could preach.

S.M. Lockridge, greatest sermon ever preached. That's where I get the clip, That's My King. That's My King is part of an hour and 10 minute sermon. Listen to the whole sermon. Right? He says some smoke it away, some dope it away, some chasing bubbles.

[ 29 : 32 ] He said, but these chasing bubbles, all you're trying to do is man is forever chasing bubbles, trying to get over the feeling that he is not worthy of being in the presence of God. So we do not run to God because we think he will accept us.

We try to avoid him because just like Ash, we know we're naked and we know he's holy. And therefore we hide among the trees, whatever the trees may be. God in his love says, come to me and I will clothe you.

And he draws us and then the will of man works in cooperation with the purpose of God. And we are drawn into his presence and all of a sudden we want to be there because we cannot think of anywhere else we would like to be.

Because though I know me, he loves me. God called me according to his purposes. And if you've accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, here's the reality that you need to understand. It is the purpose of God that called you before the foundations of the world were laid.

That's why you're there. Rather than leading you to discount this, this should lead you to fall on your face and say, how amazing is he? Because before the foundations of the world were laid, God chose you.

[ 30 : 34 ] Before you did right, before you did wrong, before you looked acceptable, before you cleaned up, before you did anything else, God chose you. And you say, well, I don't get that. I don't understand that.

Well, I don't either. And the reason I don't get it and I don't understand it is because I wouldn't choose me. But I know when I read the word of God, it tells us that the purpose of God was to save me. And the great divine purpose of God was to save us in Christ Jesus.

And he called us because he chose to call us. How that works in cooperation with the free will of man will work out as we make our way through scripture. But we need to understand.

Friend, listen to me. You did not come to Christ because you made a decision. You made a decision because Christ was pursuing you and you saw that he was worth it.

Your salvation does not rest in a choice and a prayer and a decision you made. If it does, then tomorrow you can make another decision and choose not to enjoy it. If your salvation rests in a prayer or a decision or an action of yours, then you are saved by works.

[ 31 : 38 ] And Paul very clearly says, we are no man is saved by works. You are saved because before the foundations of the world, God chose you.

And he chose to pour his love out upon you. And you're like, that is beyond me. Right. It's supposed to be. And since it's so beyond us, it ought to call us to worship and adore.

Because, see, a salvation that I did, I don't have to worship because I did something to get it. But a salvation that he did in spite of me leads me to worship because all of a sudden I don't deserve it.

I didn't do a thing. And we see here, it says, just as he chose us in him, in Christ, before the foundation of the world. But he didn't just choose us so that we could go, oh, I'm glad that's over. No, there's a purpose behind that, right? That we would be holy and blameless before him. See, the reality that he chose us does this for us.

[ 32 : 41 ] The reality that he chose us, that it's his purpose and not my purpose. The reality that it's his leading and not my leading reminds me that I have to press into what he has already begun.

If I worked out my salvation, if I'm saved because I made a decision, if I'm saved because I did something, if I'm saved and I keep myself in the center of all of that equation, if I did this and I did that and I did that, then I've done enough to be saved.

Therefore, I can stop because I've done enough. But when I realize that while I was yet a sinner, Christ died for me, God pursued me and he called me to himself. And I'm just responding to the calling of God, which he's done in spite of me.

And all of a sudden I respond to his work. Then it leads me to fulfill the rest of that, to be holy and blameless. Because now I'm working out my salvation, not working for my salvation.

Understand what I'm saying? Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, Paul would say.

Why? Because God chose you, my friend. Listen. Therefore, live according to the way he chose you.

[ 33 : 44 ] He chose you and he called you to be his child that you would be holy and be blameless. You don't have to be holy and blameless to be accepted. You are accepted, therefore be holy and blameless.

And it's a big difference. Right? If you tell someone, if you do these things, I'll love you, then the weight is too much. If you look at them and say, well, I love you and I'd like for you to do these things because I love you.

The more you love them, the more willing they are to do those things, right? God loved you so much that before the foundations of the world were laid, he looked throughout history and said, that one's mine, that one's mine, that one's mine, that one's mine.

And you're just responding to that calling. And now, therefore, walk and be holy and blameless because of the great love which he's poured out upon us. You say, well, I can't wrap my mind around that. Well, if you can't wrap your mind around it, well, then wrap your heart around it and live accordingly.

Trust that someday maybe your mind will follow what your heart already knows. Because if I had to guess, no matter how much you want to argue against it, no matter how much you want to press against it, in your heart of hearts, I'm not talking about in your mind, in your heart of hearts, you know the reason you're saved is because God pursued you.

[ 34 : 50 ] And therefore, since he pursued you, you just responded. Be holy and blameless because of that. Because, see, our calling is a fulfillment of the purpose. The great purpose of God was not to create creation.

There are some who say, and I know this is a long message, but I appreciate your patience. There were some that say that God is the divine creator, that he set things in order. He created the heavens and the earth.

He created all these things. He did it, you know, now we even agree that he did it in seven days.

And that was all that God did. He set it in order and then, boom, like a top master, he spun the top.

And he put it in motion and he walked away from it because his purposes had been fulfilled. That all God set out to do was to create a world and to create beings and to create inhabitants of that world. And everything is fulfilled in creation. Friend, that's not it. The purpose of God before he laid the foundation of the world was that you would come to him and worship him and adore him and that you would be his child.

He created all those things so that you could come to him. We are the purpose. And our calling is a fulfillment of that purpose. Now that emboldens us because we also know Paul would write to the book of Rome and the book of Romans said, And in the fullness of the Gentiles comes to faith, then will come the end times.

[ 36 : 04 ] And since we're not at the end times, guess what? The fullness of the Gentiles, I don't know what that number is. There are still others that will be saved. You know why you can have confidence in sharing the gospel? Because you're sharing the gospel with someone that God knew before the foundation of the world would come to him.

You say, well, I'm trying to convince them of Jesus Christ. No, you're not. You're just trying to introduce them to the person that's been pursuing them before the foundations of the world were ever laid. Before God said anything in order, he had already chosen them. He had already called them. That's what the scripture says, right? We were chosen before the foundation of the world were laid. There are others still there. Your joy is to be those who introduce them to the one who already chose them.

And they say, let me tell you about the one who loves you. Because they're looking for them whether they admit it and acknowledge it or not. They're just looking in different ways. And they want to meet this one that they know loves them more than anyone else.

So go introduce them to them and go let the fulfillment of that purpose come about. Number three, calling is a legal change of position. Calling is connected to a person.

[ 37 : 10 ] Calling is a fulfillment of a purpose. Calling is a legal change of position. John chapter 3 tells us that we must be born again, right? Jesus says, unless you're born of water and spirit, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

Nicodemus gets confused and says, well, how can a man enter into his mother's womb a second time? That just doesn't seem right. He says, you have to be born again, right? You have to be born of the spirit to enter the kingdom of heaven. So there's a new birth. Along with the new birth, there's also this new position.

And it comes to us, here it says, in verse 6. Not verse 6, actually verse 5. Now there's these two words at the end of verse 4 that I need to call out. Now some read it like this, okay?

And that's okay. Some of your translations, because you're reading it this way, and I want you to understand why I'm doing it. Understand one run-on sentence, right? One long sentence. There's not periods and commas and stuff in there in the Greek.

It's just not. It's just one big run-on sentence. And so some read it like this, that we would be holy and blameless before him in love. Okay? So that love modifies how we behave in front of him.

[ 38 : 13 ] I'm not trying to get too technical in the Greek here, but that I don't think is the proper modification for that, because in most of Paul's writings, the adjective that's modifying the behavior does not follow it.

It actually precedes it. Later on in the book, it precedes it again. And it really, it's modifying something else. So New American Standard has it this way, that we ought to be holy and blameless before him, period.

And in love is connected to what follows it in the next verse. In love he predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to himself. Now, in love literally means in agape.

In agape. Agape is the agapeo love. The agapeo love of God is not a feeling, ooey gooey love. It's not a philo love of God. It's not Philadelphia. It's not love. Agape love is really a love that is specified to God.

It is a love that only God can exhibit, because agape love is so much higher than the love of man. Agape love was the love that Peter could not adhere to, because Jesus says, do you agapeo me?

[ 39 : 15 ] He says, Lord, you know I phileo you. Do you agapeo me? Lord, you know I phileo you. Then he goes, Peter, do you phileo me? Yes, Lord, you know I phileo you. Peter says, I can't live up to that kind of love. Because agapeo love is a love that does something in spite of the other person with no thoughts, no feelings, no anticipation of a response from that person.

It is an active pursuing love. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. Right? That love is agape. God so loved the world. I say it like this in my pre-marriage counseling. He did something. And he did something in spite of the world, in spite of man's behaviors. He did something, and he was active.

It's an active pursuing love. Right? So what we see here is that in love, in agape, he predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ.

This change of position. This legal change of position. Because it's one thing to be born again. But this word adoption is so rich. Now, I've told you this before.

[ 40 : 21 ] You want to really understand it, go watch the old Ben-Hur. You know, I know some of you like the old Ben-Hur so long. It's got an intermission in it. And it's really cool that it says intermission, right?

You have to take a break. And you better stand up and take a break because you're going to be sitting there for the next two and a half hours if you don't. I love the old Ben-Hur. The new one's okay, but I love the old one. But you see, it's such a beautiful picture.

By the way, Ben-Hur was originally like a play put on stage. That's so amazing. They had horses running on treadmills. They actually did the chariot race on stage. That's so crazy to me. It blows my mind.

Anyway. So the old Ben-Hur, whenever Ben-Hur, you know, is on the slave, he's under there rowing the boat, and then all of a sudden it goes to battle, and he saves the captain of the ship, and he's on the raft.

You remember that, right? You've seen it? And then a little bit later on, Ben-Hur is actually adopted, and he gets that ring put on his hand. He gets that signet ring because it gives him a position in society, Roman society.

[ 41 : 18 ] See, the word adoption here in the book of Ephesians is not the adoption, I'm going to go to the nursery and pick out a baby. That's not the adoption. The word adoption here is the word that says, it is the adopting of a male adult.

It is the taking in for legal standing an adult male to give him legal position in society to have all the rights of the household.

It is changing because you are already born into the family by the spirit. You are born into the spirit. But what adoption does, and so beautiful, and even adoption in our culture today is such a beautiful thing, and we ought to support it and champion it as a church, and we ought to be those who do it as individuals, either those who do it or those who support it.

Adoption is such a beautiful thing because it changes forever the legal history of an individual, and it changes forever to give them rights that they didn't have before. And we see it here because what God is saying is that in Christ, God so loved us that in love, he predestined us to adopt us.

That is, he allowed us to be infants in Christ for just a moment, but he didn't do it there. We were born by the spirit, but then we were made, and I know, ladies, this isn't a knock on you, but in Roman society, daughters and ladies didn't have much legal rights, so Paul has to use, some translations you read says, sons and daughters, but the original Paul was writing said sons because even as a female believer, you are given the inheritance rights of a son.

[ 42 : 47 ] You are given that position in that society. Now you have been exalted. You're no longer a second-class citizen. You're no longer someone who doesn't have rights. Now you're given in Christ.

The adoption you have is you have the full rights of every son. The ring is on your hand. I've been heard, right? You have the right to put a stamp on it and to make decisions.

Now that ring that's on your hand, we get to it later in chapter 4, verse 14. That's the Holy Spirit, right? That's your pledge until the day of redemption. We don't want to get ahead of ourselves, but you are given a legal standing which gives you full inheritance rights in the kingdom, and that's what our calling does.

It changes who we are legally. Therefore, we ought to live like we're different. By the way, let's continue this theme.

You know one thing that I've noticed about adoption? You don't choose for yourself your adoption. Adoption is entirely the work of someone else, right?

[ 43 : 51 ] You don't walk up to someone and go, hey, you're going to adopt me today. That probably doesn't work. Adoption is completely and entirely the work of another outside of you.

You are just the recipients of someone else's work. And that's exactly what Scripture is teaching here, that God, in his love, predestined to adopt you as his son to change your legal standing before all.

You now have full inheritance rights in the kingdom. Now let's get to the last thing, because these things lead us to this one reality. Calling is the root of genuine praise.

Calling is connected to a person. Calling is fulfillment of a purpose. Calling is a legal change of position. A true understanding of our calling is the root of all genuine praise.

Look at what verse 6 says. To the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the beloved. That's in Christ. To the praise of the glory of his grace.

[ 45 : 02 ] See, when we really understand these things, when we get a grasp of the calling of God, it leads to genuine praise. We can't understand it, but our only response to it has to be praise.

If he's doing these things for me, he's doing these things in spite of me, and if he's working in concert with my desires, and he's leading me, and he's urging me, and I'm not going against my will.

It's not like I'm a robot, right? I want to be Christ. I want to accept Christ. Then I need to understand, all these things are put into motion, because God set his love towards me, and God set his love towards you. And the only right response we have is praise.

The reason that the people of God have always been a praising people, open up the Old Testament, and you see that praise starts with this, that God chose Abram out of the land of the Ur-Chaldeans, right? And when he chose him, Abram started praising, right?

People who understood that God called them to himself, and they understood that God was leading them to his presence. They were always welcomed into the presence of God, because of what God did.

[ 46 : 02 ] It led them to praise. Genuine, true praise is found in the reality of this foundation of our calling, that it's connected to Christ.

It's really, it's in spite of me. He glorifies me. He magnifies me. He redeems me, sure. But it's all because of Christ. Everything is through Christ, and for Christ, and in Christ, that God so worked this out, so that it would happen even before I did right or wrong, right?

Before I did anything. And in love, he wanted me to have a son of full adoptive rights. My legal position has changed. I don't care what the world says about me. I don't care what other people think about me.

God has told me that I'm his son, and I can cry out, Abba, Father. And the only thing I can do because of that is to praise him. And it says, it is to the praise of the glory of his grace.

Not to the praise of the glory of my efforts, or my works, or my goodness, but his grace. And I have to either fall on my face, or stand at the height of my toes, and reach my hands to heaven, and say, God, you are worthy of my praise.

[ 47 : 10 ] It is praise flowing from undeserving lips, flowing unto an ever-deserving God. I don't deserve to praise him, but he always deserves to be praised.

And because of the work that he has done in my life, and calling me, and the work that he's done in your life, if you've accepted Christ, and you know Christ as your Savior, because of what he's doing in your life, he deserves praise.

You say, oh, well, I'm not worthy of praising him. Join the ranks, because the ranks around the throne in heaven are filled with people that are not worthy to be there. That's why, in the book of Revelations, it says, worthy, worthy, worthy are you, O Lamb, who was slain before the foundation of the world.

It doesn't say, worthy am I to be here. It says, worthy is the Lamb. Worthy is the Lamb. Worthy is the Lamb, because praise is not about us, but true praise flows from the calling that he's called us, and that calling should lead to a different living.

Because until we really understand that, I don't think we'll really praise him. Let's pray. Lord, I thank you. I thank you for this day.

[ 48 : 21 ] I thank you for your word. I thank you even for the challenges that it brings to us, oh, God. But, God, we lean in to the Spirit, and we ask, Lord, give us an understanding, an understanding that will forever change us.

Lord, that it would encourage us to be bolder witnesses, that it would encourage us to be greater praisers, that it would encourage us to be faithful believers for your glory.

May we ever walk before you in light of the calling in which you've called us, and we ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.  
Amen. Amen.  
Thank you.