

Blessings From The Father

Ephesians 1:4-6

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The title of my message tonight is "Blessings From God The Father." I want you to go back to Ephesians 1:3. Paul said, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings," or all the blessings of the Spirit, "in heavenly places in Christ." The blessings that come to us, we're going to see, are from God the Father, from God the Son, and God the Spirit. We're going to spend three weeks, one on each of those three members of the Godhead.

Tonight in Ephesians 1:4-6, we want to look at the blessings that come to us from God the Father. We all know the song, Count your blessings, name them one by one; Count your blessings, see what God hath done; Count your blessings...the song recounts how God has blessed us and we name them one by one. Well, we're going to do that for the next three weeks. We're going to count our blessings that come to us from God our Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Paul is praising God in verse 3.

I see verse 3 as the key to the entire book of Ephesians. Ephesians focuses on the doctrine and the duty of the believer. Ephesians 1-3, the first three chapters, are doctrine; Ephesians 4-6 are duty. Some put a third category in there when you get to Ephesians 6 and talk about the believer's warfare, so some say the wealth of the believer, the walk of the believer, and the warfare of the believer. It's a comprehensive epistle written to describe our riches and our blessings that we have in Christ.

We looked at verses 1-3 last Wednesday night, the opening salutation, verses 1-2, and the eulogy which starts before the doctrine. Paul actually is praising God from whom all blessings flow in verses 4-6, so he is going to be celebrating our blessings. I call this Paul's celebration of blessings. I want to point out the divisions. In verses 4-6, we have the selection of God the Father, He's chosen us; in verses 7-12, we have the sacrifice of God the Son, He has redeemed us; and verses 13-14, we have the seal of the Holy Spirit, and He has sealed us unto the day of redemption.

There are three basic blessings. I am challenged to know just how to break this down, some see two blessings, some see three blessings, but I want to break it into three categories tonight. If you're taking notes, you can write them down. The first blessing from God the Father, it's really the foundation for all salvation. This is where salvation starts. It started in the heart of God in eternity past. The first blessing is in verse 4, "...he hath chosen us," God the Father has chosen us. Paul says, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children," that's the second blessing, "according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made us," this is the third blessing,"accepted in the beloved." Go back with me to verse 4.

The first blessing is that God the Father has chosen us. This is what is known as the wonderful doctrine of election. If you're taking notes, the doctrine of election—God chose you. We use the term for it (and it's used in the Bible, I'll give you a few references) that we are the elect of God, that we're chosen by God. Now, I used my words carefully, and I said, "The wonderful doctrine," because many people don't believe it's a wonderful doctrine. Some people don't like the doctrine. Some people don't believe in the doctrine. Some people fight over the doctrine. Churches have divided over the doctrine. I believe that it's a biblical doctrine. I believe it's a wonderful doctrine, and I believe that we should understand it, that it brings humility, it brings holiness, and it brings praise, honor, and glory to God. It is a doctrine that is controversial to many. It has caused many to create division, strife, and confusion in the body of Christ.

I don't want to get sidetracked too much tonight. I'm trying to be careful, that's why I encouraged you to grab Geisler's book and to go deeper into this subject. The two camps, the two areas that don't see eye-to-eye biblically and kind of feud with one another, are Calvinism (or Calvinist, today we commonly call them reformed theology) and the other group is Arminianism. They follow Joseph Arminius and emphasize man's free will; Calvinism emphasizes God's sovereignty. There's no need to be dividing, fighting, and arguing over this issue. Whether God chose me sovereignly by His grace or whether I chose Him by my own free will by believing and repenting and trusting in Jesus Christ, those two camps and these doctrines we cover tonight do not put somebody outside the pale of orthodoxy. In other words, these are two orthodox Christian groups, so we don't need to fight over this or divide over that.

In the book of Jude, it says, "...that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once," and for all, "delivered unto the saints." We do have to be discerning. What are the essentials of Christianity that we cannot compromise, that we must take a stand on? For sure, one of them is the deity of Christ and the salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, the Bible being the Word of God and so forth, the fact that God is triune, the Trinity, the doctrine of Christ's hypostatic union, He was God in flesh, and the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Those are things that constitute being Christian or not. We can't compromise on those.

The doctrines of Calvinism and Arminianism are issues that we shouldn't really divide over, but we should know and have conviction as to what the Bible teaches. You can't read the Bible without dealing with some of these important issues. Why do these two groups have kind of a contention with one another? Well, that's because the Calvinist emphasizes the sovereignty of God. I'm all about that. I believe in the sovereignty of God. It's a biblical doctrine, and if God is not sovereign, then we're in big trouble, right? God sits on the throne and rules in the affairs of man. God is in control of all things. They believe that God sovereignly elects those who will be saved, and I'm going to try to break it down, dissect a little bit more in just a moment. In the group that's known as Arminianism, I'm just going to give you a quick overview of what they believe, they emphasize the free will of man—that man, even though he is fallen, even though he's a sinner, still has that image of God; which Calvinists believe as well, but they believe that man can choose to repent and believe and trust in Jesus and be saved. They don't focus so much on the sovereignty of God.

Let me just say, as an overarching thought, I believe that there is truth in both camps, and I think that both are taught. I believe that God is sovereign, that He elects and chooses us by His grace. But I do believe that though we are fallen and that we are totally depraved, we still have the ability, as the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, to resist God's grace and resist that work of the Spirit and reject Christ or to surrender our hearts in faith and believe in Jesus Christ and be born again. The problem lies in that you cannot, with your physical understanding, your brain, reconcile the two—did He choose me or did I choose Him? I actually believe, and I don't know why, I've never really had a problem doing this, that both are taught in the Bible and that both should be accepted as biblical. You say, "Well, how can that be? How do you reconcile that?" I don't. That's not my job. Believe me, I'm not taking this position because I'm trying to avoid being shot at, hated, or attacked by anybody. I'm not worried about that. I believe that those two doctrines reconcile in what I use the term, "a higher unity," that God who is omniscient, knows all things and transcendent, that He knows.

I don't know how my phone works. I'm getting all this stuff on my phone, and I don't know how to get rid of it. I have a smart phone, and I'm a dumb guy. I don't know how my car works. I don't know how the tv works. I don't understand...and then people expect me to understand the mind of God. I can't do that. When something is clearly taught in the Bible, I accept it, even though something else clearly taught in the Bible may seem to not gel together or be able to be reconciled. I believe that it's reconciled in a higher unity. Let me give you an example. The Bible teaches there is one God, but that one God is three Persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. They are one in essence, but They're three separate Persons. How can you explain that? Everybody tries to get their explanations and illustrations of the Trinity, and they all fall short. All human illustrations break down somewhere. How do you understand Jesus being God and man? How do you reconcile that the Bible was written by men but given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit? Which is it? It's both. It's not the only mystery that we, as Christians, have to accept by faith that is clearly taught in the Scriptures. When something seems to not make sense to us, if it's clearly taught in the Bible, then we just accept it by faith that it's reconciled in a higher unity.

Calvinism, real quick, and I'm going to jump into this text, don't worry about it. Calvinism is summarized in what is commonly known as the TULIP acrostic. There are five points of Calvinism and they are: T-total depravity, U-unconditional election, L-limited atonement, I-irresistible grace, P-perseverance of the saints. (Now, I probably should have put this up on the screen for you to be able to check it out tonight, but, again, I'm actually spending more time on this than I even wanted to.) You'll hear of what's called the five points of Calvinism. Calvin didn't come up with these five points, they were actually started by the Synod of Dort in 1619. They're not directly written by Calvin, but most Calvinists today or reformed theologians actually accept these as the tenets of Calvinism—total depravity, that man fell and is totally depraved, is dead in sin (we'll talk about that in Ephesians 2, when we get there), and thus he's unable to repent, unable to believe, unable to put his faith in Jesus; so (and I'm going to come back to this) God has to regenerate him by the Spirit and give him the gift of faith in order to believe on Jesus in order to be saved.

The essence of Calvinism is that they believe that regeneration or being born again must take place first before one can repent or believe or trust in Jesus Christ. I totally reject that view. I don't believe it's biblical. I don't believe regeneration precedes faith, I believe it happens the moment one trusts in Jesus and believes in Him, that the Holy Spirit gives you new life (and I'm going to come back to that important point). They teach what's called unconditional election, that is, that God elects us (our doctrine tonight in verse 4, God has chosen us) and it's not based on anything we are or do. God doesn't choose us because we're smart or good looking or intelligent, because we're wonderful, it lies all in God's grace and love in choosing us. They teach a doctrine called limited atonement, that is, basically simply put that when Jesus died on the cross that He didn't really die for the non-elect, that He only died for those who were chosen by God. They believe that the atoning work of Jesus Christ is limited. Again, this is a point of Calvinism that I clearly think is not biblical or scriptural. John 3:16, we know so well, "For God so loved the world," I know there are explanations that they give for those, I think that they're weak, "that he gave his only begotten Son," and then he uses the word "whosoever," whosoever means whosoever, "that whosoever," not just the elect but anyone, "believeth in him," so if you're here tonight and you hear this study and say, "Well, I don't know if I'm elected," then repent, believe in Jesus Christ, get born again, and you'll find out you were chosen by Him before the foundations of the world.

You say, "Well, I don't understand that." Uh, neither do I, but it's awesome, isn't it? Amen? I believe that's what the Bible teaches. I don't believe in limited atonement, and then they also believe in irresistible grace—that if you've been chosen by God, you're going to get saved whether you like it or not. I'm being a little bit flippant there because I don't believe it's really taught in the Scriptures. I believe that we can resist God's grace. Jesus wept over Jerusalem and said, "...how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" So, how is it that God wanted to save them, but they would not and couldn't be saved? Obviously, we have abilities to repent and still believe and resist God's grace.

The last point of the five points of Calvinism is called perseverance of the saints. Basically, by that, they teach that if you're elect, you'll be saved whether you want to or not. You can't resist God's grace. If you're saved and elect, then you will persevere in your faith, you won't backslide or fall away, you'll persevere, which is evidence of your salvation. There's some truth to that. I like to think of it more in the terms of the security and assurance of the believer rather than the perseverance of the saints that we are saved by God's grace and He keeps us by grace.

The five points of Arminianism are election based on knowledge, that is, that God in His knowledge knows who will repent and believe in Him, thus He elects them. Again, I don't believe that. I don't think that's what the Bible means by whom he foreknew, that God set His love upon us, but it doesn't mean that God looked down the corridors of time, saw who would believe, and based on His knowledge He picked those who would believe, therefore that's really not election at all. He's choosing us based on our choice of Him.

The second point is unlimited atonement, which I would hold to that position that whoever

wants to believe can be saved, that Christ died for the world's sins doesn't mean that all be saved, only those who appropriate that finished work of Christ on the cross by faith.

Thirdly, the Arminian believes in natural inability. I do believe that there is some credence to that, that we don't have the ability to save ourselves, that we don't have the ability to seek God, to follow after God, or to look for God; that if you are saved, it's only because the Holy Spirit came to you and convicted and convinced you of your sin. That's why, when you're praying for unsaved friends and family, pray that God would open their eyes. Pray that God would convict them by His Spirit. Pray that God would show them their need of Jesus Christ because they're not going to come to Christ until they see themselves a sinner in need of Christ. I know in my life it happened that way, too. All of the sudden I began to be convicted and felt like I needed God, and I wanted to get right with God. It was all the work of the Spirit in my life, but it wasn't salvation yet. It wasn't regeneration yet. It was a pre-converted work of the Spirit convicting and drawing me to Christ, and I had to believe in Jesus Christ.

They also teach a doctrine of prevenient grace; that is, God saves you by His grace, you can't earn it, work for it, or deserve it, which is true, but they teach what's called the conditional perseverance. In other words, you have to keep on believing, keep on trusting, keep on hanging on, keep on keeping on or you can lose your salvation. In these two camps we find the group that says, "Once you're saved, you're secure in Christ, you cannot be lost." The other group teaches that you can be saved, and then if you don't believe anymore, or you fall away into sin and that becomes a subjective thing, I don't know how they could ever have any doctrine of assurance, they believe that you can lose your salvation.

Obviously, I'm not going to be dealing with all those issues, but this is what we're dealing with tonight. These are very large and controversial doctrinal subjects, and this is why, many times, people don't want to study the first three chapters of Ephesians. I've actually taken notice. A lot of the sermons I hear on Ephesians start in chapter 4. Everyone wants to know how to walk. Everyone wants to know how to live. Everyone loves, "Husbands, love your wives," "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands," "Children, obey your parents," we love those sermons. But what we believe determines how we behave, and doctrine always precedes duty, principles always come before practice. We need to know what we believe in order that we can properly behave and live the Christian life.

This is what John R.W. Stott says about this controversy. He says, "Scripture nowhere dispels the mystery of election, and we should beware of any who try to systematize it too precisely or rigidly. It is not likely that we shall discover a simple solution to a problem which has baffled the best brains of Christendom for centuries," and I say, "That's so true!" We're not going to solve the problem tonight.

The doctrine of election is taught in the Bible, it is not an invention of man. Again, you can argue with that, you can dispute that, but I think it's pretty clear that the doctrine of election is taught in the Bible. Not only are those who are members of the church chosen by God, but the nation of Israel in the Old Testament was a chosen people by God. We have examples.

Tonight we're going to look at Ephesians 1:4. Then, write down Colossians 3:12 where Paul says, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God," so he uses that title. Write down 2 Peter 1:10, he says, "...to make your calling and election sure," make sure that you are chosen by God. In 2 Thessalonians 2:13, it says, "...God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation." I'm going to share a couple more verses on this point in a minute, but let's ask and answer some questions.

What is exactly the doctrine of election? Here's my definition. It's God's sovereign, unconditional act of choosing individuals to be saved. Now, that's not so hard, is it? If you're an Arminianist, you would maybe disagree with that. I believe that I should be a biblicist, not identify with some group but identify with the Scriptures. All faith and practice must be based on Scriptures. Again, it's the sovereign, unconditional act of God of choosing individuals who comprise a group, become the church, to be saved.

The word "chosen" in verse 4 in the Greek is what's called in the middle voice, and the verb is reflective signifying that God's choosing was independent of us and for Himself. Believe it or not, in the Greek grammar of that very word "chosen," means that it was God's choice and it was God's choice of us, but it was for Himself and for His own glory. Choose means to choose out or to select. He chose us by Himself and for Himself. Overarching all that we cover tonight is that God is sovereign in saving sinners. All praise, all glory, all honor belong to God. We love Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast." It excludes boasting. It brings humility and glorifies God. In the book of Jonah, even, salvation is of the Lord. All the blessings that we enjoy, Ephesians 3:1, can be traced back to the sovereign, elective purposes of God.

Harry Allen Ironside said that this doctrine is a family secret that God loves to whisper in the ears of His beloved children. So, you don't go out in the street and go to an unsaved person and say, "Are you elect?" They'll say, "What in the world are you talking about?" "Have you been chosen or are you frozen? Are you washed in the blood?" They'll just run for their lives. This is a family secret, so I would never deal with what I'm dealing with right now if I were preaching an evangelistic sermon and unbelievers were present, though there may be some here tonight that are unbelievers, but it's a family secret this doctrine of God having chosen us.

Some feel that it's a bad doctrine because they think it's prideful to think that God would choose you. "Who do you think you are that God would choose you?" The point you're missing is that God chose us not because of who we are, "God hath chosen the foolish things...the weak things...and base things...which are despised...and things which are not, to bring to nought... that no flesh should glory in," ourselves. God's chosen foolish, weak things. John R.W. Stott says again, he calls election, "a divine revelation, not a human speculation."

Write down Jesus' words in John 15:16, you know the verse, Jesus said, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," now that's pretty hard to get around, right? "Hey, by the way, you didn't choose Me, I chose you." But God has not chosen any to be lost. Make a note of this: The Bible does not teach, and this is a radical version of some Calvinists, what's called double

predestination, that God chooses some to go to heaven and God chooses some to go to hell. God doesn't choose anyone to go to hell. The Bible says that God is "...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." I don't see any limited atonement by any means or double predestination there at all. We need to preach the gospel to every creature. We don't know who's elect, we don't know who's the non-elect. Some say, "Well, if God's chosen who's going to be saved, why do evangelism? Why witness? Why preach?" Because God has chosen (listen to me carefully) the means to the end. God has chosen people, elected people, but God has chosen for those people to hear the gospel and for you and me to preach the gospel to them. God, who has ordained the end, their salvation, has ordained the means to the end, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's why He said go into all the world and preach the gospel—we don't just find out if people are elect and then preach the gospel.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was a Calvinist, but he was evangelistic and actually used to argue against the idea that Calvinists don't evangelize or preach the gospel. He said, "If I could go around and lift up people's shirts and see a yellow stripe down their back, which meant they were elect, then I would only preach to the elect; but I can't do that, so I preach a whosoever gospel, and whoever God ordains to be saved will be saved." It actually gives you assurance that God will save, but He uses our preaching of the Word, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," or by the sermon preached about Christ. Man is, I believe, responsible to believe and put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

Nor do I believe that regeneration must precede faith. I want you to look real quick, and I'm getting ahead of myself, but look at Ephesians 1:13. These are the blessings that come from the Holy Spirit. We'll get there in two weeks. He says, "In whom," referring to Christ, "ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed," there's your faith, "ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." I believe that there's an order there—you heard the gospel, you believed, and then you were sealed by the Holy Spirit, which actually is when you're saved or regenerated. That's the order in which salvation takes place. In John 20:31, John says, "But these are written, that ye might believe... and that believing ye might have life through his name," he didn't say that you first have life that you might believe, he said you believe that you might have life.

In Acts 16:30, when Paul was preaching to the Philippian jailer, who said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" right? You know the question? Great question, right? What did he say to him? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." He didn't say, "I don't know. Are you elect? Are you one of the chosen?" He just said, "Believe," and gave him assurance, "and you will be saved." You say, "Well, John, why are you making such a big deal out of this?" (I do need to kick it into high gear and move along) That is, because the heart of Hyper-Calvinism, extreme Calvinism, teaches that regeneration happens before faith or you believe in Christ, and the Bible doesn't teach that. Again, it comes back down to: Yes, God chooses us, but we have free will to believe, to repent, to trust in Christ, resist grace or believe in grace. If you're lost, you have no one to blame but yourself. If you're saved, you have only God to thank for your salvation. You say, "I don't understand that." I know. This is why people freak out over this

doctrine, but if we can accept that both are taught in the Scriptures, then we'll have a balanced view.

In John 6:37, Jesus said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Now, when does God elect us? Look at verse 4. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world," how's that? You all know the famous quote by Charles Spurgeon. He said, "It's a good thing God chose me before I was born. If He waited until afterward, He never would have chosen me." Of course God knows us before we're born, but before time began, before creation, before Genesis 1:1...I don't know about you, but this just overwhelms and humbles me. When we were worshipping tonight, I thought, How wonderful just to think that God loves me, that God saved me. It's like, why? Why did God save me? Why am I a Christian? Why am I in church tonight? Why am I reading the Bible? Why did I believe in Jesus Christ? Why do I have eternal...I didn't deserve it. It's amazing to think about that God would reach down and choose us.

Paul reaches back in his mind before the foundations of the world, before creation, before time began into the past eternity, which only God Himself existed, and His perfect being, so He saves us by His grace. It's not because of us or because of God's foreknowledge. Write down 2 Timothy 1:9, "...not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." He tells us again, it's not because of our works or who we are or what we've done, but because of God's grace and God's purpose that He saved us by choosing us before the world began.

Let me give you four reasons for election. Election leads to holiness. Look at Ephesians 1:4. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world," why did He choose us? "...that we should be holy and without blame before him in love," or have a loving relationship with Him and have the experience of God's love. Election leads to holiness. Holiness means that we are actually set apart unto God, so God choosing us and saving us and sanctifying us, setting us apart. We don't say, "Well, God chose me, so now I can live however I want." God chose me and it motivates me to live a life of holiness and pleasing God.

Secondly, election leads to loving God, who loved us first, verse 4. Thirdly, election eliminates boasting. That's in Ephesians 2:9, "Not of works, lest any man should boast." If we had anything to do with our salvation, we'd have a basis of boasting. Fourthly, election brings glory to God. Look at Ephesians 1:6, (we'll get there in just a moment) he says, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." Understanding God's election brings glory and praise to Him.

Let me give you the second doctrine that we find a blessing from God the Father, that is, He has adopted us. In other words, He has, we don't choose ourselves, chosen us. He has, it's a work of God, adopted us. Notice it in verse 5. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will," so He has chosen us that we might live holy lives and we might experience His love.

Secondly, He has adopted us. The misunderstood word in verse 5 is the word “predestinated” us. The word is used commonly in the Scriptures, but a lot of people confuse it as being the same as election. It’s connected to election, but it’s not the same. Let me make it as simple as I can. Sometimes this gets so complicated that people don’t even know what’s going on. God chooses you, you didn’t choose Him, He chose you; He saves you by His grace, all praise and glory to Him, and then He predestines you. Predestination is God predetermined. Predestination means beforehand to determine what He’s going to do with those that He’s chosen. I humorously say, it’s kind of like God saying, “Okay, now that I’ve chosen him, what am I going to do with him?” God predestines, He predetermined. Predestination is only for the saved individual. It’s only for the elect individual. God doesn’t predestinate anyone to go to hell or to be lost, but those whom He chooses, He’s predetermined, “This is what I am going to do with them,” and what He’s going to do with them, it says in verse 5, is adopt them as His children. I don’t know about you, but that’s pretty cool. God not only chose me, but He’s adopted me.

Adoption is a beautiful thing. Adoption is an amazing thing. If you’re adopted, you’re blessed because someone actually chose you and took you into their family. You know, I wasn’t adopted. When I was born, it’s just like, “This is your kid. Take him home from the hospital, and if you don’t like him, that’s too bad. You’ve got him for a long time.” I’m being a little bit silly, obviously, but you don’t have a choice. In adoption, there’s a choice. By the way, adoption wasn’t practiced in the nation of Israel. It’s not Jewish in background, it was Greco-Roman. In the Jewish world, if your wife couldn’t produce children, you’d take another woman and raise up seed to your family name and have children with another wife or another woman or something like that. In the Greco-Roman world, if you didn’t have children, then you might adopt. It was very common for them to adopt a loved slave, and that slave would actually become a part of the family. They would take their name and get the inheritance. It’s Greco-Roman in their culture, and that’s where it comes into Scripture.

God not only regenerates us, we’re born into the family of God by given new spiritual life, but we’re actually placed in the family of God as adult sons and daughters with full legal standing to enjoy our inheritance. We’re adopted into God’s family. Notice, verse 5, that it is “...according to the good pleasure of his will,” God’s loving, gracious, sovereign purpose in adopting us. God’s higher purpose was not just to create us, but, through allowing the fall, He would elect us, adopt us, and redeem us.

Now, I know we sometimes think, What if Adam and Eve had never sinned? What if they’d never fallen into sin? I don’t know how to really think that way because that’s not what happened. But, do you know that God knew Adam would blow it in the garden? When God said, “Adam, where are you?” He wasn’t really freaking out trying to find Adam, Where did he go? I just made him, now I’ve lost him in the bushes. He knew where Adam was. I believe that when we get to heaven, we’re going to have our minds blown that God’s going to unfold His purpose. There’s going to be things that we can never even fathom of what God has done all for His praise and all for His honor and all for His glory. If Adam and Eve had never fallen, we would’ve been God’s creation, we would have been made in God’s image, we would have

fellowship with God, but we wouldn't have been redeemed. We wouldn't have been bought with a price. We wouldn't have been adopted into God's family by the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. That's why when we get to heaven, we're going to be singing, Worthy is the Lamb who is slain, who has purchased us and redeemed us and bought us by His blood. We're going to be overwhelmed with the purpose and plan of God. This is all part of God's eternal, marvelous love and grace.

The third blessing is in verse 6, that is, God the Father not only chose us, God the Father not only adopted us by predestinating us or predetermining who would be saved...and by the way, for that predestination, write down Romans 8:28-9. Let me read it to you. He says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 9 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren," so it talks about God predestinating us to be His children, the firstborn among many brethren.

God also accepts us, verse 6, "To the praise of the glory of his grace," or some translations have to the praise of his glorious grace, "wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved, 7 In whom we have redemption," so that "beloved" is a reference to Jesus Christ. God the Father accepts us in God the Son. The only standing or basis by which we can be accepted by God is in the Person of His Son Jesus Christ.

Remember last week I hit really hard the theme that we see in Ephesians 1, "in Christ, in Christ, in Christ Jesus our Lord." All these blessings come to us because of our position in Christ, so "he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." There's nothing that we can do to make ourselves acceptable to God. There's nothing that you can do to make yourself acceptable to God other than repenting of your sin, believing and trusting in Jesus Christ, and then God imputes to you His righteousness—He takes you out of Adam and places you in Christ, thus you are accepted in the beloved. This is your position in Christ. We're accepted in Jesus Christ who died on the cross. Someone put it in a poem, Near, so very near to God, Nearer I could not be; For, in the Person of His Son, I am as near as He. Dear, so very dear to God, Dearer I could not be, For, in the Person of His Son, I am as dear as He. God the Father accepts me as He would His own Son.

I'll just make a couple quick points, and then we'll wrap this up. There's an illustration of this in a little postcard epistle in the New Testament. It's called the book of Philemon. Have you ever read the book of Philemon? The book of Philemon is a little letter written by Paul to a man who was in Colossae. Philemon was a slave owner. He had a slave named Onesimus from Colossae. Onesimus did something a slave should never do, stole from his master and ran away. He left his master, Philemon, and ran away to get lost in the big city of Rome. He kind of headed off to Rome and thought, I'd get lost in the crowd. I have the money I took from my master, but he felt empty and frustrated and knew that it didn't satisfy (I'm kind of speaking with a little sanctified imagination, now, not just relating the verses).

I picture Onesimus walking down the street in Rome one day and out in front of a hired rented

house there was a man in chains. That attracted him because he thought, I know what it is to be in chains. I'm a slave. He stopped to listen to this man talk about being forgiven of sin and freedom in Christ and sharing the gospel. That man was Paul the Apostle. He was under arrest in Rome. Onesimus listened and listened and the Spirit convicted him and he got saved. He started to hang out with Paul, who was under house arrest. He got disciplined by Paul, and as time went on evidently they started talking and Paul said, "Well, where are you from?" He said, "I'm from Colossae. I'm a runaway slave, and I stole from my master. Now that I'm a Christian, I really need some wisdom. What should I do?" Paul said, "Well, I know lots of people in Colossae. Who is your master?" He said, "Philemon." He said, "I know Philemon. Philemon is a Christian. He's one of the members of the church that I started. I'll write a letter to him. I'll tell Philemon that you've gotten saved; and when you go back, that if you owe him anything, that you should put it to my account and that he should accept you as he would accept me." It's a picture of our acceptance in Christ.

Paul writes this little letter, and Onesimus goes back to Philemon. He's probably kind of shaking and a little afraid. He says, "Before you hit me, read this letter." Philemon unfolds the letter, "Why, it's from Paul!" You've become a Christian? That's marvelous!" He probably hugged Onesimus, and they cried together and rejoiced in what God had done in saving this rebellious, run-away slave, and now they are brothers in Christ. Actually, Philemon 1:18, Paul said, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account...I will repay it," I love that. That's the gospel. Jesus died for me, and God the Father accepts me as He would His own dear Son.

We are chosen in Christ, we are adopted in Christ, and we are accepted in Christ. No wonder Paul says in verse 6, "To the praise of the glory of his grace." Now, we're going to look at the blessings from the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. We just covered the Father tonight. At the end of the blessings from the Son, at the end of the blessings from the Spirit, notice what he says in verse 12, "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ," then notice what he says also in verse 14, "Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." At the end of all three blessed sections from Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, there's a doxology. It starts with a eulogy—praise be to God from whom all blessings flow—it ends with doxology, and, in between, is this doctrine.

You know, if we're really knowledgeable of what God has done for us, we should be a singing congregation. We should be singing, Praise God from whom all blessings flow! But remember, we're saved by grace, "through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast," Ephesians 2:8-9. Amen?