

Embrace the Mystery//Mystery #1: “We are Chosen”//Ephesians 1:3–14

(Lot to do, so let's get to work) Today is going to be one of the most difficult things I've ever taught you, but also the most important. We're going to talk about the fact that God has chosen you for all eternity to be His child, and the rich blessing that that fact is supposed to bring into your life...

- And it's going to be difficult for some of you, because this biblical teaching raises all kinds of questions. “*Why did God choose me? Why didn't he choose everybody? Doesn't the Bible teach free will?*” And these are great questions.

But here's what I need you to do. I need you, for just a little while, to turn *off* those objections. I want to teach you today as a pastor, not as an apologist or a defender of Christian doctrines. This is one of the richest doctrines of the Bible, and it will bring more meaning and more comfort and more stability into your life than just about any other. That's why Paul *starts* the book of Ephesians with it.

I'm going to teach the Scriptures to you just as they are written (there's not going to be a whole lot of opinion or interpretation); I'm just going to show you what they say. And I would like to ask you just to take this stuff at face value and simply assume it *means* what it says.

You say, “But what about my objections?” Listen, there is NOTHING wrong with your questions. God gave us our inquisitive minds and He wants us to *use* them. God is not threatened by our questions and He invites us to ask them! But there are certain things that God reveals to us about Himself and His plan that blow our minds... of course, we're talking about *God* here, and when we are dealing with the infinite, Almighty God, of course there are things that make us stand back overwhelmed with awe and mystery.

- So what do we do with our objections? We could take a cue here from none other than theologian John Calvin. Calvin's favorite verse was **Deuteronomy 29:29**:
 - “*The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.*”
 - What that means is that there are things that God has revealed to us about Himself which we are to hold on to and to *obey*; and then there are *secret* things God hasn't enabled us, for whatever reason, to see at this point. And while we are free to ask questions about God, we should never let those questions make us doubt or disobey the things that God has revealed clearly.
- So, God says that if we are saved it's because God chose us and drew us to Himself. But we also know that God loves all men and desires all to be saved and that whosoever will may come. And sometimes we just have to say, “I'm not sure how they work out. But I'll believe they are both true because both are revealed.”
- Think **about another difficult area of Christian doctrine, the Trinity**... Jews for 3000 years believed there was only one God. Then Jesus showed up and said “I've been sent from God... and I am also God Himself.” His disciples were like,
 - “Well... does that mean that there are 2 Gods... that we were wrong all those years about there being only one God?”
 - “No. You were right, there was only one God.”
 - “Then... you are not God... because you said you were sent from God.”
 - “No, that's true, too. They are both true: There is only one God; and I am that God, even though I am sent from God and separate from the Father...”
 - (The Apostle Peter's mind just exploded.)
 - Then, Jesus says, “*You can feel free to try and resolve all that... but what you can't deny any of what has been revealed: God is one; and I am God; and I am sent from the Father and separate from that one;*”

- *OK, have fun with that one. I am going back to my Father now... who is actually me.*
- Later, Christians expressed this tension as “the Trinity.” One God, in 3 persons. Do any of us really understand that? Not really, but we know there is only one God, and Jesus is God but somehow the Son of God and separate from God the Father.
- The other night my oldest daughter (who is 6) and I were talking about salvation. I asked her, “Sweetheart, if you died right now, and God asked you why he should let you into heaven, what would you say?” She said, “Well Dad, if I was dead, I couldn’t talk.” I said, “In your heart you could.” She said, “I would say it is because I have accepted God as my Savior.” I corrected her, “That *Jesus* as your Savior.” She said: “Dad, they’re the same: Jesus is God; God is Jesus... Dad, did you ever think about this? Jesus is his own dad? You know, He’s the Son of God, and but also God? You know, the Trinity: the whole 3 in 1 thing? ...He’s kind of like my Dora shampoo: body wash, conditioner, and shampoo all in 1.” (Promise that’s what she said!) For centuries theologians have been trying to grasp this and they’ve never thought to use the *Dora shampoo analogy*.
- God is 1 and 3... and we have to expand our minds to be able to grasp both.
- Well... that’s what we have to do here... the Bible teaches that God chose me before the foundation of the world; it also teaches me that God loves the whole world and whosoever will may come... And, again, I’m not sure how all that fits together but for now I’ll hold them in tension and believe them both.
- (BTW, please understand, I’m not saying they are illogical or contradictory, just that they may be beyond the grasp of our finite minds.)
- What you are not allowed to do is say, “*Well, I just don’t agree with this, or I don’t understand it, so I won’t believe it.*”
 - **Illustration:** When I was in college I was part of a Bible study that was team-taught. Guy: “*I just don’t believe that* verse.” Kept waiting on the other shoe to drop, some twist... but he just moved on... and I was like, “You can’t do that!”
- If this is the Word of God, we have to understand that there are many things that are boggling to our minds, and we have to humble ourselves before them.
 - Let me share you with a chapter that I have memorized recently that has brought so much peace into my life: **Psalm 131:** ¹ *O Lord, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me.* ² *But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother.*
 - What that is saying is that there’s a time to question; and there’s a time just to believe; a time to sit silently before the Father and just rest that He is God and that what He says about Himself and me and the world are true.
 - In some ways we are, in relation to God, like kids... There are many things that I tell my kids they can’t understand. Daddy, why can’t the newborn baby take a bath with us? Why can’t I play with the hair dryer in the tub? Sometimes I have to say, “Baby, there’s just some things you can’t grasp yet, and for now I need you just to trust and obey daddy.”
 - We get that as parents: sometimes our kids need to just trust us because our understanding of the world is so much greater than theirs... but which do you think is greater... the gap between my 4 year old’s understanding of reality and mine, or my understanding of reality and God’s? *Of course, mine and God’s.*
 - So, there is a time to just rest in God’s truth... even when you can’t put it all together. And some of the greatest blessings come from knowing when and

how to question and when simply to rest and to trust.

- So here is what I am asking: if you believe this book is the word of God, I want you, just for a little while, to turn off your objections, and just listen. I want to, as a pastor, show you what wonderful comfort this truth is to bring into your life.
- Later, you can go back and try to reconcile everything.
- Warning: The smarter you are, the harder this is going to be for you. (If you're dumb, you'll be like, "Oh yeah, this totally makes sense").
 - (And if you hear something today that totally trips you up, just put in the 80% of stuff you don't remember from my sermon)
- And, hey, if you don't believe this is the Word of God, I want you to at least be open to the fact that maybe this explains a lot of what has been going on in your life. And step back in wonder and say, "No human being would have written this!"
- As a pastor, I will tell you that the longer I'm in ministry, the more central and precious this doctrine becomes to me, in every way. If you get this, I promise you, this will add more strength and more comfort to your life than just about anything else. And it will drive you to worship at new depth. After today, you'll say, "Wow, I've never understood how much God has done for me in salvation."

(And, I've got to say this last thing) Some of you are going to say... Wait... are you saying this is a Calvinist church? Our church does not define itself as "Calvinist;" we are just committed to teaching everything the Bible teaches, just as it is taught. We don't let labels or systems or agendas drive us, we just believe what is written here. And that's how I am going to teach today. OK...

YOU READY? Warning... I'm about to unload on you... (After I get done, some of you are going to feel like you stared at the theological sun for too long—spiritual eyes are going to burn)

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

- This is a pretty stunning promise to the Ephesians.
- The city of Ephesus, as I explained last week, was obsessed with the spirit world... They believed in different spirit beings that occupied different levels of heaven, and you had to keep the various spiritual powers happy if you wanted your life to go well. If something was wrong in one area of your life, it's because the spirit over that area was ticked off at you and you need to do something to appease them.
- *Don't just dismiss that as something ancient, primitive people believed.* Today a lot of people refer to it as karma... some of us, our lives have gone wrong and we wonder what we are being *repaid* for... or, your something goes wrong in your life, you conclude that God must be punishing you for something.
- It's a terrible spiritual bondage because you are always wondering how karma or God feels about you.
- To those people, Paul makes this staggering and liberating assertion that in Christ, who sits in the highest of the heavens, we have the assurance of all of God's favor and every spiritual blessing.
- *There's nobody else to appease...* Christ is at the top and He is on our side; in Him we have every spiritual blessing. There is nothing left He could promise to us that He hasn't already given to us!
- What's more, Paul is going to show you in these next 11 verses, which make up 1 sentence in Greek, that every member of the Trinity is now working for your salvation and your good. In the first 3 verses He explains to you that the Father planed your salvation; then in vs 7 that the Son accomplished it; and in the last 3 verses that the Holy Spirit brings it about in your heart. From start to finish your salvation has been accomplished by God.

- Could you let that sink in before we move on... there is nothing that you could hope for more from God right now than you already have *in Christ*. He could not love you more than He does right now; He could not be more for you than He is right now. He could not be working more on your behalf than He is right now. Every member of the Trinity is at work for you and in you, always has; always will be; employed every molecule in the universe to your good.

And Paul says here is how you can know that... ⁴ even as (that really should be translated from Greek as 'because.') You can know every blessing is yours *because...*

...he **chose us in him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

Let's stop right now: **"he chose us in him before the foundation of the world..."** (v. 4)

- Here it is... you ready? It's an awesome thought. **Before the world was ever established, God knew you and loved you.** There has never been a time when God did not know about you and never been a time where He has not loved you.
- *Has it ever dawned on you, nothing has ever dawned on God?* For as long as God has been in existence, He has cherished you and planned to redeem and save you.
- A lot of people think that this verse means that God simply "*knew beforehand*" who would choose Him, and those are the ones He predestined for salvation.
- But that's not what this verse says. It says He set His love on you and chose you before you were even a twinkle in your daddy's eye. From vs. 3 when your salvation begins to vs. 14 when it is all over, God is the primary one driving the action.
- You say, "Well, *why* did He choose me? What was it about me? Did God see that I was going to make a great Christian and so He said, 'Man, that guy is gonna be awesome. Plus, he's a great musician! I've got to have *that guy* on my team!'"

- No... In fact, when God was explaining to Israel why He chose them He said, **Deuteronomy 7:7-8** "*It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but just because the Lord loved you.*"
- You say, "I know, maybe I wasn't as wicked as other people; God saw that deep down I had a good heart." Again, Deuteronomy, God said to Israel: **"Know, therefore, that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people."** (**Deuteronomy 9:6**)
- He said, "It wasn't your 'good heart.' Actually, you were more stubborn than all of them." Well, then what was it? Did you see that phrase in **7:8**? "*...just because the Lord loved you.*" As Paul says in (v. 5) it was **"according to the purpose of His will."**
 - **A story I love to tell...** the first date I had with Veronica...
 - God had no list like that for us. We were so ruined by sin we were completely unlovely! Illus. *Every bride looks beautiful on her wedding day...* (even ones that don't look other times) never stood at the altar and been like, "whoa... you seeing this? You sure about this?" All look beautiful. God chose us and loved us when we were unlovely.
- The point is that God's choice of us was not something we had in any way earned; it was all grace.
- You say, "*Well, how is it fair that God chose us and not others?*"
 - That's a good question, and one I'm not going to answer today, because I told you in the beginning that that's not my purpose in this message. Again, for now, I'm asking that you just suspend that for a little while and let me talk to you as a pastor...
 - But I will say is this: Before you and I start talking about what is "**fair,**" **we should remember that what was fair was that God not choose any of us.** We, as a race, have chosen to reject God, and to

live with the results of that rejection is what is fair. What we rightfully deserve is judgment and death.

- The fact that God chose any of us to redeem is sheer, unmerited grace. And, to be honest, the reason that this whole discussion bothers so many people is because deep down we don't really think we are worthy of judgment as a race. We still think God owes us salvation. But that's just not true.
- You say, "Well, God chose me... but didn't that violate my choice?" Like if one of you single guys walked up to some girl here and said, "I'm a Calvinist dater. I have chosen you to be my wife. You did not choose me, but I chose you and have ordained you..." That would lead to a restraining order. You say, "Is that what's happening here?" Like God forced us to love Him. Like we are a mail order bride or something.
 - No, the Bible says His choice is never against our will but always consistent with our will. The Scripture says that all those who come to God freely choose to! As Jesus often said, 'Whosoever *will* may come...' Or, 'If anyone thirsts, let Him come to me and drink.'
- You say, "Well, then why does it say God chose us first?" Jesus explained it in **John 6:44**: "***No one can come to me unless the Father draws him.***" Greek scholars point out that the Greek word for "draw" there, *helkuo*, carries the idea of an irresistible force; the image of a desperately hungry man being drawn to food. That's what God did to you: God created a hunger in you to know Jesus. And that hunger drew you to Jesus.
 - You see, our problem is not that we can't choose God; our problem is that we don't want to choose God. Our chooser works fine, it's our want that is all out of whack.
 - Ephesians 2:1 says that without the Holy Spirit we are dead in our sin, and what that means is that we don't desire God. We desire sin. We love sin and rebellion and independence.
 - So God changes our heart so that we begin to want God. He wakes us up and lets us seek how wicked sin is; how

glorious and desirable God is; and how insane it is to oppose God. When that happens in you, that is all the Holy Spirit at work in your heart.

- Or think of it like this: **Insane man on top of a building**. That's what God does. He begins to restore your sanity.
- Here's how the Bible describes it: **Acts 16:14**, talking about Lydia, it says, "***The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.***" See? She chose to pay attention because she was interested; but she was interested because... God had "opened her heart."

In love ⁵ he **predestined us for adoption** through Jesus Christ, according to the **purpose of his will**, ⁶ **to the praise of his glorious grace**, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

Notice another key word: "**predestined**" (vs. 5)

- We are predestined, vs. 5 says, for adoption.
 - I have some friends here who have adopted... they've told me about the love you feel. You walk in and see the one who is to be your child, and immediately love wells up in your heart... you're going to take them into your family. They are going to grow up w/ your name as your children; they are going to become heirs of your wealth.
 - That's what Jesus did to us. He walked into the orphanage of sin and said, 'that one... I will give that one *everything*.'
- Down in **vs. 12** Paul says that we were "**predestined to become people... to the praise of His glory.**" You see, when you adopt, one of the things you do is teach the adopted child your values. That's what God did. In predestining us to be sons, God determined that He would make us into people who reflected His values; people whose lives would bring him glory.

⁷ In him we have **redemption** through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight

Let's focus on that word "redemption" (v. 7) for a minute.

- Here's where Jesus takes over. The Father planned our salvation; now Jesus comes and accomplishes it. Jesus came to earth and redeemed us. I'm not going to go deep here, because in 2 weeks we're going to spend a whole week looking at this... but what Paul is trying to show you is that Jesus came and purchased your salvation, in its entirety, all at once.
 - A lot of people think that salvation is basically "forgiveness." You say, 'God, I'm sorry for my sin,' and He says... "OK," and forgives you. But it is so much more than that! Imagine if, when you became a Christian, God only forgave you. That would last until... you sinned again and then you would need... to be forgiven again! Your relationship with God would always be hanging by a thread... and the only times you'd be sure you were going to heaven would be when you were, at the moment, sinless... which, for me, would last about 15-seconds and then I'd need to be saved again.
 - If that were the case, none of us would ever make it to heaven!
- But that's not what Jesus did. Jesus did not forgive us, He *redeemed* us. He paid the full price and settled the score for our salvation.
 - **Let me give you this example:** A lot of the guys here at the office have to work on Sunday, and so sometimes they miss some sporting event they want to see. So, they set their DVR to record it... if you try to tell them the score, they don't want to know it. They say, "no, no, no, don't ruin it," because they want to go through and live the excitement. If I know the score, sometimes I'll be like, "Hey, do you want to know the score?" and they'll be "No..." and I'll say, "Look, if I told you the score, you could go home and spend 3 hours with your wife instead of watching TV."

- What Paul is saying here is the score of this game has already been settled and recorded: Jesus 100; our sin, 0.
- I know I'm going to heaven because the score is settled there!
- And, you see, if I know that the victory is already won, it changes how I battle with sin now. (Like, if you are watching the game and your team loses the ball and the other team gets it and runs it back for a 70 yd touchdown, you say, "It's ok... they win in the end.")

9 making known to us the mystery of his will, **according to his purpose**, which he set forth in Christ ¹¹ ...having been predestined **according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will**, ¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

"Who works all things according to the purpose of his will" (v. 11)

- Here's what else God is doing, Paul says. God is now working everything for His good plan in our lives which He has purposed for all eternity.
- He works *all things* according to the purpose of His will... every molecule in the universe God is employing for His great purpose. (Remember, these Ephesians are people who are consumed with questions about fate; they're always wondering if the gods are displeased with them or if they are unlucky.)
- Paul says, "For you, here is no fate. God has had a good purpose for you since time began, and He's at work in everything, now, accomplishing it."
 - You say, "What about bad luck? I have really been unlucky in my life. I didn't get this break; I got overlooked here." Paul says God works "*all*" things for His purpose. All things include bad luck.
 - Here's a verse very intriguing for me: **Proverbs 16:33** *The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.* That means that God exercises a certain amount of control even over what looks like dumb luck.

- What about where others have mistreated me? Surely God wasn't behind that?
 - Sure, I'm not saying God was in the person mistreating you, or that God was happy with it... but I'm saying this verse assures you that God controls everything, and employs everything, even bad things, for his good purpose.
 - In the Old Testament Joseph was a guy who really suffered at the hands of others. Yet, at the end of his life he recognizes that God was using even Joseph's victimization to accomplish his good purposes.)
- You say, "Well, what about my own stupid, bad decisions? I really have messed myself up and now I'm suffering for my bad decisions."
 - Sure, there are consequences for our choices. But if you are walking with God, God works all things, even your mistakes, for His good purpose.
 - Jacob was a guy who made some really dumb decisions, some of which *greatly* displeased God, and which caused him a lot of hardship; but God used even those to establish His good purposes.
- All things... listen, this does not mean that God calls evil things good or God takes delight in them happening; simply that God sovereignly uses all things, good and bad, for His good purposes in your life.
 - **Think of it like this: my watches backwards wheels**
 - So, you say, "Why did God allow me to be divorced? Why was I overlooked for promotion? Why didn't my parents help me out more?" I can't answer every question, and I'm not trying to minimize your pain... God weeps with you, but I can tell you, if you are walking with God, God has a **goal** He is pursuing in you and that every movement in your life is working toward. He has predestined you to be someone who brings Him glory, and every molecule in the universe is harnessed to bring that about in you.

¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were **sealed with the promised Holy Spirit**, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

- Here's where the Holy Spirit takes over. He's the one who brings salvation about in your heart. And that investment by God of Himself in you is the guarantee that what God has started in you, He will finish.

So, Christian, you are chosen. Here's why I share it with you... (what's important is not that you and I figure out how choosing works; but that we embrace what it means for us.)

This great truth should produce 5 things in you:

(1) Assurance:

- Because salvation begins in God, and is accomplished by God, you can be sure that what God starts, *He will finish*.
- Sometimes, when I am most discouraged about where I am spiritually, or how bad my heart still is... I think about the things I still struggle with; temptations I am still weak to; sick emotions or thoughts I still have... I think, "How could I possibly be saved?" But then I think about the fact that God started this great saving work in me; He sought me when I wasn't seeking Him; and what He started, He will finish. Thank God He's always been more committed to my salvation than I have been.
 - Listen, every God-seeking Christian I know struggles at some point with their salvation. Because, the closer you get to God the more you can see into your heart and you can see how *bad* your heart really is...and you think, *How could I possibly be saved?* You think, "I must be one of the ones who is religious on the outside but never *really* been saved by Jesus." Every God-seeking Christian I know thinks that at some point. I have.

- It is this understanding that delivers me from that fear.
 - What God started, He will finish! (I used to think, when I first became a Christian, that I was the one who was doing everything. I got interested in Him; I made a decision for Christ; I started to really seek to grow in Him; the farther away I get from the decision, the more I recognize that God was the one who was seeking me. And what He has started in me, He will finish.)
- Jesus explained it this way in **John 6:37–39** and said, “All that the Father gives me will come to me...³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me...”
 - Question: What would you think of a shepherd who lost a few sheep during the day? He leaves in the morning with 100, and only comes back with 98. You ask him, “Where are the other 2?” “Well, yeah, I lost 2 along the way, but you just don’t understand how stubborn they were. They got free will, you know, and I’m not going to intervene in that. So, they wanted to play on the cliff edge, so I just had to let them go.”
 - No, a good shepherd brings his sheep back and saves them from themselves. If he starts with 100 in the morning, he ends with 100 in the evening.
 - Jesus is a Good Shepherd. He loses none. All He starts with, He ends with.
- (The fact that you keep yearning to be free of sin and coming back to God is proof that Jesus is seeking you.)

(2) Power

- What I mean by that is this truth gives me power to get back up again after failure. If I know that what God starts, He will finish, I can be sure that even though today was consumed by defeat, God’s decree for my tomorrow is victory.
- (“for good works, which God prepared beforehand (predestined) that we should walk in them.”(Eph 2:10) Eph

2:10 says it this way: *God predestined us for good works*. He predestined that I would be someone whose life would be *filled* with good works and that I would be to the praise of His glory, not an embarrassment to His kingdom!

- Listen, that means that the burden of “fixing” your life is not on you. God has already decreed it... and supplied the power for it.
 - You see, many of you feel so defeated! You think, “How am I going to get over my lust? How am I ever going to be bold like a Christian should be? How am I ever going to fix my marriage?”
 - We feel like God has left us a set of instructions been like “OK, get to it,” and we think, “I can never do this!”
- But that’s the wrong picture of the Christian life. The good works God has for you, He has already predestined for you, and provided the power for you to do.
 - The burden doesn’t lie on me to fix my own life, but to yield to God, who has promised to win it through me.
 - So, when I face a battle... for example, with temptation; or, being the right kind of husband; I can say, “God has already declared that I will have victory in this battle and He has already provided the power I need to win it; so I can go into this battle trusting that the power I need to win it is already there!”
 - What I am saying is this... If you feel like, “I can’t win this battle.” You are right. But God has pre-determined that He will make you victorious in it.
 - So you should go into the battle not feeling like *you* have to win it, but believing that He will win it through you... He’s already predestined it!
- I think of it like this: Do you ever go clothes shopping and **buy clothes on faith**? “I’d like to be this size. Crunches, etc.” I used to but I quit b/c it never worked... I’d get discouraged. How am I ever going to get to where I fit these? It may not work on clothes, but this is what God does to you spiritually. God has

already purchased Jesus' clothes for me to wear; He's determined to make me fit them."

- Power: Some of you are so discouraged, and you feel like you'll never be victorious as a Christian.
 - Listen: Where does that yearning to be a victorious Christian in your heart... where does it come from? That's the ***Spirit*** of God crying out in you. And if He's in you doing that, then you can rest assured that what He starts, He can finish! He's already pre-appointed victory for you, and He's yearning inside of you for it! So, get up, my friend! Victory awaits you!
- And some of you wonder if you have what it takes to be a Christian at all... You think, *"My life is so scarred by mistakes, and failure... I just don't have what it takes to be a child of God!"*
 - **I've got an illustration for you.** Say you wake up in an ambulance... don't know how you got there... EMT says, *"You've been a bad wreck. We've pulled you from the wreckage and have you on life support. You're going to be fine."* All you have to do at that point is simply consent to their rescue of you! You could say, "Stop, let me out, I want off." Or, you could say, "OK."
 - That's what happening in your salvation. God is waking you up and saying to you, *"I am saving you. You may think you are beyond hope, but I am mighty to save. Just consent and believe."* And for some of you, it's happening right now. That's why you are here now. You just have to consent to what God is doing.

(3) Humility

- You see, according to Ephesians, all we did was wake up in the ambulance...
- Again, you may think you became a Christian b/c you considered and read and studied and pondered and decided

to follow Jesus. But, according to Ephesians 1, the only reason you did those things is because God was seeking you.

- You are a Christian by grace alone, and not because of anything you've ever done.
- And why was it God chose you? Was it because you had a better heart, or more natural strength... and God thought you'd make a great Christian, so He had to have *you*?
- No. You were chosen, Paul says, so that God could glorify His grace in you.
 - If anything, Scripture says that God chose you *because* you were weak. Paul said, **"God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong." (1 Corinthians 1:27)** In the weaker people, God could most easily put His grace and His power on display.
 - **God's preference is to turn fools into Christians.**
 - So, the fact that He chose *you* demonstrates that you were most likely a bigger fool in His eyes than others. You had less potential, not more.
 - How does that make you feel? *Not proud*. Be insulted in Jesus' name.

(4) Hope: To bravely face your trials

- I know that God is working in every area of my life to make of me a son that is to the praise of His glory!
- He has harnessed literally every molecule in the universe to that end.
- Even in the things where I feel victimized, and hurt, and unlucky, God is working for my good.
- And I don't have to ever do anything to Him or for Him to make Him work for my good, like the Ephesians thought they had to do to Artemis and the cacophony of gods and spirit beings, Christ has already done that and I know that in Him God has permanently and irrevocably willed my good.
- This shatters the idea of fate or karma.
- I have a friend, Matt Chandler, my age, father of 3... pastor of a church a lot like ours. Diagnosed with brain cancer. Heart

breaking. He's praying for healing... a lot of us are. But he said something the other day, **quoting CS Lewis**, which just really struck me. He said, when we get to heaven, it's not that we look back and see the reasons bad things happen and say, "Oh... that's why that happened." Rather, we will say, "What bad things? We are so consumed with God's finished product we don't remember the process he used. Paul said, "the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us."

(5) Boldness: In sharing the Gospel

- People say, "Well, if God has already chosen those who will be saved, then why do we witness?"
- Good question. For Paul, though, the fact that God had chosen some was why he had the confidence to witness.
 - Acts 18:9 Paul was preaching in a city and he was getting a lot of opposition. God told him in a vision, "*Go on preaching, because I have many people in this city.*" So Paul kept preaching, knowing that soon they would come. That God had chosen many more people motivated Paul!
 - I heard a missionary say once that when he first became a missionary, he didn't know how he could be a missionary if he believed God had chosen people. But after serving on the mission field for many years, he said, he didn't know how he could go on being a missionary if he didn't believe God had chosen some. Peoples' hearts were so hard... he said, "Unless I believed that God would change someone's heart, I'd be convinced people would never believe and I'd give up."
 - I certainly felt that when I was a missionary... living in a Muslim nation. I wondered how people would ever believe... but I knew that God had declared he would bring people of every city to faith in Jesus.

- The idea that God chooses some to salvation doesn't discourage sharing Christ, it empowers it.
- You say, but why share if they are chosen?
 - Again, that's one of those areas where you lose your mind.
 - I've tried to teach you to think of it like this: Has God appointed the day you will die? "*Just eat*"
- Eating is the way God ordains we would live; sharing Christ with people and praying for them is the way God has ordained people will get elected.
- So, why share the Gospel if God has already elected some to salvation? **Because the more I share the Gospel, the more people keep getting elected.** It's just the way God does it.
- Or here's what I did last night (prayed for my girls)... similar to what I do every night... place my hands on them and say, "God, save them!" You say, "Why would you do that if you believed they are chosen or not." You are thinking about it wrong. Prayer is the means by which God brings about His plan. Yes, there is mystery in that, but I know that God's choosing doesn't work separate from my prayer and efforts, but mysteriously in and through them.
- You say, "That makes my head hurt." Of course it does. It's a paradox, but a tension we live with. I share Christ with people like it's all up to me, and I pray to God that they'll receive Jesus like it's all up to Him.

Those are the 5 things that will be true in your life if you believe this doctrine. Don't just consent to the doctrine, ask, "Is the fact that I believe it reflected in my life?"

- Do I live with the hope that God is working in everything for my good? Or, do you struggle with depression?
- Do I fight temptation with the confidence that comes from knowing God has won the battle, or do you feel defeated?

- Do I share with the boldness of knowing that God is drawing some, or are you a pansy who keeps his mouth shut all the time because you are afraid people will reject you?

Now, one last thing... some of you... the thing I know you have heard through this whole message is... "How do I know if I'm chosen? Are you saying I can't get 'in' unless I'm chosen?"

- John 1:12 says, *"to as many as received Him, to them He gave the power to become children of God."*
 - If, while I am talking to you, you have a desire to believe on Jesus, that desire is from Him and I urge you to act on it. You would not have that desire were God not working in your heart.
 - Here's how God draws... You first develop a conviction of sin where you begin to lose your taste for sin. Then you begin to see the beauty of Christ and desire Him. Before you were indifferent to Christ, but now in your heart you develop an appetite for Him where you want to know Him.
 - If that's happening to you, God is drawing you.
 - Listen, the fact that you are here today shows you that God is drawing you. The fact that you met that Christian at work or in your neighborhood or have a Christian suitemate... it's not an accident. It shows you that God is seeking *you*! **You are in the ambulance right now...** you're being woken up. Just believe and consent!
 - I can say without hesitation that the choice is entirely *yours right now*. Jesus said, "Whosoever *will* may come." If you will, you may come!
 - Whether or not you are chosen is entirely in your court.
 - The irony is, you have the opportunity to choose right now whether or not you are predestined (Peter's head just exploded again).

Here's what I want you to get from today: No matter who you are, at whatever stage in life you are, God is drawing you... He is waking you up in the ambulance... and if you see that, and believe it, all you have to do right now is say "Yes." Consent.

Maybe He is saying to you,

- "Believe me that I am fully in charge of everything in your life, even though it looks like it is all going wrong."
- "Believe me that I will give you victory over a struggle you are having."
- Or maybe, "Believe me that I have come to save you. And just say Yes to what I want to do!"

Here's the question for all of you... Are you willing to say "Yes" to Him?

- God, I'll trust you are working in my circumstances, even though it seems like everything is out of control right now.
- God, I'll let you lead me in victory.
- God, I'll receive you as my Savior.

Bullpen:

- Let me use an analogy: **Geometry...**
 - In high school, I took geometry. And our teach introduced us to the whole idea of a proof... where she'd give you the answer and you'd have to figure out the steps to get there. Completely different than the math problems I was used to. Usually you'd get the question... now you got the answer and you had to figure out the steps to the answer. First few times I was sure...
 - *That's in some ways how the Bible works.* You get the answers. Truths the Bible reveals to you. The fact that you are saved means that God chose and drew you. But we also know that God loves all men and desires all to be saved. And you and I can try and figure out how it all works together. But, at the end of the day, I have to come back to trust in what God has revealed simply because it was God who revealed it.
 -
 - When you 1st become a Christian, you feel like you were choosing God. But inevitably, the farther away you get from the decision, the more you look back and see how God was, in reality, leading you toward Him the whole time.
 - God says, "Since when does your dumb little brain become the criteria for what is true about me?" *If God is the size of the ocean, and our minds the size of a soda can, does it really make sense that the only parts of him I'll accept are the little parts I can fit into my can?*

- Illustration: My kids are at the "why" and "how" stage. Which gap is greater: the gap between my kid's mind and mine; or the gap between yours and Gods?
- Sometimes we're like the kid who says, "God, I'll only believe what I can fully understand. And

When you adopt a child, you can make them part of our family, and give them our last name, and teach them our values. But we can't put our DNA into the kid. God does. He makes us as His sons, and puts Jesus' life; His DNA into us.

What God started, he will finish

- Isa 53...all past tense. All that God starts with he ends with. A shepherd who lost 8 sheep in the day? "But they are so stubborn!" The shepherd guides the sheep.
- All the way my Savior leads me

God is drawing you right now

- You are here by design
- You may think you are beyond hope, but He is mighty to save
- No room for boasting... I used to think I sought God. He sought me.
- Ambulance... you wake up and believe! (the choice is *yours*)

You can walk now in victory

- God has saved us to good works
- Earnest
- Buying clothes in good faith: God will change you to fit these good works
- God's intentions for you are good! (Shepherd) You don't have to convince him to will your goodness, like they did to Artemis (Zodiac) (cp Eph 1:3)
- D. L. Moody... whosoever! (LUTZER)

God is at work in your pain, now

- I know God works it all for good, because salvation is rooted in God
- Not that all things are good in themselves, or God calls them good (cruel) or makes them good, but uses them for good. Like backward wheels in the watch.
- Matt Chandler, quoting CS Lewis: When we get to heaven, it's not that we look back and see the reasons bad things happen and say, "Oh... that's why that happened." Rather, we will say, "What bad things? We are so consumed with God's finished product we don't notice the process he used.

There is hope for evangelism

- This did not discourage Paul, but was his motivation
- For many of you, this is happening to you now
- "Whosoever will"

How do we deal with the tension?

- I pray... contradiction?
- Geometry
- Explanation of past (this is how you chose God)
 - Encouragement to you... for some of you, this is happening to you now
 - Ambulance: redemption; adoption. You wake up in these realities
- Empowerment for present (Jesus led me all the way!)
 - "Jesus led me all the way!"
 - Chosen "For good works" ... God chose me for the works. He'll grow me into the works (for example, how many of you ever buy pants on faith? I'd like for these to fit! But it doesn't work. Well, God chose you and good works for you... you don't fit the works, God changes you!
- Encouragement for the future

- I know God works it all for good, because salvation is rooted in God
- Not that all things are good in themselves, or God calls them good (cruel) or makes them good, but uses them for good. like backward wheels in the watch.

All that God starts with, he ends with:

Evangelism: this doctrine did not encourage Paul, but motivated him!

How can you know you are in the elect? Conviction of sin and love of beauty of Christ.

Whosoever "will" may come.

Fajar

Let me teach you something important about how to cope with things you don't understand. Geometry: accept certain truths. Try to reconcile them. but, at the end of the day, come back to trust in the axioms. Psalm 131.

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- But that's not what Eph 1:4 says... and not what the word 'foreknowledge' means either.
 - The word 'knowledge' itself is complex. For example, when Adam knew his wife, Eve, it means more than he just knew who she was; it means he had an intimate connection with her.
 - In the book of Amos, God says, "of all the nations of the earth, only you have I known." It doesn't mean that God only knew the Israelite people and he didn't know who the other ones were, it means he knew and had a relationship with them in a special way. That's why some of the translations of the Bible (the NIV) translate that verse in Amos as,

“of all the nations of the earth, only you have I *chosen*.”

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- To be fore-known means fore-loved.
-
- This is difficult. Everybody wants to start raising objections.
- Some people will say that’s because I’m not a consistent thinker... Let them say that. I know God and Scripture never contradict themselves, but I also know our understanding of Him is not always easy to express in neat and tidy little syllogisms.
- And I’ll be honest, I’d much rather err on the side of preaching what seemed to be the natural sense of the text even if it left some apparent inconsistencies. I’d much rather get to heaven and hear God say “You preached my word a little too literally” than to hear Him say, “You cut out or explained away the passages that didn’t fit your theories.” We have a big God who is
- So I don’t mind if some of the things I say *sound like* they *seem* to contradict, because, to be honest, Jesus often sounded the same way when He talked. (I mean, that’s where all the controversy comes from, right?) I remember the words my dad gave me when I was first going through this, my day, who is not a professional theologian, just a godly layman: “Son, men much smarter than you have been trying to figure this out for 2000 years... they haven’t figured it out yet. You probably won’t either. Be encouraged.”
- I’m even confused in my house. I married a Presbyterian

(vv. 4–10)

SEE LUTZER, “DOCTRINES THAT DIVIDE”

Phillip Ryken, *The Message of Salvation* (Ch 4), “Chosen in Christ: Election” (Ephesians 1:3-14)

Against your will?

- Restoring your sanity (building illus). Eph 2 “dead”

- Ambulance: redemption; adoption. You wake up in these realities.

More than just forgiveness. More than just forgiveness, because then we’d be back to zero. Vs. 4: “holy and blameless.” Vs. 5: “for adoption”; Vs. 7: “redemption.”

- We would be to the praise of God’s grace. We would be amazing. We would be like Jesus. This is you!
- This means Jesus’ victory has become ours and the score is settled. Like when you DVR (some of you are still on VCR with 12:00 noon flashing) a UNC game and don’t want anyone to settle score. “I could tell you the score; you could go home, save 3 hrs and spend time with your family.” In heaven, Jesus’ score with us is settled.

Salvation is simply consent

- Ambulance. You either say no or you consent. It is an announcement you believe. Right now you are seated in belief or standing.
- You are simply doing the good works God has laid out for us?
- (Greeks want wisdom; Jews want self-discipline, Paul maintains God is an unmerited gift that exalts him!)

God is more committed to your salvation than even you are (where I question my previous commitment).

- “Jesus led me all the way”. In my doubts it’s great to know that God sought me before I sought Him (He started it and will finish it), and that He’s always been more committed to my salvation than I am.
- “guarantee of our inheritance” (v. 13)
- I will be “to the praise of His glory” (v. 12)
- He won’t stop until I am blameless and holy (v. 4)
- Even now, some of you sense that He has started it. you can see how he has been writing your life!

We stand confident that God is directing all the things in our life toward our salvation; God is working all things for His good

- Movie illustration
- God will not satisfy his wrath until he has satisfied his grace

Others who don't come, are they not chosen?

- In one sense, we are all chosen: Christ died for all.
- If we come to God, it's all of Him. Nobody comes to God unless God drags Him
- If we reject God, it's all of us. God rejects no one; they reject Him.
- **Karl Barth** said of this passage, *"the more a man finds these texts to be harsh, the more he is wedded to his own righteousness"*:¹ *We have a hard time seeing our neighbor as DESERVING hell because we don't really believe WE deserve hell.*

What about evangelism?

- "Just eat." The more people I tell about Christ, the more keep getting elected
- Far from being discouraging, this is encouraging! Otherwise no one would ever come.

Whereas He dwells in inaccessible light, and his judgments are deeper than the lowest abyss, Paul prudently enjoins acquiescence in God's sole purpose; lest if men seek to be too inquisitive, this immense chaos should absorb all their senses. (Calvin's Commentaries, Genesis, vol 2, p. 51)

All 3 members of Trinity: The Father is the one who plans salvation. The Son is the one who accomplishes salvation. The Spirit is the one who guarantees salvation.

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- See Lutzer stuff on Romans 8
- Every spiritual blessing is in heaven

- Christ's death was the standing verdict of the earth; the resurrection was God's vindication. We await God's vindication at our resurrection, and will feel unjustly treated until then.

- Sovereignty in our salvation: Predestined to the purpose of His will
 - Not fair. What is fair? (Romans 9 message)
- God's sovereignty in our suffering. All things working for your good! God has a good purpose for me in all things (see Elevation marriage retreat)

^{1:1} Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- My wife grew up in a Presbyterian church, so they talked about this stuff all the time. I grew up Baptist and we didn't... we talked about the evils of rock music and beer... I've told you before our 1st year of marriage was interesting; I married her...

But over time, this truth has become one of the most important in my walk with Jesus.

- Now, notice here what it says we are predestined for?
 - Vs. 5, for adoption. God predestined to put us into His family and made his sons.
 - We have some families in our church who have undertaken the wonderful ministry of adoption. Some of them have told me that the first time you see the child this immediate and inexplicable love wells up in your heart. Here's a baby whose life you are about to totally change. You're going to take them into your family; they are not going to grow up in an orphanage; they are going to grow up w/ your name as your children; they are going to become heirs of your wealth.
 - That's what God predestined us for—to be His sons. He looked into the orphanage of sin and set His love on us

¹ Karl Barth, *Commentary on Romans*, 350.

and said, "I will give this one *everything*... he will become my beloved son."

Well, when you adopt someone, one of the things you do is teach them your values as a family. So, Paul says, God predestined to become like his Son... see