

Chosen to Stand Before God

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Ephesians chapter 1 verse 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, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him." I do want to stop right there for a moment and just have you notice the next two words - "In love".

Tyndale would give you a small 'i', no period behind 'Him.' He put the period behind 'love.' The "in love" is modifying our own holiness and blamelessness. We are holy and blameless and in love before God the Father. Our ESVs, the NASB, put a period behind 'Him,' capitalize 'I' and connect "In love" with verse 5. I want to point this out because there is no textual issue going on here. In other words, in the original, it's the same with the ESV, it's the same with the KJV. It just has to do with the fact that in the original, it is very difficult to tell what it modifies. And so, some have gone one way with it and some have gone the other way with it. And the reality is that I can prove both to you scripturally. I can prove to you that we will stand before God in perfect holiness and love captures the reality of that holiness. Love is fulfilling the Law. It is a standard of righteousness. I can prove that to you. But then I can also prove to you that it is God's love that predestines us for adoption as sons. Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God. And so, it can go either way.

"In love He predestined us" - I am going to resume the text again - "In love He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved." Now, last week you will remember we looked at verse 4. We looked at the doctrine of election. We looked at the reality that God chooses who will be in Christ before the foundation of the world. We established that truth. We looked at it as being what it is. It's good news, it's not bad news. It's a glorious doctrine, not a horrid one, if properly understood. Paul is blessing God the Father for these realities; for every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. And the first one that he wants to articulate to us is this reality of God choosing before the foundation of the world.

Now, what we never want to do is forget the connection between verses 3 and 4. Verse 4 starts with a conjunction. What Paul is doing here is He is going to begin to elaborate and give detail to what these spiritual blessings are that we have been blessed with, that are mentioned in verse 3. Every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, and they are in the heavenly places because we see that Christ is seated in the heavenly places and we are seated with Christ in the heavenly places. Heavenly places is where Christ is, and He is the source from which all the treasures, brethren, of wisdom and knowledge, they flow forth from Him. All of our blessings come through Him. He is there, and that's where they come from.

Now, we started verse 4 but we didn't finish verse 4. There is more here. The question that Paul is answering is this. We want to ask the question. I mean, it's not enough just to say, "He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places," because as soon as you hear that, [you think] "Well, that's nice and it sounds glorious, but how has He blessed us?" I

mean, isn't that what you want to know? Don't you want to practically know? You can come along and tell me, "I have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places because I am a Christian. But what does that mean? How does that make me different from the guy out here that doesn't know the Lord at all? How am I different?" There's no question, if you're a Christian, you are different because you've been blessed in a way they have not been. But, you don't want to just know that generically. What does it mean? How? And Paul doesn't want to leave us just out here in the generic, he wants to take us and show us. And that's what he is doing, he is unfolding these things.

What we saw last week is that he does not begin to elaborate on our blessings just based on, "Well you know, where are you going to start?" It is interesting that Tawfiq was telling us in the first hour that he looked at all these commentaries and they are telling him that the order of the blessings, the benefits (We've got blessings here and Tawfiq mentioned this text. Over in Psalm 103, it's His benefits.) And he said that he looked at all the commentaries and that there was order there. And you know where it starts, it starts with forgiveness. Paul doesn't start with forgiveness, Paul doesn't start with when we believe, Paul doesn't start even with Christ coming into this world. He doesn't start with the manger. He doesn't start with Zechariah and John the Baptist. I say that because that's where Luke starts.

He goes to eternity past. He goes back. He takes us back to an eternal plan. And you know, as we go through this book of Ephesians, we're going to get to those words - "an eternal plan". There is a master plan in the mind of God. And what I want to do here as we start is just survey that master plan. Sometimes I think it's good, you know, you hear sometimes about the meta-narrative. What is it all about? What is the big picture? Let's just very quickly survey.

Turn over in your Bibles to John 17. We don't want to have a small idea of what it means to be saved or of Christianity. We want to step back at times and get the big picture. What's God doing? You see, he didn't start with when we believed, he didn't start with when man fell, he didn't start at the Cross. You have to go back into the foreknowledge of God, you have to go back to the mind of God before the foundation of the world. And notice John 17 verse 2, this is the high priestly prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ and I want you to get this feel for what's happening. The Son prays to the Father. John 17:2, "Since You have given Him - the Father has given the Son - authority over all flesh (that's over all humanity) to give eternal life to all whom you have given him." You see, we have to stop and recognize it is God's choice. We go back to this election; this eternal election according to the foreknowledge of God.

What you have here, notice very carefully, you have the Son. He is given authority by the Father. The Son has been given the authority to bestow eternal life, not just to anybody and everybody, not primarily because man determines that he wants eternal life. This is Christ's choice. His ability to have that choice has been bestowed to Him by the authority of the Father. And notice who He gives eternal life to - "to all whom You have given Him." Notice, God has a people and He gifts these people to the Son. The Son receives these people. It's these people that He says, "I have authority to give eternal life to them." I don't have authority to give eternal life to any of the others. Only those who the Father gives to the Son.

Do you know what that tells us? You belong to the Father before you belong to the Son. And belonging to the Father, you see, the Father chose you in eternity past to be in Christ. And because He chose you in Christ, He gives you to Christ. That's the truth. Go to John 17 verse 6,

"I have manifested Your name," - What does it mean to manifest a name? A name has to do with who you are. A name describes you. A name tells of your attributes. "You call His name Jesus for He will save His people from their sins." You call God, "JEHOVAH," "I AM." He is the ever-existent One. You see, names have everything to do with who you are. And what He says is this, notice, "I have manifested Your name," - To manifest means to bring to light. It means it was hidden. It wasn't known before. And what this means is this: There was a time you did not know the God of Scripture. There was a time you did not understand who He was. There was a time when the God you had was not the God of Scripture. Your God was a little God. Your God was a figment of your imagination. And how do you ever get to the place where you actually come to recognize who God is? It's by revelation.

Now it's interesting, because on the one hand, Jesus says to Peter, "My Father has made that known to you." And yet, right here, it's the Son who is making that known. He is manifesting. John 17:6, "I have manifested Your name - to who? - to a select people; the people whom You gave Me out of the world. Yours they were." You see, out here in this world, there is a people, (this all has to do with Ephesians 1:4) a people that He chose in Christ before the foundation of the world. He chose you. He chose you to be His. And what Jesus is saying is, what happens in the course of time, that people who the Father has given to the Son, the Son reveals the Father. You see, if you're saved, you have come to know God. You may be sitting here with no college education. You may be sitting here with no high school degree. But I can tell you this: if you're a child of God, you know [the Father]. You have had a revelation of the Father in a way the greatest biblical scholars who are outside of Christ have never known. That is the reality.

John 17:6, "Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word." Notice verse 9 of John 17, "I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours." Just because the Father gave them to the Son doesn't mean that we stopped being the Father's. We still are. Who does He pray for? He prays for the people that the Father chose and gave to the Son. Maybe some of you are saying, "Wow! I didn't know the Bible taught this."

John 17:24, "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, may be with Me where I am, to see My glory that You have given Me because You loved Me before the foundation of the world." You see, we are given to Christ to be Christ's. Gifted to Christ, and to evermore dwell with Christ. Don't you love this? You think about, "Wow! We were the Father's before we became the Son's." It's not primarily something that you and I do! It's not even primarily something that the Son did! It is, the Father chose a people unto Himself; chose a people to be gifted to the Son. And the Son takes them as His own.

Jump over to John 10:14, Jesus says, "I am the good Shepherd. I know My own." Wow! You mean not everybody in the world is His own? Nope. It's these people who have been chosen. And notice what He says, "I know My own and My own know Me, just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father." You see, that's another thing. We not only have had a manifestation of the Father, we have come to know Christ. To know Him. Brethren, let me tell you something, if you're looking for one of the greatest evidences of true Christianity, it's right here. You're basically walking through the world in darkness, and you don't know Christ. And suddenly, your eyes are opened. I mean, we could go into all the intimacies of this, but in light of

the Jehovah's Witness conference over here, that's one of the things that our eyes [are opened]. You come to know Him as God the Son. Deity from everlasting. The "before Abraham was, I AM" person.

We know Him. And notice what it says, John 10:15, "And I lay down My life for the sheep." Who are the sheep? They are these people. Not all are sheep. When you read in Scripture, "Like sheep, we have gone astray," brethren, this is not talking about the whole world. The world loves to take the Bible and take the promises for the sheep and apply them to themselves. But, this really is a book (I know it's written for evangelistic purposes and to let the gospel be known to the world) but I'll tell you, this book is a very personal book. And if you notice, there is a possessiveness that God has. There is a GREAT possessiveness that Jesus has. Mine! I know My own! The people that were Yours and You gave them to Me, and I pray for them and I give them eternal life. Them! My own! Yours!

Look over at John 6:39, Jesus gives these people His prayers. Jesus gives these people eternal life. Jesus gives these people His life. Notice this: John 6:39, "And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given Me, but raise it up at the last day. The last day. So you want to see this thing, this eternal plan? There in the foreknowledge of God before the foundation of the world, God has chosen a people in Christ. And He gives these people to Christ. And Christ gives these people eternal life. Christ lays down His life for these people that they might have life. And what He says is, these people, I am going to raise them up on the last day. And then, what happens? Oh, jump over to 1 Corinthians 15 verse 24. Jesus said, back in John 6:39, All that the Father has given Me, He is going to raise up on the last day. The last day, think about that last day. What's the last day? It's the day Christ comes. It's the day this age is over. It's the day this world is done. It's the day this world gets burned up. It's judgment day! It is the end! Not the end of all things, because we get raised up who are Christians, it's only the beginning for us.

But notice this, 1 Corinthians 15:24, "Then comes the end, when He (that's Christ) delivers the kingdom," - The kingdom is made up of the people that Christ rules over; His people. We are a kingdom of priests - "He delivers the kingdom to God the Father." Notice this: God the Father has a chosen people. He gives those people to Christ. Christ lays down His life for them. Christ bestows eternal life on them. Christ prays for them. And now, here at the end, what does Christ do? He gives these people back to the Father. The whole kingdom. "He delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For God has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when it says, 'all things are put in subjection,' it is plain that He (the Father) is excepted who put all things in subjection under Christ." You see what He is saying here. When everything has been put under the subjection of the feet of Christ, God the Father is excepted. And in fact, when all things are subjected to Him, except the Father, then the Son Himself will subject Himself to the Father who put all things in subjection under Christ that God may be all in all. That's at the end. It's all turned over to the Father. He is triumphant. Christ came to win a people and He's done it. There's a big picture for you.

Okay, let's go back to Ephesians. I just want you to see and feel the big picture of being chosen. We are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Brethren, so that after the

end of the world, something might be true. There's more to Ephesians 1:4 than what we covered last week. We looked at election - He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. But there's more here, let's read the rest, "That we should be holy and blameless before Him." Do you see what more there is in this verse? Now, some of your minds are going right away to "Yeah I see it - holiness, blamelessness." Brethren I don't want you to miss two words here. I told you this before. When we are dealing with this first chapter of Ephesians, you've got to notice everything. You got to notice every prepositional phrase. You've got to notice everything. There is so much going on here. There is such a richness. I want you to notice these two words: before Him. He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him. You see, you have to watch out that you don't get hung up on the modifiers so that you never get to where they are taking us. Those two words are everything.

Don't stop with God choosing us in Christ. Don't stop at God choosing to make these in Christ holy and blameless. You don't want to stop until you get to those words - before Him. Think about it. Paul is going to begin to elaborate on all these spiritual blessings in the heavenly places. What's the greatest of all? Where do you start? You see, he's not just starting with holy and blameless. It's not like he's just taking us and saying to us, "Hey look, what I want to show you first in verse 4 is that holiness and blamelessness is the best of the blessings that God gives us." That's not what you want to conclude. He's not telling us we are being in Christ is the best blessing. It is the best blessing in as much as it takes us into the presence of God. Holy and blameless is the best of blessings as much as it prepares somebody to stand in the very presence of God. He doesn't do what the Psalmist does, what we saw in the first hour. He doesn't start with forgiveness. He doesn't start with this reality that "Well, you are delivered from hell." What he wants to do is elaborate and he wants to give us in detailed fashion what these things are. This first one, it's the culmination - Before Him.

The greatest of the spiritual blessings is culminated here. God chooses you to this end. This is it. The end for which God chooses you. The greatest spiritual blessing of all. God has chosen you to be a people who are going to be able [to stand before Him]. You have to grasp this. I mean, you go to Isaiah 6, you've got seraphim. They've got three sets of wings. You remember? Those beings that antiphonally cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD God Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory!" They've got three sets of wings, and with two of those sets of wings they cover their faces. Do you recognize, they've never sinned. And what God has chosen us to do is to stand before Him. That's it. You say, "What does that mean to stand before Him?" That means to have access. To come into His presence. And I can tell you this, there is no indication from Scripture that you and I are going to be given any kind of apparatus on our bodies wherewith to cover our eyes. It seems that the teaching of Scripture is that God has chosen these people with open face to behold the face of God. To see Him. That's the end.

You might say, "Hey! What's the greatest of all the spiritual blessings?" If you do a casual cursory reading of verse 4, you might say, "Well, Paul seems to think it's holiness and blamelessness." You'll only come to that conclusion if you miss those words "before Him". Don't miss those. Brethren, what you have to recognize is salvation is not primarily about keeping you out of hell. It is primarily about returning man to the place where he can approach God. That's the culmination. You know, Scripture SCREAMS at us, "Stay back! Stay back!" Man lost the greatest of all of his privileges. Man's sin hid something from him. Genesis is not a fairy tale.

Man was put out of the garden. Cherubim with a flaming sword. You know what that sword said? "Stay back!" You think of Mount Sinai. There is thunder and there is lightning and there is fire and there is smoke and God's voice, and the people are cowering. And you know what all that said? "Stay back!" You remember king Uzziah? He took it upon himself to enter the sanctuary to offer incense, and he got leprosy. Uzziah's leprosy says, "Stay back!" Uzzah puts out his hand and touches the Ark, and he's dead! It all is saying, "Stay back! Stay back!"

God said, when He gave them all the laws concerning the tabernacle, He said, "Look! Only one can go in to that inner sanctum, into the Holy of Holies. Only one, and only one time a year. And if anybody else does, they will die." Everything about it, "Stay back. Stay back." Have you ever thought about hell? It's described as "outer darkness." It's the ultimate "stay back." You remember Luke 16, the rich man, Lazarus? The rich man was looking for some mercy. And what Abraham said to him is, "There is a great chasm." You know what? We are so used to living with the chasm between us and God that until you are saved you hardly know there is one. Men imagine that there isn't one. Chasm. Outer darkness. Outer. You are confined to a place that's outside. You remember as Jesus gets to the end of the book of Revelation, "Outside," He says, "Outside are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the sexually immoral." Outside, as over against what? Inside. Outer darkness - which means you're in a region where you have no access to the inside. The inside, that's what the tabernacle was. You went in. There were all these stages of going in but nobody could get all the way in. You see, when the author of Hebrews says that a way has been made, you have to understand what it's saying. It is, a way has been made into the very presence of God Himself.

"Before Him" means in His presence. No more chasms. They are all out of the way. And brethren, I'll tell you, there are still chasms. And there are still chasms even for the redeemed. You say, "What?!" Which one of you have walked in the cool of the day face to face with God and talked with Him physically? Which one of you have done that? I haven't seen His face. I haven't audibly heard His voice. There are still chasms. You see what the first and the greatest of all the spiritual blessings is? Every barrier, every obstacle, [removed]. That's what you are chosen for. God chose you to be a people that, in Christ, would have every obstacle removed to you standing in His very presence. God chose a people in Christ before the foundation of the world to do what the seraphim dare not do.

Brethren, don't turn here but just listen to this as Revelation is wrapping up. Revelation 21:3, "Behold the dwelling place of God is with man." God dwells with man. That's where we are headed. "He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God himself will be with them as their God." And notice, Revelation 22:3-4, again don't turn there but listen, "No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it." In the city. The city is the people of God. "And his servants will worship him. They will see His face." We better just stop and say, "Wow." The seraphim, their faces are covered with wings. "They will see His face." Now you better just think about that. After the things that you have done in your life, chosen to once again behold the very face of God. Even Moses, there was no more meek man upon the face of this earth (Numbers 12:3). But you see, he hadn't gotten to the end yet. He could see some of the glory. We can see some of it, even a greater glory than under that Old Covenant. But God told him, "You cannot see My face or you will die." But you know what we are being told? We are being told that God has chosen a people who He is going to return to

paradise. There is a return to Eden. Eden. Adam walked with God and he talked with God. There is a return. A chosen humanity that He has chosen to be so worked that they are qualified and worthy to be able to stand there directly before God and look into the glory. The glory.

Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him. Everything God has done for us in salvation takes us to this. Everything. Man once again before God. So the question of the ages has been this, you know that the Psalmist said this: "Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place?" - (Psalm 24:3). What's the answer in Ephesians 1:4? Those chosen to. Now, that's not the answer you're given in Psalm 24 and Psalm 15, but that's the answer you are given here. But notice what they are chosen to. What they are chosen to is what the answer is in Psalm 15 and Psalm 24. And this truth comes at us everywhere. You have this truth in Hebrews that "Without holiness - what? - no man shall see the Lord." "Who will ascend the hill of the LORD?" [audience speaking.] Somebody is saying it but say it louder. [audience speaking] - he who has clean hands and a pure heart. Clean hands and a pure heart. You see, God, if He has chosen you to stand before Him, He has chosen you to be what you need to be to be able to stand before Him. Chosen you that you be holy and blameless before Him in love.

Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God (Matthew 5:8). You see, this truth comes at us over and over and over again. Holiness. Brethren, Genesis 17:1, turn in your Bibles there. Go back to Genesis 17. The Abrahamic Covenant. You are children of Abraham and you are partakers of this Covenant by faith in Jesus Christ, we are told in Galatians chapter 3. But I want you to see something. Genesis 17:1, "When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; - notice this - walk before Me, and be blameless.'" You see those two words "before Me"? Before Me. Walk before Me. But to do so, you must be blameless. Be blameless. This is the reality of Scripture. Maybe Ephesians 1:4 is perplexing to some. "Is holiness really the first of the spiritual blessings that Paul should have brought out?" I mean, how would you have answered? How are you gonna answer that question? If I say, "What is the most important spiritual blessing?" Well, it's holiness in as much as holiness qualifies you; it fits you to stand in the presence [of God]. Because what Scripture tells us is this: God is of pure eyes than to behold iniquity. You cannot stand in His presence.

And you see, we tend to tone it down. We come across these verses and we say, "Well, but he wasn't totally perfect." "Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?" "Well, there is nobody in this world that you can find who absolutely has clean hands and a pure heart." But you see, what God is pointing us to is the standard of perfection. You come to the New Testament and you are told that. You are told to be holy because He is holy. You are told to be perfect because He is perfect. And you see, when God beholds this people holy and blameless, standing in His presence, brethren you have to recognize something: He is beholding us not as we are short of perfection. He is beholding us as we are in our perfect, pristine, unblemished state. This is where we are moving, and Scripture says it. When you see Christ, then you'll have it. But, for those that have that hope that when they see Christ and they are as He is, those who have that hope purify themselves as He is pure. It's true from the point we were born-again until our death, we are in a process. At our death, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. We shall see Him. There is a point of sinlessness. And then there is a point on the last day

where our bodies would be raised up and we would be complete human beings again. Absolutely perfect. And we will see His face. The pure in heart.

Oh I know it's true that these things are in process and sometimes Scripture speaks in absolute terminology when it's dealing with the process. But you have to recognize that ultimately God sees us as we are. I was thinking about this yesterday. This people who are chosen before the foundation of the world, how God viewed us? Perfect, holy, blameless, in Christ, before Him. He saw us perfect and looking and beholding Him face-to-face. And I was thinking, remember those days you were living your life. You weren't pursuing that. You weren't even thinking that. In your mind what did you pursue? Every one of us pursued, maybe different things, but we all pursued the same thing. We pursued what we thought would fulfill us. We pursued what we thought would make us happy. And I'm thinking, God is beholding me perfect, in His Son, in His mind. This has been the plan. This has been the master plan from the moment you were conceived bringing you to this point. There you are, you are chasing that which is empty. You are seeking to spend your money on that which is not bread. You're giving yourself to that which doesn't satisfy. You remember chasing the emptiness, chasing the hollowness. Chasing it, just chasing it. You remember that? I can still remember thoughts that I had go through my mind when I was lost, about the things I wanted. And we spent our whole life pursuing it. And here is God, He sees us as a chosen people.

Do you recognize the face of God is the highest, it's the center. You don't go any more in. No more inside; no closer. There is nothing better, higher than the face of God. That is the end-all. And here we are, doing our stupid little things. We're thinking to ourselves, "Oh, if I could only get that, then I'd be happy." And here is God looking at us, totally ravished and satisfied, made pure and beautiful by Him. That's the reality that we are getting. That's where Paul is taking us to in Ephesians 1:4. It ought not to perplex us. Brethren, the reality is that those first three chapters of Genesis are no fairy tale. Man lost paradise. Man lost it. He lost the treasure. You look around, brethren, nobody is out in the garden walking with God! We lost it! We lost it! But, if you're chosen, that's where you are headed. Isn't that where you want to be? Face-to-face. We're not talking something imaginary here. This is not a dream. Face-to-face.

You recognize, Mike Morrow, Bob Jennings, that's what's happening. The shadow land has passed away. It's gone. We just don't recognize what sin has done. When God says to us, "Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God. Your sins have hidden His face from you." But you see, we love the darkness. We hate the light. That doesn't mean anything. We are at enmity with God and so the attraction to that in the natural man is lost. It takes God rebirthing us and giving us brains that can begin to behold what is even precious and valuable in this world. We are told, "Evil may not dwell with Him." And so, I can tell you this, that if you are chosen to stand in His presence, you are chosen as objects that are going to receive from God everything that you need to receive from God to make you where you are perfect.

Can you imagine? Can you imagine getting to the place where you are absolutely without any fault or blemish. There is nothing wrong. You are absolutely perfect and will be forever. And that's one thing in itself, but what that does is, it qualifies you to approach Him. And there is no more "stay back". It's all welcoming. It's all smile. This book is full of frowns, and anger, and wrath, and fire, and stay-back, and lightning, and thunder, and fear and trembling. But to look at God and it's a smile. And you're absolutely incapable of ever doing anything ever

again to bring the least shadow. You see, if God has chosen you to stand before Him, God has chosen you as an individual that He purposes to rectify every vestige of the fall. The fall is real, folks, and the fall wrecked us. It wrecked us. And what you have been chosen to is to have every last result of that fall removed from you. In fact, so much so, that you will be made better than Adam was before the fall. Because you'll never be capable. He was capable of something that would be displeasing to God. Never will you be capable of that.

He has chosen you to completely undo every mark of the fall. And you remember what it says there in 1 John chapter 3 verse 8, "The purpose of the Son of God," remember when I preached through this I called it, "Christ the Destroyer." This is such interesting imagery. What did Christ come to destroy? The works of the devil. What are the works of the devil? What he did in causing man to be deceived and to fall. He wrecked it. You recognize, the whole structure of mankind fell. It was wrecked. It was ruined. And what Jesus has come to do is to destroy the works of the devil. He has come to destroy the devil's destruction. He has come to attack it. He has come to go after it. Christian, you have been chosen from the foundation of the world to have Christ come and destroy everything in you that smells of the devil. Everything that is rotten, everything that's displeasing to God. And you can lay it down, if you're not holy, you are giving no evidence that you're chosen. None whatsoever. We are chosen for this.

So what is holiness? "Even as He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him. The friberg lexicon, I like this, I mean so often we think about holiness and we think about being separate, we think about purity. Those are obviously things that we do need to think about and they are right there at the heart of what the meaning is. The friberg lexicon actually says this, which goes hand in hand with what we've got here in Ephesians 1:4. Friberg says this: Holiness is the quality of persons or things that can be brought near or into God's presence. Don't you love that? Holiness is that quality of person that can be brought near or into the presence of God. That's a good definition. Here is the thing: What is this talking about? Does this mean justification? O, He's going to remove all your sins and so we are in that state now? No.

Brethren, I'll tell you this, search the apostle Paul. Study his epistles. He loves to use holiness with defilement or removal of defilement, such as 2 Corinthians 7 that we looked at - Cleansing ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion. You see, there is this cleansing of defilement. That's the holiness. It's actually something we do. It's not an imputed righteousness. The Bible teaches us there is an imputed righteousness, yes. But when Paul talks about holiness and without blemish, without spot, holiness and blamelessness, you can search through his epistles again and again and again, this has to do with our actual being made perfect. How does it happen? You get born again and what happens? We are told this very plainly in Romans chapter 6, "Sin no longer has dominion over you." And then what we're told in 2 Corinthians chapter 3, "From one degree of glory to another, we are increasingly made like Christ as we behold the glory of the Lord." And then what happens? 1 John 3 tells us, "When we see Christ we will be as He is."

This is a process but what we have to do is recognize God sees the end. The process isn't the finish. The process isn't the complete. We are moving towards perfection. We are coming to an end. What is holiness? I'll tell you what holiness is. It's the essential attribute of God. Yes, it's that which qualifies an individual to come and stand in His presence. But if you

want to know about holiness, if you want the real heart of it, it's what God is. God is holy. And we have to become holy in order to stand in His presence. There can be no sin, there can be no corruption, there can be nothing left. When the entirety of the new man is perfect in righteousness, perfect in holiness. That's where we are headed.

Now, as we're wrapping this up, we just need to think about some practical implications of this. I want you to recognize, brethren, in the first place. This is, just like Election we looked at last week, this is good news. This is not bad news. As a Christian, you have been chosen to be perfect. "Ok. What do I do with that?" Well, this: It's good news. Why? Because I recognize this: I recognize that if I see pride crop up in me, if I feel some unrighteous anger rise up in me, some unrighteous lust, I can look at any of those things and say, "God chose me to beat you. God chose me to put you to death. God chose me to have victory." God chose me to that. Brethren, this ought to encourage you. This is good news. You say, "Wow! God chose me to be perfect? Then I am going to be." I mean, this gives you incentive. This ought to breathe some billow into your sails there, that I have been chosen to triumph over the devil's temptations. I can beat the world. I can beat these sins.

Brethren, what this encourages you to do, look at your life, every one of you, there is a place in your life where you are least like Christ. There is a place in every one of your lives. And you know what? You can examine that, you can look at that, and you don't have to let out this pathetic defeated sigh. You can look and say, "Did God choose me before the foundation of the world that I should beat that? Well then, I am going to throw my weight into that. I am going to throw all the grace of God that He has given me into overcoming that. I know I am going to." You're going to! You're going to! And so, do it. Now listen, let me tell you this. Scripture says that when we see Christ, I know this whole thing is in process, when we see Christ we will be as He is. But Scripture is very very very plain, brethren, that when we see Him we will be like Him, because we will see Him as He is, and if you have that hope in Him you purify yourself now as He is pure.

I would say this to you, do you have a hope of being like Christ? Somebody says, "Yes." And my next question would be, "Why? My friend, what is it about Christ that you want to be like?" Well, you see what John has in mind. You see the logic here. The logic here is that if you have that hope, it's not just the hope to see Him, you have to recognize what the hope is. The hope is that when you see Him, you will be like He is. Because you see, if you hope that, if that's a real desire, if that's really what Paul says is in your heart, it draws you, it motivates you. If that's true that you really desire to see Him, not just to see Him, not just for any other reasons, but you desire to see Him that you may be made holy and perfect and spotless and blameless like He is. Well, if that is really a desire in your heart, guess what? That hope would prove true right now. And you will seek to purify yourselves now.

Look, don't deceive yourselves. This reality is good news. It's good news to you that hunger and thirst after righteousness because it tells you, you're going to beat this. You're going to beat sin. You can fight it. You're going to be a winner. It's bad news, if you basically want a free ride out of hell but you really aren't interested in holiness. Then this is bad news. Because if you aren't desiring to purify yourself now, you really don't want to see Christ for the reason that John is saying that we have a hope of seeing Christ. You see what I am saying here? Look, you can say you want to see Christ, but you're deceiving yourself that you really want to see Him for

the reason that John wants to see Him, if you are not interested in holiness now. And what I want you to know, brethren, is that this defeated mindset is something you need to throw right out the window. When God says, "Abraham, walk before Me and be perfect," we always want to back away. We always want to back down. We always want to step away. We always want to think about, "But we're not perfect." Listen, that's not what God is saying. God is not giving you exceptions, God is not giving you excuses. God calls you to put on the new man. Righteous. Holy. The image of God. Imitate Him. Follow Christ. Love one another. Put away sin. Put away that which slows you down. Put it away. Put away the encumbrances. Be done with them. Pursue righteousness.

Look, there is nothing in Scripture that is giving you exceptions. John is saying, "I write to you that you sin not" (1 John 2:1). You think he was dead serious about that? Isn't he going over the top? Isn't that a little incredible, John? No! I write to you that you sin not. Brethren, when God says to Abraham, "Walk before Me and be perfect," Do you think He is saying, "But I know you really can't be, and so, yes all these exceptions are legitimate and they are acceptable"? That's not what He is saying. Brethren, what you need to get into your heads is that pursuing perfection is what we ought to be on. I am afraid we have too many people that are just satisfied. You're just chalking it up, "Well Christians can never be perfect and so I am not going to be perfect." Brethren, that is wretched reasoning. How you ought to reason is because He has chosen me to be holy and blameless before Him, Because He's chosen me, I can know this, He is going to put forth every single resource of His to bring that to pass that is necessary for me to get there. Be sure of it. He is not going to spare anything in His resources that is necessary to get you to where you are perfect. And brethren, I know I am saying that like that's almost a warning or a threat, but that's good news. Don't you recognize that? I can take hope in that. That's incentive. I can say, "Lord, give me grace to walk perfect today. Give me grace to walk in no known sin. I am going to strive after that. Why? Because God is at work in me to produce that very thing."

Look, what do you need? What do you need for that to happen? He is going to put at our disposal the necessary resources to bring it to pass. What do you need? He says He is not going to withhold any good thing, doesn't He say that? All things are going to work together for your good. So what do we need? I'll tell you typically what we need. We need more difficulty, not more ease. We need more hardness, not more softness. That's why Scripture says, "Rejoice in your sufferings, rejoice in your trials." Why? Because that really does produce righteousness. Do you need the rod? You'll have it. That produces righteousness, you see that there in Hebrews 12. What else do you need? A swift rebuke from one of the brethren? Do you need more of the Spirit of God? You'll have it. Do you need your eyes open to something in the Word of God? You'll have it. Maybe you even need the church's discipline. If that's what you need, you'll have it. You see, He is determined. Whether it takes the rod, whether it takes church discipline, whether He needs to send a brother, whether He needs to send a right word to you in a certain sermon, all these things are at your disposal.

Do you need your conscience to smite you? Do you need a thorn in the flesh? You know that's what Paul needed at a certain time. A thorn in the flesh; and Paul I'm not going to take it away because that's bringing you to the place that I want you to be. I can look at these things and I can say this may be uphill, this may be difficult, but His resources are there for you. If you

are chosen to stand before Him, you are chosen for holiness. Now look, we can just do away with it: Unholy Christianity does not exist. "O wretched man that I am." Whatever your take is on that verse, you better not come to the conclusion that unholy Christianity is okay. It is not. Without holiness, you will not see the Lord. If you've been chosen to stand before Him, you've been chosen to be holy and blameless before Him. Blameless, that means without blemish. Not a spot, not a wrinkle. That's what you've been chosen for. What an incentive. The devil, his big deception, his big lie is that you can stand before God and be unholy. "You can eat the fruit and you won't die. Go ahead and eat the fruit, you'll still be able to walk with God in the garden." Remember what death is? Death isn't when this physical body dies. Death is what it is to be removed from God. You always have to define death based on proximity to God.

People in the outer darkness don't cease to exist. But they cease to exist where God's Son shines. The devil's lie, remember, "Many are going to say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord,'" and what? "Depart from Me you workers of lawlessness." You see, they were unholy. But they were religious. That's, in many, many, many, many, O you find this all through Scripture, this is the lie, this is the classic lie. Don't you believe it. If you're taking pleasure in unrighteousness, look, if basically ungodliness and unholiness is what your heart goes after, I mean you know it, you know it when you're not here in the church, you love the money, you love the stuff of the world, you wish none of this was true, you wish it would all go away, you just really like to live for the world, don't deceive yourself. Look, if you're hearers of the Word only and not doers, you deceive your own selves. What does it mean to be a doer of the Word? Brethren, that's where holiness is. Holiness is in that realm.

We should be aiming for complete conformity. And I'm just going to wrap up with these two quotes. Spurgeon, he says, (because what I want you to recognize is this: Christian, you have been chosen to stand in God's presence perfect. There should be an honor about that. You're one who has been selected. Among all the vast multitudes of mankind, you have been chosen out.) And Spurgeon says this, "The man who knows he is elect will be too proud to sin. He will not humble himself to commit the acts of common people." You recognize that. If you've been chosen to be holy before Him, you're not common. You are in a class of mankind unlike any other. Spurgeon says, "Shall I sin after God has chosen me to be holy? Shall I sin against such love?"

And then, Martin Lloyd-Jones says, "In light of the fact that we have been chosen to stand in God's presence, does it not follow then, that the one thing I do not want to happen when I stand before Him is that there should be the slightest suspicion of disappointment when He looks at me." And you have to think about this. If we are allowed to look into the face of God, it's not a stoic face. God has emotion. He says he doesn't want to see the slightest disappointment on the face. That beatific vision when he beholds Him. He says, "Because as His child, I have failed Him. I don't want there to be that look of suspicion or disappointment because I have failed Him and have been unworthy of Him. Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure. There is nothing that so promotes holiness as this great doctrine, this precious truth which tells us that because we are chosen of God, we are going to be with Him and going to be like Him. There is no time to lose, we must be up and doing. I cannot possibly say, 'I am chosen, and therefore I can do as I like, I shall be forgiven.' It works in the opposite direction."

You see, he comes back to this too. Just like Spurgeon, our sense of honor is involved. Love is involved. The desire to please is involved. Everything argues in favor of holiness. Whatever we may have expected, this comes first - that we should be holy and without blame before Him. Honor. Remember who you are. Remember where you are going. In a few short, just a few short years, where are we going to be. Who are you? There is a people in San Antonio that are actually going to gaze soon upon the very face of God Himself. Do you feel what resonates in these men? Wow! If I have been chosen to be one among a group of people like that, what an honor. How should I live in light of that reality? Does that cross your mind? I don't want to see in that expression, think, think. You're going to look into His face and there is going to be expression. There is going to be a look. There is going to be that contact. I don't want to see the slightest suspicion, the slightest disapproval. And you can imagine it, right? "Well done, good and faithful servant." It's one thing if you're looking in His face. And then, to hear Him say that, and smile, and all approval? Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

[Prayer] Father, what can we say? What have You done? Sinners put on such a pedestal as this? I pray that the compulsion to walk worthy would resonate in the hearts and minds and lives of my brethren here. Lord we thank You. We ask You to give us grace to walk worthy of this calling to which we have been called. What a calling. We thank you in Christ's name, Amen.