

The Greatest of All Spiritual Blessings

Scripture: Ephesians 1:3-6

Code: 49-2

All of our worship is necessarily worship not only in spirit, but in truth—and so it needs to be informed by the Word of God. And we're going to look at the Word of God this morning and we're going to look at a truth that is the supreme truth about the very nature of God. This is not only our first blessing, but it's that which is most preeminently true about God.

Go back to Ephesians chapter 1. And I just want to let you know you're very privileged to be here today because what you're going to hear in this next little while is foundational to absolutely everything you ever think about in your life, and certainly foundational to our worship and preparing us for heavenly worship.

I draw you back to chapter 1, verse 3, and I just want to read down into verse 6: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved." This is a letter written to Gentiles, Gentile believers who had no history in the Old Testament. The apostle Paul introduces them to the true God at the very point at which you start understanding God, and that is at the point of His absolute and utter sovereignty.

When the apostle says, "Bless the Lord, Bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the one true God, the God who is one in nature with His Son the Lord Jesus Christ," this is a call to worship, this is a call to worship. And that's how Paul begins this letter. It might seem a little out of order to begin with a call to worship before you have explained why. Maybe we might assume that the call to worship would come after the blessings have been revealed and declared and explained in the first chapter and the rest of the letter. Maybe we would assume the call to worship would come at the end, in response to all of that.

But the Holy Spirit-inspired apostle knows what is coming, and he cannot contain his praise. He is breathlessly overwhelmed by the salvation of God. So breathless is he that he barely takes a breath from verse 3 to verse 14. So thrilled is Paul that he calls the saints and the faithful to join him in this praise even before all the blessings are revealed: "Bless the One who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus."

God has blessed us with spiritual blessings as to their nature, rather than temporal ones; with heavenly blessings as to their sphere, rather than earthly blessings; in Christ as to their agency, rather than through any other created medium. We have been blessed "with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places." These are eternal. These are eternal blessings to come to those who are saints and faithful.

The first of these blessings is the blessing of being chosen and predestined. You see the word

“chose” in verse 4; you see the word “predestined” in verse 5. You see the word “predestined” again in verse 11. This is the first and primary of all heavenly blessings. This is where our salvation begins. And this doctrine of sovereign choosing—predestination, sovereign election—is what determines not only the beginning, but the ending. This is blessing number one, and it is tied to the very essential characteristic of God: that He is in control. That’s what it means to be God.

Every blessing is granted to the saints and the faithful—every blessing, every heavenly blessing. But every heavenly blessing is granted to the saints and faithful because they were chosen; and they were chosen in Him, in Christ, before the foundation of the world. Salvation of sinners is a result of God’s being God. The calling and gathering of God’s people to eternal salvation started with God being sovereign and choosing and predestining, by name, the elect to eternal glory.

So the salvation of sinners who make up the redeemed, who make up the church, are decreed by the eternal God Himself—that’s what it means to be God. He chose, before the world began, all who would be a part of His redeemed humanity. He predestined them; He chose them to be His sons. He chose to adopt them, to forgive them, to bring them through redemption to a full heavenly inheritance—all of His doing. And it all started with His choosing; and that is why it all goes to Him, when it comes time to pass out the glory. Paul is calling for worship to our God, who chose us by grace for Himself in union with His Son, to make us His own sons for His eternal glory; and He made that choice before there was any creation, before there was time. That sums up the great truth of election and predestination.

Somebody might say, “Well isn’t that something you kind of hold back on when you’re evangelizing? Isn’t that kind of an offensive doctrine, especially if you’re pleading with a sinner to come to salvation? Isn’t this kind of a doctrine that should be held until somebody gets to a certain level of maturity and can grasp this?” No, this is where all gospel preaching starts. It starts with the sovereignty of God. It starts with the recognition that you can’t save yourself. That’s why when Jesus was talking to Nicodemus—what did He say to him? Nicodemus said, “How can a man be born again?” Jesus said, “It’s not up to a man; it’s a work of the Holy Spirit, and He does what He wills.” This is God’s plan.

Now let’s look a little more closely at this. And I’m going to do my very best to open this doctrine to you as fully as I can in the next three hours. So the origin of this, the origin of this, back in verse 4. We have been blessed “with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” *because* it all started when “He chose us”—verse 5, when “He predestined us.” “Chose”: It’s an aorist middle, it’s what we call reflexive. He chose for Himself, unaided, uninfluenced by any external reality.

Matthew 25:34 says, “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’” What a statement. The King is Jesus, and He will say, “Come, you’re the blessed. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

In Revelation 13:8 we read, “And all who dwell on the earth will worship Antichrist, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.” Those that are chosen and predestined have their names written in the eternal Book of Life. That same thing is repeated in Revelation chapter 17 and verse 8.

Toward the end of Revelation, in the twentieth chapter, verse 11, we read, "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them." This is the final judgment. "And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire." Verse 15, "And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." Even final destiny is tied to whether your name was written in God's book before the foundation of the world.

Divine sovereignty, divine election and predestination, is the first of all spiritual blessings; that's why Paul begins there. And this is precisely what our Lord Jesus taught back in John's gospel, chapter 1, verse 12: "But as many as received Him," speaking of Christ, "to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." If you were born again, it wasn't your will, it was God's will.

Jesus, as I noted a minute ago, spoke that way to Nicodemus in chapter 3. And again in chapter 10 of John's gospel; look at verse 14: "I am the good shepherd, I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd." He's talking about Gentiles. He already knows who His sheep are, and He knows they will hear His voice, and He knows they will come, and they will become one flock, Jew and Gentile together.

Later in John's gospel in chapter 15, and verse 16, our Lord says this: "You did not choose Me but I chose you." Pretty clear, isn't it? "You did not choose Me but I chose you." In the book of Acts chapter 13, verse 48, on Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey, the Scripture says, "As many as were appointed to eternal life believed. As many as were appointed to eternal life believed."

In the eighteenth chapter of Acts, when the apostles came to Corinth for the first time, the gospel just arriving, a most amazing statement is made. The Lord says, "I have many people in that city." The gospel hadn't even arrived there, but the Lord knew who the elect were in Corinth.

In Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians, listen to chapter 2, verse 13: "We should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." He says to the believers in Thessalonica, "We thank God. God chose you, God saved you, He is sanctifying you; He granted you faith in the truth. It was a calling that was irresistible and effectual by which He called you through the gospel with the purpose of your gaining the eternal glory of the Lord Jesus Christ." This is not something that is obscure in Scripture; this is how God works because this is godlike. God is God.

In Deuteronomy chapter 7 God calls Israel, "My elect." In 1 Timothy 5:21 God says angels are elect. In 1 Peter 2:6 the Bible says Christ is elect. In Acts 9:15 it says Paul is elect. So when we start with

this first of all spiritual blessings, we understand that the foundation of all understanding of how God does His saving work begins with the doctrine of divine, sovereign, eternal election, before the foundation of the world, which is also identified in verses 5 and 11 as being predestined, predestined.

Along that line, listen to the words of Peter in 1 Peter, as the chapter begins: “To those who”—from Peter, the apostle of Jesus Christ—“to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen”—again, this is not something you hold till the end, this is something that’s at the very beginning—“who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father”—foreknowledge means a predetermination to know—“by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood.” Why has the Spirit sanctified you? Why is it that you have been sprinkled with the blood? Why is it that you have been saved? Because you were chosen by God the Father.

So then verse 3 is doxological: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again.” Again it’s a divine miracle. It’s the same thing Jesus said in John 3: “It has nothing to do with you, Nicodemus, it’s the work of the Holy Spirit; He does it for whom the Father determines.”

It is God the Father who has by His mercy caused us to be born again. You make no contribution to your physical birth, obviously; you make no contribution to your spiritual birth. And by that mercy you are given “an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” You were chosen for glory. You weren’t chosen just for justification or salvation in a simple sense, you were chosen for justification, sanctification, and glorification. He chose you for glory. The reason for His choosing is because God is God.

Go down to verse 11: “Having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.” Everything that happens is in the frame of His will. The chosen are predetermined to receive eternal glory. They were chosen before the foundation of the world, their names were written in the Book of Life, and they are secured to the glory for which they are chosen.

Take another look at verse 4. The origin of all of this, of course, is in the sovereignty of God. The purpose of it is holiness, verse 4: We were chosen “in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.” We were chosen to finally and ultimately and permanently, forever, be holy and blameless. That is what is awaiting us because we were chosen before the foundation of the world.

Over in chapter 5 of Ephesians, we read that Christ will “present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.” The church is anything but that now, right? But the time will come, and the Lord will take His bride to Himself, and she will be holy.

In the meantime, Titus 2 says, “The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly and righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and”—listen to this—“to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.” He chose us

for glory and purity. He chose us for holiness. That's where we're headed.

Nobody is going to miss out on the divine purpose which was established when God made His choice. That's why we read in Romans 8 these incredible words of comfort: "We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." If you've been called according to His divine purpose, your name is written in the Book of Life from before the foundation of the world, then everything in your life is moving in the direction of the fulfillment of God's purpose, which is to make you eternally holy, and bring you to His glory.

He goes on: "For those whom He foreknew"—that is not that He looked ahead and saw what was going to happen, but predetermined to have an intimate relationship. "Know" means like in the Old Testament, "Cain knew his wife, and she bore a son." It's intimate knowledge. God has this predetermined, intimate knowledge with the elect; and as a result of that, He predestined us to become conformed to the image of His Son. We aren't predestined just to be saved and hope we can hold on; we were predestined to be conformed to Christlikeness. That's the prize of the upward call when we get to heaven. In the meantime, we are to live as godly as we can in our flesh and in this fallen world.

"Those whom He predestined, He predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son. Those whom He predestined, He called"—and that's an effectual calling, that's a calling that's not resistible—"and these whom He called, He justified"—so anyone He draws to Himself is justified—"these whom He justified, He also glorified." Nobody falls through the cracks.

Now go back to Ephesians 1. The calling is that we would one day be holy and *amōmos*, blameless, without blemish, like the lamb without blemish. So God's sovereignty, which is what it means to be God—if you're God, you are in charge of everything—God's sovereignty brought Him to the place where He chose certain individuals that would one day be created to be His own for eternity. He chose them to come to perfect holiness, in the eternal presence of the Trinity, for His own glory.

What was His motive? Why did He do this? Go back to verse 4: "In love He predestined us," in *agapē*, in love. In chapter 2, verse 4, "God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)."

He loved us. How is that? He loved us before we existed. He loved us when we had no being. How can God choose to set His love on those who have done absolutely nothing to deserve it? Well that's the essence of grace. "We love Him because"—what?—"He first loved us." First John 4:10, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us."

It was "the kind intention of His will." Look at the end of verse 9, the kind intention of His will. The end of verse 11, "predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will." That's what it means to be God. And what is the result of His choosing? Verse 5, "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself."

We aren't just subjects in His kingdom, we are sons in His family. This is all throughout the epistles of the New Testament, a celebrated, joyous doctrine, Galatians 3:26, "For you are all sons of God

through faith in Jesus Christ.” Galatians 4:4, “When the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’”—an intimate expression. “Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.” We are sons.

Philippians chapter 2 says it in a beautiful way, verses 15 and 16: “so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life.”

This work of God, this electing work of God leads to our eternal glory. It is an unspeakable, incomprehensible blessing, to be granted spiritual life in regeneration. We would all agree to that. So also is it a remarkable blessing to be freed from the penalty of sin. And so it is a remarkable blessing to be declared righteous in Christ. And we might say that if all of the blessings of God, all the spiritual blessings in the heavenlies stopped with regeneration and forgiveness and justification, no one would question God’s grace, and no one would question God’s goodness.

But in an extravagant expression of love, God not only gives us life through the new birth, but He adopts us into His family so that we may relate to Him, not only as the giver of spiritual life and the provider of legal righteousness, but also as our loving and compassionate Father. For this reason some theologians have said that adoption is the highest privilege the gospel offers, because you can’t get any higher than to be a son of God eternally, one whom Jesus will call brother. This kind of privilege staggers the imagination. It is the amazing grace of all grace. That’s why John said, “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the sons of God.”

Why does God, then, choose us and bring us to glory? The goal? We’ve seen the origin in His sovereign choice; the purpose: eternal holiness; the motive: love; the result: sonship. The goal: We’ve already looked at it, but go back to Ephesians chapter 1, verse 6. And what is the goal? It is “the praise of the glory of His grace.” Verse 7 ends about “the riches of His grace.” Verse 12, “to the praise of His glory.” Verse 14, “to the praise of His glory.” God does everything for His own eternal glory, that He may be worshiped forever and ever by saints and angels. He’s worthy of that glory.

Without doubt, this is the most foundational doctrine in all the doctrines of salvation. It is the most loved doctrine, and I think the most cherished doctrine by those who understand it. And that’s why down in verse 15, Paul prays a prayer that you would understand it. He says, “For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.” And what am I praying for? “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, that your eyes of your heart might be enlightened, that you might know what is the hope of His calling, and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.”

It’s a prayer that we would grasp this incredible reality of God’s sovereign purpose in salvation. When that wisdom and that revelation, that knowledge and that understanding becomes clear in your heart, you respond by blessing God. Spurgeon said, “He who believes he is the elect of God, will he fear at all the world that stands against him? If earth be all in arms he dwells in perfect peace, for he is in the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High, in the great protection of the Almighty. ‘I am God’s,’ says he.” The psalmist often says, “God is our refuge. God is our strong tower. He is strong, and His sons are secure.” This is the most precious of all doctrines because we have nothing to fear

between election and eternal glory, predetermined before the foundation of the world.

In spite of this, and in contrast to this, this doctrine is the most hated doctrine by people who don't understand it. And you likely, if you've been a Christian very long, have had some kind of a conversation with someone who had trouble with this doctrine. For those who understand it, it is the most important of all doctrines. For those who don't understand it, it is the most distasteful of all doctrines; it offends them. The pervasive notion of, I think, most people who call themselves Christians is to be skeptical about this because it seems unfair, it seems that this is impinging on human freedom.

But you can't measure God by your standards. Psalm 115, verse 3, "But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases." That ought to cover the ground. Psalm 135:6, "Whatever the Lord pleases, He does." Daniel 4:35, "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but God does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can stay His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'" That understanding leads to Revelation 19:6, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, Almighty"—you know the next word—"reigns." The Lord Almighty reigns.

Deuteronomy 10, verses 14 and 15, "Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it. Yet on your fathers did the Lord set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples." Is this unjust? Listen to Psalm 97:2, "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne." Psalm 50:21 asks the question, "You thought that I was altogether like you?"

What is divine justice? Divine justice is the essential attribute of God whereby He infinitely and perfectly—just in Himself and of Himself, and for and from and by Himself and none other—loves righteousness and defines what righteousness is. He wills it; therefore it is just. He wills it; therefore it is righteous.

William Perkins, Puritan, says, "We must not think that God does a thing because it's good or right, but rather is the thing good and right because God wills it and does it." Stephen Charnock adds, "The great controversy between God and man is this: 'Shall God be God? His will or man's?' If anyone's will is superior to God's will, frustrating God's will, God could not be God. That is atheism or idolatry. Yet it is popular to so dethrone God."

Picked up a few quotes from evangelical pastors and leaders; let me read them to you. "To suggest that the merciful, long-suffering, gracious and loving God of the Bible would invent a dreadful doctrine like election would have us believe it is an act of grace to select only certain people for heaven, and by exclusion, others for hell, comes perilously close to blasphemy." Another evangelical said, "The flawed philosophical theology of predestination is an attempt to eliminate man's capacity to exercise his free will, which reduces God's sovereign love to an act of a mere dictator." Another pastor: "Divine sovereignty makes our heavenly Father look like the worst of despots." President of a Christian university, he says, "Such is Calvinism, sovereignty, the most unreasonable, incongruous, self-contradictory, man-belittling and God-dishonoring scheme of theology that ever appeared in Christian thought. No one can accept its contradictory, mutually exclusive propositions without intellectual self-debasement. It holds up a self-centered, selfish, heartless, remorseless tyrant for God, and bids us to worship Him." Another popular evangelical says, "Five-point Calvinism makes God a monster who eternally tortures innocent children."

Why are so many Christians content to let God be Creator, benefactor, consummator of creation, creator of a new heaven and a new earth, but resent Him when He takes His throne with regard to salvation? To be God is to be sovereign. The Creator owes nothing to the sinful creature, not even what is graciously given. Salvation's not a matter of justice or fairness; it's a matter of mercy and grace. This offends some people.

Here's another comment: "To say that God sovereignly chooses who will be saved is the most twisted thing I have ever read; makes God a monster." Another one: "This makes God a diabolical monster and reduces man who is created in the image of God to a mere robot." A well-known writer: "Divine sovereignty, misrepresentation of God has caused many to turn away from the God of the Bible as from a monster." These are people calling God a monster because He's God.

Man is the monster, not God. No sinner is capable of choosing God, choosing Christ, choosing life, choosing salvation. We are dead in our trespasses and sins, dead and buried and blind—and double blind and triple blind. Salvation is a work of God alone. And over and over and over again, the Scripture says God chooses whom He will save.

You say, "Well what about faith?" Well the Bible teaches that, too. You say, "How do those go together?" They go side by side. Don't tamper with either one of them. They're like two tracks, two parallel tracks that don't come together until heaven. But what is hard for you to understand is trivial simplicity to God.

We know He's sovereign; that's why we pray for people's salvation, right? Why would you pray for somebody's salvation unless you thought God was the one who saves? And never do we feel when you pray for somebody and ask God to save them that you're violating their human freedom. Have you ever had that kind of duplicity in your prayers, "I don't know if I should ask You to save the guy, Lord, because You might be tampering with his personal freedom"?

The fact that God chooses is essential to the very essence of who God is; it's all over the Bible. First Corinthians chapter 1, verse 26, "Consider your calling, brethren"—the divine calling that called you to salvation—"not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble." Here we find that not only does God call to salvation certain people, but He doesn't call the people that you might think He would call—the highbrow and the noble, as it says in James. God has chosen the poor to be rich in faith. God has chosen the poor to be rich in faith. Here it says He's not chosen, called "wise according to the flesh, or mighty, or noble," verse 27, "but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God."

God has chosen, God has chosen, God has chosen, and these are the kinds of people He's chosen. Verse 30 sums it up, "By His doing you're in Christ Jesus." You're in Christ Jesus because you were chosen, you were chosen. So if you want to boast, verse 31 says, "Boast in the Lord." It's His work.

By the way, people who deny the sovereignty of God in salvation are lost here. If the weak and the foolish that make up the church choose God, then how does that end human boasting? Paul is saying there's no place to boast because this is all a work of God. If it's you that chose your

salvation, then how does that end human boasting? It turns the whole passage into utter nonsense. And you know you can't boast in your salvation.

In Romans chapter 9, verse 14, Paul poses a question: "What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, 'I'll have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' It doesn't depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy." God saves whom He will. "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth.' So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. You will say to me then, 'Well why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?'" If it's all His choice, then what responsibility do we have? Verse 20 comes the answer: "On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God?"—shut your mouth. "The thing molded will not say to the molder, 'Why did you make me like this,'" because "the potter has a right over the clay. What if God was willing" to do this? It's all up to Him.

If all Paul is saying is that God chooses those who choose Him, then why the question about injustice? Why would he pose the question, "Is this unjust?" If it's just a matter of human choice, then there's no reason to talk about injustice on God's part. If it's a human choice, there's no reason to object. No need to defend divine justice. No need to tell people not to boast; they probably ought to boast, if it was their doing. So the denial of sovereign election turns these passages into chaos.

There are some who would say, "Well no, God doesn't choose because He doesn't know the future. He can know what's going to happen." This is called open theism, in its contemporary form. "He can't choose anyone because He doesn't know what hasn't happened yet; He's like all the rest of us, He's reading the news."

That's not what the Bible says, by the way. God, according to Scripture, is the one who makes known the end from the beginning, Isaiah 46:10. In Isaiah 44, He says, "There's no God like Me, declaring things that are coming, events that are going to take place," Isaiah 44. He foretells events centuries before their occurrence. In Isaiah 44:28, He names Cyrus as the ruler who would build up Jerusalem; yet the name of Cyrus in even his existence as a human being depended upon an unimaginably long and complex series of human decisions separating the prophecy from its fulfillment.

In 1 Kings 13:2, God predicts the birth of Josiah three hundred years before he was born. In 2 Kings 19:25, He states explicitly that He has ordained and planned the military victories of the Assyrians long before they ever took place. And it is throughout the Bible that God foretells the Egyptians' voluntary oppression of Israel. Pharaoh's hardening his heart is predicted. The rejection of Isaiah's message by the Israelites, the rebellion of the Israelites after Moses's death, Deuteronomy 31. Judas's betrayal of Christ is predicted, and so on, and so on, and so on. All these things came to pass, and in the coming to pass there were millions of choices, billions of pieces of reality that had to come together in the providence of God.

It's absolutely absurd to say God doesn't know what's going to happen. It's an utter impossibility that God is trying to figure out the future. And what is most evident is the fact that the Bible predicts with detail the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Acts 2:23, "according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God." And what they did to Him in crucifying Him, Acts 4:28, was done with God's hand and plan predestining it to take place. If God doesn't know the future, God can't plan the future, then how

could He plan the death and resurrection of His Son with every detail?

The crucifixion of the Lord Jesus was laid out in detail in the Old Testament, particularly Isaiah 53, Psalm 22. Jesus spoke about it as well. It even started in Genesis that there would come the Son who would have His heel bruised, but He would crush the head of Satan. The immutable, sovereign, loving, faithful, gracious, omnipotent Lord of heaven, whose word cannot return void, always achieves His purposes. His plans are invincible. He speaks, and it will happen.

Listen to what Isaiah said, chapter 43, “I, even I, am the Lord. There is no savior besides Me. It is I who have declared and saved and proclaimed. And I am God. Even from eternity I am He, and there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it?” Isaiah 46:9 and 10, “For I am God, there is no other; I am God, there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, ‘My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure.’” Jesus put it this way in Matthew 16: “I will build My church; and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.”

Now we’re getting close to the end. There’s just one thing I want to point to you. In this opening chapter, this wonderful doctrine of election is tied to Christ. He chose us in Him. He chose us in Him. What is that about? Just turn to Titus quickly, Titus chapter 1. “Paul, a bond-servant,” or a slave, “of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ”—listen to this—“for the faith of those chosen of God”—again, sovereign election—“the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised,” literally, “before time, before time.” God chose and promised the knowledge of the truth that would produce godliness and eternal life, and He made that promise before time.

Who did He make the promise to? It was only God. So to whom did He make the promise? There’s only one possibility: He had to make the promise to one member of the Trinity or another; and the answer comes in 2 Timothy chapter 1, and it’s such a magnificent answer. 2 Timothy 1:9, “God saved us, called us with a holy calling”—again, whenever you see “call” in the epistles, it’s always an effectual call, an actual call to salvation, not just a broad evangelistic call. “Who saved us”—parallel to calling us with a holy calling—“not according to our works”—there weren’t any; we didn’t exist—“but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus before time began.” It’s the exact same phrase as in Titus 1. It’s translated differently, but it’s the same thing.

So God promised before time began to redeem sinners. That promise here was granted before time began, in Christ Jesus. So God the Father promises to God the Son that He’s going to redeem a humanity—make it simple—that will become the bride of His Son, the bride of His Son. The Father is going to redeem a bride for His Son.

Turn to John chapter 6. This is coming down to the most amazing reality, John 6:37; I just love this. John 6:37, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me.” Whoa. Who comes to Christ? “All that the Father gives” Him. The Father is gathering a bride for His Son through the history of redemption. And “all that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.” Why? Because there’s something especially charming about the one who comes? No, because the one who comes is a gift from the Father.

“For I have come down from heaven, not to do My will, My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose none, but raise it up on the last day.” Father chooses a bride. The Father chooses in eternity past. In time, the Father draws the chosen toward Christ. Each of them is a gift from the Father to the Son, a gift of divine love. The Son would never refuse the Father’s gift.

The Father chooses, the Father draws. Down in verse 44, No man can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.” The Father chooses, the Father draws to the Son, the Son receives, and the Son—look at verse 39—“loses none, but raises it on the last day. This is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him on the last day.” The bride was chosen in eternity: The Father draws the bride, the bride comes, the Son receives, the Son keeps, and the Son raises to eternal glory.

The seventeenth chapter of John, just to cap it off, verse 4, Jesus is praying to the Father: “I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.” Verse 6, what’s that work? “I have manifested Your name”—listen—“to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours” because You chose them before the foundation of the world. “You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.”

Verse 9, “I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours;” chosen by the Father, drawn by the Father, received by the Son, kept by the Son. Verse 11, “I’m no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are. While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but that son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled”—the false Judas. “Father, You gave them to Me; I’ve kept them, haven’t lost any of the elect. And “now I’m coming to You”—in verse 13—“I want You to keep them.” Verse 15 says, “I don’t ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.” Verse 24, “Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me”—this is over and over—“You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”

“You loved the Son before the foundation of the world,” and He loved us in the Son before the foundation of the world, and He made a promise to the Son before the foundation of the world that He would bring about a redeemed humanity, give Him a bride. And in history He set His love on the elect and drew them and drew them to the salvation provided by His Son. And the ultimate goal, 1 John 3, is that when we see Him we’ll be—what?—we’ll be like Him. James put it this way in James 1:18: “In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth.” “In the exercise of His will.” That’s why Paul can say, 2 Corinthians 2:14, “We always triumph in Christ,” right? No matter what the world does to us, we always triumph in Christ. He keeps us to eternal glory.

I’ll make this really brief: Election is pride-crushing, isn’t it? Election is God-exalting, isn’t it? Election is joy-producing; it is the sinner’s hope. Election is strengthening in the midst of the battle. We’re headed for glory, folks, and it was all determined before the world began. That’s the first and greatest blessing because it encompasses all the rest.

Father, we thank You for Your Word. It is literally overwhelming to us, stunning in every sense, as we talk about eternal realities, cosmic truth, sweeping from eternity to eternity. And we are not just a

stick floating downstream; we're sons of God headed for glory, because that was determined in eternity past. As long as you have been God, You have loved us. As long as You have been God, You have loved us because it was that love that caused You to choose. And since there was no time before there was time, as long as You have been God, You have loved us; and You will love us into glory. For this we worship You, thank You, and praise You. In Your Son's name. Amen.

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