

The Basis of Our Blessings

Ephesians 1:4-5

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, October 13, 2019

If you would, turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of Ephesians that is the book we're in this morning. And as you're turning there, if you're joining us for the first time today, we're on the front end of a series on the Book of Ephesians called the "All of God" series because that's what the book is about. Ephesians tells us that our salvation is all of God. It says that all the blessings and the riches and the treasures of the Christian life come from His hand and not from us.

I told you last week this is the sixth book that we've studied as a church. This is the sixth series we've gone through together. And before this, we've looked at the Book of First Peter, we've looked at Romans, we've gone through the Gospel of John, the Book of Titus and the Book of Jonah. But I'm thinking this will be the longest one yet. This will be our longest series so far as a church. We're going to be going slowly because we don't want to miss anything. With a Book like Ephesians, we want to take it all in.

It's been said, there are several ways to study the Bible, there's several ways to go through it. You can go through it with a theme like we did this summer with the "Fundamentals of the Faith" class. You can take a theme like the faith and study what the Bible says about that, turn to different passages. You can do this with a survey where you go through the Bible quickly, and we did that with the Book of Jonah. If you remember, we did a chapter a week. We went through the Book of Jonah in about four or five weeks. And then you can do it this way, which is what we're going to do in the Book of Ephesians. You can go through it verse by verse. You can go through it slowly. We went through the Book of Jonah like an airplane, and we're going to go through the Book of Ephesians like a submarine. Jesus told the disciples in the Great Commission to, "Teach them all I have commanded you." And the word "all" means "all" there. The Lord said teach them everything, and the best way to do that is to go verse by verse to make sure you get everything in. And we're going to do that with this book.

And this morning, we find ourselves in Ephesians chapter 1, we're at the beginning of this. And I would like to introduce our passage this way. In his book *Adopted for Life*, Russell Moore tells a story of the time he adopted two little boys from an orphanage in Russia that was pretty rough. It was a bad place. It was dirty and smelly and the kids were a mess. They hadn't bathed in weeks. But Moore says, to his surprise, when he picked them up and took them home, they cried. He said, "I couldn't believe it. They cried over that." He said, "I'm taking you to a place that is clean and comfortable, I'm taking you somewhere that has running water. I'm taking you to the land of McDonald's and Disneyland and Toys"R"Us, and you're crying over this." And I mention that story because I think a lot of Christians do that today with their salvation. I think a lot of us do that with our spiritual lives, because we look at what we used to be and we cry over it, don't we? We look at the dirt and the filth and the sin of this world and we miss it. We want to go back to it. Following Jesus is so hard, it makes us so uncomfortable that sometimes we just want to go back to our former way of life.

F.R. Maltby once said that when He was with his disciples, Jesus promised them three things. He said they would be at peace, they would be fearless, and that they would be in constant trouble from the day they met Him. And that's true. If you've been a Christian for any period

of time, you will know that the Christian life brings trouble with it. It's not easy to take up your cross and die, it's not easy to deny yourself. It's not easy to make the same commitment Stephen made, where you're willing to be stoned for the Saviour. And some people respond to that by going back to the world. They say, "This is too hard, I don't want to do this," and they go back to their former way of life.

This is a real problem in Canada, by the way. This is a real issue in this country. According to a Gallup poll done after World War II (get this), 67% of Canadians went to church; more than half the country. Percentage-wise, Canada at that time was more religious than the United States. And they did a same poll conducted in 1990 (30 years later), and it was discovered that the number had fallen to 23%. It was cut in half. The church had disappeared. And in some communities, churches became dance halls and they became shopping malls - the whole landscape changed in 30 years. And the question is why? What happened? And there's a lot of ways to answer that, but one simple answer is this - Canadians went back to the world. They went back to their former way of life. They missed what they used to be. They didn't want the trouble anymore. They didn't want the difficulty of following Christ, and so they turned back.

Jesus actually warned against this sort of thing in Luke 9:62 when He said, "No one, who puts his hands to the plow and looks back, is fit for service in the kingdom of God." And the idea there is you can't look backwards and forward at the same time. You can't plow a field this way and look that way. If you do, you're going to crash. You have to keep your eyes fixed on Christ. You have to keep your eyes fixed in front of you.

I remember talking with a friend several years ago who was part of our church and very active in it. He was a leader in the youth group, he did Bible studies, until all of a sudden, he quit. One day he just stopped coming and disappeared, and I couldn't find him for a while. Until one day I ran into him at a restaurant and I said, "What happened? Where did you go?" And he said, "The Christian life was too hard for me, so I left." He was pretty blunt about it. He was like, "I missed my friends, I missed my sin and I went back to the world." And I think every believer is tempted to do that from time to time. We're all tempted to do what my friend did. And I bring that up because one way to deal with this is what we're going to talk about this morning.

One way to deal with that temptation is to study the blessings of God. One way to keep your head pointed in the right direction is to remember what you're heading toward and not what you've left behind. To use the illustration I mentioned a moment ago, you get over the orphanage and the filth and the dirt by focusing on where the car is taking you.

I told you last week that studies have been done on this, and scholars have found over 5,000 promises in the Bible. God understood this. He understood this temptation. He gave you 5,000 promises in the Bible, which means that there's a promise per page in Scripture, about 75 promises per book. It's wild to think about, but every time you read a book of the Bible, there could be as many as 75 promises in it, because God wants you looking this way and not that way. Isaac Watts said, "I believe the promises of God enough to venture an eternity on them." We could all say the same thing this morning. And we see this in our passage for today.

If I can read this to you again, in Ephesians 1:1-3, here's what Paul says about this. Here's how this book starts. It says,

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 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.

And just to review that a little bit (we talked about this last week), but if you notice the word “blessed” is repeated three times in verse 3 for you to get the point that you are blessed, blessed, blessed in the Christian life. God has given you promise after promise, after promise to keep your head pointed in the right direction. You have more than you could ever ask for, you have more than you could ever want. God is not taking you to a bad place, He's taking you to the best place imaginable. This is so much better than what you left behind, amen? You should never put your hand to the plow and look back.

To be specific, he says God has given you every spiritual blessing, which means these are blessings of the spirit. They're blessings of the soul or the inner man. This is where God is blessing you. This is where He's helping you on the inside, not the outside. So many people walk away from the faith because God is not blessing them on the outside. He's not blessing their wallet. They leave because they want God to give them more money and a bigger house and perfect health. God never promised that. These are spiritual blessings. And it says “in the heavenly places”, which means these blessings refer primarily to heaven. They refer primarily to the next life, not this one. While we are blessed in this life - make no mistake, God does bless us here richly - the greatest blessings are yet to come. They occur in heaven after we die.

I don't know about you, but I go to a funeral and on one hand I'm sad, but if it's a believer's funeral, I am jealous. At that moment in time (I've been studying theology for years), their theology is 20 billion times better than mine will ever be in his life. I'm jealous. I got books all in my office and they're dead now and they know so much more than I know. That's where the blessings occur. That's what we're looking forward to. So many people forget this. They go around looking for Disneyland in this life, they look for Toys"R"Us in the Christian life. God hasn't promised that. The blessings are yet to come.

And this morning, what I want to do with you, with all of this in mind...(That's just background from our passage last week)...But with all of this in mind, Paul is going to add to this by talking about the foundation of all of this. In Ephesians 1:4-5, he's going to talk about the basis of our blessings. So if you're taking notes, that's our outline for today. That's what it's about. Before we get into a list of the blessings, Paul's going to give you a list of the blessings in the first chapter and flesh it out in the rest of the book. But before we get into that, in verses 4 through 5, Paul's going to give you the basis of our blessings. He's going to tell you why God has blessed us like this in the first place. He's going to tell you why God has driven to the orphanage, put us in the car and taken us away to a better place.

If you think about it, God didn't have to do that. There's nothing forcing His hand. You didn't earn it. You don't deserve it. God didn't walk into the orphanage and say, “Boy, these are the best looking babies.” It didn't happen that way. You had as much dirt on you as everybody else. It was all by His grace and mercy. And Paul's going to talk about this with two basis for these blessings.

And the first one is this, is that He chose us. The first basis of our blessing is simply that God chose us. We didn't choose Him ultimately, but He chose us. And we do choose God. (I'll talk

about that in a moment). But we didn't decide to bless ourselves with these things, God made that decision in His grace and mercy. And just to show you this, if you look in verses 3 through 4, the apostle Paul writes it this way, he says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world."

I told you last week that Paul does something very unusual in this book. At the start of it, he does something strange because he starts a sentence in verse 3 that goes all the way down to verse 14 without a break. It's an awkward sentence to read in English. Most of your English translations (if you have the NASB or the ESV or NIV), it's going to have periods in here. But in the Greek, there was no period until all the way down in verse 14. It's a very awkward sentence. It has over 200 words in it and more commas than I could count. Some scholars say it's the longest sentence in the entire Bible or in the Greek language. Some of our young people are studying grammar. This is the worst grammatical sentence you could think of. And the reason for it is Paul often dictated his letters to his scribe. He would speak out loud and a scribe would write down what he said. And apparently, from what we can tell, all this talk about God's blessings got him so excited. All this talk about the promises got him so worked up that he just kept talking and talking and talking, and the scribe kept writing and writing and writing until he'd put down a sentence that was this long.

I heard a preacher in Georgia one time that would get worked up and start preaching, and his face would turn red. And he would just about pass out because he couldn't take a breath and he'd just keep going and going and going. And we often thought he would just fall over. And it's almost like Paul was doing that here. He was so excited about the subject.

And he starts off by saying, "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." Just a few thoughts on this, the word "chose" here is the Greek word at *eklego* which means to "choose" or "select" something. And the idea here is that God did that with us. He chose or selected us out of the world. He drove to the orphanage, picked us up of His own will. And it says that He did that (if you notice) from before the foundation of the world.

Now this is interesting because if you notice the word "before" is a time sensitive word. In other words, it means that God chose us before something happened, before the world's foundation. That phrase is used a couple of times in Scripture to mean before the foundation of everything, before the world began. It's a very interesting phrase because before the world began, there was no time. And the word "before" is a time word. So before time began, God did this. That's when He chose us.

And this is also interesting because if you think about it, there wasn't much going on at that time. Was there? There wasn't much going on before the world began because nobody was around. No one was created. You weren't created before the world began. I wasn't created before the world began. The person sitting next to you was not around yet. The only one there was God, the Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That's who was there before the world's foundation.

And because of this, theologians often refer to this as the "eternal counsel of the Trinity" or the "eternal council of the Godhead" because this was the council God had with Himself in eternity to save the human race. This was the decision He made before anything was. And the

point here is that this was all of God's choosing. The decision to bless us came from Him and not from us, because we couldn't make it because we weren't even around yet. We weren't there. This did not happen because we were good people, this did not happen because we earned it. All this stuff in Ephesians 1 does not happen because we were just smarter than everybody else. This was all because of God.

And if you think about this in practical terms, just to maybe flesh this out a little bit (if you want a real life example of what I mean), if you think about it, there are billions of people on the planet who will never have any of these blessings. Do you get that? Does that make sense? Billions of them, living in faraway places in Africa and Asia and South America who will never experience anything in the Book of Ephesians. They will never hear the Gospel, they will never read the Bible, they will never hear the name of Jesus Christ - and you get to. You get to have all of this. You get to have every spiritual blessing. Not just some of them, every one of them. You don't get every spiritual gift, but you get every spiritual blessing. And the question is, why?

I mean, did you choose to be born in Canada? I mean, how could you choose that? Did you choose to grow up in a Christian home where your parents taught you the Gospel? Did you choose to have a random Christian friend living next door who preached Christ to you one day? Did you choose to turn on the radio and hear that sermon that changed your life? You didn't choose any of that. This was all of God. God set things in motion from eternity past that would lead you to saving faith in His Son. And He did it before anyone on the planet was even around.

Now, we've got to be honest about this passage here because when we talk about this, questions come up, don't they? Right? I've got questions. I was a philosophy student. We were told to question everything. Questions like, what about our choice and freewill? What about evangelism? How do you evangelize with this doctrine? Are we robots? Do we just say, "Yes, sir" and "No, sir" like a machine? And we can't get to all those questions for the sake of time, but let me just say this (this is important), you do have a choice in your salvation, you do have a will.

The Bible says that very clearly. If you look down in Ephesians 1:15-16 at the bottom of the page, you see the will of man very clearly. It says, "For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you." In other words, the Ephesians had faith. They had love for the saints. They chose that, which means they had a will, and it was a real will. That's important in this discussion. They weren't robots. They made real choices in real time that really mattered to God. But the difference though, what Paul says here, is that God's will and God's choice came first. God's will and God's choice came before all of that. Now how all that works is a mystery. I have to admit we can't explain all of this, but that's what this says.

R.C. Sproul has a helpful thought on this. This is a helpful thing that he says. He actually tells the story, he was about to discipline his son and his son said, "Why are you doing this to me, dad?" And R.C. Sproul said, "Well, son, it's like this, I have a will and you have a will, but my will is freer than your free will." (I thought that was funny, I was waiting for a laugh.) He says, "I make choices and you make choices, son, but as your dad, my choices have less restraints than yours do." And it's the same idea here. There are times in Scripture when our blessings are tied to what we do. There are times when the Scriptures say, "You reap what you sow," and "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." And the

idea there is that we do certain things and God blesses us, but that's not what this passage is saying here. In Ephesians 1, our adoption, our redemption, our forgiveness, our inheritance, being sealed with the Spirit, come from God and not from us. Even though we do choose Him, this is a mystery.

An evangelist once asked a young lady if she'd ever found Jesus. That's what he asked her. He said, "Have you ever found Jesus?" To which she replied, "I didn't know He was lost." She said, "I didn't find Him, He found me, and He saved me and now I trust in Him." This is what Paul is saying. God wasn't lost, you were. You didn't find Him as much as He found you, and He decided to bless you like this from before the foundation of the world. This is the basis of your blessing. This is where it all begins. It begins on the solid foundation that was built in eternity past.

We live in a crazy world, don't we? Turn on the news, talk to the people next door, sometimes you wonder where is this world heading? I'll tell you where this world is heading - this world is heading wherever God wants it to. God chose this all before time began. Which leads to a couple of applications here, a couple of ways we can apply this to our lives.

For one thing, this means you can't boast in this. That's what this means. You can't boast in your blessings because they didn't ultimately come from you, you didn't earn them, God did. All the glory goes to Him. Going back to chapter 1, if you just go through the list of these blessings, you can see this. If you look in verse 5, here's one of the blessings God gives you. It says, "In love, He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself." The Lord adopted you. You didn't do that for yourself. You didn't drive to the orphanage and put yourself in the family of God. God did that. That's all of Him. If you look in verse 7, it mentions, "In Him, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses." You didn't forgive yourself either, did you? You didn't sin against yourself, you sinned against God. God forgave you. You didn't seal yourself with the Spirit in verse 13, you didn't give yourself and inheritance in verse 14. You didn't make yourself His possession in verse 14. We could go on and on throughout the book, but this is Paul's point: we didn't do all of this, God did it for us. So God gets all the glory, He gets all the credit. We can't look at all these blessings in this chapter and say, "Look at how wonderful I am." We have to look at all of this and say, "Look at how wonderful God is." This is a chapter about God, this is not a chapter about us. So we can't boast in this. If we boast in this, we boast in Him, amen? That's where the boasting goes.

Which leads to another application (and I hope this is encouraging to you): you can't lose these blessings. If they don't depend on you, you can't lose them, right? If you didn't earn them, you can't wish them away. This was chosen for you from before the foundation of the world, or, you were chosen before the foundation of the world, before you were even around, which means you can't mess this up. I talked to Christians all the time who are so afraid of messing up their salvation. They're so afraid of blowing it. They say, "If I say the wrong thing or if I do the wrong thing, God's going to get me. I'm going to go to hell." But friends, remember this decision was made before you were even around. This decision was made before you ever said or did anything, which means God will never give up on you now. You can't lose your salvation. It doesn't rest on your shoulders, it rests on His. So be encouraged.

And it leads to one more application to this, and that is that a doctrine like this should change your life. It should make a difference in you. If you look in verse 4, Paul goes on, he says, "Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and

blameless before Him.” If you notice, Paul says, “This is why God chose you. This was the point of all of this, that you would be holy and blameless before Him.” A lot of people look at a doctrine like this one and they say, “Well, if I’m chosen then wahoo, I can do whatever I want! If this is true, then I’ve got a free pass to heaven, I can just sin like the dickens.” Paul says, “You were chosen to be holy and blameless before Him.” The word “holy” means “set apart from sin.” The word “blameless” means just what it says - without blame in regard to your sin. The point is that a doctrine like this one should change you. It should make you different.

A seminary friend of mine tells a story of the time he was talking to a professor, and he asked the professor to pray that God would make him nothing. He thought that would impress him. That’d be like a really profound thing to ask for in seminary. “Professor, would you please pray that God would make me nothing.” To which the professor replied, “I’m not going to do that because you are nothing.” Hurt his feelings a little bit. Seminary has a way of doing that. And he said, “I’m not going to pray for that because you already are that, I’m going to pray for you to realize it.”

This is what Paul is doing in this passage, he’s telling us the same thing. We are nothing, we are unworthy of all these blessings. We don’t deserve them, we shouldn’t have them. We’re not better than all these people and the rest of the planet that don’t get them. God has just given them to us out of His grace. He has chosen them for us before we were born out of His mercy and out of His kindness, and out of His great, great love. The reason we attempt to go back to the world is because we forget this, don’t we? We look back and cry over our former life because we forget that we have this. We have a God who loves us like this, we have a Saviour who saves us like this, completely and fully and absolutely.

The Puritan Samuel Rutherford once said this about this passage - he said, “If it were up to us and we had heaven in our own keeping, we would lose it all. But because it is up to Christ and heaven is in His keeping, we can’t lose anything. We are saved because of Him.” Which leads us to another point to consider this morning, another basis for our blessings that we see in this passage. The first one is that God has chosen us. We didn’t choose Him ultimately, but He chose us from before the foundation of the world.

Maybe as a side note, I would encourage you if that tempts you to pride, if you want to walk around with your chest puffed out and say, “I’m chosen,” why don’t you read Ephesians chapter 2. That will take the pride away – “and you were dead in your trespasses and sins” when this happened. So it’s a very humbling doctrine. We can’t boast in it, we can’t lose it. We’re saved only because of Him.

Which brings us to another point that kind of builds on this, the next basis of our blessings, which goes right along, and that is that God has predestined us. The first one is that He has chosen us. And just to explain that a little bit further, Paul goes on to say that God has predestined us, which is just another way of saying the same thing. And if you read on in verses 4 through 5 in your Bible, it says,

3 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, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He predestined us.

If you are familiar with church history, you'll know that the doctrine of predestination has been a troubled one. Let's just say it this way, every doctrine in the Bible has been a troubled one. People have fought over all of them. But this is one that it seems like there's been a lot of fighting going on over it. John Calvin debated Joseph Arminius over it, or at least their followers did. Arminius was born just a few years before Calvin died, so they didn't really debate over it. But their followers did. They went 'round and 'round about it. So did Martin Luther and Erasmus. Erasmus said Luther troubled him so badly that he gave him kidney stones over this doctrine. I could hear Luther turn around and saying, "Well, God predestined that for you Erasmus. You'll be fine." He was kind of a sarcastic guy. George Whitfield and John Wesley debated this. In modern times, James White and Dave Hunt have gone 'round and 'round over it. So to avoid all this, some Christians say we should never talk about this doctrine. We should avoid it to avoid controversy. And I hear their heart on that. We don't want to invite controversy where we shouldn't, but we do need to say that the Bible does talk about it. It is right here in our text, and so we do need to say some things about this doctrine. God thought it was important enough to put it in here, so we need to explain it.

The word "predestined" here is the word *proorizo* in Greek. It's a compound word from "pro" which is "before" and "orizo," which means "to decide." It means that God decided something beforehand. He chose it ahead of time, just like we talked about. Again, this is just a synonym of the word "chose." And to be specific if you look in the passage, it says, "God predestined us." It says, "In love, He predestined us." Which is important because it means love was the motive behind this. Love was the reason God chose us beforehand.

Some people don't like the doctrine of predestination because it seems so random to them and so spiteful that God would choose some and not others, and they think it's so willy-nilly that He did this. Paul says, God did not do this willy-nilly, He did this in love. Now, why He chose some and not others, we don't know the answer to that, but it was done out of the motive of love, not hate. Some people teach this doctrine in a hateful manner. It's not a hateful doctrine, it's a loving doctrine. First John 4:19 says, "We love, because He first loved us." And you see the word "first" as a time sensitive word there. It means God's love came before ours did. He initiated the relationship. First John 4:10 says, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Another way to look at this (and this is important), is if you want to know how much God loves you, if you came in (like Quentin mentioned a moment ago) discouraged and feeling down, and you want to know how much God cares, this is how much God cares about you as a believer: enough to think about you from eternity past, enough to think about you beforehand, before the foundation of the world. This means in love, He predestined us. It means God thought about you when no one else was around except the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He thought about you when you were not even born. He was planning your blessings then. If you think about it, I love my family but I cannot predestine them. I can't love them before they were born. It doesn't even make sense. I can't love them before I was born. My love has a shelf life. I can love them for 30 years, 40 years, 50 years, 60 years, something like that. And I can plan on blessing them for that amount of time. Honestly, I love my kids very much, but if I go buy them a toy, it's about a 10-minute trip to Walmart because that place is dangerous. Walmart is dangerous. So, 10 minutes in, 10 minutes out. That's the blessing in my mind. Paul says, God has been planning these blessings for all of eternity. That's a long time. He has spent forever planning these blessings out for you, mapping them out. And we might add (this is important as well), God didn't do this just for us. He's done this for several groups of people in history.

He did this for Israel. Deuteronomy 7:7-8 says God chose Israel in love even though they were smaller than all the other nations. He did this for the Apostles. Jesus said, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you" - to the Apostles. First Timothy 5:21 says, He did this for the angels. The angels that didn't fall, God predestined them. And here it says, God did this for us, which means that God has put us in the same company as Israel and the Apostles and the angels. He's been planning out our blessings that long. If I could use another illustration for this, when you see a beggar in the streets and you want to help him, when you want to bless him, you don't typically think about it ahead of time. You just kind of walk by and you go, "Oh, here's some change in my pocket." And you give it to him and say, "Have a nice day." Paul says, "God doesn't bless you like that. This is not an afterthought in His mind. This is not just pulling change out of His pocket." So you can just imagine how wonderful these blessings are going to be.

Jesus told the disciples in John 14:2 that, "In My Father's house are many rooms...for I go to prepare a place for you," which means that Jesus left at that moment in time or shortly thereafter, to prepare a place for them. And the idea is He's been preparing this wonderful place for His followers ever since. And you can just imagine how wonderful that's going to be. Paul says, "God has been preparing our blessings even longer than that." Your adoption, your redemption, your forgiveness, being sealed with the Spirit, your inheritance in Him has been prepared longer than you can imagine. So you shouldn't look back at your former way of life and say, "I miss that, I want that." Nobody should look back at what they used to be and say, "I want to go back to the world" when we have blessings like this.

At the end of the day, we can't understand all of this, and there's no way to get our minds around the doctrine of predestination. This is a mystery. I heard one man who said, "If you deny the doctrine of predestination, you'll lose so much. But if you try to explain it, you'll lose your mind." There's a lot of unknowns here, but the good news is, at least in this passage, we don't have to understand everything about it. What we have to understand is this, Paul is trying to get across the point that these blessings will be incredible. They will be beyond anything you can imagine. You have the infinite mind of God working for an infinite amount of time to give you blessings that are infinitely valuable. A.W. Tozer said, "An infinite God can give all of Himself to all of His children. He does not distribute Himself so that each may have a part, but He gives Himself so that all may have all of Him." And Paul says, "This morning, you can have all of God. He is there for the taking."

So many of us come to a doctrine like this and we get it wrong because we look at this and we say, "Am I predestined, am I one of the chosen ones?" And we look at this like it's a giant crystal ball. And if you just shake it just right, you'll know your future. If you just turn it this way or that, you'll finally get the answer and know what's going to come. But that's not the way Paul presents this, that's not the idea here. Paul is simply presenting this as a blessing for you. This is the basis of your salvation. This is the ground that you stand on. You don't stand on your own good works, you don't stand on your own good behaviour, you don't stand on all that stuff - you stand on Him.

So the proper response to this is, do I believe this? Am I comforted by this? That's what Paul is trying to do here. He wants to give you comfort. He wants to give you hope. The way to respond is, am I encouraged by this? This is a positive doctrine, it's encouraging, not negative. This is all about blessing. Remember, friends, you have a will, you have a real one. You can make choices and you can make real choices that really matter in eternity. So Paul is writing all this to say, take advantage of that and choose God now and take hope in this.

Don't worry about the things you can't understand, worry about the things you can understand. Things like believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved. Focus on that and God will take care of the rest. Focus on all who call on the name of the Lord Jesus will be saved, and passages like, "There is salvation and no one else." Focus on that and be encouraged and be filled with hope. That's the point of the passage for today.

The story is told of a group of theologians who were discussing the doctrine of predestination. They were debating the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's will when a fight broke out (as it often does). And they formed into two competing groups on each side of the room. And one man stood in the middle and not knowing what to do. He didn't know which group to join. And so he went to the predestination side and they said, "Who sent you here?" And he said, "No one, I came of my own free will." And they said, "Free will? We don't believe in that. Go join the other group. Get out of here." So he did. He goes to the other side of the room, and they said, "Well, who sent you here?" And he said, "The other group." And they said, "The other group? You mean you didn't come upon your own free will? Go join the other group, we don't believe in that." And the man finally had enough and he went home. But friends, I tell you this story because the Bible doesn't do that. The Bible doesn't fight over terms the way we do. In a mysterious way, it sees God's sovereignty and man's will as friends, not enemy. It sees predestination and our choice as allies, and we should see it the same way. The point of all of this, as you read this passage is for you to take it home and believe it, and trust in the Lord and be encouraged and have hope in your great salvation. Let me pray this morning and thank the Lord that He has given us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

Father, we thank you Lord, for the blessings You have given us in Christ. We thank you Lord, for doctrines like this one that are tough to talk about, and they're hard to understand. There are mysteries here and I'm afraid I might've even missed some of the explanation. But in the same time, Lord, Your words are so clear.

And Father, we thank you for the firm foundation that our salvation rests on. Lord, we thank you that we stand on Your shoulders and not our own. Lord, thank you for Your sovereign grace and mercy. Thank you for the love with which You have loved us from before the foundation of the world. None of us deserve love like this. We can never earn it.

And Lord, I pray for any who are wrestling with this doctrine, Lord, they would go home comforted just knowing what they have in Christ, in this whole wonderful passage. The basis of our blessings is on You, it's not on us. You have been so kind and gracious to us.

Lord, we leave the mysteries in Your hands, we leave the unknowns in Your court, but we do want to respond in worship to this great, great salvation. Thank you for Christ. Lord, thank you that we can choose Him and be saved. And I pray if there are any here who have not done that, You would draw them to Him, and be glorified in that. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.