

# God's Blessings: Aids to Worship

A sermon delivered Sunday Morning, October 11, 2015  
at Oak Grove Baptist Church, Paducah, Ky.  
by S. Michael Durham  
© 2015 Real Truth Matters

Ephesians 1:3-6

*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, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.*

Last week I spoke from the opening phrase of verse three and stated that the purpose of this epistle is the same purpose of the Christian life—the worship of God through Jesus Christ—“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is the purpose for which you were made and the purpose for which you were saved—to bless and extol Jesus and live your life as worship unto Him. I only covered the first half of verse three last week and now I’ve given you a text that’s four verses long. How are we going to get through all four verses? Well, we’ve established the foundation of these four verses and we could even say the entire epistle is built on those eleven words: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Having thoroughly established that as our footing we can now gain speed. God’s blessings come to us through Jesus Christ and our blessings, our praise, goes to Him the same way. It is through Christ we have been blessed and through Christ we bless God.

## I. Spiritual Blessings

Time will not allow us to go through all the blessings given you who are saved because we’ve been blessed with every spiritual blessing. We don’t have time to enumerate them all but we will do that through all of eternity and we will be glad to do so. But the Apostle does list some of these spiritual blessings in the first three chapters. In the first chapter he lists eight different blessings. If you were here last week, you will remember that I said that our text is only part of a long sentence that begins in verse three and ends in verse 14. So I propose we look at some of these blessings listed for us in this long sentence.

*“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,” (Ephesians 1:3)*

Paul lists these spiritual blessings in a practical way. He is not one of these men that deal with things in theories; he deals with truth. Often truth is dealt with in a theoretical way but not this

Apostle. He gives us truth for practicality so, with practical precision, he enumerates these blessings. There are practical reasons for them. The first two are similar.

### **A. Chosen Before the Creation.**

*“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:” (Ephesians 1:4)*

### **B. Predestined for Adoption.**

*“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,” (Ephesians 1:5)*

Those two words, *chosen* and *predestined*, are charged full of controversy in this day and age. Some believe these two words are nothing more than problems for the church and therefore we best leave them alone because if you bring them up they'll just create controversy and division. The Apostle Paul didn't feel that way, he was quite bold and said these were reasons for us to praise God. We praise Him because we were chosen before the foundation of the world and creation itself. For some the controversy exists because God chooses us to be saved, He did so before the foundation of the world. This word *chosen* can be substituted with its synonyms found also in Scripture, the words *elect*, *elected*, or *election*. God literally elected, chose, you to be saved and therefore you are saved because of God's eternal choice.

Now there are some who subscribe to the doctrine of election who will go so far as to say that you have no responsibility in your salvation and you cannot choose Christ because God has chosen you. They completely eliminate human responsibility. They say preachers should only preach the Gospel to the elect. They will think little of evangelism and missions.

On the other side are those who believe that a person becomes a Christian simply because they make a decision for God and they eliminate completely that God had anything to do with it, especially in electing or choosing them to be saved. These will emphasize man's efforts in evangelism and missions as if God had nothing to do with saving sinners. Of course, they would not deny that God has something to do in the salvation of men, but their emphasis is on man's actions.

Well, which is it?

As you've heard me say over the years: both.

The Bible teaches both God's sovereign grace that chooses whom He saves and the responsibility of man to choose Christ and follow Him as an act of the will. Both of these truths are taught and neither truth excludes or nullifies the other. Listen to what our Lord says,

*“But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.” (John 5:40)*

He says the reason you don't have eternal life is because you don't choose Him. You will not voluntarily will to follow Him and lay down your life for Him therefore you're not saved today because you choose not to be. He clearly teaches there is a responsibility we have in our salvation. Yet, to some of the same religious leaders in the very next chapter, He says,

*“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.” (John 6:44)*

Clearly Jesus upholds and substantiates the doctrine of election that God's sovereign grace must be involved in your salvation. This word *draw* doesn't mean He is standing on the sidelines gently calling you saying, “Please come, please come, please come.” No, the word *draw* here literally means *to fetch*, as you would fetch, draw water out of a well. This is a compulsion that comes supernaturally that is not attributed to us—God sovereignly saves!

In Acts 2:23 we see these two truths in the same verse. Peter stands and gives that great Pentecostal sermon and says,

*“Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;” (Acts 2:23)*

Here you have both truths in the same verse. Jesus was ordained by God to die for our sins. Before He ever made one man, one world, one star to glimmer in the night sky, He had already determined His Son would die for the sins of His people. The Bible said He was slain before the foundation of the world. The sovereignty of God is seen in the first half of that verse but Peter immediately turns around and says, “You have taken...” “You have put to death...” Peter in no way suggests that because God's sovereignty has ordained the death of Jesus that those people were not responsible. They had committed the crime of all crimes, the greatest crime of all humanity, they put to death the Son of God and they were responsible for it. In no way did the sovereignty of God eliminate that responsibility.

In Philippians you see this again.

*“... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:12-13)*

There it is. I have a responsibility. What is it? I am to take the salvation God has given and I am to work it out. I am to apply myself. Did you hear me? I am to apply myself with diligence. I am to dedicate myself to following Jesus in holiness. That is my responsibility and it is up to my effort to do so. But at the same time I am assured with great hope that God is going to be working in me according to His sovereign plan giving me the desire and power to do as He has ordained. So, there you have it.

How do you reconcile these two truths? I quote my hero, Charles Spurgeon, who said there is no reason to reconcile friends. These are not opposing enemies, they're two truths from the same heart—God's.

There is inherent to our salvation a mystery and that mystery must be preserved if it's a great salvation. There are just some things about God saving a sinner that is beyond the intellect because God is beyond the intellect. Who of us can understand God in all of His complexity? No one. If His intelligence is infinite, without end, and my intelligence is finite, then there has to be things He knows that I don't. Listen to what Paul tells Timothy,

*“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness...” (1 Timothy 3:16)*

There is something about our salvation and godliness that is a mystery. He said the deacons should be found,

*“holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience.” (1 Timothy 3:9)*

There is a mystery to our faith, something we cannot explain. The problem is that man doesn't like not knowing something completely. We don't like not knowing because it gives us a feeling of loss of control. And so one man holds to an extreme view of the responsibility of man and his ability to choose while another holds to an extreme view of God's sovereignty and prerogative to save whom He wills. Both views lose some of the mystery and both, therefore, become wrong. If you strip the mystery away from our salvation, then you have no salvation, and the result is religion. You have something that man makes and only man can fulfill but you don't have salvation from God, by God, and for His good pleasure.

For some reason so many Christians feel the necessity to choose between these two truths and speak evil of the other. They want to remove the mystery in order to believe the doctrine. But we don't remove the mystery of the doctrine of the Trinity to believe the Trinity, nor do we remove the great mystery of the Incarnation of Christ so we may believe that the Son of God was also Son of Man. We accept these doctrines even though we can't explain them and I suggest we accept the doctrine of God's eternal election and predestination even though we cannot satisfactorily answer all the questions of the intellect.

The only answer is found in verse five of our text. God has done this “according to the good pleasure of His will.” There it is. You want to know why God has saved you and apart from Him choosing to do so you would never have been saved? The answer is because it pleased Him to do so. If you are saved today, if you are one of His children today, the only answer you have as for why that is so is that it pleased God to make it be. Hallelujah!

Spurgeon has an interesting comment on this, “If God hadn't chosen me before the foundation of the world, He wouldn't choose me now!” I'm glad He chose me then because even though I may have been saved going on 28 years now and have preached His Word, I have given Him no

reason to save me. It's simply because it delighted Him to do so and there we ought to leave it and thank Him for it.

That's not all the blessings. Paul continues.

### **C. Redemption.**

***“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;” (Ephesians 1:7)***

What does this word *redemption* mean? It means to be ransomed, to be purchased. The concept comes from someone being in some form of captivity, some kind of imprisonment and enslavement and someone purchases them to set them free. This is the idea of redemption. You were enslaved, the Bible says, to your sins. You were a captive to the devil, a child of the devil, if you please, and Jesus redeemed you. He paid the ransom but not to Satan but to the Father's holy and righteous justice. You were under the penalty of the law and the law stood over you and me like an executioner but Jesus came voluntarily and out of love sacrificed His life, drained His blood, to give the price to God's justice so that you and I might go free.

*Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it!  
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;  
Redeemed through His infinite mercy,  
His child and forever I am.*

Little Tommy carried his new boat to the edge of the river and carefully placed it in the water and slowly let out the string. Suddenly a strong current caught the boat. Tommy tried to pull it back to shore, but the string broke. The little boat raced downstream.

Tommy ran along the sandy shore as fast as he could. But his little boat soon slipped out of sight.

A few days later, on the way home from school, Tommy spotted a boat just like his in a store window. When he got closer, he could see -- sure enough -- it was his!

Tommy hurried to the store manager: “Sir, that's my boat in your window! I made it!

“Sorry, son, but someone else brought it in this morning. If you want it, you'll have to buy it for one dollar.”

Tommy ran home and counted all his money. Exactly one dollar! He returned to the store and gave up his dollar for the boat he had made. As he left the store, Little Tommy hugged his boat and said, “Now you're twice mine. First, I made you and now I bought you.”

*“Now you're twice mine. First, I made you and now I bought you.”*

A gathering of friends at an English estate nearly turned to tragedy when one of the children strayed into deep water. The gardener heard the cries for help, plunged in, and rescued the drowning child. That youngster's name was Winston Churchill. His grateful parents asked the gardener what they could do to reward him. He hesitated, then said, "I wish my son could go to college someday and become a doctor." "We'll see to it," Churchill's parents promised.

Years later, while Sir Winston was prime minister of England, he was stricken with pneumonia. The country's best physician was summoned. His name was Dr. Alexander Fleming, the man who discovered and developed penicillin. He was also the son of that gardener who had saved young Winston from drowning. Later Churchill remarked, "Rarely has one man owed his life twice to the same person."

But we understand that, don't we? We owe our life twice to the same Person. The first time He made us and the second time He bought us. We're His twice.

*"Now you're twice mine. First, I made you and now I bought you."*

There are other blessings. We must hurry on.

#### **D. Forgiveness.**

*"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;" (Ephesians 1:7)*

I want everyone listening. This is relevant to us all. Every person down deep knows they need forgiveness and you desire it. You really want it. Ernest Hemingway's short story about the broken relationship between a Spanish father and his teenage son, Paco, highlights this desire to be forgiven.

Paco ran away from his home to Madrid, and his grieving father searched everywhere for his son. After every attempt to find him failed, the father placed an ad in the Madrid newspaper that read,

"Dear Paco, meet me in front of the newspaper office tomorrow at noon. All is forgiven. I love you."

The next morning, 800 hopeful men named Paco were standing in front of the newspaper office!

We all need forgiveness. Our conscience confirms it. There are things you have done this very week perhaps and you need to know it is settled, that it's not hanging over you anymore. There is the possibility to leave this place today with your conscience clean and your heart comforted. But forgiveness isn't easy for us, is it?

In the washroom of his London club, British newspaper publisher and politician William Beverbrook happened to meet Edward Heath, then a young member of Parliament, about whom Beverbrook had printed an insulting editorial a few days earlier.

“My dear chap,” said the publisher, embarrassed by the encounter, “I’ve been thinking it over, and I was wrong. Here and now, I wish to apologize.”

“Very well,” grunted Heath, “but the next time, I wish you’d insult me in the washroom and apologize in your newspaper.”

Forgiveness between people isn’t perfect. In fact, it is often a messy process that leaves both sides feeling hurt. It was much easier for the publisher to apologize in private instead of writing a retraction in his newspaper. But God’s forgiveness for us is perfect. Psalm 103:12 states, “As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.” If you go to God with your sins, He promises to forgive you and it is easy for Him to do so. Why? Because He has already done the hard thing—give up His Son.

### **E. Lavish Grace.**

*“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace & which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,” (Ephesians 1:7-8)*

“Made to abound” is all one word and it’s the word *superabound*. Some translations have it as this, “according to the riches of His grace which He *lavished* upon us.” Lavish grace. The idea is that it’s more than sufficient, it’s more than enough—heaps upon heaps, generosity upon generosity—so that you and I can say there is no sin we’ve committed, or even the cumulative effect of all of our sins, that would be so great that God could not forgive us.

*“Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,” (Romans 5:20)*

God gave us the law to expose our sins but grace *abounded*. It’s the same word *superabound*. You cannot out-sin the grace of God! Oh that I could make just one of you to hear me. You feel like you’re buried deep under the stain of your sin and the condemnation of your past, oh that you could see that the past has been expunged by the grace of God and that God will hold nothing against you. Instead, He gives you lavish, superabundant grace upon grace. And it’s not just the grace to be forgiven but grace for today so you can live for Him. Grace did not cease at my conversion. This lavish grace is mine this very moment if I would only appropriate it. I have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

This grace will uphold you, perpetuate you, and cause you to endure. Why are you still saved? Why are you here this morning able to rejoice in His forgiveness? Lavish grace. He has kept you. He has preserved you. You have been kept by this amazing grace. You will never deserve it, you will never earn it, you will never be able to do enough for it. It’s *grace*.

### **F. Knowledge of God’s Will.**

*“having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself;” (Ephesians 1:9)*

That’s an amazing statement, when you stop and think about it. One of the spiritual blessings is that God has given you the knowledge of His will. There is no way you can be a Christian and live pleasing to the Lord unless you know what God wants and what His will is. He’s given us a Book to outline and give us safe perimeters of His will and what He expects on certain things, but it doesn’t address every issue or decision you will have to make. But then there are promises and thank God for them like, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understandings, but in all of your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.” He will give you the knowledge of His will.

Jesus, on the night of His betrayal, said to His followers,

*“No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.” (John 15:15)*

This is amazing to me. Jesus says that whatever the Father tells Him He will tell me. There are no secrets here. You have been brought into the inner circle of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You have been brought into the secret counsel of God. What the Father communicates to the Son, the Son, by the Spirit, communicates to us so we might know what God requires of us so we might be well pleasing in His sight.

There’s not one of us today who should be saying, “I don’t know what God’s will is for my life. I just can’t get Him to tell me.” No, one of the spiritual blessings you’ve been given is the knowledge of His will.

## **G. Predestined Inheritance.**

*“In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,” (Ephesians 1:11)*

Here’s the word *predestined* again. Paul sprinkles it all through this chapter. Not only have you been predestined to be saved, you’ve been predestined to receive an inheritance. If God is our Father and He is the Creator of all things, what has He bequeathed to us? If all the Father has given to the Son is ours, then what have you been granted in Jesus Christ? Here the Son of God became one of us, obeyed the Father, did His perfect will and died on the cross for our sins. Three days later He was raised by God and then ascended to the right hand of God, seated in heavenly places where you too are seated, the Bible says.

What did the Father give the Son as His inheritance for His perfect obedience? Whatever that is, it has been given to us too. You have been predestined to inherit everything that God the Father



has given the Son. Do you know what that will be? All things are going to be wrapped up and placed under the feet of Jesus Christ. He is going to be declared King of kings and Lord of lords, Victor of victors. Every enemy will be vanquished and brought under His feet and He will be crowned Lord, Master, God, and Ruler, and with that, you and I will be there to share in His glory.

## **H. Sealed by the Holy Spirit.**

*“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,” (Ephesians 1:13)*

What a blessing! God Himself, in all of His attributes, has given us Himself as a companion. More than that, He is the very seal placed upon our life. It’s the image of the Son on my spirit so that now, as Jesus was to the apostles on this earth, the Holy Spirit is to me. He is my constant Companion and Guide. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. What a blessing, perhaps the greatest of them all.

Yes, there are warnings not to quench Him, not to grieve Him, but think about this—even if you have quenched Him, even if you have grieved Him, He doesn’t leave you. “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” And then Jesus promises the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, the Comforter will come to us.

I must hurry on. If I don’t, you’ll miss the essential point. These blessings aren’t the essential point Paul is trying to make.

## **II. The Blessings of God Aid Our Worship of God**

That’s the reason for him to list them. The eight blessings he mentions and the rest he mentions throughout the first three chapters are to help us worship God. If you go back to the beginning of this worship service, I went through all of those Psalms as aids to help us worship the Lord. Paul is giving us a list of blessings, reminding us we *now* have every spiritual blessing, in order that we would bless God. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

*“to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.” (Ephesians 1:6)*

The reason He has blessed you, the reason you are accepted in Jesus is so that you might praise the glory of His grace.

## **A. The Pervading Perversion.**

There is a perversion in all of us that make us to need incentives to worship God. The sad fact is that you and I are not perfect yet. We are not altogether like Jesus. We’re in that process, that’s part of our salvation, but we’re not there yet. The perversion that remains in us requires incen-

tives to worship Him. Isn't that sad? I think of nothing sadder in my life that God has to give me blessings in order for me to even praise Him. I should be able on the strength of His own name, on the value of His person, and for His own namesake, be able to praise Him at all times. But no. God has to give us blessings to wake us up and see how good He is.

## **B. The Perversion of the Blessings.**

Our pervasion takes the blessings and turns them into idols. The gifts outweigh the Giver. That's what happens to us. Paul, knowing this about us, begins to list these blessings one by one to cause our hearts to move from the idols of blessings to the Giver of them.

### **III. The Blessings Are Gifts of Saving Grace**

These blessings are the activity of God in saving us. They're not just gifts, they're ultimately the gift of salvation itself. I need to show you this.

#### **A. God's Aim.**

God's aim is His worship.

God's aim is His worship not because He is some egomaniac who is distraught the moment you're not praising Him and telling Him how good He is. No, worship of God is because He's worth it, but it's also for our benefit. You are never more satisfied, content, and joyful than when you are in intimate praise and worship of God. You don't believe that because you don't experience it. When you start experiencing it you will start believing that's the greatest thing you could have. God's aim is that we worship Him.

*v. 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.”*

*v. 6—“to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.”*

How has He done this? How has He brought us, who were sinners outside the family of God, in and made us to bless and praise Him? Again verses 3 and 6: He has “blessed us with every spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ” and “He has made us accepted in the Beloved.” God has saved you. These blessings are a part of that salvation.

In verse four, Paul gets to the heart of why God would save sinners who do not deserve His loving-kindness. Why would He have mercy on you when you despised Him? He tells us in verse four. Salvation's purpose is that we be “holy and without blame . . . in love.”

*“just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,” (Ephesians 1:4)*

*In love.* Commentators argue about these two words because the Greek will allow us to read, “holy and without blame before Him in love,” or to put the words *in love* with verse 5 as the NIV, NAS, and the ESV do reading, “In love he predestined us for adoption.” The *in love* can go with being holy and without blame or it can go with being predestined for adoption. Which one is it? Did God in love predestine you to be a son or daughter of His? Of course He did. Did He also save you for the purpose of being holy and without blame before Him in love, meaning you love Him? Of course He did.

So when the grammar allows for different readings, then context and doctrine must take the lead in helping us understand how to rightly interpret.

I want to give you two arguments to consider where we should put “in love.”

What is holiness? What does it mean to be holy and without blame? It means to be perfect. It means to be sanctified and altogether like God, who is holy. What does that mean? I would say according to the Scripture it is selfless love ruling the soul and body. The Bible refers to God as many different things but there are only three metaphors the Bible uses to describe God. It says God is light, God is holy, and God is love. Could it be that those things are synonymous?

*“Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.” (Romans 13:10)*

Paul says love fulfills or completes the law. Obedience to the law, which is what it means to be blameless or holy, is love and love is holiness. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself,” and if you do that you fulfill all the commandments of God and therefore, if you do that, you are holy. To love unselfishly is what holiness is.

What would give reason for more praise and blessings unto God? Multiple choice:

1) in love God predestinate us or 2) make us holy and to love Him as He loves?

Beloved, He’s already said He loves us to the degree He’s predestined us to adoption. That is an act of His love, no doubt about that. We’re not arguing that He hasn’t done that. I am arguing that He not only did that but He goes one step further, which to me is most remarkable: He takes a vile sinner who is against God and so transforms that person so that person can stand before God and love God. To me, that is amazing.

We all know God can forgive our sins. We all know what it means for God to save us and make us His and we all know that is, in itself, an infinite grace and blessing. He could have left us in that condition. He could have just forgiven you and said, “Okay, I’ve now made a way so that you don’t have to die and go to hell, and you can live in My paradise that I’ve created.” But He goes beyond that. He says He’s not only going to save you and forgive your sins, He’s going to make you like Him. Salvation is not just the bestowment of justification and righteousness or being called

“good” and “acceptable,” it’s also being given the very nature and character of God that literally transforms and changes you so that you love like God loves.

Therefore I say these two words, “in love,” belong to verse four. He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. We are not just forgiven sinners, redeemed out of our evil past, we have been transformed so we now love Him and others as He loves us. That is a work of grace.

Spurgeon said in a sermon,

Brothers and sisters, would we not sacrifice everything we have, and count it no sacrifice, if we might be perfectly holy? I said to a young girl, who came to join the church, “Mary, are you perfect?” She looked at me and said, “No, sir.” I said, “Would you like to be?” “Oh, that I would! I long for it; I cry for it.” Surely, the God who makes us long to be perfect, has already wrought a great work in us; and if we can say that, to be perfect, would be heaven to us, then we are already on the road to heaven, and God is working out in us his eternal purpose, which is, “that we should be holy.”

Here’s my final point. If salvation, that is, being a Christian, means no more to you than having your sins forgiven and escaping hell and making heaven when you die, you are not saved. Did you hear me? I’ve got to say this again. If you mean that to be a Christian is somebody forgiven by God and when they die they don’t have to go to hell, but get to go to heaven and live forever, if that’s what you believe is the purpose of heaven and that describes your Christianity, then you are still lost in your sins.

Paul makes it absolutely clear that the reason God has chosen you before the foundation of the world is not just to forgive you or redeem you or give you an inheritance in heaven but to make you like Him—holy and without blame. He saved you so you can love as He loves and love Him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

My dear friend, God doesn’t give us a small and puny salvation, He gives a, “so great a salvation.” He doesn’t just take us out of our sins and wipe the record clean, He also gives us a new heart with new passions and loves that desires to be perfect as God. This new heart is not content until we stand one day complete in His likeness. Is that the ambition of your mind and heart today? Are you persuaded beyond a shadow of a doubt that you will not be content until you see Him as He is, knowing that then you will be like Him? If that’s the case, then you are saved and on your way. God’s activity is great and you have been given every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. How vastly rich you are!

But if that’s not the pursuit of your heart, you might claim the title Christian but you are not one. Oh may today the Lord God look upon us with great favor and mercy and save you, changing you, making you to be His twice. First He made you and the second time He bought you. Oh that God would do that this morning and give us the greatest joy we could ever experience apart from our own gift of salvation. May He and you come together in a saving union!

*But I heard earlier that you said we have to be chosen and God has to do that before the ends of the earth.* That deals with God's intentions. I'm not talking about God's intentions now; I'm talking about yours. I also said to you the Bible says you must choose. You must lay your life before Him. You must sacrifice your control and surrender it to Him if you are to be saved and if you do that He will save you. In this way you can know that God has chosen you. If you repent and turn from your sins and you desire to be like Him in love, well then, the question of your eternal choice will be solved and never questioned again.

The question at this moment is not have you been chosen but do you choose Christ? Do you want Him? Then receive Him! It's just that easy. He has made Himself available to you. He came, He died, He rose again, and now the Spirit of God through my voice cries out to you, "Come! Come! Come! Receive the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved." For whoever comes to the Lord He will in no wise cast out. There's the promise. Build your whole eternity on that word. Come. He will not turn you away. He will receive you. He will save you.

*But I've seen others come and I've seen them go.* Friend, that's not your business. The business this morning is your heart. Do you want Christ and will you come? If you will, your name was written in the Lamb's Book of Life, not today, but in eternity past. Receive what God has for you, I plead with you. Amen.