

# Sovereign Grace

by C.J. Mahaney

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*C.J. Mahaney's sermon on 'Sovereign Grace' emphasizes God's initiative in salvation and the mystery of divine sovereignty alongside human responsibility.*

**Duration:** 51:30

**Scripture:** Ephesians 1:3

**Topics:** "Sovereign Grace"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding the biblical explanation for one's conversion experience. He refers to Ephesians 1:4, which states that our transition from death to life, from sinner to saved, is solely the result of God's sovereign grace. The speaker shares a personal story of his own conversion experience at the age of five, where he felt a deep sense of sinfulness and prayed for God's presence. He concludes by highlighting the profound impact of God's pursuit and love for us, even when we may not be actively seeking Him.

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## Transcript

Please turn in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 1, the letter of Paul to the Ephesians chapter 1. Last week your senior pastor addressed you on what happened when God saved us from Ephesians chapter 2. This week we're going to look further back where we will discover the ultimate cause behind God's saving activity. And so most appropriately the title of this message is Sovereign Grace. My reading this morning will be confined to verses 3 and 4. This entire opening section beginning in verse 3 concluding at verse 14 is a celebration.

Paul is celebrating beginning in verse 3 spiritual blessings. He begins celebrating in verse 3. He really doesn't stop to take a breath until he concludes verse 14. And since the content of this particular passage is appropriately celebratory, I think my reading of this passage should also be celebratory in tone.

So chapter 1 verse 3. This is not a good start. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him. Let's pray.

Lord thank you for this privilege and thank you for these people who for 28 years have brought so much joy to my soul. I pray that you would draw near to each and everyone present this morning because of your Son and by the proclamation of your Word. Draw near to us and by your Spirit reveal to us afresh this

day sovereign grace.

Overwhelm us with your amazing grace today Lord. I pray assist me as I attempt to serve those I love from this passage. Derive pleasure from all that takes place in this place among these people for your glory.

I pray and thank you in Jesus name. Amen. Author James Cantillon writes the following very moving and insightful remembrance of his conversion experience.

He begins, first impressions are lasting impressions. So goes the old saying and I suspect in most cases it is true. My first impression of God is with me he writes to this day.

It happened at a musty old church camp in central Saskatchewan Canada. I was five years old. This should transfer fresh faith for all parents and all who have the privilege to serve in children's ministry.

Back in those days we were into tabernacles. Not only were most of our churches called tabernacles but our camp meeting buildings were also given this Old Testament name for tent. On one especially hot day my parents were in the adult tabernacle and I with my fellow junior campers was in the children's tabernacle.

The teacher was taking us through Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. Wise teacher. And as she taught something sparked within me.

After the lesson the children exploded into the sunshine to play. I lingered. Miss Brown seemed to know why.

Can I help you Jimmy? She asked gently. I nodded dumbly biting my suddenly trembling lower lip. Tears welling in my eyes.

Let's go into the back room and pray she said. I can't explain what happened but I will say this. At age five I suddenly felt as though I were the worst sinner who had ever lived.

And then he describes praying and the effect of prayer on his five year old soul. I felt this newly discovered burden lift from my fragile soul. The presence of God overwhelmed me.

Listen. Listen as he remembers and see if you can relate. Without my looking for him or asking for him.

Indeed without any knowledge of my need of him. God came looking for me. Asking for me.

A five year old kid. First impressions are lasting impressions. And Mr. Cantillon's description of his conversion experience is revealing.

God came looking for me. Now if you if you have been genuinely converted. If you have turned from your sins and trusted in the Savior's substitutionary sacrifice for your sins.

How would you describe your conversion experience. Do you do you perceive like Mr. Cantillon that God came looking for you or or is your perception is your first impression of your conversion primarily your pursuit of God. As you as you reflect upon your conversion experience is the accent on the initiative and the intervention of God or your repentance and faith.

Because first impressions are indeed lasting impressions. We must submit all first impressions to Holy Scripture. We must examine first impressions.

We must examine those impressions particularly those first impressions in light of Scripture in light of objective truth in order to determine whether our first impressions of our conversion are indeed biblical and therefore accurate. This passage this verse chapter one and verse four in particular addresses all first impressions addresses our first impressions. This particular text theologically informs all first impressions and perhaps perhaps this morning will adjust some first impressions regardless of your first impressions or my first impressions of our conversion.

This passage this passage is to leave the lasting impression for here in this passage we are informed that our transition from death to life from sinner to save from object of wrath to object of mercy was exclusively and entirely the result of sovereign grace. Regardless of your first impression of your conversion experience we find in Ephesians 1 verse 4 the biblical explanation for your conversion experience. Look at verse four with me again.

He chose us in him before the foundation of the world. In this verse Paul turns our attention away from our personal experience of conversion and our first impressions of that experience and he directs our attention to God. He directs our attention to God.

He directs our attention to eternity past. He directs our attention to divine election. He directs our attention to sovereign grace.

And before we proceed any further I want to acknowledge and I want to remind you this morning that with this topic and during this message we are swimming in the deep end of the theological pool this morning. We are. At this end of the pool no one here is standing up.

There's no standing up at this end of the theological pool. I am in way over my head this morning. So are you.

We are all in way over our heads. And I am aware I'm very aware. I am aware that the mere mention of this topic provokes questions provoke certain predictable understandable questions.

I am aware of that and I want to care for you with those questions and do my best to address you in the midst of those questions to make any reference to election to make any reference to sovereign grace. It provokes understandable questions and one question in particular. How well how how do I reconcile divine sovereignty with human responsibility.

How how can can you tell me how can anyone tell me how. Now here's what I want you to be very aware of. The smartest guys in all of church history haven't been able to answer these questions.

The best minds in all of church history haven't been able to answer these questions or resolve this apparent conflict or contradiction between divine sovereignty and human responsibility. So the smartest guys and the best minds in church history have been unable to address these questions and resolve these questions. And before you this morning stands a high school graduate.

All right. A high school graduate a high school graduate who didn't even score high enough on his SAT in order to get into the University of Maryland the state where he had lived all of his life previously. And don't you forget 400 for just signing and showing up.

That's my understanding. Well I came in somewhere just over 700. So I want you to adjust your expectations accordingly.

Actually regardless of who's addressing you and their presence of education or the absence of it. You need as a Christian to get comfortable with mystery. Get comfortable with mystery because you will always be bumping into mystery.

You will always be bumping into mystery in relation to God in relation to sovereign grace. You will always be bumping into mystery. We shouldn't be surprised when we encounter mystery.

Mystery to some degree is inevitable when our subject is God. And God has announced the following non-negotiable arrangement. Listen to God's announcement.

It's found in Deuteronomy chapter 29 verse 29 where God announces the secret things belong to the Lord. And that announcement is followed with the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children. Secret things.

They belong to the Lord. There are things that are revealed. They belong to us and to our children.

There is mystery and there is certainty. There are divine secrets about sovereign grace that God will not divulge this morning. And the majority of our time this morning we will actually be considering what God has revealed about sovereign grace for our good and ultimately for his glory.

But I'm aware that there is a prideful desire, a prideful inclination for the secret things. And that prideful desire to know that which is secret can distract us from contemplating and benefiting from that which has been revealed. And so I want to prepare you at the outset for that temptation.

I want to protect you from that distraction. And given the complexity of this topic and the limitation of my both education and gifting, I've done something unusual today. I've asked an unusual number of friends to join me in addressing you today.

And because many of them are dead, they will be with us today in the form of quotes. And here's what you're going to discover in just a moment. Though they are dead, oh, they still have so much to say.

Though dead, they're still talking. And let's consider in relation to this point the wise counsel of one John Calvin when he wrote, The subject of predestination which in itself is attended by considerable difficulty. That's Calvin's way of acknowledging that we're in the deep end of the theological pool.

Yes, it's a difficult subject. Calvin, the brilliant John Calvin is acknowledging there is considerable difficulty in relation to the subject of predestination. He continues, is rendered very perplexed and hence perilous, listen, by what? By human curiosity.

Normally motivated by pride, human curiosity. Which cannot be restrained from wandering into forbidden paths. That's going to be your temptation and tendency today.

While I am trying to draw your attention and restrict your attention to that which is clear, clearly revealed, your temptation and tendency is wandering into forbidden paths. Maybe I can wrestle a secret from God. Yet, those secrets of His will which He has seen fit to manifest are revealed in His word.

Revealed insofar as He knew to be conducive to our interests and welfare. Let it therefore be our first principle that, listen, to desire any other knowledge of predestination than that which is expounded by the word of God is no less infatuated than to walk where there is no path or to seek light in darkness. The best rule of sobriety or in effect humility is not only learning to follow wherever God leads, but also when He

makes an end of teaching to cease from wishing to be wise.

How comfortable are you with mystery? How comfortable are you with the difficulty to understand? How comfortable are you with paradox? With apparent, not actual, but apparent contradiction? As I understand maturity or an aspect of maturity as taught in scripture, maturity involves an increasing comfort with mystery and a growing trust in God Himself so that we can say with David, my heart is not proud. And here's how that is evidenced. I do not concern myself with matters too difficult or wonderful for me.

You see, the proud tendency is to concern ourself with matters that are too difficult or in this case even secrets. As the years pass, there won't be less mystery, but hopefully there will be more humility making us more at rest with mystery. I cannot reconcile divine sovereignty and human responsibility for you this morning.

Can't do it. Here's why. It's a secret.

It's a divine secret. And the secret things, God says, don't belong to you, CJ, and for good reason. The secret things don't belong to the church.

You don't have the capacity to comprehend them. In my wisdom, I have placed restrictions. The secret things belong to me.

So let us acknowledge this element of mystery from the outset. Let us recognize this temptation of human curiosity to wander into forbidden paths. Let us recognize that this topic is attended to with considerable difficulty.

And because of this mystery and difficulty, I want to teach, I trust, both humbly and wisely so that there is no misunderstanding. There's mystery. It's a difficult topic.

Therefore, I want to teach you humbly and wisely so that there is no misunderstanding or misapplication. So I want to give you just a few preliminary qualifications that I hope will help you as we then eventually turn our attention to that which is revealed, that which is clear, that which is certain. Number one, the doctrine of election, though very important, doesn't define us.

The doctrine of election, though very important, doesn't define us. The gospel defines us. We are not more passionate about election than we are the gospel.

It is the gospel that is of first importance. Now, the doctrine of election plays a critical protective role in relation to the gospel. The doctrine of election protects the gospel and preserves the gospel of grace, but strictly speaking, election is not the gospel.

The gospel is the person and work of Jesus Christ, and the core of the gospel is summed up by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 when he writes, For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried and that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. That is the gospel. That is what defines us.

That is what is most important. Number two, a person doesn't have to believe in the doctrine of election to be saved. A saving relationship with God does not require an understanding of or agreement with the doctrine of election as I am teaching it today.

A saving relationship with God requires repentance from sin and trust in Christ alone to save by grace alone through faith alone. And then finally, number three, our unity with other Christians doesn't require full agreement on the doctrine of election. Our unity with other Christians doesn't require full agreement on the doctrine of election.

It does require full agreement on the gospel, but it doesn't require full agreement on the doctrine of election. And let me call upon my historical hero, Charles Spurgeon, to address us at this point and in relation to this point. Mr. Spurgeon, in addressing his church, said the following, We give our hand to every man that loves the Lord Jesus Christ, be he what he may or who he may.

The doctrine of election, like the great act of election itself, is intended to divide not between Israel and Israel, but between Israel and the Egyptians, not between saint and saint, but between saints and the children of the world. A man may evidently be of God's chosen family, and yet, though elected, may not believe in the doctrine of election. I hold that there are many, savingly called, who do not believe in effectual calling, and that there are great many who persevere to the end, who do not believe the doctrine of final perseverance.

We do hope the hearts of many are a great deal better than their heads. One of the many reasons I love him. We do not set their fallacies down to any willful opposition to the truth as it is in Jesus, but simply to an error in their judgments, which we pray God to correct.

And we hope that if they think us mistaken too, they will reciprocate the same Christian courtesy. And when we meet around the cross, we hope that we shall ever feel that we are one in Christ Jesus. I'd add one more to this list of preliminary qualifications.

The doctrine of election is for Christians, not non-Christians. This is not the message that we proclaim to non-Christians. So, there's mystery, there's difficulty.

I hope these preliminary qualifications prepare you and position you now to devote our remaining time to that which is clear and certain. You see, in Scripture, we have both certainty and mystery. And in Scripture, there is sufficient certainty to sustain us regardless of mystery.

And so now we turn our attention to that which is clear and that which is certain. Scripture is clear and Scripture is certain. And Scripture teaches both divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

Scripture unapologetically teaches both. And so do we at Covenant Life Church. We teach both.

We teach whatever we encounter in the text. And in some texts, you encounter both. And when you encounter both, even in a single text, you should teach both.

Both are taught in Scripture. And in Scripture, God doesn't, it appears, even attempt to harmonize sovereignty and human responsibility. Apparently, obviously, they are harmonized with Him and in Him.

And there could be a number of reasons why they are not harmonized for us in and through Scripture. Scripture teaches sovereignty. Scripture teaches human responsibility.

But one qualifying statement. Without doubt, unarguably, the accent in Scripture is on sovereignty. The accent's on sovereignty because, surprise, surprise, the Bible's about God and not us.

Now, sadly, you wouldn't know that from some supposedly evangelical pulpits today. But from this pulpit, you have learned this book is about God. And the accent in this book is on God.

And the accent is on the sovereignty of God. That isn't to minimize human responsibility. One theologian states it this way.

He says, in effect, divine sovereignty in salvation is ultimately decisive. It is the ultimately decisive factor in the salvation of an individual. Human responsibility, meaning repentance and faith, is significant, important, but not ultimately decisive.

And you see, in chapter 1, verse 4, Paul is accenting sovereignty. And he is drawing our attention to that which is ultimately decisive. In Ephesians 1, 4, the sovereignty of God has the priority.

Here, in this passage, inspired by the Spirit, Paul makes it clear. He makes it clear that the ultimately decisive factor in our conversion was the sovereign grace of God. That was the ultimately decisive factor.

So, though there is certainly an element of mystery whenever we contemplate divine election, of this we can be certain. Sovereign grace was the ultimately decisive factor in our salvation, not human decision. So, let's consider that which was and is ultimately decisive.

Let's consider sovereign grace. Let's consider election. Let's consider a great definition of election provided by J.I. Packer when he wrote, the verb elect means to select or to choose out.

The biblical doctrine of election is that before creation, God selected out of the human race for seen as fallen, those whom he would redeem, bring to faith, justify, and glorify in and through Jesus Christ. This divine choice is an expression of free and sovereign grace, for it is unconstrained and unconditional, not merited by anything in those who are its subjects. God owes sinners no mercy of any kind.

Only condemnation has all God owed any of us. In light of his holiness and our sinfulness, all we were owed by God was wrath, condemnation, hell. So, it is a wonder and a matter of endless praise that he should choose to save any of us and doubly so when his choice involved the giving of his own son to suffer as sin bearer for the elect.

Now, with the help of this definition, let's just consider Ephesians 1, 4, where we discover the following. All who have been genuinely converted were, one, chosen in Christ, two, chosen before time, and three, chosen to be holy and blameless. Number one, chosen in Christ.

See the phrase in verse four, he chose us in him. He chose us in him. Let's just isolate he chose us and then we'll conclude this point with a reference to in him.

He chose us. Notice, this is where Paul begins his celebration of spiritual blessings. He begins this extended celebration of spiritual blessings by accenting sovereign grace.

He chose us. Divine choice preceded human response and apart from divine choice, there would be no human response. In light of my sinfulness, in light of my pervasive depravity, in light of my wicked hostility toward God, if God didn't choose me, left to myself, in my sin, I never would have chosen him.

And if we don't understand this point, this point in particular, we will be vulnerable to a misunderstanding of divine election. So, I want to bring to your attention an excellent quote in relation to this point by Mark Webb in an article, What Difference Does It Make? He describes teaching on the doctrines of grace and

teaching on sovereign grace in particular one evening and here was the response of somebody who was listening to his teaching. See if you can't relate to what takes place here.

After giving a brief survey of these doctrines of sovereign grace, I asked for questions from the class. One lady in particular was quite troubled. She said, this is the most awful thing I've ever heard.

You make it sound as if God is intentionally turning away men and women who would be saved, receiving only the elect. And I answered her in this vein. You misunderstand the situation.

You're visualizing that God is standing at the door of heaven and men are thronging to get in the door and God is saying to various ones, yes, you may come, but not you, and you, but not you. The situation is hardly this. Rather, God stands at the door of heaven with his arms outstretched inviting all to come.

Yet all men, all men without exception, all men without exception are running in the opposite direction towards hell as hard as they can go. So God in election graciously reaches out and stops this one and that one and this one over here. I'm sorry.

I'm one of those. He stopped. I was running.

When God graciously reaches out and stops this one and that one and this one over here and that one over there and effectually draws them to himself by changing their hearts and making them willing to come. Election keeps no one out of heaven who would otherwise have been there, but it keeps a whole multitude of sinners out of hell who otherwise would have been there. Were it not for election, heaven would be an empty place and hell would be bursting at the seams.

That kind of response, grounded as I believe that it is in scriptural truth, does put a different complexion on things, doesn't it? If you perish in hell, blame yourself as it is entirely your fault. But if you should make it to heaven, credit God for that is entirely his work. To him alone belong all praise and glory, for salvation is all of grace from start to finish.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

All of grace. God chose you. If you've been genuinely converted before you chose him and apart from his gracious choice of you, you never would have chosen him.

The more you are aware of divine initiative in your life, the more you will be amazed by grace. You didn't discover God. No one here discovered God.

God revealed himself to you. See, if somebody ever asked you why you are a Christian, there are other ways you could respond and you could broaden certainly the content of your response. But the essence of why you are a Christian, if you are a Christian, is simply this.

Because God graciously and amazingly chose you and stopped you from your passionate run away from him and towards hell. Listen to Charles Spurgeon. I believe the doctrine of election because I'm quite certain that if God had not chosen me, I should never have chosen him.

And I am sure he chose me before I was born or else he never would have chosen me afterwards. And he must have elected me for reasons unknown to me. For I never could find any reason in myself why he should have looked upon me with special love.

He chose us. He chose us and he chose us in him. He chose us and he chose us in him.

You see, for God to choose, sin must be resolved. For God to choose, his righteous wrath must be fully and completely satisfied. His holy hostility towards sinners and the wicked hostility of sinners toward God must be resolved.

And so the means by which God's choice to save is achieved is clearly and fully revealed, repeatedly revealed in this particular passage. Sovereign grace is in him. Jesus Christ is mentioned no fewer than 15 times in the first 14 verses of Ephesians.

I am chosen solely in Christ, solely because of Christ, not apart from Christ or because of anything within me. Whether it's election or redemption or adoption, forgiveness of sin is all in him. There is no election.

There is no redemption. There is no adoption. There is no forgiveness of sin apart from him.

He chose us and he chose us in him. Jesus Christ was, is the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. He chose us in him.

Number two, we were chosen before time. We were chosen before time. I do pray, I pray specifically before I preach that if I am affected by what I preach and I trust I will be, that it not be a distraction to you.

But this is my story. This is my song. And therefore, this is in some ways more than preaching and different from preaching.

It's an act of worship for me simultaneously. So thank you for your patience and understanding. Chosen before time.

Look at verse four. Before the foundation of the world. Got a rare biblical reference here, revealing what God was busy doing before time, before creation, before the foundation of the world.

We really know very little about his activity before time. But we do know this. He is busy before time, before creation, before the foundation of the world.

He was busy finalizing his plan. And this would involve his most unlikely choice of sinners like you and me. He chose you before the foundation of the world.

He chose you in him before the foundation of the world. Contemplate this for just a moment. Prior to Genesis 1-1, prior to the first let there be, sinners like you and me were singled out and selected by.

It takes your breath away. It creates tears. Of joy and gratefulness.

And it fills one's heart with awe and affection and adoration to the God of all grace. Chosen in Christ. Chosen before time.

Chosen to be holy and blameless. Time doesn't permit any reference to blameless as justifying grace or holy as sanctifying grace. We conclude with the effect of election because election serves a purpose.

Election has a divinely intended effect. And we will consider that effect once I get an update on when I'm supposed to be finished. I thought I had it clear.

When did I start? Really? Well, I really have 10 more minutes? Okay. That's excellent. That's encouraging.

My favorite dean, the dean of our pastor's college has said the following, election needs to function for us the way it functions in scripture. That's exactly right. It functions a certain way in scripture.

We need it to function in our lives in a similar way. J.R. Packer writes that it is to provoke a worthy response in worship and in life. Well, the following would be a worthy response in both worship and life.

Number one, humility before God. Humility before God. Please turn to 1 Corinthians if you would.

Head left, not far, to 1 Corinthians chapter 1. Humility before God. Paul is in this letter to the Corinthians adjusting the faulty first impressions of the Corinthian church about their conversion. And so, three times in a passage beginning in verse 26, he reminds them that God chose them.

Let's consider this together. For consider your calling, brothers. Now, please be aware, the original recipients of this letter would be characterized by a pronounced pride in their lives.

Here is how Paul, in effect, addresses that pride and seeks to cultivate fresh humility before God among the Corinthian church. For consider your calling, brothers. Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards.

Not many were powerful. Not many were of noble birth. Notice verse 27.

But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise. God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are.

Three times he reminds them that God chose them. And then in verse 29, he reminds them why. So that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

You see, humility is the divinely intended effect of sovereign grace. Mark Webb writes that God intentionally designed salvation so that no man can boast of it. Arrange it so that boasting would be discouraged or kept to a minimum.

He planned it so that boasting would be absolutely excluded. Yes, he did indeed. You see, election leaves no room for self-congratulation.

It eliminates all human achievement, any and all human contribution. Election is devastating to pride. If you ask yourself, what do you think was the ultimately decisive factor in your salvation? Was it your decision? Was it your repentance? It isn't to minimize in any way your repentance and faith.

They are significant. They are important. They are required.

But they are not ultimately decisive. What was ultimately decisive was sovereign grace. If your repentance was ultimately decisive, if your faith was ultimately decisive, then you would have something to boast about, wouldn't you? And here's one of the rules in heaven.

No boasting allowed except in the only one worthy. And so Paul ends in verse 31, therefore, as it is written, let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord. And that's what I'm trying to do by bringing this glorious topic to your attention.

Boast in Him. Boast in sovereign grace. The effect of that on our lives.

Humility before God. Number two, I'll close here. Assurance from God.

Humility before God and assurance from God. To understand sovereign grace is to experience God's love. God's personal love.

God's passionate love. God's personal and passionate love for sinners like you and me. To understand sovereign grace really is to be overwhelmed by God's love.

For this was what motivated His choice. His choice of sinners like you and me was motivated by His love for sinners like you and me. And so we read at the end of verse four, back to Ephesians, we read at the end of verse four this phrase, in love He predestined us.

In love He predestined us. See, His choice cannot be separated from His love because His choice was motivated by His love. So to revisit the moment of your conversion informed by Ephesians 1.4 is to realize God's love for you and hopefully receive God's love for you.

Four minutes? No, don't do that. I didn't say that so you would do that. That's not what this is about.

No, we need to end. Folks, if we don't end, He'll go on well into the afternoon. That wouldn't serve you.

Do you guys have the quote by Ryken? I don't have my glasses. I can't even see. Okay.

Listen to J.I. Packer's celebration of God's love. He wrote, to know that from eternity, my maker, so he draws our attention, all this quote derived from Ephesians 1.4 and other passages, he draws our attention to eternity past, he draws our attention to God in eternity past, and to know that from eternity, my maker, foreseeing my sin, foreloved me and resolved to save me, though it would be at the cost of Calvary. To know that the divine Son was appointed from eternity to be my Savior and that in love He became man for me and died for me and now lives to intercede for me and will one day come in person to take me home.

To know that the Lord who loved me and gave Himself for me and who came and preached peace to me through His messengers has by His Spirit raised me from spiritual death to life, giving union and communion with Himself and has promised to hold me fast and never let me go. This knowledge, this is knowledge that brings overwhelming gratitude and joy. Oh, it does indeed.

See, the effect of contemplating divine election is humility before God and assurance from God. To contemplate divine election is to be assured of God's love as Paul dates the origin of it to eternity past. The effect of election is to be assured of God's love and secure in God's love.

May humility before God and assurance from God of His love characterize the members of Covenant Life Church for decades to come and may they be the experience of all present participants in Covenant Life Church on this day, all because of sovereign grace and all for the glory of God. Father, how kind of You to provide us with both clarity and certainty and so Lord, the appropriate response is humility and gratefulness. We humble ourselves before You, Lord, and acknowledge that we have made no contribution to our salvation.

It is exclusively and entirely sovereign grace so that no man would boast in Your presence. In Your presence, may there only be boasting in the Savior. And Lord, thank You for reminding us of Your love.

Lord, that's the real mystery. That's what is most difficult for us to explain for in light of our sinfulness, in light of our hostility towards You, in light of our hatred for You prior to conversion. Why, why, why would

You choose sinners? Why, why, why would You send Your Son and crush Him with Your righteous wrath that we so richly deserve so that this morning we could be freshly assured of Your love? Why? We don't understand why.

But oh Lord, we are so grateful and we want to communicate our gratefulness and our affection to You for Your Son and for sovereign grace. Amen.

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