

The Glory of God in Salvation

by Eryl Davies

The sermon emphasizes the importance of focusing on God's glory in salvation and highlights the blessings that believers receive through their union with Jesus Christ.

Duration: 1:22:45

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Ephesians 1:3-14, Ephesians 2:4-10

Topics: "Glory Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being deeply moved by the truth and the Spirit of God. He highlights the apostle Paul's profound focus on God in his writing, specifically in Ephesians chapter 1. The speaker mentions a photograph of a boy looking at a steam engine as an example of the sense of wonder and appreciation we should have for God's glory. He explains that verses 3 to 14 in Ephesians chapter 1 introduce key themes that are further elaborated in the rest of the letter, such as God's choice, grace, power, and the centrality of Christ.

Transcript

Thank you, Andrew, for your kind welcome. I must add very quickly that when I met Andrew in the pub in my stake, I wasn't very much older than Andrew at the time. So you can guess our ages.

It's a privilege to be here this week. Despite spending six years in hard academic study in Aberystwyth, I still have happy memories of this place. It was here in Aberystwyth that I was converted as a first-year student.

My wife, too, in her first year, though I didn't know her at the time. It was here in Aberystwyth that I met my wife in the Christian Union. Ideal places for meeting future wives and husbands.

It was here in Aberystwyth that I really learned my theology in the Christian Union, in the Theology Students' Fellowship. Visiting speakers, but particularly IVF, UCCF staff. Well taught in the word.

And they made sure that we, too, would be well grounded. And they provided us, or urged us, to buy very good books. It was here in Aberystwyth that I was nurtured as a Christian by older Christians in the Christian Union.

And also, I must add, by older Christians in the town. It was here in Aberystwyth that there used to be a regular fellowship meeting, SEAT. And there were some real characters amongst local Christians.

The matron of my hall of residence was an Ulster Christian. A fantastic character. Or there was the GP.

When you went to see him in the surgery, feeling very ill, longing to get those antibiotics and get to bed. As soon as I'd walk into his surgery, he'd get his Bible out, and we'd have a Bible study. Twenty, twenty-five minutes later, I'd tell the doctor, Doctor, I really am feeling very ill.

And he'd say, I'm sorry, I forgot. And quickly he'd give me a prescription. And then as I was leaving, he'd say, but look, look at this verse.

I couldn't get away very quickly from him. So I thank God for the associations I have with Aber, and for the way in which God has blessed me here. I was chairman of a conference back in 1984.

And very unexpectedly, but very powerfully, one morning, very early in the morning, I received a call to the work that I'm involved in. And it may be that for pastors here this week, you need to be saying, here am I, send me. I felt very miserable for the rest of that conference, and for many weeks and months afterwards.

But when God tells you to go, you have to go, even if you feel like a Jonah wanting to run away. So I urge pastors particularly, to face up to those words of Isaiah. Here am I, send me.

It must be hundreds and hundreds of people who have asked me over the months, what am I going to speak on this week. Some of you have been so restrained you've only asked me once or twice. Well, the overall theme I've chosen for the conference addresses is the glory of God in salvation.

And the four conference addresses will be anchored in the letter of Paul to the Ephesians. And I'll be majoring on a section from verse 3 in chapter 1. And I'm hoping by Friday lunchtime to reach verse 10 in chapter 2. It's a statement of intent, and I value your prayers that I may reach that verse. Ephesians chapter 1, verse 3, through to verse 10 in chapter 2. There are several reasons why I've chosen this theme of the glory of God in salvation.

Two of the reasons I can share with you fairly quickly. One reason, I believe, is the urgent need for Christians to focus properly on God, on God's glory, God's grace, and God's power. Now, I'm not a very good photographer, but I'm better than some people I know.

They find it very difficult to get the right focus when they're taking a photograph. They press the button. The film is eventually developed.

You find that your feet are in the photograph. Your middle part, perhaps part of the shoulder, but there's no head there. Or someone takes a photograph of some attractive, colorful flowers in the garden.

Well worth a photograph. When the photograph and the film is developed, you look at that photograph, and all you see is a miserable-looking concrete path running alongside the flowers. There's hardly a flower in the photograph.

They're out of focus, of course. And so are many, many Christians. They tend to focus largely on themselves, on their needs, their circumstances.

Or they may major on personalities, Christian personalities, of course, an organization, or new fashions in theology or evangelism. Or they may be taken up by new styles in worship, instead of making their main focus God himself. Now, here in Ephesians, we can be helped in obtaining what I believe to be a proper focus on God himself.

The Apostle in verse 3 starts with God. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle continues with God.

He chose us, in verse 4, having predestinated us, in verse 5. In verse 9, having made known to us the mystery of His will. And the Apostle ends with God too. In verse 6, to the praise of the glory of His grace, verse 12.

To the praise of His glory, verse 14. To the praise of His glory. The same emphasis appears in other sections in this letter to the Ephesians.

For example, in chapter 2, verses 4 to 10, if you just scan that section, after describing the sinful condition of humanity outside of the Lord Jesus Christ, in verses 1 to 3, in chapter 2. The Apostle then focuses on God, who, in His great love and mercy, an immense power has saved us in the Lord Jesus Christ. He's quickened us, He's regenerated us. We are recreated in Christ Jesus and all to the glory of God.

Verse 4 reminds us that His saved people, or verse 7 rather, His saved people are used by Him to exhibit, display the glories of His grace and kindness to us in the ages to come. So the honor and the glory of God is the ultimate reason why we have been saved. And the Apostle focuses here in Ephesians on God.

This may help us to readjust our focus on God this week. But there's a second reason why I've chosen this subject. That is, I want to encourage those of you who are already focused on the glory of God.

And I want to encourage you to maintain that focus. And I want to encourage you to appreciate what you see of the glory of God revealed in His Word. I like illustrations, so bear with me this morning.

Some time ago I was with a colleague when his friend presented him with a very beautiful oil painting. His friend was a professional painter of some repute in his country. The friend handed to my colleague this large oil painting.

He unwrapped it. We both looked at the oil painting and I was in raptures over it. My colleague had a blank expression.

No real response. When we were on our own a few minutes later he whispered to me, I don't like it. Well, we were together on our own later that evening in the hotel.

So we got this oil painting out and we studied it for quite some time. It was a painting of a vase and the vase was filled with unusual but attractive flowers. They were beautifully arranged.

The vase was placed on a small table against the background of a wall and a window. I told my colleague, this really is a fantastic painting. I tried to coax him and persuade him.

Look at the contrasting colours. Look at the mix of colour. Look at the attention to detail.

Look at the excellent proportions. No response. Next day, however, we had another session on that oil painting.

And slowly he began to infuse. And by today it is one of his treasured possessions. Now it's possible for us to be focused on God and the glory of God to embrace the doctrines of grace to enjoy the preaching of the word of God and not to appreciate the glories of God.

Not to be affected by the glory of God. And our lives are unaffected by what we are reading of God in the word, what we are hearing of Him in the preaching. We are the same afterwards as before.

Brothers and sisters, there must be something wrong here. What we see of God in the word must grip us. It must move our hearts.

Our lives have to be powerfully influenced by the truth, by the Spirit. And I want to encourage you to appreciate what you are seeing of God's glory. Now in the Greek text, verses 3-14 in Ephesians chapter 1 forms one long sentence.

I remember an English publisher whom I've never used, and I must say that immediately, giving me some advice and telling me that the ideal length for a sentence is somewhere between 10 words and 25. But you really should major on 10-15 words per sentence. Now in this one long sentence in the Greek, the Apostle Paul is using 202 words.

Non-stop. And the reason is pretty obvious. The Apostle Paul is taken up with God.

His heart is profoundly moved as he outlines the remarkable dealings of God with the elect in Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul cannot contain himself. Worship springs from his mind and his heart in the sense of wonder and excitement.

Appreciation. And what he does is to use the form of an extended prayer of praise we find in the Old Testament. And he uses this form to express from the depths of his heart worship and appreciation to God.

It's a good reason for coming to Ephesians chapter 1. Now as I approach the text of Ephesians 1 and 2, I'm making three assumptions. First of all, I assume that the Apostle Paul wrote or dictated this letter. I believe there's strong internal evidence to support this assumption.

And I won't labour you with the arguments. The second assumption I make is that the letter was intended initially for the church in Ephesus. But it may have been intended as a circular letter for a group of churches in addition.

So a date for the letter would be approximately 62-63 AD while Paul was a prisoner in Rome. And thirdly, I assume that verses 3-14 function like a key to the whole letter of Paul to the Ephesians. Now I know that there are good commentators who believe that the section continues to verse 10 in chapter 2. One commentator argues it goes right to the end of chapter 3 and ends with a doxology there.

But even good commentators aren't always right. And I would argue that here in verses 3-14, Paul is introducing all the important words, all the important themes which he elaborates in the rest of the letter. It's all packed tight into verses 3-14.

So God's choice, God's grace, God's power, God's church, the cosmic dimension of God's purpose, God's goal of holiness for the elect, the centrality of Christ as the one in and by whom God's purposes are accomplished. These themes are all introduced. They're underlined here.

And Paul goes on to describe them in more detail in later sections. So here then in verses 3-14, we have the key for understanding the rest of the letter. And I want to encourage you to grapple with verses 3-14 outside these conference times.

Now there are different ways in which one can legitimately structure verses 3-14. And preachers do it in various ways. But I want to use a more Trinitarian framework for the structure.

This morning we're going to be considering the glory of God the Father in salvation. In verses 3-6. Tomorrow morning, God willing, we'll consider the glory of God the Son and the glory of God the Holy Spirit in salvation.

From verses 7-14. Let's turn then to verses 3-6 in Ephesians chapter 1. In verse 3, the Apostle begins to praise God. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed the God. Blessed be the God. The Apostle could have stopped at that point.

Worshipping the glorious being of God. Adoring his perfections. The one who is eternal, unchanging, independent, self-sufficient, omniscient, omnipresent.

Present at every point of space with his whole being. Holy, righteous, just. The sovereign ruler of the entire universe.

Blessed be the God. The only God, the true, the living God. Or the Apostle could have used some of the rich titles ascribed to God in the Old Testament.

Blessed be the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers. Blessed be the Most High God.

Blessed be the Lord God of heaven. But he uses a far more wonderful title. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The context explains why he is using this title. Now the Apostle refers to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit in turn in verses 3 to 14. Again in verse 17 and in other places in this letter.

So he acknowledges that these three persons are co-equal, co-eternal in the one Godhead. But the context of verses 3 to 14 indicates that the Apostle is maging on the plan and the accomplishment of salvation by God. It's a plan which was agreed in the eternal councils of the triune God in eternity.

And for our salvation, each divine person in the Holy Trinity accepted different responsibilities. The Father appointed his own eternal Son to be the mediator. He was foreordained before the foundation of the world.

It wasn't an emergency. It was planned in eternity by the Father that the Son should be our mediator. That he should care for the elect, that he should die for the elect.

The Father appointed him as the head of a new humanity. And he would consummate, complete God's purpose. God the Father chose the elect in Christ.

A covenant was made between the Father and the Son and the elect. And the elect were gifted to his Son. And the Father gave to his own Son work to do on behalf of the elect.

And work for the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus accomplishing our salvation. God the Holy Spirit applying that salvation.

So the Apostle addresses God. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and the Father.

The Father who has chosen us. The Father who has put us in Christ. The Father who has predestined us.

The Father who has adopted us as his children. The Father who has forgiven us. The Father who has revealed his will to us.

The Father who has sent his Son into the world. The Father who has spared not his Son but smote him. And laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. But why does Paul praise God in this way? Well, simply in verse 3, because he has blessed us. Something which has happened in the past.

An aorist participle refers to a specific action in the past. And amazingly, says Paul, God, the eternal Holy God, has not damned us. He has blessed us.

And he has done this in three ways. He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing, first of all. So the blessings which the Apostle has in mind here are spiritual.

They are not physical. They are not material in nature. They are blessings which are spiritual in nature, which are eternal.

They are not temporal. They are blessings linked with the heavenly world. Linked with God, rather than with this world.

And when people major on worldly prosperity as a gospel message, they distort the gospel. The blessings of grace are essentially spiritual. From verses 4 to 14, the Apostle tells us what some of these blessings are.

In verse 4, our election in Christ to holiness. An amazing blessing. In verse 5, he has predestinated us to adoption as children in his family.

In verse 6, he has shown favour and grace towards us in the beloved. In verse 7, there is redemption by the blood of Christ and forgiveness of sins. In verse 9, there is the knowledge of his revealed will.

In verse 10, he tells about the cosmic restoration of all things in heaven and on earth in Christ. In verse 13, the sealing of the Holy Spirit. There is emphasis on the word all or every.

God has blessed his people with every kind of spiritual blessing. All that the believer will ever need in this life and in the next. God has blessed us in Christ.

And such blessings are priceless. And they are only available in Christ and as a gift in him. But secondly, notice that these blessings are in the heavenlies.

This important phrase occurs five times in the letter to the Ephesians. In verse 20 of chapter 1, we are informed that the Lord Jesus raised from the dead. He then ascended into heaven.

And he was seated at the right hand of God the Father in the heavenlies. Our Lord Jesus in his meditational lordship is in the highest place of authority which is possible. He has absolute power and authority over the entire universe.

And over all the heavenly, the spiritual spheres. Jesus is Lord. He is King.

In chapter 2, verse 6, we are told that because of our union with Christ, the church too, believers, enjoy this high level of fellowship with the ruling Christ. And we share in his victory and we are seated together with him in the heavenlies. We are in vital contact with the exalted Christ.

We can talk to him, we can fellowship, we pray to him. And in prayer we can know authority. In chapter 3, verse 10, the Lord intends that his infinite wisdom which planned and achieved salvation will be made known by the church to rulers and powers in the heavenlies.

So that the angels will admire and they will be astonished at what God has done in Jesus Christ. Remember in chapter 6, verse 12, the apostle Paul warns us that there are powerful but evil, wicked spirits and powers active in the spiritual realm. These wicked spirits oppose God's people, they resist and hinder God's work.

They tempt his people. But in the Lord's name, on the ground of our saviour's sacrifice, and in the strength and power which he gives to us, we are able to resist, we are able to fight and to overcome such evil spiritual powers in the heavenlies. So here in verse 3 of chapter 1, we have been blessed in the heavenlies.

We are no longer just earthy. Our horizon, our dimension is not just this life and this world. But we are alive in the spirit, we have been born again.

We are in union with our Lord Jesus Christ. We know him. We have the spirit of God living within us.

We too share in the victory of Christ. We have been blessed in the heavenlies in Christ. But thirdly, notice that God has blessed us in Christ.

And I want to labour this just briefly this morning. The phrase, in Christ, or its equivalent, in him, occurs 11 times, just in chapter 1. And many other times in the rest of this letter. The words, in Christ, or in him, are of crucial importance.

They express what really is a central, major truth with regard to our salvation. Namely, our union with the Lord Jesus Christ. And without our union with Christ, no spiritual blessings would ever come to us.

Now, Mikhail Gorbachev, President of the former Soviet Union, surprised the world in 1986-87 by calling an end to the Cold War which existed between East and West. He wanted to remove the danger of a possible nuclear war. Which he felt, perhaps rightly, would mean the destruction of our planet.

Encouraging a genuine search for world peace, Gorbachev pictured the whole of humanity standing on the edge of a mountain precipice. And all the people tied inseparably together by a very strong rope. Gorbachev insisted in his speech that if one person falls over the precipice, then he would pull and drag the rest of humanity over the precipice into their ruin and destruction.

As far as I know, Gorbachev wasn't a believer. I don't think he was an expert in Pauline theology, either. But he was remarkably close to biblical truth.

The Bible teaches that Adam, our first parent, was appointed by God as the head, the representative of the entire human race. All humanity is tied up in Adam. Now, this was God's decision.

You may not like it, you may criticize it, but we have no right to question it. Our creator, God, chose to deal with the entire human race as one entity, represented by Adam. When Adam obeyed, we were all

represented in his obedience.

When Adam sinned, we were all regarded as having sinned in Adam. So with Adam, the whole of humanity fell over that mountain precipice to our ruin and spiritual death and separation from God. This is what the Bible teaches in Romans 5, verse 12.

Sin entered the world by one man, and death through sin. And in this way, death came to all men, because all sinned. Now that's our natural plight.

That is our ruinous condition in Adam, as humans. In Adam, all die. According to Ephesians chapter 2, verse 3, we were by nature the children of wrath, just as others.

The thrilling news is that God has blessed us, says the Apostle Paul. And he has chosen us in Christ. Christ is now our federal head.

We are no longer in Adam, but we are in Christ. The history of Christ becomes our history. Christ's obedience is our obedience.

His death is our death. Our sins were reckoned to Him. And His righteousness is imputed to us.

We were buried with Him. We rose with Him. We ascended with Him.

And experimentally, this union with Christ has been made real to us by the Spirit of God. We are in Christ. They're glorious words.

Only in Christ are we blessed. Now, I must refer to one of our great Welsh preachers from our past history in Wales. This morning I'll refer to Christmas Evans to show I'm not prejudiced.

An early 19th century Welsh Baptist preacher. He has a very powerful sermon on Luke chapter 15, verse 4. The parable of the man with a hundred sheep, who searches for the one lost sheep until he finds it. With his vivid imagination, he pictures the Lord Jesus and the great shepherd of the sheep in heaven.

There were the Father. And the Father presenting the elect, the sheep, to His Son to be the shepherd of. And the Father places the elect on the shoulders of His own Son.

Then Evans describes the incarnation of the Lord Jesus. How God the Son has become the God-Man. And how He assumes our human nature.

And pictures the Lord Jesus Christ in Bethlehem as a babe. He asks the question, where are the sheep? They're on His shoulders. Then goes to the baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Before He commences His ministry. Walking into the water of the river. And the Father speaking, this is My beloved Son.

Evans asks the question, where are the sheep? They're on His shoulders. In the wilderness as He is tempted by the devil. The sheep are on His shoulders.

As He does good, as He teaches, as He performs miracles. As He observes and honors the law of God as our representative. As He travels the countryside.

The sheep are on His shoulders. He then pictures the Lord Jesus Christ in Gethsemane. Pictures a kind of river flowing deeply and deeply.

Coming over the Lord Jesus Christ. The heart of the Lord Jesus being filled with sorrow. Describes the Lord Jesus praying, not My will but Thy will be done.

Evans says that the sheep, the elect, are on His shoulders. He then pictures the cross. The tidal wave of God's wrath.

Overwhelming His Son. The darkness. The Father forsaking His own Son.

Smiting Him. Punishing our sin in His own Son. And the elect, the sheep, are on the shoulders of the Lord Jesus.

We were buried with Him. Now the Lord Jesus rose from the grave, says Evans. The sheep were on His shoulders.

And even when He ascended to heaven, as recorded in Acts 1, says Evans. He didn't leave His sheep behind, they were on His shoulders. He carries their responsibilities.

He cares, He loves. In heaven He prays for His sheep. He sends His Holy Spirit, He cares for them.

He rules over them. In other words, He's making the point that Christ's history is our history. And it is made real in our experience, experimentally.

As we're born again of the Spirit and called effectually to Christ. And to enjoy mystic, spiritual union with Him. Now can I try and help younger Christians here, who may not be young in age.

You may have questions with this doctrine. Who chooses the elect? Well, from verse 3, it's quite clear that it is God the Father who chooses those who are to be saved and made holy. He chose us in Him, that is in Christ.

Other verses in the Bible emphasize the same truth. Example 2, Thessalonians 2, verse 13. God has from the beginning chosen you for salvation.

Many times in Ephesians 1, verses 4 to 11, God's sovereign choice and plan is emphasized. He predestined us, verse 5. How? According to the good pleasure of His will. It all depends on God.

It begins with God, the decision belongs to God. There's a concentration of related terms in verses 9 and 11. His good pleasure, the beginning of verse 9. He purposed in Himself, at the end of verse 9, or in verse 11, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.

This purpose is God's plan. It's the one, comprehensive, eternal plan of God for all events, for the entire history of the world and the destinies of humans and angels. And central to God's plan for all that will happen in the universe is God's choice of the elect.

God elects. Is it fair? It's the inevitable question for some. There's an American evangelical who recently wrote a statement to the effect that every person has a right to be saved.

Nonsense. No one has a right to be saved. Our only right, our only deserve, is to be punished.

We're sinners. The wages of our sin is death. The Bible describes God in Romans 9 as the potter.

Paul describes Him as having the power and the authority from the same lump of clay of humanity to make one vessel for honour and another for dishonour. God has the absolute right. He chooses according to His good pleasure, according to the counsel of His will.

He has the right to show mercy on whom He will have mercy. It's God's prerogative. Election is sovereign.

It's unconditional. When I was about 14 years of age, I was anxiously waiting at the end of, I think, September that year for the headmaster in my school to announce the school soccer team for the coming year. I was hoping that my name would be included.

We'd had lots of games in our forms, in our houses, trials, and we waited with bated breath. And slowly the headmaster read out the names and my name was there. I think I got there on merit.

But I can tell you this, that no one is chosen by God on merit. There's nothing in us at all which appeals to God, which attracts His decision. It's unconditional.

All of us have sinned, we're under His wrath. We're rebels and enemies. But God, in His own good pleasure, decides to love a people.

When did God choose the elect? Well, says Paul here in verse 4, before the foundation of the world. It's an astonishing truth. He chose you before you believed.

He chose you before you even heard the gospel. He chose you before Christians started praying for you. He chose you before you were even born.

He chose you before your parents were born. Can I say He chose you before Calvin was born too? Luther? Augustine? Amazingly, He chose you before Jesus Christ died on the cross. You'd already been chosen.

He chose you before the days of Elijah or Ezekiel. David or Moses. Abram or Noah or even Adam.

Or before creation of the world. Paul is saying that God the Father chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. You think back into eternity.

The councils of the triune God. Father, Son and Spirit. God the Father choosing those to be saved in Christ.

Gifting the elect to the mediator. To care for and to die for. The Saviour agrees.

He stands as our surety. The Holy Spirit agrees to apply that salvation. The plan.

The decisions are made in eternity. How did He choose us? Well, Paul underlines the fact again. He chose us in Him.

In Christ. All that heaven has, in terms of blessings and grace, is in the hands of God's Son, our mediator. Very often the government will tell agencies or individuals that certain monies are available only through selected funding councils or bodies.

You have to go to that particular body. The gospel tells us that it is only in Christ that the treasures of heaven are mediated. In Christ.

In Christ is united to Him. The covenant of redemption. We are elected to eternal salvation.

Apart from Christ, there is no election by the Father in eternity. But a final question. Why has God elected us? Notice the end of verse 4. That we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

Now, this is a purpose clause. We should notice it. In order that.

Now, many of our contemporaries would say in order that we should feel happy. That's what God's love surely is about. To make men and women, young and old, feel happy.

To feel good. God has done this to make us feel fulfilled. Or in order that we should be prosperous.

Or achieve inner healing. But the answer here is that God has done it in order that we should be holy. Separated from the world.

Separated from sin. Set apart to God in obedience, in righteousness. Consecrated to Him in with purity, zeal, serving Him.

And without blame. No outward inconsistency. No one pointing a finger at us and accusing us of being hypocrites.

God's purpose is that we should be holy without blame before Him. As in His presence all the time. As in fellowship with Him.

And as we will stand one day before this Holy God at the end of our lives. God's purpose is that we should be holy and without blame before Him. Notice, in love.

Our desire to be holy. Our desire to be God. Godly.

Christ-like. Arises out of our love for Him. I obey Him because I love Him.

I turn from sin because I love Him and love His law. Christians love God. They love Him with all their heart and mind and soul and strength.

Being a Christian is not just practicing a cold kind of morality. It's not a legalism. We delight.

We delight in God's law. We long to please Him. We long to be in His presence, to enjoy Him.

Some of you may be asking this morning, am I one of the elect? How can I know it? Well, here is the major line of evidence. That you love Him and you express that love in wanting to keep His commandments. And your life is holy.

It's the major evidence. It's not just feelings. It's not just a verbal profession of faith.

Being a Christian is not just going around with a group of Christians. The evidence is a holy, God-pleasing life. Obeying God from the heart.

Being in love with Him. Making this one's supreme desire to please Him. That's God's aim in election.

I would exhort you to underline these words in your Bible. In order that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Notice it's we.

The Apostle includes himself with the Ephesians. Preachers here. Elders.

Deacons. Old Christians. Young ones.

If we are elected in Christ, the purpose is that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. I fear that we have double standards in our lives and our churches. We accept second best.

We're accustomed to it. And the world, I believe, is waiting to see holy men and women in our churches. Write these words of your television set as you choose programs to watch.

If you watch a program when there's unsavory language or immorality portrayed, God's purpose is that you should be holy and without blame before Him. Young people, when you choose a video to watch, put these words alongside the video that you should be holy and without blame before Him. Put these words over your computers.

All of you. Put them in large, large print over your computers. As you surf the internet, I'm told that 50% of all UK internet users regularly visit pornographic websites.

And I have evidence that amongst the 50% of UK users are Christians. They spend time in these pornographic websites. They download material which is filthy.

They feed their minds on it. And if you are doing it, you must repent of it. Early yesterday morning and this morning, I watched very early in the morning the council lorries coming and clearing the rubbish.

They're very busy around about 6, 7 in the morning on the promenade. But there's a lot of rubbish in our lives to be cleared away. You probably read the accounts of what has been described as revival, I don't know whether it was, in Wheaton College in 1995 and some other colleges in the States.

Repentance was very dominant there. One of the expressions of repentance was that many of those students filled black bags with all kinds of pornographic and filthy literature. There they were piled up on the campus.

Christians, you need to clean out your life. If you are elected, this is the evidence that we should be holy, separated from the world and from sin, set apart to God in obedience and holiness, blameless before Him. You should put these words prominently in your home or your digs as you talk to your relatives.

Respond to them in daily routine. God's purpose is that you should speak with grace, away with temper, impatience, ungodly behaviour, violence, abuse. Perhaps we should placard these words in our churches that we should be holy.

Church members' meetings can be the most unholy places sometimes. Give expression to sin. Where are the holy Christians? Loving God, obeying Him, loving each other, social activities, places you go to.

I must move on. Notice in verse 5 there is another blessing which is identified by the Apostle and that is predestination. Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His word.

It's a big word. When I first heard it here in Aberystwyth as a student, I almost collapsed. What on earth did it mean? And the old preacher whom I heard mention it for the first time had such a gracious disposition.

He loved the word and he explained why he did love it. It gave me an appetite to understand it more and more. But he urged us not to be frightened by it.

It expresses a glorious truth. So these two words chosen, verse 4 and now verse 5, predestined, draw attention to different facets of God's one and glorious purpose in saving His people. Predestinate means to decide, determine beforehand.

So the word clearly refers to God's plan. To use it in a wider sense again in verse 11, just as we decide beforehand what our holiday arrangement should be. In a far more wonderful way, God determines that some people in Adam, though guilty, though on the sentence of death, should become His children.

That's God's plan in redemption. To carry out this plan, God chooses certain individuals to share in that plan, but to be God's children, they need to be holy. God predestines us to adoption.

In the Korean War, 1950-53, a godly Presbyterian minister in the north had two of his teenage sons killed by a young communist official. The story has been well documented. But the minister and his wife were given a great deal of grace to accept the death of their two teenagers.

After a few weeks, they decided to seek out the murderer and to pray for him, to pray for his conversion. They wanted to express forgiveness to him. They were eventually informed by the authorities, the allied forces, that this young man had been captured, had been tried, had been sentenced to death, because he'd killed other young people.

And the minister began to appeal to the allied leaders for permission to take this young communist official home and to be responsible for him. After a great deal of negotiating and persuasion, the authorities agreed. The young man was released.

On condition he stayed with this minister and his wife. And what this couple did was to treat him as one of their own children. They forgave him.

They accepted him. They loved him. And after a year or so, they actually adopted him formally as their son.

The young man was overwhelmed by the love of this man and woman. And he was converted. He became a very useful Presbyterian minister in the south of Korea.

It's just a feeble picture of God's dealings with us. God loves and forgives sinners. He accepts enemies.

By Jesus Christ, says Paul in Ephesians 1 verse 5. By Jesus, by his glorious sacrifice for us. And when God justifies sinners, when they believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, he also adopts them through Jesus Christ to or for himself. He adopts them.

He receives them as his children. He gives to us in the words of our 1823 Confession of Faith, the liberty and the privileges of children. He begins to call us by name.

He sends the spirit of adoption into our hearts. He gives us liberty and authority to come boldly to the throne of grace. To ask what we will in his name.

He gives us grace and strength to cry, Abba, Father. And as our Father, he pities us. He cares for us.

He provides for us in all kinds of situations. He teaches us. He protects us all the time from dangers seen and unseen.

On occasions, it's necessary for him to chastise us as his children. But he will never cast us away. And we're sealed to the day of redemption.

We're his children. We have an inheritance. Now one contemporary preacher whom I won't name, he's not present here, has adapted what really is a well-worn illustration over the centuries and used by preachers.

But he's adapted it helpfully, I think. He pictures a criminal in court being found guilty of many offences. And suddenly a man stands up in his place and takes the punishment himself instead of the criminal.

That's a picture of Calvary. That's what happens in justification. Christ has taken our place.

And as we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, his righteousness is reckoned to my account. I'm pronounced righteous, not guilty. I'm now free.

So the preacher pictures this man walking out of the courtroom, amazed. But he feels that he's abandoned. He's got nowhere to go.

And he thinks in the countryside that there is a small, old, dirty hut he used to play in. I'll go and stay there. Maybe I won't have a job, but I may get enough food.

So he begins to walk. And as he does so, the officials of the great king run up to him and tell him, Look, there are some rooms waiting for you at the palace. And the king declares that you're to live there as one of his family.

And the pardoned criminal asks, Well, how is this possible? And the official shows him some papers. Oh, your Heavenly Father knows all that you've been up to. He's got a detailed record of your past.

And the criminal looks at it and he's amazed. It's so precise and so accurate. It was all there.

And yet, says the official to this criminal, the king has planned in his love to give you not just acquittal, but to give you family rights. And also an inheritance. So this criminal is taken into the palace, his rags taken off, new expensive clothes.

And he lives like the son of a king in the palace. That's adoption. Enemies, rebels, sinners.

And we're saved in Christ. And we're adopted through Jesus Christ into his family. Adoption is the ultimate experience because it's the ultimate of God's purpose purchased by Jesus Christ.

Predestined according to the good pleasure of his will. And notice in verse 6, I draw to a conclusion. The ultimate aim of God's redemptive purpose is underlined in verse 6. To the praise of the glory of his grace.

There are similar statements in verse 12 and verse 14. But here in verse 6, there's emphasis on his grace as well as on his glory. The ultimate end of God's electing, predestinating love is his glory.

God wants his name to be honored and glorified. And he also wants his grace to be outshining, to be exhibited in his people, in the church. So that honor and glory is brought back to God through his people.

In your little church or large church, God wants his grace in your life to be so exhibited as to fill people in your community with a sense of awe and wonder. Look what God has done to these people. And this is highlighted then in the rest of verse 6. By which he made us accepted in the Beloved.

So as the apostle speaks of the glory of God's grace, he adds that it is this grace with which he has made us accepted in the Beloved. Literally, with which he has highly favored us. All bestowed grace or favor upon us.

You'll know the same word as used earlier in Luke's Gospel, chapter 1, verse 28 in relation to Mary the Virgin. Thou art highly favored. She is chosen among all women to bear the Lord Jesus Christ.

God has chosen us as sinners in Christ to be highly favored, to be blessed, to be redeemed, to be adopted, to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. How? Again, says the apostle, it's in the Beloved. It's a new title here for our Lord Jesus Christ.

It's all achieved and made possible in the Beloved One. Remember the words of the Father again in the baptism of our Lord Jesus, this is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. In his transfiguration, the same words.

The one who is in the bosom of the Father from eternity. The Father has sent him. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

He spared not his own Son but freely delivered him up for us all. Grace. Look at the cross, we'll be looking at it again this week.

But there you see the glory of God outshining. You see God's grace. The people for whom Christ is dying have done nothing to deserve it.

It's the most stupendous, incredible event of history. God's Son and his human nature should bear our sin. The punishment of our sin.

We see there his righteousness. This holy God hates sin. He punishes sin.

He has no compromise with it. He can't close his eyes to it. He maintains his own righteous standards.

He remains just and yet the justifier of him which believes in Jesus. Now you see his love shining. The Father is there with the Son.

He has sent his Son. He smites his Son. He lays on his Son our sins.

He spares him not. He pours out his eternal wrath upon him, the wrath which is due to us because of our sin. He hides his face from his own Son, from the dearly beloved one.

Hear his love, says John. Not that we loved God but that he loved us. And sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us. The heart of the Apostle is moved. He cannot express himself adequately.

A few years ago I was in the home of a godly pastor in North Wales. And in his lounge I'd noticed before but I drew attention this time to an enlarged photograph he had on the wall. It is the photograph of a 1950 LMS steam engine.

It may mean nothing to most of you so don't worry. But it meant a lot to me. My father used to work on the LMS.

I sometimes had the privilege of riding in the engine. And I was fascinated by this engine. The photograph was of this long, sleek, dark green steam engine standing at the platform in Llandudno Junction.

It was the Hollyhead London train. It was ready to leave. And the driver was looking out of his cabin in a state of readiness.

You felt it in the photograph. And the driver was looking down onto the platform. There was a boy about 9 or 10 years old looking up, watching.

I said to this pastor, I like the photograph. I wasn't giving a hint but I really did like it. I liked steam engines, I told him.

But he wasn't impressed. He said, I bought this photograph in a second-hand shop in Bethesda Coit. For one reason, I don't like trains, he said.

But it had a lesson. What is the lesson? Well, I gave him some answers but he didn't accept them. Being ready, prepared, watchful.

He was disgusted with my answers. He said, get close to that photograph. Look at the boy's face.

That's where the secret is. There's a sense of wonder on that boy's face. Probably hasn't seen an engine like this before.

He's just overwhelmed by the size and the majesty of this engine. He's captivated by it. Then he turned to me and grabbed my arm and said, that is worship.

Worship isn't noise, he said. Worship isn't physical movement. Worship isn't music.

Worship is a sense of wonder, a sense of amazement, a sense of appreciation. You're taken up with the object, God. And unfortunately we're captivated by secondary issues.

Worship is being aware of him and adoring him. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us pray.

Our Heavenly Father, we do ask that by the Holy Spirit we may be given understanding of this part of Scripture, that we should be privileged to see in a new way the glory of our Triune God. From our hearts grant that there may be deep and sincere worship and appreciation. We ask it in our Saviour's name.

Amen.

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