



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dr. S. Lewis Johnson

Ephesians 1:1-5

“Paul’s Grandest Epistle”

John Stott, who is one of the most prominent of present-day Bible expositors, formerly the pastor of a large church in the center of the city of London, and now a Bible teacher all over the Western world, has a relatively recent book on the letter to the Ephesians in which he says, “The letter to the Ephesians is a marvelously concise, yet comprehensive summary of the Christian good news and its implications. Nobody can read it without being moved to wonder and worship, and challenged to consistency of life.”

It was John Calvin’s favorite letter. Armitage Robinson, who has also written a more technical commentary on Ephesians, has called it the crown of St. Paul’s writings. William Barkley said that Samuel Taylor Coleridge called it, “The divinest composition of Man.” And then he added, that is, Professor Barkley, “That it is the queen of the epistles.” So we’re looking into an epistle that has a great reputation. That is, the Epistle to the Ephesians.

Paul made a number of visits to the city of Ephesus, and among them were, so far as the New Testament is concerned, the first on the Second Missionary Journey they described in Acts chapter 18. Apollos followed him to the city, you’ll remember, and the description of Apollos as minister there is given in Acts chapter 18. Then, on the Third

Missionary Journey, the apostle came again into the city of Ephesus, and he spent three years there. He preached and taught in the school of Tyrannus, and had a wide-ranging ministry no doubt, from that city. And finally, he had a third contact with Ephesus, set forth, specifically in the New Testament, when he was making his way down to Jerusalem in the story of Acts chapter 20, he called the Ephesian elders to come and meet him. We know, too, that John the Apostle spent his last years at the city of Ephesus. The tradition of the church is that the Virgin Mary died and is also buried there at Ephesus. No doubt that that tradition is related to the fact that Jesus committed Mary into to the hands of the Beloved Apostle.

Ephesians is, of course, a church that looms in the New Testament, simply because of the exalted nature of its message. It was a church that had, therefore, a tremendous ministry given to it: ministry from the Apostle Paul, ministry from the Apostle John. It’s rather sad to read of the last mention of the church in the New Testament when our Lord wrote a letter to the church and reminded them that they had left their first love. And so while it was a church over which the Apostle Paul rejoiced in the Epistle to the Ephesians, when our Lord wrote a letter to the church forty years later, it was a church that had left its first love. That to me is always a very solemn thing: that a church that could have the ministry of the Apostles, the Apostle Paul, the Apostle John, forty years later should leave its first love.

The theme of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians, if we were to single out one thing, is the theme of “in the heavenlies,” “in Christ.” We noticed, for example, that it begins in verse 3 of chapter 1: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, in Christ.” Notice in verse 20, “which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.” Then in chapter 2 and verse 6, the Apostle writes, “And hath raised us up together and made us to sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.” Then in chapter 3 and verse 10, the Apostle writes, “to the intent that now

unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.” Notice, “in heavenly places” again. And then also in chapter 6 and verse 12, we have the final reference to “in the heavnlies”: “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [or heavenly] places.” So the theme of “in Christ,” “in the heavnlies” seems to stand out.

Isn’t it a strange thing, really, when you think about it, that the Apostle should write so much about being in Christ? What is meant by being “in Christ?” Men don’t speak of being “in Plato,” or “in Moses.” But we don’t use terminology like that. The Bible says that we are “in Christ.” So, we don’t read “in Plato,” “in Moses.” It’s so strange that one of the great grammarians of the New Testament has spoken of this expression as containing a “mystical dative.” That is, the preposition “in” followed by the dative case, and the thought being of a mystical kind of union, a spiritual union, and being so strange that he wanted to give a different grammatical category for it, to speak of the “mystical dative.” But while that may not be real justifiable, the thought of union with Christ is the preeminent thought. To be “in Christ” is to be in union with him. And that of course means a spiritual union.

We cannot really describe this other than to look at the New Testament references to “in Christ,” “in Him,” “in Whom.” That kind of expression occurs over 130 times in the Apostle’s writings, so it looms large in the writings of the Apostle Paul. He speaks about this union that Believers enjoy with the Lord Jesus Christ. I think of all the things that Paul writes it’s probably the most important thing. And it reminds us of the fact that he was – the Lord Jesus – was the representative head and the representative head of his people went to the cross, and died there, and in his death we died. And when the representative head came forth from the grave, we came forth from the grave in him. And when the representative head ascended to the right hand of the Father, we have come forth and have ascended to the right hand of the Father, “in Him.” Now that is specifically

stated in the second chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians when we read in the sixth verse, “and hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” So the thought, then, of union, I think spelled out in the federal union, the representative union, that Christ’s people have with Him, is the thought of “in Christ.”

Now when we look at the opening part of the epistle, and tonight I’d like to look at the first five verses – or first six verses, I should say – which contains the introduction or the salutation, and then the first movement of the first section of the epistle, verse 3 through verse 14. Let me read these verses, by the way. The Apostle writes:

“Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus, and to the faithful, or the believing, in Christ Jesus. Grace and be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Let me just dispense with the introduction or salutation; just a few comments. You notice the Apostle speaks of himself here as an “Apostle of Jesus Christ.” That is one sent forth by Him. Right in the beginning, again, we have the characteristic note of the New Testament, and that is, the divine initiative. The Apostle is one sent forth by God: an Apostle of Jesus Christ. He is one sent forth by the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not something that he himself has thought up. It’s not something that he has devised. It’s not something that he has imagined he would do. The Apostle is an apostle by calling: he is sent forth by God himself. Now, he lays stress on that, for he says, “An Apostle of Jesus Christ by the *will of God*.” Not by the will of Man, but by the will of God. So, if you want to get into the heart of the Apostle’s thinking, you must, as he does, begin with the will of God.

So much of our theology today is anthropological: men begin with men. And the result is a pelagianism or arminianism or that kind of theology in which the human is stressed. But in the Bible, the Apostles, our Lord, and the Prophets begin from the standpoint of God. They don’t do away with human responsibility, but they look at it

from the standpoint of God. So, Paul is a “sent one” of Jesus Christ, by the *will of God*. He never thought of himself as someone who applied for his position.

Do you know that this is characteristic of evangelicalism today? When a man gets out of theological seminary – and they usually advise him to do it before he gets out of theological seminary – he sends off letters, all over everywhere: “I’m graduating from seminary and am ready to teach at your institution. I’m ready to preach in your church.” They apply for their positions. It seems to me that is contrary to the spirit of the New Testament. That’s why I’m not so popular with some people. But, it seems to me that is contrary to the spirit of the New Testament. A man who is called of God may expect God to open doors for him. He may expect people to approach him.

The Apostle is an apostle by the will of God, not because he thought, “I think I’d like to be an Apostle. I think I’d like for people to read my letters down through the centuries.” No, the last thing Paul ever had in mind was conversion to Jesus Christ. And the next last thing he had was an Apostle of Jesus Christ. And probably the third thing was that he would be a servant such as he was and have the influence that he has had down through the centuries. He is an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. And I claim – I may be wrong about this – but I claim, that you can usually tell, by the flavor of the ministry of a man, whether he is called of God or whether he is called of man and God. You can usually tell the difference. So the Apostle is an apostle by the will of God. He’s like the Prophets who had a burden laid upon them to give forth the message of God.

“By the will of God, to the saints...” Now we know, you’ve been in this class long enough to know that this is one of the characteristic terms for the believer: saints, believers. “Saints” stresses the divine side. “Believers” stresses the human side. “Saints” stresses the fact that they are set apart by God for his control and possession. “Believer” stresses the work of the Holy Spirit in us by which we respond to the message of God. So, it is to the saints, the set apart ones, who are at Ephesus.

It’s interesting, as you read the Greek text of Ephesians – probably you have a note in your modern version, on this point – that the words “at Ephesus” are not in some of the oldest manuscripts of the Epistle to the Ephesians. Perhaps the oldest, uncial manuscript does not have this. A couple of others, of the very old ones do not have it, and so, naturally, one wonders if Paul really wrote this in the text that he wrote, by dictation, through Tychicus, or whoever his scribe might have been. Tychicus is one who took this letter for him.

It’s possible that this was a circular letter. It was possible that this letter was sent to the churches of Asia Minor, like Colossae, Heirapolis, Laodecia, and Ephesus, and the Apostle just left the blank, the words, because he expected each of the churches to insert their own name there. That is, in Ephesus, or in Laodecia, or whatever it may have been. It is interesting that these words are not in some of the oldest of our manuscripts. So, if it is not something that he wrote, it was a circular letter.

And what confirms this, possibly, is that there are no personal greetings here with reference to this church. He doesn’t start out like he does in so many of his epistles by speaking of how thankful he is for the Ephesians, and how he remembers their work of faith, and labor of love and patience of hope, but he just begins talking about God and talking about Christ, which would be suitable for a circular letter that was to be passed around.

On the other hand, it is possible that the words were genuine. We cannot be absolutely certain at this point. So, you probably have a note in your Bible – it’s not something to get excited over – because we just don’t know exactly what Paul wrote. Some of the manuscripts have “at Ephesus,” some don’t. Those are the facts. Now we have to decide whether that is genuine and if genuine, the omission, what it might mean. I’ve suggested to you the essence of what Bible students have thought.

Now he adds, “and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.” Probably that word means “believing ones.” Now the word may mean “faithful,” which stresses of course their

activity, or it may mean “believing,” which would stress their intellectual response to the Gospel of Christ. The latter is probably the force: to the faithful, that is to the believing ones, in Christ Jesus. They have been united to him by faith. “Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ,” the grace coming from the Father and from Christ reminds us of the equal standing that the Father and the Son have.

Now, having said that, we turn now to verses 3-6, which are surely one of the most important sections in all of Paul’s writings. If you turn to a man like Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield, who has some outstanding articles in some of his collected works, and you read his one on predestination, for example – and I recommend you read it, incidentally, if you’ve never read it; it’s an excellent article – but in this article on predestination, when Professor Warfield discusses that, he says there are two or three passages in the New Testament that are the outstanding passages on that subject: Romans chapter 8, Romans chapter 9, Ephesians chapter 1. In some places he will mention 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 13 and verse 14. But this one of the great sections on the doctrine of predestination.

Therefore, it introduces us to that very, very difficult problem right at the beginning. It’s a Biblical subject. It’s one that merits our investigation. We want – we do not want – to make the mistake of overlooking it, even if we fall into the blunders of misunderstanding or overdoing it. But we don’t want to fall into those errors, either. It is important that we approach this with caution. As I’ve repeated recently, and it’s come up here again, and I’ll have to say it again, as Calvin wisely said, “We ought to teach the truth God has given us to teach lest we seem to scoff at the Holy Spirit for publishing what we ought to suppress.”

Now, on the other hand, we should remember that when the teaching of the word of God reaches its limits, we should beware of trying to be wise and going beyond the word of God, and falling into emphases that are not proper. If a truth is worthy to be revealed in the Bible, it is worthy of being preached. And so, I don’t make apology –

well, you knew that – I don’t make any apology for preaching the doctrine of predestination or election. If it is something that God has deemed worthwhile to publish, it is worthwhile to preach it. And I, I must say, will stand there. And I think that is the way we ought to read the Bible.

Now let me begin by saying a word here about the connections of this particular passage. The Apostle, after this brief salutation, launches into a lengthy sentence of twelve verses in praise of the redemptive purpose of God. Beginning at verse 3, and going through verse 14, that is his opening subject. In his opening verse, we have the fountainhead:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”

That’s the fountainhead. He says that God has blessed, and he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ.

Now, from that fountainhead, there flow three amplifying sections: verses 4-6, verses 7-12, verse 13 and verse 14. There is a kind of refrain that marks these sections. And if you look at it carefully, you can see exactly what was in Paul’s mind. He talks about the work of the Father, and he closes with the refrain in verse 6, “To the praise of the glory of His grace, through which He hath made us accepted in the beloved.” Then in verses 7-12, he speaks of the Son, and he closes with the refrain in verse 12 that we should be “to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ.” And then in verse 13 and verse 14, he stresses the work of the Holy Spirit. And here again he closes with, “Who is the earnest of our inheritance and the redemption of the purchased possession unto the praise of his glory.” So verse 6, “to the praise of the glory of His grace,” verse 12, “to the praise of his glory,” verse 14, “unto the praise of his glory” – these are the

three amplifying sections which tell us exactly what is meant when it says, “He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies, in Christ.”

So, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are glorified by the Apostle in the redemptive work. He begins with election and predestination, he moves to mediation by the Son, and then, the realization of the blessings, or the application of them by the Holy Spirit in verse 13 and verse 14. He begins this kaleidoscope of dazzling lights and shifting colors, as Armitage Robinson calls it, by blessing God for the plethora of spiritual blessings – not material blessings – spiritual blessings that we have bestowed upon us through our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” That, by the way, is an expression that means that he is worthy of being blessed. There are two expressions in the New Testament that we find that are translated this way: “blessed” in the active sense, as we have here; or “blessed” in the sense of being blessed.

Now, let me show you a couple of places where this difference is rather interesting. So turn with me to Luke chapter 1 and listen as I read verse 42 of Luke chapter 1. In Luke 1 verse 42 we have the visit that the Virgin Mary makes to Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, and while you’re finding the Gospel of Luke, in verse 41, Luke writes:

“And it came to pass that when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost. And she spoke out with a loud voice saying, ‘Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.’”

Now the expression that is used here, “blessed,” is an expression that means that she has *received* blessing. I mention this because it is the contention of this large religious organization that Mary is a *blessor*. But what is said here when we read “blessed art thou

among women,” the construction that is used is a construction that means she is blessed, she is the recipient of blessing. She is not the conveyor of blessings to others, she is the recipient of blessing.

But now, notice in verse 68, here we read:

“And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, ‘Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people.’”

But here, the word is a word that implies a blessing that is *due* to that individual. So that one is blessed, in the sense of he is worthy of blessing; the other is blessed in the sense of she has received a blessing. That’s the difference between our Lord Jesus Christ and Mary. That’s the difference between the Father and Mary. The Father is worthy of blessing, but Mary has received a blessing. She’s the recipient of blessing. Now, the term that is used here is the term that means he is worthy of blessing: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” So he is the truly, blessed, bless-ed Father God.

Now notice that these blessings are traceable to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That’s fitting too, isn’t it? Because the term “Father” suggests that this is his provision for the members of his family. “Blessed be the God and *Father* of the Lord Jesus Christ.” All true fathers like to be the source of blessing for their children, for the members of their family: wife and children. Well, our great heavenly Father wants to be the source of blessing for his family, and that is what he is. He has blessed all of us who are in the family with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

It won’t make a bit of difference whether your earthly father has left you five dollars or five million dollars in comparison with this. If you have all spiritual blessings in Jesus Christ, you have all that is necessary for life and godliness, the Apostle says. We’ve been blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places.

Poor old Howard Hughes, he only left \$465 million. Everybody’s disappointed over that. But the poor man, so far as I know, entered into eternity a pauper. He had no conception, so far as we can tell, of the grace of God and Jesus Christ. Oh we may leave a pile of a few pennies here on earth, but we are rich. And we have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ, and when we arrive there, we arrive with wealth, spiritual wealth, and furthermore, that currency is negotiable in heaven. Dollars are not. Kruegerands are not negotiable in heaven. Pile up as many as you want; they won’t do you any good at all. They may put’em in your coffin to weight it down so it won’t float away when floods come, but that’s about all their worth.

All spiritual blessings are in Christ. We are rich. Christians are rich, tremendously rich – cannot even speak about it. Talk about the national debt, that’s a pittance in comparison with our blessings. That’s saying a lot, isn’t it?

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ.” Now that expression could mean in or with heavenly things, further defining the blessing. But it probably locates our wealth. Our wealth is in the heavenly places. It’s the region and sphere of our home. And Paul further defines this as saying “the heavenly places *in Christ*.” Now these heavenly blessings are ours now. We have been blessed with them. We have these things in the bank of heaven. But like all of our blessings, they must be appropriated, and we must live in the light of them. Live like they are true.

I like the law of Joshua 1:3: “Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given you as I said unto Moses.” So, as the children of Israel went into the Promised Land, all they had to do to make that land theirs was to tread upon that ground, and it was theirs. These spiritual blessings are ours: all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ. They are appropriated by the steps of faith, and they become ours.

I always remember the story of William Penn. I don’t know how true it is, but the Indians said to Mr. Penn, “You can have as much as land as you can walk around in one

day.” So, the story is that Mr. Penn got up early in the morning, I would’ve too. And he walked fast. And he walked over a wide territory. And at the end of the day he had encompassed, well not the state of Pennsylvania, but nevertheless a wide territory and one of the Indians said laconically later, so I’m told, “Paleface has had a long walk today.” Well, he was appropriating land that was a promise to him, as he appropriated it. And so here, the appropriation is to tread upon these great promises and make them ours.

Cannot overemphasize this expression “in Christ.” Over 130 times, I say, it is found or equivalents like “in Him” or “in Whom.” I think it’s fair to say the most important Pauline doctrine is not justification by faith. The most important Pauline doctrine would be, perhaps, the doctrine of union with Christ. That’s expressed by this. For every time that justification by faith is mentioned, union with Christ is mentioned ten times in the New Testament. Furthermore, the doctrine of justification by faith is found only in a limited number of Paul’s epistles. Did you know that? I imagine a number of you are surprised. You know why? Because you hear preachers so often say, “Oh, the doctrine of justification by faith, that is the most important Pauline teaching.” That’s questionable. If you read your Bible, you’ll discover it’s not found in most of Paul’s letters. But “in Christ” or union with Christ, that’s found much more frequently.

The Apostle turns to the ground of the blessing in the fourth verse:

“According as he hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world.”

Now, the word translated here “according as” can be translated “according as,” or “as,” or “because.” Now, “because” is not its most common meaning. It’s most common meaning is “as.” And if it means “as” then he would simply be saying “we have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ” and that great blessing is just as – it’s like – the election of us before the foundation of the world. In other words, he’s comparing the greatness of these things.

But, the best known Greek lexicon (most modern), among others, takes this word here to mean “because”: “because he hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world.” Now I didn’t look at any of the popular renderings, and perhaps some of you have that in the Bible you are looking at, because many of the commentators have turned to this as the more proper rendering of that adverb *kathos*, that comparative adverb. I’m inclined to think that is the meaning. In other words, what we have here is the ground: he’s blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ *because* he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world. That is the ground – that’s the foundation – of this great blessing, all these spiritual blessings that we possess. In other words, election is the fountainhead from which our blessings flow. And I suggest to you that sense is found in other places. It’s probably found in chapter 4 verse 32, right here in the Epistle to the Ephesians. It’s also found in Romans 1 verse 38, and in other places as well. So, let’s render it “because”: “because he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.”

Oh how much we owe – even though we may carp at the doctrine, even though we may object to it, even though we may fight against it – oh how much we owe to the doctrine of election. Now, I’ve got some good friends, they fight against it all the time. They try to redefine it. They say they believe in election, and when you ask them what they believe, it usually is human election. They fight and they struggle and get mad. When we get to heaven, I’m going to go up to them and say, “Why are you here?” And they’re gonna say, “Because we were elected.” That’s exactly what they’re gonna say. Because then they will know that right at the foundation of the blessings we receive is that great work of God in electing us to salvation. That’s biblical language. That’s biblical teaching. The Apostles says, “Because he hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world.”

Now we have to hesitate for just a moment over this word: elected. In the first place, this word is found in a tense that looks toward the past. In other words, it looks at

this electing act as an event of the past. Doesn’t take, I don’t think, much biblical intelligence and skill and interpretation to see that. “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world”; isn’t that simple? If I were to ask you, having read that text, when were you elected? Well you would say, “I was elected before the foundation of the world,” wouldn’t you?

I want to read you a statement now of a man – if I told you his name, every one of you in this room would know him. If you wouldn’t, you would have heard of him. He’s a graduate of a theological seminary located here in Dallas, Texas. He’s teaching is not the teaching of the faculty there – I don’t want to suggest that. It’s his own teaching. This is what he says, talking about election: “all members of the human race are potentially elected in the plan of God by unlimited atonement”—well I don’t want to talk about that; that’s not right either. But the sixth of his points on election is: “This election takes place for you at the moment of salvation. [pause, then repeats] This election takes place for you at the moment of salvation.” He has the nerve to cite 2 Thessalonians 2:13 for that particular viewpoint.

Paul says we were chosen in him before the foundation of the world. The election is not something that takes place when I believe. I believe because I have been elected.

So, we’re chosen in him before the foundation of the world. I have to be tough on my friend – he’s a friend of mine – I have to be tough on him. Nobody’ll pay attention to me if I don’t. So you can run and tell him. Tell’im that’s what Lewis said.

In the second place, I want you to notice another thing about this. It says, “According as he hath chosen us in him – or because he hath chosen us in him – before the foundation of the world” – and this particular word is a word that is used in what we call in Greek, the middle voice – it is an indirect middle – and I’m just going to translate it for you because that doesn’t mean anything to you and it’s not necessary for you to remember that – but this particular verb, in this particular voice, could be rendered

accurately, “he chose us for himself, before the foundation of the world.” In other words, it expresses his personal interest in our election. It expressed his love for us. For this word suggests the intimacy that exists between the Father in heaven and those whom he has chosen. That’s the ultimate explanation of our election: the Father loved us and he chose us for himself.

Now in the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel of John, Jesus says, “the Father “gave him” these people. We are given. We are elected by the Father and given to the Son. And we belong to the Son. The Son, when he prays his great High Priestly Prayer, he says, “Father, keep those whom thou hast given me.” So he gives us back to the Father for keeping. So, we are given to the Son as an elect people, chosen before the foundation of the world, for the Lord God.

This word points to divine selection. Chosen – that’s what it means – divine selection from or out of all possibilities. There are others that are not chosen, because we are chosen. The very fact that we are chosen means that there those that are not chosen. We cannot escape that. We don’t like to think about that. That upsets us. That’s the thing that causes us to wreck our brain sometimes, trying to figure out exactly what is the meaning of this idea. Election: we have, others do not have. He chose us. We did not first choose him.

Listen to what Karl Barth says, to show you how far we can go astray. Professor Barth says, “It is for this contextual reason (he’s talking about us and saints and believers) that I cannot”—well I was gonna say that Professor Bart makes the point that in connection with this, in Christ, all men whatever are chosen. So that everybody, everybody who has ever been born, everybody who’s going to be born, the great Swiss theologian says, was elected in Christ.

The Bible does not teach that. Modern theology preaches that. That’s what you find if you go into liberal churches today, for the most part, that still make a profession of Christianity. They teach that everybody is elected, and the purpose of the evangelist is

not to tell you that there is a basic distinction between the elect and the non-elect, but the purpose of the evangelist – and by the way, to tell you to believe in Christ – but the purpose of the evangelist is to tell you that all men are elected and some are aware of their election and some are not aware of their election. And the purpose of evangelization is to make people aware of their previous election by God in Christ. That’s evangelism for a modern, contemporary theologian.

We don’t preach the Gospel like that, and the Apostles didn’t either. They preached that men were lost, that there are some that are elect, but not everybody is elect. We are responsible to preach the Gospel to everybody so that the Holy Spirit may bring his elect ones to faith in Christ. It’s all the difference in the world in the evangelism of these two viewpoints.

So, the Apostle says, then, that we are, he has chosen us to be in him since the foundation of the world. Well, our time is just about up, and I am just getting warmed up. But I think that probably it is good to stop here, and we will continue our study of the Epistle to the Ephesians next week. And we have some interesting words in the next section – just notice the next one, will you? – having “predestinated” us. How about that? The Apostle sure does ring the changes on these words that talk about predestination and election, doesn’t he?

Let’s close with a word of prayer. If you’re here in the audience tonight, you’re either elect or one of the non-elect. But I don’t know who is elect. I certainly don’t know who the non-elect are. And so far as we are concerned, our responsibility is to believe the Gospel. If you want to join the happy company of the elect, blessed with all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ, the Scriptures set forth one simple step to take, and that is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

He has offered a sacrifice for sinners. You’re a sinner. You may come and believe in him and receive the gift of everlasting life. And having received the gift of everlasting life, having come to life, you can say, I am one of the elect, and blessed with

him all spiritual blessings within the heavenlies. But if you don’t want to come, and won’t come, then how can you be mad that he has elected some? We all are lost people. He doesn’t choose some because they are better than others, they’re all lost, all worthy of hell. And he’s free in his sovereign mercy to take some of these burning brands out and save them.

May God move your heart. May you come unto him. Believe, be saved, find out you are one of the elect. Let’s close in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for the word of God. How wonderful is this message the Apostle gave the Ephesians. O Father, may it work in our hearts that we shall never lose our first love.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.