

THE FORMATION AND FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH

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Gracious Heavenly Father, we assemble at your feet this day, trusting that you would be our vision. We don't ask for answers per se, we just ask for clear vision of who you are in all of your glory and your majesty, your grace and your mercy, all of those attributes which we have come to love and to adore and to respect. We pray, Lord, that you'd create within us a heart of reverence and a heart of awe as we reflect upon your majesty and your glory. May we come to you this day desirous to see your face that we might see you more clearly for Jesus' sake. Amen.

We've been looking in recent weeks about the formation and function of the church. In Ephesians 1, we looked at what it meant to be part of the ecclesia or the gathering or the assembly of God's people. In your outline #4, we're looking at how does one enter into the assembly of God's people, the ecclesia, the gathering. In Ephesians 2, we saw in verses 1-3, that we are saved from our sin. We need to understand what we are saved from. We often talk about, ask somebody, are they saved, and they say, "Oh yes." Do they really understand what we are saved from? That's part of our understanding about being a member of the gathering.

Then we saw in verse 4 of chapter 2 that we are saved because of love, the motive behind God's saving us from our sin is his love for us from eternity, of his elect, of his remnant.

Then we saw in verse 5 that we are saved into life. We are saved from death, darkness, blindness, condemnation. We are saved into life. We are saved into something.

Last week we touched a little bit on verse 7 about we are saved for a purpose. I'd like you to go back to Ephesians 2 and look at verse 7 to help us understand the significant...now we often talk a lot about our purpose in life. Sometimes I think we have such a micro version of that thinking that my purpose in life has something to do with profession. I would like to expand that and take it up to 100,000 feet and help us understand it in the context of what it means to be part of the assembly, part of the gathering of God's elect, part of that group, and look at our purpose as it relates to our being a participant in the body of Christ. It far exceeds something such as our vocation or our professional life.

We see this in verse 7...well let me read back to verse 4 to keep it in the right context—I'm reading, again, from the English Standard Version—"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ." Now there you see the motive behind his salvation. His grace is his love for us. Then we saw that we are saved into life (verse 5). Even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, "by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Now here's the cause and effect. We were raised up and we were seated. That means we now have a different past. All of us have a past history of our lives, but now, because of the transformation of our life from unrighteousness to righteousness because we are now members of the ecclesia, the gathering, the body of Christ, we have a new past. Our new past is this—that you were raised and that you are seated. Those are past tense verbs, which means those things can't be changed. You and I now look back and say, "I am now raised up with him and seated, us with the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

Now here's the consequence in that cause and effect relationship, "so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." Now there's one of the purposes that you and I have as being one who has been drawn in to the gathering of God's people. It is through the process of our salvation. One of the purposes of that is to show his immeasurable riches.

Notice how the phraseology, “to show that in the coming ages,” that means in the future—not only the present but there’s a future aspect, “he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

Now, there are some things we need to understand about our purpose. First of all, we see our heavenly citizenship. We see that in Philippians 3:20. Our citizenship is in heaven. So yes, we are to be in the world, but not of the world. So our citizenship is in heaven because we have been raised up with him and seated with him in the heavenly places. Now your and my citizenship really is in heaven, although during this temporal life, we are called to live a life where we are in the world, but not of the world. In other words, it’s like a ship in the water. You want the function of...a ship functions far better at sea than it does in dry dock. You and I will function much better in the world. The question is we need to be in the world, but not have the world in us. You want to have the ship in the water, but no water in the ship. You and I need to be in the world, but you don’t want the system of this world, the priorities, the directions, the attachments of this world to be in us. Our purpose, in the big picture, is that we are the means by which God puts his immeasurable riches of his grace on display. That’s your purpose wherever you are. That’s why we come to the conclusion that ministry really is who we are where we are.

You are the means by which God puts his life on display. We’ve see that numerous times when we’ve looked at a cross reference in 2 Corinthians 4:7, “We have this treasure in earthen vessels to show that the all-surpassing power comes from God and not from us.” In other words, you are a trophy of God’s grace. Essentially that’s what it means. You and I are trophies of God’s grace, and the purpose in your life is wherever you are, whatever vocation you choose to pursue, you and I need to realize that the big picture, we are means that God is going to demonstrate the immeasurable riches of his grace in Christ Jesus wherever you are. There is our purpose as a member of the ecclesia of the gathering of the body of Christ.

Now we take that and live that out in your calling, but we’ve got to recognize sometimes we bring this down to such a low level of thinking that my purpose is my job. No that’s the way in which you express your purpose. Your purpose is to be a walking trophy of God’s grace in your employment. Now that’s what it means to be part of the ecclesia. That’s the big picture as we understand the consequences, the cause and effect of our salvation, is that you and I are immeasurable demonstrations of the riches of God’s grace wherever you are.

Let me show you a couple of cross references. Go to Ephesians 3:10...well let me go back to verse 8 to keep it in its context...chapter 3:8-10, “To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things,” now here you go, “so that through the church,” that’s the ecclesia, that’s the gathering, “so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.” In other words, you and I are the trophies that God puts on display for the angels to see in heaven and to understand the whole concept of redemption.

Go to Revelation 7. In other words, that’s why the Scripture says that the angels rejoice when somebody comes to saving faith. The angels celebrate. Go to Revelation 7:9-12. Here we see a great multitude from every nation. Beginning at verse 9 of chapter 7 of Revelation, “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’ And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, ‘Amen! Blessing

and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.” In other words, you and I, in the big picture, we are trophies put on display, and the angels are praising God because of the redemption of the lost.

Now that’s part of our purpose. Not only does it have a means where you and I are the visible demonstrations of God’s immeasurable riches of his grace wherever you are, but also there’s something in heaven going on, that the angels rejoice at the redemption of a lost soul.

Don: Yeah, I was thinking, Bruce, of that passage in 1 Peter 1 I believe it is where [UNCLEAR] talked about all of these things that we have in Christ about how the Old Testament things [UNCLEAR] and then it says the things that even angels [UNCLEAR]...

That’s right.

Don: And, you know, it’s just fascinating. On the one hand the Bible says that angels are made lower, and we’re made lower than the angels, and yet, what we have, the angels don’t have.

That’s exactly right.

Don: It’s just incredible.

That’s the important thing we need to understand that Don’s highlighting for us. We have something that the angels never experience, because they were never saved from their sin because they don’t sin. They were created in a different state and nature than we are. You see, they don’t understand what it means to be redeemed. We do, and we have been saved from our sin, we’re saved into life, we’re saved because of love, and the purpose is that you and I are the means by which, not only does this world see and come in contact with the immeasurable riches of God’s grace, but the angels in glory, whenever they see that, they are anticipating our arrival. That’s why the Scripture says that the angels rejoice at the going home of a child of God. They rejoice when one of us passes from this earth to the next because they’re waiting for us to say, “Tell us what it’s like to be saved. Tell us what it’s like to be redeemed. What was it like to have your life transformed from a life of sinfulness into a life of sinless perfection and perfect obedience. Tell us what that’s like. We’ve never experienced that.” You see, that’s what Revelation is saying. That’s why they’re saying...notice their response to the understanding of what it means to be a redeemed person, in verse 12, and here is their response to that, “Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen” They are just rejoicing in the fact that another person has been redeemed and has gone from death unto life. The angels are worshipping him and saying, “Lord, that is just magnificent. We’ve never experience that.”

Let’s bring that down to earth. There are a lot of people in this world who have never experienced what you and I have, in our salvation in Christ Jesus. That’s why our purpose is to be the means by which God uses you and me as trophies of his grace to demonstrate the immeasurable riches of his grace in us in salvation. There’s a whole world out here, guys, who don’t understand what we’re talking about. You and I are the means by which we may be the seed planting of somebody might come to saving faith, because you and I understand our purpose.

You see, our purpose is not your profession. When we talk about something about the members of the body of Christ, we have a much greater purpose, and that is to call attention to the immeasurable riches of God’s grace.

If we start thinking like that, that’s going to change our conduct, wouldn’t you think? But you see, we

don't think that way. We've been taught in our academic institutions that your purpose in life is some job that you need to pursue. There's nothing wrong with pursuing a career path. That's not what I'm saying. I'm trying to elevate, I'm trying to elevate the purpose of our life from being worldly to being out of this world. Remember this, you were raised and you were seated with him in the heavenly places. That's where our citizenship is. We need to start acting out our citizenship. Our citizenship is in heaven. Our purpose is in heaven. It translates into life, and you and I are the visible means by which people come in contact with what? The immeasurable riches of God's grace.

Now guys, I would think that if you and I would begin to think like that, we would begin to act differently—in our conduct, in our responses to situations, with our employees, with those to whom we report, the way we manage, the way we conduct ourselves in the world, wherever we are, if we recognize that my purpose now today is to be one of the ways in which God's going to demonstrate the immeasurable riches of his grace.

You see, in reality, guys, we're not what we think we are, but what we think, we are. We're not what we think we are, but what we think, we are. I think what Paul is teaching us here and understanding the formation and the function of the ecclesia, the gathering, is this—he's trying to take us from the mundane things of this life and to elevate our purpose. Now there you talk about significance and security.

Sociologists and psychologists and psychiatrists would say a person needs two things in their life to be whole. Now this is an overgeneralization in simplicity, but there's some truth to it. The two things they say people need to be whole and that is this—the feeling of being unconditionally loved. What's the motive for God's saving you? Love. You're unconditionally loved. There's that feeling that you and I have. This is not only a fact, but there's a feeling to this. You and I know this, that because I've gone from death to life, because the motivation was love for me in Christ, that God chose me before the foundation of the world, there's your sense of this feeling of being unconditionally loved, that you and I take that with us and begin to create our wholeness if you would.

The second thing is this—significance. Security and significance. Security is the feeling of being unconditionally loved. Significance is the feeling of being involved in something of value. You and I have the feeling of being involved in something of value. Look at the something of value that we're involved in as one of God's ecclesia, as one of God's gathering, as one of God's members of the body of Christ. You and I are involved in the significant issue of being a trophy of God's grace where people are going to come in contact with is immeasurable riches. Now that is significant. Because what is that? That is life changing. That is life changing.

You and I really are in the life changing business. That's our purpose. You and I, as we go through life and let people see and come in contact with the fact that we are whole in the sense that we know that I'm unconditionally loved because God loved me before the foundation of the world. And I now that. I have this feeling that changes the way I think, and I have this feeling of being involved in something of significance. I'm just not a little thing here, a little microbe here on this earth. You see, there's a purpose behind our salvation, and that is that we are the means by which we're trophies of God's grace, and the world comes in contact with that, but not only in this world, but also in the world to come. And the angels are rejoicing because they say, "There's another one of those people that God saved before the foundation of the world. We can't wait for them to come here and rejoice and praise and worship with us and have a sense of reverence because we want to find out from them what was it like to go from darkness to light, to go from sin to sinlessness. What was it like to be redeemed? What was it like to be rescued through the payment of a price?"

You see, that's what we see in Revelation 7. The angels are just rejoicing because that's something that they've never had, never will have, and can't experience. The only way they're ever going to understand

it is to hear it from you and me and to see us live it out. That's why they rejoice in it.

Ian: The question is [UNCLEAR]...

Amen. You see, Ian's point is critical. The real issue is this. What am I going to do about what I just learned about my purpose? What am I going to do about it? That's why I wanted us to remember this. We are not what we think we are, but what we think, we are. If you and I begin to think more about our eternal purpose, not just our temporal purpose in life, but something bigger than that, that's where we get our significance.

Guys, do you see how critically important it is that we think correctly? That's why Paul tells us in Romans 12, "Do not be conformed to the system of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." If there's one thing I would love to do whenever I try to teach anyone or whenever I'm in a counseling situation, just to get people to think differently, just to get them to think differently.

A couple of weeks ago, I was at Camp of the Woods in Speculator, New York. The other person speaking there was Ravi Zacharias. I had a week with Ravi, and we had some wonderful times together. Just a brilliant, brilliant man; just phenomenally brilliant. He gave a couple of lectures on the infiltration of Eastern mysticism into Christianity and its damage. All the isms—Hinduism, Islam, Confucianism, Yoga-ism, and all those other things. He says, you know, there's some subtleties that creep into Christianity because it looks so good, but really, its destroying redemption because its taking us off the mind of the accomplishments of the person and work of Christ.

He gave several presentations on that. He says the one thing that Christianity can deal with all the isms that they can't deal with are three things. First of all, creation. They can't deal with creation because we can deal with taking something from nothing and creating a life. Christianity is the only one that can deal with creation, going Ex nihilo, out of nothing, in the beginning God created. He said all the other isms, the Eastern religions, they avoid that because they can't deal with the issue of something was created out of nothing. Well the Scripture deals with that.

The second thing he says they can't deal with is transformation, going from death to life, from sinfulness to sinlessness. In other words, transforming a person's life. They can't deal with transformation in a person's life, that they were dead, they were blind, they were condemned, and all of a sudden now they're guilt free. There's no condemnation. You see, they have to work at all these things. Christianity deals with the transformation of a person going from death unto life because they're raised and seated with him in the heavenly places.

The third thing is, he said that the Eastern religions can't deal with, in addition to creation, transformation, is translation, from this life to the next; going from this life to the next. He says now that's the one thing that Christianity can take on all the Eastern religions. He has a book coming out in January on those three things. I would really encourage you when it comes to get that book because he gave us some lectures on that that are really phenomenal. It really helps us understand what it is that you and I can deal with by being a means by which people will see the immeasurable riches of God's grace.

Audience Member: [UNCLEAR]...

I don't know the title of it. It's coming out in January. It's a very long title, something about the impact of Eastern religion upon Christianity and its damage; something like that. I would really encourage you get it because it was so helpful to us to understand what it is that we offer the world. You know, it's not so much that we need to be against things as we need to be for something. What we are for is the redemptive work of the person and work of Christ. That's what the angels are celebrating is the

redemptive work of the person and work of Christ in heaven as they see us being created in Christ Jesus, being seated and raised with him in the heavenly places, and they rejoice in the whole thing that they've never experienced themselves, and that's the redemptive work of Christ.

Audience Member: What was that guy's name?

Ravi Zacharias. He's a converted Hindu. He grew up in India, and he grew up in a Hindu priest family. He's on WORD sometimes; 6:30 in the morning.

Audience Member: Every morning.

He's really worth listening to. He's really worth listening to.

Audience Member: www.rzim.com

Ravi Zacharias International Ministries at www.rzim.com. He's really worth looking at. He's an apologist. Now apologetics would be that phrase or that segment of theological, Christian theology, that attempts to remove the intellectual hindrances to believing the Gospel. He deals with people's minds because he's trying to remove their intellectual hindrances from believing the Gospel.

Audience Member: [UNCLEAR]...in many cases, Bruce, that you don't need faith [UNCLEAR] new life, without how do you reconcile that with there are no intellectual hindrances to believing the Gospel. There is a mortal hindrance for believing the Gospel, and that's where we're dead.

Yes, we're dead. Exactly right.

Audience Member: [UNCLEAR]...So how do you reconcile Ravi's ministry because intellect can't get into salvation.

You've got to understand, he's dealing with those hindrance, but the end result is he's an evangelist who proclaims the Gospel of Christ. He proclaims the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the person and work of Christ and repentance and faith. The end result is that's what he gets to, because he knows this—I'm not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power unto salvation to all who will believe. He's says, "I can't change anybody's belief, but I get them to the point of listening to the Gospel." When the Gospel is proclaimed, that's what takes them from death to life.

You see, guys, we've got to recognize our greatest weapon is our message. Do you understand that? We can't deal with people's minds. We can't...I can't get anybody to change their thinking about anything. All I can do is get them to the point of saying, "I'm going to listen to the Gospel," and that's when we trust the Holy Spirit who's role and job description is to guide us into all truth. You see, that's why its so important that we understand the function and formation of the church, of realizing what we can and cannot do. We can't change anybody, but we have the methodology of doing that, and that methodology is the proclaiming of the Gospel of the person and work of Christ.

Don: I think you can reconcile our deadness in sin with the effort to, so that the intellectual [UNCLEAR]...that we are always to give a hope, the reason for our hope [UNCLEAR]... Ravi does that very well.

Yes he does.

Audience Member: [UNCLEAR]...converted Hindu friends that converted to Christianity, and he

listens to [UNCLEAR] his generation [UNCLEAR]...our kids go to China and India, Africa and discover there are more stronger Christians on a percentage in those places than in this country. Those people are so logical. Once they get the message, it takes off [UNCLEAR]...

Yes, that's excellent.

Audience Member: *[UNCLEAR]...*

My point here, guys, is we need to elevate who we think we are, not in our own humanness, but in the fact that you're part of the gathering, you're part of the ecclesia, you're part of a church. In that is when we have our citizenship. We just need to function more based upon what the truth of who God says we are. The real battleground is who do I believe. Do I believe what the world says about me or do I believe what God says about me?

One of the things that he's teaching us here in this passage in Ephesians 2:7 is this—that you and I are the trophies of God's grace, put on display so that the world will see the content of his immeasurable riches in Christ Jesus. You see, they're going to see the benefits of the Gospel in your life and my life. They may not see the Gospel because the Gospel is not about benefits. The Gospel is about salvation accomplished by the person and work of Christ at the cross. The Gospel message is about Christ and him crucified. Its not about being whole. It's not about having a sense of security or significance. Those are consequences. Those are the demonstrations of the immeasurable riches which people will come in contact when they see that in your life, which allows you and I then to say, "Let me tell you how that came about," and then we have a chance to proclaim the Gospel of Christ.

Audience Member: *[UNCLEAR]...we fill our lives with so many things that we don't [UNCLEAR] we don't have Scripture in us, so we can't transform our mind because we don't have the Word [UNCLEAR]...*

Right. Amen.

Audience Member: *[UNCLEAR]...*

That's a great illustration Brian. When I working on my doctorate, one of the men in my class was a converted Jewish man who had come to saving faith. He was working on his doctorate in theology also. I was doing my dissertation on the Puritan view of the pulpit. So I studied the great Puritan preachers in England. His dissertation was on the role of the father in the family. Now being Jewish, came from the Orthodox Jewish community, he went back and all of his research was based upon what was the Jewish family like during Biblical times and what was the role of the father. That's why I learned from him that the educational system of the Jewish father in the biblical times was simply this—teach your children to love God, teach your children to have a trade, a skill, so they would never be in debt, and teach your children how to find the right mate. Now that was the educational system of the Jewish father in the biblical time. Teach the children to love God, teach them to have a trade, so that when they entered into society they would never be in debt, and thirdly was teach them how to find the right mate.

Now I began to talk to him about that. He had four children. We began to talk about this. I asked him, "What are you doing about what you're learning?" He basically, Brian, said what you said, "I've had to give up bowling, because what I do is, per child, per day, I spend one hour teaching them to love God. That's four hour s a day." Now you throw in his job and the other things he was doing as a student and all the other stuff, I said "What do you do for fun?" He said, "My fun is spending that hour with my children, teaching them to love God." I said, "No, I mean recreational fun. What do you do for fun?" He said, "Bruce, your missing it. The fun is spending that hour with my six year old and teaching her to

love God. That's really become fun for me. That's my recreation in your terms." I was playing handball. I said, "Do you go play handball?" He said, "I don't have time for that." Look, he was spending four hours, per day, I mean one hour per day per child; that's four hours a day. On top of everything else. He said, "I've had to eliminate a lot of other things. But what I'm finding is the value that's changing my life and my children is just so radically, it is now becoming fun for me."

Now I'm not suggesting that you and I need to do one hour per child per day. It's not a bad idea. I'm not suggesting that we need to do that and become legalistic, but I think Brian's point is really, really excellent. We need to take seriously what it means that we are the demonstration of God's immeasurable riches to people we come in contact with.

***Audience Member:** And also we're to teach [UNCLEAR]...*

We'll forget that one. That's good. {LAUGHTER} Now you're getting hard. You're talking about hard stuff. {LAUGHTER} No, you're absolutely right. That's the role of the head of the family, and its anti-American. It's politically incorrect. What you just said is politically incorrect, you'll get blasted for that.

***Audience Member:** [UNCLEAR]...*

He just said not only do we need to do that with our children, but also with our wives. Absolutely. That is the role of the head of the family.

***Audience Member:** What your friend was embracing was Nehemiah 8:10, "The joy of the Lord is my strength." He drew his strength from what he learned, what he was embracing and it gave him tremendous joy to pour it out because when, you know, and I'm going to elaborate a little bit here with what you're saying. Little kids are taught let your little light shine, you know, when you let your light shine, and I've been taught by other pastors, then somebody's going to see you and they're going to say, "What is it..." [UNCLEAR]...*

Hopefully they'll say that.

***Audience Member:** I can assure you that that will happen. I went back to my old home church and gave testimony of situation [UNCLEAR] and the pastor who's a dear friend of mine, he said, "I always that that," he said, "I always thought that was [UNCLEAR]...I didn't know that things that had happened. But it does happen. I can assure you it will happen.*

Amen to that. That's the ideal. That's the immeasurable riches put on display.

***Audience Member:** [UNCLEAR]...the spheres that God created—government and labor, the church, the family, community, [UNCLEAR] God, and drew a circle, and it had those in authority and those in submission. The man-God relationship where God/Jesus and Bruce Bickle and the Holy Spirit [UNCLEAR]. They took that and put a triangle, put us [UNCLEAR] in the triangle. You talk about understanding the significance of our role.*

I'm just trying to help us elevate our understanding of who we really are in Christ as a member of the ecclesia, as a member of the gathering of the assembly. The next thing we want to see in verses 8 and 9, which Don covered a couple of weeks ago, is we're saved by grace through faith. Not only are we saved for a purpose, but we're saved through grace. God gives us faith to respond to his love (verse 5), he gives us the faith to respond to his mercy (verse 5), and he gives us the faith to respond to his grace (verse 5). You look at Philippians 1:29, we see that God grants faith. Faith is a gift. In other words, for you to understand God's grace, you have to have faith, and that's a gift that God gives you. That's all

wrapped up in this whole thing called our salvation. It's all wrapped up in God's election of us unto saving faith. It's all the things we've been talking about. But we need to understand that faith is not something that I choose to do. Faith is something that God gives me as a gift.

Now a new baby cries after being slapped. Not because the baby knows he must breathe, but because it hurts. Now why does a person breathe, spiritually? It's because they've been slapped by grace. You've been slapped by grace. That's why you believe, spiritually, because you've been slapped by grace. When a baby is born—I was asking Becky about this the other day; my wife is a pediatrician—"Why do you slap a baby?" She said, "To get it to breathe." "Why does it breathe? Because it knows to believe?" "No, it doesn't know to believe," it doesn't know to breathe. The reason it believe, breathes... Last night I was talking to Becky... {LAUGHTER} ...I'm going to take a mulligan on this one. {LAUGHTER} And I said, "Why is it a baby cries? Why do you slap a baby when its born?" She said, "To get it to breathe, but the baby doesn't breathe because it knows to breathe. You have to give it a reason to breathe, and the reason the baby breathes is because you slap it, and it hurts, and that opens its mouth and its system in his lungs and it begins to breathe."

Now that's what grace does. You and I don't believe just because we know that we should believe. The reasons we believe is because you and I have been slapped, if you would, by grace. That's a gift that causes us to believe. You see, that's why you see in such passages as 1 John 5:1, you begin to see that the first indication of your salvation is you believe. Belief doesn't save you. It's evidence of the fact that you have been gifted and slapped by grace. Now you can believe because you've been slapped by grace.

There's a Greek phrase in 1 John 5:1, in the Greek its [UNCLEAR], and it literally means this—having been born of God one believes. That's the literal translation. Having been born of God, one believes. Which comes first? Life or faith. Life. Slapped by grace. Now you believe. That's what it means. Don taught us a couple of weeks ago about you've been saved by grace. What we used to be and what we are, we now begin to believe because we have been slapped by God's grace.

Look in 1 John 3:3-8.

Audience Member: [UNCLEAR]...

That's a good point. Thank you, Brother. Let's go to 1 John 3:3-8...let's see where is it...how about Philippians 1:29. We see the combination of that. Philippians 1:29, "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake," you see, there you begin to see, you've been slapped by grace. You begin to see that faith is a gift. Its has been granted to you. In other words, somebody gave you something. "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ, you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake."

You see, guys, you and I are a love gift of the Father to the Son. Now notice, it's for the sake of Christ that you believe. You see that? It's for the sake of Christ. Not for your sake. It's for the sake of Christ. Because he accomplished that, and the Father is saying, "I am going to give you exactly what you accomplished, and you accomplished his salvation at the cross. When you were on the cross, he, by name, was on your mind, and I'm going to give him a gift to you as a love gift of me to you because you were obedient to me and fulfilled your destiny and did what you were called to do when I sent you down to redeem the elect." Now do you see how that fits together? You and I believe for the sake of Christ. Your belief is a reward to him, if you would, in the sense that you're a love gift that the Father gave to the Son and said, "I gave you him. Now he's going to believe in you, and I'm going to cause that to happen. I'm going to slap him with grace, and they will believe, for your sake, Son. For your sake."

Audience Member: Before a baby is slapped, its thrust out of darkness into light.

There's all kind of imageries about this—physical birth and the new birth. Exactly right. Coming out of the womb, from darkness into light. What happens? They need to be stimulated to breathe. When you and I come out of darkness into light, we need to be stimulated to believe. What is that stimulation? It's grace. It's grace. That's why you see our purpose is to be the visible demonstration of the immeasurable riches of God's grace to a lost world. So belief is the consequence; it's not the cause for the new birth. It's the consequence.

Lastly, I want us to see here in verse 10, we are saved unto good works. Go back to Ephesians 2. "So that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow." Whoops! That's Philippians. That's a good one. {LAUGHTER} Ephesians 2:8-10, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." You see, we are...the motivation for his salvation for us is his love. The purpose is that you and I are the visible demonstrations of the immeasurable riches of his grace. We are saved by grace not by works so that we can't boast about it. We can't take credit for it. The end result is that you're saved unto good works or for good works.

Now we need to understand, that notice it says, "we're saved unto good works," not by good works. Not by but unto. In other words, you are reborn to produce good works. The word workmanship there means masterpiece. Now sometimes...now notice, it also says, "which God prepared beforehand." Sometimes you don't know what a good work is until after its over, and you look back and say, "Oh, that was one of those that you prepared for me." You see, you won't understand it necessarily going forward.

I could give you numerous examples of just doing something very minutely, insignificant in this world, but somebody responds to that and then you look back upon that and say, "Oh, at that point in history, I was the only person, in all of the universe, who could have done that very thing," and that is a response in that person, and you begin to say, "Oh, that was one of the good works which you ordained, prepared beforehand." Just a classic example.

Months ago, I was walking down the street and this young kid was just dropping his McDonald's trash on the ground—take a bite of a hamburger, put his piece of trash down, dropped his cup down after he drank his Coke, just...he left a whole litany of trash. I was right behind him about 20 yards behind him. I just picked everything up. A woman came up to me and she said, "Why are you picking up trash? It's not your stuff." I said, "No, I just am trying to help people understand I enjoy my city, where live, and I'm just trying to be responsible and let people enjoy the city in which I live," and she said, "That's really weird." {LAUGHTER} She said, "That's really weird, but it's nice to see somebody caring enough about their city. Maybe I need to do the same thing," and then I watched her walk away and she picked up a piece of trash.

Now I began to think—that's a good work. That's a good work. I, at that moment in history, was the only person in all of God's sovereign grace, was there at the right time to pick up that trash, to have that brief conversation with her that took about 30 seconds, and to see her conduct change. Significant? Not in the eyes of the world. Nobody saw that. But I saw this and said this, "Oh, that was one of those goods works which you ordained beforehand." Now that's a very trite example, but I'm sure that you can come up with incidents in your life. Just be aware of those. Be aware that when you respond to something that is radically different than the way you used to live, because you used to be in darkness, you could give a rip about that, and now you care about it, and you live that caring out in some way, and you see a person respond—good or bad. You see, that may be one of those good works which God prepared beforehand.

You and I were saved unto good works. There's going to be evidence of the transformation, as Ravi

says, the significant thing, that the isms, the Eastern religions, can't deal with is they can't deal with somebody going from darkness to light and having a conduct change, because they have to work at it and join something in mass as opposed to having an individual translation of a person's conduct. You see, you're saved unto good works. That's means by which you and I fulfill our purpose of being the visible demonstration of the immeasurable riches of god's grace. May God give us the grace, guys, just to realize who he says we are; who he says we are in Christ.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the immeasurable riches of your grace contained in the Sola Scriptura. Father, help us realize that we don't need to go outside the Scripture to identify good works because you've identified all those for us and you've ordained them beforehand, Father, may we live a life today that we'll be consciously aware of the fact that you have saved us unto good works for the benefit of a dark and perishing generation, and to that end, we say thank you in Christ Jesus. And all the Brave Men said...Amen!