

“The Family of God” Continues

Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians - Class 4

Ephesians 1

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Jeff: All right. Why don’t we turn to Ephesians chapter 1? I’d like to read the chapter to you.

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His purpose which He set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth.

“In Him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of His glory.

“In Him you also who heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance, until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory.

“For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His great might that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him as Head over all things for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” The word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: How about that, Don?

Don Maurer: Ah, Jeff!

Jeff: You didn’t think it was coming, did you? *(Laughter)*

Don: I was wondering.

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Jeff: I know. All right. Well, here’s what we’re going to do today. We’re going to start in the middle of the lesson. And so where we are is where we are. *(Laughter)* I’m not going to break out the outline for you. Like I said to you the last time, this is a six-week lesson through the Book of Ephesians. And it will take either six weeks or it will take a little longer. That depends on you. *(Laughter)* And so what we’re going to do over the next six weeks is that we’re either going to start a new lesson or we’ll start where we left off. And this is where we left off. And I don’t have an outline, but I do now. All right.

So we are on II, and I’m summing up B. All right, here is where we left off. We said that there are these blessings that we have in Christ Jesus. And I talked to you the last time about all of the constituent elements that are a part of the blessings that we receive in Christ. There are things like justification and adoption and sanctification, and all of those things. All of the blessings that Christ earned are ours in Him.

So let me sum it up now with this illustration that will sort of get us moving in that direction. Imagine that you get your child into hockey and he’s interested in hockey. And he says to you, “Dad, I love watching it on television, but I want to play hockey.”

So you go out and you buy him everything he needs. You buy him skates and you buy him pants and shirts. You buy him the pads, you buy him sticks. And you carry it all upstairs into his room. And you open the door and you announce to your son, “I got everything you need to play hockey, son. By the way there are some pucks in the bag. Have at it.”

And your son looks at you like—

Dick Clouser: “What are pucks?”

Jeff: What’s that, Dick? *(Laughter)*

Dick: “What are pucks?”

Jeff: “What are pucks?” *(Laughter)* No, your son looks at you and you say, “Yeah, what?”

“Where’s the ice? Are you taking me to an arena?”

And you say to your son, “Uh-uh. Have at it, son. Just be quiet up here. You know, your mother doesn’t like a lot of noise.” *(Laughter)*

Now that would be an analogous illustration of saying to someone that they can possess justification or any other benefit apart from Christ. All of the benefits that we possess are possessed in union with Jesus Christ because they are His. He earned them. He is the justified One, the adopted One, the sanctified One. He is these things, and we possess those things by being a part of Him. And in the same way you can’t play hockey unless you have a sphere from which to do it. So you cannot possess the benefits and the blessings that we have as a part of the covenant of grace apart from the sphere of being in Christ or united to Him. He is the storehouse of those blessings. And those blessings are heavenly blessings that come from Him. And that is to say that we possess what is to be possessed in its culmination at this present point.

In other words, let me put it like this. The storehouse of blessings is ours. And yet the Spirit is a down payment of those things that are yet to be ours.

It’s sort of like this. You have to think of it in a couple of different ways. Imagine for instance,--and I think I’ve given you this illustration before,--but imagine, for instance,

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the embryo which is the smallest of the stages of human life and development. I’ve asked you this before. How many chromosomes? There are 23 pairs and 46 altogether. And how many chromosomes does a zygote have, not an embryo.

See, this is what I said to you, Caleb. You’re tired. You know, Caleb asked me, “Do you get up and sort of get ready for this?” (*Laughter*)

I said, “No, I just come in and step right into it.” You can tell. (*Laughter*)

A zygote has 46 chromosomes, 23 pairs. How many chromosomes does a 43-year-old adult have? The same number. And so we talk about that zygote becoming what he already is. He grows into the genetic information that he has.

And so there’s a sense in which the Christian is the same sort of thing. The Christian is as Christian as he will ever be at his earliest stage, just like the zygote is as human as it will ever be. And yet the Christian grows into what he is in Jesus Christ, just as the zygote grows into all of the genetic information that he possesses. And so there’s a sense in which we are as Christian as we will ever be. Even now we possess all the riches that are in the storehouse of heaven because we’re united to Christ. And yet, even as our text says later, the Spirit is a guarantee of those blessings that we have.

So we might think of it in another way. We might think of a father bringing his son into his office and saying to him, “Son, I want to tell you something. I’m leaving you all of my possessions, all of my worldly wealth.” He takes the ring off his finger and he says, “Now you know that this ring has been in our family for years and years and years. And it’s gold, and it has a precious stone in it, and it’s been in our family for a long time. I’m giving it to you now as a guarantee that the treasure that is behind it is yours.”

And so there’s a sense in which that son has by his father’s will and word all of his treasure. And yet he has this token, this ring, as a guarantee and deposit of that treasure itself. And in the same way we have the Holy Spirit as the deposit, the guarantee, of the consummation of the treasure that we already possess.

And so that’s the way that Paul wants us to understand the blessings that we’re about ready to explore, and in part because he’s about ready to lay down the Trinitarian framework that says, “These are yours and this is why.” Does that make sense? Do you have any questions about that? No? All right.

All right. So now we’re actually going to talk about what it is that we possess, and how it is that we come to possess it. And remember, I think that we had the one slide that I showed you the last time we were together and talked about the Trinitarian structure. And that was what we entered into before we took a pause and said that there’s a Christological sphere for all of this. And that was that the Father allocates and the Son accomplishes and the Spirit applies redemption.

So the Father allocates, and what does that mean? That means that He takes and He sets aside some who will be redeemed. The Son accomplishes the redemption for them. And then the Spirit takes and applies the accomplished redemption to those who are allocated by the Father. That’s the idea here, the steps. Yes, Don?

Don: As Bruce has always said, “What the Father ordains the Son accomplishes, and the Spirit applies.”

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Jeff: Yes. I stole this from John Gerstner though because he had three a’s. *(Laughter)*
There we go with the—

Paul Deffenbaugh: Alliteration.

Jeff: Alliteration. If you’re going to do anything right, you’ve got to alliterate it.
(Laughter)

Transcriber’s Note: Jeff imitates John Gerstner’s voice.

Jeff: Who knows John Gerstner?

Don: *(Similar tone of voice):* I do. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Does anybody know John Gerstner?

Brave Man: *(similar tone of voice):* Oh, yes. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: *(imitating Gerstner):* All right, let’s go to the next point. *(Laughter)* He had that kind of voice. So the Father allocates. The Father’s work is the work of allocation. I want you to catch this. It’s in verses 3-6. We’re going to pause and read these verses again. It says, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ*”—there’s the Christological sphere,—“*with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will.*”

Now let’s just think through that for just a minute. The first thing I want you to notice is this. I want you to notice that “*He chose us before the foundation of the world.*” He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world.

Now let’s just pause and think about that for a minute. I think that this may be old hat for some of you, but for some of you it may be new. When we talk about this, we talk about God having chosen us apart from our doing anything good or bad. Why? “*That His purpose in election might stand.*” That’s Romans 9. But that doesn’t mean that God chose us out of neutrality.

This is oftentimes where people get tripped up. They think to themselves that the election of God before time began means that God chose out of an innocent mass of humanity some to be His while leaving others to suffer the consequences of Adam’s later fall. And that’s not the way it is. When we talk about this particular issue, let me use the board since it’s back.

Transcriber’s Note: The board says, “Use me.”

Jeff: In fact, it is impossible not to use the board today since it’s back. So let me use it. When we talk about this particular issue,—

Transcriber’s Note: Jeff writes *supralapsarianism* and *infralapsarianism* on the board.

Don: Ah, yes. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Listen to Don. Oh, yeah! *(Laughter)* Now when we talk about this particular issue, we talk about *supralapsarianism* and *infralapsarianism*. Now this has to do with the Fall. It has to do with God’s decree. In other words, when does God decree that the elect will be saved? Remember, this has to do with the decree; the decree comes before creation. So what we’re thinking about here is the thought process of God. In other words, how are the decrees logically ordered?

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Now the supralapsarian is going to say that you begin with the primary point. And the primary point is election. And so God decrees the election of the saints first and everything else follows from that.

The infralapsarian says no. That’s not the way you ought to think about God’s electing decree. How you ought to think about it is that God decrees to create, decrees the Fall, decrees redemption, and that’s how you ought to think about it.

Now when people think about election before time began, or being chosen before time began, if they think about it in terms of the supra position, they sometimes feel as if God is not fair. Why? Because this position sometimes feels as if God is electing apart from the decree of creation and Fall, and that creation and Fall actually fall out of the decree of election, whereas the infralapsarian says, no-no-no. In terms of the order of decrees, election comes after men are fallen.

I happen to be an infralapsarian. And just to drop a few names Paul is an infralapsarian. *(Laughter)*

Don: Paul Deffenbaugh? *(Laughter)*

Jeff: I don’t know if Paul Deffenbaugh is, but if he is he’s with the apostle Paul. *(Laughter)* All right. Now that’s what I’m going to say about that. Here is what I would simply say to you. When you think about God choosing us from all eternity, think about that in the context of God’s having decreed creation, fall, and election or redemption. So when you think about that, that’s the decretive soil out of which we are elected. So we’re not elected—well, let me put it positively. We are those in eternity elected out of sinful humanity, fallen humanity. God elects some by decree. Go ahead.

Don: It’s interesting with the different translations. The New King James says that “*we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us.*” So the New King James writers may have been supralapsarian. The ESV would say that “*in love He predestined us.*” So they may have been more on the infra side.

Jeff: Well, here’s the trouble with that. The trouble with that is that verses 2-7 is one long sentence.

Don: Right.

Jeff: So where to put periods and commas is the judgment of the interpreter. And so I think you’re right. I think that when you read a text that was written by folks who may have been supralapsarian you certainly get a flavor for that in the way in which it’s grammatically constructed. However, I think that the reason why the Westminster divines did not deal with this and make it a confessional position is because they realized that there was so much division over the issue in the assembly that they didn’t set it down as a confessional position. I think that what you have is an issue within supralapsarianism that is an important issue. But I don’t think that it rises to the level of confessional orthodoxy.

Don: I agree with you. And to bolster your position,--

Jeff: Please speak. *(Laughter)*

Don: I like what the ESV says. He predestined us in love. It’s not this cruel, arbitrary kind of thing. Well you are, you aren’t. No, He predestined us in love, 1 Peter 2:8 notwithstanding.

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Transcriber’s Note: 1 Peter 2:8, ESV. *“They stumble because they disobeyed the word, which they were destined to do.”*

Don: We’re predestined in love. I think that’s important.

Jeff: And you think about Romans 5:8. *“But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* The idea then is very compatible with that idea. Romans 5:8 has more of a temporal aspect to it: that while we were yet sinners Christ actually dies in time. But here God chooses us before the foundation of the world in love. And so the idea is that it’s the love of God that motivates Him to choose some, and again I’m going to argue out of a decree that says that there is a Fall, and that all in Adam die. And therefore the motivating factor of God’s election is His love for us.

Don: May I—

Jeff: Yes.

Don: There are people who are going to say, “Well, why did God decree a Fall in the first place?”

Jeff: That’s right. And what we can say to that and what the church has said to that is the answer of *felix culpa*. It’s the position that says happy culpability. Why? Because Christ comes as a result of that. Now that’s not as satisfying to some as it is to others. But that’s the position that the church has oftentimes given, whether it’s the medieval church or the Protestant church. And I’m not super happy with that myself in terms of giving explanation to why it is that God decreed a Fall. I think that’s one of those things that I’d rather just leave alone and agree with Calvin, that this is a question that prompts God to fill hell. *(Laughter)* Remember that?

Don: Yes. Making hell for the curious.

Jim O’Brien: It seems to me that Paul really addresses that in Romans 9 when he says, *“Who are you, O man, to answer back to God?”* And as sinners we want to be in charge. We want to have answers and we want to judge God. And Paul simply says no. And you know, your arms are just too short to box with God. There comes a point as a Christian when you say, “He’s God; I’m not.” And of course, as sinners we really thought we were. We knew we weren’t infinite, omnipotent and eternal spirits. But we did think we were the center of the universe.

Jeff: Yeah, right.

Jim: And now we know that He is. And so there just comes a point when you just say, “I’m going to stop talking and let God be God.” And I think that’s Paul’s answer to all of that kind of objection to God’s sovereignty. But I will also say that the supralapsarian will say that God elects out of love.

Jeff: Oh, sure.

Jim: That’s not an infra position alone; it’s a supra—

Jeff: No. But the problem I have with the supra is that He does elect out of love; they will say that. But He doesn’t elect out of a context of the Fall.

Jim: Well, it’s election on steroids, you know? It’s absolute sovereignty. Dr. Gerstner: *(imitating his voice)* I didn’t do anything wrong! What did I do wrong? But God chooses.

Don: But Gerstner was infra.

Jim: Yes, he was infra.

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Ron Baling: But in Romans he goes on to say that there are those who are worthy of His wrath and that there are those who are worthy of His glory. I don't know, My impression is that just as the woman wears down the unrighteous judge, to me the whole point of eternity is that He will never stop forgiving. His forgiveness will never end for the elect. And he will also never tire of opposing evil.

Jeff: Yes. And in my mind this is the closest reason that you can get in the Bible to election, and you referenced it. This is right after when he goes through and asks the question. Is there injustice with God? Why does God still find fault? *“What shall we say, then?”* No, that's not it. Oh, verse 22. *“What if God then, desiring to show His wrath and make known His power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath, prepared for destruction?”* Now here's the reason. *“In order to make known the riches of His glory to the vessels of mercy which He has prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom He has called.”*

And the idea then is this. You know how it is. When I was Arminian, what I used to say was, “That's unfair! It's unfair that God would elect some and not others' it's unfair!”

And it hit me reading Romans 9:22 one day that God was telling me something. He was telling me that rather than saying how unfair it is for people who are sinners to not be elect, He was saying to me, “What if I'm doing this to show you, Jeff, the object of My mercy, My great power? What about doing that to show you something? So maybe you ought to shut up.” *(Laughter)* “And quit pointing out what you think is fair or unfair.”

And, you know, once you contextualize that in the Fall, you begin to realize that it's against the backdrop of everyone deserving sin, and out of this God showing mercy to the objects of His mercy, and demonstrating to the objects of His mercy His wrath. And what's the response that I ought to have? Praise be to God that I am an object of His mercy, right?

Jim: Amen.

Ron: What do I have that I've not been given?

Jeff: That's right.

Brian Whittington: So can you give some insight to everybody about this? Okay, great!—supra, infra, love, logic, theology. How does this impact my life? How do I live this out?

Jeff: So I think that when we think about the decree of election, I think that you ought to be like the person who (and you can frame this in a number of ways and none of them are actually going to be quite sufficient), but think of it like this. Think of it as if you went to prison for a crime. It was a horrible crime and you were going to get the death penalty. And on the day of your punishment the family of the person that you murdered comes to the judge and the governor and says, “I want you to pardon this individual.” And the governor listens and pardons you.

And you get out, and the only request that the family had was to meet with you. And you sit down across from the family, this family. You've stolen from them; you've taken a life from them. And what they say to you is this. They say, “Now we've given you your life. Don't waste it,” right? Live to the glory of God with it. And live to the fullest extent of your ability in love for your fellow man.

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Now what are you going to do? Unless you're an exceedingly callous person, you're going to go out and you're probably going to enroll in all kinds of humanitarian efforts. Let's keep this very simple. You're going to try to live your life like a redeemed person would, like a person who has had his life given back to him. I think election is that kind of motivation. If we really think about it, it's not just theology on the page. But what it is, it's God sitting us down and saying, “I gave My Son for you. Now live to My glory.”

And I think that when we don't let that motivate us, I'm not sure what has happened to us. It's almost like this, Brian. It's almost like the Calvinist person who doesn't pray, right? Some people will say, “Well, you know, the sovereignty of God sort of dampened my understanding of prayer.” No, there's nothing wrong with the theology of Calvinism, because that's Biblical. The problem lies in you, right? If you're not praying the problem is not with your theology. The problem is with how you think about your theology, and how you act as a result of your theology. But it's not your theology that's the problem.

And in the same way, when we think about election as not having that motivating force in our lives, it's not the theology that has been corrupted or that is wrong in some way or other. It's really our view of the theology, or something in us that has allowed that theology to be taken for granted, or at least the message of it to be taken for granted.

For instance, you can go back to the illustration. The man who begins to fall off of his humanitarian efforts begins to get back into drugs and sell drugs to little kids, and pretty soon he's caught up in a life of sin again, and so on. Now what has he done? He's taken for granted the second chance at life he's been given. And he has not allowed what has happened to him to be a motivating force in his life.

The same is true for the Christian who has lost sight of what election really is. It's being elect; it's being chosen out of sin, which means out of impending punishment, out of an eventual hell, right? That's the idea. So that's how I would see it. That's where the rubber meets the road. Go ahead.

Brian: If I can add to that, one of the things that people can absolutely take from this is that when we talk about joy and gratitude, that's the motivation. The motivation is gratitude; it's the result of joy. But the other side of that is that if I truly serve a sovereign God who has chosen me from the beginning of time and knows everything, then I don't need to worry about elections, the corona virus, whether or not my business will fail, whether or not I'll get this job. There is so much peace when you truly understand this. And my fear is #1, most people don't thank God, #2, don't want to deal with theology, and then #3, whenever they do love doctrine or theology, they don't live it. And so that is such a massive peace that we especially as men, leaders in the church, need to understand and to live it out.

Jeff: Yes, and I totally agree with you. But here's the thing that I think that we have to keep in mind. There's a view of that which kind of goes awry.

I was in college. And I wasn't a Calvinist at the time; I was an Arminian. I came out of this test with a fellow student who was a Calvinist. And he said to me, “How'd you do, Stivason?”

I said, “I think I did pretty well.”

And he said, “That's good.”

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I said, “How did you do?”

And he said, “I bombed it.” And then he said this. “But that’s the difference between you and me, Stivason.” He said, “You worry and fret about that test and probably studied all night. I had a football game; I had this, I had that. *(Laughter)* And I bombed that test, but guess what? It’s in the providence of a sovereign God that I bombed it.” *(Laughter)* He said, “You know, you’re all anxious about that.” And then he said, “You Arminians, you worked for it, right?” That’s the idea.

And I thought to myself at that moment that I never want to be him. *(Laughter)* I wouldn’t want to be that, right?

Let me give one more illustration. Let’s say, for instance, that a seminary student gets his first call. He gets his first call, and his parents drive to see him preach his first sermon and his first call. And they’re on their way to see him, and they die in a car accident.

Now that seminary student who is now a pastor can be ministered to by this very doctrine, the doctrine of predestination, by saying this. He could say to himself, “It’s all my fault! It’s all my fault! I asked them to come and see my first sermon at my first church!”, right? And he could fall apart and feel that it’s his fault.

Or he could say, “In God’s sovereign decree this happened. And it wasn’t my fault. I asked them to come. That’s the most natural thing in the world for a son to do. But for whatever reason, in God’s sovereignty He decreed this to happen. And I can leave that with God. I don’t have to like it; I can mourn through it. But I leave it with Him,” right? That’s the idea.

Brian: So your example of the Calvinist who won’t pray is equivalent to your buddy at the seminary.

Jeff: Yes, I think so.

Brian: And that absolutely goes against 1 Corinthians 10:31 and Colossians 3.

Transcriber’s Note: 1 Corinthians 10:31, ESV. “*And so whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*”

Brian: So they are being unbiblical. And you’ll see that problem in the church too—let go and let God. People are lusting and living to their best. So that has to be emphasized.

Jeff: Yes. So I totally agree with you. There’s a peace that comes. But it’s the peace that comes to us through the means that God has established for us to receive peace.

So for instance, faith is a means for us to stand firm in a whole Christ. But if our faith is weak, in one sense I want you to think about it like this. Here’s your faith beaker. Faith is not a substance, right? But let’s say it is for the time being. If you have that much faith (*a little faith, illustrated by a small amount of water in a glass*), how much of Christ do you possess?

Jim: 100 per cent.

Jeff: A hundred per cent, an entire Christ. If you have that much faith (*a lot*), how much of Christ do you possess? A hundred per cent. If your glass is this full of faith, (*low*), it’s low and you live like it’s low. Go ahead.

Bill McCoy: Jeff, is there anything more unfair than someone else having to die for our sins?

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Jeff: Oh, right.

Ron: Back to your analogy of the murderer who is pardoned.

Jeff: Yes.

Ron: Again, one murderer gets off and doesn't follow the request of somebody else. And again it's based on who he is. So it doesn't matter if He predestines him from the beginning, or whether He changes a man when he's forty.

Jeff: Yes, that's right. That's where the analogy breaks down, because the man who has been redeemed by God is a different man, right?

Ron: It is all God's work; it doesn't matter what he does.

Jeff: Yes, that's right. Okay, let me get onto this next slide, or this next half of this slide. And let me say that *“He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world”* to be what? *“Holy and blameless.”*

Now I want you to think about this just for a minute. This provides us with a profound context to think about when I've talked to you about the past. When we think about this, we think about the *duplex gratia Dei*. And the *duplex gratia Dei* is the twofold grace of God. It's an expression that John Calvin used. And when we think about the twofold grace of God, we understand that what we possess in Christ are both *forensic benefits*—justification and adoption, for instance,—and *transformative benefits*—for instance, sanctification and glorification. So in Christ I possess forensic and transformative benefits, which means that I cannot say, “Well, I'm justified. I just haven't received the blessing of sanctification yet.”

Now that's a view that's alive and well. And it's propagated by the idea that a person can say a prayer and be saved, and his life is no different afterwards. That's the idea that I can be in some sense justified, (perhaps we might say born again), but never grow beyond that point of infancy. You can hear it in any number of ways. But the point is that no matter how it's expressed, the idea is that I can possess part of the *duplex gratia Dei* while not possessing the other part. I can possess the justifying part but not the transforming part.

And here's the point of this. That is false, false, false. That is a lie from the pit. In other words, if you are justified in Christ you must be transformed in Christ, being transformed in Christ. It's as simple as that. You can't be one without the other.

So we are *“chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless.”* It's interesting that he uses that expression instead of the expression “chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world to be justified.” Now he used that word *justified*. But the idea that he can express the transformative and still include the forensic is here in this text, just like you can talk about the forensic in other places and include the transformative. So any questions about that?

Bill: We have to keep in mind that sanctification is not something we do; it's something that's done to us. *(Prolonged silence and laughter)*

Jim: And it is true that it is the work of the Holy Spirit. And as He works in us we work out our salvation—

Jeff: Don't go there, Jim. *(Laughter)*

Jim: But Paul goes there. Not that Paul guy there, but this one. *(Laughter)*

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Jeff: We have a semantic difference with Bill in the back over sanctification and maturity versus a definitive and a progressive sanctification.

Jim: Okay, I won't go there. I withdraw.

Jeff: Raise your hand, Bill. Raise your hand just a second. Afterwards, get him.

(Laughter)

Jim: That's all right. I can do it.

Don: Philippians 2:12 and 13.

Jeff: Anybody else? No? All right. So we are predestined to be adopted as His sons. Now isn't that interesting! I mentioned the transformative, but the forensic is there. So we are adopted, which is a forensic benefit. So now we have both the transformative and the forensic benefits, ours by the electing grace of God by His predestinating decree.

And so what we possess are all of the benefits in Christ. Remember how he started this. He started this by saying that you possess all of the benefits that are in Christ in the heavenly places. And what are all of these benefits? Forensic and transformative. How do you possess them? In Christ. When did you become their possessor? Before the foundation of the world, by decree.

Now let me just say this to you. And this is an important thing, because sometimes people can get tripped up with this. We need to ask ourselves. Does that mean that we are what some call eternally justified? Are we eternally justified? In other words, is my justification in eternity? What do you think?

Kirk Ellerbusch: Yes.

Jeff: No. *(Laughter)* Trick question. All right, let's think about that just for a second. You've got to think about the order.

Let's think about it like this, okay? This is the time line of history. And we'll make it like this and say that this is when history begins. So back here is eternity. What happens in eternity? Well, God decrees. And what does He decree? He elects in all eternity.

Now He elects in all eternity for me to receive the benefits of being in Christ. But think about it. It is in time that God effectually calls me, right? It is in time that I am regenerated, right? It is in the moment that I come to have new eyes, to see the world in a new way. And what happens when I'm regenerated? I am converted. And conversion is a way of saying what? I have the fruit of regeneration, which is what? Faith and repentance.

Now how is justification received?

Don: By grace through faith.

Jeff: By faith. So I am justified by faith. I am justified by faith, by the exercise of faith. So my justification has to happen in time.

Remember what Paul says? Do you remember what he is going to say in chapter 2 of Ephesians? Look at it just for a minute. He says in Ephesians chapter 2, *“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air.”* And then go down to verse 4. *“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.”* In other words, we were elected in eternity by decree. But we were born as children of wrath. And there was

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a point in time when God effectually called us. And it starts the whole order in our lives. Does that make sense, Kirk? Go ahead.

Brian: To go to the point that I think you’re kind of messing with too, though, once adopted, you’re in. So if you have a couple kids, (and you know 12-year-old boys; you’d rather not have them around.) But he’s adopted and you’ve got to deal with him, even though he’s not living the lifestyle that you want. He’s adopted; he’s always going to be there. So that shows that when he raises havoc, all of that happened because he heard that once you’re adopted you’re always adopted, no matter where you are in that lifestyle.

Jeff: Yes. But what’s the experiential linchpin of justification, adoption and sanctification? What is the experiential linchpin of all of this? Faith. We experience all of this by faith. And so if our faith is weak, our sense of adoption is going to be weak, right? If our faith is strong, our sense of adoption is going to be strong.

And we’re going to talk about that as we go along, because I want you to think about this. There’s an objective basis and there’s a subjective basis for our experience. For instance—Yes?

Caleb Falbo: I was going to say this might feel weird. It might feel like it can’t be the way it’s supposed to be. But I think you have to look at our culture in America. We were raised up in a culture where everyone is equal, where everyone has the idea that equality is the right thing for all individuals, that we have to be equal across the board. If we presented this same exact idea to someone in another political system, this would sound quite different.

Jeff: That’s right.

Caleb: So we’re in a unique society because we’re in a democracy. But if you look throughout history, not every culture was a democracy; actually, it’s the opposite. So it’s easier for them to accept something like this as opposed to us, because we’re in a democracy.

Jeff: Yes, absolutely.

Caleb: Your culture can kind of influence your thinking. And in some cases you have to really think about what the text is saying versus what your cultural identity is telling you.

Jeff: Exactly. Let me give you this final illustration and we’ll close out. When you think about faith being sort of the linchpin of understanding, think about it like this. You take your wife on a bridge. And maybe I’m going to return to this illustration in a couple weeks. But you take your wife on a bridge. And she gets up to the middle of the bridge, and she’s absolutely terrified, okay? She is so focused on her subjective fear that she can’t move.

And you go back to her and you say, “Honey, what’s the problem?”

She says, “I’m terrified!”

“Okay, I know you’re terrified. Why are you terrified?”

And she looks at you and says, “Duh! I’m afraid of heights!”

And you say, “Well, let’s focus on the objective reason why you’re not falling. What is that?”

And she says, “The bridge.”

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And you say, “Right. The bridge is the objective reason that you have for not falling, right? Now bring your subjective response into alignment with the objective evidence that you’re not falling, okay? Because right now your subjective response is not consistent with the objective evidence.”

And faith is always trying to bring our response into alignment with the objective information that we have, that we’ve been saved in Christ. Whenever we allow our subjective experience to become fearful, to become anxious, and those kinds of things, we are forgetting the objective. We’re forgetting that there’s a bridge underneath us. And that becomes the linchpin.

So for instance,--and you know this by experience,--if there’s an adopted child who is having trouble with his feeling of placement in the family, what can you do? You can pull out his birth certificate and say, “This birth certificate says you’re in our family. That’s not going to change; you’ve been adopted. Forensically you belong here.”

But his feelings don’t match up with the birth certificate. And so your task is to bring his subjective feeling to line up with the objective evidence of the birth certificate bearing your family name, and so his. And that’s the way it is with Christ. Does that make sense?

Okay, so that’s all the time we have today. So why don’t we pray and close out?

Father, thank You for this day, for the time You’ve given us. Thank You, Lord, for Your word. We pray that You will bless us abundantly, richly in Christ as we contemplate these deep things. And we pray it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. (*Applause*)