

## *“Ephesians - The Family of God”*

### **The Family of God**

Ephesians 1:1-14

Dr. Jeff Stivason

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**Don Maurer:** Jeff?

**Jeff:** Yes?

**Don:** Kevin Cohn wanted to make sure that I razzed you this week.

**Jeff:** Oh, okay.

**Don:** Have you gotten that chalk back yet that you accused me of stealing?

**Jeff:** No; you still have it.

**Don:** What use would I have for it? *(Laughter)* I guess it's like Augustine who didn't like pairs when he stole them off the tree. *(Laughter)*

**Ted Wood:** That's good.

**Jeff:** All right.

**Sig Tragard:** Hey, before you get too far along, remember that Kevin—Where is he?

**Jeff:** He's back there.

**Sig:** Not Kevin Cohn. Kirk. Where's Kirk? I didn't see you with your mask on. Kirk has a microphone, I have a mike. So if you want to ask Jeff a question raise your hand. Give us a second to get to you for the sake of the recording and for the other 75 men who couldn't be here.

**Jeff:** All right. I'm going to also pray for my brother-in-law. Last night he was in a motorcycle accident. He's banged up pretty bad. They had to life-flight him to Erie. I think he's going to live, but he's banged up pretty bad.

**Sig:** What's his name?

**Jeff:** Brad.

**Sig:** Brad?

**Jeff:** Brad.

**Sig:** This is Tabitha's brother?

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Don Maurer:** Let's pray for Roger Myers and the family too.

**Jeff:** Absolutely.

**Sig:** Roger's here.

**Don:** Oh he is?

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Roger Myers:** Hi, Don.

**Don:** Hi, Roger.

**Jeff:** Roger lost his dad a week ago, so we'll pray for him and his brothers as well. Don, do you want to lead us in?

**Don:** Sure. *(Music)*

**Jeff:** Father in heaven, we are so thankful for Your many mercies to us in Christ Jesus our Lord. We're thankful for Your Spirit who indwells us. Father, we're thankful for all of the blessings that we possess in Christ and realized by the Spirit's presence. And we're

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thankful for Your love, for You loved us when we were yet sinners, when we were unlovable, when we were in fact Your enemies. And yet You loved us, sending Your only-Begotten into the world to offer obedience, both active obedience according to Your law and passive obedience, whereby He suffered on the cross for our sins, the punishment that we deserved. Lord God, we're thankful that You are a loving God and that You sent Him, that we might have life in Him and have it abundantly.

Father, as we gather, we gather here to study Your word. And we pray that our lives would be changed by studying it, knowing that it is a living and active Word because it's Your word. And it's Your Spirit who inspired it, who inscripturated it. And Father, we know that not only did He inspire it, but He continues to illuminate His word in our lives and change us thereby. And we're thankful for that and pray for that, not only Lord's Day by Lord's Day but also Friday by Friday. And we pray for it at other times when we're in the Word.

Father, we also pray for Glenn. We ask for healing on his behalf. And certainly, Father, we pray that you'll keep Frank and Shirley as they travel to see their son. And Father, make them a blessing to him.

Father, we also pray for the Myers family and the loss of Roger's dad. And Lord, we pray not only for Roger and Michelle and for his brothers and their families, but we pray for friends. And we ask, Lord, that you'll bless them as they minister to the Myerses. And we pray that you'll comfort their hearts in the loss.

Father, we do pray for Brad. We first of all give You thanks that his life has been preserved thus far. We certainly pray that it would continue. And we certainly pray, Father, that he would make a recovery. And we pray that it would be a full one. And we ask, Lord, that Your hand will be upon him. And we pray that You'll use this in his life to spiritual good. And we pray that You'll draw him to Yourself out of a life of sin and into the kingdom of the Son of Your love. And Father, we pray these things in Christ's precious name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** All right. Well, we are picking up with Ephesians chapter 1. And what I would like for us to do is start by looking at verse 3. And instead of reading the whole chapter I'll just read through verse 14 at this point. We'll see how we fare. So Ephesians chapter 1; I'll start reading at verse 3. This is the word of the living God..

**Ted:** There you go.

**Jeff:** *“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 to Himself 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 on us in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His purpose which He set forth*

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*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, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, believed in Him and 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.”*

Well let me begin by just reminding you of a couple of things. First of all, when we started this study we decided, or at least I decided that I was going to do it in something of an overview fashion. That may be lost in the translation since it's been a number of months since we sort of started and then tried to continue online. And now we're back in person and studying the book again almost from where we left off when we first started this endeavor.

But again I want to remind you that there's something of an overview that we're trying to work at here. I quickly learned in the process of teaching it that there's more along the line of questions about this text. And so I just want you to keep in mind that the original idea was overview. And I'm totally okay with us extending this and sort of exploring places where you would like to go, and I'm happy to do that. But I just want to remind you in case I don't touch on something that you want to touch on. Think of the nature of what it is that we're doing with the book. And if I haven't said something, feel free to pick it up.

Well, what we're doing now is that we're entering into verse 3. I always feel like I'm walking on air up here. You know what I mean? This carpet, I just can't get used to it. *(Laughter)* This second week I feel like a cat, you know? You're just kind of like this.

Anyway, starting in verse 3, I think that what we have here is really helping us to understand our security. We talked about our security. We talked about being secure where? In Christ. That prepositional phrase *“in Him”* or *“in Christ”* is used 11 times in these 14 verses. And so where is our security? Well, our security is to be found in Christ and in Him alone.

But now Paul is going to open that up for us. He's going to flesh that out a little bit. What does it mean to be in Christ? How did we get there? What does that mean for us? And those kinds of questions are going to be answered in these verses. And the very first thing that he is going to communicate to us is that we are allocated by the Father.

Now again this is verses 3-6. What I want you to gather is that this allocation happens not in a vacuum. I want you to remember that we were dead in our trespasses and sins. Now the interesting thing is that Paul is going to talk about that. But he's not going to talk about being dead in our trespasses and our sins. He's not going to tell us about the nature of our state and condition until he gets to chapter 2.

But he's already telling us about our security in chapter 1. It's almost like in chapter 2 that he goes backwards for a few minutes. So we're not there yet. But I simply want to mention that the allocation of the Father is not an allocation in sort of a vacuum. In other

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words, there was an allocation that happened, an election of God, a choosing of God that happened out of humanity’s sinfulness.

In other words, you have to read verses 3-6 remembering that the fall of man into sin is the context. And not only the fall of Adam into sin, but remember that Adam’s sin is imputed or reckoned or counted as his posterity’s sin. And therefore no one escapes the implications of Adam’s fall. All are sinful. All fall short of God’s glory. All are consigned to hell, consigned to everlasting punishment. It is out of that mass of sinful humanity marked, designated for punishment, that God the Father allocates, chooses, elects some in Christ Jesus.

Now before we get into anything about the text, that’s the context that we have to remember and work with. That’s the idea in which this sits.

Now the Father’s work is the work that we find in verses 3-6. Just take a look at that for a minute, verses 3-6. *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Now *“who has blessed us in Christ.”* There’s Christ again. So the sphere in which this blessing of God takes place is in Christ. It’s sort of like what the Westminster Larger Catechism talks about. That is the place where all blessing flows. And so justification, sanctification, all those things flow out of that relationship.

*“With every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.”* And here it is: *“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,”* and so on.

So the idea is that the Father is the One who chooses. He chose us before the foundation of the world *“in Him,”* in Christ. And He chose us for a purpose.

Now let me just simply say this before we go on. Let’s just take the first line of that. *“He chose us in Him.”*

I’ll just pause, because I know that before we had a number of questions about this. Is there anything you want to chew on or talk about? If not I’ll just go on. But I want to give you time to interact with me about this. I know it’s not an easy topic. Anyone?

**Transcriber’s Note:** Don Maurer raises his hand.

**Jeff:** Anyone? Anyone? *(Laughter)* Go ahead, Don.

**Don:** I know we talked about this last time. But if He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, and there was an eternal counsel of the Godhead that this would take place, and yet you’re saying that they were chosen as fallen creatures, can you expand on that a little bit?

**Jeff:** Yeah. So this is the question that Don asked the last time. And I’m going to give you a different answer. No, I’m just kidding! *(Laughter)* I’m going to give a different answer. Anyway, I thought that was really good.

**Sig:** We recorded it. They can go back and listen to it.

**Jeff:** That’s right; yeah.

**Bishop Rodgers:** Jeff, to use your word, the answer is in the context that you just provided before we started. You said that you have the allocation in the context. They context actually is prior to the context. God is obviously all-knowing.

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**Jeff:** Yes, because what we’re talking about is that we’re talking about *decree*. That’s really the overarching category in which we’re thinking. And there are basically two ways of thinking about this. And both of them have this word in them: *lapsarian*. And that word means *fall*, okay? So somebody talks about lapsing, right? They’re basically talking about falling or stumbling, that idea. And when we think about decrees we’re thinking about the decrees in relation to the fall of Adam.

And the first idea is the idea of *supralapsarianism*, and then the latter is *infralapsarianism*. And so what we’re thinking of is the order of God’s decree. When did God decree the election of His people? And remember, we’re not thinking about the historical narrational unfolding in history. We’re thinking about the logical order of decree.

So let me put it like this. You’re sitting at home and you’re planning to go and do something, and you make a list. You plan out what it is that you’re going to do. In a human sense that’s the decree stage. You’re not doing it; you’re planning it. And the question is, how did God plan? And I’ll just do this one first. In logical order of the decrees did God plan to create and then for Adam to fall, and then for there to be redemption? Is that the logical order of creation? Or is the logical order of creation to elect first, and then to order creation and fall? That’s the question in the supra- versus the infralapsarian position.

Now I’m just going to assume that you’re logical and think that infra- is correct, because I think that infra- is correct. I think that’s the logical order of the decrees. The supra- person, though, is going to say this. But don’t you start with your purpose in mind? Don’t you start with the very thing you purpose to do as the leading thing?

Of course this is the leading thing. The leading thing is not creation. The leading thing is election. So once you have a purpose than everything falls out of election. And so the supra- is not nonsensical. They have a reason for starting with election.

**Ted:** It’s wrong.

**Jeff:** It’s just wrong. (*Laughter*) So this is even sort of the context of the context. In other words, why is Adam fallen? Well, Adam is fallen by decree. Well, in what sense is he fallen by decree? Has God just elected that he fall? In what way? Well, the logical way.

Again I happen to be an infralapsarian. But I have good friends that are wrong, that are supra-lapsarians. And let me just say this to you. All the supra-lapsarians I know function as infralapsarians. (*Laughter*) Okay. Anyway, I’m not doing too well here. Sig?

**Sig:** You said at the beginning that lapsarian was in there.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Sig:** Do you mean in the Greek language, or whatever language this is in?

**Jeff:** We’re talking about infralapsarianism and supralapsarianism.

**Sig:** It’s in the context of the text we’re looking at.

**Jeff:** It’s in the title of these two positions. I just wanted you to know what the word—

**Brave Man:** Why supra?

**Jeff:** I just wanted to let you know what the term meant. *Supra* is prior to or before, and after.

**Sig:** I don’t know what you meant when you said—

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**Jeff:** It’s in this designation.

**Sig:** You’re not referring to what you read from Ephesians.

**Jeff:** No. I’m just saying that here’s the decree issue.

**Sig:** Okay.

**Jeff:** And here are the two positions. And lapsarian is in both of the positions. One is that the decree to elect is before the Fall, and in the other it’s after the Fall.

**Caleb Falbo:** Can you provide names of theologians who fall into each camp?

**Jeff:** Yeah. John Calvin. But it’s kind of funny because I think people on both sides of the isle would appeal to John Calvin. So that’s why I say John Calvin. So for instance Samuel Rutherford would be a supralapsarian. So he would be from the Westminster Assembly days. The Hoexemas today are Dutch theologians. They may have been more popular about fifty or sixty years ago. They’re supra-lapsarians. Somebody that you might know today, Louis Berkhof, is a famous author of systematic theology. He’s an infralapsarian. R. C. Sproul was an infra-lapsarian.

**Don Maurer:** John Gerstner was.

**Jeff:** John Gerstner was an infra-lapsarian.

**Brave Man:** So would the people who are supra-lapsarian considered to be Hyper-Calvinists?

**Jeff:** Yes, the designation of hyper-Calvinist would typically fall on the supra-lapsarians. And so for those of you who don’t know, here’s just a brief way of thinking about hyper-Calvinism. I mentioned the Hoexemas; they’re Dutch theologians. In their camp they would not talk about the free offer of the gospel. They would talk about the promiscuous call, because you don’t offer the gospel freely, because you start with election as a limiting concept. You can’t offer the gospel freely. You have to promiscuously send it out and see who bites on it. And putting it crassly, if you see some nibbles then you offer it, and you see if there’s something really there. That’s the idea. Yes, Matt.

**Matt Reichart:** Good morning, Jeff.

**Jeff:** Hi, good morning.

**Matt:** I’m praying for you.

**Jeff:** I appreciate it; thank you.

**Matt:** I have a question regarding the text.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Matt:** *“Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.”*

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Matt:** I don’t understand why. I just take that at face value. Okay, before God created the world God already knew.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Matt:** I just wondered what the meaning is in regard to that.

**Jeff:** Yes; you’re absolutely right. *“He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.”* And this is a debate that sort of grew up 500 years ago about the order of the decree, about what God did and why He did it. And I’m not familiar with all of the 17<sup>th</sup>-

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century context as to why it went on and those kinds of things. I’m more familiar with the debate itself, but not the historical whys.

**Matt:** How do we still take it? If I believe that God chooses, do I still make a choice?

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Matt:** And so before He even created anything He already knew—

**Jeff:** Yes; you’re right. Before He created he had His plan. And this plan is going to take place. But I totally agree with you. This does not negate choice. And that’s why we talked about that at one point in time. I don’t think it was in relation to this; I’m not sure. But we did talk at some point about libertarian free will and compatibilist free will. Compatibilism has the idea that God’s sovereignty is compatible with man’s responsibility. So absolutely.

**Bishop Rodgers:** It’s what the Bible teaches.

**Jeff:** Yeah. Actually it is what the Bible teaches. And there’s a really great passage which says that in 1 Peter chapter 2. It says in verse 8 that *“they stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.”* So both ideas are happily wed together by Peter in a single sentence. Yes, Ted?

**Ted:** I wanted to point out that any time that you see ma at the end of the last name that it’s Dutch.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Ted:** You all might even know that. That’s always a Dutch ending. How you know; it ends with ma. I’m thinking about—

**Jeff:** Or “uns”, right?

**Ted:** (*Unclear*)

**Jeff:** Come on, *Stivason!* Okay; never mind. (*Laughter*)

**Ted:** We’ve anglicized everything. (*Laughter*) I’m thinking that all of these issues—I mean, I’ve been a Christian for 53 years. And I’ve heard the word *lapsarian*. But I never knew what it meant until right now.

**Jeff:** Okay.

**Ted:** So the question becomes that I think all of these deeper discussions often come out of heresy. I mean, with the creeds you’re basically looking back and saying, “Well, that’s what they just said.”

“Well, that’s not right.”

“Well, what do you believe?”

“Well, this is what I believe.” Therefore the Creed says, “I believe,” because it’s going against something else. I just wonder what this was going against. Why do we even have this discussion?

**Jeff:** Yeah—

**Ted:** It’s very obscure. It gives us a bad name. We go into the minutiae of things when we don’t need to.

**Jeff:** And I don’t know the historical—

**Ted:** It’s not a reflection on you personally.

**Jeff:** Yes. The one thing about this is that those on the one side and those on the other—those on the supra- and those on the infra—were oftentimes good guys. This is why I

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don't know if this was sort of an in-house debate that grew up sort of like classical apologetics and presuppositional apologetics. Was it that kind of a debate, or what? I just don't know the history.

**Bishop Rodgers:** It helps if you realize that we simply don't know how to put together certain things in Scripture. It doesn't mean that they're contradictions. It means that you can't handle it.

**Jeff:** That's right.

**Bishop:** We're finite.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Bishop:** So the sovereignty of God and the choice of men is just not something that we can rationally solve.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Bishop:** That's point 1. Point 2 is that I do believe that a debate arose actually under Calvin's history in Geneva. And the supra-lapsarians just thought it better to express the sovereignty of God. The infra-lapsarians thought it better according to the actual likeness of Scripture.

**Jeff:** That's helpful. Thank you.

**Bishop:** That is helpful.

**Brave Man:** Where do the elect fall under the infra- side?

**Bishop:** After the Fall.

**Jeff:** It falls—

**Bishop:** He chooses out of the mass of fallen mankind.

**Jeff:** Yeah; thank you for that. This is the idea. So the Fall comes after election on the supra- side. On the infra- side the Fall comes logically before election. And so when I talk about the context to God's electing grace, that context is the Fall. And this is what Don was asking about. Yes?

**Jim Obrien:** I'm not a supra. But in defense of them they're going to go to Romans 9 and assert that there was a difference between Esau and Jacob *“before they had done anything good or evil.”*

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Jim:** They would argue that this means that God elected Jacob and rejected Esau before He saw them as sinners.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Jim:** That's like predestination on steroids.

**Jeff:** It is, because I think the infra- would say that it's before actual sin, not before Adam's fall.

**Jim:** I'm not a supra. But beyond that I think that the other issue with election is with choice and God's timing. How did God come to—I've lost it now. But the idea would be that we don't know.

**Bishop:** We don't know.

**Jim:** Because God does not foresee who chooses. And therefore He elects those for whom God does the electing, and then ordains that our hearts would be changed so we



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would choose. Most people in the general Christian population are going to say that God foresees who will choose Him, and so He makes his election on that.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Jim:** But if you do that, First you have to ask how these dead people choose him. But more importantly God’s knowledge is dependent upon looking into the future and seeing. And that makes God’s knowledge dependent upon people’s choices. And the one thing we all know in our heart of hearts is that God is not dependent on us for anything.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Jim:** God is absolutely independent and we’re absolutely dependent.

**Jeff:** Yes, absolutely.

**Jim:** So I think it’s worth pointing out the pathway of organizing the choice of our freedom and God’s foreknowledge. God knows the future because He plans the future.

**Jeff:** Mm-hmm.

**Jim:** And God knows that you were going to be here today because He planned it.

**Jeff:** Yeah; that’s exactly right. Well said. Go ahead.

**Bishop:** If you look down through history at us as fallen people, you wouldn’t find anybody who’s going to choose Him unless being moved through the power of the Spirit. It would be empty.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Don Bishop:** Let me mention that a good explanation of election and choice is in J. I. Packer’s *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Don:** I was going to say to understand that fully. But it’s a good explanation.

**Jeff:** Yes, it’s a good explanation. So there are many facets to this whole idea of choosing. And you can see those as we talk about them. And it seems to me that many of you have a really keen understanding of this. So let me move on to the next part.

Notice that there is a purpose for which God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. It’s that *“we should be holy and blameless before Him.”*

There’s a purpose, right? So automatically we have to remember that there is entailed in God’s choice of us an obligation that comes with it, because if we say that I’m among the elect by virtue of the evidence that my life has brought forth the faith and repentance as it were, then I don’t say, and I don’t know anyone who says, (well, I do know people who say it.) *(Laughter)* It’s unfortunate that they say this. But I don’t know many Christians who would say that they are now—

**Bishop:** Holy and blameless.

**Jeff:** Holy and blameless. I think that the idea is that we are set apart to God to become holy and blameless in His sight. There’s a progressive nature to our growth in grace, which interestingly enough, If you think about that, it entails the responsibility that we were talking about—the responsibility to choose the things of God in our lives because God has chosen us.

**Bishop:** Jeff, you don’t think that he’s referring to our justification at that point, that we are holy and blameless because of Christ, and that His holiness and blamelessness is accounted unto us.

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**Jeff:** Yeah. And so here my instinctual move is going to be to say that when you think about the words *holy and blameless*, it's not to think about justification but to think about sanctification. And when you look at different places in Scripture, I think it's in 2 Corinthians 2. In the order of the three that he mentions, sanctification comes before justification.

**Bishop:** Yes.

**Jeff:** So I have the tendency not to see justification just because it comes after the election. But because of the words themselves I automatically think of the concept. I personally think of the definitive aspect of God sanctifying us, moving us from one kingdom to another. But then I think that naturally entails us to think about the growth. But that's how I've construed it.

**Bishop:** Fortunately they're both taught in Scripture.

**Jeff:** Yes, yes. Over here?

**Brave Man:** I think it would be good for us to think of our wives that way.

**Jeff:** Of our wives that way?

**Brave Man:** Of our wives that way, yes.

**Jeff:** Yes. Go ahead. Okay.

**Brave Man:** That would be nice.

**Jeff:** Oh, yeah yeah yeah.

**Ted:** Jeff, I've said that none of us think of ourselves as being holy and blameless. But that's exactly how I think of myself, because—

**Jeff:** Well, definitively, right?

**Ted:** Because in Christ #1, essentially, in my being I am holy and blameless in Christ.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Ted:** There is no other holiness and blamelessness existentially, how we live our lives, without that first extension.

**Jeff:** I agree.

**Ted:** So I am totally happy saying that Ted Wood is holy and blameless. And I'm learning, growing, maturing into holiness and blamelessness in my everyday life, day in and day out. I think we've got to start by saying that in essence, at my core, I'm holy and blameless because and only because I'm in Christ. The behavior and the attitudes of the mind follow.

**Jeff:** Absolutely. Let me just say this. He's condensing, right? So when you think about him condensing here, you're right. As soon as you think about sanctification you think about the definitive element of it, which is more often used when you think of the word for *holiness* in the New Testament. It's more often the case that Paul is talking about a definitive holiness like you're talking about, wherein I am no longer a citizen of the kingdom of darkness. I am a citizen of the kingdom of the Son. My citizenship has been moved. And I am in that sense as much of a citizen as I will ever be. And yet I'm becoming that citizen that I am. And so I totally agree with you. There's a sense in which I am as holy as I will be, as set apart as I will be. And yet I'll be set apart more and more progressively every day. As our friend likes to say, I'm maturing. So yes, I totally agree.

But you can't have maturity without that initial understanding of—

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**Ted:** Of the being, the essence of it all in God.

**Jeff:** Yes. The example I really like is *The Prince and the Pauper*, where the two boys switch. And the pauper—was it Edward? Okay, thank you. He goes to the kingdom and now he’s a pauper. Now he’s the prince. And everyone thinks he’s gone crazy because he has no idea what to do in this kingdom, right? He’s used to the home of the peasant. And he goes and he has no idea what to do. But he’s the prince.

And yet he progressively adapts, gets better, grows in his new context to the point where he does really well, right? And he acts just like a prince. And that to me is a helpful illustration of the Christian life with regard to sanctification—a new king that progresses in his holiness in that kingdom.

**Bishop:** I was just reminded of a story. This is really related more to the Wesleyan doctrine of perfection. There was a preacher preaching around who said, “Certainly nobody in this group would claim to be sinless.”

And the guy in the back of the room stand up. He says, “Sir, are you claiming to be sinless?”

He said, “Oh not me; I’m referring to my wife’s first husband.” *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** Okay. All right. On that note, *(Laughter)*, we’re going to go on. *(Laughter)* So now we enter into another dimension.

**Kirk Ellerbusch:** Just real quickly here.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Kirk:** When it talks about “*He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him,*” I mean I always tend to think of it as this. Where was the origin of my salvation? What is the nature of God’s salvation in how it’s viewed or seen in our lives? You know, I guess what I’m saying is that it doesn’t work by evidence itself.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Kirk:** That’s kind of how I’ve seen some of this. And that’s probably what everybody is saying anyhow. So you know, I wonder sometimes. I’m kind of struggling with the issue of the fear of the Lord. I don’t think that we as Christians really understand or even live very often in the fear of the Lord, whatever that means. But we know that it’s God’s salvation. And if God has done the work of transformation, we ought to see the evidence of some of that in our lives and boldness as well. But you know, that should cause us to stop before we sin, and realize, you know, who am I acting more like? The world? Or am I seeing the fruit of what God is doing in me? And I wonder sometimes if we could just get our minds wrapped around that if we would sin a little less? Does that make sense?

**Jeff:** It does make sense. You know, you make me think about John Owen’s *The Mortification of Sin*. And he talks in there about all of the things that will cause us to sin less. And he says things like “*Fear of our sin being exposed to man will cause us to sin less. But it won’t cause us to sin less forever.*” So he continues to move toward the center, which is God Himself. If our lives are hidden in God and He’s the motivating Source of our salvation, and our decisions grow out of a love and fear for Him, then there will be lasting choices for Him and not for sin. So it’s that same kind of idea.

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But you know, I personally think that when you think about the fear of the Lord, we typically think about language equivocally and analogously. There’s the idea that when I talk about good, I’m not talking univocally. I’m not talking about God as a good God like my dog is good, right? The dog brings the slippers and the paper. God doesn’t bring the slippers and the paper, right? (*Laughter*) But there’s a little equivocation. I mean a little bit of a different thing when I use the word *goodness*.

And yet when I use the word *goodness* or *fear*, I transfer that fear to when I fear my father, right? There’s a little bit of negativity in that, right?, because there just is. I’m sinful; I’m human. But when I think about the best of that fear that I had for my father, that at least helps me to approximate the ear that I have for God. And that’s a motivating factor, right? I mean, my father means a lot to me, slow I don’t want to disgrace the family name. And that approximates something of my fear for God and the honor that I want to show Him, right?

**Kirk:** That’s great.

**Jeff:** Let me just hit this because the next time we’ll get to the Son’s work. But *He predestined us to be adopted as His sons*. Look at this. “*He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Christ.*” And again, when you think about the purpose of God’s predestinating us, it’s to be a part of His family. He adopts us. We’re not natural sons like Christ; we’re adopted children.

And I’ll say this next and you can come back to that. But this is all “*according to the purpose of His will.*” So when you think about election, there’s the subtext there that God has created us according to His purposes.

But here it is explicitly stated. I am these things because this is God’s purpose. This is His will for me. And so you can understand that when we think about the letter to the Ephesians in its context, again remember all of the uncertainties that were swirling about in Ephesus, especially the Artemas cult. You know, the Artemas cult was about black magic. And there were spells that were found that people believed happened to them. The Artemas cult specialized in that sort of thing.

And what your security is in is knowing that God has chosen you out of that to be His son,—not a child of Artemas but to be His son. And your secure in that.

And the great thing about this (and this is probably what those who were converted out of the Artemas cult needed to hear), is that you’re not a son and secure so that you can do anything you want. But you’re a son and you’re secure so that you can evidence your election in holiness and blamelessness of life. Not perfection; that perfection element comes because of what Christ did in setting us apart. But certainly we grow into that perfection. We become more like our Father, as Matthew 5 says. The Father demands perfection; we’re to be like the Father. So that’s the idea. In the last minute or two do you want to open that up? No? Okay.

**Sig:** I’d like to—

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Sig:** At times this can be very complicated to me.

**Jeff:** Uh-huh.

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**Sig:** In the light of Bishop Rodgers and Rev. Ted Wood and yourself, we have some pretty smart men in this room, right?—seminary students and graduates, ordained ministers. I look at this and I say, how did Paul or any of the apostles get this? There had to be a crash course that they took. They had to take a crash course somewhere not only to understand it but then to communicate it. And you know, I’m just kind of curious. Not that there’s an answer to that, but—

**Brave Man:** The Holy Spirit.

**Sig:** I know. But he knew what to say while he was saying it. I mean, that’s a lot of stuff in the first five verses of this letter.

**Jeff:** Yes. What I think you have to realize is, there was a Bible that was functioning, right? There were 39 books that were functioning.

**Sig:** In the Old Testament.

**Jeff:** In the Old Testament. When Paul talks about the Scriptures, that’s what he meant.

So with these concepts, think about the book of Esther. You know, God is never mentioned in that book. But you can’t hit chapter 6 without realizing that God is at work, right? The king can’t sleep. He has the story about Mordecai read to him. And the whole story turns on that. You know, if you were a Jew you would have understood that this is a sovereign God who shows up at just the right moment because He’s in every moment, right? So even in a story like that you just can’t help but see God’s hand.

How many Jews are going to read the book of Job? Job loses all that he has. And God says, “Look! You lost all you had because I’m sovereign. When are you going to learn this?” And He shows up in the whirlwind in chapter 38 and 39, right? And He basically gives Job the smackdown and tells him, “You’re the clay and I’m the potter, and I’ll do with you what I will,” right? So you know, these kinds of things are just throughout the Scriptures.

I mean, even in Psalm 107, I think, it talks about how the people of Israel got settled into Egypt. And God had to cause His enemies, the people of Egypt, to hate His own people to get them to be driven out as a motivating force. Or think about what’s in 1 Kings 19, maybe 2 Kings. *“Long ago I ordained it; in the days of old I planned it. Now I brought it to pass.”*

This theology is just in the Old Testament. So this is not a stretch. Paul is not just pulling this out of the air. He has really studied those 39 books.

**Sig:** But maybe it’s a stretch for me because I’m not so well versed in the Old Testament. So I read Ephesians and I hear you explain it. But I feel a little lost and bewildered that Paul would pull this all together.

**Jeff:** Yeah, and I think that’s the problem for all of us, right? I mean, all of us modern-day American Christians (and I’ll just speak for us), need a little more Old Testament in our daily diet. If we had that we would probably have a better understanding of Christ’s work and the New Testament itself.

**Sig:** That’s refreshing; thank you.

**Jeff:** Yes. Well, Ted gets the last one.

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**Ted:** Let me say that the fact of the matter is that our study of the Scriptures and our meditation on the Scriptures is anemic compared to what these folks were doing.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Ted:** And so they were able to talk like this because they thought about it all the time and they conversed with each other. I mean, you have the Holy Spirit’s work. But in addition they talked with each other all the time. They were arguing with each other. It was a form of study in Judaism, arguing the Yeshiva back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. And they had the body of Christ that kind of helped them along. So Paul was writing this 25 years after he was converted. He’s had 25 years to meditate on all this.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Ted:** After having a thorough knowledge of the Old Testament.

**Jeff:** Yeah. And you know, if you ever want to read a kind of a fun story, it’s called *The Great Books*. I can’t think of the author’s name. But he’s a movie critic who goes back to college. He goes to Columbia University and takes all the humanities classes. And he realizes that he’s discovered that he’s become a movie critic and not a reader any longer. To read 25 pages of sustained reading in a classic text is really difficult for him.

And that’s our problem. I mean, when I write for this website the people who are over me always tell me to write 750 words. You will not keep people’s attention for more than 750 words. That’s a single-spaced page if you’re writing on an 8&1/2-by-11 sheet. Our attention span is just not all that great. And so people want sound bites. They want 750-word articles.

And here’s a plug for the Paideia thing that we do. Paideia gets together three times in the fall and three times in the spring. And we read an old book, and we get together and discuss it. And what I love about it is that it forces me to read an old book.

And I get together with people. It’s fun. What is funny is that a lot of times the guys that come together aren’t pastors in churches; they’re laity. And they come together and they read these books, and they love to discuss them. I love to discuss with them because they have good ideas and stuff. But I can’t tell you how many of them will say, “Boy, I would never have read this book had I not had this accountability.” So we need to become more of what we were in the past. And perhaps that’s just one way of doing it, and you might consider doing it.

But I think that we all need a better diet of Scripture. We all need a better diet of some of the books of the past, especially today. I think that if we’re only hearing what we’re seeing on the news or listening to what we’re hearing on the news, and not sort of informed by a greater depth of history, we’re in big trouble. Anyway, the Lord bless you. See you. Yes?

**David Presutti:** What would you like us to leave with today based on what you taught?

**Jeff:** That you’re secure. You’re secure in God’s electing grace.

**David:** Thank you.

**Jeff:** Therefore—

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**David:** I go along with what this gentleman had to say there and what brother Ted said as well, and Bishop Rodgers. But I think we spoke about that some of you are very rich in Scripture and some of these are not.

**Jeff:** Mm-hmm.

**David:** And if you're regenerated and have the Holy Spirit, it's very clear that I'm a very simple person. And as this brother was just talking about, if you're ever having a bad day just read Ephesians 1. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** Yes.

**David:** But what we talked about today was a lot of heavy theology. We talked about this and that and this and that, and I'm like why are we talking about this? It's great. But we really did not follow forward with the Scripture. Does that make any sense?

**Jeff:** Well—

**David:** Leaving here today,--and once again as I was always taught,--what am I going to do about what I just heard?

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**David:** I'm sort of weeping inside because I'm not leaving with something that's the key to what I'm going to apply.

**Jeff:** Yes. And the struggle that I feel is—

**David:** Does that make sense?

**Jeff:** It does.

**David:** I'm sorry if I'm hurting anyone's feelings, but that's how I feel.

**Jeff:** No. And I realize—

**David:** Thank you.

**Jeff:** Sure. And I realize that the kind of study that we're doing is not for everybody. And I'm kind of weeping that we don't go deeper. And you know, this is good. I come to a group like this and guys like to chew on the Scriptures and like to go deeper. And for me my understanding of security in Christ is really nurtured by going deeper, rather than sort of a surface understanding of Scripture. So that's my view.

**David:** Thank you.

**Jeff:** Yeah. *(Laughter and applause)*

**Matt:** We don't know who God has called and chosen. So everybody is talked to.

**Brave Man:** Amen.

**Matt:** And I know that all are sinners in need of a Savior. And we know that is all mankind. So we continue to pray and talk to everybody.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Matt:** So go talk to everybody.

**Jeff:** Absolutely.

**Don Maurer:** Amen.

**Jeff:** And the thing about it is, you need to know what to say. And one of the things that I think, and I'll just say this. And I don't mean it just because I'm a minister. Your chalice has to be full in order for you to talk effectively to people.

Now of course it's the Holy Spirit who will bring life. But the bottom line is that if you don't know what you're talking about, if your chalice is not full to overflowing so

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that you can talk freely and easily about not only simple concepts but also difficult ones, when you engage with somebody who actually has some criticism about the Scripture you need to be able to talk confidently and easily about that.

You can say (and it’s okay to say), “Look, I don’t know. And I don’t really care what your criticisms are. This is what I believe and this is what you ought to believe.” And there’s a place for that.

I just read Celsus. He wrote a book back in the second century that we don’t have. But we have it because Origen critiqued it. And almost the entire book is quoted by Origen in his book. And one of his criticisms is that Christians just say, “All things are possible with God. That’s all you guys ever say.” And that was his criticism.

So I get the fact that in the early church not everyone is a theologian. Not everyone is a Biblical scholar. And not everyone needs to be. And there’s a place for just saying, “I believe it because God says it.” And again that’s okay. I’m just simply saying that we’re living in a day and in an age where it’s helpful to have some depth to what you’re saying. Bishop?

**Bishop:** I know that before I chose Him He chose me. And also I know that if in Christ we become holy and blameless, these are somewhat practical matters.

**Jeff:** Sure.

**Bishop:** I take those home and chew on those quite a bit.

**Jeff:** So if you want to start here next time that would be good. But I gotta get rollin’. So I’ll see you. Have a great week.

**Brave Men:** Thank you. (*Applause*)