



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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

The Sermons of Dr. S. Lewis Johnson

Ephesians

“The Work of the Father”

In our last study of the epistle to the Ephesians, we came to the fifth verse, and we want, after a brief introduction, to pick up the account at verse 5 again tonight.

Now let me read a few verses again. There are a few comments that I was unable to make last time. So let me read and intersperse a few more comments concerning the opening verses.

You’ll notice again the Apostle begins by saying, “Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.” Now, I don’t think I mentioned this fact, but the fact that the Apostle speaks of himself as an apostle by the will of God is to be traced back to the experience of his conversion when on the Damascus road he met, or encountered the Lord Jesus Christ in that appearance to him from heaven. And you may also remember that in the words that were spoken there it was said that he was a messenger by choice, or a vessel of choice to bear the name of the Lord God to the nations. So right from the beginning of the Apostle’s ministry, it was stated that he was an elect person.

I think that the Apostle wrote, when he wrote his epistles by the will of God, that he had that in mind. The words are: “The Lord said unto him go thy way, for he a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name unto the Gentiles and kings and the

children of Israel.” So the Apostle writes that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.

And I think there is another thing the Apostle stresses by putting in the words “by the will of God.” He’s repudiating any human merit. He’s saying, in effect, I am not an apostle by virtue of the fact of who I am or by virtue of what I have done. I am an apostle by the will of God. In other words, there is no human merit in my apostleship at all. The fact that he traces his apostleship to the will of God – I think I stressed last time that he did not trace his apostleship to the will of man – and so right here in the beginning of the Apostle’s letter to the Ephesians he takes us back to the beginning of his relationship with the Lord and he traces it to the will of God.

He addresses it to the saints, which are at Ephesus. The term “saints,” we said, refers to the believer’s standing, rather than to his state, because all believers are saints. It refers to his position, or our position as justified, rather than to our progress as sanctified individuals. Every believer is a saint. Of course, every believer ought to be saintly. Not every believer, at every point of his life, is saintly, but we who are saints, ought to live saintly. Matthew Henry said all Christians must be saints, and if they come not under that character on earth, they will never be saints in glory. Mr. Henry was trying to make a point that if we are true believers in Jesus Christ, it will be manifested down here on earth that we are saints. And if it’s not manifested down here on earth that we are saints, then we cannot expect to become saints when we get to heaven.

Now he says, it is addressed to the faithful in Christ Jesus. And of course, to be in Christ, for Paul, meant almost the equivalent of the whole meaning and measure of the Gospel. One commentator whose work I was looking at today said. Now he goes on to say, “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” I forgot whether I commented – I don’t think I did – that the common Greek greeting in the writing of a letter was simply the word “greetings” or *charain*, related to word for grace. But Paul has more than simply *charain*. What he has done is to take the Greek

greeting, modify it slightly from “greetings” to “grace,” and has added “peace” to it, thus combining the Greek and Hebrew greetings in one: “Grace to you and peace.” Paul’s letters were, as Dryden observes, absent sermons. And so here, he speaks and wishes his readers that they have grace, and that they have peace. Grace suggests a God who is propitious toward us by virtue of the blood that was shed, and peace suggests a God who desires to bestow prosperity upon those who belong to him.

Now his theology is often expressed in terms of “doxology.” And again, we have it here:

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

And I commented upon the fact that at the heart and at the beginning of all the blessings of God is divine election. One great commentator wrote, “The foundation and first cause, both of our calling and of all the benefits which we receive from God, is here described to be his eternal election.”

Now it is God’s sovereign right to mark out individuals for himself. The fact that He is a God gives him that right. I didn’t have any time last time to lay a little bit of stress upon the fact that the doctrine of election is not designed to hinder us in our spiritual life; it’s designed to help us. It’s been my observation that individuals who believe in the sovereign election of God are much more stable Christians than those who do not. It’s also been my observation that those who believe in the sovereign grace of God are much more effective in their Christian work than those who do not believe in the sovereign election of God.

Of course, we must beware of several pitfalls. One is, it’s possible for Christians to be arrogant, or become arrogant, because they see that God has chosen them before the foundation of the world and not having a great deal of understanding of

Scripture, it is not uncommon to run across, particularly a young believer, who has developed a note of arrogance, because he has been elected of God. That’s something we should seek to avoid.

And also it is, at the same time, true that sometimes we give the impression to others that there is no hope for them because we have been elected. Now that ought to give people a great bit of hope, actually, but sometimes the reverse is true. People ought to be able to look and say, “Well my goodness, if God has chosen Lewis Johnson, he can choose anybody!” There is hope for me. But actually it works the reverse in a number of cases. An individual expatiates so much about his own election that one gains the impression that maybe there is no hope for me. All of those elect people that meet out at Believer’s Chapel are elect, but the rest of us – well, there may not be an opportunity for us. Well, let me assure you that not everybody who comes to Believer’s Chapel, so far as I can tell, is one of the elect. I hope that all eventually are elect. But nevertheless, we should never give the impression that there is no hope.

An individual may settle the question very simply of his election at any time, if by the grace of God he comes to a personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ – that settles the question. The Apostle says he could know when a person was elect or not, when they manifested the fruits of election. He told the Thessalonians that. He said, “I know your election because I have seen the fruit of it in your life.” It wasn’t because he was able – he had by some...by some...electronic device the ability to call up to heaven and find out if the individuals with whom he came in contact with were elect. But he knew the inevitable fruits of election, and the inevitable fruits of election included a vigorous response to the word of God, as had happened in the case of the Thessalonians.

So, in our discussions and in our talk about the doctrine of election, we should never cause people to lose hope. And of course, our good friend the Arminians, they love to tell us, the Calvinists, something we already know. But they love to tell us that if you hold to the doctrine of election then you cannot be evangelistic any longer.

Now that is so ridiculous, that it is amazing to me that after all of these years there are still people going around prating the same thing, that if you believe in divine election, you cannot believe in evangelism. So, the only way that we can convince our hard-headed Arminian friends is by being more evangelistic, and it’s perfectly proper for us to be evangelistic. Calvinism, or the doctrine of election, the doctrine of predestination should never have the effect upon us that it causes us to be any less zealous that individuals be saved.

And I think that in Believer’s Chapel there has been clear evidence of that, because the people who carry on the tape ministry, and there are a number of them who do and send out, I think last year, approximately 70,000 tapes all over the world: that’s an evidence of their desire that others receive the word of God and respond to it. That’s response to the word of God.

The people who pay for the radio broadcasts – and many thousands of people are listening – that is response to the message of the Gospel. That is evangelism. That is Bible teaching. That is the product of individuals who believe in divine election and divine predestination. But we ought to be careful, since the word of God tells us that we are expected to be witnesses for him, that we do, and that we not use that doctrine in such a way that others blaspheme the word of God by saying of us, “We don’t seem to have any concern for the lost,”

But now that brings us to the fifth verse, where the Apostle has said, having just said:

“According as he hath chosen us before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestinated us by the adoption of sons, Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.”

Now in the authorized version of the text that I have, if you’ll look at the end of verse 4 – this is the Scofield edition of the King James Version – there is a comma after the prepositional phrase “before Him.” And then “in love” is taken with verse 5: “In love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of sons.” Now I don’t question the fact that God has “in love” predestinated us unto the adoption of sons. But unfortunately, the individuals who punctuated the text at this point, and remember, there were no punctuation marks in the earliest Greek manuscripts – in some of the later ones that were still quite early, there were a few little marks – but basically, all of the editors of the Greek text when they translate it, must punctuate it themselves. And of course, punctuation changes meaning, and editors may change meaning. And this is a case where the editors have thought where the little phrase “in love” ought to go with “having predestinated.” That is, *God in love predestinated* us unto the adoption of sons, rather than taking it with the preceding that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

Now, the translators, or the editors in this place, the editors did not bother, evidently, to look up the expression “in love” though the epistle to the Ephesians. It occurs a number of other places in the epistle, and in every case it’s always to be taken with what precedes, not what follows. And so in this case, this punctuation of the text is probably wrong. What it should be taken with is the preceding. In other words, “We have been chosen before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before him in love” – that’s the goal of election, that we should ultimately be in the presence of the Lord, holy and without blame before Him in the possession of the love of God.

I don’t question, I say, that God has in love predestinated us, but it just isn’t the truth that the Apostle sets forth here. He goes on to say, “Having been predestinated unto the adoption of sons. That brings us to another one of the words that is of great significance in Pauline teaching. In fact, there are three words that are very

closely related in Paul’s teaching. And I want to go over this slowly because I want you to grasp it.

The Apostle uses three terms very similarly. They each have a slightly different emphasis. One of them, first of all, is the term: “foreknown.” Now we saw that in the Epistle to the Romans – those of you that are following through on that series on Sunday morning – we saw that in Romans chapter 8, where it is stated that we were foreknown: “Those whom he hath foreknown he hath predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son,” Paul said there. Foreknowledge, in that particular context, we pointed out, did not mean “knowledge beforehand,” simply, as if what Paul is saying is he [God] looked on down through the years and saw who would believe and chose them. It’s not *what* he foreknew. It’s *whom* he foreknew.

Foreknowledge is a term of election. It’s the Hebraic way of stating election. Let me give you an illustration. In Amos we read, “You only have I known of all the nations on the earth”—I’m going over this—I know some of you have heard me say this a number of times, but I want you to get so you not only know it but so you can explain it to someone else—“you only have I known of all the nations on the earth.” Now, of course, God knew all the nations on the earth. When he says, “you only who I have known” it means, it is you that I have known in a special sense; he’s talking about the Nation of Israel, and of course he’s talking about their election. They alone of the nations have been chosen, for a special purpose. So, foreknowledge is a term of election with stress on the intimacy of the divine choice. “Knowledge” is the term that we even used of sexual relationships in the Old Testament: “Adam *knew* Eve, his wife, and she conceived.” So it is a word of intimacy. It’s a word that stressed the intimate relationship into which we have entered by virtue of God’s choice of us. “Foreknown” is to be chosen, and to be chosen out of God’s intimate selection of us.

The second word is the word “to choose.” Now that is found in verse 4, right here, “according as he has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world.” That

word is rather simple; it means “to select.” When you go into a store and you look at some garments, for example, trying to make up your mind what you want to buy, and finally you say, to the clerk, “Well, I have chosen this.” And you pick out this tie, and you purchase it. You have chosen that tie out of the hundreds of ties in the store. So, to be selected, or to be chosen, is to be selected out of a body of possibilities.

When we read here, “according as he hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world,” he means that we have been selected out of the mass of individuals. So the stress rests upon the word “selection” in the word “choice.” One word then, “foreknowledge,” stresses intimacy. This word stresses “selection.” But now we also have this one in verse 5: “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of sons.”

Now you can tell from this word, but from its very meaning: “Predestinated us” suggests the term destiny. It means to be marked out beforehand for a particular goal. So the term, predestination, emphasizes the goal for which we have been chosen. One suggests then intimacy, the other selection out of the mass. The third stresses the goal: “We have been predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son.” Putting it all together, God has entered into an intimate relationship with the elect. He has selected them by virtue of His love for them. And He has determined in his predestination that they are going to be, well, sons here and like our Lord Jesus Christ. So these three words say the same thing, with three different emphases, “having predestinated us unto the adoption of sons.” What it means, simply, is to be earmarked by divine grace, and for grace. And the believer carries the hallmark of the eternal good will in the fact that he has been predestinated to the adoption of sons according to the good pleasure of his will.

It’s not a stroke of fate. Sometimes people say, “Ah, that’s fatalism.” It’s not fatalism; it’s the act of a loving heavenly Father. The most wonderful act that God could ever have toward us is to select us out of the mass, in intimate knowledge of us, determine that we’re going to be like Christ, and then supervise the work of redemption by which the Son lays down the foundation in the shedding of his precious blood, and

the gathering work of the Holy Spirit by which we are all gathered into the family of God to worship and praise him throughout the ages of eternity. What a glorious heritage we believers have.

Tremendous beginning, a life in the meantime in God’s purpose and will, that he might be glorified here, and a fantastic future through the ages of eternity. You know, that is enough even to make a Presbyterian say hallelujah.

Now in this context, he says, “predestinated us unto the adoption of sons.” This is one of the things for which we’ve been predestinated. Now the fact that we’ve been predestinated unto the adoption of sons is a remarkable thing. I’m not really sure of the concept of adoption that the Apostle has in mind here. There are two of them, and I’m going to set them both forth for you and then ask you to think about it yourself and see what you come up with as you think about these two possibilities.

It was the custom in the Roman world for a young child, born in a family, at a certain time, to pass from young manhood to adulthood. He wore a crimson-bordered toga which was called the *toga praetexta* until that time, and very much like Jewish children today, at a certain point – twelve, thirteen, fourteen years of age – [would] enter into a particular ceremony in which they, too, pass from childhood into a measure of maturity. Bar Mitzvah. Son of the Commandment. Well, it was something similar to that. The Roman boy was under tutors and governors. If he was a wealthy boy he would have slaves who trained him in Greek and in the other areas of study, and finally, when he reached a certain point, all the family would be gathered together, and the crimson-bordered *toga praetexta* would be taken off of him, and then there would be placed upon him the white *toga virilis* – the toga of a man. And that, I say, was a particular point in his history when he became an adult member of the family. He was able to enter into the family councils as an adult from that time on. He was considered, at that point, to become a son in the fullest sense. It’s possible Paul had that in mind here. Many feel that that is what he has in mind in Galatians chapter 4.

There is another custom, however, among Romans that might be in Paul’s mind and some of the commentators feel that that is what is in mind. And that is a true adoption, by which an individual is taken out of one family and put in another family. In the Roman world, the family was based on what was called the *patria potestas*, that is “the father’s power.” The father had absolute power among the Romans. He not only had absolute power over his children so far as disciplining them is concerned, but he had power over them as long as he lived. He could actually put children to death in Roman Law. In fact, even when a son became a magistrate, he was still under his own father. So, for a child to be taken out of one Roman family, and placed in another family, was a very, very significant thing. In fact the ceremony is so interesting I’m going to read a little bit to you about it.

Deon Cassius tells us that the Roman Law was that the Law of the Romans gave a father absolute authority over his son, and that for the son’s whole life. It gives him authority, if he so chooses, to imprison him, to scourge him, to make him work on his estate as a slave in fetters, even to kill him. The right still continues to exist even if the son is old enough to play an active part in political affairs, even if he’s been judged worthy to occupy the magistrate’s office, and even if he is held in honor by all men. It is quite true that when a father was judging his son, he was supposed to call the adult male members of the family into consultation, but it was not necessary that he should do so. There are actual instances of cases in which a father did condemn his son unto death. Silast, in the Catiline Conspiracy, tells how a son called Allus Fulvius joined the rebel Cataline. He was arrested on the journey and brought back. And his father ordered that he should be put to death. The father did this on his own private authority. The father gave as his reason, “He had begotten him not for Cataline against his country, but for his country against Cataline.”

Under Roman Law a child could not possess anything, and any inheritance willed to him or a gift given to him became the property of the father. So it was a serious step

to take a child out of one family and put him another. The ritual of adoption must have been very impressive. It was carried out by a symbolic sale in which copper and scales were used. Twice, the real father “sold” his son, and twice he bought him back. Finally, he sold him a third time and at the third sale, he did not buy him back. After this, the adopting father had to go the praetor, one of the principal Roman magistrates, and plead the case for the adoption. And only after all this had been gone through was the adoption complete. But when the adoption was complete, it was complete indeed. The person who had been adopted had all the rights of a legitimate son in his new family and completely lost all rights in his old family, and furthermore all his old debts were considered to be paid – he was a new person.

Now it’s possible the Apostle has that in mind when he says here, “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ to himself.” We have been taken out of the family of Adam, we have been placed in the family of God. Our connection with our old life is absolutely settled. Our old father was the one who brought us into death, our new father is the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. That may be what is in mind. Now since the Apostle writes to Ephesians, and since Ephesians were part of the Roman Empire, it might be that that is the precise force he has in mind. But even if it is not, the force of “adoption as sons” is that we are now in the family of God as adult sons – predestinated to be that.

Notice, too, that that text says “having predestined unto the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ *to himself*.” That is, we are now related to the Lord God. His household is the household in which we enter. His welcome is the welcome with which we are saluted. His name and his dignity we wear. His image we possess. His discipline we receive. His home, secured and prepared for us, we hope to live in forever. “To himself” we are adopted. It’s a magnificent thing to think that I am a member of the family of God.

Now I’ve got some friends back over in South Carolina. When I see them next week, they’re gonna be really happy and pleased with themselves because they’re members of other families. Old families. I have one friend, he doesn’t hesitate to tell almost every time I see him, “My family had more slaves than anybody else in South Carolina at the time of the Civil War.” He’s very proud of his family. And over there, we have the Rhett’s, and the Ravenel’s, and names such as that, and they’re all proud of their heritage. Many of them came from the Huegenots, and wouldn’t know what the Huegenot first doctrine was today if their life depended on it. And they will talk to me about their families, and I will think all the time, very contentedly, my family goes back far before yours ever came into existence. I’m a member of the family of God. And I won’t envy them one little bit, you can be sure of that. We are adopted into the family of God: “the adoption of sons.”

I’m not surprised that Paul says, “according to the good pleasure of His will.” This is the norm of this predestination to sonship. It’s His sovereign purpose. That’s what is meant, incidentally, translated, “good pleasure.” That Greek word, when it refers to a thing, means “good will.” But when it refers to a person, it means “purpose.” Here is affirmed the purpose that God had in mind. It is – the whole great purpose of election – is according to the purpose of His will. It takes place because he has determined that it take place.

Now we cannot understand beyond that. The Scriptures tell us he did this in love. In other places our election is traced to his love, but why he should settle his affection upon us, we don’t know. Anymore than one knows why another person loves a person down here on this earth. It is a sovereign thing. When we think about election, there are only two or three options. One is that God elects the good. But the Scriptures say that he doesn’t elect the good. He says we are saved by grace through faith, that not of ourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast. God doesn’t elect the good. He elects the bad and makes them good. That’s what the Scriptures say.

Then there are some who say God does not elect the good, but he does elect the ones he foresees will believe. But we’ve so often tried to point that that is not God’s election, that’s man’s election. And if it’s true that he looks down through the years and sees who will believe and elects them, he waits upon them to make the choice – it is they who are electing, not God.

Furthermore, how can we escape the criticism that God is learning things by this? He looks down through the years and sees a certain individual will believe, and thus he comes to new knowledge. And if he comes to new knowledge then he was deficient in knowledge before he came to that new knowledge. And if he’s deficient in knowledge, how can he be an omniscient God? That’s all so simple, that one wonders how individuals can propagate the idea that he looks down through the years and sees who will believe and chooses them.

Well, that’s the doctrine found in the Scofield Reference Bibles in the past. How many of you noticed it when you were reading your Scofield Reference Bible? I’m not against that Bible. I like it. I’ve got one before me. It’s a great help. But on that point, it’s not sound.

What the Bible does say is that God elects those whom he purposes to save in Christ, through faith. “It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,” Paul says. Paul, in 2 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 9 makes this significant statement. 2 Timothy 1:9 – this is the Apostle writing:

“Who hath saved and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

This was a sovereign purpose based upon the love of God. This was the reason why we have been selected out; it was his purpose! It is his determined will!

Now let me tell you this. The God of the Bible is good. The God of the Bible is just. The God of the Bible rules with equity the affairs of this world. And if He has determined to do this – and it is plainly taught in the Bible – then that is good. That is just. That is equitable.

Now we may not understand it yet, but it is good, it is just, it is equitable. How many of you ever learned things when you grew up that you didn’t know when you were children? Don’t raise your hands. I’d hate to see one person not raise their hands; it would make me feel real bad. Everyone of us has had the experience of discovering that our parents were a great deal wiser than we thought they were. We have all kinds of sayings to that effect, such as, “I always thought my father was ignorant and dumb. And when I grew up, I was surprised how much he had learned in such a short time.” Things like this, you know. We have a whole string of sayings like that.

Now you can be sure that since we are children, there are things, when we get to heaven, that we are going to learn. And one of the things we are going to learn is how just and how good God is to have accomplished his work in the way he has done it. And I don’t think there’s going to be anyone who’s going say, “I’m surprised at how smart the Lord became at the moment I passed from earth into heaven.”

Reminds me of a story which Frank Gabelein has in one of his books. There was an Episcopalian clergyman who was riding in a dining car in a train that was traveling along the Hudson River. It just so happened that in the dining car, opposite him, there was an atheist, and seeing the clerical collar of the Anglican, he thought he would get up a little argument with him. And he began like this:

“I see, sir, that you are a clergyman.”

And the Anglican said, “Yes, I am a minister of the Gospel.”

There was a slight pause and the atheist said, “I suppose, then, that you believe the Bible?”

Now the clergyman happened to be an Episcopalian of sound faith, and so he said, “I do indeed believe that the Bible is the word of God.”

And immediately, the atheist came out with the query, “But don’t you find things in the Bible that you cannot understand?”

And the minister answered, rather humbly, “Yes, there are places in the Scripture that are too hard for me to understand.”

Whereupon the atheist retorted with an air of triumph, because he thought he had him, “Well what do you do, then?”

Well, the preacher went on quietly eating his luncheon for a few moments, which happened to be Hudson River Shad – that’s a very delicious fish, so I’m told, but noted for the overdevelopment of its bony structure. Then finally he looked up, and he said, “I do, sir, just as I do when eating this shad. When I come to the bones I put them on the side of the plate, and I go on eating my lunch, leaving the bones for some fool to choke on.”

Well, the moral of the story is plain. There is a great deal in the Bible that we can understand and from which we can derive a great deal of profit. There are some things that are difficult for us, some things that are difficult for us at certain stages in the Christian life. When we are young Christians there are many things that are difficult for us, but as the years go by and we grow up in spiritual things, we learn a lot. The Holy Spirit teaches us many things that are in the Word of God.

Sometimes things persist in difficulty for us. And I am sure that there are some things that will be difficulties for us as long as we are in the flesh. Because in heaven we read about the fact that there we shall...well, for example, God’s going to wipe away all the tears from our eyes, then. We shall understand a lot of the things that have happened to us when we get to heaven. So there are many things that we do not understand now, but we keep reading the Bible. We keep profiting from the things that we find there.

What I think the lesson is simply is the lesson of the exercise of suspended judgment concerning the things we don’t fully understand now. Nevertheless, we believe

what the Scripture has written. And we accept it. And I think in my own case, in connection with this particular doctrine, that I've come to understand a lot of things in the last ten years that I did not understand ten years ago.

So, when the Apostle writes here that we've been predestinated...maybe we have some difficulties with that. But you can be sure, that when we get to heaven, we'll find that God has been just and good.

Now he concludes this section, the first section of the first part of the chapter by saying:

"To the praise of the glory of His grace, through which he hath made us accepted in the beloved one."

That's the ultimate end of the electing love and purpose of God: the glory of God.

For don't you see that when men are brought into the presence of God, selected out of intimate love, predestined to be like him, and they ultimately enter into the presence of God, like Jesus Christ, that is going to be to the praise and glory of the grace of God, by which he has made us accepted in the beloved one? Incidentally, we have here one of the answers to the problem of the permission of evil. Why did God permit evil to exist in our universe? Why he is determined that evil exist in our universe that men might come to understand him as a gracious God. If evil were not determined, then we would never know that God is a God of magnificent grace. We could know his justice, apart from redemption. We could know his various other aspects of his character, but it takes sin and evil for us to come to fully understand the grace of God. And that is why he has determined that evil exist in this universe: that men might see him truly as a God of infinite grace.

So now "to the praise of the glory of his grace," he has elected us, predestined that we should be like Jesus Christ, in the meantime enjoying the adoption of

sons because we are accepted in the beloved one. Not accepted because of what we are ourselves, but accepted in the beloved one. That expression, incidentally, is an expression used in the Old Testament of the nation of Israel. In the Hebrew text, the word is *yeshuren*. It’s a term that suggests that. Israel was God’s beloved nation.

In the Greek translation of the Old Testament in these instances where *yeshuren* occurs, it is the form used here in the “beloved one.” It came to become a Messianic term. It’s a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one upon whom the love of God has been fully shed forth, and we, the believers in God, are placed in Him, and accepted in Him. For when God looks down upon us, he sees us in Christ, possessed in the righteousness of God. That is our magnificent position.

Are you a believer? Have by the grace of God you come to understand that you’re a sinner? That Christ has died for sinners and have you fled to the cross of Christ? Have you received Him by his grace, as the Son of God and the Savior of sinners, and do you know the forgiveness of sins? Can you really say, “I’m accepted not because of who I am or what I have done, but because of what He is and what He has done? When God looks down upon me, He sees Christ. Is that your confession?

It may be. You may have a question about whether you’re predestinated, whether you’ve been foreknown, whether you’ve been elected. That can all be settled in a moment of time, as you flee to the cross, and lay hold of what Christ has done, receiving the free gift of everlasting life. May God help you to come, come to Christ. Trust him, by his grace. Let’s bow in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these wonderful passages which so fully expound the marvelous grace of our great God. O God, we do praise thee, for the glory of Thy grace. We pray, too, Lord that Thou wilt clarify all of the things that may be of difficulty for us. We know that if they have been revealed, they are to be proclaimed, and to be understood. So give wisdom and guidance to us and give us an attitude of dependence, acceptance, as we read and study the Scriptures. Enlighten us by

the Spirit, and cause us to be instruments in the accomplishment of Thy purpose. O God, help us to give hope to others, to evangelize the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and deliver us from arrogance, for we know that Thou has not chosen us for anything in ourselves. We deserve eternal hellfire.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.