

Chosen for Life, Holiness, and Love

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[0 : 00] Well, as I anticipated being in Genesis this Sunday, that didn't happen.

I know. We'll get back to it. We'll get back to it. I think we're on the, when we come back to Genesis, which will probably be this next Sunday, who knows? The Lord knows. I just follow, right?

My plan is to be in Genesis this next Sunday, and I think we're going to pick it up at day five. We've got a couple of days left of God's creative activity. But as I sat this past week, thinking, studying, praying, especially early in the week, I was back in Colossians, just thinking through what I had preached, meditating on, praying on, what I had shared with you guys, and just really relishing the truth that we all shared in last week together.

Just marvelous, wonderful, encouraging truth from the Lord in Colossians 3. And so I kind of camped out there for a little while, and as I did, I realized that Colossians 3, especially in one particular part, is very much tied to God as creator and to the love of God in creation for us.

And I'd never put those two together before. So I just sat there in that moment, just allowing the Lord to minister to my heart in that truth.

[1 : 37] And I thought, this is exactly what I want to bring to Grace Church on Sunday, Lord. And so that's where it started, and this was the result. The title that I've chosen for this, no pun intended, Chosen for Life, Holiness, and Love, Colossians 3.12.

And we'll be there in just a moment, but I want to say a few things to you as we move our way into the text. For example, listen, as we approach Christmas, just finished Thanksgiving, approaching Christmas, and the celebration of Jesus coming to us as a human being in the form of a baby, a newborn, I want to encourage you with the love of Jesus Christ applied to you and then applied to us as a church family.

Now, in our study of Genesis chapter 1, we are being awed by the wonders of God's sovereignty in His six days of creative activity.

It is an awesome, wondrous, incredible, inspiring reality that God did all this. He could have done it in six nanoseconds. He took six days to do it and set the pattern for the way that we live in the cycle of life here.

And that was the reason that He set it all up the way He did. Just the marvelous wisdom of the Lord. But I want to make sure that we understand something.

[3 : 08] Does the Bible tell us anything about God and what God was doing before He entered into this six days of creative activity that we know as our universe?

And the answer is yes. Now, there are a number of things that we could say, hey, but I'm going to zero in on one. What was God doing before He created the world? What was God doing before Genesis 1?

What kind of creative activity was God involved in that was very, very critically important to you? And that's what I want to talk about.

God was doing a work of creation for you before He ever began creating the universe. Now, in this pre-creation work, God set His love on you and guaranteed your future salvation.

That's a hallelujah moment. How important was this work of the Lord to you? Were it not for God's pre-creation work of choosing you, you would face the hopeless reality of dying in your sins without God.

[4 : 24] That's the truth. That's the truth that Scripture brings. It is one of the most glorious, beautiful, and amazing doctrines in all of the Word of God. And as I've grown in this doctrine, I've grown in my understanding and appreciation of God's sovereignty.

And I am very, very thankful for what the text will tell us. If you'll go to Colossians 3 with me, if you're not already there, I'm just going to preach half a verse this morning.

It's all I could squeeze in for all that God was pouring out onto me as I sat there with Him. And it's in verse 12. We read it last week as just part of the context for what I preached from verses 15, 16, and 17.

But look at verse 12 with me. So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved. That's it.

That's the text for this morning. As those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved. He uses that as the basis to then launch into a put-on treatise.

[5 : 38] Put on these things as those who now have been chosen and owned by the Creator of the universe. You are now able, as a child of God, to wear the garments of, what does He say?

A heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another, forgiving each other, and so forth. All of that is part and parcel of you being saved, you being born again in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But all of that stands on the foundation of someone, as someone who has been chosen of God and made holy and beloved.

That's what I want to focus on for this morning. One of the things this teaching from God's Word does for us, especially, now hear this, especially as we study through the creation account, is to ground us in God's control over every aspect and detail of our lives.

We call that God's sovereignty. God had your life and salvation settled before He made the world.

[6 : 55] Now just let that settle in on you. This may be a little bit new to a few of you, and I hope that it'll be a tremendous blessing as you see it in the Word of God. I know it is to my heart.

In fact, God made the world so that He could place you in it. So that He could give you life.

So that He could then save your life from sin for eternity. God made a habitable world to put His chosen ones in it that they might one day come to life, physical life, and then one day come to spiritual life.

Because all of that was settled before He ever made the world. Now you're going to have a lot of trouble with that if you believe that the God that we're preaching about in Genesis had trouble doing it in six days, and so you want to put millions of years in there to help Him out.

You're going to have a lot of trouble with a sovereign God saving you in the sense of choosing you before He ever made the world if you can't get past the fact that He did the creation of the universe in six days, literally.

[8 : 07] You see how all of this bears... Everything about what we're studying in Genesis chapter 1 is a hill to die on. Because that's where God establishes who He is for us and how He works in His world, how He's sovereign over all of creation, and how nothing can thwart His design and purpose and plan for us as His people.

Nothing. Nothing. And so we want to give God all the honor and glory for being that creator, and we don't want to take anything away from Him. God made the earth with you and your salvation as an established fact of creation.

That was all built into it. That's your God. We don't want to take anything away from that. So, friends, please now, please allow, prayerfully allow the Lord to encourage your hearts with a very unlikely Christmas and creation-themed message.

in just half a verse, Paul is going to do this. He's going to give us three wonderful, wonderful expressions of what God created in and for you before He ever created the world you live in. So to begin with, you were, first of all, in this first expression of His love before He ever made the world to you, His expression of love to you, you were unconditionally chosen.

[9 : 40] Now, this is fascinating to me. Unconditionally chosen. Notice the text in verse 12 of Colossians chapter 3. So as those, as those who have been chosen of God, chosen of God, those refers to you and myself and all of us in here now as a community.

Originally, of course, it referred to the Christians at Colossae, the church in Colossae. But by extension now, he's speaking about believers brought together in this spiritual enterprise and made the family of God.

those refers to that community of faith, that community of faith. We are those whom God has chosen to forgive and make His own.

So we stand unique to others in the world. This is a special and unique set of people. Have been chosen is an expression of God's sovereign activity in eternity past.

This is why this is so big. And it presents God as so big. We really can't even get our arms and our minds and our hearts around all of this.

[11:07] It's just so glorious. Have been chosen, an expression of God's sovereign activity in eternity past. God made you and I as His chosen ones the object of His compassion before He ever made the world.

He chose us in love and He appointed us to receive His mercy instead of His justice. We received mercy instead of justice. You understand, if we had received God's justice, what would have happened to us?

We would have been left in our sin to suffer the consequences of what we have chosen in our rebellious hearts to be against the Lord. We are born like that.

We come into the world like that. All human beings come into the world like that. Now we're seeing something happen that isn't based in something that we offer to God or we bring to the equation. No, that's the unconditional part. His unconditional choice of you, it means that His choice of you wasn't based in something that He saw in you beyond the fact that you're a filthy rebel sinner who is in need of salvation.

[12:20] That's all you brought to the equation. That's all I brought to the equation. My sin in need of a Savior. That's the beauty of this magnificent God who does the choosing.

And Scripture is crystal clear about this. This is not an ambiguous doctrine and it's not a doctrine that we're going to monkey around with any more than we do in Genesis chapter 1.

This is why I'm bringing it to you before we jump back into Genesis 1. I have told you since the very first sermon in Genesis 1.1 that if you struggle and have trouble believing in this sovereign God who created the world in six literal days, taking the text in Genesis 1 as it's presented to you.

Just a normal reading of the text and let God explode off the page. If you struggle with that in Genesis 1, you're going to struggle with God being sovereign in your salvation.

It's going to happen. There are going to be aspects of God's saving grace that you're going to struggle with. And this is why Grace Church Williamsburg stands on Genesis 1 as literal truth.

[13:26] It's not allegory. It's not myth. We don't play around with it. This is a big God doing a big thing that we cannot fully understand. It's a miracle. It's supernatural just like your salvation.

Your salvation is supernatural. You'll never get your full mind around all that God is and does to bring you. Look, can you wrap your mind around everything this is and all that God did here?

I can't either. But the things that I can astound me and humble me and bring me before the foot of the cross worshipping. That's where I should be.

Worshipping. Not doubting. Worshipping. So God chose us in love and appointed us to receive his mercy instead of his justice.

Now, we then, we are a collective of those he chose. We are those he chose.

[14:26] That's what we're dealing with in this sermon. Paul is speaking from God's perspective about this. Paul is emphasizing the fact that God's choice of you for salvation was based solely in himself.

His choice placed you in the company of the chosen. And so now we are a local expression of that love that God set on us before the foundation of the world.

We are those who can come together and proclaim this wonderful and glorious truth and offer praise to God for it. As a group, as a family, all sharing in the reality of God choosing us because that's what he wanted to do.

Look, his choice of you, in eternity past, connects his sovereignty to your salvation. That is an important and critical point to make.

His choice of you in eternity past connects his sovereignty to your salvation. This is where a big God becomes very personal to you.

[15:41] Where a big God who created all of the cosmos, shrinks all of that down and identifies you. And you think, why me?

Exactly. That's exactly where you should be. If that's what it's doing in your heart as you think about this, then it's doing its work. The Holy Spirit's ministering to your soul. Why would God shrink all of that down and make it specific to me?

Exactly. How humbling. God's sovereignty, when we talk about God's sovereignty, we could define it in a number of ways, but here's what we're talking about as we think about it applied to our salvation.

God's sovereignty concerns his knowledge of and his power over all things he's made. So God knows and controls all things.

He is sovereign. You with me on that? God knows. Now get this part. We're stepping our way through this. I am just taking verse 12.

[16:42] So as those who have been chosen of God, I'm just taking that and expanding on it as scripture allows us to do that. Listen to this now. God knows all things beforehand.

This is God's foreknowledge. You've heard of this. God knows all things beforehand and he determines all things beforehand.

I want to show you some scripture that'll help you with this and we're fleshing this out from verse 12 in Colossians 3. Look. For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to become conformed to the image of his son.

Now let's take the second half first. The second half of that verse tells us that this work that God is doing in the first half of the verse has the purpose of conforming us to the image of Jesus Christ. That's the most glorious thing that can happen to us as human beings on the planet, planet Earth, right? Under his creation. We are being conformed to the image of Jesus. Now notice what the first part of the verse says.

[17:47] For those whom God foreknew. There's that word those again. Who do you suppose he's meaning when he says those? For those, those are the chosen whom he foreknew, he also predetermined, predestined, to become conformed to the image of his son.

That's the guarantee. That's the absolute guarantee of your salvation and your conformity to Jesus before he ever made the world. Romans 8, 29. Now God's foreknowledge refers to God's deep and intimate love for those he chose beforehand.

That's what God foreknowing you means. It means, it refers to his deep and intimate love for you. It's as if God is saying this, I knew you and loved you before I ever made the world.

God has a beforehand knowledge, full knowledge of you based in his beforehand love of you. That's critical.

God loved you beforehand and God in that love knew you intimately in that way. It's as if the Lord is saying before I ever made the world, before I ever made you, I embraced you and brought you into my heart.

[19:11] Now listen to what, you are a creation of the heart of the God of the universe. That's you. Now you're gonna think, oh, aren't I special?

Well, in a sense, because we can take that and go that. I'm a princess. I'm a whatever. I don't know what the guy, I'm a prince.

No, listen, what that does for us is it does signify to us that there is a special, special way that God loves us. But what does that cause us to do? It causes us to see this big God grow bigger and to think that that big God would condescend to me and make me part of who he is, that I would know him in a saving way and that he would invite me to come and share the universe with him for eternity?

Why would he do that? I want to say, don't you know me? Don't you know who I really am? And the scripture comes back, oh, oh, I knew you before I ever made the world.

I knew you better than you know yourself now, then. And I chose you. I chose you. I chose to give you love and not justice.

[20:29] I chose to give you mercy and not justice. If I gave you justice, you'd have to die. And you'd have to suffer in hell. Because that's what we all deserve.

Folks, it is a marvel that God chose one person, much less a host of people. I don't, I don't struggle with the fairness and all that stuff.

I say to myself, I can't believe he chose me and I sure can't believe that he chose just one. But he did. He chose many. So we're talking about foreknowledge and we're talking about how God loved you beforehand.

Again, let's look at some more scripture. Just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before him.

There it is. In love, he predestined us, predetermined to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to himself, to himself.

[21:36] That's Ephesians 1, 4, and 5. This is another place where Paul is helping to just flesh out the reality of God's choosing us and making us holy and beloved.

In God's beforehand foreknowledge, in God's beforehand love of you, he acted in that love to predetermine your destiny and guarantee your salvation.

Now, I'm glad for that because I know if left to myself, I would still be running with the crowd I was running with or found some other hombres to run with, but running away from the Lord for sure. But God took care of that. He guaranteed all of that. Look, even Peter tells us, the apostle Peter tells us that we are chosen, look, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, 1 Peter chapter 1, verses 1 and 2, that's the context there.

He's talking about us being chosen in the Lord Jesus Christ. Even Peter teaches this. Now, here's the question that I want to answer for you before we move on. what does it mean for God to foreknow us?

[22 : 47] What does it mean for God to foreknow us? And I've been hitting on it. John MacArthur explains it this way. This is a predetermined choice by God.

It is the knowing of predetermined intimate relationship. As when God said to Jeremiah, before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.

See, that's not a hard thing for God, is it? Jesus spoke of the same kind of knowing when he said, I am the good shepherd and I know my own.

So God chose you from his beforehand or his predetermined choice to love you before he ever made the world. So this is an intimate, deliberate, sacrificial, special, compassionate, and saving love which he has set on you and has had for you since before creation.

Again, this is why I'm bringing this to you. As we move back into Genesis 1 and talk about the creation account, I want to help you understand why the creation account itself is so important to you, understanding how God works in his world and how he works to save his people, why he made you, why Jesus came to the cross.

[24 : 07] This is all brought together as we look at creator God and saving God. All of that comes together. Now, someone might ask, and they have asked this, I asked this, someone might ask, well, doesn't God love everyone like that?

Because certainly there are churches out here, churches in quotes, there are churches out here, there are teachers out here, there are guys on TV out here that are telling everybody that God loves everybody and that everybody is going to be in heaven one day because God would never send anyone to hell.

And so we asked the question, does God love everyone like what we're describing right now? Well, now listen, here's the answer, God does have a love for each person that he made in his image. He does. How could he not? But the point of being chosen, the point of God's electing grace is to highlight God's unconditional, unmerited, undeserving, saving love for those whom he's chosen. This is supposed to highlight that reality about God's sovereignty and salvation. All right, I know that might bring up a question or two in your mind and we're here to help answer those as we can.

[25 : 34] But I want to hasten on to the second part of this because all of this is I'm going to hope, I'm hoping and prayerfully hoping this is going to help flesh this out for you. Unconditionally consecrated is the second item I want to bring out of this text.

So as those, now we know who those are who have been chosen. We are those chosen, what does he say? Holy, holy.

We are chosen of God, holy. And so as those who have been chosen of God and made holy, what in the world? God made you the object of his forgiveness, forgiveness.

For God to make you holy means that he set you apart to himself. God knows you as his own and God owns you.

That's a good thing. You are specially, wonderfully, and eternally related to God because he has freed you, forgiven you for all your sins, and made you pure.

[26 : 47] That's holiness. God did that work in you. So friends, look, your freedom, forgiveness, and purity came at the cost of Jesus' sinless life being given up for you.

Yes? That's what it cost God to make you holy. You had to receive the holiness of his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, for you to be holy.

This is what we're talking about. Jesus was offered on the cross in place of your sinful life. Jesus was your sin bearer.

He was your sin bearer. This is what the word says. God made Jesus, who knew no sin, to be sin on your behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:21. Folks, this is why becoming the righteousness of God in Christ. This is why God chose you. This is why Jesus was born.

[27 : 56] sin. It puts a whole new spin on Christmas when you start looking at the scripture and thinking about this. When we sing about this baby born in a manger and we realize this baby born in a manger was born for a specific purpose.

He was born to die as your substitute on the cross paying for your sin debt to release you from the power and penalty of sin and give you hope for eternity with God in heaven forever.

that's the work of this great creator God that we've been studying and learning more about. This is why the Lord chose you.

This is why Jesus was born. It's a reciprocal kind of relationship. This is a wonderful quote that I want to share with you from J.I. Packer. Look at this. The father is as concerned to exalt the son as he is to rescue the lost and it is as true to say that the elect were appointed for Christ the beloved son as it is to say that Christ was appointed for the beloved elect.

Let me let you take that in. You see friends it's not either or. It's both and.

[29 : 23] God is concerned to exalt his son and rescue the lost.

They're not in competition. These doctrines are beautiful. They're precious. And they need to be safeguarded by the church and proclaimed unashamedly with much grace, kindness and patience. Paul told us why God chooses some for salvation. Paul told us again, this is not a mystery in the scriptures. Why? Why did God choose some for salvation?

Here's what he told us. God predestined us to adoption as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ to himself. Why? According to the kind intention of his will.

That's the answer. I can't go deeper than that. I'm telling you as much as I know. The purpose of our calling, the purpose of our being set apart to God made holy.

[30 : 40] Is the merciful difference Jesus makes in us. Our purpose for God setting us apart in holiness is that we might show the kindness of God for the undeserving.

We don't wear this in this pride, looking down on everyone else in the world. We wear this with tremendous humility, praying with that humility that God will help us to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which we've been called.

That people will see the kindness and the tenderness and the gentleness and the sacrifice that Jesus displayed for us on the cross. To win us to himself.

And that it will change us forever. And that people will see, now mark this, people will see the difference, the difference that Jesus is making in you and I.

And that difference will shine forward and we will be able to say, let me tell you who it is that makes that difference in me. His name is Jesus Christ.

[31 : 56] You might ask at this point, well man, with all this talk about people who are chosen and elect and electing grace and all that kind of stuff, why would we even bother to go out there and tell people if God's already decided?

And I have two answers for you to that. It's a one coin, two sides. Number one, because God tells us to. And that ought to end it right there, because God tells us to.

But we'll add one more to it that'll help us. Because we don't know who they are. We don't know who they are. Do you know who the elect are?

Do they wear a big E on their heads? Can you put on special glasses and see E burned into their, no, that's ridiculous. You and I don't know who the elect are. I didn't know I was elect.

So God tells us to share the hope of the gospel with everyone. And we should. Because we don't know who they are and God tells us to do it. Simple as that.

[32 : 58] Do you love them? Do you care about them? them? This is the way that you and I go out and hunt them down. We tell everybody. Here's when we know they're elect.

When they get saved. When they join the church. They begin to serve and express the fruit of the spirit in their life over the course of time. When they run into the trials and persecutions of this life and they persevere in faithfulness.

those are all demonstrations of a heart that's been converted to Christ. But we don't know who they are. I don't know who they are. You don't know if your kids are. You don't know if your relatives are. I don't either. That doesn't have to bother you. That doesn't have to turn everything upside down for you. Listen. I you guys some of you know I have three unsaved grown children.

The very is it heartbreaking. It certainly is. The very very best place for them to be is right where they are right now with their salvation not depending on their father to find the right words or the right timing or the right place for them to get saved.

[34 : 07] The best place for them to be right now is in the hands of a God that I trust with their souls. He knows them and he knows the timing and if those three children are elect if God chose them before the foundation of the world then nothing in this universe will thwart their salvation and I can rest my heart in that truth.

And that's why I'm not at home in a heaping mess right now sobbing my eyes out and not being able to serve you or serve my wife or be useful to God in any other way because I'm so overcome with my own grief.

What gives me hope to do this and preach this with conviction? A sovereign God who loves his people and sent his son to die for them to purchase them away from sin.

And so what do I do with my three kids? I keep living for Christ and I keep sharing the hope of Christ with them. I know that I might die and they may not be converted at my death.

That doesn't mean they won't be converted. They don't need me to be converted. You see? God's big isn't he? Let him be big.

[35 : 23] Let him be big. That's a good place to be. Growing in the bigness of God's love and heart for his people is where we want to be. What was the question that I asked?

Does it encourage? Does it inspire? Does it warm?

Does it motivate you to godliness for you to know that God chose and guaranteed your own holiness before he ever made the world? God made you and God made setting you apart to himself your destiny before he ever made the world.

Now if God chose my destiny for me before he ever made the world what about free will? No he's not going to go there is he?

Yeah I am. Because it's here. It's here. If God chose my destiny before he ever made the world what about my free will?

[36 : 27] What about each person's right and each person's personal power to choose what they will believe and how they will live? Well let's deal with that in my final point.

So here's what we've covered unconditionally chosen unconditionally consecrated now unconditionally cherished. Now remember the unconditional part means that God did not look into the future and see something about you or in you that caused him to choose you instead of that one or that one or that one.

The unconditional part is it was not conditioned on anything about your merit your ability your social class where you came from none of that stuff.

God chose you based on what we've read according to the kind intention of his will from himself.

God chose each one of us. All right now finally unconditionally cherish because that's what the text says.

Notice again in verse 12. So so he's kind of wrapping up what he said from one to eleven. So as those who've been chosen of God then holy and notice beloved.

[37 : 36] That's where I get cherished as those who have been chosen of God holy and beloved. God made you the object of his love.

Now this is an astounding thing when you consider what we were before God saved us. Again I was saved in college so I had plenty of time to live a life in sin. Suzanne was saved when she was a very little girl.

She had sinned. She was born in it and she had sinned but her sin in her life looked very different from me as a college student and her a seven year old little girl.

Nevertheless sin sin right. So we all have that to deal with. The fact is we were all spiritually dead to God prior to salvation we were all spiritually dead to God.

God we lived we lived in this life as enemies of the cross of Christ according to the Apostle Paul.

We were separated from God. We were hostile to God in our minds.

[38 : 39] We were stubborn and selfish and prideful rebels to his will. We were children of God's wrath because of all of that we deserve God's holy punishment.

His holy anger on our life and yet and yet friends listen now knowing all that about us in love God predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to himself.

You say wait a minute now. God saw me do all that stuff. No no no no listen. That's not what it says. This is predestined. God saw before he ever made the world that you would live like that. God said he would set his love on you anyway. Jeff how could he do that because he knew he would give his son to free you.

That's why. He didn't do it based on your merit. He did it based on the son's merit being credited to you.

[39 : 44] Let's just let him keep getting bigger and bigger and let his love grow and grow because you'll never contain it.

You'll never fully understand the riches of the love that we have. Paul prayed that we would in Ephesians that we would know the depth and the height and the breadth and the length of God's love for us in Christ.

This is a this is an amazing thing. You know you and I are born rebels to his will because we are born with our wills enslaved to sin.

OK. Our wills are deceived and set against God. Now we ask the question. What is your will? What is the will in a human being?

It is your center for activating choice. To say I want this. I choose that I'm going to do this. Those are expressions of your will. Your will determines and sets in motion the desires of your heart.

[40 : 48] It's the choice center in you. So when you will to say or do something you're acting from your heart or from the core of who you really are.

What makes you you? For example. For example. This is just a generic example. If what you desire most in your heart is some form of personal pleasure.

Then your will activates your body in a pursuit for that pleasure. So the material point in all of that and then that cycle that I've just described to you.

You want something you desire something to the utmost. Your will is going to activate your body in a pursuit to fulfill that desire. Right with me.

Here's the material point in all of that that we need to understand. No part of our being including our will is left uncorrupted by sin.

[41 : 52] Our will then is not free from sin. What what what what is what does that mean?

Unbelievers hear me carefully now.

Unbelievers are free to make choices. You got up. Well you're not an unbeliever. Most of you are not unbelievers in here. Let's do an unbeliever. Unbelievers can get up in the morning and they can decide whether they want toast or whether they want pancakes.

They can decide to put on the blue shirt instead of the red shirt. They can decide whether they're going to take the truck or the car. You know that we make choices like that all day long every day about stuff that we do stuff that we say.

Human beings are free to that extent. And we are morally responsible before God our creator for the choices that we make for every word that comes out of our mouth that we choose to say the things that we choose to do with our life how you spend your resources what you put your priorities on all of that comes under the auspices of God as sovereign creator and you standing before him as a morally responsible creature.

All right. So unbelievers are free to make choices like that. They're responsible for the Lord for the choices that that that they make. But and here's where the spiritual difference comes in that the Bible makes clear.

[43 : 12] But unbelievers are not free. I should have bolded that. Unbelievers are not free to choose the good of what will please and honor God.

But the question is why not? They really aren't free. No. Why aren't they free? That's the question. Without Jesus Christ we are all in bondage to the deceptive and corrupting influences of sin and in this condition we're helpless to help ourselves.

You see your will is as much in bondage to sin as any other part of you. Every single part of who you are as a human being it's corrupted thoroughly by sin.

You may not act as badly or as sinfully as you're potentially capable of in any given instance but that doesn't change the fact that you are thoroughly and completely polluted corrupted by sin in every aspect of your being as an unbeliever.

There's not a vestige of you at all that is unfree from the deceptive and damning influences of sin in your life. None. Not a particle. I heard a testament example one time.

[44 : 31] This was when I was a young Christian and I didn't I didn't know any better and I was growing in in these understandings and I heard a preacher use an example and he said something to the effect of let's explain explaining how you get saved.

Let's say that you're on a boat and the boat sinks and you're in the water now and you're drowning and you've gone under several times and you're just about to go under for the last time and God because he's so accurate he throws a life thing a ring life preserver for you and as you go under your finger is just sticking up out of the water as you go down and God places that just perfectly and your finger latches on and you're able to pull yourself up.

And on the front of it you think oh oh praise the Lord. But see here's the problem with that. We are told that we're spiritually dead.

There's no spiritual life in you. You're already dead. You're not drowning. You're dead. You're dead. And dead things don't do things like that. There's no response dead.

It's dead. It's gone. That's what the Bible says. And so as spiritually dead people we don't have the spiritual animation in us to respond to God in any way.

[45 : 53] Why? Because we're in bondage to sin. We are dead in trespasses and sin. We are lifeless to the things of God. God in fact what we do is we are rebels and hostile to the Lord and we suppress the truth and unrighteousness.

If we're active in anything we're active in our rebellion against God. We're not warm to him. We're not seeking him. We're not looking for him to throw a life preserver. We can wrap a finger around it because there's one vestige left inside of me that can exercise the will for me to be saved.

No I'm dead. You with me? This is what the scripture is bearing out. Now one of the reasons that we're we're eager to teach this and put this out here in the scripture is because it magnifies Jesus Christ.

It shows us how desperate we are for a savior. A savior. Not a savior that did a little thing but a savior that did a miraculous thing. He took deadness and made it alive.

Alive. And we get no credit. Do you want credit for your salvation? I don't. I want to worship a God who saved me thoroughly.

[47 : 11] Our wills are in bondage to sin just like any other part of us is in bondage to sin. We're helpless to help ourselves as it says there at the end.

Now look at this. We sing a song. We're going to sing it at the end here. We sing a song entitled all I have is Christ. But but folks I wonder when we sing these songs do we really understand what we're singing as you were singing earlier this morning before I began to preach.

Were you looking at those songs when you when you sang to the Lord and and praised him for some aspect of what he's doing and working in your life. Were you able to do it with a song in your heart.

Were you wearing the joy of Jesus and singing it. Were you thinking about the doctrine the truth that you're rehearsing to God. You're singing to the God of the universe. I hope you're singing something worthy of him.

That's why we sing his word back to him. Because we know that's worthy of him. That's another philosophy of ministry a philosophy of worship we adopt here at grace.

[48 : 16] We sing all I have is Christ. Look look with me again at the lyrics. I once was lost in darkest night yet thought I knew the way the sin that promised joy and life had led me to the grave.

Folks that's that's deception. That's sinful deception and death. The grave is death. That's what you're singing. I was dead in my trespasses and sin against the Lord.

I was deceived. I thought I knew the way but no no. I had no hope. That you would own a rebel to your will.

And if you had not loved me first. I would refuse you still. That is great theology. Straight out of scripture.

In fact let me share this with you. First John 4:19 says this. We love because he first loved us.

[49 : 27] If we're going to be true to scripture regarding free will. We need to put the emphasis on God's free will to love us first so that we could and would love him in return.

I want to do a little more with that. God unconditionally cherishes us in his son as his people. He first set his love on us before he set the foundation of the world.

So now here's a question. Is our will important in our salvation? Yes. Yes. How can we say that? Look. We cannot be saved apart from our will choosing Christ.

No. Jeff. You just said that we can't choose him. Because our will's in bondage. I know. It's so complicated. It's not. When we read the scripture and we think carefully about how God, the creator of the universe, recreates human souls.

How does he do it? You must repent and believe the gospel. Remember how those old timey preachers would bang and point their bony finger?

[50 : 47] You. You must repent and believe the gospel. Look. It must be you who trust Jesus to forgive your sins.

It's very personal. That's all a matter of your will in action. If we don't exercise our will to turn from our sins to believe with all of our hearts that Jesus Christ is both Savior and Lord, we will not be saved.

All right. Here's the question. But how does human will, totally in bondage to sin, respond to God's commands to repent and believe? Does the scripture even answer that?

How does the human will, totally in bondage to sin, even respond to God's commands to repent and believe? And here's the answer. Our will responds to God's will, loving us to himself.

Our will responds to God's will, loving us to himself.

[51 : 59] When did God will your salvation? Before he ever made the earth or anything on it. Whose will is more important?

Whose will should we be talking about more? God's. God's. John, chapter 6, verse 44.

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. This is the drawing of God on your life to himself.

Look at this next one. All that the Father gives to me will come to me. The Father gives. When did he give? And the one who comes to me, I will certainly not cast out.

There's, you see, guarantee and certitude written all over that, don't you? Our new spiritual life in Christ does not come through men.

[53 : 06] It does not come through men. When did God make you a gift of his son or to his son? When did you become a gift given to the Lord Jesus Christ?

Because that's what we're seeing. All that the Father gives to me. Well, when did you become a gift to Jesus? At your salvation? Or could it have been another time?

Well, the scripture speaks to this. Look, look. Go with me real quickly, if you would, to John 17. I haven't kept you very busy like I usually do with this. John 17.

Just give you two little areas here where we're talking about this Father giving. The Father giving. John 17, verses 1 and 2.

Jesus spoke these things, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, he said, now he's praying to the Father. Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you.

[54 : 08] Even as you gave him authority over all flesh, and to all whom you have given him, he may give eternal life.

All that the Father has given to Jesus, Jesus will give eternal life. And then one other in John 17, verse 24.

Jesus is still praying, and he prays, Father, I desire that they also, that would refer to us, whom you have given me.

Be with me where I am, so that they may see my glory which you have given me. For you loved me before thee. When did God love Jesus Christ, the Son, who would give his life on the cross?

When did God love him? What does it say? Does that sound like what he said about you? Before the foundation of the world, I knew you, loved you, and set my saving love on you.

[55 : 14] This is throughout Scripture. Once you learn this, and grasp this, and take this into your soul, you're going to see this all over the Bible. All over the Scripture.

In John, since we're there, go back to John chapter 1 if you would. I'm going to put this on the screen, but I want you to see it in your Bible as well.

In John 1, 12 and 13. And I'll put it up here too. I'm reading from the New American Standard, by the way.

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God. Even to those, those keep showing up, doesn't it?

Even to those who believe in his name. Who were born, or saved, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

[56 : 13] So friends, our new spiritual life in Christ doesn't come through any agency of man, as I said a moment ago. It doesn't come by the will of man. It doesn't come by the will of God.

And it doesn't come initially by your will. Your will is simply responding to what God is doing in drawing you to himself. And then regenerating you.

That's the way that Scripture describes it. We were spiritually dead to God, and we were enslaved to sin.

The Scripture uses these words for specific reasons. That's what we were as unbelievers.

Therefore, look now, in his unconditional compassion, God chose to breathe new life into us.

Spiritual life into a dead spiritual creature. God reanimated us with the life of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit now lives in you as a believer.

[57 : 15] God regenerates us. These are good words from Scripture. God regenerates us at a point in time we call our salvation. God decided back before he ever made the world that this would be your reality.

But he had to give you life, physical life, and bring this spiritual reality to a point in time, didn't he? No problem for God. This is the same God who made the world in six days.

No sweat for him to do that. Nevertheless, wow, a miracle. A miracle. And God deserves our praise and our honor for it.

He reanimated us. He regenerated us. Or we would have remained spiritually dead. So he gloriously and graciously opens your heart to the love he has had for you since before creation.

I want to sum it up in terms of what Paul said in 2 Timothy 1, 8 and 9. I'll put it up here for you just for the sake of time.

[58 : 21] Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, Paul is telling young Timothy, or of me, his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God who saved us and called us with a holy calling.

Not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.

This is an eternal reality. God gives you all that you need to fully embrace him in saving faith as your God and your king.

He gives you what you need because you lack it. You don't have it. God makes good on his choice of you in eternity past by drawing you to his son in his divinely appointed moment in your life.

He makes you his beloved. In that moment, you become his beloved. You willingly choose God out of the depths of his love that he first lavished on you before he ever made the world.

[59 : 42] You're choosing the Lord out of the love the Lord has for you and has had for you. Kept, ready.

And none of that would have happened if he hadn't given you physical life. And none of that would have happened if he hadn't made a world that was habitable for you to live in. And it just goes back and goes back.

Right? This is one of the reasons that I love what I do. I love sitting there in my living room going through all of this and weeping.

And I can't wait to get to Sunday. Let Sunday get here fast, Lord. I do. I sometimes ask the Lord, please don't take me before Sunday. I don't want to die before I deliver this.

Well, the second verse of all I have is Christ. And I'll close with this and then we'll sing it.

[60 : 40] The second verse. You suffered in my place.

And led me to the cross. And I beheld God's love displayed. You suffered in my place.

You bore the wrath reserved for me. Now, all I know is grace. Hallelujah. All I have is Christ.

Hallelujah. Jesus is my life. Amen? Let's pray together. Father, we have plumbed the depths in Scripture here just briefly.

Of these magnificent doctrines that display your love for us before you ever made the world. And we are awed and astounded. Lord, we have questions too.

[61 : 46] Because this reality is arresting to our souls. But it is also balm to our souls. And so we thank you for Jesus.

We thank you that before the foundation of the earth was ever laid, the counsel of the Godhead had come to the place where Jesus, the Son, the second member of the Trinity, would come and die as a substitute for sinners.

He would die in my place so that I would have life in his name. Thank you, Father. These are things that are too marvelous for us. And we can't get all of our understanding around it. But we clearly see it in Scripture. And so help us again to embrace with our souls in faith what you teach us as you liberate us and conform us to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. In his name we pray and for his glory. Amen.