

# Ephesians 1:3-6

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Preacher: David Helm

[ 0 : 00 ] Ephesians chapter 1 verses 3 through 6 when you have it please rise to your feet for the reading of God's Word. Amen.

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 himself in him before the foundations of the world that we would 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.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Well good morning.

Good morning. It is good to be together. For those of you who like titles I might call this sermon God's grace is worthy of your praise.

[ 1 : 22 ] God's grace is worthy of your praise. If I was to throw a few superlatives on the title as the writer to Ephesians is always throwing superlatives in this letter.

It would be that the glories of God's grace are worthy of your affection and praise.

If I was to throw a few superlatives. If I was to throw a tone upon the superlatives upon the title to the message. It would simply be oh Christian wake up.

Look up. For the glories of God's grace are worthy of your affection and praise.

Last week we began our winter series in the book of Ephesians by looking at what this book promises to be on about. Namely if you remember it God's vision for Christ's church.

[ 2 : 29 ] Christ's church meant in double form. God's vision for Christ. His Christ. And his church. God's vision for Christ's church.

I want to introduce today's message with why it is that the writer is concerned to outline this vision. Why do we need such a reminder? Simply this. We need God's vision because our vision is impaired.

I'm probably not the only one in the room today that has impaired vision. You already know that given my glasses.

You get close to me and talk to me long enough. You'll know that in regard to one eye that doesn't function properly physically. Many of us have impaired vision.

[ 3 : 26 ] But we need spiritually to hear God's vision for Christ's church. Precisely because our vision is impaired. Isn't that what Paul is going to pray in verse 18?

That he wants you to have eyes. The eyes of your heart. That they would be enlightened. Let me put it this way.

We need to possess God's peripheral vision. A vision that can gaze back into eternity past and can move forward all the way into eternity future.

And it's because we suffer from nearsightedness. Nearsightedness that condition the inability to see things clearly unless they are relatively close.

We need God to burn his vision of things into our own eyeballs. Precisely because cataracts have clouded our spiritual heart.

[ 4 : 36 ] In essence, the what of Ephesians emerges from the why of our impoverished eyesight.

Put the whole book in this terms. We need reminding because we so quickly forget.

It was Abigail Adams who wrote to her husband John, second president of the United States, a bit later, about the time of the American Revolution.

And she writes these words. Posterity, who are to reap the blessings, will scarcely be able to conceive the hardships and the suffering of their ancestors.

What is she saying to her husband in the midst of their difficulty? She's saying that those who will later be possessors of the blessings can scarcely comprehend what stands behind all the things

that went into those blessings arriving.

[ 5 : 50 ] In the same way, Paul now writes to us, those who are the posterity, men and women and children who have reaped every spiritual blessing, yet, those whose eyes have grown dull, dim, dim, to the full and just appreciation of all the blessings that are ours in Christ.

Perhaps, this is why verse 3 opens as it does. 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. Three times over, pen to paper, launching into the letter.

Blessed be God who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing. And perhaps that's why verse 6 bookends the unit of our thought for this day to the praise of His glorious grace with which He has blessed us in the beloved four times over embedding words of blessing for a people whose vision is opaque at best.

notice in verse 3 the source of the blessing God the Father and what He has done for us in Christ.

[ 7 : 52 ] Notice the extent of the blessing you have been blessed with every spiritual blessing.

He has front end loaded through the Holy Spirit dwelling within you and within the church every spiritual blessing not in full but present.

The source is God the extent is universal in what He's doing and notice the place from which it comes it comes to you from the heavenlies that you and I who walk here are already amped as it were through faith in Christ with the blessings that will be ours in full from the Father in the Son.

And so what are the particular blessings that are worthy of affectionate praise in these short verses you who have read the letter in the past might know that verses 3 through 14 is one long extended sentence so wrapped up with the writer with the blessings that emerged but we'll hear in the ensuing two weeks later blessings additional blessings but the blessings of our text are twofold and the first is the blessing of election verse 4 even as He chose us in Him the word translated chose is the word which we derive the idea of election election is the first fountainhead of blessings that outline the glory of His grace that make

Him worthy of our praise I don't think speaking to men and women and children in the western world that you will have any trouble at all identifying with the word election or praising its praise worthiness I mean we who live in a free society who consider ourselves to be men and women of free independent moral determination well we would die we would fight for the ability to have free election I mean we we want this word we have little trouble understanding it we identify it after all we choose don't we we elect don't we persons all the time remember being a child on the school playground and it came time for a captain to choose or elect the players that's the way we work they were of their own determinative will to elect those that they wanted to join them on this field it's not just on the play lot we choose or not many of us anyway whether or not to get married beyond that many of you choose you have the freedom to choose whom you would marry in the church in the [ 11 : 41 ] Lord we choose some of our judges not all and they are the most difficult vote to cast when you enter into the ballot box so many there are that you freely elect we we choose in the voting cycles our representatives from our own area who will serve us in the house of representatives we choose the senators who will represent this state before the entire country we even get to elect in this country our president as well as our local school board members by just last week this very church chose elected a pastor to join us in the work yes the word election is not difficult for us to understand nor is it adversarial for us to appreciate two more things about election first we do all of this choosing all of this electing out of our free determination of our own will that's what it is to be a free citizen or a free society in fact we would not have it any other way for secondly we would find ourselves indignant were we robbed of the ability to choose would you not be indignant you were subjected to the vocational choice of another rather than that which you wanted to do you see this term election is something we identify with something that emerges from the determination of our own free will something that we would be indignant if we were to lose it how is the glory of God's election of us then something that we can identify with learn to appreciate and actually elevate into praise well think of it this way while you and I choose based on the character of others

God chooses based on his own character while you and I choose based on things which we deem to be praise worthy God chooses you and me who have very little within us that is worthy of praise I mean his choice of us is phenomenal it is elevated the fact that God would choose us according to the free determination of his own will is astounding for you know who you really are and I know who

I am somebody once said

I don't know what the heart of a bad man is like but I know what the heart of a good man is like and it is terrible and then I read these words he chose us the blessed truth about election that Paul is highlighting for the church is that God God the almighty the one who declares himself to be utterly holy pervasively pure one whose character mind and heart is truly good indeed no one is good but God that

God that God cast his eye upon you and me all who are in Christ and he freely he freely said come unto me and I will take you for my own it's overwhelming to me I know my frailties I know my faults I know my sins I know my shortcomings and even with all your frailties and faults and sins and shortcomings all your grumblings and complaining your projection of life upon others nevertheless God chose us think of it I can't think of a doctrine more humbling in the best of ways the doctrine of election ought to make the Christian the most humble in all of society and the doctrine of election ought to make Christ's church the most welcoming in all of society for all her members are fully acquainted with who they are and yet even so with what God has you might ask when did God elect us let me take a swing at your question did he elect you when you decided to take an interest in him perhaps there are many sitting here even this morning who find yourself strangely coming on week by week almost mysteriously drawn to a consideration of a

[18:44] God who would love us and elect us and draw us near to him did he did he begin this process of drawing and pulling and electing you when your mind finally began to think and consider of him did he begin it in accordance with the family that you somehow had been raised in in a very positive family therefore it led you to him did it begin because he raised you in such a horrific family that you're still trying to escape all of its entanglements and he's leading you to him no it did not begin when you began to think of him it did not begin when you were born and therefore led to consider him it began according to the text look at it even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world oh my are you kidding me from all eternity yes from everlasting to everlasting his choice of us reaches back his choice reaches back beyond time his choice reaches back beyond our comprehension his love is not limited in scope to the time that your heart began to be warmed toward him this glory of

God's grace is worthy of our praise because of not only that he does it but from when he does it now let me concede something to I'm sure at least a handful in my midst election from before the foundation of the world does this then mean that we serve an arbitrary God does the Bible then teach that he is the malicious benefactor upon some would we not be repulsed by the doctrine rather than revere him in accordance with the doctrine these are all natural thoughts

I mean natural in the best of ways these are all issues of the heart and the mind and often require conversation with the scriptures and with others but have you not read not merely when he elected us have you not read why he elected us look at the text even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that here you go why that we should be holy and blameless before him the text says that he elected us from eternity past for the purpose of making us holy and blameless and capable of holy standing in his presence in other words we are not to think of humanity as a group a collective mass lined up like children on a play lot who are absolutely neutral in stance toward the captains who are choosing what we are to see here is that humanity as a whole in the mind of God was unholy was holy unholy was completely pervasively universally particularly every single one of us unholy and therefore in his mind worthy of wrath what's the membership question say something like this do you confess yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God worthy of his just wrath save his sovereign mercy that's humanity and so the electing power of God who is both all truth and all grace and in all truth becomes grace in the person of his son can at the same time be most righteous in his salvation and in his judgment we were not all upright we are not all neutral when God sees us as a universal race we are fallen unholy save his sovereign mercy the amazing thing the amazing thing the amazing thing amazing grace is that grace would come to any of us at all by way of analogy God chose you in the same way that he chose Abraham Abraham living in the land of her was an idol worshiper and God leaning over the windowsill of heaven upon a humanity under complete universal judgment even after the flood and he says how will I demonstrate my righteousness and my mercy to a people who are gone I will elect one I will choose one and I will from him instill my promises until my own son can complete a righteous and just wrath for the sin of those that I am calling to myself and so he chooses Abraham in the same way analogously he chooses Israel the scriptures say Israel started to think they were worth something they were big they started to feel

pretty good in their own shoes and God has to look at them and say did I choose you because you were so big did I choose you because you were better did I choose you because you were badder than the rest did I see something morally superior in you that I didn't see in somebody else did I see did I have the foresight to know that you were a person in a nation of great potential whereas all the others weren't no none of it

I chose you out of your weakness out of your death out of your blood and I married you and I put life into you it is all God all God let me put it this way for those who came to Christ and are coming to Christ perhaps even today under the glorious truths of this comforting doctrine it's not that he sees something in us that he does not see in another it's not that he deems us to be morally superior to others no of course not he chose you to be in him for no reason in and of yourself at all now notice though it says he chose you to be holy and blameless before him if his choosing of us is humbling this choosing for the purpose of standing in his presence is hopeful you you have been chosen in Christ to stand faultless before

[ 26 : 46 ] God forever you before him not not some creature winged creature without freedom of determination of will but you how should we feel about knowing that God elected us perhaps this will make you ready to be more open to embracing the doctrine let me quote an old dead preacher as all preachers will one day be Charles Spurgeon I love this quote catch it I believe the doctrine of election because I am quite sure that if God had not chosen me I should never have chosen him and I am sure he chose me before I was born or else he never would have chosen me afterwards and he must have elected me for reasons unknown to me for I never would find any reason in myself why he should have looked upon me with special love so

I am forced to accept the doctrine beautiful get this right our election in Christ is on the is your election in him is the grounds for your holiness holiness is not the grounds for his election you and I were not chosen because we were holy or are holy we were chosen by God with a plan to make us holy so let me put the blessing of election as we find it in verse four in the most positive and personal terms here it is the doctrine of election a glorious grace that makes us God worthy of praise one God did it and no one made him do it he did it because he wanted to do it not only did God do it but he did it before time he's always been in your mind you have always been on his mind can't even say that about your mother and he did it for the purpose of making you holy capable of standing before him is that not a stupendous cause for rejoicing is not this glorious truth of God's grace worthy of praise does not this make you more humble does not this make you more hopeful that he is actually accomplishing something in you let me put it this way in pastoral terms as we have just lost Wes Thomason faithful attendee and worker in this church at the age of 34 two weeks ago he sat in chairs in our midst and in one sense what God had for Wes to do was completed in another sense God completed his own work on that day God's work was being completed in bringing his own whom he had called whom he had loved whom he had embraced whose eyes of his heart had been enlightened whose response was to love God and serve Christ God's work was done and therefore now he stands I stand alone in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene well let me turn it because verses five and six and I won't be as long here mirror in form by way of amplification what has already been put down in verse four by way of explanation God chose us before the foundation of the earth to stand in his presence so too God predestined us for adoption into his family to the praise of his glorious grace it's as simple as that when you read verses four I mean five and six it's therefore not just the blessing of election but here it's the blessing of adoption look at it in love which

I believe while it tails off at the end of verse four there is in all likelihood the opening of what we would consider to be verse five as long as you remember that verses three to fourteen is one sentence anyway in love 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 adoption not just election but adoption this really is striking to me God has brought you into his family that's the second blessing of election God has spoken of here as a father I don't know what kind of father you had I can only tell you that you begin to understand [ 32 : 37 ] Christianity a bit not by rejecting God as father but by coming to understand that God is the good father he he's the one that gives birth to you he's the one that plants seed of life in you he's the one who will rightly spiritually protect you he's the one that will forgive you he's the one that actually loves you now I can see that when you and I in this neighborhood begin to see terms in the Bible about God we think of paternalistic ineptitude and when we begin to see terms like sons we

think of sexist jargon so I understand that these terms which are here might actually make one resist to the glories of election and adoption but this is not sexist language this is language of the first century

Levant this is a Roman concept along the Mediterranean bend where the sonship of the father is relaying truths about the inheritor of what the father has it's language of heir so to be a son of the father is to be an heir to be a child of God to be a daughter of God is to be in Christ and the one who will receive the inheritance as his rightful heir in other words you want to be this son you want to be this heir you want to have God as father the one from whom all blessings flow is now going to be flowing down in and through and to you that's what adoption does that's what family does would you not want to be adopted into a family where the father is good and the inheritance is plentiful with

God you have a father who is perfect with the father you have a wealth that is inexhaustible let me get your attention if you drifted how many of you would not want inexhaustible wealth and he says you have every spiritual blessing in Christ in other words if you get Christ you get the fullness of the riches that he is the inheritor of I don't know how to get it to you I'm thinking of Marcus Aurelius which you're like okay well that's not going to do it this this ancient Roman who becomes the emperor of the empire somewhere around 161 in the common era he takes over his reign he succeeds

Antonius Pius upon his death and Marcus Aurelius is none other than the adoptive son of the succeeding emperor not by blood but by the free determinative choice of the emperor to look down the line and decide who he would put in his line to succeed him and so suddenly Marcus Aurelius in the golden hour of the Roman empire receives the full extent of the kingdom because he's the heir and that's what this is saying the blessings that demonstrate the glories of his grace are that he has put you in his family not merely so that you would be holy and stand before him forever but that his glory his grace would be given to you in all of its fullness

I mean it is it is going to be astounding eye hath not seen ear hath not heard the mind cannot yet comprehend all that is ours no wonder blessed is the death saints die in the Lord and yet for some I'm sure even at this point in the message still yet might find election and adoption both troublesome and difficult the lingering idea that it's an unsettling notion but let me say that this humbling doctrine this hopeful doctrine ought to make us the most happy of people because he is at work he is at work in you let me put it to you this way why would we not want to grant unto

[ 38 : 05 ] God what we would demand for ourselves the free moral determination of will or are we the ones who are the ultimate possessors of it and he should not be able to have it even though we are the creature that in all of the free determination of our will are reflecting that which is his but his is all moral and good and upright why would we shun God's glory when we demand it for ourselves would we not give God the freedom to choose come on you you want to give everyone around you the freedom to choose but not God if we would not have it in any other way for ourselves how would we withhold this from

God and if we would be indignant if someone tried to take it from us would God not have the right to be indignant if the creature would not give to the creator that which was his due besides if God should be making an alternate family in the world which is what I think he's doing and what I think people are joining here an alternate family already in the heavenlies that walks alongside the kingdoms of this world if God should be making an alternate family for himself among us isn't it true that people outside the faith actually have no long lasting desire to be numbered among his own anyway don't we find men and women always everywhere rejecting God's offer don't we find men and women perhaps even in our midst who yet would despise God's son don't we find people who they just flat out they don't want to be inheritors of an everlasting kingdom they would rather freely rightly elect choose to go on with this world instead by way of analogy and with some closing such people are like bike riders in the summer along

Lake Michigan front who come across a family at reunion and you always recognize them in Chicago because they're all wearing the same colored t-shirt but the bike riders are speeding along to their own destination not their family in all likelihood no interest in being in their family but what if you drive by the lake front and the family in t-shirts was a church family where God was the father not by blood but by faith what if what if what you're missing is an understanding that this family already has bought extra shirts for you and they're just simply waiting for you to choose to come on over what if they had already planned to welcome you what if you were to learn that a relationship

with God as father through them and their witness was open to you what if you had always wanted brothers and sisters who would walk with you and what if you did come you would find yourself amazed at

God's grace as they live with one another what if your mind became awakened what if your eyes became enlightened what if your lips began to add to the chorus of praise praise his glorious grace is worthy of praise wake up sleeper arise shine Christ wants to rest upon you and it begins through the humbling receptivity of election it moves to the hopeful outcome that God is at work it creates the happiest of peoples who stand like we did even this morning and we'll do in just a moment and open a full throated musical sound to the infinite praise of the glories of his grace it's all grace it's all grace all grace all grace we bring nothing but he wants to bring everything our heavenly father awaken us to the glories of the grace that are in God through

Christ which are worthy of praise no which are worthy of affectionate praise no which are worthy of joyous affectionate praise no which are worthy of our infinite everlasting joyous affectionate praise in his name we pray and sing amen crow crow crow