

# God's Free Gift of Freedom and Grace

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's just be honest. I'm going to be honest with you. I try to be honest with you all the time, so this isn't just like a weird thing. But let's be honest. That long text of the Bible that Nora just read, my guess is that if you're at all like me, you started tuning out very quickly.

Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. It's very, very theological. It seems to have all these abstract ideas. It doesn't seem very practical. It doesn't seem very gripping. It doesn't have a joke. It seems to be irrelevant.

And on top of it, all of a sudden, in the midst of all this stuff, we're just going on and on and on and on and on and on. Predestination. On and on and on and on. Predestination. So it seems to go from being irrelevant and boring to, what did he just say?

Because many, many, many Christians are very, very bothered with this doctrine of predestination. And it seems as if it was said twice in the text. So what we're going to do is we're going to walk towards this.

We're going to walk towards why is it that this text seems so boring, so abstract, so needlessly theological. Why it seems to be so impractical. And a lot of it is just revealing things about our hearts.

[ 1 : 19 ] Because as I think we'll be able to see if we spend some time with it. And I'm confessing with you. I confess with my devotions. It's easy for me just to, my eye just rolls over and rolls over until I get to something interesting.

I'm being honest with you. I have that problem too, often when I read the Bible, especially when I read texts like this. But let's walk towards it, okay? Let's walk towards it together. So if you have your Bible, we're not going to jump into the Bible right away, but we will be looking at the Bible to go through this text.

And it's Ephesians chapter 1. And as you sort of find your Bibles or power them up on your phone so you can find them, and just look at the Bible, don't check your Instagram, just the Bible. And just as you're doing that, just keep in mind, we're not going to talk about this very much this week.

But it is really interesting to know that Paul wrote this while he was in jail. Like, this doesn't sound like a jail letter, right? If I was writing you a letter from jail, it would be, please pray for me.

This is scary. You know, fortunately nobody's beaten me up yet. I mean, I don't know. Like, that's how I would begin a letter from jail. But this doesn't sound like a letter from jail, but it is.

[ 2 : 28 ] It's a letter from jail. But we're going to talk about that more. He's written either around the year 60, 61, 62, to a group of churches in a place called Ephesus. But here, let's walk in towards some of this stuff.

I'm going to begin by telling you a story that helps us to understand the scary doctrine of predestination and all that's going on with it. You know, usually when I talk about people, I use like Bob or Sue.

But in this case, I'm going to use a person's name, Ruth Jo Bartram. Ruth Jo Bartram, who's now with the Lord, was a great woman. And she played a really important role in our lives.

You know, we were probably at the time, I don't know, in our 30s. And she seemed really old. She was like probably 70 or something like that. Really, really, really old. But she was a very wise woman, very loving.

And she had a real profound influence on our family. She was in the first parish where I was privileged to be the rector in the parish of Eganville. And she was very kind to us, very giving, wise.

[ 3 : 32 ] I can't say enough good things about her. You know, obviously she had her faults. But she was just a very, very important woman in her lives. And I had done funerals for people who had Alzheimer's or Nementia.

But Ruth Jo was the first person where I actually entered into the reality of Alzheimer's in a small way. Ruth Jo was always eccentric.

Okay? One of the things that was eccentric about her is she loved trees. Like, I mean, she loved trees. Like, she didn't go hugging them and stuff like that. But, like, there was going to be, she, God had blessed her with some wealth.

There was going to be a development, not that, just where she drove. She drove by it all the time. There was going to be a development, some restaurant, a bar, all that type of stuff. And she didn't want it to go in. So she bought the land.

Why did she buy the land? To develop it? No. So the trees could grow there. She's a bit eccentric. Okay? She knew what she liked and she put her money into what she liked. She liked trees. She liked kids as well.

[ 4 : 33 ] She liked ice cream. I could go on. But here's the point. She was eccentric. And all of a sudden she started to become more eccentric. Her decisions became a little bit more eccentric and random. And a person who was very close to her started to try to be very, I thought, rude and direct and claim that she was having mental problems and dementia.

And I denied it. I was in denial. There was a division amongst people who loved Ruth Jo as saying that this person was just trying to muscle in and get her money and doing all of this type of stuff. But the fact of the matter is, as time went on, it became very obvious.

In fact, tragically, Ruth Jo had dementia. She had Alzheimer's. And the family member, the person who we thought was being really mean, she just recognized it right away, way before the rest of us. And it's really, really hard to see a person who had been very independent, very wise, very loving, lose her free will, lose her control of her faculties. It's very hard to watch it happen.

And she, in fact, died a few years later from it. I went back. It was the only, at the time, the only funeral I did that I had, after I left my former parish, it's the only funeral I did where I went back to my parish, former parish, to do the funeral memorial service for her when she died.

[ 5 : 49 ] But here's the point about all of this. Here's the point about all of this. The doctrine of predestination implies that God is sovereign over all things.

And when he's sovereign over all things, things work together according to his will. And the problem we have with this idea and with predestination is that we somehow think we have to try to carve out some freedom despite God's will.

And I put it up like here, like on this. You are not free despite the Lord being sovereign over all things. The truth is, whatever freedom you have is because the Lord is sovereign over all things. See, that's why I shared this story. The fact of the matter is, is that nature doesn't guarantee your ability to make free choices. The tiniest little breakdown in your chemistry takes away your free choices.

I mean, you could talk to Jeremiah afterwards. He's in there a lot. He can tell you all these little tiny, minus things that just take away your freedom. And if we live long enough, I mean, most of us don't have the privilege of being able to just sort of die.

[ 7 : 07 ] You know, we've just gone, you know, we're 98 years old. We just went for a, you know, 20-mile walk and we're reading War and Peace after having had a nice cup of coffee and then we die in our favorite chair.

That doesn't happen to most of us, right? And so the fact of the matter is, is that nature conspires at some point in time to take away our freedom. And what happens, the problem I had when I, because I used to have lots of problems with the doctrine of predestination, is I had what I call the Switzerland syndrome.

And the Switzerland, Switzerland's been neutral for 450 years or something like that. And it's as if Christianity has this problem. But outside of Christianity, everybody else has, I mean, you know, it's just obvious you're free.

But that's not the way it is. If you think about it, like most people just sort of somehow think that it's just a part of nature that we're free. But the story of Ruth, Joe, and countless other illnesses, and that's not, and that's separate from people who suffer from schizophrenia and bipolar and all of that, is that, in fact, nature doesn't guarantee that you and I are free.

That nature, freedom is always something like a gift. And the very, very first crisis of faith that I ever had as a young Christian, I'd only been a Christian eight months or six months, was I'd been sharing the gospel with these two guys who are philosopher types.

[ 8 : 20 ] And they looked at me with a very superior smile. And they said, George, you think you believe all those things because you've come to a conclusion about it. But you're completely and utterly wrong. So, cause and effect, George, cause and effect.

You take a pool table and you roll the ball and the ball hits another ball and it all just bounces. It's all a cause creates an effect which creates another cause, which is another cause, which is another effect.

That's what science teaches us, George. That's how the world works. There's just a cause to an effect to a cause to an effect to a cause to an effect. And you might think you're free, but it's an illusion. You're just eluding yourself.

It's just all cause and effect. That's how science works. That was my first crisis of faith. I didn't know how to answer it. Didn't know how to answer it. I was, I mean, literally, I almost left, I almost stopped being a Christian over it.

I won't go into all of it, how I eventually, what, here's a bit of a summary about it. You see, here's the problem. And it's a problem that every system of thought has to answer.

[ 9 : 22 ] The fact of the matter is, is that just most people in Canada never even think about it. But in fact, it's an issue. How can you live in a world, everything in the world seems to indicate that there is, in fact, cause and effect.

Yet on the other hand, one of the things which is most obvious to us is that we have freedom. How can there be freedom in a world with cause and effect? Like, okay, you're making a cool, hip spirituality of your own.

Okay, well, how do you answer the question? Hinduism. You can't just say, well, it's all illusion. No, no, answer the question. You know Buddhism? It's all illusion. No, no, no, answer the question.

Is it all just illusion that there's cause and effect? Like, if that's the case, then how did things come to be? Like, answer the question. Islam just embraces it by saying, well, it sucks to be you.

Everything's just caused by God. Sucks to be you for some of you and good to be you for others. I don't want to be belittling about it, but they just have a doctrine, overwhelming doctrine of God's sovereignty causing everything.

[ 10 : 28 ] But think about it for a second. Like, huh? How is it that there really is cause and effect? And how is it that there's freedom? You see, I think that only the Bible, in fact, these texts are going to help to make it clear, only the Bible actually helps you to understand why it is that there really is freedom and there really is cause and effect.

Get your Bibles out. We're going to look at verse 3, and then we're going to jump down to verse, sort of verse, last bit of verse 4, and then verse 5 and 6. I'm going to put the first one up here on the screen, which I'll do right now.

And you'll notice we read normally from the ESV. This translation that you see up here for verse 3 is a little bit different. What it is is I've taken some literal stuff in the translation and I've added it to the ESV to sort of bring out something which is there in the original language.

And here's what it says in verse 3. I'm going to read now from the screen, but it's in verse 3. Let's read that again.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every blessing of the Spirit in the high heavenlies in Christ. And what we can see here is at the very beginning of this long prayer, this intensely theological part, is there's the doctrine of the Trinity.

[ 11 : 52 ] It's right there. It's sort of hidden in our translation with the word spiritual. But really, if you look at the original language, spiritual is a good word. It can be a bit confusing. But what they mean in the ESV is not something inner and meaningful.

What they mean is something given by the Holy Spirit. And so you see right off the bat in the text, there is this idea of the Trinity, something which we think of as being abstract and irrelevant, but it's an unbelievably important doctrine.

You see, what it's saying is this, that from the beginning of creation, I've said this before, I'll say it again, in a sense everything that exists, other than the evil which came into the world through us, came as a result of light and life and love.

You see, from all eternity, the Father existed, the Son existed, and the Holy Spirit existed. Three persons but one God. They were in unity, but they were different. I know it's a mystery.

But from all eternity, the Father has loved and known the Son. And from all eternity, the Son has known and loved the Father. And sometimes when you look at how the Holy Spirit is described,

sometimes the Holy Spirit, he's always a separate person, distant, but also sometimes the Holy Spirit himself is the love that goes between the Father and the Son and back and forth from all eternity.

[ 13 : 06 ] And what this means is this, it was when the triune God creates, he wasn't creating because he wished he had a puppet to play with. He wasn't creating because he was lonely.

He didn't create because he got tired of saying, I'm so great, I'm so great, I'm so great. I'd like to create beings that will say, God, you're so great. He didn't do it out of that. From all eternity, the Father loved the Son, the Son loved the Father, and the Holy Spirit is both a separate person and the love from the Father to the Son.

And it's out of that love that God creates. And so what does he create? He creates a world that is going to have love as the most important ingredient of it.

And in love, you both have to have some degree of ability to have causality. Like, Louise can't make us supper if there's not something like causality.

But at the same time, God made us so that there can be love, which implies freedom. See, the way God made every human being is that on one hand, he made us as bodily beings, where if somebody punches me, the laws of physics can tell you how that punch is going to affect me.

[ 14 : 20 ] But at the same time, he made every human being with a soul, a spirit. And out of that comes the mind and the heart and the will, which is both acts into the world of cause and effect and is partially affected at times by cause and effect, but is outside of the flow of cause and effect.

You can listen to it later on in the tape if I've gone a bit too quick. Only Christianity accounts for that within the sense of creation and why. See, jump down to the next bit versus the last little bit of 4 and 5.

Remember, because Paul is bringing this all out and this thing which seems so abstract, yet it's accounting for freedom and causality. In love, in love, he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons.

Later on, I'll tell you why it says sons and it doesn't say children, it says sons later on. If I forget to do it later on, ask me at coffee because it's really important. 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.

In love, for love, he created us with a soul, a mind, which is outside on one hand, the flow of cause and effect, but is partially affected by it and can act in to the flow of cause and effect.

[ 15 : 45 ] And while you see nature, cause and effect can't guarantee freedom. Nature cannot guarantee freedom. It is only if the Lord is the creator of all things and the sustainer of all things that he himself, who is uncaused, has no environment, that he can guarantee to you and me the gift of freedom.

Only if God is sovereign over all things can any human being have any freedom or be able to love. Oh, but George, come on.

Okay, that's really interesting. You sort of caught me by surprise. But predestined? Predestined? Doesn't that sort of imply, George, that you're some sort of like little puppet at the hands of God? And, you know, when you, I actually, when I gave my life to Christ, you know, true confession, I walked down an aisle. I know altar calls aren't very trendy anymore.

I walked down an aisle in front of a whole 800 people or 500 people walked down the aisle to give my life to Christ. That's what I did. And, George, isn't predestined just to imply that God's up there and he was just making you walk down the aisle?

[ 17 : 05 ] Doesn't that sort of go against it? No, the sovereignty of God and the fact that he guarantees our freedom is important to understand and understand what this doctrine of predestination is trying to communicate.

And I'm going to put it up here and then I'm going to show how it is there in the text. In salvation, all of the initiative and all of the power comes from the triune God. There is no ground for you or me to be proud.

You and I can only marvel in gratitude and praise. Now, why do I say that?

Just a little while ago, I was talking to somebody very influenced by, you know, that we have an astral body and a higher body and different types of bodies and, you know, there's spiritual energies and all that are in us.

And he had asked me, this is like a couple of months ago, he'd asked me about a sermon and I was talking about a sermon of healing. He liked it. He looked at it and he said, what was really going on is that Jesus said these things and it inspired the man and he was able to, you know, to align his chakras and his astral body was doing this.

[18:19] He gave me this long explanation about why all this stuff went and caused him to become healthy. So I listened to it all. Ten minutes, he went on. I listened to it all. And then I said to him, once again, I don't know why anybody ever talks to me a second time.

You should pray that I'm nicer. So I said to him, if that's true, I'm way better than you. So I said to him, he said, what?

He said, by any objective analysis, I'm vastly more healthy than you are. In fact, the man actually has cancer. I'm vastly more healthy than you. Any doctor would say that.

I bet my blood pressure is better, my fat content, you know, I'm not as pale. I didn't say that to him. I just said, I'm way healthier than you. That obviously means that you're doing a bad job of aligning your chakras and your astral self.

And I'm doing it way better than you. Doesn't that what that means? Nobody had ever said that to him. He was shocked. And he really came at me hard to try to.

[19:27] And what he did is the way he came back at me, by the way, was completely and utterly reasonable because he's a very smart and reasonable man. But the way he came back at me was he completely ignored the astrals and the chakras and the balancing and all that type of stuff.

And he said, no, George, it has to also do. I mean, maybe you just, you know, physiologically have like, you know, you're given a better body. And, you know, yeah, but you've left what you just said. See, now here's the thing. And this is what I said to him and I shared with him. I said, here's the reason why people hate religion. They both love religion and hate religion because we love pride and hate pride.

We love pride in ourself. We cannot detect pride in ourselves, but we hate pride in others. That's what happens. You see, it's not just because, you see, really, if you take this doctrine, and that's how it is.

So all the healthy people, you know, the slim people who do all their yoga and they're vegans and they're going to live to be 153 and all of that stuff. And then there's the rest of us.

[20:25] And, you know, they can be, they can, we hide it because we're Canadians. You're not supposed to be proud, but it comes out to people. And that's why the people in the bar, you know, who are drinking their fourth Jack Daniels and have just had their third plate of nachos, and they don't like those people because they're so self-righteous about their yoga and stuff like that.

And it's not just religious. It goes everywhere, you know, because it could also be, well, look at me. I exercise. I do this and that. Look at you. You're a couch potato. Like, look at me. I'm better than you. It could be the money people. George, you waste money in Starbucks.

Look at that. You don't do this. You don't do that. You don't do that. Look at me. I heck a lot more money than you. We don't detect our own pride. We love our own pride. We're blind to it.

And we hate it when we see it in other people. And what is Paul showing in this text? Friend, if you are a Christian, if I am a Christian, you have nothing to be proud of.

Get out your Bibles. We're going to go through it. I'm just going to read it from the screen. We're going to go very, very quick. Look at this. What does the text say? God the Father chose you before time began.

[21:35] I didn't do it right. I did. Okay. God the Father chose you before time began. One moment. Before he knew how witty and smart I am.

Before he knew my good people skills. Like, before he knew how holy I could be and how well I can interpret the Bible.

He chose me before any of that. God chose you before time began. Verse 4. He predestined you for adoption.

Verse 5. He blessed you in the beloved. You didn't earn your blessing. It's not because he blessed you.

He lavished his grace upon you. Verse 7 and 8. He provided you redemption through the blood of Christ.

[22:39] Verse 7. He provided you forgiveness through the blood of Christ. Verse 7. He blessed you with grace through Christ.

Verse 7. He made known to you the mystery of his will. Verse 9. He provided Christ Jesus for you. Verse 9. He bestows upon you a full inheritance. You didn't earn it. He bestowed it upon you. He sealed you with the Holy Spirit. And that means two things. It means on one hand, if you could see from God's perspective, if you were a child of Christ, he's put a big tattoo on you. To say, this is mine. Precious possession. And there's another sense of it. The same thing is you can imagine as if he's put a force field around you to keep you his and to protect you from things from the outside.

[ 23 : 44 ] He sealed you. He did it. Not you. And he. Not you. Not because you come to Church of the Messiah. Not because you're an evangelical or you're a charismatic or you're whatever.

Not because you're white or you're black, because you're a victim, because you're heterosexual or because you're gay or because you're comfortable with your gender or find your gender a problem. Not because you are North American or rich or poor.

Not because of that. He guarantees your inheritance until you possess it in full. And why does he do this? To the praise of his glorious grace.

Verse 6. To the praise of his glory. Verse 12. To the praise of his glory. Verse 14. I have problems with pride.

And probably most of you do too. And the world is filled with proud and arrogant Christians. But the fact of the matter is. It is foolish and delusional.

[ 24 : 54 ] Because in salvation all of the initiative and all of the power comes from the triune God. There is no ground for you to be proud. You can only receive it with gratitude and praise.

It is. It is. It is all you can do. Well, okay, George, but maybe what it is, George, is that, okay, God chose me and he did that.

But he works me and he helps me. He gives me the power. He gives me the power to accomplish all of these types of things. Nyet. Nyet. Nyet. I think that's Russian for no.

Trying to be a Renaissance man here, okay? So, nyet. Nyet. That's not the way it works. You know, look at the text. And in this case, I just, I provided an image to try to understand.

Well, here, I'm going to say this first. In salvation, all that had to be done was accomplished by Jesus Messiah. There is no ground for you to be proud.

[ 25 : 59 ] You can only marvel in gratitude and praise. You can only marvel and receive it in gratitude and praise. In salvation, all that had to be done was accomplished by Jesus Messiah. None of it by you.

None of it by me. There is no ground for you to be proud. You can only marvel in gratitude and praise. And what I've tried to do is take chapter 1, verse 1 to 14, and I put it up in a picture.

If you go through, and at the time, I didn't know that it was going to actually fit on the screen, so I didn't put the verses.

If you go through, you can take a picture of it, or you can look it up online. Notice the arrow. By the way, I have to confess, one of the problems I had for a long time as a Christian is I never understood that there's this profound mystery that Jesus dying upon the cross as the Christ, the anointed one, the fulfillment of all the prophecies as the Lord, as God himself, that him dying upon the cross, the benefits of that mystery of his substitution in my place and the exchange of his destiny for my doom, that the mystery of this is such a deep mystery that one image doesn't cover it, one analogy doesn't cover it, one metaphor doesn't cover it.

It goes into the very depth of what it means for us to be human. And I used to think that somehow you had to figure out how, how, I don't know, peace, you know, you're forgiven, and that creates, like the arrows had to go all around the outside as if there was some type of order.

[ 27 : 36 ] No, no, no, no, no. And Ephesians, you go back and look at it, Ephesians, it throws these things out. Some of them will be covered. He'll explain them a little bit more later on in chapter 1 and in chapter 2 and chapter 3.

He'll sort of unpack and give it a bit more of a metaphor. But through Christ's death in the cross, I receive blessing. It's because of Christ crucified on the cross that when I receive it, I get the Holy Spirit.

One of the things for me to, and this is what the power is of some of these images. Are you here suffering, feeling as if you were in slavery, slavery to the inability to conquer something, slavery to what your parents said about you, slavery to something that's going on, then you can grab this idea of redeemed, because redeemed means that as Jesus dies on the cross and rises from the dead,

what we see is people being delivered from slavery.

A ransom was paid that you might be delivered from slavery. If you are struggling like me with not feeling that you are holy enough or not set aside for God enough, not as moral as I should be, He is the one who makes you holy.

If you are feeling completely and utterly abandoned, if you are feeling as if your family has been a complete disaster, they don't love you, they hate you, they don't want to have anything to do with you, or they only call you names, and you feel like nobody has ever chosen you, through the death of Jesus upon the cross and the resurrection, you are offered adoption.

[ 29 : 08 ] Meaning to life. If you go through this, in the ESV it says, He unites all things in Himself. A better translation is He sums up everything. What does that mean?

You know my life has been here and here and here and here and here and here and here and here and it just feels like it's going like this, but what does it say that in Christ, He sums it all up.

He sums up your life. There's a type of meaning to it. That's what's going to happen when you appear before God face to face.

And I'll stand there before Him, and I'll be so conscious of all those times I nursed pride, and I nursed anger, I nursed envy, and I'll be so conscious of my sloth, and sloth, and I wish I'd accomplished this, and wish I accomplished that.

And I think one of the things that will happen, it says here in the text, He will sum up my life.

George, this is what was really going on. This was the meaning and the significance of it. And all I can do is throw my face before Him in wonder and awe, marveling in gratitude and praise.

[ 30 : 19 ] He makes me blameless. He gives me peace with God. He gives me grace. It's through Him I'm forgiven.

It's through Him I'm saved. It's through Him that my inheritance is guaranteed. By the way, just before I close with one final thing.

You know, this whole idea of what's just gone on in Ephesians, it's because of this that we can have hope in evangelism and hope in holiness. In evangelism, why is it?

Because God is choosing and calling people to Himself. It doesn't depend upon me being really witty, coming up with the perfect analogy, never making a mistake. I think I'm going to do a blog over the next couple of weeks that every Christian who tries to share the gospel does one yoga pose.

It's called foot in mouth, actually. Because you can't make any attempt to share the gospel without eventually putting that old foot in the mouth. And then you put the other one in. If you had a third and fourth foot, they'd all go in as well.

[ 31 : 30 ] You know what? The hope is that God is doing this. In the city of Ottawa, here's the thing. In the city of Ottawa today, there are people that God is calling to Himself. And wonders of wonders, He is going to use imperfect people like you and me saying something like, have you ever considered Jesus or praying for them to make that call effective.

The same thing with holiness. You know, some of you, I was using the example of Peter doing his PhD. And he's a smart guy.

He's probably guaranteed his PhD. I think only 30% of people who start a PhD get their PhD. It's some statistic like that. But you know, there can be times when you're wrestling with it and you think to yourself, I don't know, is it worth spending all this time in the dry text?

Is it worth learning the language? Is it worth doing this? Is it worth doing that? Because there's all this drudgery to it. And if all of a sudden God was to show up and say to you, I am guaranteeing that you will get that PhD.

And all of a sudden there's an energy. You know what? Memorizing Greek words or learning French or learning German or learning ancient Norse, spending time memorizing, it's worth it.

[ 32 : 38 ] There's going to be the end is guarantee. It's worth the sacrifice. Is it worth it to sit at the door? Is it worth it to care for the children downstairs in the nursery? Is it worth it to make coffee?

Is it worth it to lead a small group? Is it worth it to do these things? Yes. Because the result is guaranteed.

Just one final thing, just in closing. Like what about you? Is this all true? Here's the big mistake we make about the Bible and with texts like this, and it's going to become more and more obvious as the week goes on with this text.

Paul, the Bible is not proposing an hypothesis. God himself is making a proposal to you.

And what is the proposal that we see this week? Can I adopt you? Can I adopt you? I said, whoa, one moment. Okay, it's not just about ideas, about predestination and sovereignty and free will and causality and it's not just about pride.

[ 33 : 53 ] It is about all of those things, but at the end of the day, it's more than that. It's God himself looking you in the eye right this morning and saying, can I adopt you? I'd like to adopt you.

See, this is one of the things which is so wonderful about the fact that the text was written when it was. You see, in the ancient world, a guy my age could be adopted. You see, because in the ancient world, there might be a wealthy man in the congregation and he's a little bit older than me but he never was blessed with children.

He's amassed a great fortune. He doesn't want to just see it all just dissipated. So, in the ancient world, at the time of this writing, that man could come up to me and say, George, you know, you look healthy and you have sons.

You have sons. I mean, that's just how they would have thought in the ancient world. Can I adopt you? And I'd have to consider it. If I accepted his offer to adopt me, it means that whatever other inheritance I have, I'm going to have to just say I won't have it.

In my case, by the way, in case you're thinking of adopting me, my inheritance will be zero probably from my parents. So, I'd be giving up something that I have nothing to get everything. And that's how adoption worked in the ancient world.

[ 35 : 09 ] You say, okay, I'm going to go by his name. I'm now legally his son. And whatever other inheritances I might want to claim, I will not accept it. And here's the thing which is so wonderful about the adoption of sons.

You see, this is what was so unbelievably, this is why in the ancient world, most of the first Christians were women and slaves. Why? A woman could be adopted as if she was the son. in a world where she could not own property and did not have a proper status in Christ. She would be adopted as if she was the son who will inherit all things.

The slave with no status even as a person can be in Christ adopted as the son. And this is the thing that God is saying to each one of us right now.

This is what the Christian faith is. God is looking at you in the eye and he's saying, I've done everything. You have nothing to boast about and I've accomplished anything. Can I adopt you? Are you willing to give up whatever status and whatever other inheritance you have and be my child and I will give you your new status and your new inheritance?

[ 36 : 24 ] Can I adopt you? Please stand. Just bow our heads in prayer.

Father, if there are any here who have never accepted that proposal to be your child by adoption and grace, I ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would move them towards that or that even now, today, Father, would be that time when in their heart of hearts they say, yes, please adopt me.

Thank you, Father. Thank you, Jesus. Please adopt me. I want to be your child. I want to be your child. I turn from whatever other inheritance I think I have through my acts, through my idols.

Please adopt me. And Father, for all of us, grip us with these truths. Make us unashamed of the gospel and your world, your word. And Father, grip us with this truth that you, not weighing our merits but pardoning our offenses, that in Christ you adopt us and our inheritance is guaranteed.

Father, grip us with this truth. And all God's people said, Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.