

The Elect?

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[0:00] Father, we thank you so much that we can be in your presence. Father, we ask that the Holy Spirit would move in our lives so that as we are in your presence, we will know that we are in your presence and that you will make us work within us so that we will be in your presence to receive from you in a worthy manner and respond to you in a worthy manner.

Father, we give you an unconditional, no qualifications invitation and permission to have your word speak and rule deep in our hearts.

And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. I became a Christian in November of grade 12. I'd been on sort of a year-long quest or journey.

It started the previous fall. But in November, when I was in grade 12, I became a Christian. And in the spring, I was part of a small group of young people that we gave out evangelistic tracts after the service.

I don't know if many people know anymore what tracts are. A little like brochure or a leaflet that you give to people in the hope that you can have a conversation. And as a result of the conversation, they'll come to a faith in Christ.

[1:14] And we weren't allowed to do this on the school property. We tried to do it on the school property. And the principal came out and told us we weren't allowed to do it. So we went just on the edge of the school property on the sidewalk.

And there were three different ways in that school that most... Mainly two ways that people left. And we went at one of the main way that people left. And we stood on the sidewalk and handed out evangelistic tracts.

I know I was one of those guys back then. And doing that meant that I got actually into a lot of conversations with people.

And there were two guys in particular. They were well-known in the school. Some of you can remember what high school was like and how people get different types of reputations. And these two guys were very well-known as being intellectuals as much as anybody in high school can be an intellectual.

But, you know, in high school life, they were the intellectual types. And they started to have conversations with me and asked to speak with me separately. I realized later that they'd taken it on as their pet project to argue me out of the Christian faith.

[2:18] But at first I went into it sort of thinking that they were interested in having a bit of a conversation learning about the Christian faith. But really, the very first time we had a private conversation, the two of them hammered me.

They really hammered me with why Christianity couldn't be true. And one of the particular things they did, which really rocked me because I'd never thought about it, they said to me, George, in the world you see, and this is what science has discovered, and this is what you see in the world, that there's just a cause, and the cause creates an effect, and that effect becomes another cause, which creates another effect, which is another cause, which is another effect.

There's only cause and effect in the universe. There's no free will. And given that that's the way the universe works, you've come to these beliefs, not because you've freely come to Jesus or anything like that, but just because of cause and effect.

And the fact of the matter is, is that the universe described by cause and effect, it means that Christianity can't possibly be true. And they did different examples, you know, a billiard ball, you need another billiard ball, and they'd move, and dominoes, you make one domino move, and all of that, if they're all lined up in the right way, they all just move, and they gave me illustration after illustration, and it was as if they were, you know, tag team wrestling, where I didn't have a partner, but there were two of them, and they just kept tagging each other off, and they really hammered me.

And even as I think about it, I get a little bit uncomfortable about it, actually, because I'm sure I just sat there, tongue-tied and red-faced. And all I could do is, blether, there must, basically, there must be some answer to what you're saying.

[3 : 56] And actually, that launched me into about a good solid month, where I came very, very close to walking away from the Christian faith, because I couldn't figure out how to deal with what they'd said.

Very, very, very close to walking away from the Christian faith, until about a month later, when I had a conversation with them. I mention this story, because there's something in the Bible text that Shane read, and what we do here at Church of the Messiah most of the time, is preach through books of the Bible.

And one of the really good things about preaching through books of the Bible is that they were written as books. The Bible isn't like a big, long collection of quotes. It's not at all like the Koran, which is just a series of different sayings, ordered in terms of length, not even in terms of the order that they're written, but that the Bible is, it's all written as a book.

And so when we preach through books, you're studying the book, or understanding the book, in the way that it was intended to, as a book. The other thing, of course, about it is if you're interested in the Christian faith, you're not going to be surprised with the small print later on, because we don't skip bits.

And in the text that Shane read, because we're preaching through 2 Timothy, this is the second week, there's actually something in the text which is the identical problem which I faced with my non-Christian friends.

[5 : 14] But interestingly enough, that identical problem, which is in the Bible, is something that many, has led several people that I know away from the Christian faith, because they think it poses a problem which is insoluble.

And so it would be really helpful to me if you would turn in your Bibles to look at it. And it's in 2 Timothy. We'll read the whole text later on, but what I'll do is, I'm going to focus on that bit. And some of you are saying, there was something in that text that would lead people to leave the Christian faith?

It's identical to that problem that George had that almost led them to leave the Christian faith. Like, people don't recognize it's an identical problem, but it's an identical problem. And I'll try to show you how it's an identical problem.

Here's how it goes. We're just going to get right to the little bit, and then we'll look at the whole text. It begins 2 Timothy 2, verse 8. Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel.

And just sort of pause there. Those of you who might have overheard a little bit of the text last week. Paul is in jail. He's in jail in Rome. Paul had a record as long as your arm.

[6 : 24] I'm sure today he'd have all sorts of prison tattoos or something like that, but back then he wouldn't have done that. It would have gone against the Old Testament law. But if you read the whole book, you'll see that Paul is in Rome.

He's doing hard time. He's chained. And he knows that even though he survived all sorts of jail time before, he has a very, very deep sense that this time he's going to walk out of jail not to freedom, but to be executed.

And in that he's correct. He is in jail for the final time. He will only leave the jail cell to be executed under Nero. And I shared last week that Paul is in jail not just because of an ideology or religion, although he is, but he's fundamentally in jail because he won't deny a fact.

And that's a very, very rare thing to see that somebody would be willing to do hard time and to suffer and even die over a fact. And the fact is what I just read.

Remember, he's in jail. And what's he in jail for? He's in jail because he believes that Jesus was crucified by the Roman authorities. And after he'd been crucified, he was buried.

[7 : 33] And on the third day, the tomb was empty. The body was never found. And the reason that the tomb was empty and the body was never found was because that Jesus had risen from the dead.

And Paul knows this because not only is it true that the tomb was empty and the body was never found, but Paul saw Jesus after his resurrection. And so Paul is willing to die rather than deny this particular truth and fact.

I'll read that verse again. Remember Jesus Christ risen from the dead, the offspring of David as preached in my gospel for which I am suffering. Bound with chains is a criminal, but the word of God is not chained.

Therefore, I endure everything for the sake of the elect that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

The elect. Now, you know, those of you who've come to the church before know sometimes I'll say, you know, with this particular word, if you look at the origin language, it sort of means this or has this other different type of sense.

[8 : 41] If you do this with the word the elect, all it does is emphasize that it's saying the elect. And it's connected to the doctrine of predestination. It's actually, some of the texts connected to predestination were in last week's text.

Remember, some of you might remember that Paul says that people who've come to faith, they've been called out of eternity, that God from eternity chooses them and from eternity calls them.

And from eternity means that from before time existed, after time stops to exist, underneath time and over time, in a sense, outside of time, God calls people to himself, he chooses people, and this word, the elect, is connected to the whole doctrine of predestination.

It means, obviously it doesn't mean that you're superior because that doesn't really fit with Paul being in jail and chained, but that somehow or another God chooses people and people he chooses become Christians.

And a lot of Christians find this a very offensive doctrine. In fact, I was just talking with somebody just within the last couple of weeks that might be on the way out of the Christian faith and the crack in the dike was this doctrine of predestination and election.

[10 : 07] It was the crack in the dike because the person found it, excuse me, a very offensive idea. It means that you're not free. It means only some.

It's unfair. Like, how can you, God says, say that it's all about love, that he's all about love and that in heaven it's all about love.

George, when you were talking, you know, a little while ago in some of your blogs about hell and all of that and how, you know, God respects your freedom and you're free to choose him and love involves being able to be free and you say all of that stuff but now it says, George, as if that's a complete and utter contradiction and it doesn't even make any sense of my experience, George.

I didn't feel like I was a puppet, you know, and then God sort of manipulating me to come to a saving faith in Jesus. I chose him. Like, this doesn't make any sense and it's very offensive. And so, then people start to look at other things and they realize there's other problems or they think there's other problems in the Bible and they end up, in some cases, I've known some people that that was the crack or part of the cracks that led them to leave the faith.

And I'm going to have to ask for some mercy. Give me some mercy because I don't, I really, I don't mean to offend anybody but I might say something which might offend.

[11 : 34] In every case when I've had conversations with people like this that they've ended up leaving the faith, I think all of them, their testimony would be, that they came into faith and the Christian faith and it was just all about believing and you don't use your mind and you just trust what people say and you don't use your critical faculties and they started to use their critical faculties and when they started to use their critical faculties they ended up realizing they had to, if they wanted to be, live an examined life and be a thinker they have to leave the Christian faith and that leaving the Christian faith it's like walking into a world of really, where you really begin to think.

Now here's where I need some mercy because actually I would say that what always happens with them in my experience, maybe not yours if you're here, is they've left the Christian faith and stopped thinking, not begun to think.

That's why I really need some mercy. You see, my opening story I said was identical to this problem and it is.

You see, what people are saying is how on earth can you believe the Bible, George, if it says that God just causes some people to have these certain beliefs but what was the challenge my non-Christian friends were saying?

You only believe things because it's caused. It's the same problem, actually. The exact same problem looked at from two different types of world views. And you see, that's the particular thing is that, and by the way, here's another bit of an aside.

[13 : 07] If you haven't seen it, I really, really recommend you Google, go to the Dig and Delve Apologetics YouTube channel or just go to Dig and Delve and also put in Oz Guinness and you'll see an event which actually was in the Ottawa Little Theatre about five years ago or so like that and the Dig and Delve Apologetics team here in Ottawa, we teamed up with the major atheist organization in Ottawa to put on a conversation around the meaning of life.

And so we had Oz Guinness as our speaker and they got to choose their speaker and they chose a philosophy professor from the University of Toronto. And right on this stage the two men had a conversation. And one of the things which is so fascinating is how honest the philosopher, the atheist philosopher from the University of Toronto is because in the talk if you go and listen to it, he sort of acknowledges that he's not sure if there's any such thing as free will because the logic of cause and effect would imply that in fact there's no freedom, there's nothing chosen at all.

And it's a very, very telling, honest conversation between the two men. But you see, my friends who get problems with predestination and they leave the Christian faith believing that they're thinking stop thinking because they haven't thought through what they're stepping into.

And it's compounded if they were to leave for, once again, give me some mercy, but in Islam it's total fatalism, total determinism. It's the essence of Islam, total determinism.

And in Hinduism and Buddhism, and by the way, I'm not saying this about anybody being bad, but the problem is that freedom and free will is always fundamentally a type of inherent contradiction within all those schools of thought because everything was the one and there's been some great disruption which means that people think there are different things but really there aren't different things and the end result is that there's only the one and if there's only the one then there can't really be freedom and there can't really be choice and so you have this problematic thing in the middle but that's not really adequately dealt with and so the fact of the matter is that you see some problems in the Christian faith and you think okay, I'm going to continue to be a thinking person and leave but you leave into things which are vastly more, they have no hope.

[15 : 35] How did I answer my non-Christian friends all those years ago? This isn't because I'm particularly brilliant. You know, one of the things I love saying this, I'm going to say it and say it and say it until I die hopefully.

You know, I'm going to find in heaven that it wasn't that, oh, I'm such a clever thinker, I came up with a rebuttal. What I'm going to find out in heaven is that my grandmother was praying for me or some nameless old lady in the congregation was praying for me and that's why I got this insight because God gave it to me not because I was clever and what I said to them eventually about a month later, a month where I came so close to losing my Christian faith and then one day I was reading the Bible and then afterwards I was going for a walk and all of a sudden it came to me Christians don't believe that human beings are purely natural.

God gives us a soul and it was like whoa and I said to them here's the problem with your worldview that the Bible teaches that human beings have been given a soul that a soul is not material it's not energy it's something that's spirit or mind and it means that human beings both have a soul and have a body and obviously we're connected to the whole flow of cause and effect but there's something outside of the flow of the cause and effect and that's how God has made human beings and out of that means that sometimes human beings can actually make full choices and not just human beings human beings do it preeminently but you can even see in the higher animals that God gives them like my dog Rocky a small degree of some degree of times when you can see that they choose to do some things my wife trained our German shepherd that when she comes in the door

Louise can say to her close the door Rocky and Rocky goes and closes the door expecting a treat but the thing about it is is that if Rocky comes in the house opening the door he looks at Louise and then he looks at the door he goes back to the door he closes the door and he looks at Louise waiting for a treat that even animals have a certain degree not as much as a human being but a certain degree of ability God has given them something within them that is outside just the flow of cause and effect and I said that to my friends and they had no answer the other thing I said to them is you don't actually believe what you said to me because if you believe what you said to me it means that your views are controlled cause and effect it's not just mine it's yours too but you don't believe that you and they had no answer because they thought they just had an argument against Christianity and in the words of G.K.

Chesterton they're thinking it led them to a thought that stops all thought so how do we begin to puzzle this thing together of the elect well I'm just going to give you two types of ways to think about it and any of you and it's going to come down to first of all we can just go to Hollywood novels and anybody who's watched a post-apocalyptic novel or movie will have a sense about how to understand the problem and the other thing is if you think about the experience of love so first of all post-apocalyptic novels I actually just read a really really excellent literary one I think it was called the dog star or something like that written about nine or ten years ago really excellent very thoughtful people and so there's a world where there's been some virus that's killed like 99 point you know 99 percent of all the population and 99.5 or whatever so there's very few people who are left in and it's this particular novel set in in the

[19 : 24] Colorado area not that far from Denver and but it doesn't matter any type of a of a novel or a movie where some disease or something has killed most people what's life like after everything has fallen apart is there more freedom or less always less why because they always portray a world where there are bands of roving men usually men occasionally with some women who basically survive by raping and pillaging and so people who do not want to make their living by raping and pillaging how do they live they want to try to you know have a garden and have some food and live peaceful they hide they hide I was thinking about this this week when I was out for a run along the canal now I'll be honest when I say it's a run I'm exaggerating it's a fast shuffle in my case but I continue to call it a run so I was off for a fast shuffle along the canal and I was just thinking about it in a post apocalyptic novel or movie nobody goes for a run along the canal nobody just goes out to a restaurant or buys groceries why you can't you can't do that if you do you have to carry lots of guns lots of knives lots of bows and arrows you have to do all that type of thing you scurry in you scurry out and you try to protect yourself so how is it that we have freedom we only have freedom if there's something like a government and laws something that guarantees and creates the context for freedom and that's exactly what the

Bible teaches that's why only the Bible only gospel centered Christianity can provide an answer to the paradox of how we live in a world where there is both true freedom and where there's cause and effect why because God guarantees it he created the world he designed that world in a particular way he said I'm going to design human beings in my own in in in our image in in our image and we're going to design human beings so that there's a little bit of something in them that's not just part of the cause and effect but it's completely connected to them and it means they're going to be affected by things we all know how brain chemicals can change things in our mind but there's going to be this flow of cause and effect but they're still always part of human beings something which is outside the flow of cause and effect that they can choose they can they can have an identity they know that they're different than rocks and trees and and birds and bees and bugs and beavers they're different and and and and and yet they're also creatures and they can choose and they can be in the world and we're going to guarantee it I'm going to we're going to only create a world like that we're going to sustain a world like that so that there's real freedom and in fact it even fits within Christianity because how do

Christians understand God the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit three persons one God from all eternity from all eternity there was the Father loving the Son in a sense choosing the Son to love the Son in the Son choosing to love the Father and the Holy Spirit in that whole mix and so right from the very nature of God there's choice there's freedom there's love and it is that God the Trinity that creates human beings and creates a world that in some way reflects the character of the triune God and he's created us to be free he sustains our freedom when we meet a human being who's lost their freedom that's completely and utterly captivated or not captivated completely and utterly overcome by Alzheimer's or by dementia or by mental illness we feel sorry for them we feel they've lost their identity and have become completely and utterly controlled by outside forces and then of course we by our other choices can be people can enter into alcohol or drugs in a way that diminishes their freedom pride and narcissism and and and and over self-regard reduces our freedom evil reduces our freedom virtue increases our freedom the the humble person the meek person is vastly more free than the proud and arrogant person vastly more free if you can't control yourself if you can't be self-effacing you are less free than the one if you can control yourself and you are self-effacing you are more free than the one who cannot be self-effacing can only be proud so the Bible describes it the second thing is though like what about the fact

George that well I'm still trouble there's still trouble by freedom and the fact that God chooses you from all eternity to become a Christian and yet it still feels free and it doesn't seem to fit George years ago when I was in my rural parish and I'm so I hope this doesn't isn't a an analogy which is wounding for some for some people but there's this really really funny woman and she was good friends with some of the people in the congregation and she'd come to all of the in rural Anglican churches they're always having like suppers and all these types of things and and it's really quite glorious if you have even something like a hymn singer a choir sing and for rural people you have to have a big meal afterwards rural people are far more like people like in South America or Africa you meet you have lots of food the first time we Louise and I got invited out for supper in a rural place they didn't just offer me one type of meat three types of meat were offered in the meal lots of different other not just one way of having potatoes and anyway that they just like they love to eat anyway so there's this woman and I said are you like I should I refer to you as Mrs. or Ms. and and she laughed because she was she was round and jolly she said no you should call me missed I never got married I was missed I missed you know whatever Smith and she just laughed away at it and went downstairs and lined up for the buffet she wasn't bothered by it at all but you know here's the thing about this so here's the thing this story illustrates two things the first is every single one of us not every single one of us many of us more than once have experiences where we feel both most free and most determined most free and most bound and that's the experience of love if you meet a young couple you oldies and they've just really fallen in love and they're gonna get married if you talk to them at all they'll say I've never felt I've never felt so free and so alive as I do right now what will they also tell you

I've never met anybody that it just feels I have to marry them they feel completely and utterly bound and compelled and it's not just with something like that it's it's often how it is and I know I can be touching on troublesome things for some people I know there are people who'd love to have babies and they're never able to have them but often a mom and a dad but often a mom in particular will feel that way when they're holding their newborn baby they've never felt so much love they've never felt so much themselves and so alive and yet at the same time so completely and utterly tied and compelled to that little life you see when you go up you come to this port where you're both most free and most bound and the Bible describes that God is love you see the fact of the matter is is that the Lord both chooses you to be his child by adoption and grace and provides you the freedom to choose him the Lord both chooses you to be his child by adoption and grace and provides you the freedom to choose him now one of the things about this these stories that I've given is it can cause a lot of trouble that people who always wanted to marry and were never able to marry people who were married and were in love and and now there may be living with a in divorce or whatever people who wanted to have that baby and were never able to have that baby and these are very very troublesome thing it touches on a very very deep wound in the center of a lot of our lives a very very deep wound or whose marriages right now are on the rock those days of feeling so free and so alive and so bound have have gone away you know and in fact I've talked to people who say you know all all my life nobody's chosen me they weren't like that woman in Eganville who could say I missed missed Smith and just sort of have a laugh and maybe she could do that because she was older and had come to terms with it and so they hear this doctrine that

[28 : 33] God chooses you to be his child by adoption and grace and provides you the freedom to choose him and in your bones you have this very very very deep sense the Lord would never choose me no one's chosen me story of my life you know what they should have on my on my tombstone the unchosen but I want to tell you something right now if that is at all your reaction anyone here anyone working online that the story of your life is the unchosen if that's what comes to you unbidden as I describe this very very wonderful thing because it's a very wonderful thing which I'll describe a little bit more in a moment if you feel that at all you know what that is you're hearing his call you're hearing that he's chosen you the person who doesn't give a flip that's a different category but if you feel

I never get chosen you know what is you are feeling God's choosing you and I just would like to encourage you to stop listening to me and say God have you chosen me I would love it if you chose me I would love to have Jesus as my savior but I just pour out your heart to God and say that's what you'd like and become his child by adoption and grace see here's the other thing which is so wonderful about this particular doctrine in fact actually see here's the thing which is so wonderful about there's so many things that are wonderful about this doctrine if you think about it for a second if God didn't do something like that there'd be no Christians I wouldn't be a Christian I'm not naturally spiritual if it was just up to me I would sleep in this morning I'm reading a really good novel I'd probably go for a run I'd probably go somewhere and have a coffee in the afternoon have a nap somewhere along there I'd watch some NFL football games and then have a beer or wine at the end of the day church would definitely not be part of it and let me tell you something else how many people do you think will wake up on a Monday morning and say I'm trying to figure out how to get connected to the living God you know what I think I'm going to look at the hundred thousand plus Romans people the

Romans crucified back 2,000 years ago I have a feeling that some crucified guy is the key to life what are the odds of that zero zilch what if Jesus God sends Jesus to die upon the cross I mean who when he died upon the cross who was left on the grave his mom John a couple of women everybody else all the cool kids all the powerful kids all making fun of them it isn't enough that God just provides the means of salvation he needs to bring people to salvation you know one of the wonderful things about the story of the Jesus and in Luke chapter 7 when I read about the the young man that's dead and how does what happened to that young man the young man isn't dead and said I think I'll get up and talk to my mom no he's dead he says he doesn't say to himself I think I'd like to talk to Jesus no he's dead how does a parable where how does a story work not a parable is a story work Jesus calls him he calls him out of death into life and because he calls him out of death into life the man's alive and let me tell you you read the Bible read Philippians read Colossians read Ephesians what does it regularly say apart from Christ we are dead the dead don't choose and so the gospel is this wonderful not only this good news of what God has done in Jesus to make us right with him it is this wonderful news that God doesn't just look around look for the cool kids the powerful kids the ones who are always chosen he'll choose some of those he chooses the Dalits he chooses he chooses the street people he chooses the middle class the working class he chooses the only chooses the unworthy and he calls them and his call comes from all eternity comes out of love it comes to you and you respond to it that he not only calls you he gives you the freedom to respond to it it's all from him and then you can say George well if it's just all from that like why would anybody even do anything or try anything like why don't you just sort of just let God do everything but you see if you do that it's like this true story I I had I had been going to this very very conservative

Baptist church you know I come to come to faith very very very very add like add six varies that's how conservative it was and and an evangelical and about 20 years later I'm I'm at a bus stop on Bank Street and I I meet a I meet a guy cigarette sort of you know one of those guys he's sort of as if there's a wind he you know he'd had more than a few beer so he's standing there and he says oh George I say hi to him I ask him if he's connected to the church or he asked me about that and I asked him about that and he says to me as he's swaying he said you know Christianity is wonderful God loves to forgive and I love to sin and he said I figured out that I'm gonna have a really really really good time until I'm too old have a good time and then when I figure there's about a year left to live I'm gonna give my life to Jesus go to heaven they gave me a drunken smile so you see here's the thing he thinks he's fooled God he'd not given his life to Jesus he's figured he's done an end run around God that he's read the fine print and he's been able he's gonna be able to trick God he doesn't think he needs a savior he doesn't think he's dead needs life he doesn't think he's blind and need to see he doesn't think he's broken and needs to be whole he doesn't think he's lost and needs to be found he thinks he's superior to everybody and even God and he's found a loophole around God's provision and

[35 : 45] God's conditions that will get him what he wants that's called presumption and God sees right through it what is the doctrine of election do why is it that it actually if you grab it and you understand this that gives you this it as it grabs you more and more it gives you courage it helps you to do hard things it propels you and draws you to do things of sacrifice and of humility and of self examination that you might have thought impossible before the gospel starts to grab you I'll give you an example for many years I've wanted to write a book it's the first time I've ever said this in public I'd love to write a book I love reading books so I'd love to write a book not a particular surprise but here's what goes through my mind I don't have the time I'd have to cut time with Louise I'd have to take time out of the job and you know the book probably wouldn't be any good even if I could write it and even if I wrote it and it's so it wasn't very good and I'd probably sell a couple of copies in my church because people out of pity would buy it and then they'd come and say way to go George it's such a good book and I'd say yeah yeah that's 40 sales and wasn't worth the time what if one day God showed up and said George I want you to write a book and the book you're going to write is going to help a hundred thousand people I've called you to write this book and because I don't have as much faith as you God has to show up two or three times and even after the third time he says this still isn't working I'm going to show up to

Louise so Louise will tell George and then I finally know that that's the case that God has called me chosen me to write a book you know what then I go to the wardens I go to you folks and say you know what I'm going to take an hour a day out of my time I go to Louise I'm going to take an hour a day out of our time with you and the family I'm going to be working on a book and all the stuff and all the time when I'm struggling with not knowing the right thing and how to edit it and and all the times I'm tired and all the times I feel that it's not worth it or it's not working it's all worth it the sacrifice is worth it because it's going to end with something that God has already said he's going to do and rather than creating laziness it gives you hope it gives you endurance because it's not presumption it's just believing what God has said and that's why we need to gather in church to hear that God has chosen you yes I know he had poor taste no just joking if you say to yourself did he know how big of a screw-up I am did he know how weak I am does know how bad a

Christian I am yes he know all that stuff he chose you and because he chose you you've given your life to Christ and nothing will ever take you out of his hand and your end will be glory and because of that you can go and you can try hard things you can do hard things you can look at the sin in your life you can go and humble yourself and ask forgiveness and seek reconciliation you can give away your money you can give up of your time why because it's worth it God has called you he's chosen you he's done everything to make you his child he'll never let you go that is the gospel remember Jesus Christ risen from the dead the offspring of David as preached in my gospel for which I am suffering bound with chains as a criminal but the word of God is not chained therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory why do you share the gospel why do you bear witness to Jesus God uses imperfect people like us but he does all he does all the work he still has people in this city we have a brother who's going to be going back to Asia why does he go to

Asia because God has people call he's calling in Asia right brother not because nothing personal not putting you down it's not because you're an unbelievably charismatic persuasive salesperson it's a matter of obedience and you open your mouth you get on your knees and pray you open your mouth you do acts of love share about Jesus and you go there knowing what God has people in Asia that he's calling and he's using imperfect people like you and he has people in Ottawa that he's calling he uses imperfect people like us might invite you to stand please let's just bow our heads in prayer father the word this morning says that you want to make us strong and you want to make us strong in grace we give you thanks and praise father the grace that you have given us that purely and utterly your are your unmerited kindness and favor and love towards us that you would provide a savior your unmerited kindness towards us that you would call us and give us the freedom to freely choose

Jesus as our savior and Lord your unmerited kindness to us because you have called us that you will you and made it effective you will never let us go no matter how many hard times we experience you will never let us go even those times when we appear to wander you will always father take us back because your grip is never let us go father this wonder of grace that you know everything there is to know about us and still Jesus died for us still you called us that we do not make ourselves righteous and perfect we do not you do not add up our merits that it's all your grace and love and mercy towards us and we give you thanks and praise father that you want us to grow in strength not in our in self-confidence but in confidence of you and of your grace and if you're a effectual call to us in our lives father we ask that that you who have helped us to be gripped by the gospel that we would grip the gospel back and that it would have a deeper and deeper hold and roll in the very center of our lives and that father that as your word comes to us in the and as your gospel comes to us as your Holy

[42 : 31] Spirit moves and works within us that we will not be conformed to this world but that your grace will transform us to take risks risks of speaking risks of forgiveness risks of humility risks of generosity risks of giving that your word father will transform us so that we know you and know your will and bring you glory and delight in you and all these things we ask in the name of Jesus and all God's people said amen God bless you and God bless you you m