

1st Peter "Chosen by God"

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 April 2024

Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 0 0] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah. It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

Let's just bow our heads in prayer. Father, sometimes your Word sort of shocks us and jars us. It says things about us that make us uncomfortable. In fact, Father, sometimes your Word says things that make it easy for others to mock us or to mock your Word. So Father, we're looking at a text like this today. We ask that you help us to trust you, to trust that this is your Word. You speak this Word to us because you love us and you want us to know these truths. And we ask, Father, that your Word and these truths, by the power of the Holy Spirit, would come deep within us to form how we live each day.

And we ask these things in Jesus's name, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. So one of the things that bothers me sometimes is when somebody says, this is a really, really famous person and nobody's ever heard it. And you feel sort of like a, can be like a accidental way of putting a whole pile of people down. Usually it's said accidentally, just as when I first had to start wearing glasses at 49. By accident, I kept putting my glasses back up on my nose like this.

And at the time I had a son living at home. And every Sunday when I got home, he'd tell me, Dad, you gave the congregation the finger so many times. He was paying very close attention to the service. He always told me how many times I gave them the finger. There's a book, if you could put the picture of the book up right now, there's a very interesting person by the name of Rosaria Butterfield. Some of you have read the book or have heard of her, watched some of her YouTube videos.

[2 : 5 6] It's a very interesting book, very good book, originally written to a very tiny little niche publishing company, but it ended up selling, I think, several hundred thousand copies. But here's the reason I'm mentioning it. Can leave it up there in case one of you want to try buying the book or reading it later on. There's this very, very powerful scene of how she had been gone to Catholic church up until she was like nine or ten or eleven or something like that, and completely turned her back on everything against Christianity, and how in her early forties, one morning she gets up and goes to church for the first time in literally decades. And what makes the book so interesting is that at the time, not only would she have had lots of all of the multicolored hair and everything like that, but she was a professor at Syracuse University, which is a tier one university in the United States. She was the academic sponsor of all of the LGBTQ plus groups on campus. I think there were 10 or 11 or 12. She was the academic sponsor. She taught queer studies and feminist studies at the university. She did expert testimony at state and state court levels to try to change the laws in a pro-LGBTQ plus way. She was an outspoken activist, and she was a scholar who was very highly thought of in the whole area of gender studies, queer studies, feminist studies. And she wrote one day sort of an essay in the local paper, really dissing Christians, putting them down. Some people got very, very upset, but out of all of the letters that came to her, there was this one letter by an older man who was a

Presbyterian minister, and she found it sort of, well, she found it gracious, and she actually found it thought-provoking. So she wrote him back, and he wrote her back. And they eventually had coffee together, and the coffee together eventually came to a variety of meals, even her going to his house quite a few times. And after a process of about a year, I don't know how long it was, maybe it was longer than, maybe a little bit later, she writes, and this is, it's about, I don't know, 15 or 20 pages into the book. I've always found it very moving when I read it. She talks about how she gets out of the bed of her lesbian lover, that she's sharing with her lesbian lover, to walk to church. It's a very powerfully written scene. She really communicates how radical a change this is for her, leaving this bed, and walking and going to church. And she does become a Christian. I mention this because you guys are weird. By Canadian standards, you're all a bunch of non-conformist weirdos. Can I say that? I mean, the biblical word is that you're, I don't know, you're a peculiar people. You know, increasingly in Canada, when somebody becomes a Christian, it's a big journey. It's a very big thing. I mean, for some people, maybe who grew up in a very devout Catholic home, or a very devout

Baptist or Pentecostal home, and maybe wandered away from the faith, to come to the faith is still a bit of a journey. But Christians believe a lot of things that are out of step with our culture. And to pave that journey to become a Christian is increasingly a very difficult journey to take.

And it's really important to remember this. Some of you come from different places in the world, where it is not only very difficult to walk away from the religions and the practices of your culture, it can even mean complete and utter exclusion from your families. In some countries, some Muslim countries, some Hindu countries, in India, it can lead to violence, even murder against you. In Pakistan, other places like that, it is a very, very, very major and serious step.

The Bible text is going to talk about that, and help us to name it and claim it, so to speak. Not in the way health and wealth gospels name it and claim it, but it's going to help us to understand it. And it's going to help us to understand both how, when we're sharing the gospel with people, I think we have to take a bit of a longer view. Like, if you go back and you read this opening from Rosaria Butterfield, you realize that for somebody to give their life to Christ and actually come to church, that's a really big step. Like, that's not just, oh, like, I think I'll go to the 7-Eleven, or I think I'll go to the Ottawa Little Theatre to see a play. It's a really big step. And it's a very countercultural step.

[7:46] And anyway, we're going to look at it. So if you turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 1, today we're just going to look at verses Peter 1 to 2. And what, in a sense, the book of whole 1 Peter is about, it's written, like, if you read it, it's only five chapters, it probably only takes you about 15 minutes or so if you want to go home and read the whole letter. And you'll see what I mean. On one level, when you're first reading it superficially, it looks a little bit confusing, because it looks like, you know, he says this, and then he talks about something else, and then he seems to return to this, and then he talks about something else, and he returns to this, and he returns to that. It seems a little bit like it's all, like a bit, the flow chart would be a bit confused. But it's actually a very simple idea. What he really is doing is he's talking, he wants to talk about what your identity is as a Christian. And then he basically also, as he wants to talk about your identity as a Christian, and how you got that identity, and how you grow in it. And then in particular, how you're going to live, if that's true. Actually, just a bit of a time out. A lot of Bible study guides and other Bible study things, they mean to be very helpful. They'll ask the question, so you read the Bible text, and you study the Bible text, and then they'll say, okay, so what? So that it says that, so what does that mean you do?

And a lot of Bible study materials say, so what? And I just, you know, a bit of a time out, so what is a terrible question. Why is it a terrible question? It implies this, so what? Well, that's not the right way to read the Bible, sitting back in sort of pride and arrogance. It's the same thing for the other version of the question, now what? You know, once again, you ask the now what question, you can just easily picture somebody sitting back here with their, when you're sitting, you know, if you're in a counseling session, and people are sitting here like this with a set expression, that's not a good sign.

They're not being open. Right? You'd know that. Like, if you're in a, if you're talking to your friend, and they sit there like this, and say, so what? Or now what? Those aren't friendly questions. The better question is this, how shall we then live? How shall we live if this is true? And that's what the book of Peter is going to keep coming back, because why? How do we live in a world, if we have this identity, and God is doing this stuff in us, and giving us this future, how do you live in a world where there's an emperor? How do you live in a world where there's kings and governors?

How do you live in a world where there's suffering?

How do you live in a world where you fail when you come to some type of a time to show your Christian faith, and you fail? How do you live in a world like that? How do you live in a world where there's slavery? How do you live in a world where there's bosses? How do you live in a world where there's marriage, and husbands and wives? How do you live in a world like that? And that's what the rest of the book of 1 Peter is going to do. It's going to, but it's going to keep weaving back about what your identity is, and how you get that identity, and then in a sense, say, okay, this is how you live.

[10:46] This is what this means in terms of how you live, and giving us some guidance. It all sort of gets set up with these two first verses. Now, one other little sort of moment. It's a bit of a geeky moment. When I read these first two verses from the Bible, they're a bit confusing to understand.

Okay, well, let's read them, and you'll see what I mean. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. There's all sorts of, you know, issues here, of course, but here's the odd thing. According to, okay, well, like, what's it referring to? Like, what's the according to, like, what's going on there? According to the foreknowledge of God the Father and the sanctification of the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood, and may grace and peace be multiplied to you. Now, it's very, very literal, but so here's what I'm going to do. I was going to actually call it the dummies version, but I realize dummies is probably copyrighted. So, I'm going to, what we're going to do is we're going to use the simple version, and the simple version is the absolute best conservative Christian commentary, academic commentary in the book of 1 Peter is written by a woman named Karen Jobes, and it's, and I've read it this week in terms of preparation for the sermon, and what I've done is I've taken her translation, and following the commentary, I've reformatted it in a simple way, and so hopefully, that's what's called the simple version, but brackets George's adaptation of Karen Jobes' work, and here, hopefully, it'll be up there. It will be, I hope, and here's how it goes in the simple version, and then we'll go into it, because I'm not getting away from that. Like, some people, what, chosen? Like, elect? Like, what's going on here? That's, those are very, okay. From Peter, apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are the chosen or the elect, I'll explain that in a moment, foreigners slash exiles of the diaspora, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. That, by the way, those areas are basically what's modern-day Turkey. Second verse, this is making clear what it's actually saying in the original language, where you have sort of something controlling it, and then it just skips a whole pile of things, and you have to, unless you know the grammar of the Greek, you're not going to realize that there's something controlling these statements, or, and so I've just made it clear. Chosen, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. Chosen by the consecration or sanctification, both good ways to translate the word, of the Spirit, and chosen for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus.

May grace and peace be multiplied to you. Now, some of you are going, whoa, George, you've not just said the word elect or chosen, like you've really, like, not rubbed our face in it, but you've really made it, like, chosen, chosen, chosen. That's actually what the original language says. I'm just trying to make it very simple and clear and understandable and able for you to follow, and I'm going to preach from this simple version, rather than the ESV, which we normally use. And, and for some of you, that's, they say, George, okay, that sounds like Calvinism. You know, George, you do know that the Eastern Orthodox churches say that Calvinism is a heresy. That's truth, by the way, that you have to repent of to know the Christian faith. You know what, George, it's elitist. It's, it seems like we're all puppets, like, there's all these problems, and like, da-da-da-da-da-da-da. So, that's in verse 2. I'm going to talk about that in a moment, and it's actually just to warn you, this idea is going to come up over the next two weeks or three weeks, in fact, of sermons. So, I'm not going to deal with the whole thing in just one week. I'm going to give you some hints or some ways to reframe the issue, to understand why this, this is really in the Bible, and it's really precious, and it's really beautiful.

[15:01] It is really beautiful. Like, it's so beautiful, you want a tattoo? Tattoo that on your hand, or something, you know?

It's really beautiful. Well, let's look at verse 1 first, and then we'll get to the first go at this whole chosen thing. So, first of all, you just, you just notice here, right? Look at it again, verse 1. Who is it? It's from Peter. He's an apostle of Jesus Christ, so that means has an authority.

And it's two, and there's these three different words which is describing our identity, that Christians are chosen, or the elect. Christians are foreigners, or exiles, and Christians live in the diaspora. And we're going to get into the chosen and elect in a moment, but one of the ways to understand how he's trying to place this, in terms of our relationship with God, I'm chosen. In terms of how I now live in Canada, I live as an exile or a foreigner. And not only that, in terms of how I think about where I live in the world, I'm part of a diaspora. It's actually, literally, diaspora is what's translated.

It's one of those funny things in translators. They try to figure out what people will understand better, and so they think dispersion's easier to understand than the diaspora, but it's actually, it's literally the technical word for the diaspora. Just a bit of an aside, when he's writing this letter, there's the majority of Jewish people at the time lived in what we now would call Israel, but there's two other very, very, very significant large Christian communities in the world, and one of them is in what we now call Egypt, and the other one is what we now call Iran, or used to be called Persia. And because of the different conquests of Israel, large numbers of Jewish people were left. And anyway, well, and actually, so what it's saying, this is actually important. It's really funny, as we mentioned it, because of course, you know, I'm speaking under the shadow. Some of you are probably very concerned about the fact that there is war brewing, potential war brewing, even as we speak, between Iran and Israel. And as we all know, we're talking about this in the context where Jordan and the U.S. and several other countries have gotten involved in the war, and it has a possibility to spread. So it's a very serious, it's a very, very serious thing.

And part of all of this is going on is Israel as being the Jewish homeland. That's the claim made by Jewish people. And I'll say they have good historical grounds for it. But when the Bible here describes Christians as part of a diaspora, it's telling us that we don't form a Christian nation.

[18:02] For Hindus, India is the homeland. And what's going on right now with the increasing conflicts in India with Muslim communities and Christians is that the Hindus are trying to really claim that Hindu and Indian is synonymous, and this is our homeland. We don't want foreigners there.

But when the Bible is describing Christians as being part of a diaspora, it's actually saying there is, it's God's intention is that there will be Christian communities in Ottawa and Tehran and Beijing and Manhattan and Vancouver and London and Nairobi and Cape Town.

That's God's plan. It's not a failure. It's God's plan. We have no home here. When you put your faith and trust in Christ, you get a new allegiance.

And the other thing which is very powerful and wonderful about the term diaspora, and I failed to put the thing down, but if you go and you look up, it's somewhere in Ezekiel, and I forgot to put it down in my preaching notes. I just realized I forgot to put it down.

There's this very powerful part in the book of Ezekiel where Ezekiel writes to the Jewish people who are living in Persia and says to them, people are telling you there's going to be all these dramatic things that are going to happen. Don't believe them. They're just, they're not talking the truth.

[19:40] You need to seek the good of the city where you are. And so the idea of diaspora means that even though we are foreigners in Canada, we seek the good of our country.

We seek the good of our city, the true good of our city. But at the same time that we maintain our identity. We maintain our identity as those who have been chosen by God to belong to him and be in a covenant with the Lord Jesus Christ.

So it's a very powerful and very precious image. And the idea of being a foreigner or being an alien is also very, that's why I began the story with the sermon with the story of Rosaria Butterfield.

And increasingly we feel that. There's been times obviously in Canada where being a Christian makes you feel very at home in the country. Almost everybody in the room is too young to know that there was a time like that in Canada.

Or at least for large segments of Canada. But that's not the case anymore. And this letter is not a call for us therefore to take back the country and force it to be Christians. Maybe to do something to manipulate some political party in the Supreme Court.

[20:46] So we only, no, no, no, no, that's not what this letter is calling us to do. It's telling us to have an influence. If you work in the civil service, have an influence for Christ. If you have an influence in political parties, have an influence them according to a Christian worldview.

If you are starting a business or running a business, do that. In your neighborhood association, stand for Christ. Articulate a Christian way of understanding the world. You're called to do that. It's only within that perspective that the city will start to understand what its true good is.

It is not for the true good of Canada to kill the innocent. Which is what we do with medically assisted dying. Our country thinks it's for the good of this country, but it's not.

That's part of how Christians bear witness. Increasing use of pornography is not for the good of this country. There's many in our country who think it is part of the good of this country, but they're mistaken.

We work to try to minimize that according to Christian values, but we work for the good of our city. Interestingly enough, one of the reasons that people say that having this idea of being chosen or elect is it can make us feel very, very superior.

[21 : 55] But that's what's so brilliant about this text. It's so spectacularly brilliant. Look at it again. It says, to those who are the chosen slash elect, foreigners and exiles of the diaspora.

That whole thing means we don't have power. And the other thing is, if we start to understand ourselves and are gripped with the idea that we are foreigners in this country, that should give us a profound heart for immigrants and for refugees.

A profound heart for them. You know, there's another thing which is really sort of key in here. It's just like a little bit of a hint. This word exile.

Foreigner. Yeah, go ahead. It's just, you know, we don't think about things like this. There's all sorts of hints that Christianity is true.

And that no other system of thought can solve these hints. Why is it that you've been born, that human beings have been born in this world? We're obviously completely and utterly at home in this world.

[23 : 05] But why is it that human beings, part of this world system, have a sense or a longing that there's another world? Like, why does that even exist?

Like, why is it that very, very common, many of us in the room, and if you go to a coffee shop and you just talk to people, I don't care if it's a Tim Horton, I don't care if it's a Starbucks, I don't care if it's some really hipster type place that I've never heard of because I'm really old and uncool and you know where they are.

If you go talking about the idea that there's these, you know, why is it that you live in a seamless universe, but everybody has a sense that there's seams in reality? Where, and you're in some situation or some place and you have a sense that there's another world that's trying to break in. Why is it that you can be in some place of ancient prayer and have that sense that there's some other world? Why is it that sometimes if you're up early enough for a sunrise or a sunset and you're looking over as the light begins to change and you just have this sense that there's another world just on the other side of that, yet so close and you have a sense of longing, how does that even exist?

Human Christians know. They'll tell you. Why does it exist? It's because on one hand we have both a memory of the past or in a sense if we go, whether you look at it as going backwards or going deep, there's this fundamental sense that God, the biblical story is true, that God made all things and he made all things good and there's been a tragic cosmic accident and catastrophe where human beings rebelled against God and now there's evil and the world is broken.

[24 : 47] And human beings, God has left within human beings some type of sense, whether it's looking up or looking forward, that there will be a new heaven and a new earth, that God continues to reign, that the world isn't empty, that there are angels and demons.

And secularism doesn't have an answer for that, neither does Hinduism or Islam, but it's a very powerful hint in human experience. So who's the letter written to?

The chosen elect who are foreigners or exiles of the diaspora, it pontes da-da-da-da-da, basically modern day Turkey. Who's the letter written to?

Look at verse 2. Chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, chosen by the consecration or sanctification of the Spirit, and chosen for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus.

May grace and peace be multiplied to you. What's the big idea? Chosen. Okay. And once again, I've just made clear what the grammar is saying, and if you go to the commentaries, the academic commentaries, each one of those sections begins with chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, chosen.

[25 : 59] So I'm just putting it together in a simple way that can't maybe be made in terms of an official Bible, but that's actually what the original verse is saying. And so what's going on in here?

Well, actually, just at a very simple level, it's saying this. That the God that really does exist is the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, three persons, one God, and the Bible's not embarrassed about that.

In fact, as I'm going to explain in a moment, it is one of the most wonderful and beautiful things about the Christian faith. Hard to understand, not opposed to reason, and deeply wonderful, deeply beautiful and emotionally satisfying once you start to walk towards it rather than walk away from it in fear.

And what it's saying is that all three persons of the Trinity were involved in you becoming a Christian. Some of us afterwards, if we went out in the lobby and I say, you know, we're going to have a bit of a different section today, would several of you be willing to share with the rest of the room how you became a Christian?

And some of us would get up and say, listen, I just want to be, I'm so thankful for my parents, I'm so thankful for the church. I grew up in a Christian home with mom and dad who prayed for me and read Bible stories to me, and I don't know a time when I didn't trust Jesus as my Savior and my Lord.

[27 : 18] And I've just been able to grow in that, and that's my testimony. And boy, a lot of us who are parents would love it if our kids said something like that. And others of you will say, you know, I sort of grew up in a nominal home, and then I, you know, got involved in drinking and partying or whatever, or I grew up as a Muslim, or I grew up as a Hindu, or, you know, I grew up in an atheist house, and then, you know, one day, and you tell the story about how you became a Christian.

You know, I know there's people in here who grew up not going to anything, and with people who didn't have any interest in Christianity, looking at, you know, one of my brothers over here, who sort of his journey towards Christianity was through Jehovah Witnesses, because God has the biggest sense of humor in the world to use Jehovah Witnesses to start having a person move towards the Christian faith.

Right, Jason? Just God has a huge sense of humor. That gave us a big thumb up. We should have a sense of humor, too. But we could give that testimony. And that's, in a sense, completely valid, and that's from our point of view.

What this verse 2 is describing is very beautiful. What's going on underneath the hood? And here's this profound knowledge. I just used Jason as an example. I'll continue to use this. Jason, before you were even born, God the Father knew that he was going to choose you to be his.

That's why the word foreknowledge is there. Like, if you think about it, if God knows everything, why is the word foreknowledge there? Well, the foreknowledge is connected to a little cluster of ideas.

[28 : 51] And it's clustered with the ideas of calling, of effectual calling, like a calling that actually works, and a calling to himself in a covenant.

So, Jason, I've heard parts of your testimony. It's a great testimony. You should write it up someday. You should do a YouTube video about it someday. But underneath all of that is before you were even born, God knew you, and he started calling you.

And you want to know something else? Even before you were born, the second you were born, God the Holy Spirit started to work in your life to set you apart and to begin processes which would culminate in you giving your life to Christ.

And that work of the Holy Spirit continues in you and will continue in you until you see Jesus face to face in the new heaven and the new earth. And Jason, God was calling you not to just have this sort of like lonely, naked, bare-naked experience with God.

We've already talked about how the Holy Spirit was working in choosing you and setting you aside and working your life to that point in time that you would give your life to Christ. And when you come to Christ, you don't realize that you're not just coming to Christ.

[30 : 20] Well, you are coming to Christ, but what you're coming, this language of chosen for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, it's a direct reference to how the Israelite nation entered into a new covenant with God when they entered into the promised land.

And there was a ceremony and they pledged their obedience to the Lord God. And the Lord God takes them as his covenant people and they're sprinkled with the blood that takes away their sins and God takes them to themselves.

And when Jesus died upon the cross, he was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He is both our good shepherd and the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

And when we celebrate the Lord's Supper, this is a covenant meal. We are being reminded that Jesus inaugurated a new covenant. And in this new covenant, people from Hindu backgrounds and pagan backgrounds and Muslim backgrounds and Buddhist backgrounds and atheist backgrounds, when they put their faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, they enter into a new covenant with the Almighty God in a new covenant community.

And in that covenant, Jesus is our King. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is our King over Trudeau, King over the Supreme Court of Canada, King over the CBC and all of the institutions of this place.

[31 : 46] And we seek the good of this city. I don't say that to put them down. I say that to say we're going to serve them well under King Jesus. But we come into a covenant and you were chosen for that.

And what at the end of the day is God's heart for you and for us? God's heart for you is that grace and peace will be multiplied. And so for the rest of the book, we're going to talk about what it means to live as a Christian, what it means to deal with suffering, what it means to deal with being persecuted.

What does it mean to be married? What does it mean to be a slave? What does it mean to have a society where there are slaves? What does it mean to be in having to deal with a world where there's demons? What does it mean to actually be part of a church?

Well, at the heart of all of these things is God talks about what it means with your identity in Christ. He's going to say, what's my heart for you? My heart for you is that grace and peace will be multiplied in your life.

That's my heart for you. That's my heart. Well, George, you may have chosen sound a little bit attractive, but don't you think there's lots of problems with it, like free will and all of that type of stuff.

[32 : 59] Don't you think it leads to pride? And we're going to close with why it doesn't mean those things. I mean, there's just the first thing. I'll talk about it a little bit more in the weeks to come.

One of the things which is so wonderful about the Christian faith and about texts like this is it brings us face to face with a human problem. I was telling my wife the other day, I watched a YouTube video, and there were a couple of them, and they were people very hostile to the Christian faith. And one of them, you know, had that really educated British accent that makes it, you know, whatever they say, they could say the dumbest thing in the world, but because they have that Oxbridge accent, it sounds like it's, like you should all bow down to it and just accept it.

You know what I mean. You know that type of accent. If one of you guests have that accent, we're really glad you're here and we're going to use you in public announcements because everybody will just think that it's really, really, really smart.

You know, and the other ones had these, just they're really quick and very aggressive and very assertive, and they went boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. And I'm always intimidated by those guys and gals, always intimidated by them. And when I've had conversations in coffee shop and somebody just turns their full guns on me and just go bam, bam, bam, bam, bam, bam, all these quick points, really confident, really assertive, and I just, I just, whoa, I'm not a fast thinker.

[34 : 19] But I was sharing with my wife, and, uh, but I, but the comfort I have listening to them is this. I don't, it's not because I think I'm smarter. I know I'm not smarter than most of them. I know two things about them.

I know that when they talk about the Bible, they don't really want to understand what the Bible says. They've just gone cherry-picking for verses to make me look stupid. And that if there's time, you can show how they've just misquoted everything.

The second thing is, I know they're not self-reflective about the problems of their own position. 99.999% of the time, they're not self-reflective.

I, I can think of, uh, I went into a, to see a doctor once, at one of the walk-in clinics, and he asked me what I did, and I told him I was a pastor, and he went from doing this to doing this, looking at me, and he was ready to go ba-boom, ba-boom, ba-boom, ba-boom, ba-boom, because he was a very, as I discovered, a very outspoken atheist, and wanted to really blast me with all the problems that Christians had done in the world.

Now, that was one of those moments that probably, uh, some little old lady was praying for me, because I just sort of took it, and I said, I don't know why you can say those types of things. The only societies that have been atheists like yours, Russia, USSR killed 50 million people,

Communists, China killed 50 million people, the Communists in Cambodia killed over a third of their population.

[35 : 44] Like, what gives you a right to talk about anything about Christianity? Only been atheist societies for a few decades, and you've already killed hundreds of millions of people. And he just went, changed the topic.

Not reflective about his own position. So here's the thing going back to this. The fact of the matter is, it's a very well-known problem of thought of how you can have free world in a world where there's causality.

Within Hinduism and Buddhism, when you have these iron laws of, of, uh, karma, how can you actually have freedom within that system? Islam is the pure religion of complete and utter control of Allah.

And if that's the case, how do you have any type of freedom whatsoever? And let me tell you, you might not be completely happy about the Christian solution to this over the next few weeks, but Christianity is very honest and upfront that there's something here, and it gives you the most beautiful answer in the world.

Here's the beginning of the answer. We'll talk about it more in the next couple of weeks. Only Christianity believes that God is a God of love. Actually, all religions basically try to say that's the case, but only Christians can actually claim it.

[36 : 54] Well, that sounds like an awfully bold claim. Why do you say it? Well, some of you have heard me say this before, but it's very deeply true. If Allah is the only being that exists, how can he be, how can he love?

There has to be another for love. And if, whether it's in Hinduism or Buddhism and all that, at the end of the day, there's only this one God, this one thing which is everything, and if there's just this one thing that's everything, how can there be love?

You need to have another. Only Christians say and understand, not because we're smart, not because we're clever, but because it's been revealed by Christ, there is three persons in one God. From all eternity, the Father has loved the Son. From all eternity, the Son has loved the Holy Spirit. From all eternity, the Holy Spirit has loved the Father, and the Father has loved the Holy Spirit. And back and forth, from all eternity, the very, very foundation, before there is any other type of reality or creation, there is a God who is a God of unending love.

[38 : 05] And doesn't it make a difference for you if you think that this God of love chooses? doesn't it make sense that if there is, in fact, a true God of love that he will make a world where there is both some type of control and order, yet there is human freedom?

Because you can't have love without freedom. Only Christianity starts to make you think, oh, that's a bit of a hint that, gosh, like maybe Christianity is true.

Like, in fact, once you start to understand that, why wouldn't you want God to be like that? Isn't that the God you long for? Isn't that the God you yearn for?

God and just in closing, but you say, okay, but George, there has to be some basis of God choosing and all of that.

Okay, really? Think about it for a second. What this text is saying is that love chose you. Only love chose you. What's better than that?

[39 : 22] Do you really want to know that he chose you just because, I don't know, you're good looking or you're rich or you're ugly or you're poor or anything like that. Like, what's better than love choosing?

What can be more basic than that? What's more beautiful than that? It's love. That's why he chose you.

Love. Only love. Love for love. love. What could be more?

What could be more? You see, that's what's so profoundly powerful about this text is that on one hand, when you understand that love is, you are chosen to become Christ purely and utterly because of love.

On one hand, all of the pride, all of the reasons I think I'm strong or wonderful, they're all completely and utterly undercut. But he doesn't undercut me to grovel.

[40 : 23] All of a sudden, the same things that topples my pride, gives me confidence and joy. I can go forward and face life because he has chosen me, unworthy as I am.

Invite you to stand. If you were here and maybe you've wandered away from the Christian faith or maybe you're online watching or maybe you've never given your life to Christ and you feel that bit of a tug, some of you might be saying, George, you know, all my life I've been missed.

When it comes time for dating, I missed. When it comes time for marriage, I missed. When it comes time for children, I missed. When it comes time to make money, I missed. When it comes time for all of these good things, promotions, I missed.

And I can't believe it's true. Let me tell you, if you've heard this and you feel that all, even by you saying that, it's showing that God is at work in your heart and he wants you to recognize that he's chosen you.

Like, yes, like you. The final word about you will not be missed. The final word about you has already been spoken and it's chosen.

[41 : 39] Chosen for love's sake, by love, for love's sake. He loves you. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, whether it's just sort of dawning on us for the first time and our hearts are turning to Christ in humble gratitude and amazement that he would choose somebody like me, somebody like us, or whether we have known you for a long time and are just once again enchanted or moved by the beauty of what you've done so that we would be your children by adoption and grace.

Father, we ask that these beautiful words have chosen that they would be etched on our heart, that they would be etched on our mind, that, Father, it would be the ground on which we stand as we look at our world, that it would be that which propels us to move forward, that which draws us to move forward, that which helps us to see the world and see ourselves and what you've called us to do.

We ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would take these words and weave them deeply into who we are. And we ask all these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior, and all God's people said, Amen.