

Chosen Before the Foundation of the World

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Preacher: Rev Iver Martin

[0 : 00] You turn with me to that second passage that we read together, Paul's letter to the Ephesians, and we're going to read together from verse 3. Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 3.

Page 1174, Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

In love, he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace with which he has blessed us in the beloved.

I'm tempted to shy away from this passage for five reasons.

First of all, I'm tempted because there's a voice inside me that says it's too complicated. But then when I give that a second thought, I think, well, you know, what an insult to the people of this congregation.

[1 : 42] If it's too complicated for you, it's too complicated for me. Who do I think I am to understand a passage like this more than you do? And ministers, you know, can be terribly arrogant.

And that's always one of the temptations. If it's in the Bible, it's not just for ministers or elders. It's there for the people of God.

It is there for the ordinary people. And if the words of Jesus were understood by the fishermen of the day, you don't need to have a university degree to be able to grasp God's word.

I'm not saying that we can understand all of it in its complexity, but it's for us all. Every single part of it is for us all. Even the parts which are more difficult to understand, including this passage here.

The second reason I'm tempted to shy away from it is because it might give people an excuse for not coming to faith in Jesus. Let's read that verse again. God chose us in Jesus before the foundation of the world.

[2 : 54] And then Paul goes on to say in verse 5, He predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ. Now, here's what tempts me. I'm tempted to think, well, if you preach that, if you try and explain that, if you try and bring people's attention and focus their attention on these verses, it might give people an excuse for not coming to faith in Jesus.

People say that because this passage explains how God chose his people before the foundation of the world, some might say, well, if that's the case, if I'm saved, I'm saved, and I don't need to worry about whether I'm saved or not, because it's not up to me.

It's up to God. After all, God, this is what it says. God chose us in Jesus before the foundation of the world. Why do I need to worry about believing in Jesus? Why do I need to be concerned about my soul?

It's not up to me. It's up to God himself. So that's another reason why I might be tempted to shy away from a passage like this. But that's wrong.

Because God has told us in this passage here a truth. And all truth is God's truth. And God's truth is to be revealed. It's not to be hidden.

[4 : 07] It's not to be shied away from. Every part of the Bible is to be tried, is to be made clear. And it is for ourselves, is for all of us.

And then the third reason is this. It might put people off. Trusting in Jesus. Maybe there's someone here tonight, and you read this passage, and you say, and you might be on the border of trusting in Jesus.

You have a genuine, intense interest in being right with God. And yet you come across a passage like this, and you say, well, what if I'm not chosen?

What if I'm not predestined? And here it says quite clearly that a person is saved because God chooses that person, and God predestines that person to eternal life.

Now, what if I'm not chosen? I don't feel chosen. I don't feel inclined. After all, why would God choose a person like me? Then the fourth reason is this.

[5 : 07] Some people say that it contradicts the rest of the Bible. The rest of the Bible in many places says that if a person believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, then that person is saved.

And here it says that a person is saved because he is chosen by God. Is that not a contradiction? Well, there are many people, as you know, who try to make out that the Bible is full of contradictions, and here is one of them.

Here is a passage that says that we are saved because God has chosen us before the foundation of the world. And in the rest of the Bible it says believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. You must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ in order to be saved.

Well, both truths are true. Both things are true. There is no contradiction, even if there may be an apparent contradiction in our logic and in our minds.

Both truths are true. And the fifth and last reason why I might be tempted to shy away from a passage like this is because we need to keep the gospel simple.

[6 : 08] But that's like saying we need to eat ready break all day. You have to see, you have to try and grasp the Bible in all its diversity. And very often God comes to one person in one way with one chapter and one verse.

And God may very well come on another day with another chapter and another verse. There is nothing in this passage that I need to be ashamed of tonight. There is nothing in this passage that might put you off coming to faith in Jesus.

After all, this is God's word. And if you are seeking the Lord tonight, then what's to say that this passage itself may not be the final blow, the final draw, the final influence that will bring you from being outside of the kingdom to being inside the kingdom.

This is God's word. And I have to stand here tonight believing that God's word, all of God's word, is God's word. And a passage like this can equally speak to the unbeliever.

I believe I can stand here tonight unashamed. And to preach a passage like this, and if I preach it properly, and I hope I will, then I should be able to never ever diminish from the free offer of the gospel, even if God has chosen his people from before the foundation of the world.

[7 : 32] Well, with that in mind, let's try and unpack these few verses in a way that will help us, I hope. We're not going to understand fully what they mean, but I hope that we will grasp them and accept them as they are, as God speaking to us, and as him making himself known to us in the pages of his word.

Let's be absolutely clear. First of all, the Bible teaches that a person is saved through faith as that person hears the gospel, and as he comes to put his trust in Jesus Christ and Jesus' death alone. That is the gospel, and that is the only way to be saved. There has never been a person who has come to Christ without putting his trust in Jesus Christ and his death alone.

In other words, if you are going to be saved, as the Philippian jailer said, what must I do to be saved? Paul's answer is absolutely clear and is timeless. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

Let's take some examples of the clarity of how clear the Bible is in teaching this. John chapter 3, the well-known passage of John chapter 3 and verse 14.

[8 : 56] He says this, And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Now that's absolutely clear, that if you are to be saved, and if I am to be saved tonight, then we must believe in the Lord.

And John chapter 3, of course, gives that wonderful story from the Old Testament, when the people of Israel were moving through the desert, and when they began once again to complain against Moses and the Lord, and the Lord sent poisonous snakes amongst them, and the poison, as the snakes, the serpents moved amongst them, they were bitten, and many of the people died.

And of course, they were terrified. And they said to Moses, What are we going to do? God said to Moses, Well, this is how we're going to be saved. Now God could have healed the people right away. He could have taken away the snakes without doing anything.

He could have worked a miracle so that they would disappear. But this is the way that God made clear how people were going to be healed from the poison that the snakes had inflicted upon them. [10:10] By Moses erecting a pole on top of which was a bronze snake. It had to be high enough for everyone to see.

It mustn't be too low. Everyone had to be able to see the snake. And the purpose was for Moses to announce to the people as quickly as he possibly could, and as urgently as he possibly could, that whoever looks on the snake, on the bronze serpent, would be healed from their poison. And that's exactly what happened. Whoever looked, all they had to do, all they had to do was to cast their eyes on this bronze, this brass snake on the top of the pole, and they would be healed from the poison of the snakes.

Now, it's all very well saying, Ah, but if God wanted to heal them, he would have healed them anyway. That's not for you to say. This is how God chose to save his people.

Through their faith in him, through looking at the snake. And the same is true for Jesus Christ. John 3 verse 14, For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so as many or whoever looks to Jesus Christ and him alone and his death on the cross as the payment for our sin, whoever looks to him.

[11:33] Now, don't lose sight of that fact. Whoever, that means you. If you look to Jesus in faith, putting all your trust in him, turning away from your old life, trusting in him with all your heart, you will be saved.

That's the gospel. And there's nothing in the Bible as clear as that simple fact that Jesus is the way to salvation. And it has to be through faith.

Your faith in Jesus Christ. However, at the root of our salvation, at the root of the gospel, is this, that God has chosen and elected those who are to be saved.

That's not something I've made up. It's not something to do with Calvinism. We heard this on Wednesday night. It's not something just to do with Calvinism. It's all to do with the Bible.

There is nothing as clear. Here it is. Ephesians chapter 1. Even as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ.

[12:39] And this is not the only passage that makes this clear. Romans chapter 8 and verse 27, I think. And then John, we read it in John chapter 6 and verse 37. That as many as the Father gives me will come to me.

The Father gives them to me. That's the first step in the process. Now right away there are people saying, well this can't be. You can't say on the one hand that a person is saved as he puts his faith in Jesus Christ and on the other hand that he's saved because God has chosen him.

These two things don't make sense. Well, let's take some examples from the Bible. First of all, we have to root all our questions on the Bible whether we understand it or not.

You know there's a verse in the Bible that says, trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean to your own understanding. The problem is we try to understand this with our logic. And you can't because you're dealing with God here.

God is beyond our logic. And there's one thing you can say whilst we are not able to understand you can never accuse God of being contradictory to himself.

[13:46] That's one thing. And you can never accuse God of being unfair. Let's not say at any point it may seem unfair to us. It's not because God is the God of fairness, the God of justice, the God of grace.

God never does anything that's unfair. So let's not start with the premise that ever at any point in time God is unfair. Let's take some examples from the Bible.

Go back to Abraham, Genesis chapter 12. God came to Abraham. Abraham was living in Ur of the Chaldeans, a city which was inhabited by thousands of different people, a modern city, a city that was well on the way to paganism at that time.

God approached Abraham, called him, chose him, asked him, commanded him to go out to leave his city, to go into the land of Canaan that God would show him and there he would bless him. Now, I want to ask you this.

Why did God choose Abraham? There were thousands of other people living in Ur of the Chaldeans. Why did he have to go to Ur of the Chaldeans? Why could he not go to Palestine or somebody living in Jerusalem as it was at that time or the Hittites or the Canaanites or anything

else like that?

[14:55] Why did he choose Abraham? Abraham? There's no answer to that question. And it's the same with Isaac and Jacob and all the patriarchs and all of the twelve tribes of Judah.

Why did he choose them? Moses, the burning bush. Why did he approach Moses? He was making a good life for himself, quite happy the way he was until he met God in the burning bush and God said, no, stop.

I want you to go back to Egypt. I want you to lead my people out. Israel. They were the most obnoxious people under the sun. Rebels, a bunch of rebels and many of them, they spent their whole lives complaining against God.

Why did God put up with them? Why did he choose them? There were plenty of other people in the world. That is the history of the way that God dealt with people. Now Paul says in another letter, he says, are you going to accuse God of being unfair because he chose?

Not at all. Because this world is a fallen world and every single person in the world, the only thing that we deserve, you and I deserve tonight, is God's just, right punishment.

[16:02] So the fact that he saves anyone at all is a marvel, it's a miracle and it's a testimony of his grace. That's the way he worked in. Now when it comes to the gospel, you'll find the same thing again.

Why was it that Saul of Tarsus, this rebel, this man who considered himself, this is the way he described himself, that's the worst of all sinners. He lived, once he became converted, he began to see how obnoxious his life was beforehand, trying to be right with God because by his own works. That's what he did. He spent years of his life trying to earn God's favor by his own works. And it was only after he became a Christian that he realized how wrong he had been. And why should God choose this obnoxious individual?

Was it because he was any better than anyone else? Not at all. He persecuted God's people. He was responsible and he was party to their death. So if there's anyone who God is not going to call, you would imagine, it would be Saul of Tarsus.

And that's the very person that God chose. Why did he do it? I don't know. Paul didn't know. That's why, as he writes this letter to the Ephesians, he's absolutely ecstatic.

[17:13] He can't believe that God would want to choose him over anyone else. He can't believe it. If there's one person in the world, he says, that was undeserving of God's favor and his mercy and his salvation, it was me.

I can't believe it, he says. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing. And he's just taken up with this in the original language.

The whole of the, almost the whole, the half of this chapter is one sentence. He can't even draw breath. He's so full of joy. That's the way that God deals with people who are sinners.

So you see, there are two sides to the gospel. Two sides to the way the Bible teaches us how God saves people from their sins. Number one, that God has chosen his people from before, here it is, from before the foundation of the world that we should be holy.

he predestined us. That means it's quite simple that he chose, he selected in order to be saved, in order to be part of his community, in order to have everlasting life.

[18:27] That's what it, that's what it means and that's what it says. Nevertheless, at the same time, now don't ask me to reconcile this. I can't do it. Neither has ever, anyone else ever been able to reconcile these two truths.

Nevertheless, it is your responsibility and it is my responsibility to listen to God's word and to listen to God's word speaking to us, to the message of the gospel, to listen to God saying to us, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son so that whosoever, that means you, whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

Therefore, in other words, it's not for you to say tonight, I wonder if God's chosen me or not. It's for you to say, I'm listening to this gospel, God is speaking to me, he's telling me that if I put my trust in Jesus Christ as my savior, I will be saved and that's a fact, that's a promise.

There's the two sides of the gospel and they run along, somebody described them once as train lines. You know how you have train lines, they have to be parallel. parallel. They can never come together.

If train lines come together, train is bust. You can't run a train on it. They absolutely have to be parallel and it's the same with these two truths. The truth about your responsibility and my

responsibility to listen to God and to come to faith in Jesus, that's my responsibility.

[19 : 58] I must come to faith in Jesus. At the same time, God has chosen those who will come to faith in Jesus and that's a fact. That's another element, that's another dimension to the second dimension to the gospel.

These two things are absolutely true. Now the person will say, well, you're confusing everybody. I'm not confusing everybody. It's not a matter of confusion, it's a matter of accepting what God has said about himself.

Are we prepared to accept this as God's word to us or not? Or are we going to fall into the trap of doing what so many Christians are doing and just ignoring one section of the Bible?

It's so easy to ignore this because we think that if we elevate some of the Bible and if we hide the rest of the Bible that somehow God's going to bless that. He's not going to bless it because the whole of the Bible, including the less acceptable bits, are God's word and we must never, ever conclude that some of the Bible is less acceptable.

Okay, we don't understand it. We find it difficult to grasp. But it's still God's word to us. Now, there are some people that come to a past like this and they try to get around it by arguing.

[21 : 17] And here's how they argue. They say this. When we read that God predestined or chose some to be saved, it means that he somehow saw, before the foundation of the world, he saw into the future and he knew, he could see into the future and he knew those out of all the world who would hear the gospel and who would accept Jesus as their saviour.

So, on the basis, when he saw that they would accept Jesus, then, on that basis, he chose them. Alright? Do you understand?

I hope that that's clear. That's how some people try to get around this passage by arguing. In other words, he chose them because he knew they would accept the gospel.

He knew they would listen to the gospel and wouldn't reject it but that would come to faith in Jesus Christ. Well, now, that sounds very reasonable. The problem is it's not true because it's not in the Bible and if it's not in the Bible, it's not true.

let's assume though for the moment that it was true. Let's assume that what we read here is not as it appears but that before the foundation of the world, before God made the world way, way back in time, that God knew he could foresee into the future and that he somehow knew those who were going to accept it.

[22 : 48] And on that basis, he chose them. So, that was on the basis on which he sent Jesus into the world. Now, let me put it in another word. In other words, what you're saying is this, that Jesus came into the world just in order to make salvation possible for anyone who wanted it.

That's what you're saying. He came into the world, he became a man, and he worked and he lived with people and he laid down his life on the cross when they crucified him, he died on the cross, he was buried, he rose again on the third day, but all he achieved from that was to simply make salvation possible, to open the door.

Is that what you believe? Do you believe tonight that the only achievement that Christ made in this world was to simply open a door for those who happened to want to come in or those who didn't happen to want to come in, for anyone who wished to come in?

Is that right? Now, let me ask you, if it is, then let me ask you this question. What if nobody came in?

That's possible, isn't it? It has to be possible. If it's up to us, whether we decide to come into the kingdom or not, even if the door is open, what if nobody wants to come in?

[24 : 15] There are millions of people in the world who aren't Christians, who wouldn't give the gospel the time of day. They have no time for the gospel. As soon as they hear about the Bible, they're off like a shot. You've met them, I've met them.

Many, many people. What if nobody was saved? Jesus coming into the world in that case would be a complete waste of time.

And that's what you're saying. You are suggesting, if it's all down to us, and if all that Jesus did was to open the door for salvation and leave the rest to us, whether we wanted to come in or not, then the possibility is that nobody would come in.

And in that case, his coming into the world was a complete waste of time. That makes a mockery of the gospel, doesn't it? It makes a mockery of what God did. And it makes a mockery of the Bible that tells us this.

Listen to what Jesus says. The Son of Man came into the world to seek and to save. It doesn't say he came into the world to make salvation possible.

[25 : 25] It says he came into the world to seek and to save. You remember the parable of the lost sheep? What did he do when the one sheep wandered off? Did he just wait and say, oh, well, as long as the lost sheep knows that he's welcome here any time he wants, as long as I wait up for him at night, he'll be okay.

That's not what he did at all. He left the 99 in the wilderness and he went after the sheep that was lost and he didn't stop until he found it. he pulled out all the stops. Who knows how many sleepless nights he had?

Why? Because he loved that lost sheep and because nothing was going to stop him from finding that lost sheep and when he found it, he lifted it on his shoulders and he went back to his friends and his neighbors and said, rejoice with me for I have found my sheep that was lost.

That's the picture that we have of the gospel. It is not a God who simply just opens the door and just leaves the rest to us. Not at all. You know why I say that?

Because the Bible tells us that we're not capable of coming in the door anyway. We're not capable of deciding for Christ. The Bible goes on, in fact, Paul goes on in Ephesians chapter 2 to describe us as dead in trespasses and sins.

[26 : 38] How, I ask you, can a dead man or a dead woman ever go through a door even if it's open and even if he has an invitation to go through the door? He can't. You go to a cemetery tonight and I'm not trying to offend anyone by saying this but you can shout and you can scream and you can holler all you want but nobody's going to listen to you because they're dead.

That's the way the Bible describes us. As dead and spiritually dead. You might not feel dead but as far as your relationship to God is concerned that's what the Bible describes your condition as being. Dead in trespasses and sins and you are not able to come. You see we talk about free will and of course we know what we mean. Of course we have to live with the choices that we make.

I'm not trying to say that we don't make choices. Of course we do. But when it comes to putting our faith in Jesus Christ the Bible tells us we're not able to. We need the power of God. That was the whole point by the way when Jesus raised the dead.

Jairus' daughter. The son of the woman of name. Lazarus. The whole point was to show and to demonstrate to the world why he had come into the world. So that those who were dead like ourselves would be raised.

[27 : 53] And so that we would be resurrected. And if there's anyone here tonight who's a Christian. If you're following Jesus that's the way that's what the Bible tells us about us.

That we've been raised to newness of life. There's only one way in which a person can be raised from the dead and that is by a miracle. It's the one thing that's impossible. You cannot raise a person from the dead.

But God can. He can raise a person and that's what he does every time a person comes to faith in Jesus. This is one more thing.

If that person is right that tells me that Jesus simply came to open the door for someone and that that person well who knows whether that person will come or will not.

As long as the door is open then that person knows that the invitation is given. Nothing more than that. How can I pray for somebody to be saved if God has no power over whether that person is going to be saved or not?

[28 : 58] You're praying for your brother tonight. You're praying for your sister to be converted. You're praying for your husband. You're praying for your wife. You're praying for your parents or whatever, your friends, your neighbours.

if you don't believe that God has any power over whether that person is going to be saved or not, you're wasting your time. And I'm telling you tonight that if the only thing that Jesus came to do tonight was to open a door for people and to just leave the rest to them, who knows whether they'll come or whether they won't.

God has no say in the matter whatsoever. But I can stand here tonight. You know this is why I can read a passage like this and it fills me with confidence because I can pray for my friend who isn't a believer and I can pray for them day after day and I know that I'm coming to the one who has the power of life and death in that person's life.

If I didn't believe that, I wouldn't waste my time. But furthermore it means that I could come and stand in this pulpa tonight and I can know for sure that God's word is a thing of power and that God works and he reaches those people who he has chosen and I don't know maybe the whole of this congregation tonight is chosen.

It's not for you to say, oh well he is and I'm not and I wonder if I am and he's not. It's not for us to say that. This is God's business. It's for us to listen to the gospel and to listen to God speaking to us but it means that I can stand here Sunday after Sunday even despite all the discouragements that there are in the ministry and I can know that God's word is powerful to bring people not just to remind them that the door is open but to actually bring them in to compel them to come in and that's why the apostle Paul the first thing he discovered after he came to Jesus Christ was that this was God's work and he felt humbled he felt completely humbled as he as he contemplated God's work.

[31 : 06] So for Paul this is an absolutely foundational teaching. It's something that he cannot resist. He cannot get away from. Most importantly more importantly it's the most wonderful truth as far as the apostle is concerned.

He seems to have a grasp and a confidence of this great truth in which he is totally unashamed in announcing that God has chosen us. For him it wasn't a point of conflict.

It wasn't something that he wanted to come between Christians or for Christians to endlessly argue over. It was just a fact. He knew he couldn't understand it but he knew it was a foundational fact. That he rejoiced in it. And the first thing he rejoiced in was the fact that God was the author of his salvation. That he was what he was because God had somehow or other set his eye upon him. And he had done it by choosing him. And this is the central issue. The issue is this. Why would God choose me?

[32 : 13] Why would God choose me? And I have absolutely no idea. Because as I look at my life and particularly as I look at my life in the mirror of God's word heart and as it shows me my filth and my deceit and my corruption in my heart and the more I go on in the Christian life the more I'm sure of who I really am and the less I know the answer of why God should want me to be his son, his child, his person, member of his kingdom.

It is a mystery. And I'm sure it is to you as well. It is a complete mystery. Do you know when we go into the supermarket you always choose what's best, don't you?

That's the way we choose something. You go looking for a car and you're examining the cars, see how many scratches there are, see how many miles it's done. You're not going to take the scrap, are you? Unless you can't afford anything else.

You go into the supermarket and you open the eggs, don't you see any of them is broken, there's broken eggs, you put it back, you take the ones where they're perfect. That's the way we do things, isn't it?

When we're given a choice, when we're given a selection, we're always looking for the flaws and we leave the flaws and we take the perfect ones. That's what we do. That's the way we make the choice. When it comes to this teaching, it's the opposite.

[33 : 38] We don't know the question. In fact, I wonder even if we should be asking the question. But one thing is for sure, as I contemplate tonight, why I should be amongst those who are saved, it humbles me.

And it makes me realize that I have the greatest gift that anyone could possibly have. It makes me realize that I don't need anything more in this life than what I have.

It means that in this world where envy and covetousness is everything, everything, that I can be driving along a street in Edinburgh and somebody rolls up in a bigger and better and more flashy car than me, and whereas I would normally look over and say, I wish I had a car like that, I could say, I have everything.

And it means that when I get frustrated, and when things do my head in, and when I'm just fed up, and when I'm completely at the end of my tether, I can stop and I can say, I've got everything.

I couldn't be in a better position tonight. Even if I'm frustrated, even if it's one of these days where everything has gone against me, and I'm just struggling the whole day, I can say every day of my life that I have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus.

[35 : 14] And I can say to my Christian friend who says, ah, but you need a second blessing, I can say, I don't even know what a second blessing is, I've been blessed with everything. Blessed be the God and Father who's blessed as in Christ with every spiritual blessing.

That means that if you're in Christ tonight, you don't need anything else not another thing. And you can say with the Apostle Paul, I have learned to be content in whatever circumstance I am.

That's what it means to be blessed. And it's when you grasp the incredible privilege of what it means to be saved and to have been called by God to be his child and to inherit everlasting life. If you are elated by that call, if you think that you have something that someone else doesn't have, you are wrong and you're not likely to be called in any case.

If it makes you proud, I would question whether you're saved in the first place. But as you contemplate the enormity of the grace of God over and against your sinfulness, my sinfulness, my utter horrific sinfulness, then I just, all I can do is to accept the grace of God for what it is in Jesus Christ and love it and stand in it and come to God confidently and thank the Lord and say, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Jesus Christ.

[36 : 59] Now I'm going to ask you in closing, do you have that tonight? Are you right with God tonight? Are your sins forgiven?

Have you come to faith in Jesus? If the answer is yes, then go out of here not looking for anything else, every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus, you've got it all.

You've got it all. And cherish it and treasure it and don't ever lose sight of it and let it carry you through the week. That one foundational fact, let it carry you through the week.

But if you don't have Jesus tonight, then what? Well, I guess some of you are saying that, what can I do? Here we have it. There we go. God's word. If I'm chosen, I'm chosen.

If not, then what can I do? Well, let me ask you. If you knew that you were chosen by God, let's just take this hypothetical question.

[38 : 02] If you knew that you were chosen by God tonight, how would that make you feel? Do you know what? Some of you in here are saying, I wouldn't want it at all.

That's horrific, isn't it? But you're being honest. You see, a lot of people go back to the Bible and say, well, look at Jacob and Esau, two brothers, and one of them was a believer in the Lord and the other one wasn't.

They say, well, isn't that unfair that God should select Jacob to be one of his own and Esau? No. If you had asked Esau, you'd gone up to Esau and you'd said, do you realize that you're not a believer? He would have said, yeah.

And if you had said to him, do you want to be a believer? He said, no. No way. You see, nobody is forced to be a believer. And if you've made your choice not to be a believer, then that's your choice. I'm not saying that God can't change that. I hope he does. But if you choose, God's not going to change you against your will. He's not going to create something against your will. That's why I have a problem with people who talk about the unfairness of God.

[39 : 18] God doesn't operate by forcing people. He operates by changing inwardly in them. A person is tonight what they want to be. If you're not a Christian, you don't want to be a Christian, then so be it.

But if tonight, if I said to you, what if you knew you weren't one of God's people? And if you were to say to me, that would be the most horrific thing I could ever find out about myself, nothing terrifies me and troubles me more than the thought of being lost.

And I want more than anything else to be right with God. God, then I say to you tonight, come. And I say that with all the authority of God's word.

And I can say to you tonight that if you do come to faith in Jesus, you will be saved. That's God's promise.

You look to him and to him alone, God's love. And it's only by looking to him by faith that we make our calling and our election sure.

[40 : 39] Let's pray. Father, we give thanks this evening once again for the power of your word and for even the fact that having grappled with it and having to confess this evening there are so many questions that we don't understand, so many issues that are still in our heads, so many things that we can't get our minds around.

We pray, Lord, for anyone who really wants to grasp your truth, but Lord, show them that whilst they want to do that, that they must also accept and that they must also believe that the truth of God has to be more complicated than our minds can grasp, because your ways are higher than our ways.

Your thoughts are higher than our thoughts, and so will we pray to surrender our intellect to your great truth and we pray to change that your spirit will even right now change people who need you and who want more than anything else to be reconciled to God before it's too late.
In Jesus' name, Amen.