



Almont Vineyard Church
Week 6 Sermon Series: The Sandals of Jesus/ Alive in Christ
July 11, 2026

Opening Monologue

Welcome to the AVC App!

Whether you've been part of our church family for years or you're joining us for the very first time, we're so glad you're here.

You've landed in the Sermon Section — your home for thoughtful commentary, spiritual reflections, discussion questions, and more. Everything here is designed to help you go deeper into Sunday's message and apply God's Word to your everyday walk with Christ. As you read and reflect, we pray the Holy Spirit opens your eyes to fresh insight and renews your strength for the road ahead.

We're now in Week 6 of our series. If you missed the live message, here's the link <https://www.youtube.com/@almontvineyardchurch>

As I shared in this week's sermon, I've felt led by the Holy Spirit to deviate from my original plan. The message is titled "Alive in Christ."

Life is not meant to be a constant drag — just barely making it through. Life is meant to be truly lived. And trust me, I get it — life isn't always easy. Trials and tribulations will come, and I'm not downplaying that at all. But the reality is, Jesus did not create us to merely survive. In fact, He tells us the complete opposite.

In John 10:10, "Jesus says the thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy, but He has come so that we may have life and have it to the full — abundant life." Christ also declares in John 14:19, "Because I live, you also will live." That word "live" in the original Greek is rich — it means to breathe, to have life, but also to enjoy real life... to be fresh, strong, efficient, and powerful.

Satan wants to sink our ship, and he often does it by planting lies in our minds — because he is the father of lies. Over 30 years ago, I walked through a season of life-altering depression. I honestly thought I might not make it. But by the grace of God, I didn't give up or throw in the towel. I fought through it in the powerful name of Jesus Christ. I prayed harder, I soaked in God's Word, and I asked my Christian brothers to surround me and pray over me. Praise be to the Lord — the darkness did not destroy me. Why? Because I am alive in Christ.

This week we're going to dive deeper into this truth, turning to Jesus' words and Apostle Paul's encouragement to Ephesus we will explore the precious promises of the Lord. As we read them aloud, I believe we will all be encouraged to remember that the Lord is with us and in us. He is by our side. In fact, Scripture tells us we are chosen and predestined — God Himself made the choice to use us for a purpose and a destiny.

Come this Sunday ready to be encouraged, equipped by God's Word, and to change the atmosphere of your mind, body, and soul.

In Christ,
Rev. Pastor Brad

To Listen to this week's Sermon: "Week 6 Summer Series: The Sandals of Jesus/ Alive in Christ" Go to the Sermon tab here in our APP or use the links to our website or YouTube Channel where you can also listen to our Sermons:

Web: <https://www.almontvineyardchurch.org/media>

You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/@almontvineyardchurch>

Key Sermon Text

John 14: 19-20

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2014%3A%2019-20&version=NIV>

Ephesians 1:11-12 & 13-14

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%201%3A11-12%20&version=NIV>

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%201%3A13-14&version=NIV>

Being Alive in Christ

Being alive in Christ stands at the very heart of Christian salvation and transformation. It is far more than a doctrinal concept — it is a profound spiritual reality that reshapes your identity, your desires, your power over sin, and the very way you experience daily life. To be "alive in Christ" means you are no longer defined by your past failures or enslaved to the patterns of this broken world. Instead, you are united with the risen Lord, sharing in His victory, His life, and His future.

The Nature of Life in Christ

At its core, this new life flows from our union with Christ — a deeply personal, spiritual connection in which believers are "in Christ" and Christ is in them through the indwelling Holy Spirit. This is not cold intellectual agreement or rule-keeping; it is a living, relational reality marked by mutual indwelling. We don't just follow Jesus from a distance — we are joined to Him so intimately that His life becomes the source of ours.

Death and Resurrection with Christ

This union is grounded in Christ's redemptive work. When we place our faith in Him, we participate in the key events of His story: His death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and glorification. As Paul explains, if we have been baptized into Christ, we have been baptized into His death. Our old self — dominated by sin — was crucified with Him. Because we died with Christ, we are freed from sin's mastery. And just as we died with Him, we are raised with Him to walk in newness of life (see Romans 6:3-11). The power that raised Jesus from the dead is now at work in you, empowering you to live differently.

Present and Future Dimensions

This reality is both present and future. Right now, your life is "hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3), and Christ Himself is your life. This calls us to live today in a manner worthy of Him — putting off the old ways and putting on the new. At the same time, we look forward to the day when Christ returns and our union with Him is fully revealed in glory. Union with Christ is the central truth of the entire doctrine of salvation.

Biblical Foundation

This truth explodes with hope in Scripture. As Paul writes in Ephesians:

“God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:4-6)

John reinforces this in his first letter:

“God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.” (1 John 5:11-12)

Practical encouragement for today: Being alive in Christ means you are no longer stuck in survival mode. You are empowered to live with purpose, joy, and spiritual vitality — even in the midst of trials. The same resurrection power that raised Jesus is available to you through the Holy Spirit. Let this truth sink deep: You are chosen, loved, raised, and seated with Christ. Walk in that freedom this week.

Sources: 1-3

Resurrection Life as Foundation

Jesus’ continuing life — specifically His resurrection from death — forms the very basis for our life. This isn’t merely that Jesus survived death, but that His victory over death means victory for all who follow Him. The consequence of Jesus rising from the dead is new life for His disciples — a whole new kind of life, even while still on earth, mediated by the Holy Spirit.

Union and Dependence

This life operates through intimate connection. Through the resurrection, the living Jesus became the disciples’ life because they became united to Him like branches in a vine. Just as the Son’s life depends upon the Father, the believer’s life depends on the Son. You don’t generate your own spiritual vitality — you draw it from Christ’s resurrection power flowing through you.

Present and Eternal Dimensions

According to John, believers already have eternal life and will enjoy it more fully in the age to come. This salvation is fundamentally about life: because Jesus lives, you also will live — united to Him by the Spirit and sharing in the life of Him who is the resurrection and the life.

Transformed Existence

What has been true of Jesus will now be true of us. We are not merely forgiven; we are grafted into Christ’s own resurrection existence, making His victory our victory. We participate in divine reality itself, taken up into the life of the Son.

Practical encouragement

Satan wants to steal, kill, and destroy this life (John 10:10). He tries to stomp out our joy, plant lies in our minds, and keep us in a half-dead existence of fear or exhaustion. But because Christ lives, we also live — with resurrection power flowing through us.

Don’t let the enemy rob you. Fight back: pray harder, soak in God’s Word, surround yourself with believing brothers and sisters, and stand on this truth. You are alive in Christ — fresh, strong, active, and powerful. Breathe deeply of God’s presence. Live the full, abundant life Jesus died and rose to give you.

Sources: 4-7

Live – Life Word Breakdown

(Exploring the Greek Word *zaō* – G2198)

zaō (ζάω, G2198) is a primary verb in the New Testament that means “to live” or “to be alive.” It appears over 140 times and is the verbal form connected to the noun zōē (life), which often refers to the abundant, eternal life Jesus gives.

Core Meanings

1. To live, breathe, and be among the living — Literally the opposite of being dead or lifeless. It emphasizes being vital and active.

2. To enjoy real life — Not mere existence, but true life worthy of the name: active, blessed, and full.

3. To live in the manner of the living — To pass life with character, purpose, and vitality.

4. Metaphorical / Spiritual Sense: To be in full vigour — fresh, strong, efficient, active, powerful, and efficacious. It can describe “living water” that has vital power in itself and imparts that power to the soul.

Key Usage in John 14:19

Jesus declares, “Because I live [zaō], you also will live [zaō].” This is resurrection language. Because Christ conquered death and lives eternally, His followers share in that same victorious, vibrant life through the Holy Spirit. It is both present reality and future hope.

Broader New Testament Themes

- **Physical life:** Everyday existence (e.g., Acts 17:28).

- **Spiritual / Eternal life:** The quality of life that comes from union with Christ (John 5:24-25, 6:57, 11:25; Romans 6:11, 8:13; Galatians 2:20).

- **Moral / Practical life:** Living in a way that pleases God rather than the flesh (Romans 6:2, 8:12-13; Galatians 5:25).

- **** God as the Living One:**** God is the source of all life; Jesus is “the Living One” who was dead and is alive forevermore (Revelation 1:18).

Application for Believers Today

zaō challenges us to move beyond survival mode. Satan wants to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10), keeping people in a diminished, half-alive state. But Jesus offers zaō life — fresh, strong, powerful, and full of purpose.

Because He lives, we live. This means breathing in God’s presence, standing strong against lies, and living actively in the kingdom — even amid trials.

You are not just existing. In Christ, you are alive with resurrection vigour. Draw daily from His life, and let the Holy Spirit make zaō a lived reality in every part of you.

This word beautifully captures the heart of the Gospel: Christ didn’t just save us from death — He calls us into abundant, vibrant, and ultimately eternal life.

Commentary, Spiritual Applications, and Theological Reflections

John 14:19-20

Life in Christ: Reflections from John 14:19-20

In the Upper Room on the night before His betrayal and crucifixion—around A.D. 30 in Jerusalem—our Lord Jesus Christ spoke words of intimate comfort and eternal promise to His anxious disciples.

He was about to pass through the valley of suffering and death, yet He directed their hearts (and ours) to the triumph of resurrection life and the profound reality of union with Him. These verses form part of His farewell discourse, where He promises the Holy Spirit and assures His followers that His departure is not abandonment. Let us receive His words as a living exhortation for our walk in Christ today.

“Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”

—John 14:19-20 (NIV, 1984)

Jesus begins with tender reassurance: “I will not leave you as orphans.” This reveals His fatherly care for those He loves. He promises to come to them through the Spirit of truth. After His resurrection, He appeared to the disciples in His glorious resurrection body and breathed the Holy Spirit upon them (John 20:22), fulfilling the promise that He would come to them “in a little while”—following the cross, the tomb, and the victory of the empty tomb.

The world, in its unbelief, would see Him no more. But the disciples—and every believer since—would see Him. Through the Resurrection, the living Jesus became their life. They were united to Him like branches in a vine. “Because I live, you will live also.” Just as the Son’s life is dependent upon the Father’s life (John 5:26; 6:57), so the believer’s life is dependent on the Son’s life. The historical reality of the Resurrection becomes the unshakeable basis for our hope of eternal life.

Jesus spoke these words with profound confidence even though He faced His own physical death. He affirmed His resurrection as a fact to undergird our entire way of living and dying. Christ’s teaching contradicts the way our culture often denies or avoids the reality of death. We may freely participate in this present life—loving, serving, working, and enjoying God’s gifts—while at the same time remaining ready to let go of it in favor of a life that will never end. We miss the deep joy of Christ’s teaching if we hold desperately to this temporal existence. Is there someone who needs to hear us say, “Because Jesus lives, I will live also”? It could be the beginning of a conversation with eternal consequences.

On that resurrection day, the disciples began to know by experience what it means to live in God and have God live in them: “I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.” This mutual indwelling is the very essence of life in Christ—a real, transformative union in which His resurrection life flows into our mortal frames.

The New Testament rings with this glorious theme. The Apostle Paul testifies, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). In Romans 6 we are taught that we have been united with Christ in His death and resurrection so that we may walk in newness of life. Colossians 3:3-4 exhorts us, “For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” And in the rich imagery of John 15, Jesus commands us to remain in Him as branches remain in the vine—for apart from Him we can do nothing, yet in Him we bear much fruit and our joy is made complete.

This life in Christ is not merely future hope; it is present power. It sustained the early church through Roman persecution, where believers faced martyrdom with songs on their lips because they knew the risen Christ was their life. In a world that often reduces existence to the material and finite, or that clings to this life with frantic anxiety, the resurrection promise liberates us to live with courage and to die with peace.

Therefore, let this be our exhortation and encouragement: Abide daily in the risen Lord through the Word, prayer, and the Spirit’s presence. Let His life shape your thoughts, your relationships, your work, and your witness. When trials come, when shadows lengthen, or when death itself draws near—whether our own or that of someone we love—remember the Savior’s sure word: “Because I live, you also will live.” And let us not keep this treasure hidden. In a culture starving for lasting hope,

may our lives and our lips boldly declare the good news that turns fear into faith and mourning into everlasting joy.

Because Jesus lives, we live also—now and forever.

To Him be all the glory. Amen.

Additional New Testament Passages on Life in Christ

1. Galatians 2:20 – “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

2. Romans 6:8 – “Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.”

3. 2 Corinthians 5:17 – “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

4. Philippians 1:21 – “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

5. Romans 8:10-11 – “But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.”

Sources: 8-9

Soaking in the Life of Christ Scriptures

Isn't it absolutely wonderful to know that Jesus Christ has given us life... Even in this broken world filled with trials and tribulations we know that Christ is with us. Take these scriptures in and look at them to be refreshed and renewed by the power of his word.

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Therefore, let this be our exhortation and encouragement: Abide daily in the risen Lord through the Word, prayer, and the Spirit’s presence. Let His life shape your thoughts, your relationships, your work, and your witness. When trials come, when shadows lengthen, or when death itself draws near—whether our own or that of someone we love—remember the Savior’s sure word: “Because I live, you also will live.” And let us not keep this treasure hidden. In a culture starving for lasting hope, may our lives and our lips boldly declare the good news that turns fear into faith and mourning into everlasting joy.

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Additional Reflections on Life in Christ

The New Testament unfolds the riches of life in Christ as a present, transforming union with the risen Lord. Drawing from the same themes of resurrection hope, mutual indwelling, and daily dependence seen in John 14, these passages deepen our understanding. Each one anchors believers in the historical reality of Christ’s victory over death, offering encouragement amid trials, cultural pressures, and the brevity of earthly life. Early Christians, facing Roman persecution and competing philosophies that offered little genuine hope for life after death, clung to these truths as the power for holy living and bold witness.

1. John 15:4-5 – “Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

This teaching, given in the same Upper Room setting as John 14, pictures life in Christ as organic and vital. Just as a branch draws sap moment by moment from the vine, our spiritual vitality, fruitfulness, and effectiveness flow only from continual abiding. In a world that prizes self-sufficiency, Jesus calls us to radical dependence. Historical Jewish imagery of Israel as God’s vine (Psalm 80;

Isaiah 5) finds its fulfillment in Christ, the true Vine. Abiding produces love, joy, obedience, and answered prayer—fruit that lasts into eternity.

2. Galatians 2:20 – “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Paul’s personal testimony in a letter combating legalism shows life in Christ as a daily exchange: our old self crucified, His life now animating ours. This union is intensely relational, rooted in Christ’s sacrificial love. In the context of first-century Galatian churches pressured by Judaizers, Paul reminds them that righteousness and power come not by works but by faith in the indwelling Christ. This truth frees us from performance and empowers us for sacrificial living today.

3. Romans 6:4 – “We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”

Paul links our identification with Christ’s death and resurrection to ethical transformation. Baptism symbolizes burial and rising—death to sin’s mastery and new life in the Spirit’s power. Written to the Roman church amid a morally corrupt empire, this exhortation calls believers to walk in resurrection power rather than the old patterns of the flesh. Life in Christ is not theoretical but visibly new.

4. Romans 6:8 – “Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.”

This verse anchors future hope in present union. Because we have died with Christ, future resurrection is certain. Paul’s logic here combats despair in suffering: our union guarantees both present victory over sin and future bodily redemption. In the early church’s experience of persecution, this assurance turned martyrs into joyful witnesses, echoing the confidence of the original disciples after seeing the risen Lord.

5. Colossians 3:3-4 – “For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

Written to a church facing false teachings, Paul emphasizes security and future glory. Our true life is “hidden” with Christ—safe from earthly threats, beyond the reach of decay. This hiddenness explains why believers can endure trials without despair. Christ Himself is our life; His appearing will reveal our full identity. This perspective shifts our focus from temporal struggles to eternal reality.

6. 2 Corinthians 5:17 – “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

In a letter defending apostolic ministry amid hardship, Paul declares the gospel’s recreating power. Life in Christ is not mere improvement but a complete new beginning—like the original creation now renewed in the Messiah. This truth sustained Paul through beatings, shipwrecks, and opposition, and it empowers us to live as ambassadors of reconciliation in a broken world.

7. Philippians 1:21 – “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

From prison, facing possible execution, Paul sums up life in Christ as total identification with his Lord. Living means fruitful labor for the gospel; dying means immediate presence with Christ. This single-minded focus brought joy amid chains and remains a powerful antidote to modern distractions and fear of death. It echoes Jesus’ own confidence before the cross.

8. Ephesians 2:4-5 – “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.”

Paul contrasts humanity’s spiritual death with God’s initiating love. Life in Christ begins with resurrection—God making the dead alive together with Christ. Written to mostly Gentile believers, this highlights grace over works and the church’s unity in this new life. It reminds us that our standing rests entirely on God’s mercy, freeing us from striving.

9. Romans 8:10-11 – “But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.”

In this great chapter on life in the Spirit, Paul assures believers that the same power that raised Jesus dwells in them. Even as our bodies experience the effects of sin and mortality, the indwelling Spirit brings present spiritual life and future bodily resurrection. This was revolutionary in a world dominated by Stoic resignation or Epicurean indulgence—offering vibrant hope rooted in historical fact.

**10. 1 John 5:11-12 **—“And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.” John writes to assure believers amid false teachings and opposition. Eternal life is not a future reward earned but a present possession through relationship with the Son. This exclusive claim distinguished early Christianity from surrounding mystery religions and philosophical systems. It calls us to confident assurance and compassionate proclamation: life is found only in Christ.

These passages together paint a multifaceted portrait of life in Christ: abiding dependence, crucifixion of the old self, resurrection power, new creation, hidden security, and eternal possession. They encourage us to live freely and boldly in the present while fixing our hope on the coming glory—because He lives, we live also.

Sources: 10-12

Ephesians 1:1-14

Paul wrote this letter to the believers in Ephesus and the surrounding churches while he was in prison for preaching the gospel. He wanted to provide in-depth teaching to nurture and maintain the unity of the church, putting this important information in written form because he could not visit them himself. In the original Greek, Ephesians 1:3–14 forms one long sentence—the longest sentence ever found in ancient Greek. This sentence introduces most of the themes Paul develops in the epistle. Paul used a technique rooted in Jewish worship known as the *berakah*—a form of praise. The language and style suggest influence by Hebrew psalms and hymns. This eulogy praises God for the blessings He has showered on believers because of His grace. These blessings come as a result of Christians’ identification with Christ and the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. All of this occurred according to God’s plan and purpose—His people were chosen in Christ “before the foundation of the world” (1:4). Because it was God’s plan, believers can trust that their salvation is certain—nothing can change what God has purposed. Because it was God’s plan, believers also know that they were called and chosen for a purpose: to “be holy and without blame before Him in love” (1:4) and that they “might live for the praise of His glory” (1:12). Finally, because it was God’s plan, Paul wanted his readers to understand God’s ultimate purpose—“to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ” (1:10). To be in Christ means to be part of God’s plan for the redemption of sinful humanity in a sin-filled world—a plan He made before the earth was created! Believers are privileged to be chosen by God, saved by Christ, and filled with the Spirit, “who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of His glory” (1:14). Through this eulogy, Paul demonstrated that believers have all spiritual blessings; then he prayed that they would know God intimately (1:17) in order that they might understand their past call to salvation, their future inheritance with Christ, and their present power available to them through the Spirit. This eulogy serves to introduce Paul’s letter by focusing the readers on their privileged position with God and the blessings He has heaped on them. From this beginning, Paul would teach them about unity in the church and about living as lights in their dark world.

1:1-2 – Paul’s Greeting and Apostolic Authority

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul (Saul) was a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin. He was raised as a strict Pharisee (Philippians 3:5), grew up in Tarsus, and was educated under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). He was also a Roman citizen,

a fact he used to great advantage at times (Acts 22:27–29). Out of this diverse background, God formed and called a valuable servant, using every aspect of Paul's upbringing to further the gospel.

The Jewish name "Saul," given to a man born in the tribe of Benjamin, evoked memories of the tribe's days of glory. The first king of Israel was named Saul and came from this tribe (1 Samuel 10:20, 24–26). The Roman name "Paul" was a common surname. When Paul accepted the Christian faith and began his mission to the Gentiles, he identified with his listeners by using his Roman name. In all of his letters, Paul identified himself with his Roman name, linking himself with the Gentile believers to whom God had sent him with the gospel of Christ.

Following the style of first-century letters, Paul began by introducing himself as the writer. He used a scribe (secretary) for his letters, dictating as the scribe wrote, and often added the last few lines in his own hand to validate the document. Tychicus probably carried this letter to the Ephesians (see 6:21–22).

An Apostle of Jesus Christ by the Will of God. Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ. He was not one of the original twelve, but the risen Christ confronted him on the road to Damascus and called him to preach the gospel to Jews and Gentiles (Acts 9:3–19). The apostles were God's representatives—envoys, messengers, delegates directly under the authority of Jesus Christ. They had authority to set up and supervise churches and to discipline them if necessary.

In some letters Paul explained and defended his apostleship, but the Ephesian church most likely had no doubt about his authority. However, Paul used this opening because the letter was to be circulated to other churches. God chose Paul for special work, saying that Paul would be His "chosen instrument to take My message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel" (Acts 9:15). Paul did not seek this apostleship; God chose him. Thus, Paul could truthfully say that he was an apostle by the will of God.

By the Will of God

An apostle was a messenger, a "sent one." Paul says he was Jesus' messenger "by the will of God." If ever there was a clear-cut case of someone not choosing God but being chosen by Him, it was Paul of Tarsus. Saul was a violent persecutor of the church. He was there when Stephen was martyred (Acts 7:58). He was heading to Damascus to do more harm when Jesus stopped him. From that moment, Paul followed, later becoming Christianity's greatest missionary. Whatever sins you have committed, whatever shameful thoughts or deeds haunt your past—or present—they are minor compared to Paul's. If God's grace was sufficient for him, it is sufficient for you. Let go of your feelings of guilt or inadequacy, and leave them at the foot of the cross. Paul did, and the world has never been the same.

To the Saints in Ephesus, the Faithful in Christ Jesus. Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesian believers (the saints in Ephesus). The Bible uses "saints" to refer to believers—those set apart by God to devote themselves to the highest moral living. Paul emphasizes their dedication to God, not their personal holiness (though that grows as they mature in faith). This is captured in Paul's greeting to the Roman believers: "To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints" (Romans 1:7). Thus, the word "saint" denotes both the privilege and the responsibility of all true believers.

Saints and Stained Glass

A little girl who attended worship in a place with a lot of stained-glass windows was asked what a saint was. "A saint is a person the light shines through," she replied. A saint is someone whose life—speech, actions, attitudes, relationships—points to Jesus. Does yours? The Bible teaches that all believers are saints—including you! This is not a reflection of your personal holiness but of the fact that a holy God has set you apart for His purposes. Face your day ready to treat each responsibility or each relationship as an opportunity to reflect God's mercy to others.

The words “in Ephesus” are not present in the three earliest manuscripts. Therefore, this was very likely a circular letter, with the name of each local church filled in as it circulated. Ephesus, the leading church in the region of Asia Minor, was probably the first destination. Paul mentioned no particular local problems or personal greetings, pointing to its broader use.

Ephesus was a commercial, political, and religious center. The temple to Artemis was located there. Paul first visited briefly (Acts 18:19–21) and later stayed almost three years (Acts 19; 20:31). He met twelve of John the Baptist’s disciples, explained the Holy Spirit, and baptized them in Jesus’ name. He taught in the synagogue, then the lecture hall of Tyrannus. God gave Paul power for unusual miracles, leading to a huge public book-burning of magic scrolls. A riot erupted when silversmith Demetrius saw Paul’s preaching threaten the idol business. Paul later met the Ephesian elders at Miletus, warning them about false teachers and exhorting them to show love and care, remembering that “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Paul had a deep love for this church. This letter speaks much of love, unity, and relationships in the home and church—truths needed everywhere.

Paul also referred to the believers as the faithful in Christ Jesus. All believers are “in Christ Jesus.” Jesus Christ brought a new relationship between God and people—we have a relationship with God only because of Christ and because we are “in” Him through belief. Paul used this phrase (or a variation) twelve times in the first fourteen verses, stressing the unity all believers should have because of their common bond in Christ. Faithfulness is possible only in Christ.

1:3-14 – God’s Overflowing Kindness

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...

Paul called for a blessing upon the Father (recognizing His glory, honor, and goodness) because the Father has already blessed the believer with every spiritual blessing. We are not sitting here groaning, fretting, or questioning our salvation. He has blessed us; therefore we will bless Him. If you think little of what God has done for you, you will do very little for Him; but if you have a great notion of His great mercy, you will be greatly grateful.

The “us” includes both Jews and Gentiles. First-century Jews had a strong sense of being blessed, called, and predestined. Paul showed that these things are now given to Christians, whether Jew or Gentile. These are spiritual blessings—far better than material ones. They are ours in the heavenly places in Christ, higher, better, and more secure than earthly blessings. Our thanks ought to go to God in thunders of hallelujahs for spiritual blessings. A new heart is better than a new coat. To feed on Christ is better than the best earthly food. To be an heir of God is better than being heir of the greatest nobleman. God has blessed us with spiritual blessings—the rarest, richest, most enduring of all blessings; they are priceless.

If we have no appreciation for spiritual blessing, we live at the level of animals. We are made in the image of God and He has something much higher for us. God wants us to know every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Every blessing we receive, we receive in Christ. God wants to bless us with every blessing available to us.

The Work of the Father (1:4-6)

For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will—to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves.

Believers are blessed in Christ with every spiritual blessing because God chose us in Christ. We have these blessings because of God’s choosing us, Christ’s dying for us, and the Holy Spirit’s sealing us. God gives spiritual blessings to believers because of the saving work of all three persons in the Trinity.

That God chose us forms the basis of the doctrine of election—God’s choice of an individual or group for a specific purpose or destiny. We are saved only because of God’s grace and mercy; we are not saved by our own merit. It focuses on God’s purpose or will, not on ours. God does not save us because we deserve it but because He graciously and freely gives salvation. We did not influence God’s decision to save us; He saved us according to His plan. Thus, we may not take credit for our salvation or take pride in our wise choice.

Election runs through the Bible, beginning with God’s choosing Abraham’s

descendants. Through them, God would fulfill His promise that “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). The nation of Israel fulfilled a specific purpose: the nation into whom the Savior, Jesus Christ, was born. Even after exile and rejection by many, God’s “chosen” and elected people are now Christians—the body of Christ, the church—all who believe in, accept, and receive Jesus Christ as Messiah, Savior, and Lord.

Why Me?

Why would God choose some and not others? A better question is, Why would God choose anyone at all? We will never fully plumb the depths of God’s purposes in election, but Ephesians 1:4 gives insight. We are to be “holy and blameless” before Him. When we select members of a sports team, we look for those most capable. Not so with God; He delights in choosing the most unlikely. In calling us “before the creation of the world”—before we had done anything to demonstrate worthiness—God shows that His decision has nothing to do with our righteousness and everything to do with His compassion. When your head spins with the mystery of election, let your heart swell with the reality of grace.

In Ephesians 1:4–5, Paul gave four specific components of this election: (1) It is “in Him” (in Christ, because of His sacrifice); (2) it is “before the creation of the world” (from eternity past); (3) it is for a specific purpose: “to be holy and blameless in His sight”; and (4) it is an act of “love.” Our salvation rests on God’s choosing us. Our being chosen rests on God’s love and mercy alone. Therefore, salvation is completely certain and eternal. Believers are chosen in Him (in Christ). We are blessed in Christ and chosen in Christ, emphasizing the spiritual sphere of this election. We have blessings and election only because of what Christ has done.

The mystery of salvation originated in the timeless mind of God long before creation. Before God created people, He knew sin would occur, a penalty would have to be paid, and He (in His Son) would pay it. What God began in eternity past will be completed in eternity future. God’s purpose in choosing us was that we would be holy and blameless. Believers are chosen not just to be saved but to live changed lives. To be “holy” means to be set apart for God to reflect His nature. We are chosen for a new life, new goals, and a certain future in eternity with Him. We are set apart and to live blamelessly—without fault. Christ offered Himself unblemished so that we may serve the living God.

It may seem difficult to understand how God could accept anyone. But because of Christ, believers are made holy and blameless in God’s sight. God chose us, and when we belong to Him through Jesus Christ, God looks at us as though we had never sinned. Our appropriate responses are love, worship, and service—in thankfulness for His wonderful grace. We must never take our privileged status as a license for sin.

Paul wrote that we are holy and without blame in His sight. God knows us thoroughly. “In His sight” means in His perfect moral judgment. We cannot hide from God. Thankfully, while God sees and knows us completely, He also sees us as He has made us and will perfect us. When we stand before God the Judge, He will accept us because of Christ’s sacrifice.

“In love” points out that God’s love is shown in predestination. The fact that God chooses and predestines believers for a glorious future with Him is most certainly an act of love. Love is both the basis for and the end product of our holiness.

He Predestined Us to Be Adopted as His Sons Through Jesus Christ to Himself. In His infinite love, God chose for us to be adopted as His own children. People were created to have fellowship with God, but because of sin, they forfeited that fellowship. Through Jesus' sacrifice, God brought us back into His family and made us heirs along with Jesus (Romans 8:17). God knew from the beginning this would happen. People were "predestined" to be "adopted." Under Roman law, adopted children had the same rights and privileges as biological children. Even if they had been slaves, they became full heirs. Paul used this term to show the strength and permanence of believers' relationship to God. This adoption occurs through Jesus Christ.

Not only had God planned this from the beginning, but He also planned it in accordance with His pleasure and will. Predestination, election, and adoption are all part of God's purpose and will, a magnificent expression of God's character.

Chosen in Him

Very few issues cause more confusion than election and predestination. It is difficult to simultaneously embrace God's sovereignty and human responsibility. Election was not a theological concept dreamed up by Paul; it appears throughout Scripture. Election comes from the heart of God, not the mind of people; it should be an incentive to please God; it should give birth to gratitude. Human responsibility requires that we actively confess Christ as Lord, focus on living according to God's plan, and share the gospel with everyone. Election energizes a Christian's life of obedient service. Responsibility challenges us to build a life "worthy of the calling" we have received (Ephesians 4:1). As you consider God's divine selection of you, how do you respond—with pride or apathy, or with a worshipful heart and obedience?

To the Praise of His Glorious Grace, Which He Has Freely Given Us in the One He Loves. God's goal in the election of believers was that they would praise Him. The ultimate purpose of believers' lives is to praise God because of His merciful dealings with us. We praise Him first for His glorious grace. His grace (the unmerited favor He shows His chosen ones) is indeed glorious—without it, we would have no hope. Instead, we have purpose for living and hope of eternal life. His grace was freely given—a free gift, not something we could earn or deserve. The means of this grace is realized in the One He loves—Jesus Christ. God's favor to us is realized by our union with Christ. God's love for His only Son motivated Him to have many more sons—each conformed to His image.

To the Praise of His Glorious Grace

Praise means celebrating God. As Christians, our lives are living tributes to God's grace. God selected us as believers so that we might praise Him. When others look at our lives, what kinds of "tributes" do they see? Liberated, engaging individuals, full of gratitude? Or shriveled, sullen shells? Let your prayer life and worship express your gratitude to God.

The Work of the Son (1:7-12)

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

In Him we have redemption through His blood. Redemption always implies a price being paid. It means "to liberate on the receipt of a ransom." Here the price is His blood. Jesus does not redeem us by His sinless life or moral example, but by His death in our place—by His blood. Observe, it is not redemption through His power or love alone; it is through His blood.

Set Free!

Christ has bought us back from the tyranny of sin—literally "ransomed" us. At a terrible price: His life. He has set us free from enemies that once owned us—fear, prejudice, lust, anger, legalism, greed—and made us His own. Imagine you are a slave belonging to a horrible master. One day a benevolent stranger buys you at a staggering price and sets you free. How would you respond? Would you show

appreciation? Sing His praises? Would you ever go back to bondage? Your life should reflect gratitude for what Christ has done. Don't return to your former bondage. Claim your freedom in Christ!

Paul's use of the present tense ("we have") indicates a present and continuous reality that the Ephesian believers already possessed. Redemption is a present reality. All people are enslaved to sin. Jesus paid the price to redeem us. The purchase price was His blood. Through His death, Jesus released us from slavery to sin and gave us forgiveness of sins. When we believe, an exchange takes place. We give Christ our sins, and He gives us redemption and forgiveness. God's forgiveness means that He no longer even remembers believers' past sins. We are completely forgiven.

Our redemption and forgiveness are in accordance with the riches of God's grace. It is not a "small" redemption. It is immense. God's redemption, forgiveness, and grace to us are infinite, eternal, unchanging, and far beyond our understanding. Not only was this grace given, it was lavished on us, generously showered on us. God wants to give grace to people, and when He gives, He gives abundantly and extravagantly.

The Mystery of His Will (1:9-12)

He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. In Him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory.

Part of what belongs to us under the riches of His grace is the knowledge of the mystery of His will—God's great plan and purpose once hidden but now revealed in Jesus. The "mystery" is something hidden to the heathen but clear to the Christian. God's ultimate plan is to bring together—to ultimately resolve—all things in Christ, either through Jesus as Savior or Judge. This will happen in the fullness of the times. The word for "gather together" has the idea of uniting or summing up. God will make all things "add up" at the end. This shows that God wants to unify all things in our lives under Him. It is a heresy of our times to divide life into sacred and secular. This is the great resolution and deliverance that even creation groans for (Romans 8:18–22).

In Him we have obtained an inheritance. Believers are predestined for this according to the counsel of His will—the reasons for His choosing reside in Him, not in us. God made His plan carefully according to an eternal purpose, taking counsel within the Godhead, and then He works with all wisdom. Our God is a God who not only wills; He works; and He works according to His will. The word "counsel" stands for deliberate planning. God does all by counsel and ever has a reason for His will. Meanwhile submit.

That we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. God's purpose is so that those who have trusted Christ will exist to the praise of His glory. The goal of God's ultimate plan is to glorify Him. "We who first trusted" speaks of Jewish believers. God's great plan has a place for both Jew and Gentile.

The Work of the Holy Spirit (1:13-14)

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of His glory.

God's sovereign choice works with human cooperation. These ones who were sovereignly chosen were also the ones who trusted, heard the word of truth, and believed. You were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. His presence in our lives acts as a seal which indicates ownership and is a guarantee of our inheritance. The seal is the Holy Spirit Himself. His presence denotes ownership and security. The sealing with the Spirit is not an emotional feeling but the presence of the Spirit. The

word “guarantee” (“down payment”) is used only in the New Testament of the Holy Spirit. He is our only down payment of coming glory.

Having believed, you were sealed. The sealing does not come before we believe. For sealing there are needed the softened wax, the imprint of the beloved face, the steady pressure. Would that the Spirit might impress the face of our dear Lord on our softened hearts, that they may keep it forevermore!

Until the redemption of the purchased possession. We have this guarantee until we are completely purchased by God through resurrection and glorification—again, all to the praise of His glory.

This passage reveals the Trinity’s coordinated work on behalf of the believer. The Father chooses and adopts in love. The Son redeems through His blood. The Spirit seals and guarantees our inheritance. In a broken world filled with trials and tribulations we know that Christ is with us. Take these scriptures in and look at them to be refreshed and renewed by the power of His word. Isn’t it absolutely wonderful to know that Jesus Christ has given us life? Let this reality produce holiness, gratitude, unity, and bold witness. Live freely and boldly in the present while fixing your hope on the coming glory—because He lives, we live also. To Him be all the glory!

Sources: 13-14

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Sermon Notes:

Happy Sunday & Happy Summer to everyone!

I hope you are enjoying this wonderful summer...

It was great taking a few days off last week and I want to thank Pastor Jerry for preaching and taking care of the AVC Family!!

I am so blessed... Really, we are so blessed to have such a wonderful team that takes care of the Body of Christ...

Before we dive into God's Word, let me give you the AVC Connections...YT, App, Website / FB

Let's Pray

We are in a Summer Series titled "The Sandals of Jesus."

Today I am going outside of the plan. I originally had this as the Holy Spirit led me. I titled today's sermon "Alive in Christ."

I believe we are supposed to live life to the fullest...

Life is not supposed to be a drag or having the attitude — "It's just another day in paradise..."

Life is not supposed to be like the old movie Groundhog Day — the same boring thing over and over again.

Life is Life. I got it. It's not always going to be peachy... Trials and tribulations will come...

Jesus doesn't want us just getting by... He says He wants much more for us!! Jesus said this: John 10:10 "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have an 'abundant life'."

Lets Look at Jesus' Words in John 14: 19-20

PP John 14:19 "Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live."

The Word "Live" from the Greek literally means: To Live, Breathe, To Enjoy Life, Be Active, To be Fresh, Strong, Efficient, & Powerful

Theologian Stigor says: "Live translates as Living Water... A water that flows, moves and sustains life rather than remaining stagnant and life less."

I Am... Alive In Christ

Verse 20 says: "On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in Me, and I am in you." (John 14:20)

Christians... Satan wants to Sink your Ship... and he does this by climbing up in your mind and making a nest...

Mind games... Fear... Worry... Anxiety... Depression.

30 years ago I experienced what some docs would call a nervous breakdown...

I was so depressed I thought I was going to die... And that's not a joke... This happened during one of the best times of my life.

Listen... I had some hard days and hard months, but what I didn't do was play the blues...

Friends, I fought in the mighty name of Jesus... I prayed harder... I read the Word... I got brothers to pray over me...

Praise God I was healed from the darkness that tried to destroy me!! J-E-S-U-S

I know there might be someone here today or online that is going through a battle... This is why the Holy Spirit led me to this word.

Friends... We are Alive in Christ!

Some of you need Renewal and Revival in your minds and lives...

Turn with me in your Bibles to Ephesians 1.

We have on a PP... Read Ephesians 1:3-5a

I want to talk about 2 important words: Chosen and Predestined.

“Chosen” v. 4 — Literally = God made a choice by Himself to use us / you.

“Predestined” v. 5 — Literally = Why did God choose us? For a purpose and destiny to fulfill.

Alive in Christ!!

Read Ephesians 1:11- 14

Friends... We are Alive Through Jesus Christ...

Closing Prayer

Devotional Questions:

1. John 14:19-20 – Jesus says, “Because I live, you also will live,” and “I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.” What does it mean to you personally that Christ lives in you and you live in Him? How does this truth change how you face your day?

2. The Meaning of “Live” (zaō) – The Greek word zaō means to breathe, enjoy real life, be fresh, strong, efficient, active, and powerful. In what areas of your life do you feel like you are just “existing” or “getting by” instead of truly living? What would it look like for you to live the full, vibrant zaō life Jesus offers?

3. John 10:10 – Jesus promises “abundant life,” yet trials still come. How do you practically hold onto abundant life when Satan tries to “steal, kill, and destroy” through fear, worry, anxiety, or depression?

4. Personal Testimony – Pastor Brad shared his battle with depression 30+ years ago and how he fought through it with prayer, God’s Word, and the support of brothers in Christ. Share a time when you (or someone you know) had to fight spiritually. What helped you overcome?

5. Ephesians 1:3-6 – God chose us and predestined us for a purpose and destiny. How does knowing you were intentionally chosen by God Himself (not by accident) affect your sense of worth and purpose?

6. Union with Christ – The sermon emphasizes that we are “Alive in Christ” and Christ is in us. What are some practical ways you can remind yourself of this union daily so that His resurrection power flows through you?

7. Application & Revival – Some of us need renewal and revival in our minds and lives. What is one specific step you will take this week to move from “just getting by” into the full, abundant zaō life Jesus wants for you?