

1Harris Creek Baptist Church  
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Series: Ephesians  
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You Are Chosen  
Ephesians 1:3-14

**<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup> For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace <sup>8</sup> that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, <sup>9</sup> he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, <sup>10</sup> to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.**

**<sup>11</sup> 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, <sup>12</sup> in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup> And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup> who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.**

Let's go. How are we doing Harris Creek? Hey, one of the first jobs I had after college was, I worked at 24-Hour Fitness, slinging gym memberships, selling those gym memberships, a hundred percent commission. You know, just trying to make bank. I was a brand-new believer, and I really had one ambition at this moment in my life, and that was to be rich.

And so, like, the Holy Spirit was working on me. I was brand new into the church, and I wanted to be rich. As we sell those memberships, there was one membership that was different than the others. It was this 42-month prepaid membership that nobody bought because of it was so expensive, and it came with all the training and all the benefits of the gym. And you could go to any club, anywhere in the world. It was just the one that, truly, I'd never sold one.

One day this guy walks in, and he's dressed really nice, and he's got these BMW keys. I would notice these kinds of things. He sits down, and I'm kind of showing him what we have, and he said, "What about that one?" I tell him about it and he said, "I'll take it." He just said, "I'll take it." No questions. He said, "That's the one I want." And I just said, "Amazing!" because I'm about to get paid. And I asked, "What do you do?" And he said, "Well, I'm in telecom." And I said, "Man, that's, so interesting, because I've always wanted to be in telecom."

And he said, "Really, why is that?" And I said, "Well, because I want to be just like you!" He was kind of endeared by that, so he said, "I tell you what." He wrote down a name: Walter. He

wrote 'Walter' and a phone number. And he said, "Call this guy." I was like, "Done!" This feels like one of those moments where your life's about to change, and I'm like, "Okay!"

So, I'm just calling Walter every day leaving voicemails, "Hey, I just met Paul. My name is Jonathan, and I want to be in telecom. I've always dreamed about being in telecom. I am your telecom expert. And so finally, I didn't realize, but I was calling the VP of this company, and finally someone calls me back. I get an interview, and I meet with Walter, and this is how he starts, he says, "Well, let me ask you this. Do you know what a T1 line is?" And I'm thinking, "Oh, man, T1 line." And the only frame of reference I had, and this will be lost on most of you, but do any of you remember Napster? Okay, if you don't, if you're here in your twenties, Napster was like Spotify, but it was illegal. And I remember that on Napster, the T1 line was like the fastest download. That's all I knew. And so, I said, "Does that have something to do with the internet?" And he laughed and he said, "It does. And you're hired." And I was like, "Wow!"

So, I go to work for Walter and as we build our relationship, and I'm learning about T1 lines and how to sell them later on, I asked, "Man, like what happened there?" And he said, "Well, I really didn't want someone that had been trained the wrong way. I didn't want someone that had bad information. I knew that I could train you up, and teach you what this was, and teach you how to sell it. So, I hired you. I chose you because of what you didn't have."

I start there today because as we're diving back into the book of Ephesians, and we're still early into the letter. These are letters, we call them books, but they're really letters written to a church by a person inspired, breathed by God, inspired by the Holy Spirit. As we read them, you're going to see today this idea is somewhat controversial, that God chose you.

And He didn't choose you because of anything you can do for Him. He didn't choose you because of your skills and capabilities. He didn't choose you because of your background. He didn't choose you because of your vast experience. He didn't choose you because of how smart you are, or how fast you can run, or how high you can jump, or how beautiful you are, or your amazing sense of style.

He didn't choose you for any of those reasons. And so that's going to leave the question as to, well, why did he choose me? And some of you are going to feel like, well, what if he didn't choose me? And those are some of the questions I want to answer from the scripture today as we talk about what it means to be chosen by God, because everyone here has been chosen at some point in your life.

Maybe you were chosen to fill a relationship void, chosen to be in a relationship with someone. Or, as I share that experience with you up front, you went to the job interview. You had your resume folder. You sat down and talked about your skills and capabilities and your experience.

Or maybe it was a team. I don't know if it was sixth grade dodgeball, and they said, "Hey, I'll take her or I'll take him." Or if you practice basketball, football, cheerleading, whatever it is, volleyball. And as you honed your skills, you made the team, you made the cut, you were chosen by that coach. And they always did so because you were bringing something to the table that they perceived would make them better.

Even in a relationship, they liked you. They liked the way you made them feel. Team; “Hey, you’re the one we need.” Job; “Hey, you can fulfill this responsibility.” And then we get to this relationship that we have with God, the Father, and it’s altogether different than any relationship we have. And what we tend to do is project all of those experiences on *this* one. And it hinders our walk with Jesus in ways we’re not even aware of, in a way that we’re not consciously thinking about. We just get in a funk at times, and we’re like, “Man, why does God feel far? And why am I reading this scripture, and it doesn’t really come alive? And why don’t I feel more? And why is this so toilsome?” And lo and behold, as you begin to peel back the layers, we have a wrong view of God and a wrong view of the way that God views us.

That’s why this text is so important. I’m going to be in Chapter 1, verses 3 through 14. If you’re here and you’re like, “What if I’m not chosen?” I’m going to want to tell you, before you leave, how you can know with confidence that you have been, that you are. As Nate said last week, he set this up out of Acts 19. He talked about how Paul planted this church in Ephesus and basically turned the entire city upside down. When God wants to change a place, he changes a person, and people are burning their scrolls, and they’re leaving witchcraft, and the church is being built, and you’re seeing this amazing momentum gain. And he just said, “Hey, when you show up, bring a pen, bring a journal or write in your Bible, and you can have a commentary on a book of the Scriptures, because we’re just going through this book verse by verse.” That’s what we will be doing for the next several weeks.

The passage today is a world record, most likely. It is considered by many to be the longest recorded sentence in ancient Greek. One of the most complex sentences in ancient Greek.

Here’s what I think is happening. We just got back from Universal Studios. We did a little family vacation in Orlando. And if you caught my 11-year-old, you’re going to get one of two things. If you say, “Hey, how was it?” And I don’t know what determines which one you get, but sometimes you’ll get, “It was fine.” You know, almost too cool for it, so, “It was fine.” But if you catch him in the right mood, let me tell you what you’re gonna get. You’re gonna get: (JP begins talking *rapidly*) “Oh, it was amazing because we went on Hagrid’s motorbike ride and then we went there to the VelociCoaster and it’s the fastest one and there’s this corkscrew and you almost touch the water and then we went there to the Hulk and we rode the Hulk like nine times and it was amazing because we were there and we stayed in this hotel and this was what they had and we got to see this and there was a swimming pool and it was too cold we didn’t get in ...” And you’re like, “Whoa what is happening? Well, how many sentences was that? Like, what did you just say?” All of that just got mashed together into one ball of excitement.

I think that’s what’s happening here with Paul. So, in the English, we’re going to read many verses, many sentences, but in the Greek, everything I’m about to read to you is one run-on long sentence with no punctuation.

**<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father (you can underline that) of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup> For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, (you can underline that) in accordance with his pleasure and will— <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the**

**forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace <sup>8</sup> that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, <sup>9</sup> he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, <sup>10</sup> to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.**

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Yeah. Yeah. Paul's excited! One sentence, no punctuation. And in that one sentence, the things I had you underline quickly there, represented there, is the Trinity. You have God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit all represented in that sentence, working together to bring you into the family of God. And that's the message today.

The breakdown, the preview, is we're going to talk about the work of the Father, the work of the Son, and the work of the Holy Spirit to bring *you* into the family of God. And so, he starts by telling us, you've been chosen by the Father. That's my first point.

### *1. You've Been Chosen by the Father*

**Praise be to God**, he says. Eulogetos is the Greek word there. Praise be to God. Eulogetos. It's where we get the word 'eulogy.' It translates directly 'to speak well of.' "Speak well of God for the good that He's done." A eulogy is, you know, you may give one; one will be done for you one day. It's where people will gather around a casket and talk about the good that you did in your life.

He says, speak well of **God and Father** (you can underline that) **of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.** God's blessings to you are not temporary, but eternal. God is not concerned so much as to blessing you with material things, as much as He is eternal things and supernatural gifts.

I'm not saying he can't bless you with material things. I'm just saying those material things are not nearly as important as you want to believe they are. Artemis, Nate talked about last week, the temple of Artemis in the center of Ephesus, where people would come and make sacrifices. There was temple prostitution and worship there. This is all in an effort because Artemis promises material blessings. And he's saying, "Hey, God gives you something so much better than Artemis, the goddess Artemis, could ever promise you." **"For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."**

He chose us when? Before Genesis 1, verse 1. Whoa. Now this resets everything. He chose you to be blameless in His sight. This is complex. This is where we're going to really expand our minds. Everything you and I know is in chronological order. I was born, I lived my life, at some

point in my life I placed my faith in Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection for the forgiveness of my sins. I continue to live now as a new believer with a new heart, and I died and I went to heaven. We think in sequence, in an order. God sits outside of time. That right there, we cannot comprehend. We can't comprehend this idea that there's a deity who is not bound by our manmade human construct of time.

And so, He sees you right now. Before creation, He chose you and saw you blameless in His sight as you go about your seconds and minutes and years to get to that moment where Jesus presents you pure and blameless. And yet God sees it as though it is already done, because he's God, and He knows what will be, and he predestined, it's not just a foreknowledge. There's not just what He knows is going to happen. It's the events that He's put in motion. And that doesn't make sense. Take a deep breath. And that's okay. It's okay that God doesn't make sense. It doesn't mean that I'm going to stop searching Him out.

There's lots of things that don't make sense. There are things you do that don't make sense to me. Much less my deity. You know what I mean? There are a lot of things that we don't know. We don't know why we yawn. You know what I mean? You know what I'm saying? Like, we don't know why. Some of you are like, yeah, we do. It's so your brain needs oxygen. No, it's not. No, no, we don't know why we yawn. Like, the greatest science that we have available to us cannot tell us why sometimes we just go (JP mimics a big yawn). And what's crazy is, it's contagious. And we don't know why. We have no idea that when *I* do that, why *you* do that. We don't know why; we have no answers. And yet, we want a God who operates exactly as we would in our finite wisdom. And I'm just telling you, "No, you don't." You want a God that is filled with all kinds of mystery.

You want a God that you can search out and seek out and never be bored, and He operates in these profound ways. And so, we sit here and we debate, "Well, did I choose God or did God choose me?" And the text doesn't really leave room for that. It just answers the question outright. And then he gives us examples of the very one who penned this letter.

Remember, Paul, in Acts 7, Stephen dies. Paul stands over his corpse and applauds it, says, "Yes!" Goes on, leads a revolt against the Way, which is Christianity, persecuting women and children who follow Jesus, killing some of them. And Jesus shows up on his little jaunt to Damascus as he's walking along the path.

And this is what God says. He says, "<sup>15</sup> **But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man (talking about Paul) is my chosen instrument (the same word, that word is the same word as in Ephesians 1), the chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their Kings and before the people of Israel."** He's blinded. He can't see, and he becomes the greatest missionary that has ever lived. Did he choose God or did God choose him?

There is a clear recruiting happening. It says, the text continues, verse four, "**In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.**" Why did he choose you?

Because he needed an employee? Because he needed a slave? Someone he could just tell you what to do and you have to do it? Is he building a team? Is he structuring a company so that he can take it public? Is he looking for a lover? Like, why did he choose you?

To bring you into his family. You say, “That one's mine, my daughter, my son.” God's getting his children back. What was lost in sin, God is getting back through the Gospel. Before time, God chose you to be His offspring, an heir to His kingdom. He has a glorious inheritance for you forever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever.

And what do you bring into the relationship? You're like, “Well, I'm really good with numbers.” God's like, “Hey, could you help me out with algebra? Really stumped over here.” You're like, “Well, I've got a lot of money.” And He's like, “Oh, little pieces of the paper. That's cute. And the road is gold up here.” You know, it's like, why did he choose you? “Well, I'm really strong.” His weakness is stronger than your strength, the Scripture says. Why did he choose you? “I'm a great mom. I've got this Etsy business. You don't understand. Really trying to help out with the kingdom.” “That's neat, man. It was really neat.” He chose you according to His pleasure. That's what it says. It just pleased Him, just pleased Him to do so.

He chose you before creation. When you were in diapers and you couldn't clean yourself, you were chosen by God, but He's not looking at you in diapers when you can't even clean yourself or feed yourself. And He's like, “Oh, yeah, that one. That's what I need. That's really gonna get this show on the road.”

No, no. He chose you when you had nothing to offer Him. And you still have nothing to offer Him that He didn't entrust to you as Sovereign God. Your greatest gifts that you can bring to God are gifts that He gave you. That reality, when it sets in, it kind of changes everything for us. This is really a repeat of where we've been in the *Abide* series.

John 15 verse 16, “**You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name, the Father will give you.**” What I'm trying to show you is this is not unique. It's not like Paul said something unique in Ephesians.

He's repeating the words of Jesus. This idea is woven throughout Scripture. If you really want to just twist your brain up, go spend some time in Romans nine, where he just kind of hammers this idea every way he knows how. So, this is not a unique concept. Like it's really clearly stated throughout the Scripture.

And I think we get stuck. It's like, “Well, wait. Why does God only save some? Why does God only save some?” And it's like, if five people commit a murder, commit a heinous crime, all of them equally guilty for the crime, and they appear before the judge, and the judge says, “I'm prepared to let all five of you go free. You just have to acknowledge me as the judge.” And three of them say, “You can't. I refuse to acknowledge you as the judge.” And so those three go to prison for the crime that they committed, and two people go free. No one is saying, “Why did three go to prison?” We're all like, “Well, they went to prison because they committed a crime, and they deserved prison.”

And this is where we have a misunderstanding of the world that we live in, the weight of our own sin, what it costs, and what God had to do to redeem us, to forgive us from that sin and sending His own Son into the world to be a grotesque sacrifice on the side of the road, brutally murdered in our place so that we can have a relationship with our heavenly Father. And we're like, "Wait, hold on. But does that mean God sends some to hell?" Every illustration is going to break down. Like my best efforts to explain this will fall short in some ways because there's some mystery baked in and when we have to today in this world, leave room for the mystery.

But I'll try to give you one. It's like He puts us in this house, a well-appointed mansion that has everything we need. The pantry's stocked. He says, "Everything you have here, I'm just gonna give you one rule. Don't play with fire in the house. Okay? Everything around you, just don't. Just trust me on this. Don't play with fire."

And it takes us about three chapters to strike a match. And the whole place is set ablaze. And it's burning down, and we're all gonna die. And God, who loves us, stands at the door and says, "Come out! Get out! I want you to get out! I want you safe!" **"For God is not slow in keeping his promises, as some understand slowness, but He's patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."** 2 Peter 3:9.

"Get out!" And we say, "We're not gonna get out." And Jesus goes in and brings out some. And Jesus goes in and just carries some of us out. And that's the reality that we sit in. And you say, "Well, wait a minute. What if He didn't carry me out?" Well, where are you right now? You got up, came to a place of worship, sang some songs, opened the Word. Seems like God's after you at best. Or at least rather, not at best, at least. Seems like God is pursuing you. Right? Seems like He wants you on the team.

Verse seven, I just say this. I understand how people read this text and say, man, it just seems like God saved some but not others. I understand that. What I don't understand is why people didn't go the next step to say, and if that's how God works, I want nothing to do with Him. That part confuses me. That part brings some confusion to me.

**"<sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace <sup>8</sup> that he lavished on us."** I love the acronym for grace: God's Riches at Christ's Expense, G R A C E, if you want to write that down, God's Riches at Christ's Expense. He says redemption, what was lost in sin is made new in Him. Like God is doing a new work. If we bring Him our junk, He exchanges it for salvation **"With all wisdom and understanding, <sup>9</sup> he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure,** (Why did He choose us? It pleased Him to do so, "according to his good pleasure," it says. You can underline that.) **which he purposed in Christ, <sup>10</sup> to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ."** That God is putting everything back together That when He saved you from that building, as the fire burnt the mansion down, and you are now safe in Christ. He says, "Okay, now let's go rebuild it. Now let's go rebuild it." And he's going to come back and finish the job. But we are in that middle ground of Jesus has come. He's died for our sins. He's raised from the dead. He's with God and He's coming back. And so, He came, He's with God. He's coming back here. And here we are. Rebuilding the kingdom that was lost in sin as Christ comes back to finish it.

This is the mystery of God. And the text says that you have been forgiven and redeemed by Christ. That's my second point. First point was the father's role. Second point, the Son's role.

## 2. *You Have Been Forgiven and Redeemed by Christ*

That's directly from the text that before creation, God called us to know him.

All is lost in the Fall, Chapter 3. God sends Jesus to the earth for the forgiveness of sins and the redemption of mankind to get God's children back. Our sins have been forgiven, but the unity of all things in heaven and on earth, verse 10, that has not happened yet. We can just look around and say, "Yeah, not everything is unified." But He's made known to us the mystery of His will to communicate the plans that He's going to resolve it. And you and I *must* live in that hope using our shortcomings as tools of 'redemption' is the word.

Okay, let me go slow here. Every single pair of eyes watching, every pair of ears that can hear me right now is someone with a story. You've been living in a broken world. You've done some things you shouldn't have done, even as recent as this morning. And you are operating as you're trying to build the house, but every now and then you hammer your thumb. You know, two steps forward, one step back, and God's going to come back and fix it all. And so, as you live here, you have to keep your mind renewed around that reality. Use your story to help others heal.

Last week I had the opportunity to speak at Florida State University, FSU, affectionately known as the second biggest party school in the country, second to Baylor. No, I'm kidding. It's not second to Baylor. I'm just joking. I think it's like Arizona State or something. So, I'm there and, and they want me to share my story. That's what they said. They're like, "Hey, we're just seeing sexual sin run rampant on campus. Would you share about your addiction to pornography? Would you share about the freedom that you have in Christ? Would you share your story?" And so, I do. I share my story. I point to Jesus. It's probably one of the few times I actually pivoted the message when I got up there and I just said, don't worry about the points I sent you. We're just going straight gospel.

When we went straight gospel, I talked about my addiction. I talked about the healing and recovery that that I've found, the recovery journey that I've been on. And, and at the end of the night, my friend Jenny Allen spoke. It's an event called Unite. It's moving from campus to campus. God's doing something, I'm just telling you. God's doing something on college campuses. And then we go up, and we say, "Hey, if you want to place your faith in Jesus Christ tonight, would you come forward?" And 314 students charged the stage. I mean 314. The first time we did this, we baptized. And so there really wasn't a plan to do this. But then I came back up and had the opportunity to teach on baptism, what it is, make sure they understood what it is. And we went down to the fountain that they throw drunk people in at midnight, and baptized 314 people.

And the reason I know that number is because we were able to plug all 314 of them into a local church so that they can be discipled and grow in the faith. That's what's happening through Unite. And so, what that is, when I'm in the depravity and disgust of my sin, had you come alongside me and said, "One day God's going to use this. He's going to redeem this." I don't know that I would have believed you, but you might be in a place where you need to hear that

right now. One day, God's going to redeem this eating disorder. One day, God's going to redeem this addiction. One day, God is going to redeem this marriage. One day, God is going to redeem this thing that you're stuck in. He wants to. He exchanges; you bring him your junk and he exchanges it for eternal life with him. Not just for you, but for other people as well.

Verse 11, **“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,”** There's a lot of sovereignty here. It was God in charge. Romans 8:28, **“For he's working together all things for your good, for the good of those who love him who have been called according to his purpose.”** He is in charge. **“<sup>12</sup> in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.”**

Paul was first, among the first, to put their faith in Jesus. But listen to this... **“<sup>13</sup> And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed,”** And so this is, this is a strange language because one sentence, he's like, “God chose you, God did it, God's sovereign, He predestined when you believed.”

And there you see the antinomy; you see the tension. You're like, “How does that fit together? Wait, but when I believed, and God did it, and wait, how does that all work?” And what we do is we miss it when we create these really sharp guidelines. “No! he chose you!” “No! I chose him!” I see both represented here.

They've got to fit together somehow. We have to either make sense of it or sit in the tension. **“... you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,”** (there He is) **<sup>14</sup> who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.**

There's a deposit there. You know what a deposit is like in our modern day. If you are going to promise to pay something off, and so you put a deposit down as evidence of your promise, your commitment to pay something off. We get that. And so, the Holy Spirit to us, it's like an engagement ring. I promise that I'm going to marry you forever and ever and ever and ever. “And here is a symbol of my promise.” God is so kind that He gave Himself to us, as a symbol that we will be with him forever and ever and ever and ever.

You have been sealed by his Holy Spirit. It's my third and final point.

### *3. You Have Been Sealed by His Holy Spirit*

Not only did He lay down his Son, He deposited His Spirit in us. There's just like past, present, future, permanent language here. Here's what God did in the past. Here's what you're experiencing in the present. Here's what will be in the future, but it might as well be the past because God sits outside of time, and he sees it all at once. And it's done, it's permanent, it's sealed, signed, delivered. It's as good as the day that you stand before Jesus. That's so hard to comprehend when you're tripping and stumbling in the world today, but it is also absolutely true. We go through life and we measure our relationship with God based on how we're doing. “How strong is your relationship with God?” “I don't know. What did I do today? Was I greedy today? Did I commit a sin today?”

When we were in Orlando, we were at Universal Studios. It was cold and rainy, and I was sick. I'm not a hypochondriac, but I was pretty sure I had Covid or something. I just was like really beat down, and I hung in there till about one in the afternoon. I said, "I've got to go back to the room. Y'all hang out, have a blast. Monica, have fun on the roller coasters. I'm gonna go back to the room."

I go back to the room and I try to lay down. I can't sleep. I turn on the TV. When I turn on the TV, it pops up on the guide. On the guide right there is Adult Movies. When I travel, I will usually, almost always, if that's a thing, deactivate that. I'll ask the front desk, "Hey, can you turn that off?" And there it is. I haven't seen that in a really long time, and it's like it awoke something in me, and every ounce of me wanted to see what was behind that.

One thing the Holy Spirit does, we've been sealed by the Spirit, He strengthens us in temptation. I want you to know, I didn't watch one of those movies. But I also want you to know, what I did do, is I clicked on it. And I began to scroll through those titles, just kind of go in, in auto drive, and I'm looking at, and every title has an image attached to it. And it's not nudity, but it might as well be. And I'm thinking, "I'm here by myself. My family's at the park. My mind goes to all these places; and what it feels like in the moment, I'm going to put you in my body, what it feels like is a relapse. Like an alcoholic sneaking a drink or a cocaine addict finding his dealer's number. That's what it feels like. And I stop and don't watch something, but I knew that I lingered too long.

And what happens in that moment is the Enemy comes. This is two days after FSU. "Go and tell them about the freedom that you've had in Christ from pornography!" "Yeah! I'm free!" And then two days later... And I'm like, "Oh, man. You see? See what you're doing?" "Healed? No, man. You're not healed! No, you're a fraud! You're a hypocrite!"

So, first of all, let me say this to you. Will *you* please forgive me, as someone who preaches that *you* need to divert your eyes from such things, will *you* please forgive me? Yes? Thank you! Thank you! One of you. Thank you.

Secondly, you say, well, why do you share that with us? Well, a couple of things. One, I told you I would. I told you I would. And two, because I want you to know that what happens when you do that, shares what you believe about the gospel. If you want to know, "Am I chosen?" I would say, "Well, what happens when you sin?" Because if you've been sealed by the Holy Spirit, you're going to work out the tension of, "I should hide it. How do I keep this from Monica? How do I not tell anyone?" And then you're going to get to a place where you're like, "You know what? I don't care who knows? I've been set free by the blood of Jesus. I don't want to make light of my sin. It costs Jesus his life, but I also don't want to play games. I don't want to play religious games. I've been sealed by the Holy Spirit. All of the glorious riches and inheritance found in Christ have been made available to me. They're waiting on me. They're waiting on me." And then you can text your life group and say, "Hey guys, would you please pray for me? You could go to the elders and say, "Guys, I want you to know what, how I was just tempted and how I wish I would have prevailed better in that temptation. Would you pray for me?"

And you can appear before the body if you needed to, and say, "Hey, I have been free in Christ. I have avoided the penalty of sin. I am strengthened in the midst of temptation, even to be grieved

and convicted.” A part of the conviction that you feel post-sin is evidence of the sealing of the Spirit!

If you're like, “Well, do I have the Spirit?” What happens when you sin? What happens when you sin? If you're not sure if you've been chosen by God, all you have to do is answer one question: “Do I truly believe that Jesus died for my sins and God raised him from the dead?” And if you answer affirmative to that question, you have been chosen, without a doubt. You're in; you're in the family, sealed by the Spirit. If you're like, “I believe Jesus died,” and what you do next is you follow Jesus. You are a Jesus follower and you follow Him and you walk on that path toward blamelessness before Christ. But I want you to know that you cannot compromise a reality that was fixed prior to Creation. You cannot compromise a reality that was fixed prior to Creation, and the grace of Jesus frees us to confess and forsake our sin, not hide it.

In summary,

1. *You've been chosen by the Father.*
2. *You have been redeemed by Christ.*
3. *You have been sealed by His Holy Spirit.*

You have been chosen by the Father, you have been forgiven and redeemed by the Son, and you have been sealed by his Holy Spirit.

I want to end by sharing a testimony with you guys. The American name given her is Stephanie Fast. She was born in South Korea. She was the offspring of an American soldier there in South Korea and her Korean mom. The soldier, returned, left her and her mom, and she was called a tooki. It's a racial slur, that of someone who has no value in their society, who is worthless. She was called this her whole life. That might as well have been her name.

When she was four years old, her mom realized that she could not support her. And so, what she did was she put her on a train, which is the equivalent to a four-year-old in South Korea as Universal Studios. You get to ride the train. She put her on a train and just sent her away. And so, at four years of age, she is left to wander the streets, searching for food and trying to survive. At four years old, learning to steal, learning to do whatever she can do just to make it, abused in every kind of way imaginable at this time in her life by just about everyone. She was tied to a tree. She was thrown into a septic tank. She was thrown out with the garbage multiple times. Cholera came to South Korea, and she didn't know what it was, but she has a memory of just thinking, “I'm going to die. I'm very, very, very, very sick.” Somebody finds her, throws her out with the trash. She's in a landfill and there's a Swedish Lutheran nurse that went there to try and care for children. She's walking through the landfill, and she sees what she thinks is the corpse of a child. She says, “There's nothing I can do there.” She walks forward, and she hears the voice of God say, “This one's mine.” She would describe the event as though her legs fill with concrete and she couldn't move. “This one's mine.” She went back, picked up that little girl and took her to the orphanage, which is just mildly better than being on the streets. There's a faith component to it. but a lot of confusion that goes along with that.

At this moment in her life, in that orphanage, her hair is completely white with lice. She's so malnourished that she has one eyeball that has no muscle strength to control it. It just kind of bounces around in her skull. She has tapeworms. When they're done eating everything inside of

her stomach, they would come out of her mouth. This is her life. She's way smaller than she should be.

On this particular day in the orphanage, she hears that there's an American couple coming there to adopt a boy. And so, the girls were tasked with cleaning up all the little boys in the orphanage. She sat there in some sort of pen, as she described this giant of a man who walked in with pale skin. She just remembers tears streaming down his face as he went from child to child. He walked up to her, and he placed his hand on her cheek. She says that she remembers thinking, "Oh my, please never move that hand." She had never been touched in a healthy way by a man. She said, "I hope you never move that hand." But her survival skills took over, and she slapped that hand away and spit in his face.

And he had said something that she couldn't understand. What he said was, "This one's mine. This one's mine." So now she lives, adopted into a family of faith, grown to know Christ as her Savior, and she shares her story, her testimony. I shared on her behalf with you today so that you know you brought nothing to God.

Sometimes you've just got to get really small. It's cool that the world affirms your gifts, and you can use those gifts and leverage them for the Kingdom. But God didn't choose you because you're gifted, and He didn't choose you because you're beautiful. He didn't choose you because you're fast or smart or rich.

He chose you, like a girl with tapeworms, malnourished and eye bouncing around in her head, hair white with lice, smelly, dirty. And He says, "That one's mine." And sometimes we just got to return back to that reality to understand what it means to be effective for the Kingdom. It is God doing something through your life, not you doing something for God.

Let me pray that we would get that. Lord, would you help us? We're going to need your help on that one. Everything in the world tells us a different message. Everything in the world feeds us a different message. Would you just become small right now before God? Just as you pray, would you become small right now before God? Would you just start to shed all of your giftedness, all of your wit, and you can make deals, and you know, you're the mom that's first in the carpool line, and yes, you got a lot of great things going on. Would you just become small right now?

He chose you because it pleased Him to do so.