

# OpenTheo

## Ephesians Introduction, 1:1 - 1:6



### **Ephesians** - Steve Gregg

In this introduction to the book of Ephesians, Steve Gregg discusses the origins of the letter and how it relates to other Pauline epistles. He explains that Ephesians is a generic letter to the universal Church, and not specifically to the Church in Ephesus. Gregg also delves into the concept of predestination and explains that being predestined does not necessarily equate to the Calvinist doctrine. Overall, Gregg offers an insightful overview of the book of Ephesians, providing context and shedding light on key themes.

### **Transcript**

We're beginning a study in the book of Ephesians with this session, and Ephesians is a fantastic book. I suppose I could say that at the beginning of almost every book in the Bible we study. Each has its own charm and each has its own value, though I think that there are many who would say that Ephesians is one of the chief books of the New Testament.

Not so much that it has the same kind of value as, say, the Gospel of John or the book of Romans, but rather because it takes the thought of Paul, which we find of course in his other epistles, to a higher point than we find in most of his other epistles. Some have actually referred to Ephesians as the Alps of the New Testament. It's the loftiest point, and much of the vantage point of Ephesians is from the heavenly places.

There's the most striking statements about election and predestination in this book, and there are many things that encourage Calvinists in this book for that reason. Some parts of it are very Calvinistic sounding, but that's true of course of many of Paul's writings as well as some other books of the Bible. There are reasons why people are Calvinists, and they come from verses that sound very Calvinistic, and we will encounter quite a few of them in this epistle.

And it is not clear whether this epistle was actually written to the Ephesians. You'll notice in verse 1 it says, Paul, an apostle to Jesus Christ by the will of God to the saints who are in Ephesus, and that expression, who are in Ephesus, is not found in a few of the older manuscripts, and that has raised questions as to whether it was original, whether Paul

actually wrote those words, who are in Ephesus, or whether the original simply said to the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus without indicating where these people were. Now, one of the reasons that some have felt that maybe the letter was not written to Ephesus is because Ephesus was a church that Paul had intensive personal dealings with.

Paul had, first of all, established the church in Ephesus, he had planted it, and he had spent between two and three years ministering in Ephesus, which means that he knew these people very well, and they knew him very well. But the letter is more impersonal than most of Paul's letters. There are no references to things that were going on in the church, very little in the way of personal greetings.

The only thing you have along those lines would be, in the last few verses, there's not even personal greetings per se, but just a few personal notes, such as he might wind down an epistle even to persons he doesn't know with, but there's statements within it that have made many scholars feel that he's writing to people who may not know him personally. One of the things that indicates that is chapter one, verse 15, where Paul says, therefore, I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all saints, do not cease to give thanks to you. Notice he says, I have heard of your faith and of your love for all the saints, and that sounds like perhaps his knowledge of this church is by hearsay merely, and not by personal acquaintance.

We know this is true in the case of the Colossians. He wrote the book of Colossians without ever having been to Colossi, have any indicator in it that he had ever met these people that he wrote to in Colossians. Likewise, Romans.

And so we don't find as many personal things in these epistles, but there's another indicator that in Ephesians that perhaps his readers knew him only by hearsay also. Not only did he only know them by hearsay, but they might have only known him by hearsay. In chapter three, in verse five, I don't know if it's verse five, it's verse two, excuse me.

Chapter three, in verse two, he says, if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which was given to me for you. So he's saying that they have perhaps heard of his ministry. They have perhaps heard of his stewardship of the gospel toward the Gentiles.

Now, this, these statements about, you know, I've heard about your faith and you, if you've heard of me and my ministry, certainly have given the impression that perhaps this wasn't written to the Ephesians at all, who would have known Paul very well. And Paul was very close with those people. And yet there's no indicators in the epistle that he's close to, or even knows personally, the people he's writing to.

And therefore the absence of the words who are in Ephesus in some manuscripts are thought perhaps to be an authentic omission. And that the words who are in Ephesus

were somehow added later manuscripts. And, and that's how we came to call it the book of Ephesians or the epistle of Paul, the apostle to the Ephesians as it's titled here.

These titles, of course, of the epistles are not found in the original and Paul didn't write these titles over it. He didn't write this over this, the epistle of Paul, the apostle to the Ephesians, for example. Now there is some speculation that the letter may have been originally sent to another church, possibly to Laodicea.

One of the reasons for saying so, there are actually two reasons for suggesting it, if not more, is that in Colossians chapter four and verse 16, Paul tells the Colossians, now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. Now it sounds as if Paul has sent an epistle to Colossae and another epistle to Laodicea and they're to exchange epistles after they've read them so that they would both churches read both epistles. There's certainly nothing in that statement to identify the epistle from Laodicea that would come to Colossae with this epistle, Ephesians, but there are some speculators who think perhaps this is it.

In the early canon, the Marcionite canon, and we know that Marcion was not right on, Marcionite canon was not to be trusted, but Marcion labeled the letter that we call Ephesians, he called it the letter to the Laodiceans and so he may have had some very early documentation for knowing this letter by that name, but we're not sure. He may have only inferred it from Colossians 4.16, he inferred that this was written to them, but it does suggest that Marcion didn't know this letter as being to the Ephesians, as we have it written in chapter 1, verse 1, and so there are some indicators, A, that possibly this was not a personal letter to the Ephesian church, and B, it might have been in fact the letter to the Laodiceans or from the Laodiceans. Actually, there's not a reference directly to a letter that was written to the Laodiceans, but rather a letter from Laodicea.

Now, Paul would tell the Colossians, read this letter as coming from the Laodiceans, it suggests that the letter was already in motion and had gotten to Laodicea before it got to Colossians, would come from Laodicea to Colossians, and therefore there is a theory that perhaps this letter called Ephesians that we have was a sort of a circular epistle that went around to several churches in Asia, and if so, then it may have made a circuit very similar to the circuit made by the book of Revelation. See, the book of Revelation was addressed to seven churches in Asia, the same region, Laodicea was one of those churches, and there were an Ephesus was one of those churches, and there were, of course, five others. There are altogether ten churches known to us in the region of Asia, and we know that Revelation circulated among at least seven of them, and it would have followed a certain course along the postal route that would have, depending on which direction it started and went, it would have gone around to each of the churches, from one church to the next.

Some have felt that Ephesians was written as that kind of a letter that would account for it being impersonal. Paul wouldn't make any references to personal things because some of the churches that would receive it, though they would be acquainted with him, some would not, and also it would suggest that perhaps this letter was sent to Laodicea and then would circulate, starting from Laodicea, or maybe it had even come to Laodicea from an earlier destination, but that Paul expected it to go from Laodicea to Colossae, and therefore he spoke to the Colossians about reading the church from Laodicea, reading the letter from Laodicea. These are some of the speculations.

It's not extremely important for us to decide about this. If we could be sure this was written to the Ephesians, we could say a lot about the Ephesians and the Church of Ephesus because they were a very privileged church. They were, as I said, founded by Paul.

They had the ministry of Priscilla and Aquila. They had the ministry of Apollos, briefly. Paul was there longer than any other church that we know of, between two and three years, the second longest period he stayed in any church that we know of was Corinth, which was half that long, 18 months.

So the Ephesians were very privileged with all this talent of ministry among them, and then later on, Timothy was among them. When Paul was in prison, in the second imprisonment, he sent Timothy and left Timothy there, and Timothy apparently died a martyr in Ephesus. And later still, it would appear, John the Apostle spent his last years in Ephesus and died there.

And also, of course, when John wrote the book of Revelation, it was written to seven churches of Asia, and there were seven epistles from Jesus himself. One to each of these churches, and the first one addressed was Ephesus. So Ephesus and the church there had had tremendous special privilege.

It was to the elders of that church that Paul gave his lengthy speech in Acts chapter 20, about the need to watch over the sheep and watch out for wolves and so forth. And he obviously had a tremendous connection with that church, but we don't know that he wrote this letter specifically to them. He may have, but he may not have.

If he did not, it is almost certain that Ephesus was at least one of the cities that would receive him. If this was a circulating epistle, it may have begun in Laodicea, it may have gone to Colossae and through some of the other churches of Asia, and it may have ended up in Ephesus, and it may have been kept in Ephesus. After making the circle of the churches, it may have been, you know, Ephesus may have become the custodian of the epistle after it had circulated.

And if that is true, it would perhaps explain why the epistle came to be associated in later manuscripts with the Church of Ephesus. And someone might have even just

added, who are in Ephesus, because they thought of it as a letter to that church. And it's hard to know, you know, if it was not sent to Ephesus particularly, it's hard to know why the name Ephesus came to be attached to it, and why it has come down to us as the letter to the Ephesians.

But it would be explained possibly, if it had already made the circle of the Asian churches and had come to rest in Ephesus, and was then forever after in the custody of that church, it would be associated with that church in the minds of most people. Anyway, that's just a little background of it. One thing we know is that Paul, when he wrote it, was a prisoner in Rome.

There were two Roman imprisonments, we have reason to believe. The book of Acts only mentions one, and closes with Paul imprisoned in Rome, but there are indicators in 2 Timothy and Titus especially, and actually 1 Timothy to a certain extent, that Paul was released from that imprisonment, that he was not condemned by Nero the first time, and that he traveled some more. In addition to the travels that we read of in the book of Acts, when he was released from prison in Rome the first time, he apparently went to Crete and Ephesus, he might even have gone to Spain, nobody knows for sure, but we know he intended to.

And at some later date, he was imprisoned again, and did not receive a release from that imprisonment, he died a martyr the second time. But it was during his first imprisonment, that of which we read at the end of Acts in chapter 28, when Paul came to Rome, and as Acts closes, he is said to have spent two years under house arrest, with no one really bothering him, but receiving visitors and preaching to whoever would come near him in Rome, awaiting trial, and of course Acts closes without ever recording that trial or its outcome. It may have been during that two years, or at some other time during that same imprisonment, if it went much longer than that, that Paul wrote four epistles, which we usually refer to as the prison epistles, and Ephesians is one of those, Colossians is another, Philippians and Philemon are the remaining two.

So, during one period of time, during one imprisonment, Paul wrote four of the epistles that we have of his now. Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians, and Philemon. Philemon of course is written to an individual, and he lived in the city of Colossae, and so the letter of the Colossians, or to the Colossians, was sent probably at the same time as the letter to Philemon, who was in that city.

There are remarkable resemblances between Ephesians and Colossians, that anyone will observe if they read them anywhere near the same time. The thought in Ephesians is similar to other places Paul has written, a little bit in 1 Corinthians and Romans, even some in Galatians, but mostly Colossians. It's been observed that Colossians and Ephesians share at least 78 verses in common with each other, and that doesn't mean that the verses are verbatim, it doesn't mean that you'll find them in exactly the same

words, but you'll find them in such a close wording that they are identical in thought.

And anyone who has read Ephesians and Colossians, you know, near each other in time, I mean, like in successive days or in the same week or something, can't help but feel they're in familiar ground when they come to the second having read the first, because they're so much similar. And also, there is a lot in Ephesians that resembles 1 Peter, of all things, really. Peter and Paul didn't really associate real closely in their ministries, they were usually in different locations when they were ministering, and you don't expect to find quite the close resemblance between a letter of Paul's, like Ephesians, and a letter like 1 Peter.

However, we know that Peter was acquainted with Paul's letters, because he says so in 2 Peter. He mentions all of Paul's epistles, in which Paul writes of the same things that Peter writes about, says Peter in 2 Peter 3, verses 15 and 16. And this familiarity with Paul's epistles may have had some influence on Peter's thinking, because in 1 Peter there are many, many resemblances with Ephesians.

Including stress and almost all, well, when we go through Ephesians I'll point out where the resemblances are, but there are far more than one would expect to find. In so short a document as 1 Peter, you wouldn't expect so many points of identity, of thought, with Ephesians, as you find, unless Peter was in some respects impressed by Ephesians, influenced by it to some extent. And so we have this epistle.

As far as the resemblance to Colossians is concerned, that is no doubt accounted for by the fact that Colossians and Ephesians were both written around the same time, perhaps sent with the same hand. Colossi and Ephesus were both churches of Asia Minor, and both carried by the same person. Probably Paul sent them all at once.

And though there are many resemblances, there is a slight shade of difference in emphasis, not Ephesus, emphasis, between the Ephesian epistle and the Colossian epistle. And that is that Colossians emphasizes the preeminence of Christ. Particularly it is an epistle about Christ, the head of the church.

It is an epistle that is written against a heresy that was belittling Christ. In Colossians, some heretics were teaching something that was belittling Christ, and so Paul wrote a letter exalting Christ. And just speaking of the lofty position that Christ holds, and who he is, and speaks of him as the agent of creation, and all these lofty things that he says about Jesus, the head of the church.

Ephesians, on the other hand, although it says high things about Jesus, is more focused on the church. And it has been pointed out that while Colossians and Ephesians are very similar in subject matter, they are more complementary to each other than anything, because whereas Colossians is about Christ, the head of the church, Ephesians is about the church, the body of Christ. And in Ephesians, we have the most generic or universal

of what people would say Catholic.

And by Catholic we don't mean Roman Catholic. We're not talking about anything related to Roman Catholic theology. When we say Catholic, we mean general or universal.

The idea of the church. You see, in Corinth, you'll find some of the same ideas mentioned in the Corinthian epistles you find in Ephesians. For example, in Ephesians and Corinthians, both refer to the church as the body of Christ.

Both epistles also refer to the church as the temple of God. But it appears that in Corinth, it is the church in Corinth that is referred to as the temple. Paul says, I came and I laid the foundation.

Another builds on that foundation. He's talking about Paul having come to Corinth, established the foundation of that church in Corinth. And another, Apollos, comes and builds on it, and others afterwards build on it.

He's talking about the building of the church in Corinth. Likewise, when he talks about the body and the members of the body and the gifts of the various members, he's talking about the actual congregational meeting in Corinth and the function of the different parties in that meeting. So, when you read of the church in Corinth, or in 1 Corinthians, and you read of these metaphors that Paul likes to use, of the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit, both references to the church, in Corinthians, it seems to be used of the church in Corinth itself, whereas in Ephesus, I should say in the book of Ephesians, it is the universal church.

You don't have any reference to any particular congregation in the book of Ephesians. Even if we allow that the words who are in Ephesus in verse 1 are authentic and that the letter was sent to Ephesus, yet the way Paul talks about the church, he speaks of it as all persons who are in Christ the world over. And it is not a reference to a congregation in Ephesus or a congregation anywhere else.

We have in Ephesians what we call an ecclesiology, which means the doctrine of the church, that is of the universal church. And every local church, or every city that has the church in it, has a sampling or cross-section of the larger entity. The church, to Paul, and therefore to us who believe like Paul, the church was the new Israel.

And Paul knew that Israel was an entity that was global because the Jews were scattered throughout the world. But that in every city there was a synagogue made up of Israel in that town. And so in every city where there were Jews, where there was a quorum of Jews, there was a synagogue.

And the synagogue was the representation of Israel in that town. But of course all the synagogues taken together, and even those Jews who were not in a synagogue, were all of Israel in the world. And so also the church has its synagogue, as it were, its gathering

in every town.

But all taken together, and including some people who may not be in any such gatherings, there are those who are in Christ, those who are born again, and those who follow Jesus Christ, and they are the church. And that is the church that Ephesians talks about, the global church, the universal church. This letter, we're not sure exactly why Paul wrote it, says it does not address any specific problems.

Well it might, but it doesn't identify any problems. Certainly what Paul wrote addresses problems in the sense that if we had a problem, we might find some answers in Ephesians. But it doesn't identify any problems that he sees going on in the church that he needs to correct.

It seems to be more of a tract about the church. And we have in Ephesians the very best book in the New Testament, I think, for teaching about the doctrine of the church. But we need to remember when we read it, we're not reading about some individual congregation, we're reading about the church, the bride of Christ, the body of Christ.

And these images all are used in Ephesians. Body of Christ, temple of the Holy Spirit, bride of Christ. These are all different images that Paul uses, and more besides.

The family of God and an army are also metaphors that Paul uses in Ephesians. The church is seen as a family of the Father, as the body of Christ, as the temple of the Holy Spirit, as the bride, and as a bunch of soldiers waging war. And so all these different metaphors of the church are in Ephesians.

Now the book is divided, like many other of Paul's epistles, into two basic sections. The first three chapters, which is just half of the book, and the latter three chapters, the other half. And like Colossians, which also divides in half, though it's a shorter epistle and has only two chapters and two chapters, so a total of four.

But like Colossians, the first half is theological. And Paul just lays out theological propositions and states his doctrine about the church. And then the latter half is application or practical teaching about how Christians ought to live.

And it's interesting that Paul, in his epistles, does this regularly. He'll lay out the theology. Now I won't say universally.

There are some epistles where he doesn't do it. But it's very common. In Romans he does it.

In Ephesians and Colossians he does it. In Galatians he does this too, although he has two chapters of autobiography before he gets into the theological chapters, and then there's the practical chapters. But very commonly Paul will lay out the theology first, and then the instructions of what to do.



And that is no doubt because the instructions are not to be taken as just isolated commands to be done without any background. The instructions are the reasonable response to the truth that is given in the theological section. That's why Paul, after he gives his lengthy theological treatment in Romans through chapter 9, actually I should say through chapter 11, in chapter 12 he starts the practical application.

He says, I want you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice which is your reasonable service. It's reasonable in view of the mercies of God. He says, therefore I beseech you by the mercies of God or in view of the mercies of God, which the mercies of God were his first 11 chapters of theology.

He laid out the mercies of God. And in view of that, I want you to present your body as a living sacrifice. Likewise in Ephesians, Paul lays out the theology in the first three chapters.

And then in verse 1 of chapter 4, which begins the second half, he says, I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called. Our calling into the lofty position of being in the body of Christ is laid out in the first three chapters. And then in chapter 4 he says, I want you to walk in a way that's worthy of this calling.

So that the practical instructions are not isolated, they grow out of the theology. And it's not enough just to live the Sermon on the Mount, for example. One has to believe in the one who taught the Sermon on the Mount.

One has to have theology right to have to know who Jesus is. They have to believe in Jesus and then do what he said. If you believe Jesus is Lord, then you have motivation to do what he says.

And likewise, Paul often will give the theological background and foundation for his instructions before he gives his instructions, often taking as much as half or more than half of his epistle to give that background and then spend half or less of the epistle to give the instructions, which gives some impression of how important Paul believed theology was. As far as the thought of the epistle, Watchman Me wrote a very well-known book called Sit, Walk, Stand. And the reason it was called that was it was sort of commentary or a book based upon the epistle to the Ephesians, or this epistle we're studying today.

And he said that the thought of the epistle was threefold. There were three basic thoughts. One is that we are seated with Christ in heavenly places.

And that's what the whole three chapters of theology there is telling us, that we have a position in Christ and we are seated, that is, at rest. We are not laboring for our salvation. We are at rest because of what he has done for us.

And we've been raised with him and made to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, Paul says in chapter 2 verse 6. And so the first three chapters are about sitting, an exhortation to sit, to be at rest, to occupy the position that God has put us in. And then, of course, as I pointed out in chapter 4 verse 1, he said, now walk worthy of the calling. So the second exhortation is walk.

How are you to walk? The first exhortation is to sit, to find your position in Christ and to, from that position, live out your life. From the awareness of where you are in Christ, live out the daily things you do. And the second exhortation, of course, is to walk.

You need to progress, in other words, in Christ. You need to walk in a certain way and make progress in your Christian life. And then the third exhortation is in chapter 6 verses 10 through 24, stand.

And this is, of course, in the context of warfare. In chapter 6 verse 10, he says, finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, etc., etc. Then, verse 13, therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. So we are to find out how to sit first, how to rest in Christ, how to find ourselves positioned in Christ and see ourselves that way.

Secondly, we need to be exhorted on how to walk in this world, how to progress, how to live out our lives. And thirdly, we need to know how to stand, because it's not just a matter of walking, it's walking against a stiff wind. It's walking into a battle.

It's walking into danger, so that there's warfare. And we won't keep walking if we don't keep standing. We have to stand and withstand the opposition of the enemy.

And so, hence the title of Watchman Nee's book, Sit, Walk, Stand, an outline of the book of Ephesians. There are some special emphases in Ephesians I'd like to call your attention to. One, and probably the most important, is the expression, in Christ.

And certainly that is not an expression that's unique to the book of Ephesians. Paul uses that expression frequently in his writings. It's almost entirely a Pauline expression.

That is, it's one of Paul's favorites, but not used much elsewhere. And what it means to be in Christ, to Paul, means that we are absorbed into the corporate identity, which is Christ, the body of Christ. We're like organs in a body.

We're like stones in a temple. Excuse me. We're like members of a family, but all the members make one family.

So also, to be in Christ is to be in his body. And if we are in his body, then we participate

in his identity. The organs of your body do not have a separate identity.

Your liver doesn't have its own social security number. Your kidneys don't have their own separate fingerprints. You know, your stomach doesn't have its own personality.

These organs of your body are simply part of you, your identity. Who you are is who they are. And thus, Paul speaks of the church in Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 23 as Christ's body, the fullness of him who fills all in all, Ephesians 1, 23.

Paul said over in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 12, 1 Corinthians 12, 12, he says, for as the body is one, meaning the human body, and has many members, but all the members of that one body being many are one body, so also is Christ. He says Christ is a body made up of many members. He didn't say that so also is the church, which we'd expect him to say, but he says so also is Christ.

But Christ refers to Jesus, the head, taken together with all of the members of his body. When we speak of you, we're not speaking only of your head. We're speaking of all of you.

Your head gives identity to who you are. If somebody would walk into this room with a very undistinguished body, but their head covered with a bag, somebody you know, but perhaps not dressed in a characteristic way that you'd recognize, it's not likely you'd identify them just from their body, unless like to say they had a distinguished body style. But you could distinguish them instantly from their head.

And it is the head that gives obvious identity to the body. And the church is his body, the fullness of him. The church is in him, like organs of a body.

And because of that, that speaks a great deal about how God treats us. God only can save us if we are in him. We can only be righteous in him, because he is righteous.

We are only chosen in him, because he is chosen. We are said to have died and risen from the dead and ascended into heaven and are seated in him, in heavenly places. Now, this doesn't mean that we are psychologically or consciously in heavenly, in the heavenly place, or that we should psych ourselves up to think of ourselves that way.

It is rather saying that our position is a secure position, a lofty position, an authoritative position, simply because we're in him and he has all authority and all prestige and so forth. And whatever is true of him, we share in before God, so that we are, as Paul puts it, accepted in him, accepted in the beloved. Christ is accepted to God and we are in him, so we are accepted in him.

This idea is a bit mystical, but I don't expect it to be brand new to you, so I won't take the time to try to discuss it more fully. It would take so much time. But I would point out to you that in Ephesians, Paul uses this concept of in Christ a little more thickly, that is,

more frequently than in most of his epistles.

If you notice in Ephesians 1.1, he speaks to him as the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus. In verse 3, the last line, in the heavenly places, in Christ. Verse 4, just as he chose us in him.

Down in verse 6, the last line, made us accepted in the beloved. Christ is the beloved and therefore it's in Christ. Verse 7, in him we have redemption.

Verse 10, about the middle of that verse, it says they might gather together all things in Christ. And the last words in that verse 10 are in him. Verse 11, in whom, that is in Christ, also we have obtained an inheritance.

Verse 12, that we who first trusted in Christ should be, to the praise of the Lord. Verse 13, in him you also trusted. The middle of that, verse 13, in whom also having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

And there's more, down in verse 20, it says which he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead. That's a little different meaning of in Christ there. But in chapter 2, it says in verse 6, that he raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Verse 7, the last line, in the grace of his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Verse 10 of chapter 2, for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus. Verse 13 of chapter 2, but now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been made near by the blood of Christ.

Verse 15, having abolished in him or in his flesh the enmity. And then later in the same chapter, verse, so as to create in himself, that is in Christ, one new man. That's the church, which he also identifies in verse 16 as in one body, to reconcile them both to God in one body.

That is the body of Christ in him. And there's more in whom's and in Christ as we go along. Chapter 3, verse 6, that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ through the gospel.

And there's more in verse 11 and 12 of chapter 3 and so forth. So we have a lot, especially in these three chapters at the beginning, which lay out the theological background for what he wants to say. It's all about what it means to be in Christ.

And since Christ is seated in heavenly places, we are seated in heavenly places in Christ. Now that, again, that doesn't mean that we need to somehow psych ourselves up into thinking of ourselves as seated in heaven. It just means we need to be aware that our status, our position, in the sight of God and in the sight of the principalities and powers, which we'll mention in a moment, is one of authority, one of honor.

In Christ, none of it is ours. It's not what we are in ourselves. And there's no grounds for boasting, as Paul makes very clear in chapter 2. He says, lest anyone should boast, in verse 9. Not of works.

But it is a position that we need to understand ourselves in. It'll change the whole way we view our Christian life. It is, in a sense, a self-image kind of thing, although you know my thoughts about self-esteem.

But if by self we mean in Christ I have such a position, in Christ I have such authority, then this transforms the way I live out my life, as opposed to if I didn't know such things. Now let's look at a couple other expressions that Paul uses frequently in Ephesians, because we'll find them through the whole book. One of them is the expression, in the heavenlies.

In the New King James, it's translated, in the places. But the word places is not found in the Greek. It's simply the adjective, heavenly, made plural, heavenlies.

In the Greek, it is in a form that could either be masculine or neuter. If it's understood in the masculine, then in the heavenlies would mean among the heavenly beings, although most scholars believe that doesn't fit the usage in Ephesians very well, and it should be taken in the neuter, in the heavenly things, or in the heavenlies, or heavenly places, in the heavenly realm. This is how it's usually understood.

The New King James translates it in the heavenly places. There are some translators that just leave it in the heavenlies. It's a strange expression, because Paul uses the adjective heavenly in various places in his writings elsewhere, but only in Ephesians does he use it without a noun.

You know, he might talk about a heavenly body versus an earthly body in 1 Corinthians 15, but you've got heavenly as an adjective, it needs a noun. Only in Ephesians does it appear without a noun, and it's used that way five times in Ephesians, and it's not all in one place. It's in chapters 1, 2, 3, and 6. Let me show you the places so you'll recognize them and be acquainted with them when we come to them in our individual verse studies.

But we first read of the heavenlies in chapter 1, verse 3, where it says that God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies, in Christ Jesus, or in the heavenlies, in Christ. Okay? In chapter 1, verse 20, he says, which he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenlies, or in the heavenly places. Then in chapter 2, verse 6, we've already seen, and raised us up together and made us to sit together in the heavenly places, or in the heavenlies, in Christ.

Chapter 3, in verse 10, says to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be

known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies. And then the final occurrence of this expression is in chapter 6, verse 12, where it says, for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies. Now, you can see that the word heavenlies is used pretty much two different ways.

Well, it's used one way, but in two connections. One is where Christ is. Christ is in the heavenlies.

And because we are in Christ, we are in the heavenlies in Christ. Watchman Knee, again, illustrated what it means to be in Christ by saying, if you, if you, if I'd simply put a dollar bill in this Bible and close it up and put it in an envelope and send it to New York, what would have happened to the dollar bill? Well, it would have gone to New York in the Bible, where the Bible goes, the dollar bill goes, because it is in, in the Bible. And so if Christ is in the heavenlies and I'm in him, then I must be in the heavenlies too.

And so the first sense in which the heavenlies use is where Christ is. Chapter one, verse three says, in the heavenlies in Christ is where we are. We are in the heavenlies in him.

He's there. And that's where we are. In chapter one, verse 20, it is Christ who is seated in the heavenlies.

In chapter two, verse six is we who are in the heavenlies in Christ again. So Christ is the inhabitant of the heavenlies. And we are inhabitants of the heavenlies, heavenly places, in him only because he is.

The other sense in which the word in the heavenlies is used is with reference to principalities and powers. Now I'll say something about principalities and powers as a separate expression in a moment, but there are principalities and powers in the heavenlies. In chapter three, verse 10, it mentions that the church or the wisdom of God has been made known through the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies.

And then also we read that in chapter six and verse 12, that we wrestle against principalities and powers and against spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies. So there is spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies and there are principalities in the heavenlies and powers. And so the inhabitants of the heavenlies are Christ and us in Christ, and then also these principalities and powers.

And that brings us to a consideration of what is meant by principalities and powers. The word principalities means something like jurisdictions or authorities, spheres of authority. And powers, now that's just a word that is used sometimes for political powers.

In fact, the two Pauline conjunction, principalities and powers, are mentioned together in scripture several times, but always by Paul. And in various ways, more times in

Ephesians than in most books, but also found frequently in Colossians and once in Romans and once in Titus. And just so you'll know what the meaning of principalities and powers is, I'd like to show you first of all what it says in Titus.

This would be Titus chapter 3 verse 1. Titus chapter 3 verse 1 says, remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey and be ready for every good work. Now rulers and authorities, although it's translated different here, is the same Greek expression principalities and powers used in the other places. One reason that the King James translators probably rendered it rulers and authorities instead of principalities and powers is because they know that most of us, when we think of principalities and powers, we think of the demonic realm.

We wrestle against the principalities and powers. And if that is so, it would seem strange to say to obey them and be subject to them. You don't want to be subject to the demons.

And it's clear that Paul doesn't mean demons. In this place, Titus 3 verse 1, when he says principalities and powers, he means the rulers, political rulers. So we know this expression is at least used once by Paul with reference to ordinary political rulers on earth.

But we also know, as I pointed out in Ephesians 3 verse 10, he speaks about principalities and powers in the heavenlies, which would be of course different than earthly rulers. And therefore it is believed that the principalities and powers in the heavenlies are spiritual rulers. Now it's not clear whether they're all good or, I mean, whether they're all bad or all good, or some good and some bad.

There's nothing in Ephesians 3 verse 10 to tell us whether the principalities and powers in the heavenlies are good or bad. They might be references to angels, or they might be references to demons, or it might be references to both. We know that in vision that Micaiah saw in 1 Kings chapter 22, God was surrounded by spirits, presumably angels principally, but a lion spirit was among them and came and spoke to him.

Likewise, in the book of Job, the sons of God came to present themselves before God. Satan was among them. And therefore principalities and powers in the heavenlies could be a reference to angelic beings, both good and bad, both demons and good angels.

Now when we see the expression found in Ephesians 6, 12, which we looked at, we're wrestling against what? Principalities against powers. Now it doesn't say here that the principalities and powers are distinctly in the heavenlies. It goes on, it says against rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies.

Now it's not clear in Ephesians 6, 12, whether the expression in the heavenlies applies to all four of these things, principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age, and spiritual hosts of wickedness. Are all of these four in the heavenlies? Or is it only the

spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies? And the others might be earthly. We don't know.

The way it's phrased could be taken either way. But there are clearly in Paul's writings principalities and powers on earth which are simply the earthly rulers of nations. There are also principalities and powers in the heavenlies, probably both good and bad.

These would be rulers in the spiritual realm, angelic type creatures. We know that Daniel, in Daniel chapter 10, was made aware of a prince, or a principality we might say, of Persia, who was, as we generally understand, a demonic prince in the heavenlies. And there was a prince of Grisha.

And then Michael, sometimes called the archangel, was called the prince of Israel, the prince of Daniel's people. Now these are angelic princes, angelic principalities and powers. So it would appear that in addition to the rulers of this world, there are rulers in some sense in the spiritual world under God.

And that means that when you find the expression principalities and powers without a modifier, it's not clear whether it means earthly or heavenly ones. For example, the only time this expression occurs in Romans, which is Romans 8 and verse 38, it's not clear whether he means demonic or earthly rulers. In Romans 8, 38, it's part of, it carries on, well, I'll just put this way.

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Now these are some of the things that might challenge us or threaten us, but will not be able to separate us from the love of Christ. Now among them he says angels, and it says or principalities nor powers.

Now the fact that he mentions angels, then principalities and powers, and the principalities and powers are mentioned in close connection with angels, might suggest he is speaking of angelic principalities and powers. On the other hand, it could be argued just as well that by mentioning angels separately, he does not mean angelic beings, but he says principalities and powers. Angels are mentioned as a separate listing, and then you've got the principalities and powers, which could mean simply the rulers of this age, and certainly one could easily understand that Christians might wonder whether the principalities and powers that were persecuting the church, that is the earthly rulers, the Emperor and his governors and so forth that were persecuting Christians, whether they might succeed eventually in separating some of us from the love of Christ.

And so Paul might well be referring to earthly rulers and powers in Romans 8.38, but it's not clear the way it's listed there. It could be earthly. Likewise, in Colossians, there are three times in Colossians that this expression is used, and it's not clear whether in Colossians it's heavenly or earthly principalities and powers.



In Colossians, for example, 1.16, Paul says, for by him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through him and for him. Now thrones and dominions sounds like earthly political authority.

Principalities and powers might be mentioned in contrast to that, might be shifting the realm of vision to the heavenlies there, but he doesn't say so. He doesn't say principalities and powers in the heavenlies, and therefore that might only be a reference to earthly authorities and could well be. In chapter 2 of Colossians, verse 10, and it says, you are complete in him who is the head of all principality and power.

Now there, Christ is said to be the head of all principality and power. You might think, well, that would mean the angels, but it might, it might not. Certainly Christ is the king of kings and the Lord of lords, and kings and lords in those cases are probably earthly kings and lords, and Jesus is the king and Lord of both the kings and of the lords.

Therefore, he's the head of the principalities and powers, even if they are seen as political rulers. He's the ruler, as it says in Revelation, ruler of the kings of the earth. So he may well be here in Colossians 2, 10, seen as the head of earthly rulers, for all we know.

Also in Colossians 2, verse 15, it says that Jesus has disarmed principalities and powers and made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it, that is in the cross. That we generally understand to be a reference to demons, and it probably is. It's not clear exactly in what sense he could have been said to disarm the rulers of the earth, unless it is saying that his authority, his kingship established through his cross and through his resurrection is, as it were, the downfall of all earthly kings, because the kingdoms of this world are going to become ultimately the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ, and he sure ain't forever.

But I think more likely in Colossians 2, 15, the thought works better if we see it as demonic principalities and powers. But he does not specifically say in the heavenlies there. So in all the places in the Bible which use the term principalities and powers, they are Paul's writings.

In one place at least they are clearly earthly rulers. In one place they're clearly heavenly, because they're said to be in the heavenlies. And all the other places do not say whether he's referring to earthly rulers or heavenly beings, and in a sense it's kind of a toss-up.

But it's not necessary for us to decide, but we need to come at the passage not with the assumption that we know, because sometimes, since we do know of at least one place where Paul says the principalities and powers in the heavenlies, we might, probably without much good grounds, import the expression in the heavenlies in our mind every time we see principalities and powers that may not always be the ones in the heavenlies

he's referring to. Now, I'd like to begin going through now the first chapter, having looked at some of the special terminology that's going to be encountered here. It says, Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus and faithful in Christ Jesus, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, or in the heavenlies, in Christ, just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace. Now, I might just comment that the last line, or actually I should read the rest of that sentence, by which he has made us accepted in the beloved. This is a lengthy sentence.

We're in the middle of a sentence that in the original goes through, I think, about 13 verses without a period. And different translations have done different things to break it down to make it more manageable. The more non-literal the translation, the more sentences they break it into.

I think the Living Bible breaks these down into 13 different sentences. But this is a long, complex sentence that has many subordinate clauses and so forth, and it makes it a little difficult but intriguing to try to follow Paul's train through this long sentence, train of thought. I would say this, though, that three times in it, Paul uses the expression, to the praise of the glory of his grace, or its equivalent simply to the praise of his glory.

In verse 6, he says, to the praise of the glory of his grace. Later in verse 12, he says, to the praise of his glory. And in verse 14, he says, to the praise of his glory.

Now, that seems to work like sort of a refrain in a song or a poem, sort of a punctuation mark or something, sort of a recurring chorus. And this is really kind of a long poem or song of praise to God in this first chapter, to a great extent. It's very unlike most of Paul's writing.

It's more like a very long benediction or a very long doxology of God. But you'll notice if you read the whole thing, that in verses 3 through 14, a portion of it talks about our relationship to the Father, and that would be verses 3 through 6. The next portion of it talks about our relationship to Christ in verses 6 through 13. And then part of 13 and 14 are about our relationship to the Holy Spirit.

So, we have the relationship of the Church to each of the members of the Trinity, mentioned separately. And each of them, in each case, it says, after it tells of this relationship to the Father and our relationship to Christ and our relationship to the Holy Spirit, it ends, or has in the section, a statement, to the praise of his glory. That is to say that God has caused certain relational dynamics and realities to exist between us and

himself, between us and Christ, between us and the Holy Spirit, all to the praise of his glory.

Or in the first instance, chapter 1, verse 6, says, to the praise of the glory of his grace. So, what God has done in linking us with himself and giving us benefits in the Father and in the Son and in the Holy Spirit, is for his glory. It's not for ours.

It's not for us. It's a benefit to us, but it's really for him. And this is one of the most important things Christians need to get through their heads, because the modern forms of evangelism make it sound just the opposite.

Modern forms of evangelism make it sound like, you know, God is just a big sugar daddy, and that we are the people who have a need and that have, and the gospel is all about our need, all about us, and giving us what we need, and, you know, getting us saved, and getting us to heaven so we don't have to suffer in hell, and getting us, you know, into a position where we can get our prayers answered, and getting us healed and prospered and all the promises of God being ours and so forth. And that is, of course, a slight twist on the truth. There is truth in it, of course.

The gospel does have all these benefits for us contained in it, but Paul twists it back the way it really belongs. Everything that God has done for us, he's done for the praise of his glory. The gospel exists for the glory of God.

We were created for the glory of God. The reason God has done so many good things for us is because it does not glorify him for us to be left in our sinful state. Our lives are not lived for his glory that way, and we are saved for his glory.

We are created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them, he says in Ephesians 2.10, that it is so that we might redound to his glory. And he makes many references to this in Ephesians, but as I said, it kind of punctuates these three sections. The part about the Father, the part about the Son, and the part about the Holy Spirit.

Now, in this portion about our relationship to the Father, he says, he begins by saying, blessed, verse 3, be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. So we know he's talking about the Father here initially, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And of the Father, it says that he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

Now, it's not clear exactly what Paul means by spiritual blessing. I mean, it might be just the most generic of all terms. It might not have any specific items that he has in mind.

He didn't say, well, he does seem to have specific items in mind because he says every spiritual blessing, which seems to itemize different spiritual blessings, not just the vague sense of being blessed spiritually. But the spiritual blessings he has in mind might well be the things that he's going to lay out in the following verses. And the spiritual

blessings we have are adoption and acceptance and an inheritance and salvation and the seal of the Holy Spirit.

These could be all the things that he's referring to. He lays them out in the next 12 verses. These may be the spiritual blessings he has in mind.

But he says that God the Father has blessed us with all these spiritual blessings in Christ. Now, these blessings are Christ's blessings. They are what he possesses.

And in him, we benefit from them. In him, we have them, too, because we are identified with him in God's sight and his own sight. So that if Christ is without blame before him, we are without blame before him.

If Christ is accepted, we are accepted in him. If Christ has the Holy Spirit, then we have the Holy Spirit in him. If Christ has an inheritance, then we have an inheritance in him.

It is simply that as we are identified in Christ and are seen as belonging to him, that these spiritual blessings are ours. Now, they are said to be in the heavenly places in verse 3, which suggests that it's not necessarily the case that the principal blessing Paul has in mind is what we are experiencing right here. In the Beatitudes, Jesus said, blessed are, and listed a whole bunch of circumstances which were not seemingly very blessed from an earthly point of view.

Persecuted for righteousness sake, mourning, you know, people who are meek, people who are maybe walked on, people who are not treated well, people who don't appear to be blessed from an earthly vantage point, but from a heavenly vantage point. The blessings we have in Christ are, we are really blessed because theirs is the kingdom of heaven. They shall be comforted.

They shall be called the sons of God. They shall see God. These are the blessings, the spiritual blessings.

They're in heavenly places. The reward is future in some respects. There is a reward now, and that is that we are currently accepted.

We currently have the spirit. We're currently sealed with the spirit of promise. But the real blessedness is really in the heavenlies.

It's really something that is in a different realm than the earthly, which is simply to say that he is not promising us here that we will be rich and healthy like the prosperity doctrine would suggest that, you know, God wants to bless us, that the blessings of Abraham might come on those who have the faith of Abraham. And there's always, in some circles, people looking for earthly blessing as a sign of God's approval. But the real blessing is of a spiritual sort, of a heavenly sort.

And he is not saying that our blessings are to be seen in any sense in our physical circumstances, but they're in the heavenlies in Christ. Now it says in verse four, just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him. Now the punctuation here is questionable since the Greek does not contain the punctuation.

And you'll notice that verse four ends with in love, with a comma, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, comma. Now that is a possible way to render that. But some feel that the comma belongs after the words blame before him, without blame before him, comma.

And in love introduces the next clause, in love having predestined us to adoption. So that in love would be referring to God's love being the motive for his predestinating us. It's not known which is the way, and no one can ever say.

I mean the Greek allows either way. So we should either be holy and without blame before him in love, or else we should be holy without blame before him, and in love he has predestined us. So you can see that that in love may refer to our state, or God's state of being in love.

But I want to talk about for a moment, well we need to take verses four and five together because they talk about election, or chosenness, and predestination. He says having predestined us, verse five, to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of his will. Now there are many places in Scripture that Paul and others speak about us being chosen by God, or elected.

There's a few places where he speaks of being predestined. Actually there's only two chapters in the Bible that mention the word predestined. This chapter which has it in verse five, and again in verse, I thought it was in verse 11.

Am I right or wrong? I don't see there now. Yeah it's in verse 11. Being predestined according to the purpose of him.

So twice in Ephesians it mentions predestination, and both in chapter one, verses five and 11. And then it's also mentioned twice in Romans chapter 8 in very close proximity in verses 29 and 30. In Romans 8, 29 and 30, it says for whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren, moreover whom he predestined.

These he also called. Whom he called, these he also justified. And whom he justified, these he also glorified.

So those are the only two places in the Bible you'll find the expression predestined, or predestination. Actually the word predestination isn't found, but that's a word that's obviously a cognate of predestined. Predestined means literally marked out before, is

the literal meaning of that Greek word.

Marked out before, pre and destined, means that God has beforehand marked out for certain people a certain destiny. Now the doctrine of predestination is understood variously by different Christian schools of thought. The Calvinistic school of thought is that school that makes the most use of the term, and talks about it more often than most.

And it's not because they're the only people who do justice to it, although sometimes they talk as if that's true. There's certain Calvinists that I've listened to on the radio who are defensive of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. And in fact one of them I've debated with, or two of them I've actually debated with, but sometimes they'll say, well, I don't find the doctrine of predestination easier, but it's there in the Bible.

The Bible says predestined, and if it says predestined, I believe it means predestined. And that's just how they defend their doctrine of predestination. But the problem is, of course, that they act as if Calvinists are the only people who notice that word.

The only people who do justice to that word. If it says predestined, then it means predestined. But what they don't realize is that if it says predestined, it doesn't necessarily mean the Calvinist interpretation of predestined.

It might mean Paul's interpretation of predestined, and that might not be the same as the Calvinists. That's a possibility. We need to ask, what is meant by predestined? What does it mean to be chosen in him, as verse 4 makes reference to, before the foundation of the world? Well, I would point out to you first of all that this only speaks of this in the plural.

It talks about a plurality of people being chosen, and a plurality of people being predestined. We have been predestined. We have been chosen in him.

Now, since we're talking about we, plural, the question then is, were we selected as a group, or were we selected as individuals? That is the real question between the Calvinist and the non-Calvinist views of these subjects. Did God select a group, or did God select individuals? Now, the Calvinist believes that it's, and they don't have to defend it, they just assume it, that if it says we are predestined, it means that we as individuals were predestined. That God, before you were born, had decided that you must, because of his overriding sovereignty, you must become saved.

And somebody else, because of his overriding sovereignty, he determined they would not be saved. That was his predestined plan for those individuals. And likewise, the chosenness of us is predestined or chosen individually before the foundation of the world.

This is how all Calvinists understand it, and it is how many people, just at a glance, they

say, well, I guess so. If God says we're predestined, well, I'm one of us, and I guess I was predestined then. But you should notice that he says in verse 4, he chose us in Christ over the foundation of the world.

Now, what that means, if we understand in Christ, the expression Paul uses, and how he uses it, if we are accepted in Christ, it means we are accepted only because he is accepted. And by being in Christ, we share in his acceptedness. If it says we are holy in Christ, it is because Christ is holy, and being in him, we share in the holiness that is his.

And to say we are chosen in Christ would be Paul's way of saying Christ is chosen. Christ is the chosen one. And by being in him, we share in his chosenness.

Now, the chosenness is not mine as an individual, it is Christ's. It is Christ's chosenness that is in view here. I, as an individual, may participate by being in Christ, or may not participate in it by not being in Christ.

It is as if we were talking about the nation of Israel, and it's God's chosen people, the chosen nation. And we could say God chose Israel. And the Israelites who are in Israel could say God has chosen us.

But there could be people who were Israelites by birth, who defected and renounced their Jewishness, and died lost, and were not part of God's chosen people, separated themselves. At the same time, there were Gentiles who were not born Israelites, who by their own choice, like Rahab or Ruth, became part of Israel. And by becoming part of Israel, this Gentile who was not chosen became chosen.

That is, became an Israelite part of the chosen race. Now, who chose that individual? Well, one might argue that God chose them in some mysterious way behind scenes, but the Bible doesn't tell us that. All we can see in the Bible is that Ruth chose to associate with Naomi and her people and her God.

We see that Rahab chose to associate with the people despised. If God was behind the scenes working on their hearts, making them do that, the Bible is silent on that, and only a Calvinist would suggest it, because he has to import it from his Calvinist presuppositions. The Scriptures give the image of individuals in the Old Testament choosing to be part of Israel, who were not in Israel originally.

Now, once they are in Israel, they are part of the chosen race, part of the chosen people. And as such, they are chosen. But it doesn't mean that they as individuals were chosen to be part of that group.

It means that they chose to be part of a group that was a chosen group. God selected the group, and the individual decides to be in or out of it. Likewise, Christ is a corporate entity in Paul's writings, and to be in Christ is something you can choose to do or not.

If you do choose to, you will share in his chosenness. You will be chosen in him. It does not say in verse 4, just as he chose us to be in him.

God didn't choose me to be in Christ, or if he did, that's not what Paul is saying. It's possible he did. I'm not going to argue against that, but it doesn't say so here.

It doesn't say that God chose me, or chose you, or chose any other individual to be a Christian, or to come into Christ. It says that those of us who are in Christ are chosen in him. God chose us in him.

And I don't know if that's an easy concept for people to grasp or not. I'm familiar enough with Paul's writings that it's not hard for me to understand. It's hard for me to explain, though, if someone doesn't quite grasp what Paul means by in him.

But what I'm saying is there's nothing in this that suggests that God selected individuals. Before the foundation of the world, to save some and not others. But he chose Christ before the foundation of the world.

Those who are in him are accepted in him, and chosen in him, and seated in him in heavenly places. And it is in him that we have this status of being chosen. It is not the case that Paul is saying any of us were chosen as individuals to become Christians.

But rather, having become Christians, having come into Christ, we now have a status of being chosen in him, in his chosenness. Now, also, predestinated us to adoption as sons. This might, again, be applied individually, and the Calvinists would say it is, that God adopted, chose, or predestined that you would be adopted, and predestined that you would be adopted, and predestined that I would be adopted.

But that's not necessarily a given. Adoption as sons can be corporate. That God predestined that his people, those who come to Christ, will be adopted as sons.

It's not a given, without God making that decision, that anyone who would throw in his lot with Christ would be accepted as a son of God. I mean, if the Bible didn't declare it, if God didn't decide it, you could be on Christ's side. I mean, just like anyone can be my friend who wants to, and you could be a friend of Jesus if you wanted to.

But that wouldn't entitle you to be in a son of God, unless God graciously allowed that, and said, okay, I'll tell you what, those who are in Christ, I'm going to adopt as sons. Now, I'm in Christ, so I'm adopted as a son, and God predestined that it should be so. Not that I, as an individual, but that whoever, whosoever would, might come.

And when they did, he predestined that they, that group, would be his family. So that predestination and election here, and election just means chosenness, are as easily seen as corporate matters, as individual. Now, the Arminian view sees it as corporate.



The Arminian view holds that God did not decide for you whether you would become a Christian or not. He wanted you to. He urged you to.

He drew you with all that he had available to draw you. But he has done the same. He's wanted others to become Christians who haven't.

And he's urged them, and he's reasoned with them, and he's pleaded with them, and he's wept over them, and he has gotten angry at them. And he has drawn them with everything he had available to them, and they didn't come. The choice is yours, ultimately.

An example of that last instance is where God says, in the story of the vineyard, in Isaiah chapter 5, speaking of Israel as a vineyard, he says, I planted them in a fruitful hill, I put a choice vine there, I put a hedger on it, I put a winepress in it, I gathered out the stones, I did everything that I could imagine to do to produce good grapes from this vineyard, but it didn't produce good grapes, it produced bad grapes. And then he says, what more could I have done? What more could I have done for my vineyard to make it produce good grapes? But it didn't. What God is saying, I've done everything I can, and I still didn't get from these people what I want.

He didn't have some other thing up his sleeve he could have used. He implies he had nothing else. He had no resources available to him, but those he had already expended to try to get something good out of Israel, but apparently he didn't have their approval.

He didn't have their cooperation. And therefore, God can do all that he can, and still man can resist. Now some people think that's a slap in the face of the sovereignty of God, and it is only seen that way if one realizes, or if one fails to realize, I should say, that God, in giving man this freedom, acted sovereignly.

That is to say that no one twisted God's arm and said, thou must make a creature that is independent in his will. God, you are required to make some free moral agents and give them freedom to choose. No one twisted God's arm, that was his own sovereign choice to do.

And having done so, it was his sovereign choice to allow man to exercise that freedom. This is not an affront to God's sovereignty, this is a function of God's sovereignty. It's the Calvinist who limits God's sovereignty.

The Calvinist says God can't be sovereign and give somebody real free will, because then he can't be sovereign. The Arminian says no, God can be as sovereign as he wants. He can even sovereignly decide to give someone free will.

The Calvinist says no, if God does that, he's not sovereign anymore. See, the Arminian has a higher view of God's sovereignty, because the Arminian believes God can really do anything he wants, including create a category of people that he gives true freedom to,

whose will he cannot coerce, because he decided he will not. And therefore, it is possible, sadly, for God to desire a man to make a choice, and prefer for man to make a choice, and man to make a different choice than what God preferred, which is why God complains so frequently when that happens.

And so God is not making all the choices for the individual. God urges individuals, he draws, he does all he can to woo, but the Bible indicates that some have been drawn, resist. Once God has done all he can do, and can do no more to get them saved than what he has done, yet they still turn from him and resist and will not come to him.

And others don't resist him permanently, and eventually turn to him, and come to him. Now that is a function of the free choice of man. But God has chosen and predestined that those who turn to Christ will have privileges given to them.

That's God's preordained decision, that whoever comes to Christ, whoever comes into Christ, will participate in his chosenness, in his election, in his prestige, in his standing, and will be like him a son. They will be adopted. Jesus is a natural son of God, or supernatural, but we are adopted sons.

But the point is we have prestigious sons in Christ. God predestined that we who would come to Christ would be adopted as sons to himself according to the good pleasure of his will. That's God's sovereign choice.

No one made God set up this system, this arrangement, this pleased God to do that. Now, I want to say something more about verse 4, and we're going to have to wind this down. In verse 4 it says, Just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and before him in love.

Now, when we talk about election and being chosen by God, we need to understand what we mean. When people think of Israel as God's chosen people, sometimes they assume that means that being a Jew, you just automatically have privilege because you're chosen, chosen by God. And it is assumed that chosen means chosen for privilege, chosen for salvation, chosen for special treatment in a positive way.

And while there may be an aspect of that, the Bible emphasizes that when God chooses people, he chooses them for a responsibility. He chooses them to play on the team, to be on the crew, to be performing a task. Israel was chosen, not just chosen for privilege, they were given privileges as part of their task, but they were chosen for a task.

And they didn't fulfill it. And insofar as Israel does not fulfill what it is chosen for, you know, it bears responsibility, and rather than privilege, they'll have greater punishment. There is wrath to the Jew first, and then to the Greek, as well as privilege to the Jew first, and then to the Greek, depending on the Jew living up to, or not living up to, the thing they're chosen for.

Likewise, when we say that the church is chosen by God, what's it chosen for? Not just chosen to go to heaven. Being elect, being chosen, being predestined, doesn't just mean God just chose to send you to heaven. And unfortunately, an awful lot of the presentation of the Christian message in our day focuses only on the privilege, and when we talk about being chosen, everyone says, what if I'm not chosen? God's not given me as great a privilege as someone else because I'm not chosen, and then they're chosen.

But being chosen means being chosen for a task. There are privileges associated with the task, but it is a set of responsibilities that comes with being chosen. He has chosen us in Christ that we should be holy and without blame, but for him in love.

There's a similar statement to this in Colossians, and I don't have it in my notes, I'm just working from memory, and I hope I can find it as quickly as I'd like to, because if I can, it helps to illustrate the individualness of choice in this matter. Colossians 1.22, it says that he has reconciled in the body of his flesh through death us, Colossians 1.22, to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable in his sight. Now, notice, this is the same expression, holy and blameless, holy and without blame.

It says in Ephesians 1.4 that God chose us that we should be holy and without blame. Colossians 1.22 says he wants to present us holy and without blame and irreproachable in his sight, but look at verse 23, if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard. Now, notice, Paul says that God has chosen us to be holy and blameless, he intends to present us holy and blameless, but that's if we continue, and if we don't move away from the faith, Colossians 1.23 says.

So, it's clear that it's not just saying that God has chosen certain people to be holy and blameless and they are guaranteed to be, because he predestined that they would be, it's rather God chose that there would be a people who would be holy and blameless, a people in Christ, accepted in him, chosen in him for the purpose of holiness and blamelessness, and predestined to be in him, adopted as sons of God with all the privileges involved in that. And he chose a people like that, and you can be in that people if you continue, and if you don't move away from the faith, which makes it clear that the individual participation is an individual choice. God chooses the category, those who are in Christ, that's the category, he has chosen that those who are in Christ will be adopted as sons, those who are in Christ will be holy and blameless before him.

We choose whether we will be in that category or in the other category of those who are not. So, this is how, I believe, Paul understood and taught the doctrine of predestination and election. God predestined certain things for those who are in Christ.

We determine whether we will be in Christ or whether we will fall away from Christ or not, except in the first place. And this is, you know, not anymore, Ephesians doesn't support Calvinism any more than Galatians does, or Hebrews does. It has words that are

taken by Calvinists as their special pet projects, chosen, predestination, and so forth.

But when you see how they are used and what they are saying by Paul, they don't really support the Calvinist interpretation of those words. They actually support another way of looking at it. We're going to have to stop with that and it's a natural breaking point in the talk, although it's a long sentence that goes on for many more verses in Paul.

But we'll come back to it next time and go on through, maybe even finish the first chapter. We'll see.