

Amazing Love!

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After I left home, sometimes I would go home, and when my dad would greet me and he'd say, what do you know? What do you know? And I'd think. And I think. And I think.

Well, I'm not sure what I know, but sometimes that's a good question, isn't it? What do you know? There's a story in John, chapter nine, about a young man who was born blind. And Jesus' disciples were walking along, and they were wondering, did he sin or did his parents sin? Why was he born blind?

And Jesus, no, this is for the glory of God. And he told him. He put some mud in his eye, told him to go wash in a pool in Siloam, and his eyes were open. He could see. The only problem with that, it was on a Sabbath day.

And the Pharisees were upset. That can't be from God. They broke the law. It's a Sabbath. And so they kept questioning this man who healed you, who did this.

Then they didn't believe that he'd actually been blind, so they called his parents. Yeah, it's our son. Well, how did he. We don't know how. And finally, they know this man, Jesus, is a sinner.

And the man's response is classic. He said, whether he is a sinner or not, I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, I now see one thing I do know. I would say that if you are a Christian, you may not know a lot. I've done a lot of study and a lot of reading, and I recognize in the comparison to some people that have devoted their life to studying the scriptures.

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I don't know a lot. But one thing I do know, Jesus loves me. Jesus saved me. I belong to Jesus. And, yeah, there's things I don't know.

But I do know that. And I share this story. Because we have an enemy. Every single one of us that's a Christian, we have an enemy. A little bit of ringing, I think, with the sound, isn't there?

There's a little bit of ringing with the sound. Yeah. Might need to turn that down just a little bit. And our enemy, Satan, does everything he can to get you to doubt your relationship with the Lord. He'll bring up past sins.

He'll bring up your problems. He'll bring up things you don't know. Failures, trials, hardship, disappointments. And he wants to use those to discourage you and somehow undermine your faith. The Bible labels this spiritual warfare.

We are in a battle with forces of evil that always work against us. The Bible labels the spiritual warfare. And it says, in all circumstances, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one. Satan hurls his lies at you and I, trying to discourage us, but we have to be convinced. We have to have the faith to believe that what Jesus said about you and I, and the word is true, and that we can trust that no matter what we are going through or even what we have done in our life, that I know that I have eternal life.

We see the importance of this knowing in the passage that we looked at this morning, the opening remarks in chapter one, verse four. And Paul says, for we know, we know, we have this assurance. There's no question in our mind. He says, for we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, that word brothers can be brothers and sisters. Paul has the assurance.

He is confident that these thessalonians in Thessalonica are Christians. And he knows two things about them as something that you and I need to know about ourselves. Two things that he knows about them. First of all, he knows that they have been chosen by God. Chosen by God.

The word chosen. Here is the word electos. Electos, which we get the word election from. And some of your translations will say, we know he has elected you to salvation. We're coming up on an election this fall, aren't we?

And you and I get the opportunity to vote. You may not like the choices that you have, but we have been guaranteed the right to vote for the person that we would like to see in office. They don't choose to be in office. We choose, and we need to take advantage of that opportunity to vote. We live in a free country.

We've been guaranteed that right to vote. Where does that guarantee come from?

Our constitution. But it says right in the constitution that those rights have been given to us by God. They acknowledged that when we started our country. And so in the same way, God has the right to elect whoever he wants to be part of his family, to make the choice, to choose whether you or I will be a part of his family. We call that the doctrine of election.

And a lot of people do not like it. They don't like the idea that God chooses. I get to choose is what they would think God chooses. In John 15:16, Jesus told his disciples, you did not choose me, but I chose you, that you might go and bear fruit, fruit that would abide. And the fact is, Jesus, if you're a Christian, he chose you.

You did not choose him. In Ephesians, chapter one, verse four says, even as he referring to Christ, even as he chose us in him before the creation of the world. If you are a believer in Christ, God actually chose you before he created the world. He knew you and he had a purpose in choosing you. And thank God for that.

He has the right to do that, to elect us to salvation. Anyone he wants to be a part of his family, he can choose. Paul himself was a great example of that. We know the story that he was on his way to Damascus to persecute, to rest, and to kill Christians. And of course, he met Christ on the Damascus road, asked, who are you?

And he said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting, but rise and enter the city, and you'll be told what you are to do. When he saw Jesus, he went blind. And he was blind

for three days just waiting. When God spoke to a man named Ananias, said, go and pray for this guy, Paul Anasias. Don't you know that he persecutes us?

Go and pray. And so he told Ananias, go. For he, referring to Paul, is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. God chose a persecutor of the church to be a proclaimer of his glory. And it wasn't because Paul was seeking the Lord.

There was something in him that qualified for that. It was solely because God says, I want you. And he chose him. And he had to respond to that choice, and he lived for Christ the rest of his life. Now, we might protest.

Wait a second. I don't like this concept of God choosing. Maybe he chose Paul because of all of his gifts. Paul was a gifted man. He had been trained, a trained theologian.

He was committed 100% to what he was doing. But he didn't choose him because of that. And he didn't choose you or I because of. Well, look what we can offer. Look what we can bring to the church.

Look what we can do for God. No, it says there in verse four, Paul says, brothers, loved by God. He chose you for the simple reason that he wanted to extend his love to you. No other reason, nothing in you that qualified you for salvation. Brothers and sisters loved by God, one reason they were chosen.

And he chooses this because he wants to give his love to you and I for us to experience that love. It's interesting, this is the only time in the New Testament where that term loved by God is in the New Testament. But it's not the only time in the Bible. If you go back to Deuteronomy, chapter seven. We see the same thing regarding Israel.

Deuteronomy seven, verse six to eight. And Moses is giving instructions to Israel before they go in the promised land. He says to the Israelites, for you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possessions out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was

not because you were more numbered than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you are the fewest of all people.

But it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand. And I don't know if we fully understand the privilege of being loved by God. Loved by God means that God is fully invested in sharing his love with you and I, preparing us to spend eternity with him. God loved Israel not because they were a great nation and, oh, they're going to be obedient and they're going to do this. No, just because he chose to love them and he was faithful to keep working in their lives through everything that they went into.

And in the same way, he chooses Christians today simply because he loves us. And this is important for two reasons. First of all, the Bible's clear. It says in Romans that no one has the ability to choose God. None is righteous.

No, not one. No one. Understand? No one seeks God. All have turned aside.

Together they have become worthless. No one does good. Not even one. So how many are good and how many are seeking the Lord?

No one. It's not possible. We're in our sin and we may protest. Wait a second. I know people who seek God and they're not Christians, but they're seeking God.

If you know someone like that, they are not seeking the true God. They're seeking a God in their own image. And you find that out when you present Christ's commands and demands on their life. I don't want any part of that. That's not the God I'm worshiping.

So they're not really seeking the true God and they don't want anything to do with him. God has to choose us. The second reason God does the choosing is because he gets all the glory, all the glory. We live for our own glory. We want glory, but the fact is we have none.

Everything we have can be taken away in a moment and gone just like that. And he gets the glory. And as a result of that, we get to thank him for all eternity for choosing you. And I. I think all of us have been in a place where there's something we wanted.

But somebody was going to have to make a choice, whether you made the team or you got hired at the job, or the woman or the man said yes, whatever. And you couldn't demand that they do what you wanted to do, could you? You were just praying. I hope they choose me. And if they did, just remember the joy that came into that they wanted me.

What a great thing that is to be chosen. Dev and I, along with 30 other pastors, just spent three days at a prayer summit down at Cannon beach. And no agenda, just singing praise and praying. And if you listen to the prayers, it was hardly any petition, hardly any asking, God, do this, do that. I need that, whatever it was, almost all praise, giving glory to God for who he is and what he's done.

It was an exciting time of be able to give glory to our God, not because of anything we've done, but because of everything he had done. And we'll get to do that for all eternity. If we really know the Lord, we'll give praise to him, thanking him that he chose us. This doctrine of election is so important that Paul gives us four proofs on whether or not you've been elected or not. Go back to first thessalonians four proofs that you've been elected.

There in verse five, he says, because I know you've been chosen because there's a reason that he knows this. They weren't chosen because of this. He just knows they're chosen because of this. So first of all, he says, because our gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, came to you not only in word. So the first proof that you have been chosen by God is you somehow heard the gospel.

Someone shared the good news with you. Could have been somebody just visiting with you, a friend or a relative. It could have been in a church, it could have been at a crusade, it might have been on the radio. But somehow you heard the gospel, that Jesus Christ died for your sins, that he was buried, that he rose again. And you cannot

believe.

If you haven't heard that, Romans 10:14 asks the question, and how can they believe in him of whom they have never heard? Verse 17? So faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of God. Thank God that there have been people in our lives that had the courage to share the gospel with us. The good news, because if we'd never heard that, we can't be chosen, we can't come to Christ we have to first hear the word of God in some way.

The second proof it says, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power. The power of God in some way working your life, that might have been a miracle, and that's a possibility, but more likely it was whoever shared that word. The power of God was working through the word. And again I remarked in my prayer, it's easy for us sometimes to sit here Sunday after Sunday after Sunday, and we heard a message and we liked the message. Oh, that was a good message.

And we go home and what was the message?

My wife's laughing because I sometimes ask her what the message was. Depends how much sleep she had the night before. Okay. But the fact is it takes the power of God to make that message stick in your heart, to impact your life. And if you come to Christ, somehow the power of God worked through the message of God and you end up believing whatever it was, the gospel that you heard that day.

How many have been to a Billy Graham crusade?

I had a big one in Seattle quite a few years ago. In fact, it was the record attendance for the kingdom. More people came that day than any other event. They had rock storage, baseball games, football. And so Billy Graham is up there.

He is sharing a simple gospel message. It's not real complicated, it's not real deep. He's just sharing the gospel. And then what does he do? He gives an invitation.

And then what happens? People just start flocking towards the front. Sometimes 5000 people go forward to receive Christ. And even though it was a simple message, the power of God was working through that person's words. And sometimes that happens in our life.

We're sharing the gospel and somehow the power of God is working in that. And it does its work in the same way. If you're a Christian, the power of God was working through the word of God to bring you to that place of decision. Yes, I need Christ as my lord. And so Paul was preaching in Thessalonica.

And I can't hardly comprehend just going into a town, a pagan town, no believers, and go into the synagogue. And I'm here to proclaim the word of God. And people give their life to Christ even to the point of they're willing to be persecuted. That's not just logic or, gee, what a good deal that is. That is the power of God changing people's lives and bringing them to Christ.

The third proof that, you know, you are chosen, it says, because our gospel came to you not only in power, but also not only in word. But also in power and in the Holy Spirit. And the third proof is the Holy Spirit in you working in your life. He calls you by name, and you respond by saying, yes, Lord, I want Christ in my life. I want to live for him.

And that's a work of the Holy Spirit. He comes to convict us of sin, Jesus said, but then he comes to comfort us and bring us into that relationship with Jesus Christ. And I know it was that way for me as a nine year old hearing the gospel at a Bible camp outside of Shelton. And on a Wednesday night, the speaker, art beals, shared the gospel. And then he said, if anyone wants to receive Christ, when you get back to your cabin, tell your counselor.

Tell your counselor. And I ran back to my cabin, and I was the only one there. And I waited 510 minutes. And finally the counselor came in and he kind of like, what do you want?

And I said, I want to be saved. Name was Mr. Workman. He worked for the post office in. So we got down on our knees on his bunk and he led me in a prayer of salvation and gave my life to Christ.

And I know it was real because the Holy Spirit was working in my life. And it doesn't mean that I did everything right the way God. But he never let go. And he just held on and kept bringing me further and further along in the faith. And that's a work of the Holy Spirit and thank God.

And that's not something that we do. It's something that he does in our life. And you should have evidence of that if you have been chosen by him. The last proof that mentions. Because our gospel came to you not only in word but also in power and in the Holy Spirit with full conviction.

The full conviction. Everyone know what full conviction is. And I'm sure there is no doubt in my mind. There's no question. I know that I belong to Christ.

I know that he's the only way. I know that he is God, the son that came into the world to die for my sin. I know that he came into my life and he's working in me and changing me, and my hope is in him. In a sense, I know with all my heart. Doesn't mean that there won't be doubts.

There often are. But when it comes right down to it, I am convinced that Jesus is Lord and savior and that I belong to him. And it's his work in me and nothing that I have done in myself, that he chose me. Satan will attack you and try to get you to lose that assurance. But if it's real.

You're going to say, get out of here, Satan. That's a lie from hell. I know I belong to Jesus Christ, that he loves me and I love him. As I was doing this message, I was reminded of a friend, someone I met at Cottonwood, Idaho, when I pastored there. And I was asked to write an article every week for the paper.

And some of those articles are in my book. And every Tuesday I had to have that article to the paper at noon. And, boy, Tuesday morning I am just writing like crazy and

trying to get it all ready. Of course, you didn't have a computer back then. You had the typewriter.

If you made a mistake, you had to wide it out and all of that stuff. And I'd run down to the paper and get it there by noon, and I gave it to a lady named Connie. That town was a catholic town. Almost everyone in the town was catholic. I got a call from Connie one night and said, hey, do you do counseling?

And I said, well, yeah, would you visit with my husband, dawn? And looking back, it's a miracle that she even asked me. But she did. So I went to visit with dawn, and Dawn was suffering severe depression. He thought that he was Jude in the Bible.

He was going to have to die for the sins of the people in Cottonwood. Twice he had dug a hole in a field and tried to bury himself. It didn't work. But twice they took him down to the mental hostel in Lewiston, shared the gospel with him. He prayed to receive the lord, and it was real, but it was like he was in a fog.

He just could not understand. He couldn't work. He couldn't remember his phone number. His wife was just taking care of him like a little boy, but he kept coming. And then one day, someone said, God wants me to pray for you, Don.

They prayed for him, and his mind was opened immediately. And he went from not remembering his phone number to knowing more scripture than all of us in the Bible put together, quoting scripture like you would not believe. And he was like a man who had been let out of prison. And he was so joyful that all he wanted to do was hug everybody, and we would see him coming and, oh, no, here comes hugging dawn. He was so full of the joy of the Lord.

He ended up leading his whole family to Christ, his sister, his two brothers, his mom and dad before they died. And he's in Lewison today and walking with the Lord and sharing the gospel with everyone. And I asked you, was there anything in dawn that would cause God to choose him. Look what he's going to be able to do. Nothing.

God chose dawn because he loved him and wanted to work in his life and bring glory to him. And so out of that, here's the question. Have you been chosen by God? Do you know you've been chosen? Is there any evidence that you've been chosen by him?

If you have, thank him. Tell him you love him. Ask him to work in your life and to bring glory out of your life and him grow in your knowledge of him. Invite the Holy spirit to work in you and through you and hold on to that conviction no matter what you're going through. And we go through a lot.

And sometimes some people go through more than other people. But hold on to that conviction. I belong to the Lord and he's working in my life. And I don't understand how, but I know that he is. If, on the other hand, and you're not sure that you've been chosen for God, you need to do whatever needs to be done to ask him.

Choose me. Lord Jesus said, many are called, but few are chosen. I thought about that. If Jesus is calling, why are a few chosen? Why are a few chosen?

And I remembered that verse today. If you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts. I believe that Jesus is speaking today in people's lives. But they get so busy and so caught up with their life that even though they kind of hear that still, small voice, they just put it aside. Maybe someday, maybe someday, but not now.

And they don't realize what they're doing is hardening their heart. As a result of that, it becomes harder and harder to hear the voice of the Lord. And then they find out when it's too late. I wasn't chosen. I did not respond to Jesus' invitation to come to him.

If you're convinced that Jesus Christ is the son of God, the way, the truth and the life, that no man comes to the father except through him. If you have to, plead with him, o Father, choose me. Choose me. Bless me. Pour out your love upon me.

Use me. Glorify yourself through me. I believe that's a prayer that God will answer. We may not know how, but he will answer that. And the result of that will be joy for all of eternity.

Because we were chosen by God. We are the beloved of God. Doesn't matter what our circumstances are, doesn't matter what anybody else thinks about us. All that matters is I know God loves me. This I know, for the Bible tells me so.

And when we have that, we have everything. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you that you are a loving God, that you don't desire that any perish and God that you are calling. Lord, we confess that sometimes it's hard to hear the distractions of the world, the busyness of our life, the desires that we have in the flesh. But God, if we've heard that voice and we responded, we praise you and thank you for choosing us that we are the beloved of God, that your eye is always on us and that you're working in our life. And Lord, if someone doesn't know for certain they've made that choice I pray that you would be calling them by name and that they would respond and say, yes, Lord, I want to follow Christ with all of my heart. I repent of my sins going my own way and I choose to follow Christ because he chose me.

And I pray that you'd fill him with great joy in Christ's name. Amen.