

July 11, 2021

Texts: 1 Peter 2: 9-10; Ephesians 1: 3-14

Title: "Because We Are Chosen"

What would you do if tomorrow you found out that you had inherited an unexpected fortune? What problems would it solve for you and what problems would it create? How would your life change?

There was a wealthy bachelor from Portugal named Luis Carlos de Noronha Cabral da Camara. By our standards, that's a long name. Luis had inherited a large amount of money (millions). Being a bachelor, he didn't have anyone to leave his fortune to, so he picked the names of 70 random strangers from a Portuguese phone book and left them a share in his estate. And shortly thereafter he died, unexpectedly, at the age of 42, many of his heirs thought they were being scammed when they received their unexpected inheritance. Can you imagine how this money affected their lives?

I hear from time to time about large amounts of money sitting in an account somewhere because the heirs to it couldn't be located. That's the message the Apostle Paul is trying to share with us today. God has abundant gifts He is waiting to give to His children. The Apostle Paul tells us that we're greatly blessed. He writes, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places..." Note those words "*every* spiritual blessing." God is love. Love is generous. So, by His very nature, God is abundantly generous. He doesn't hold back any spiritual blessing from His children. The power, the authority, the hope, the joy, the peace,

the love of God are all available to His children. So why do so many Christians struggle with anxiety, envy, greed, fear, and hopelessness? Could it be because we don't understand the truth and the value of the spiritual blessings we've been given?

We're blessed, for one thing, that we've been chosen! Paul writes that we were chosen in Christ "...before the foundation of the world." The words "in Christ" appears ten times in the book of Ephesians. Paul wants us to realize that Jesus did the work for us. We don't have to earn it. We don't have to be "good enough" to deserve it. Out of his love for us, Jesus sacrificed his own life to guarantee us all the spiritual blessings that flow from his relationship with God.

If you're chosen, that means you're valued. You're loved. God has a purpose for you. In November 1984, a young man named Patrick was doing his laundry in the dormitory laundry room at San Francisco State University. It was late at night, and Patrick was spooked by a sound coming from a cardboard box in the corner of the room. He walked over and peeked inside and found a baby! It was a newborn baby girl, abandoned in the dorm laundry room. The baby's body temperature was dropping, and she was turning blue. Patrick grabbed the first student he saw, a nursing student named Esther, and asked for her help. She cared for the baby until paramedics arrived.

The hospital staff named the newborn Baby Jane Doe. When the story hit the news, people from all over offered to adopt her. Among those who contacted Child Services were Sam and Helene Sobol. Helene says that the moment she saw

Baby Jane's picture in the papers, she said to herself, "This is our baby."

The Sobols adopted her and changed her name to Jillian. They never hid the fact that she was adopted, but they didn't tell her the circumstances of her birth until she turned sixteen. They were concerned that she might be upset at her abandonment. But when Jillian found out, it didn't matter to her how her life started out. All that mattered was that she'd been chosen and adopted. That's what defined her life. More than 20 years later, Jillian entered the same college where she'd been abandoned—this time as a student. She graduated in 2015 with a degree in Hospitality and Tourism Management.

Friends, because each of us is a child of God "in Christ"! We are set free. We are chosen. Let that be a truth that defines you. There is great joy in a feeling of "chosenness."

We're blessed, secondly, when we realize that our sins are forgiven! To encourage the Ephesians Paul wrote, "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us." The wrongs we've done can sometimes be a source of our feeling like a failure. In Christ, however, we are forgiven and given another chance. There is no barrier between us and God. Not on God's part anyway!

Sometimes the hardest person to forgive is ourselves. But true freedom and new life are possible if we give (or perhaps to renew the giving of) our lives to Jesus Christ. In him, we are set free. In him, we are forgiven.

And finally, we're blessed when we realize that we're not trapped by

what's happened to us in the past. Many of us get stuck because we remember and relive old, painful memories. There's an old story about a man who ran into a friend one day. He said, "Say, you look sad. What are you thinking about?" "My future," was the quick answer. "What makes your future look so hopeless?" Just as quickly, he replied, "My past."

If this Bible passage is true, then it's God who defines us, not we ourselves, not our friends and family. Neither are we defined by our successes, mistakes, or failures, even by our strengths and our weaknesses. God alone defines our life. And when God looks at us, He doesn't look at our past. He looks at our possibilities, our potential. He looks at who we could be if we'd just open our hearts completely to Christ.

For some of us, last year was the worst year ever. Some people lost jobs or were laid off. Many lived with a lot of stress. Others experienced death in their families which left them hurting and grieving.

Here's what Christ says to us, regardless of our circumstances. New beginnings are possible. In fact, this very time is a time of new beginning. You may have spent your life living in anxiety and disappointment. You may have let your family, your culture or your past define you. God wants us to know that we have nothing to fear. We've been chosen. We've been forgiven! We're no longer trapped by the old stuff. You and I are blessed. Let this be the day that you find your identity, your purpose, and your future "in Christ." Amen.