

## The Doctrines of Grace: Unconditional Election

Ephesians 2:1-10

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Most of you may not know, but we are celebrating our 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year in August. I decided to start here, at the beginning of the year, a short series on what we call the doctrines of grace. These are the doctrines this church was founded on.

They are the Articles of Faith of the Mississippi Baptist Association that this church joined when it was founded in 1836, and I am working through them. This is the third message on the series. Last week we studied total depravity: the sinful condition of man: justly condemned by God and spiritually dead, unable to improve their relationship with God and unable to break free of the sinful nature and Satan's domination to respond to God. That sounds hopeless, but we found that in Ephesians 2, where Paul said: "When you were dead in your trespasses and sins ...."

Today we come to what is called unconditional election, and it is taught in Ephesians 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ: just as he chose or elected us ... (Paul means by us, himself and the readers or the Saints who were in Ephesus), ...just as he elected us in Christ, or in Him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the kind intention or good pleasure of his will, which he freely bestowed upon us in the beloved, which is in Christ. In him, in Christ, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us." The doctrines of grace include the doctrine of election in verse four.

Boys and girls let me ask you something: Did you have anything to do with whom God selected to be your parents? The obvious answer is no. You did not have anything whatsoever to do with it. In a sense your parents didn't have anything to do with it. It wasn't that they somehow in their minds looked into the future and said, God, I would like that child to be born from my womb. No, God selected you without your parent's knowledge of you to be born to them. God is the creator and you are the creature. He is the potter and you are the clay. It is his right to choose your parents for you without asking you first or because of anything in you beforehand.

Part of your faith and trust in God is to accept that he had a purpose in giving you to your parents and your parents to you. Let me ask you another question: Suppose you are an orphan in an orphanage. That means you are an orphan that has no parents or no family, and you have been placed in this home with other orphans. You hope that one day someone will come by: a man and a wife and come and choose you to be their child, but the problem is, you are the worst behaved orphan in the orphanage. You are the one who is selfish. You are the one who disobeys the rules. You are the one who complains about the food. You are the one who gets angry.

So suppose a really nice couple comes by to adopt a child and looks around to all the orphans gathered in the room and the director is whispering to them about each orphan. As they look around they choose whom they will adopt. Do you think it will be you, if the director is honest and says, you don't want Fred, he is the worst one? So they adopt a child and they chose the most obedient and the nicest child to bring into their home. Would anyone criticize them for not choosing the others? No, because they didn't have to choose any. They didn't have to show their benevolent kindness and open their home to strangers.

Now suppose the next week another couple comes to adopt a child and you are all gathered there and the director says, "Which one would you like?" The director whispers about each one, and so after

learning about you and the others, they choose you, the worst one: the one who had lost all hope that you would ever be adopted; the one who knew in his heart that no one would really want them; but they chose you to bring into their home; to give the same rights as a natural child: an inheritance, to bless with love and kindness that you had never known. How do you think you would feel towards them? What would it do to you? What astonishment would you have and thanksgiving! As you tasted of their kindness and their love day after day, you would wonder: why has God been so good to me when I had been so bad?

Well, unconditional election is like this. We can understand human terms of these kinds of things, but when it comes to God and what the bible teaches about God's election the human heart begins to stand out and cry: It is not fair! It is not right for God to choose whom he saves. Yet the bible is very clear about it. It actually says that. Unconditional election means that God has chosen to save a multitude of sinners from hell when he did not have to save any and when there is no condition in them that deserves his choosing one over another. The doctrine of total depravity told us that we are by nature children of wrath under God's wrath. We are dominated by our own selfish minds and desires in what we choose to do, and that we are spiritually dead to God and unable to do anything worthy of him or to even change our own nature, which is dead.

It takes a miracle to raise the dead, to give them life, and this is how God works in sinners hearts: to convict of us sin, to help us to understand the wonderful salvation that is in Jesus Christ, crucified for our sins, and also to give us new life and a new heart of faith, to free us from the bondage of sin and Satan that we may embrace Jesus Christ willingly and be saved. God is much more involved in our salvation than most people give him credit for and that many churches teach today. And the doctrine of unconditional election teaches that God saves from beginning to end. You must understand that, to understand the meaning of grace and the doctrine of grace in the bible.

So if God is able to do that with a great multitude that no man can number, why didn't he just choose to save everyone? Why didn't he choose everyone for salvation and heaven? Why does he leave some in their sinfulness and under his wrath justly so that they live and are born and die and end up in hell? Isn't that unfair of God? If he could do that why doesn't he do that? Isn't that unfair? Does it mean that he cannot save anyone without their help? And is it only those who have something in them that makes the final choice to be saved; is that the real cause of their salvation?

Well the answer to all of these questions is the doctrine of unconditional election in the bible. It is out of his own kindness and grace, undeserved, that anyone is saved, and that no one can boast about anything within themselves, that deserves God's favor. That goes totally against man's pride and self righteousness, thinking that he is better than another: to understand that in God's eyes all of our righteousness is as filthy rags; that he is neither obligated to help us and bless us, nor do we deserve it. It is necessary to understand these things to grow as a Christian. You must understand this.

Now this teaching, if it is new to you this morning, you need to understand that this is what Augustine believed, Martin Luther during the reformation, John Calvin, the Presbyterians, the Congregationalists, the Episcopalians and Anglicans, the Baptists; that the Protestants in general believed this and our Baptist forefathers from England and their coming into America with Roger Williams and the Philadelphia Association and the Charleston Association and the Sandy Creek Association; all these churches, these first Baptist Churches in America, including this church, believed in unconditional election; and it was important to them; it was not just something to stimulate argument or to show you are smarter than other people because you understand it; it is essential to spiritual growth, to evangelism, to holiness and to worship and to the body of believers.

Let me read you what the Mississippi Association and this church believed in 1836: "We believe in the fall of Adam in the imputation of his sin to all his posterity: all his children. We believe in the total depravity of human nature... *and this is important*: ...and in man's inability to restore himself to the favor

of God. We believe in the everlasting love of God to his people, in the eternal, unconditional election of a definite number of the human family to grace and glory.”

These were the beliefs of the churches of southwest Mississippi and here in southeast Louisiana. These were the beliefs of the 1806 Mississippi Baptist Association which all these churches became a part of. This church affirmed those beliefs when it joined. Almost all Baptists believed in unconditional election until 1900, a century ago, and in that last century they gradually rejected this belief in favor of what is called conditional election. But in 1970 there began to be a growing number of Baptist and Southern Baptist all over the world rediscovering the doctrines of grace, total depravity, unconditional election...and they began to teach them in their churches and the people of God were amazed. They had never heard these doctrines even though it was in their background, and it was the belief of their forefathers. The people began to rejoice in how great was God’s grace and were humbled by how much God loved them. We have seen lives change to a greater desire to love God and to live his way in many of these churches. It is a growing movement now: there are thousands and thousands of young Southern Baptist pastors who have come to believe these doctrines in the last ten or fifteen years. Our seminaries, three of them, are now teaching unconditional election. That is amazing! But the reason they are doing that is because it is in the Bible.

If you believe the Bible is the inerrant word of God, you have to then go and say, what does it teach? So this morning, what I want to do is ask the question: Does the Bible teach about unconditional election, and secondly, what difference does it make? Is it just a bunch of preachers sitting around and arguing with each other or does it have something that is meaningful for every Christian to help them live each day in their home with their spouse, with their children? Does it have something to say about going to work in a work place that is profane and competitive and sometimes deceitful and dishonest? What can it do for you?

Well first, does the Bible teach unconditional election? I say yes, but you first have to ask the question: does it teach election at all. The reason I say that is because there are a lot of church people that I have heard over the last thirty five years that have said things to me and to other pastors like this: I don’t believe in election. Church people! I don’t believe in election. You have to believe something about it because it is in the bible. The word itself means: called out; called out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. It is God doing the calling and God doing the work in bringing us out of our total depravity and bringing us into his kingdom.

We read in Ephesians 1:4, “Just as he chose or elected us in him before the foundation of the world.” The word chose or the word elect is in the bible. You have to believe something about it. It happened before the world was made, before time began, before the first bird flew in the air; that God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, planned, before the foundation of the world, election. It is God’s choosing to save sinners. He chose us in Christ. In Him, who is the elect one, the chosen one, the Savior, and when God chose these sinners to be saved, he chose them as sinners in need of a savior.

This is confusing and hard to understand. In fact, Jesus taught it and he never received a real good response to it. The first sermon that Jesus preached was in his own home town synagogue in Nazareth. He preached from Isaiah and how he had come to fulfill the prophecy of being the Messiah. They sort of were in wonder at what he had said when he sat down. They began talking about it with each other and then he continued and he said that God in the days of Elisha had chosen to heal the leper Neman, who was Assyrian, a pagan, a gentile, while passing over lepers who were Israelites and Jewish. That upset them: that he would say that God passed over his own people and chose to save a Gentile, a pagan.

So this is how they responded in Luke 4:28, “All the people in the synagogue were filled with rage when they heard these things.” They were angry, and they got up and they drove Him out of the city, this was Jesus Christ, they were pushing him and shoving him out of his home town. These were people that he served in the carpenter shop, people he knew. This was the synagogue that he grew up in. They were driving him out of town for teaching the sovereignty of God and that God does what he wishes

among men. Then they led him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built in order to throw him down the cliff.

I love the next verse, "But passing through their midst he went his way." Nobody could touch him without his father's permission and he knew it. This wasn't the time. These people wanted to kill him. People naturally hate the doctrine of election. They resist it. Those of you who have been in churches that a pastor has come in and just reads the scripture and says: that "He chose us in him before the foundation of the world." He gets a reaction from the congregation of anger, because they don't want it in their bibles.

Some of these pastors have suffered. I know young men who have read the scriptures and said, here we have God choosing us in him before the foundation of the world or one of those kinds of scriptures, and they have been locked out of their pastorium that Sunday afternoon with a wife and small children. There is more than one example of that. There are many others where people resist the sovereignty of God in salvation, that they deserve nothing from God, that he can do what he wishes to show mercy or withhold mercy upon any, because it tells them that they really are sinners; they have no self righteousness, no reason for pride and arrogance, that they are no better than other people and God would be just in letting them all go to hell. And they don't like that.

Yet, all through the bible, we have clear teaching that God made choices of certain people and passed by others. For instance, he chose Abraham out of all the people on the earth to be the father of Jesus Christ one day and of all those who believe in Jesus Christ, the father of those who have faith, Romans 4 says. He was not necessarily the most righteous man on the earth. There is no reason given in the scriptures why God chose him. But God in his wisdom chose him and revealed himself to Abraham and not to others. It was his sovereign choice, and Abraham did not deserve it. He proved himself to be a liar in his life, but it was God's right to choose Abraham.

He chose Israel to be his people out of all the nations of the earth. He passed by Assyria, he passed by the Canaanites, he passed by the Hittites, the Phoenicians, the Philistines, he passed by the Egyptians, and he chose Israel to be his people. Was he being unfair to the other people of the earth? Or was it simply God's right to choose whom he wishes, and that none of the nations, including Israel, deserved his affection and care and blessing.

In Deuteronomy 7:7, God told Moses and the people of God, the Lord did not set his love on you or choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. For here is why God chose them, "Because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which he swore to your forefathers. The Lord brought you by a mighty hand and redeemed you out of a house of slavery in Egypt." It wasn't because they were good. It wasn't because God looked down ahead of time and said, you know what, this is the nation that will be faithful to me in the future. He simply had told Abraham, I am going to raise up a people of yours to be a kingdom and enter the land of Canaan. That is why he took them out of Egypt. There was nothing in them why God elected them or chose them to be His people.

He chose David to be the forefather of Jesus Christ, and we know what David's life was like: in many ways a godly man, yet fallen to such a low state through his sin. Jesus prayed before he went to the cross in John 17:1, "Jesus spoke these things lifting up his eyes to heaven he said, 'Father, the hour has come glorify your son that the Son may glorify you.'" So he was going to the cross to glorify the father as he had on earth and now asking the Father to bring honor to glorify him, himself. How is he going to do that? The father gave the Son power and authority over all flesh that to all whom God has given him he may give eternal life. These were the ones that the Father gave to the Son before the foundation of the world.

"He chose us in him before the foundation of the world." They are the ones that the Father gave to the Son to be a kingdom, a people of God, a people to redeem from sin and to change their nature and make them once again in the image of God: to love God, to love their neighbor as themselves, to

become different and to be a people of God. These “given ones” are the ones that Jesus Christ came for: totally depraved sinners in God’s eyes who deserved nothing, but Jesus spoke of them in John 6:37, “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and the ones who comes to me I will in no wise cast out. For I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me, and this is the will of him who sent me...*this cannot be anymore clear in the bible*...this is the will of him who sent me that of all that he has given me I lose nothing, but will raise it up on the last day. All that the father has given me shall come to me. All that the Father has given me I will raise up on the last day.”

Jesus did not come to make salvation possible. He came to save his people from their sins, Matthew 1:21. He came as the High Priest who went into the Holies of Holies once a year dressed in his royal robes and with the breast plate that covers his chest; twelve precious stones in this beautiful breastplate: each engraved with the names of one of the tribes of Israel; and he went into that Holy of Holies to offer up the annual sacrifice in blood for the atonement of God’s people representing each of those tribes; and so our Lord Jesus Christ came to save his people from their sins.

Well in John 6 after preaching that, we find how the crowd reacted to what he said, and they hated what he said. They did not want to have a God in which salvation is in his hands instead of their own, and so in John 6:65 he was saying, “For this reason I have said to you that no one can come to me unless it has been granted him from the Father. As a result of this many of his disciples withdrew and were not walking with him anymore.”

Now he had just fed them with the miracle of loaves and fishes. He had preached that he was the bread of life and the one who eats of him will never die. He had just told them: “...that the one who comes to me I will in no wise cast out.” They did not like that he said, “All that the Father gives shall come to me,” that the Father has given me a people when he did not have to, and when he did not have to choose any of them to be saved. This is the absolute grace of the bible. It is unconditional and undeserved and infinite according to the need of sinners.

We love to read how Jesus is the good shepherd. But Jesus, in John 10 said, “I am the good shepherd and the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep”...and he said to the unbelievers standing there...”but you do not believe because you are not of my sheep.” Do you understand what he said there? He did not say, ‘You are not of my sheep because you do not believe,’ he said, “You do not believe because you are not of my sheep. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.”

They are his sheep, they hear his voice calling, “Repent and believe and come to me,” and they come, because they are his sheep; and when they come to him they have the promise that he not only brought them to himself, but that he will keep them. This is the salvation that the Protestant reformers believed and our Baptist forefathers believed.

Let me bring you one last quote from Christ in Matthew 11:27. This is something you don’t hear very often from pulpits because it is very simple. Speaking to His disciples he said, “All things have been handed over to me by my Father.” That means Jesus has authority over all things in heaven and earth. Jesus Christ is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords of this entire universe, and every one of your lives, and every person who has ever lived. This whole existence is about him. We know the sun is the center of the solar system, but God’s people are the center of the universe because it is about Him caring for such small sinful creatures and bringing them such huge blessings.

“All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and any one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” All people are in the hands of Christ and no one comes to know the Father in heaven except through the will of the Son. God is in charge of salvation. God is the one that raises the spiritually dead, totally depraved sinners, and shows them and helps them to understand, and gives them an understanding of faith in Jesus Christ to be saved, because salvation is of the Lord.

Well, election is in the bible, but is unconditional? There are a lot of folks that say yes, ok, I have to believe in election. That has happened in the Southern Baptist Convention in the last thirty years. But some people will say I don't believe in election. Now they are starting to write books and say I believe in election, but not like them. At least they are looking at their bibles again and some good things are happening. But is it unconditional election?

Some will say yes, it was not unconditional election but it was a conditional election. Here is the typical explanation that you may have heard growing up: God foresaw who would believe in Christ of their own ability and then chose them to be his elect people. So election is ultimately in their hands and not God's; salvation is the hand of man, finally, and not of God.

James Arminias, in the 1500, challenged the whole Protestant's Reformation's view of unconditional election. In fact, the whole Arminian school taught that God works equally in everyone to show them that they are sinners and in need of a savior, but that is all. It is up to them to believe that their own innate ability, their spiritual ability in life, (even though they are totally depraved and dead spiritually), it is up to them to find some kind of faith and ability to come to life. So eternal election is conditional upon what God foresaw in certain people, that some people are different from others. Some people seem to understand better than others in that view; and some people exercise their ability to believe while others do not. So the difference in God's work in people's minds and hearts in the world today is in the people, and what that does is it makes grace and salvation conditional.

Sadly, this is what most evangelical Protestants and Baptists have believed in the last century. But we have already seen that God chose Israel not because of anything in them, he chose Abraham not because of anything in him, David, not because of anything in him; and the real problem is that in the bible no one has the ability to believe anymore because we are spiritually dead. In fact, it teaches faith is the gift of God which he gives as he wills.

"By grace you have been saved through faith," Ephesians 2:8-9, "and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, not as a result of works that no one should boast." Faith is a gift of God. Paul told the Philippians, "It has been granted to you to believe." God granted them the ability to believe. It is a gift whereby God raises spiritually dead sinners, as we saw last week, through the new birth: blind and cannot see, deaf and cannot hear, spiritually dead and cannot move, helpless, hopeless, with no ability to save themselves. God does something remarkable: he raises the dead.

This is what he said in Ephesians 2:4, "But God being rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ, by grace you have been saved." Some would say no, he just foresaw who would believe and chose them. But the word foreknowledge in the bible is not about God looking ahead in time and seeing and knowing who would believe and who would not, in fact, the word foreknowledge in the bible is God's word for his elect.

In Romans 8:29 it says, "For those whom he foreknew, *not what he foreknew about them*, he predestined to become conformed to the image of his Son that he might be the first born among many brethren. And whom he predestined them he also called," (that means he sent the Holy Spirit with the gospel being heard and worked in their hearts) and "those whom he called he justified and saved them by faith. And every one he justified he glorified." That is, in God's eyes, whom he foreknew before the foundation of the world are sure to be glorified eternally. The idea here is that God saves.

Let me give you one further thing that you might hear. I have heard it in the last years and it goes something like this: (I have never found a theological school in the past that believed this); but this is what many Baptist in Louisiana believe: some teach that God gives the gift of faith to everyone, but it is up to them to accept it or reject it for salvation. So, right when you finally got them to understand that faith is a gift of God, they still got to hang onto man, and that God gives the gift of faith to everyone and it is up to them to accept it or reject it.

Listen, total depravity teaches that the natural man does not accept the things of the spirit of God because they are spiritual discerned. Even if God gave the gift of faith to everyone, no natural man will accept it. We are *that* spiritually dead. There is nothing in us to say: well, that is a pretty good gift. I think I will take it and go to heaven. This is against scripture to say such a thing. You can promise a dead man new life, but unless something happens to him outside of himself he will not live.

And if God gives life to a dead man like Lazarus he does not lay there on the slab and say let see, I think I will go back to death and not take life. He is alive. If God raises him from the dead he has life, and if God gives faith to an unbeliever he becomes a believer. It is amazing what people will do to deny that God is God and man is man; that we are sinners and deserve nothing but God's judgment and wrath; that no man can boast before God; that there is no self righteousness in man anymore. There is no room for pride, arrogance, condescension, criticism of others as less than you are or less than I am, because in God's eyes we are so sinful and evil in our rebellions against him that he has no responsibility to save anyone. So the fact that he would have mercy on any is a miracle; a miracle in the nature of God to the praise of the glory of his grace which he freely bestowed on us in the beloved.

The only hope sinners have is that God will show mercy to them. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." The whole chapter of Romans 9 in the bible is dedicated to proving that God is not unfair in whom he saves or chooses to save, and that God is almighty to save whom he will, and that man has no right to argue against God's choices.

By the way, that chapter is talking about individuals out of the Jews and the Gentiles who were saved. It is not talking about the Jewish nation. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," God says. Let me give you one other verse in the book of Acts on this perspective. When Paul preached to the Jews they hardened their hearts to the gospel. Now let us not get our minds in a circle here. I don't understand all that except to say that if they didn't believe it was their fault. It was their responsibility to respond to the gospel, but their sin, their own sin, had hardened their hearts to such a degree that they did not respond to the gospel. Only God could have done something there and he chose not to. It wasn't unfair. It was just.

So the Jews hardened their hearts when Paul preached the gospel and then he turned to the Gentiles in Acts 13:48 and preached and Luke recorded, "When the Gentiles heard this they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many had been ordained to eternal life believed." That means as many as God chose before the foundation of the World to be saved believed. Their belief was not the cause for God's election; election was the cause of their belief. So election in the bible is unconditional as far as man is concerned: not of works, not of man's abilities, it is of the Lord.

So what difference does it make? I can only say it makes all the difference in the world for the Christian. It means that God has loved you from before the foundation of the world, and sent his Son into this fallen world to save you upon the cross from your sins. If you are a believer in Christ as evidence that you are elect, God has loved you always, eternally, infinitely. The infinity of God's love is measured by the infinity of the person he chose to die for you. The Lord Jesus Christ who made the worlds and the universe humbled himself to be punished for your sins. It means that all your life has been planned before this date to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to your ears as the means by which God would save you, and nothing hinders you this morning if you are not a Christian from responding to the gospel except your unwillingness to respond; to come to Jesus and bow to him as your Lord.

You may say I don't know if I am one of the elect. That is not the way God presents it in the bible. Jesus didn't say: come to me all you who are the elect and I will save you. He said, "Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest." If God is working that in your heart to show you your sins and your desire to be saved, and that God has enabled you to believe Jesus Christ is really the Son of God and Savior, God is calling you to come. So come!

For the Christian, it teaches you that God is the one who planned your life to bring you to salvation, and he has a plan for the rest of your life to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before his

throne. He will never leave you or forsake you as he promised. He will never reject you in spite of your remaining sins, till you stand complete in him with a resurrected and glorified body that is like unto Jesus' glorified body in which there is no sin but only righteousness; that he has promised to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before his throne with great joy. He has promised after your body had deteriorated in the ground or has been eaten by fishes in the sea, by the almighty power of God by which he said, "Let there be light" and there was light; he will gather you from the four corners of the earth and remake you into a glorious body that will rise from the dead and soar through the skies to meet Christ in the air; ever to be with him in the new heavens and the new earth forever.

For the Christian it teaches you that your assurance of salvation each day always begins with the faithfulness of God and not your faithfulness to him; that God keeps his word, that God keeps his promises, and you are to believe in his unconditional election so that you will understand the magnitude of the love of God for you, and learn to love him as a greater God than when you first believed; to love him with all your heart and soul and mind and strength, and in so doing, to live a life of loving obedience as your greatest desire on earth till you see him face to face and thank him for choosing you.

There are some objections to the difference it makes, for instance: some people say that if you believe in unconditional election you won't evangelize others. That is always the first argument you hear. This is ridiculous for unconditional election promises success because God has chosen to save from among every tongue and tribe and race and nation a multitude no man can number and has promised that those who go forth as workers into the harvest shall harvest. This is what sent William Carey and Adinrom Judson and Lottie Moon and others into the mission field. William Wallace, which our association is named after, Hudson Taylor and pastors like John Bunyan and Charles Spurgeon, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitfield, Marten Lloyd Jones and John MacArthur, this is what drives them to keep preaching the gospel even if people may harden their hearts, they know and they believe that God has chosen the proclamation of Jesus Christ to be the means by which he sends the Holy Spirit into the hearts of his people and calls them out of darkness into life, and so they keep going.

It doesn't matter what kind of response they have to encourage them that they are a good preacher, because they have a great gospel to preach, and they know that God is able to save sinners. What great encouragement this is to spouses and parents who are married to unbelievers who have born children who do not believe; so tempted to give up on hope and become hardened in heart towards the other and say: God will never save them! I have heard that from the lips of people. They believe that God will never save them or change them. It is a denial of the power of God and a denial of unconditional election: that God is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Christ, and he is able to invade the hardest heart that is spiritually dead and spiritually blind, and upon hearing of the good news of Christ as Savior able to raise their hearts and break the bondage of sin and Satan and pierce through the darkness to shine as Paul said: the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. And God is able to save them and change them.

Unconditional election has so many applications and I have to quit, but one final thing: you have to believe in unconditional election to understand the magnitude of God's love for you as a believer and to grow in your love for him. Unconditional election is what gives you unconditional love towards others. I cannot say this more plainly: unconditional election, believed and understood, is what gives you the power to love others unconditionally. Everybody talks about unconditional love, even unbelievers on these TV programs sometimes. You cannot love unconditionally unless you understand that God has loved you unconditionally.