Communion With God The Father

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Preacher: Rev. Thomas Davis

[0:00] I think all of us would agree that one of the most precious and beautiful parts of life are the relationships and connections that we have with other people. So often our happiest memories are our memories of moments that we've spent with others and I think the summer is a great time to reinforce that because you know we see people again people come home on holiday we maybe go away we catch up with friends and family we get to see the people that we love and we're able to enjoy more of those precious moments with the people who are dear to us and and the reverse of that is true that that often and often one of the hardest things that we can experience in life is when we are separated and cut off from the people that we love it's such a beautiful thing to be close to somebody to be with them in their company enjoying their presence it's amazing when we have things in common with others maybe the same interests the same thoughts the same dream stuff that we can talk about for hours and hours and hours it's such a privilege in life to be involved with other people to achieve things together to participate with one another to walk side by side through life to stand shoulder to shoulder it is such a blessing to share our lives with other people to talk to laugh to cry to stick together through it all these connections that we have with other people are so precious they are the best bits in life you know we often make the mistake of thinking that that that you know a possession is what's going to make us happy whatever it may be something material and it can give us a moment of joy but when you look back over over life I certainly find when I look back at all the happiness happiest moments of my life it was never when I bought stuff it was when I did stuff with people when we were able to enjoy moments together and of course I think that's one of the reasons why social media is such a massive phenomenon today because everybody craves that social connection with other people and that's why you don't get any websites for isolated media where people post things that no one else gets to see everybody's looking for that connection with one another and that can happen in lots of different ways whether it's online with social media or whether it's just meeting people in the community picking up the phone whatever we're all trying to connect that need for involvement and relationship and sharing with one another is one of our deepest human needs and there's a word that we can use that captures all of these things it's the word communion communion communion conveys that idea of union and connection it's the idea of having things in common of being part of a community enjoying the amazing blessing of having other people in our lives and if you think of even just the last week of your life I'm sure that all the best stuff that happened in the last week of your life were examples of communion whether that was a good laugh with a friend or an encouraging comment from your boss or a successful task that you completed alongside somebody else a hug from a child or a grandchild a kiss from the person that you love whatever it may be the best moments are moments of communion and and if you didn't have any of these things

I am sure that that you wish you did that you long for them communion with others is a massive part of life and it's a beautiful beautiful thing over the next three Sunday evenings we are going to be thinking about something even more amazing something even more beautiful we're going to be looking at the fact that if you are a Christian or if you become a Christian you can have communion with God and so this week we're going to look at communion with God the Father next week we'll look at communion with God the Son and in a fortnight's time we'll look at communion with God the Holy Spirit and each of the in each of these weeks we're going to look at Ephesians chapter one as the text that we'll focus on so this week we're focusing on communion with God the Father let me read these words from Ephesians 1 3 to 5 3 to 6 again
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 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him in love he predestined us for adoption as

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sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will to the praise of his glorious grace with which he has blessed us in the beloved now as I said when we were doing the reading this is a very rich chapter Ephesians 1 is like the Niagara Falls of theology it is just full of so much incredible truth so even though we're going to spend three Sundays in this chapter we're still only just dipping our toes into this great waterfall so to start with I want us to do a quick survey and I'm going to ask you four questions you don't need to answer them out loud but for each of the questions that are going to come up on the screen I want to I want you to answer it on a scale of one to ten and so to answer these questions you need to think of somebody else in your life it can be anyone in your life family friends colleagues neighbor whatever it may be but pick an individual and then for each of these questions I want you to give an answer between one and ten now one means not very and ten means immensely and so you get the idea of the scale that lies in between and here's the four questions how significant are you in their plans one not very ten immensely maybe in between how wanted are you in their eyes same one to ten scale question three how much do you belong in their company and last question how indispensable are you to them now depending on who you are thinking of your answers are going to be different so if you thought of a close family member then I would hope and expect your numbers to be higher but maybe if you thought of your boss or if you thought of maybe friends at school or somebody who you know you don't really know that well or don't get on well with maybe your numbers would have been lower now I want you to do the questions again but this time they're in relation to God they're in relation to God how significant are you in God's plans how wanted are you in God's eyes how much do you belong in God's company how indispensable are you to him now I don't know what you gave yourself I wasn't going to ask you to do it out loud but I'm pretty confident that for those four questions about God you would be inclined to give yourself low numbers and the reason I say that is because that's how I instinctively feel I think of all the stuff that God is doing in the world in the universe in eternity and I feel like a very tiny insignificant spec compared to that I see all the stupid mistakes that I have made and that I continue to make in my life and all of them to me look like reasons why
God would not want me I feel like I don't deserve to be near God and and I can think of dozens of people that to me belong closer to God far sooner than I ever do and I think that God could do just fine without me what about you how do you feel and for all of us whether you're a Christian or whether you're not sure yet where you stand before God these kind of feelings can really discourage us and cripple us they can cripple us as Christians and they can also kind of you know feel like insurmountable hurdles for those of us who are maybe seeking God or just not quite sure exactly where we stand with Jesus the feelings can be overwhelming and horrible but this is one of the many places where we need to remember that feelings are very often like bad politicians very powerful but totally unreliable and what we need to do is we need to try and replace our feelings with theological facts and in this chapter Paul is giving us some key theological truths that are going to answer all of these questions for us and to show that I want to pick out some key words or phrases to help us find the real answer to these questions so let's do these four questions together number one how significant are you in God's plans the answer is 10 and the word that tells you that the answer is 10 is found in verse 5 where it says in love he predestined us you can see it there in the middle of the paragraph in love he predestined us you are saved you are a Christian already if you are one you will become a Christian if you become one all because God has predestined you to be part of his family now this is a word and a concept that people can very very often struggle with and it's one that people find hard to get their head around and as a result some people will try and play it down so they don't really want to think or talk about it others will often use it as an excuse not to become a Christian I've heard that many many times you know well I'm not predestined or how do I know if I'm predestined I'm I'm I'm
I can't become a Christian because I don't know whether or not I'm predestined or not and so people when they're called to follow Jesus will respond to that by saying well how can I follow Jesus I you know I don't know if I'm predestined or not so I'm not going to do anything until I find out I want to say to anybody who thinks like that whether you're here or whether you're watching at home anybody who thinks like that you need to recognize that that is a ridiculous way to think and I chose that word carefully it is logically ridiculous to think like that and the reason it's ridiculous is because if you were being consistent with that mindset you know that says right I'm not going to do this important thing until I find out whether or not I'm predestined to do it or not so I believe you I believe in predestination but I'm not going to do anything until I find out whether or not I'm predestined or not if you think that through logically and apply it to other parts of your life what's going to happen if

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you apply that to breathing so you know God has foreordained everything that comes to pass God is sovereign over everything he's in control of every moment are you predestined to take your next breath and the point is do you do you suspend that breath until you find out whether or not you're predestined to take it or not no of course you don't just breathe because you need to you do what you have to do and so if you are called to follow Jesus pausing to say well I need to find out if I'm predestined or not it's the most ridiculous thing to do because you have to stop asking the wrong question and just do the thing that you need to do when it comes to breathing you don't stop and think am I predestined to take my next breath no you just do the thing that you know you need to do to prevent death exactly the same principle applies to the gospel if you are called to follow Jesus you don't say well I better find out if I'm predestined or not rubbish you need to do the thing that you need to do to prevent death which is trust him and follow him and respond to his call it's the wrong question to ask and the reason it's the wrong question is because the word predestined in verse five is not there to try and explain the metaphysics of how time interacts with eternity of how God's sovereignty interacts with human responsibility it's not there to tell you any of those things it's there to tell you that your salvation is absolutely crucial in God's plans so how significant are you in God's plans that word predestined tells you that the answer is 10 your salvation your place in God's family is not some afterthought from God it's a key part of God's eternal plan of salvation and that means that you are sitting before God tonight as someone who really really matters to him and when you became a Christian if you are a Christian or when you become a Christian if you're not yet a believer yet when that happens God doesn't say oh wow excellent what a bonus what a surprise I wasn't expecting that no God says yes that is exactly what I have been working everything towards and as he says that the whole of heaven roars with joy the answer to the first question is 10 what about the second question how wanted are you in God's eyes the answer is 10 and there's two words that show that one's in verse four and one's in verse five
[15:23] the word in verse four is the word chose and the word in verse five is the word will these two words go together and they're highlighting God's choice and they're highlighting God's will and their crucial concepts for us to think about in terms of understanding how God's salvation works his choice and his will when we speak about how much God wants you when we say that you know how much does God wants you the answer 10 when we say that it's very easy to make God sound a bit pathetic as though you know as though he kind of is like begging you to follow him and he really needs you and he's like oh please please please please please I really really really need you it kind of makes God look you know it can make God look a bit pathetic in that sense and and that idea of God is totally inaccurate it's never true that God is that kind of pathetic kind of guy longing for us to notice him God is God Almighty he's a consuming fire he's the creator of all and he does not need you or me in any sense of dependence or pathetic neediness he absolutely does not need us he is totally self-sufficient in and of himself but the incredible truth is that he wants you and these words choice chose and will they're telling you that God the

Father has planned and implemented and accomplished something incredible for your salvation and the whole reason he did that is because he wants you he actually wants you how wanted are you in God's eyes the answer is 10 not eight not nine not nine and a half 10 and so you think of God's great plan of salvation which Ephesians 1 reveals so much about you think about you think about how that was planned from eternity that it was worked out across history revealed through scripture accomplished through Jesus in his death and resurrection applied by the active engaging work of the Holy Spirit you think of all of that great theology why does any of that happen it's because God wants you it's what he's chosen to do it is his will third question how much do you belong in God's company you know what I'm gonna say already don't you but maybe this is one of the hardest ones to believe because you know we look at ourselves we see our sin and our failings and we think well that just makes us so unworthy unsuitable to be in God's presence and that's absolutely true but the answer to the question is still 10 and Ephesians tells us why it tells us in verse 4 that he chose us so that we would be holy and blameless before him you can see that in the third line down that's God's goal his great plan of salvation is in order for us to be holy and blameless before him and that of course is that is only possible through what Jesus has done and Paul explains that when he goes on in verse 7 to speak about redemption through Jesus's blood and about the forgiveness of sin that Jesus brings but this is getting to the very heart of what the gospel is all about of what the gospel achieves our sin and brokenness makes us totally unworthy if you're sitting here tonight thinking I am absolutely not worthy of becoming a Christian then you're a

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good theologian because that's absolutely true we're not able to approach God there is an alienation and a separation between us and God that sin has caused and that's because he is holy and perfect we are unholy and we're broken and we are to we are to blame for that but the whole reason Jesus came is to fix that he came to cleanse us from our sin to restore us into relationship with God to set us apart as holy and the fact that he took the burden of every single one of our sins means that we are now blameless before God we sang about that in Psalm 38 you know it used the language of disease and stench and all sorts of really vivid things to speak about our brokenness and our neediness before God Jesus has taken all of that all of it so that we can be holy and blameless before God so if you are a Christian or if you become a Christian where is the place where you most belong the answer is that it's in God the Father's presence in fact it's in God the Father's arms and that's of course why we turn away from sin in our lives because sin is trying to pull us into places and circumstances and actions where we do not belong how much do you belong in his company the answer is 10 and then our fourth question how indispensable are you to God you know the answer now it's 10 and the reason we know it's 10 is because of the word adoption which you can see there the great plan of salvation that God has everything that is pieced together across time and eternity is all directed towards the goal of you being adopted into God's family that means that if you are a Christian or if you become a Christian you are now God's child and he is your father that's a great test you know often people you know will say how do I know if I'm a Christian how do I know what should I do well can you think of God as your father can you call God father and if you can then that then you are a believer because that's the transformation that the gospel brings bringing us into the family of God where he is our father we are his children now every parent in here let me ask you are your children dispensable never and if that's true of us then how much more is it through of God God's saving work through his son Jesus Christ is bringing us into God's family that means that you're utterly secure you're indescribably precious God is totally and eternally and irrevocably committed to being your father and he's never going to let you go the answer to all four of our questions is 10 if you are a Christian or if you become a Christian all of these are a 10 and if you doubt that okay if you think that you are less than 10 and if you think Thomas you have not persuaded me if you think that the answer to any of these is less than 10 then it means that you have majorly underestimated the power of the cross you've underestimated and misjudged the power of the cross because the whole reason the cross happened is because God has an eternal plan to save you the massive cost of the cross was paid because of how much God wants you the effect of the cross is big enough to present you holy and blameless before God the security of the cross makes you safe in God's arms forever the cross is so mind-blowingly powerful that's why Paul can say that in Christ God the Father has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places so what does all of that mean for our communion with God the Father well what I hope it what I hope it helps us to see is that there is a good chance that many of us maybe all of us need to change what we think about what God the Father thinks we need to change what we think about what God the Father thinks in other words we can so easily think that God thinks the worst of us or that he thinks pretty negatively about us or that he's a kind of reluctant Father towards us we're not significant to him we're not particularly wanted by him we don't belong with him that we're pretty dispensable to him and the reason we think like that the reason we think that that's how God thinks is because so often that's how the culture around us treats us so often that's our experiences in terms of how people deal with us so often we are only important to people if we're useful to them so we can get picked up and put down whether that's in work or in friendships or in relationships we can be easily overlooked quickly forgotten and that's why everybody today has to try and work so incredibly hard to be noticed whether that's in the workplace or on a night out or on social media everybody's trying their best to be noticed to be important because people are having to put this huge amount of effort in to try and find some significance in their eyes to have communion with people all too often we have to impress them
quite often in life we're wanted if we meet certain expectations and you know that's I'm just going to say it I think that's a massive problem on our island you've got to have the right clothes the right car the right house the perfectly tidy living room the this the that and the next thing people you know just have this set of expectations that we've got to conform to and you see so many people whose lives are kind of just slaves to this level of expectations around us and so you know to have communion with people we've got to take the right boxes in order to impress them often we can feel like we don't belong or that if we're going to belong somewhere we need to change and you know I think that you don't need to you probably only have to think about school days for a few minutes to

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find examples of that you know when you know you feel excluded or shunned but it's not just confined to school it can happen at work it can happen in the community whatever it may be I remember when I was in school I had the same duvet cover for a long long time as a child and I liked my duvet cover loved it it was just my favorite duvet cover I had it all the way through primary school and I continued that policy into secondary school it was a Thomas the Tank duvet cover and I had Pershi I think on one side of the pillow and was it James on the other I can't remember I love my duvet cover of course came to high school and I was like completely embarrassed that anybody might find out that I had this duvet cover at home and so like I was embarrassed by it even though I actually loved it and you know all this kind of like oh well I mean all these scars of teenage years that we all have to go through and experience you know and there's just this idea that you know to be accepted to belong you've got to change and so often you know people will just go along with the crowd in order to fit in in order to impress others to have communion with people we've got to conform often we can feel judged and rejected one day someone likes us the next day they don't one year work is going really well the next year it isn't we have communion with people for a little while but all too often in life with people with circumstances things change and we can be left feeling a bit forgotten and a bit disposable and we're often left in this really difficult situation in life whereby we want to be close to people because every human being craves communion with others but all too often we're left feeling overlooked awkward like we don't fit or that we're just a bit unwanted and often to protect ourselves we push others away and keep them at arm's length all of this I'm sure is something that everyone here has experienced for some of us it's going to be something that's just overwhelming the way culture can be around us Ephesians one is telling you that God will never ever do that to you he will never ever ever be like that but everyone who trusts in Jesus everyone who is a Christian or becomes a Christian you are gods you're his and God does not think the way our culture thinks he's not going to treat you the way people treat you because when
[29:50] God the Father looks at you coming towards him what does he think what is he thinking he sees someone who is so important so important because you're part of his predestined plan he sees someone that he wants so much in fact yet his choice communion with you is his will he sees somebody so suitable for him someone who's been made holy and blameless through the cross so that when you come into God the Father's arms you come to the place where you belong so perfectly and when God sees you approach him he doesn't see a stranger or a customer or a servant he sees his child a child that he's going to love forever and that means that when you say father to God when you pray and you say father whether that's as you pray to him just now or at the end of the service or whether it's as you pray tomorrow morning or at work as you ask for help if it's when you'd cry out in trouble if it's when you're lying awake in the middle of the night unable to sleep is whether it's when you flop at the end of a hard day's work whether you're seeing it for the first time or for the a thousandth time when you say father to God he is never ever ever going to sigh or roll his eyes or get exasperated with you like people often do instead God responds with a fully satisfied totally delighted never-endingly patient smile and he says yes my dear child I am here as we conclude there's three things I want you to remember and think a little bit more about number one communion with other people is one of our deepest human needs but please don't look for that in the wrong place and it's very very easy to do that and and I'm going to kind of target social media in particular for a moment because there's a lot of a lot of very good things about social media a lot of very very very good things about it but also a lot of very very very awful things about it and the key thing is not to make it like the cornerstone of security in your life please don't ever make social media the place where you go for identity and reassurance and comfort and purpose never make it the place where you feel at your most wanted the same goes for superficial relationships it's the wrong place to go it's the wrong kind of communion we must not go looking for significance or belonging in all the nonsense that we see in the culture around us you don't need to because all the time God the father's arms are open for you and communion with him is so much better and of course when we have communion with God that's when we can use things like social media in such in a much healthier way so don't look for communion in the wrong place number two communion with God the father does not rest on feelings it rests on awesome theological facts now that's a massively important thing to say it does not rest on feelings we tend to think that I feel good about myself therefore my communion with God the father is good I'm feeling better about myself therefore I am closer to God not through feelings do not dictate your relationship with God and so if you look at yourself and if you feel rubbish about yourself please remember everything that we've

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looked at tonight you might be feeling

like a rubbish Christian but you're predestined as part of God's plan his perfect plan you might feel totally unlovable but you're actually chosen by God you might feel like you're the last person that God would want near him but actually you've been made holy and blameless before God through Jesus you might feel like an outcast with the truth is you are a precious beloved child of God all of these facts mean that you can go straight into your father's arms and you know the amazing thing is that you can go straight into your father's arms when you're feeling utterly rubbish you don't need to sort yourself out first you can go straight there with all your needs and of course the more we do that the more the rubbish nonsense feelings will go away and last of all I want to say this communion with God the Father is totally free but it came at a massive price that's revealed in Ephesians 1 it's captured in the wonderful word grace that gets mentioned again and again in this letter God's purpose his desire his commitment to have you in his arms came at the cost of giving up his own son in other words it cost the father everything it costs you and me nothing it's all a result of God's glorious grace and that's why if you're not yet a Christian you are not being excluded from all that we've spoken about tonight you are not being excluded from this you are being invited into it all of this is what God wants for you as well and you don't have to do anything complicated or fancy or dramatic you need to say one sentence to God
Father please save me it's all you've got to do Amen Father we thank you for the amazing amazing privilege of having communion with you

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