

BIG QUESTION UNDER INVESTIGATION

We're in... Unit 8: The God Who Loves

Unit 8 Big Question and Answer and Song:

"What Is God's Love for His People Like?"

PFI NIV Songs 8, Tracks 3,4

Unit 8 Bible Verse and Song: 1 Chronicles 16:34 NIV 1984

"Give thanks to the LORD for He is good. His love endures forever."

PFI NIV Songs 8, Track 5

BIBLE TRUTH

We're learning... Bible Truth 2:

God Loved His People Before They Loved Him

Even before God created the world, He loved His people. Even back then, He knew all about them. He knew that they would be sinners like everyone else. He knew they would all rebel against Him and deserve His punishment for their sins.

Yet even though He knew all this about them before even a single one of them was born, He loved them deeply and wanted them to be His people. He chose to set His love upon them in a special way. He chose to send His Son, Jesus, to pay for their sins. He chose that by the Holy Spirit, He would give them faith in Jesus, and through that faith, He would forgive their sins. He would give them each a new heart to love and obey Him. They would be His special people--a countless number from every language and people on earth, who would live to enjoy Him and praise His amazing love forever.

We can know God's love and be His dearly loved people, too, when we turn from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior.

BIBLE VERSE

How do I know this is true? The Bible tells me so!

Bible Truth 2 Bible Verse: Ephesians 1:4-6

"For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves."

CASE STORY

*Acts 18- 20; Ephesians; Colossians 4:7-9,
1 and 2 Timothy, Revelation 2:1-7*

Our story is:

The Case of the Chosen Who Needed Courage.

As you listen to the story, see if you can figure out:

1. Who were the chosen? Who had chosen them and when?
2. What did He chose them to be and to do? How did this give them courage?

This story takes place in New Testament times, about ten years after Jesus rose from the dead and went to heaven. It takes place in Ephesus, a city in the country that is now called Turkey.

Ephesus again! At last! It had been a year since Paul visited that city. On that last trip, many had gathered in the synagogue as Paul told them the gospel. They eagerly listened and believed. As Paul left town, the new believers pleaded with him, "Come back and stay longer!" How they wanted to learn more about Jesus!

"I will come back, if it is God's will," Paul promised. "I will leave my friends, Priscilla and Aquila, with you now to teach you more about Jesus," he told them.

It was God's will, so here was Paul, a year later, once more walking the marble-paved streets of Ephesus. He was eager to see the new believers; and, eager to tell more people of God's gracious love for sinners in Jesus.

And what a lot of people there were to tell! Ephesus was built at the crossroads of two great trade routes. Merchants from Asia, Europe and Africa passed through Ephesus to buy and sell their goods. If Paul told these people the good news of Jesus, they could take it back to their distant homes. How wonderful!

But the people of Ephesus, themselves, needed the gospel, too. Ephesus was a huge city of 200,000 people—one of the largest in the Roman Empire. There were over fifty different gods and goddesses worshiped in Ephesus, the greatest by far being the goddess Artemis. Her huge magnificent temple, four times the size of the huge Parthenon in Athens, drew thousands of worshipers each year. They came to offer sacrifices and to do wicked things that were supposed to please the great goddess. In return, they hoped she would make them rich and successful. At very least, Artemis made the silversmiths of Ephesus rich, for these men made their living selling small statues of

Artemis to thousands of worshippers.

Ephesus was also a great city for the buying and selling of magic spells. Many people lived in fear of evil spirits who they believed ruled in the heavenly places and had great power over their lives. People from all over came to Ephesus to buy magic spells to protect themselves from these spirits. The Jewish magicians were considered most powerful of all. They used the name of the LORD in their spells, a name so great that it was only to be spoken by the high priest, they told the people who bought their spells.

Paul knew what these men were doing was wicked! They were dishonoring the LORD and they were tricking men and women into thinking they could use the LORD's name to do what they wanted to do, as if He was some puppet. The LORD was definitely no puppet! He was the one, true God. He had long loved sinful people with His gracious love in Jesus. He had done so much more to rescue them from the power of Satan and the misery of their sins, than these people ever imagined! He reigned victoriously in the heavenly realms, over and above all. As Paul watched all the people in the agora (marketplace) buy the little statues and the magic spells, he was grieved. Oh, how badly someone needed to tell these Ephesians the truth! They would stay dead in their sins without it!

So that was exactly what Paul did when he came to Ephesus: preach the gospel! First in the Jewish synagogue, then in the Hall of Tyrannus, then house to house, Paul preached God's gracious love for sinners through Jesus: "God made us to know Him, but we have all rebelled against Him. Our hearts are dead to Him. We deserve His just punishment for our sins. and we cannot rescue ourselves," Paul told them.

"But from before the beginning of the world, God chose to save sinners through His Son, Jesus," Paul preached. "At just the right time, He sent Jesus to be the perfect sacrifice for their sins when He died upon the cross. God raised Jesus to life on the third day, showing that He had won victory over sin and death, for all who would ever turn from their sins and trust in Him as their Savior. They would be His dearly loved, adopted children forever," He told them.

"This is the good news God's gracious love for sinners in Jesus! Come, repent of your sins! Leave behind your idols and magic spells! Don't fear the evil spirits! Turn away from your old way of life! Trust in Jesus as your own Savior and be made new in Him! You can be God's adopted children,

too!" Paul urged them.

Paul's words were not just talk. The LORD backed up what Paul preached with "amazing miracles, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick and they were healed.

When the Jewish magicians saw the power of Jesus' name, they added it to the spells they sold people But the LORD would not let His name be misused like that. He used their tricks to shame the magicians and to encourage many to turn away from magic and trust in Jesus. How powerful the name of Jesus was to overcome any evil!

News of what happened spread rapidly. Many believed in Jesus. They burned up 50,000 drachmas of magic scrolls in a bonfire--enough money to take care of a person for over a hundred years! Others stopped worshipping Artemis and the other idols.

Not everyone was pleased with what has happening in Ephesus. Demetrius, a leading maker of silver statues didn't like that less people were buying his statues. He stirred up an angry mob to kill Paul. Paul barely escaped Ephesus alive, but how he rejoiced at how many people had come to know God's gracious love for sinners through Christ Jesus!

That was the last time most of Ephesians were to see Paul. Angry Jews in Jerusalem arrested Paul for something he didn't do. He spent the next five years in suffering in Roman prisons. Life was difficult for the believers in Ephesus, too. Bad men began to teach that believers could worship the old gods and goddesses and still be Christians. Many were tempted to go back to some of the wicked things they used to do. Believers were not treating each other with love and honor as they should.

Word of the troubles in Ephesus reached Paul in prison. He couldn't go to them, but he could write. And so he did. Paul finished his letter, rolled it up and handed it to his faithful friend, Tychicus. "Take this letter to the Ephesians. Read it to them and encourage them in God's gracious love for them. Tell them that the Lord is keeping me well."

How happy the Ephesians were to see Tychicus and get news from Paul! They listened eagerly as he read Paul's letter to them: "To all the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus. Praise God for giving us every spiritual blessing in Christ. He chose us before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. He chose us to be adopted as his children. He chose us for the praise of

his glory. Your hearts were dead to God and you deserved His punishment for your sins. But because of His great love for us, He made us alive with Christ. He has forgiven our sins. He has filled us with His Holy Spirit. Our old way of living is gone! We have been made new in Jesus."

"We have even more to look forward to," Paul reminded them. "When our lives on earth were over, God will bring us to live with Him so we can enjoy Him completely and so He can shower us with His gracious love forever. I pray that you will understand more and more about how deep God's love is for you! And don't forget that God's love for us will show to all those evil spirits in the heavenly places you fear - -as well as all the good angels—the glorious, perfect wisdom of His plan for the world through Jesus."

"Hold on to these truths!" Paul urged them. As God's dear children, imitate Him in how you love each other. Sacrifice for each other! Honor and obey your God-given leaders! Don't follow anyone who teaches you lies and tells you that it's ok for Christians to worship idols and do magic. Fight against the devil's plans by having faith in God and living for Him. Know God's Word! Pray for each other! God will give you victory!"

Paul's letter to the Ephesian believers was a great encouragement to them. The Lord used his words to remind them of God's gracious love for them, from before the creation of the world. It helped them to fight against the lies of bad teachers and against sins in their own lives.

Something For You and Me

Our Bible Truth is:

God Loved His People Before They Loved Him

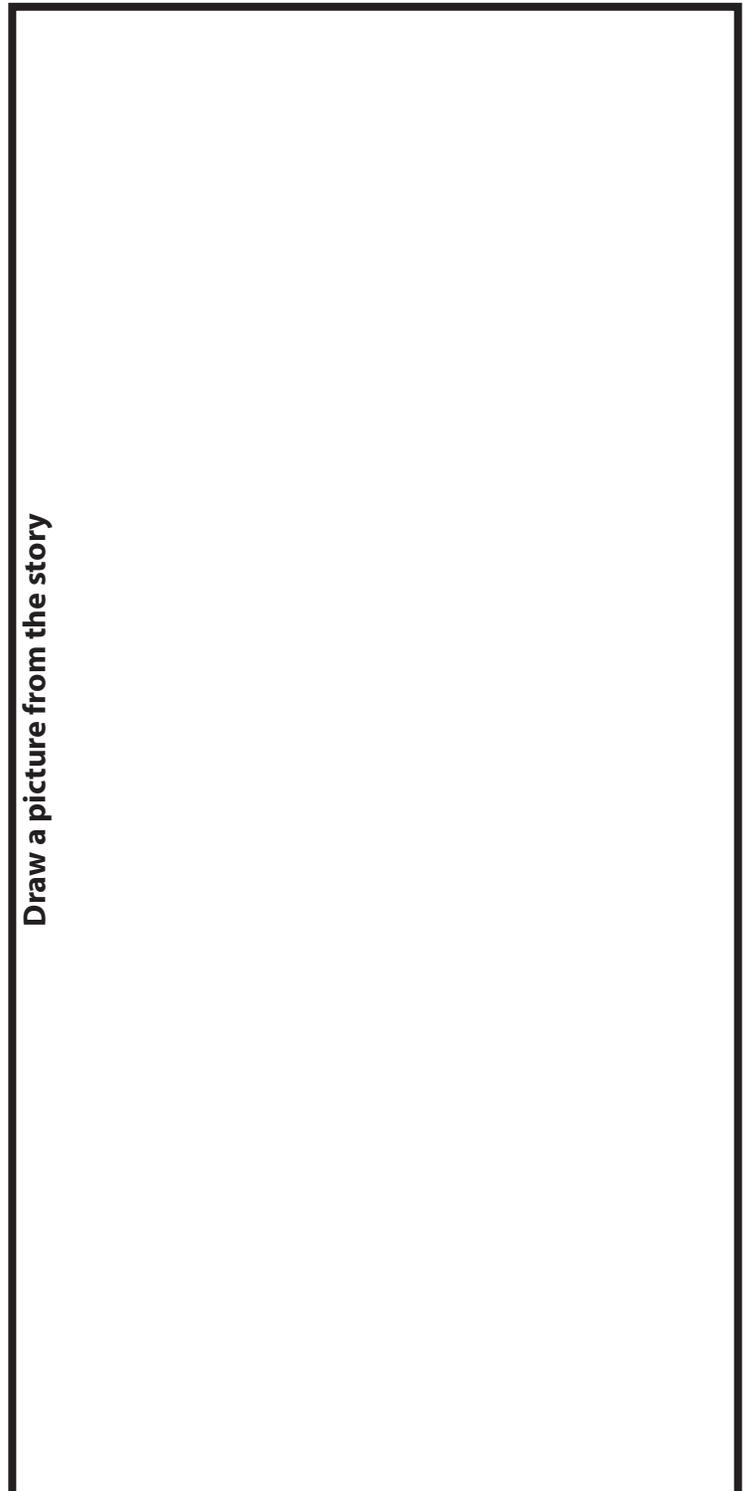
Our Bible Verse is: Ephesians 1:4-6

"For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves."

Did you know, Paul's letter to the Ephesians has helped many more Christians than just those who gathered around Tychicus that day. Christians for thousands of years have been encouraged by it. Do you know how? It is one of the books in our Bibles! And of course, that means something for you and me, too.

It means that God wants us to know of His gracious love for sinners from before the creation of the world. He wants

us to turn away from our sins, confess them to Him and trust in Jesus as our own Savior. He wants us to be some of His chosen, beloved children that can enjoy Him now through the Holy Spirit living in our hearts. And after we die, can live with Him, enjoying Him and being showered with His gracious love forever and ever. Let's praise God for loving sinful people, long before they ever loved Him. Let's ask Him to help us to confess our sins and trust in Jesus as our own Savior that we might be His very, own adopted children.



Draw a picture from the story

SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU
<p>1. A Question about the Bible Truth, True or False: The best of God's good gifts are those that God's people know and receive. Answer: True! God is their Heavenly Father. They are His dearly loved children. Jesus died to save them from their sins. The Holy Spirit lives inside them and helps them to love, obey and enjoy God. They will get to live with Him forever. These gifts can be our when we repent of our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior.</p> <p>2. Crack the Case Questions a. Who were the chosen? Who had chosen them, to be what? When did He chose them? Answer: The believers in Jesus (in general), but the believers in Ephesus (in this story). The Lord chose them to be His dear, adopted people, saved through Jesus. He did this before He even created the world.</p> <p>b. Why did they need courage? What did they take courage from? Answer: Others in Ephesus were persecuting them for being Christians. From knowing that God had chosen them and made them His dear, adopted people. He would take care of them in this life and one day, take them to be with Him forever in heaven.</p> <p>3. Fill in the missing words from the Bible Verse: Ephesians 1:4-6 "For He chose us in Him before the creation of the ___ to be holy and blameless in his sight. In ___ He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and ___-- to the praise of his glorious ___, which he has freely given us in the One he loves." Answers: world; love; will; grace.</p>

BIBLE TRUTH HYMN
<p>Oh, How I Love Jesus <i>PFI NIV Songs 8, Track 8</i></p> <p>Verse 1 There is a name I love to hear, I love to sing its worth; It sounds as music in my ear, The sweetest name on earth.</p> <p>Oh, how I love Jesus, Oh, how I love Jesus, Oh, how I love Jesus, Because He first loved me.</p> <p>Words: Frederick Whitfield Music: Anonymous</p> <p>Through Jesus, God loved His people before they loved Him. He loved them while they were still sinners. He loved them even before the creation of the world. This makes God's people so happy! They know that their sinful hearts would never choose God if He had loved them and chose them first. They know without God choosing to send Jesus to save them from their sins, they would never ever know God. This makes the name of Jesus the sweetest name on earth.</p>

AN ACTS PRAYER FROM OUR STORY
<p><i>A=Adoration, C=Confession, T=Thanksgiving, S=Supplication</i></p> <p>A God, we praise You for being the Chooser and Adopter of Your people through Jesus.</p> <p>C God, we confess that like the Ephesians we are sinners who need to turn away from our sins. We need a Savior!</p> <p>T God, we thank You for loving Your people so completely, from even before the creation of the world. Thank You for making sure that they would be Your people by planning to give Your Son Jesus to save them.</p> <p>S God, work in our hearts! Help us to turn from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Make us Your adopted children who will know You and love You forever.</p>

BIBLE VERSE SONG
<p>For He Chose Us <i>PFI NIV Songs 8, Track 9</i></p> <p>For He chose us in Him before the creation, Before the creation of the world, To be holy and blameless in his sight, Yes, he chose us before the creation of the world. In love he predestined us to be adopted as His sons, Through Jesus Christ, With His will and pleasure Yes, In love He predestined us.</p> <p>Words: Ephesians 1:4-5 NIV 1984 Music: Constance Dever ©2012</p> <p>God loved His people long before they loved Him. He loved them and chose to adopt them as His people, even before He created (founded) the world. Why did He do this? Because it pleased Him to do it! It would show how wonderful He is and how great the good gifts He gives His people because of Jesus. We think of what He's done and we praise Him for being so good to people like us. People who are sinners, but through Jesus, are made to be holy--without sin and without blame in His sight.</p>