

Text: Ephesians 1:1-14

Meaning: Paul shared the blessings of salvation with the Ephesians

Big Idea: We have immeasurable blessings in Christ

Objective: Rest in grace

Theme: Conquered by Grace

LEADING GENTILE MEGACHURCH

Genesis of the church is in ACTS 18-20. Paul took Priscilla and Aquilla with him on his second missionary journey and started this church. He left them there to preach and disciple the church and a young preacher named Apollos. When he returned on his 3rd missionary journey he found the church was strong and growing and he stayed there 3 years, more than any other church he planted.

Church was known for its pastors. Paul, Apollos, Timothy, and the apostle John

PRISON LETTER – This is one of Paul’s 4 prison letters written while in a Roman jail cell on his first Roman imprisonment.

EPHESUS

2nd largest city in the Roman Empire

Leading cultural and economic center

Huge temple to Artemis – one of 7 wonders ancient world

Artemis – goddess of sexual fertility

HELLENISM

4 pillars of Hellenism – brought in by Alexander the Great in 4th century BC

EDUCATION

HEALTHCARE

ATHLETICS

ENTERTAINMENT

THIS IS AMERICA! PAUL IS WRITING DIRECTLY TO THE AMERICAN CHURCH, TO US!

WHAT SHOULD THE CHURCH BE ABOUT IN A SEXUALLY BROKEN, RELATIONALLY BROKEN, RACIALLY DIVIDED, SPIRITUALLY CONFUSED CULTURE? The GOSPEL!

In a sexually broken, relationally broken, divided, and confused society the church should preach THE UNEQUIVOCAL, UNADULTERATED MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST!

WE ARE DEAD IN SIN, BUT JESUS MAKES US ALIVE TOGETHER WITH HIM! JESUS IS THE ANSWER! JESUS IS OUR ONLY HOPE! JESUS IS THE ONLY GOD AND THE ONLY WAY TO GOD! BIBLICAL MORALITY AND SEXUALITY IS THE BLESSED LIFE!

Church – we must preach the gospel! And we must live out the gospel!

A broken culture doesn’t need some pop psychology and some cute stories – **WE NEED TO HEAR THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST!**

This Gospel is a gospel of **GRACE!** We’ve been **CONQUERED BY GRACE** and we **CONQUER THE CULTURE BY GRACE!**

READ EPHESIANS 1:1-14

The gospel is not about performance. It’s not about religion. It’s not about appearance. It’s not about measuring up. It’s all about what God has done for me in Christ!

JESUS + NOTHING = EVERYTHING

In the very beginning of this letter Paul talks about what all God has done for us in the Gospel. He says **WE HAVE BEEN BLESSED WITH EVERY SPIRITUAL BLESSING IN CHRIST!**

What are those BLESSINGS?

1. PREDESTINATION

Paul says here that God chose us in him before the foundation of the world and that he predestined us to adoption as sons.

PREDESTINED – WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

Predestined – Proorizo in the Greek. It means to pre-decide, to determine something ahead of time.

Before we ever came to be, before the very foundation of the world, God was in on our salvation. 1 John 4:10 says that IN THIS IS LOVE, NOT THAT WE HAVE LOVED GOD, BUT THAT HE FIRST LOVED US AND SENT HIS SON TO BE THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS.

So, does that mean that God chose who would be saved and who would be lost? Is this saying salvation is PRE-DETERMINED? YES!

BUT – THE QUESTION IS WHO OR WHAT WAS PRE-DETERMINED – AND I BELIEVE WHAT PAUL IS SAYING HERE IS MORE THAT THE WHAT WAS PRE-DETERMINED AND NOT SO MUCH THE WHO! IN OTHER WORDS IT IS MORE ABOUT THE WAY OR SALVATION THAN WHO IS SAVED.

No less than **9 TIMES** in these 11 verses we see the words **IN CHRIST or IN HIM**. In fact, the phrase **IN CHRIST** is used no less than **35 TIMES** in the book of Ephesians. The point is that a Christian is most simply **SOMEONE WHO IS IN CHRIST**.

Also, NOTICE **PAUL'S USE OF PRONOUNS** IN THESE 11 VERSES.

US/WE – verses 3-12

YOU – verses 13-14

Who is the US/WE? He tells us in verse 12:

WE WHO WERE THE FIRST TO HOPE IN CHRIST

Who were the first ones to hope in Christ? – The JEWISH PEOPLE

YOU – referring to the GENTILE BELIEVERS IN THE CHURCH.

What Paul is saying is that BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD, before ABRAHAM WAS EVER CALLED OUT BY GOD, the chosen way of salvation was IN CHRIST, not through being Jewish.

What He is saying is that GOD'S PREDESTINED WAY OF SALVATION BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD WAS BEING IN CHRIST – AND THE CHURCH IS NOW THE GRAND EXPRESSION OF THAT – JEWS AND GENTILES TOGETHER WITH CHRIST AS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH!

Ephesians 3:6

This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

You have to understand, for Jewish people to hear that Gentiles were included in the gospel – WAS A REVOLUTIONARY AND RADICAL TRUTH! Hearing that you don't have to TAKE CIRCUMCISION AND KEEP THE JEWISH LAWS AND TRADITIONS IN ORDER TO BE RIGHT WITH GOD WAS MIND-BLOWING TO THEM!

Even the NT Church started as a MESSIANIC JEWISH THING! So their were many, even the Apostle Peter himself, who at first thought this was still a Jewish thing. Paul debunks that clearly in the letter to the Romans and here to the Ephesians.

GOD'S PREDESTINED PLAN OF SALVATION WAS ALWAYS THIS NEW THING CALLED THE CHURCH – THE BRIDE OF CHRIST – JEWS AND GENTILES TOGETHER!

KINGDOM OF GOD – expressed through this church, Jew and Gentile together with Christ as King

WEDDING SUPPER OF THE LAMB – Jews and Gentiles now are together as the singular Bride of Christ.

DID GOD CHOOSE US? YES!

DID WE CHOOSE GOD? YES!

Both are equally true, and that is the mystery!

THEOLOGY – COMBINATION WORD OF THEOS AND LOGOS – THE LOGICAL DEDUCTION AND SYSTEMATIC PRESENTATION OF GOD. THE ONLY PROBLEM WITH THAT IS WE CANNOT PERFECTLY EXPLAIN GOD BY OUR LOGICAL MIND!

2. ADOPTION

ADOPTION – to formally and legally declare that one who was not your child is now your child, and he or she is now entitled to the same legal protections and provisions of a biological child. Heirs of God and Joint heirs with Jesus!

Child of God – when you repented of your sin and placed faith in Christ IT WAS LEGALLY DECLARED IN THE HEAVENS THAT YOU ARE A CHILD OF GOD! NO LONGER A SLAVE BUT A SON OR DAUGHTER OF GOD!

EXTENSIVE – In Romans culture you could legally disown one of your biological children, BUT YOU COULD NEVER LEGALLY DISOWN A CHILD YOU ADOPTED. If you adopted a child IT WAS FOR LIFE. So

too, when the Father adopted us into His family He declared that our place in the family is FOREVER SETTLED IN THE COURT OF HEAVEN!

EXTRAVAGANT – the fact that God would lovingly include a wretch like me into his family is beyond comprehension.

3. REDEMPTION

To be redeemed means to be “bought back.” It carries with it the sense of being released from slavery. By being redeemed by Christ, we are freed from sin, both the penalty and the enslaving power. This **redemption** was accomplished by the death of Christ on the cross where he shed his blood and died to secure our redemption. His death paid the price for our release from sin and death.¹

Coupon Illustration

When I think about redeeming something I think about coupons. A coupon is a voucher you exchange for the item offered by the coupon at the price it says you may exchange it for. My favorite is the BOGO! Buy one get one free!

Beloved – Salvation is the greatest BOGO deal ever! Jesus paid for it, now I get it free!

FORGIVENESS – also goes hand in hand with our redemption. Paul says here we have been forgiven of our sins, NOT JUST A LITTLE BIT, but ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE! THAT'S EXTRAVAGANT FORGIVENESS!

¹ Max Anders, [Galatians-Colossians](#), vol. 8, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 92.

Psalm 103:12

as far as the **east** is from the **west**, so far does he remove our transgressions from us

GOD DOESN'T FORGIVE AND FORGET – HE CHOOSES TO REMOVE OUR SIN – ANOTHER IDEA HERE IS THAT WE HAVE BEEN LIBERATED FROM SIN

PENALTY OF SIN – PAID IN FULL
POWER OF SIN – BROKEN FOREVER
PRESENCE OF SIN – REMOVED FOR ETERNITY

LIBERATION – APRIL 9, 2003 – STATUE OF SADAM HUSSEIN TORN DOWN

Whenever we make Jesus King of our heart He comes in and takes the devil captive and overthrows him from the dictatorial rule of our heart – no longer does the devil have any power of us!

When the devil tries to tempt you or accuse you and condemn you, just remind him YOU'VE BEEN OVERTHROWN DEVIL! I'VE BEEN LIBERATED BY THE RESURRECTION POWER OF JESUS!

4. REVELATION

Paul says here that Christ has made known to us THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL. The initial context of this is the mystery of the JEWS AND GENTILES BECOMING ONE IN CHRIST! ONE BRIDE, ONE IN THE BELOVED!

However, through our dependence on the HOLY SPIRIT, our Heavenly Father makes known to us the mystery of His will for our personal lives as well.

Paul says here that God set for His will in Christ – again the context is talking about God's will for the salvation of His people – but GOD'S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE IS ALSO SET FORTH IN CHRIST!

Pastor Mentor once told me – **THE WILL OF GOD IS ALWAYS JESUS!**

When it comes to knowing God's will it is a **3 step process:**
PRAY – STAY – OBEY

When we pray God and lay the decisions and priorities of life before Him **He answers in 4 basic ways:**

YES – NO – WAIT – GROW

5. INHERITANCE

Church, in Christ we have obtained an inheritance. Christ purchased it with His blood and secured it with His resurrection. This inheritance became ours **AT THE MOMENT OF OUR SALVATION**. So we received it in the past, but we have the joy of using it now in our present lives. **The HOLY SPIRIT** he says is the guarantee of this inheritance. **GUARANTEE** speaks of earnest money, the first payment made securing the transaction, with the final fulfilment to come when Christ comes again.

The story is told of...

A family that had a rich father and a bunch of greedy children. When he died the children called a lawyer and asked him to read the last will and testament to them and mediate its instructions. He opened the legal document and read the first line: "I, John Jones, being of sound mind and body...SPENT IT ALL!"

When Jesus Christ wrote His last will and testament for His children, He didn't say he spent it all. Rather, He paid it all.

He wrote us into His will

He died to enforce that will

He rose again so as Judge He can ensure the terms of that will take affect