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C0427 -- July 14, 2004 -- Eph 1:3-14 -- Trinity's Plan of Redemption

Verses 3-14 make up the longest sentence in the Greek NT. The subject is the Trinity of God, the roles each person of the Trinity has in the Plan of Redemption, and the spiritual blessings given to His saints. Why a single sentence to explain the Plan of Redemption? Because Paul thinks of the Plan of Redemption as a single thought. The plan of Redemption is so complex and interrelated that Paul can only think of the Plan of Redemption as a single complex of events. Thus, Paul communicates the Plan of Redemption from the perspective of the Trinity.

Verse 3 is a summary statement of vv. 4-14. In other words, if we took v. 3 and unpacked it you would find that it contains everything in vv. 4-14 and actually much more. Put another way, if you want to summarize vv. 4-14 you would simply quote v. 3. v. 3 corresponds to the box and vv. 4-14 are what is inside the box. This is a very Hebrew way of communicating. You summarize what you are going to say and then you expound it.

Blessed is the God...why is God blessed? He is blessed for two things. First, His intrinsic character...who and what God is (SRJLOOOIE). Second, for what this God has done for His saints (***because***, v. 4). What has He done for His saints? He has given them ***every spiritual blessing***. Next, we find that not only is God blessed but that God ***has blessed us***. This is a constative aorist meaning that this took place ***before the foundation of the world*** (cf. Eph. 1:4). God blessed us before the foundation of the world. Not only are we to bless God for every spiritual blessing but God ***has blessed us*** with every spiritual blessing. The word for ***blessed*** is *eulogeo* and it means “to speak well of” “to say good things about”. It’s the word we get “eulogy” from (e.g., funerals). Why does God say good things about us? Because we are in union with the 2nd person of the Trinity. Not because of anything we have done but because of Christ. What have we been blessed with?

with every spiritual blessing...if you are a believer here tonight you already possess every possible ***spiritual blessing***. ***Spiritual*** indicates the nature of the blessing. It’s ***spiritual*** in nature not physical. Israel under Joshua was given every physical blessing, particularly the

land. According to Josh. 1:3, everywhere the Israelites stepped foot the physical land had already been given to them. Eph. 1:3 therefore is the NT complement of Josh. 1:3. Members of the NT Church have every spiritual blessing. The Book of Joshua is therefore the OT corollary to Ephesians. You as a believer today have every spiritual blessing. However, even though these spiritual blessings have been given to you there are still enemies to overcome. Israel had physical enemies; the land was full of enemies that they had to overcome if they were to enjoy the land. We have spiritual enemies, we do not fight against flesh and blood ***but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness*** (Eph. 6:11-12). Israel would be victorious if they trusted God's promises, and the only way they could trust the promises was to meditate on the word of God. So, for Israel, the way of victory was by the word of God (Josh. 1:8). For you to be victorious you must take the same road Israel took to victory. That road is the word of God (Eph. 1:17-19). You cannot overcome your enemies if you don't take in the word of God. But where are these blessings located?

in the heavenlies in Christ...this phrase refers to the source of our spiritual blessings. The spiritual benefits come from heaven and are for the believers united with Christ (1:2b), who has ascended into heaven (1:20; 2:6). Because we are united to Christ and Christ is seated in the heavenlies then we partake of all that Christ has given us. Thus, our spiritual blessings can be said to be ***in the heavenlies***. This does not mean that they are not for the here and now on earth. They very much are, but they find their source in heaven. Why is God blessed? We already said it was because of all the spiritual blessings He has given us. Here's the verse that proves that. It should begin by saying...

v. 4 ***because He chose us*** rather than ***just as He chose us***. ***because*** marks the beginning of the actual spiritual blessings we have been given. The first spiritual blessing mentioned is ***He chose us***. This refers to election. The verb is used 21 times in the NT. We looked at every usage including the controversial Luke 9:35. We made 5 concluding observations: *First*, we find that in all cases a choice was made out of a multiplicity of known choices (cf. Lk. 6:13; John 15:16, 19; Acts 1:24). The choice is not arbitrary but based on knowledge. *Second*, just because one option was not chosen does not mean that the unchosen option is disliked (cf. Acts 6:5; 15:22, 25). *Third*, the fact that the middle voice is always used (with possible exception of Luke 9:35) indicates a personal interest. The middle voice is as personal as the language can express because it means literally "to choose for oneself". The middle "calls attention to the whole subject being concerned in the action" (Mark 13:20; Luke 10:42; 14:7; John 15:16). *Fourth*, in most of the contexts

the subject is God. Of the 21 instances, 16 of them have the subject as God or Jesus.¹ *Fifth*, election is clearly a loving choice. Election doesn't have anything to do with people going to hell. Sin has one destiny, God another.

There are 3 views of the doctrine of election. *First*, God chose those He foreknew would accept Christ. This view states that God looked down through the corridors of time and saw who would respond and He elected them. *Second*, God chose Christ and those who believe in Christ are therefore elected. Christ is the sphere in which God's elective purposes take place. This is called corporate or group election. This is reading into the passage more than the grammar allows. It says God chose us, not God chose Christ. It may say God chose Christ elsewhere, but Christ was chosen for a specific service, not salvation. The context here is the plan of salvation. I think this is only a partial answer to election. *Third*, God, before time, chose individuals to be saved. It seems to both be reasonable and in line with Scripture to teach that individual election is the basis for group election. Individual people make up a group. This view carefully observes the doctrine of total depravity and makes applicable all the promises of God to the individual. Grammatically...

in Him refers to us being chosen in connection with Christ's finished work on the cross and not because we believed in Him. The context says nothing about the choosing taking place because we believed in Him. Election takes place *before* time...belief takes place in time. The purpose for which *He chose us* is also given in v. 4. God elected you *to be holy and faultless before Him in love*. *Before Him* is the Greek word *katenopion* and it means "in His presence". God elected us before the foundation of the world *to be* (present infinitive *ei=nai* expresses purpose) *holy and faultless in His presence in love*. So, election took place in eternity past and secures eternity future. We do not know the exact relationship between eternity past or future and time except to say that everyone who is elect will believe and everyone who believes is elect.

v. 5 *having been predestined*...Here we have predestination. Grammatically *election* is the only finite verb in a relative clause in this long Greek sentence of vv. 3-14. What this means is that *election* logically follows *predestination* (*proorizo*) and/or *predestination* is the cause of *election*. I think both are true. *Predestination* logically precedes *election* in the eternal counsels of God and *predestination* is therefore the cause for why God *elected*. Predestination therefore precedes election in the eternal counsels of God. Predestination is from the word *proorizo* and it basically means "to pre-plan a destiny". The word doesn't have so much to do with people as it does with the destiny of people. Election has to do

¹ Op. cit., 187.

with the people. For example, you plan a party. **Predestination** has to do with planning the party, you plan ahead. **Election** has to do with the people you invite to enjoy the party. So, God prepared a destiny and because of this He chose people to enjoy that destiny. Election and predestination are different. Predestination refers to the destiny itself, election to the people who enjoy that destiny. Like election, predestination has nothing to do with hell. God has one destiny, sin another. Ultimately, God's destiny is Christ or adoption. Those he elects will be conformed to the image of Christ so they can be in His presence forever. How does this take place?

having been predestined to adoption...Adoption, as used by Paul, has to do with the structure of the Roman family. The father of the Roman family had *patria potestas* (absolute power) over every member in his family and over-all family possessions. He could kill a family member and not be subject to charges of murder. He could buy and sell possessions at his will. His eldest son would become the *patria potestas* in the next generation. But what if he had no son? He could adopt a son. In Rome this took place in two steps. *First*, the release. A younger son of another man was released from the control of his natural father. This release was done by a procedure whereby the natural father sold his son as a slave three times to the adopter. The adopter would release his newly adopted son two times and the adopted son would automatically come under his natural father's control again. However, with the third sale, the adopted son was freed from his natural father once and for all. *Second*, the new bond. With all authority of the natural father forfeited the new father now had absolute authority and power over the adopted son. He would retain this control until his death. The purpose of this adoption was so that the adopted son could take the position of a natural son in order to continue the family line and maintain property ownership. This adopted son became the *patria potestas* in the next generation. Now, applying this to Christian adoption we come up with the following: saints have been predestined to adoption by God. This means that even though you were once labeled "sons of disobedience" and "children of wrath" (Eph. 2:2-3), you have absolutely no responsibility or obligation to your old father, the devil (John 8:38, 44), the one who is the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2). Instead, you are now God's sons and daughters and He controls your lives and property. Since God does not die you will always be under His control and authority. This is why God has the right to discipline believers (Heb. 12:5-11). You now occupy a position of great privilege. Through whom and to whom have we been adopted?

through Jesus Christ to Himself...the adoption takes place **through Jesus Christ** referring to His sacrificial work on the cross but we are being adopted by the Father. The sacrificial work was the payment to release you from your natural father, the devil. We were adopted

to Himself refers not to the Son but to the Father. This is why we cry Abba, Father and not Son. What was the standard by which we were adopted?

according to the good pleasure of His will. *Kata* with the accusative always gives us the standard. The standard by which God adopted us was *the good pleasure of His will*. *Good pleasure* comes from the word *eudokia*, and has the sense of “well pleasing, satisfaction, good pleasure.” It refers to God’s sovereignty. God wanted to adopt us and so He sent the Son to make the payment to release us. In the context of Eph. 1:5 and 9 God’s good pleasure is expressed freely from His own will and is not influenced by any other person or thing. What this is saying is that God’s predestination to adoption into His family was not unpleasant but was an expression of His *good pleasure*. This is “not a grim Lord watching over the execution of his predetermined plan, but a smiling Father is praised. He enjoys imparting his riches to many children.” (Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 199). When humans do things according to their good pleasure, we have a problem because we may operate out of the old sin nature, but God is infinitely righteous, just, loving, and holy. So, when He operates according to His good pleasure it is always in accordance with His nature, which is good. This good pleasure finds its source in God’s will showing that His *good pleasure* is an expression of *His will*.

v. 6 *to the praise of the glory of His grace*. This defines the goal of the Father’s pre-planning a destiny and electing people to enjoy that destiny. The goal is that the Father’s glory might be praised for the revelation of *His grace*. The plan of redemption is like a prism that reveals God’s *glory*. *Glory* is the sum of all of God’s attributes. It is the essence of God. The most prevalent attribute revealed in vv. 3-14 is God’s *grace*. *Grace* is God’s unmerited or undeserved favor. God wasn’t obligated to any of us in any way to elect us to His pre-planned destiny. It is therefore all of *grace*. All of the Father’s actions in redemption have as their *goal* praise to God. How do we praise or glorify God? By reflecting His glory back to Him as Christ lives through us in every area of life. God’s ultimate purpose is therefore to glorify Himself. This is one of the essentials of Dispensationalism. This is one thing that sets us apart as a dispensational Bible church. We recognize that salvation is not the ultimate purpose of God but that the ultimate purpose of God is to glorify Himself. This verse demonstrates that salvation is not primarily about men but about God. God set out the plan of redemption first of all to glorify Himself and only secondarily to save men. God’s grace was...

freely bestowed upon us. It cost man nothing...it cost God everything because it was freely bestowed upon is *in the Beloved*. That is, in connection with the finished work of the *Beloved* on the cross. The *Beloved* is, of course, Jesus Christ, the Father’s Son.

v. 7 ***in whom we have the redemption***...The ***in whom*** refers to the Beloved who is Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ ***we have***, present tense, ongoing possession, ***the redemption***. This refers to the past assumption of and present possession of ***redemption***. ***Redemption*** is the Greek word *apolutrosis* and means “to loose away from” “to release upon payment”. What exactly is the payment?

through His blood...*dia* with the genitive indicates the agency. The payment came by payment with ***His blood***. The blood had to be holy, not *unclean* (Heb. 10:29) but *precious* (1 Peter 1:19). So, the redemption could not be made by the blood of any man. Why Christ’s blood and not just any man’s blood? For example, why couldn’t God have supernaturally created a sinless man with clean blood to be the sacrifice? Because then all men redeemed through that man would then have to pay glory and honor to that man rather than God. This is why it was necessary that God descend and become man. So, that when men are redeemed God gets all the glory. So, the blood of the Redeemer had to be the blood of a God-man. The blood of the God-man Jesus Christ was therefore the ransom price necessary to set us free from our sins and to bring glory to God. What does it mean to be redeemed?

the forgiveness of sins...stands in apposition to ***the redemption*** and therefore further defines it. To be redeemed is to be forgiven of one’s sins. The Old Testament saints’ sins were merely “passed by” and “overlooked”, they were not taken away by the blood of bulls and goats. The word for sins here is *paraptoma* and refers to treacherous, deliberate acts against God, not mere accidents. We all have committed treacherous and deliberate acts against a holy God, yet God has forgiven us of all our treachery by placing them on the person of Jesus Christ who died in your place. What was the measure of how much it costs to forgive your sins?

according to the riches of His grace...*kata* with the accusative always gives the standard or measure. The measure or how much it costs God to redeem you, to forgive your sins can only be measured by ***the riches of His grace***. How much is the grace? The grace is infinite, limitless. You might expect Paul to say that redemption was out of God’s grace but that’s not what he is saying. Paul is telling us how much it cost God. Paul’s point is that for God to redeem man it cost Him the supreme sacrifice, His own Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Christ’s payment is enough to save an infinite number of men.

which He lavished upon us...*perisseuo* is the Greek word translated “lavished”. “God poured this grace unsparingly on us”. Paul’s combining “riches” with “lavished” more than

demonstrates the superabundance of God's grace toward us. Not only did He redeem us but out of this grace comes...

all wisdom and insight...This wisdom and insight do not refer to God. ***insight*** is never used of God, only of that which God gives to men. When ***wisdom*** is divine or finds its source in the divine it refers to a knowledge that gives one the ability to pierce through a problem and behold the best course of action. "Wisdom is the true insight of known facts or insight into the nature of things."ⁱ *phronesei*, ***insight*** should be translated as "discretion". It is the ability to put into action that which is seen through the eyes of wisdom. The two are very close in meaning and have a wide area of overlap (Prov. 3:19; 7:4; Jer. 10:12). The basic distinction is that wisdom is more theoretical knowledge and insight more practical knowledge (Prov. 3:13; 8:1; 10:23). Both are necessary. "People of understanding or discretion have pleasure in wisdom because they know how it will benefit them practically."ⁱⁱ If wisdom is the knowledge of skill in living then insight is applying that skill in living. Wisdom gives you the course of action, insight the willingness to take it. Summers says, "this grace of God has been extended to us in the area of moral intelligence or insight and in the area of the practical expression of wisdom."ⁱⁱⁱ So, "in Eph 1:8 it has the idea of understanding the relevance of God's revelation in the present time."^{iv} The Lord gave Solomon understanding and wisdom in his time (1 Kings 2:35). God gave Daniel and his three friends wisdom and insight in their time (Dan. 1:17). Wisdom is compared to gold, and insight to silver (Prov. 16:16).

having made known to us the mystery...reveals one reason God gave us ***wisdom and insight***. Namely, to understand ***the mystery***. A ***mystery*** is something that was totally unknown in the OT but now revealed. There are 9 Divine mysteries and 2 Satanic mysteries. The mystery here in Eph. 1:9 is that all things will be united under Christ in the Millennial Kingdom. This was totally unknown in the NT but is now being revealed.

of His will...indicates that the mystery was a part of God's will all along. The mystery finds its source in God's will. Nothing in time happened that made God change His will. God is just revealing more of His already decided upon plan. By what standard was God's will revealed?

according to His good pleasure...*kata* with the accusative again indicates the standard. The standard by which God revealed this mystery ***of His will*** was ***His good pleasure***. Revealing the mystery ***of His will*** to believers brings God great pleasure. God loves to reveal His plan to His children. God reveals the past and future to believers so they can know how to live in the present.

which He purposed in Him...means that God the Father purposed this revealing of His will in connection with Christ because it is God's plan that comes to pass in Christ's work of redemption.

v.10 *in the arrangement of the fullness of the times*...This means that God is arranging a period of history called the fullness of the times. The mystery that God is revealing here has to do with the future time of the Millennial Kingdom. The world is a household run by God. In His household-world, God is dispensing or administering its affairs according to His own will and in various stages of revelation in the passage of time. Many things had been revealed in the OT about the Millennial Kingdom but what is about to be revealed was not known in the OT.

to unite under one head all things in Christ...this phrase comes from the long Greek word *anakephalaiosasthai* which means "again" "the main point". The main point of God's creation was that it be united under Him. The fact that this word is prefixed by "again" means that all things will once again be united under Him in the Messianic Kingdom. This aspect of God's will was a mystery; it was hidden in God until He chooses to reveal it. No amount of human study or ingenuity could enable a human to see into God's will. The only way we can know God's will is for God to reveal it. So, here we have a Divine unfolding of God's will for human history, namely, that all of creation will be re-united under the authority and dominion of Christ. What are the *all things*? The *all things* are

the things in the heavens and the things in the earth in Him ... It seems best to say this refers to all of God's creation, animate and inanimate beings united under Christ in the Messianic Kingdom on earth. This means that all of creation, whether good or evil, will be gathered under Christ's authority (for example, Satan will be bound for 1,000 years; Rev. 20:1-6). In one sense everything is under Christ's authority now, but Jesus Christ will be the head of all things in a more direct way in the Messianic Kingdom. Everyone and everything will acknowledge and respond to His authority then.

v. 11 *in whom also we were made a heritage* ...is the best reading. This verse is not talking about us receiving an inheritance. v. 14 talks about our inheritance as heaven, but here we become God's heritage. "Not only do believers possess these benefits, but moreover, God possesses the believers because of all he has done for them."^v Because of all the spiritual blessings He has given us we have become His heritage.

having been predestined according to the purpose of the one who is working all things... Here again we have *predestination* and it is the Greek word *proorizo*. It means to pre-plan a destiny. In this context it is *causal* just like in v. 5 so it means that the *reason* or *cause* why we become God's heritage or inheritance is because our destiny to be His heritage was pre-planned. God pre-planned our destiny to be one of being His possession. The standard by which we were destined to become His possession is *according to the purpose of the one who is working all things* (Gk. *prothesis*; cf. Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:11; 3:11). It was God's purpose, nothing outside of God's own eternal purpose was considered in pre-planning our destiny to be God's heritage. The word *working* is a participle of the Greek word *energeo*. From this word we get the English word "energy". We might say that God is "the one who energizes all things". It refers to God's power or energy working in the universe to carry out His will. The participle *working* is in the present tense and is active in voice. This means that God's ultimate purpose for the end of history is being worked out presently, the present working of God in the universe either directly or indirectly is the means by which God brings about His purpose. Since it is active in voice it means that God is taking an active part in *all things*. By what standard is God energizing all things?

according to the counsel of His will... The Greek word for *will* is *thelema* and basically means "resolve or desire". The Greek word for *counsel* is *boule* (Lk. 7:30; 23:51; Acts 2:23; 4:28; 5:38; 13:36; 20:27; 27:12, 42; 1 Co. 4:5; Eph. 1:11; Heb. 6:17). *Boule* is a noun referring to inward deliberation that results in a decision. God's will is not arbitrary. We do not worship a God of caprice who acts without and apart from reasons. But we have an all-wise God who acts in accordance with infinite wisdom and divine benevolence in *all things*. According to Heb. 6:17 God's *boule* is unchangeable, fixed. Once God's careful deliberation results in a decision that decision is final and unchangeable.

v. 12 *in order that we might be to the praise of his glory*... This is the goal of us being made a heritage. That we might be to the praise of his glory. We, in all that we have become, might be physically, mentally, and spiritually praising God. This brings God glory. Glory is the sum of all of God's attributes and when we reflect Him in our lives, we are glorifying Him.

v. 13 *In whom you also*... refers to the believers at Ephesus. This truth is not for the Paul and the other apostles only but also for the believers at Ephesus. It applies to all believers without distinction.

having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation... The *word of truth* refers to the content of Christianity as absolute truth. Paul narrows the exact truth he has in mind by saying *the gospel of your salvation*. The *gospel* is the “good news”. The gospel has as its content *salvation*. *Salvation*, in this context, is the deliverance from the bondage to sin. The gospel involves the message of sin, substitution, and salvation through faith. All men must recognize they are sinners, that Christ is their substitute, and they must believe this message in order for God to save them, giving them eternal life. Salvation is by grace, through faith. Since the content of Christianity is absolute truth then the *gospel of salvation* corresponds to reality and truly does save. It is the only way of salvation.

having heard...in whom having also believed... do the hearing and believing take place one before another or at the same time? At the same time. The hearing refers to an internal hearing, not just external hearing. The moment one internally hears he believes. It is not that one hears the gospel over and over and finally believes. It's that he hears the words externally, as mere foolishness, when he finally hears the gospel internally, he actually and certainly believes (John 6:44-45; cf. John 6:60ff for two types of hearing). Those who never hear the gospel internally never believe. Something else happens at the moment one hears and believes...

you were sealed... Sealed means *security, safety, ownership, and authority*. In this verse it is a passive participle. Since it is passive it means that this is not a work of man. It is not something that believers are to seek after salvation; it is a work of God at the moment of salvation and is not experiential. The one who is sealed is passive, not active. The moment you believe, God put you “in Christ” and God sealed you with the Holy Spirit. What were you sealed with?

in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise... God seals the believer by giving him or her the indwelling Holy Spirit who keeps the Christian “in Christ”. The Holy Spirit is the seal. The seal is for all believers, not just spiritual Christians. Those who are sealed can grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30). The sealing is not experiential; this means you don't feel it happen. Finally, the significance of sealing is that it secures our salvation. It's one of about 1001 different ways you get eternal security. Our eternal security is not based on anything we do, we didn't seal ourselves therefore we don't secure our salvation. It is wholly a work of God and therefore our security is based on God's power. Paul says this is the *Spirit of promise*. The Holy Spirit was *promised* by Jesus Christ himself (Luke 24:49; John 14:16; 15:26; 16:13; Acts 1:5).

v. 14 *who is the earnest of our inheritance*...The Holy Spirit is the *earnest* guaranteeing the believer's much greater future inheritance. What is our future inheritance? Clearly it is heaven. We have a little bit of the New Heaven's and New Earth in us in the Holy Spirit's presence, and His presence is a guarantee of much more to come in the future.

until the redemption of the purchased possession...this seal will last at least *until the redemption of the purchased possession*. Redemption here is looking forward in time. It is not being set free from the penalty of sin or the power of sin, but over the presence of sin altogether. As a believer we are already set free from the penalty and power of sin. But we still await the glorious day when we are set free from the presence of sin. The *promised possession* is our resurrection body. When you receive a newly transformed resurrection body sin will no longer be an issue for you to struggle against. Until that point the Holy Spirit will keep you "in Christ".

to the praise of His glory... The Spirit's goal is to be praised for His 'in time' and 'beyond time' sealing of the one who has believed the gospel. His glory is in the genitive again and therefore refers to 'reflecting back' on God His essential being. God's ultimate goal is to be praised for who and what He is as revealed through the Triune plan, execution, and securing of redemption.

ⁱ Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 211.

ⁱⁱ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 212.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ray Summers, *Ephesians: Pattern for Christian Living* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1960), 19.

^{iv} Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 211.

^v Hoehner, Harold W., *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 227.

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