

202 Words of Unbroken Praise

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Bible Text: Ephesians 1:3-14
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Our Scripture for this morning comes from Ephesians chapter 1 and in honor of God's word, I just want to start right there and we're going to read Ephesians chapter 1, verses 3-14 as the setting for our message for this morning. Ephesians 1:3-14 is going to be our text and so let me just read that to get it set in our minds collectively before we begin to expound it.

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, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight 9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him 10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him 11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, 12 to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. 13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation - having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

That is one magnificent passage and it is going to take us a few weeks to go through it together. What we are going to do this morning is simply view it from an overview perspective with this in mind, those of you who are believers in Christ: you have a most noble call from God. You have an eternal hand placed upon you that has set you apart in ways that go beyond anything that you could possibly describe with your own unaided tongue. When we understand something of the greatness of what it means to be a

Christian, we must necessarily rejoice. When we understand something of the magnitude of the call of God on his people, we must praise him and that is what the Apostle Paul is doing here in this passage. Whatever else you think about the theology that this passage teaches, and we'll go through that in detail in days to come, you must understand that what Paul is doing in this passage is that he is praising God. The opening word of this passage is, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." He is praising God and his heart is bursting forth with gratitude and with honor toward the God of whom he speaks. That is what you must understand as the preliminary entrance, as the narthex, as the entrance way into this passage. This is a passage of great praise and one of the things that makes it so spectacular is when you understand how it is structured. All that I read there, verses 3 through 14, in the original language, in the original Greek, is one single sentence. It is a 202 word sentence in the original language. It is one vast unit of thought, a multifaceted diamond of infinite numbers of carats set forth to display the splendor of God. As you look at it with the light of understanding, as you look at it, the light hits that diamond and explodes into many different colors of radiant glory. It is a single prodigious flood of praise from the heart of one whose heart belongs to Christ, namely the Apostle Paul. It is one vast explosion of fireworks that honors God for Christian salvation.

What we're going to do this morning, is we're going to look at the overall structure of this passage and we want to have this have a particular effect. I want to just tell you what I'm after here as you listen to God's word here this morning. What this passage should do to your heart, what you should find happening as you hear God's word expounded this morning, how you can test yourself to see whether you are tracking with what Scripture says, is that this is a passage that humbles us by its vastness. This is a passage that causes us to magnify God as we see the awesome nature of Christian salvation and as we as believers start to understand that God has included us. You should say to yourself, if you're a Christian, "Do you mean to tell me that God has included me in something of this magnitude? Something of this great nature? Something that can't be expressed in human words except as the Spirit would give utterance to the apostle?" There is so much here. This is a passage that you don't grasp at all in your first time through. You don't see the magnitude of this in the tenth or the thirtieth or the fifteth time through and what we're going to do this morning is a very feeble effort to try to see something of the magnitude of the sweep of what Paul has said about the nature of our redemption. The bar here in Ephesians 1 is set incredibly high. The bar in Ephesians is set at both ends of eternity, if you can speak of eternity that way; it sweeps through eternity; it sweeps through the nature of God; it brings us to a place of utter humble worship and praise before what God has done.

I want to say something in sympathy with your spiritual life because you have the same tendency that I do, you tend to think about spiritual life without thinking about it, we just kind of naturally drift into this because our responses are shaped by what we see and so often we tend to calculate salvation in terms of what it can do for us today, "Lord, I have a really difficult problem, can you help me through this? Lord, there is somebody who I really want to see saved, will you save them?" And we tend to process salvation through what we are experiencing today and, beloved, that is an aspect of our walk with God but

what we're going to see today lifts us out of that and you have to aim your heart, your prayer right now should be, "Oh God, please help me step out of this earthbound realm and the way that I tend to think about my life and let me see this from your perspective. Lift up my heart by the power of your Spirit to see salvation from the way that you designed it, to see it as you see it in the broad sweep of your great character and of the great span from eternity to eternity." We don't naturally, you and I, we don't naturally enter into that realm of thought. It's like we've got ankle weights on our feet and as we would try to lift up to heaven, there is something else that pulls us down and we tend to walk by sight and not by faith. Well, today is our opportunity to cast aside the weights on our legs and to be drawn up into the realm of heaven as we contemplate the greatness of Christian salvation.

There are three things that I want you to see as we go through this passage and we are actually going to pass through this passage three times today to try to make this point. There are three aspects of the nature of salvation that I want you to see from this passage that are right there on the surface and yet we read it and we miss it. We read it and we don't see everything that it is saying. So here's where we're going to begin: what can we say about the nature of Christian salvation that makes us realize how great it is, so much from another realm that salvation is not from this earth, it must be from heaven? First of all, what I want you to see from this passage this morning, I want you to see the Triune nature of salvation. The Triune nature of salvation by which we mean this: all three members of the Godhead participated in our redemption. You are a Christian today because God the Father did something. Because God the Son did something. Because God the Holy Spirit did something. This passage brings us into the ineffable glory of the very nature of the Godhead. And it's all plain to see. The Triune nature of salvation. One God working to accomplish our redemption, three persons each equally God, one God in three persons acting to secure your redemption. Let us forever put aside the thought that we saved our own soul. Let us put aside forever the thought that somehow what I did with my hands or things that I thought in my mind brought me into this realm of salvation. Beloved, what you must see, what you must begin to grasp if you are going to understand the message of Ephesians, is that there was a great power of a Triune God that was set into operation before time began and you enjoyed the benefits of Christian salvation. You stand in a position secured by the blood of Christ because of a great work of a Triune God that you could not possibly have ignited by your own power. That's why when Paul opens up after his greeting in the first two verses that we looked at last week, that's why when Paul opens up his passage here, the first words off his lips are, "Blessed be God." He is directing us immediately to the focus of salvation and he's not saying, "Let's congratulate ourselves for what we have done to save our souls." He's saying, "Blessed be God."

All three members of the Godhead participate in our redemption and I want to walk through that one by one with you. Let's start with God the Father. We've taught on the Trinity in the past, you can look up that message online, it's available. We're going to assume the reality, the nature of the Trinity here and just deal with the text as we have it before us this morning. God the Father has established an unspeakably great salvation for Christians as he accomplishes his will in creation. God the Father has blessed us with

every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Look at verse 3 and notice who the actor is in this verse, "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." God the Father designed to bless you. You are a Christian today because it was the intention of God the Father to do that and if you are a Christian now, you have already received every spiritual blessing that there is to receive. God has deposited in your life the fullness of redemption, the fullness of the Holy Spirit, he has withheld nothing from you. That alone is reason enough to reject the idea that we must receive the Holy Spirit after our conversion. That would suggest that you could be saved and still be missing out on the best of the blessings, the blessed person of the Holy Spirit dwelling within you. That's not true. That's not true for the saved, for every single believer, for all the redeemed, God has blessed us, past tense, with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ and that was a result of the purpose of God the Father to be good to children that he would one day redeem in Christ. You are on the receiving end of an intentional blessing from God that you didn't stumble into, that he designed for you and Scripture says that he designed that for you before the foundation of the world. Before Genesis 1:1, God the Father did something on your behalf. Before creation, when there was nothing but the perfections of God, when there was nothing except the blessed communion of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit with one another. At that pre-temporal time, if you can say it, you don't have the words and language to express it.

Look at verse 4, "just as He," meaning God the Father, "just as God the Father chose us in Him," that is, in Christ, "God the Father chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him." That's what God the Father did. He's blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. God the Father chose us in Christ. He purposed to secure our salvation before he created the world, before you and I had done anything good or bad, God had already determined before he spoke the world's into existence, he said, "I will save these by my power. I will include these in the redemption which I purpose in Christ." God had an eternal purpose for every believer including you already established before he said, "Let there be light." Wow. That right there would be enough for us to just stop and be overwhelmed at the grace and the magnificent purpose of which you and I are on the receiving end, but we've hardly started. Now let me just say one thing to help you as you read your English text, with wisdom, I believe, the editors of the English text have broken up this great passage into different sentences and so you see a period at the end of verse 4 and that's for the benefit of English readers because we're not used to such long, involved, complex sentences. We don't think that way and so they've broken it up into individual sentences and that is fine, but in the Greek text as I said, it is one long unfolding sentence. And so you have periods in your text to help you break this up and to be able to receive it and access it but in the original language and it's a well-known fact, this is one long sentence of 202 words. It's one unit of thought and so we break it up for the sake of being able to receive it. You can't receive all of that all at once, you've got to break it up but here we have it.

He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. What's more, at the end of verse 4, he predestined us because he loves us to adopt us into his family. Look at the end of

verse 4, "In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved." This has the picture of God lavishly pouring out his grace. It has the picture of God seeing us, knowing that we would sin, knowing that the human race would fall into rebellion against him and that you would be part of that rebellion and that there for a time in your life you would be separated from him by your own sin, by your own choice, rejecting him, sinning against him with no desire for God in your heart and here is God the Father purposing to look beyond that, to have an eternal plan that he would execute that would bring all of the redeemed in Christ into his family. Those of us who were strangers and aliens, outside the realm of the family of God, having no claim on him, having forfeited every single possible claim that we could make by our own righteousness, forfeited it all, threw it away for the bite of a piece of fruit in the Garden. And then you and I ratifying that bite with every sin that we committed and agreeing in spirit with the original sin that Adam and Eve committed in the Garden of Eden.

Here we are separated from God, deserving judgment and God, before time began, said, "I'm going to bring them into my family one day. Those who have no claim on me, those who are outside any natural relation and affection with me, those are the ones that I am going to adopt into my family. I'm going to bring them in and make them my own with all of the privileges and rights that belong to my own Son." Guilty, vile and helpless we, here is God bringing us into his family. Wow. Do you start to see why Paul opens up and says, "Blessed be God. Praise be to God the Father." He chose us before the foundation of the world. He has adopted us into his family through Christ and we are now in a position of such astounding, unspeakable privilege as believers in Christ that we can't begin to fathom the depths of it. And we enjoy this position now, we have this position that we are walking in, we have this status as sons of God adopted into his family and here's what we must embrace, here is what Scripture teaches, here is where our hearts must be humbled: we are in that position because of the purpose and kindness of God, not because of things that we did to deserve it. You didn't exist when God determined this for you. You weren't around when God said, "I will do this and I will do it for him by name. I will do it for her individually. I will include her in my plan." This is a lofty God doing a lofty thing by his love and grace and mercy and his sheer goodness and his sheer grace, he has lavished, he has poured out so much undeserved favor on you and me. To be in this position as creatures who once were rebels against his will and now here we are secured in the family of God, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Praise be to him for such undeserved kindness, undeserved favor."

Let's come up to the surface for a moment: here's the thought that should be getting drilled deep into our hearts, God the Father is intrinsically great and he is vastly good and he has blessed us beyond measure. There is no counting, there is no calculating the breadth and depth and the height and width of the love of Christ that has been poured out upon us and God the Father determined to do that before time began upon you and me. Blessed be his holy name. Blessed be his holy name. That's why Paul praises him and brothers and sisters, you should too. You should have deep in your heart, at the cornerstone of your very existence, a resolved, settled worship of God the Father that is

so grateful that he has been so good to you. That's the cornerstone of Christian living, is to have that straight, to have that anchored, to stand on that foundation. God the Father blessed me. God the Father chose me. God the Father predestined me to adoption before time began. Little old me. Little old speck on the little ball of planet earth and the whole revolving universe. That great God who did all of that saw me by name and chose me.

You know, there's a part of you, if you're like me right now, you just want to leave right now and run right into the throne room of heaven and say, "God, thank you. Bless your name. This is so great. I could leave this all behind if I could just get to you to say thank you in your presence undistracted by anything else, to go into your holy chamber, O Father, and to worship you for what you've done. Yes, Father, I see why Paul says, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' I echo it from the bottom of my heart right now." That's where we should be here at 9:50 a.m. Sunday morning, June 29. In time, the recipient of eternal blessing.

Now, that's not all. We're just getting started with this wonderful sweep through this passage. I said that salvation has a Triune nature and we've seen God the Father, we've just barely touched on it but go further and realize that the nature of salvation is centrally connected to the second person of the Blessed Trinity, Jesus Christ, God the Son. Look at the end of verse 6 with me there where it says salvation is "to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved." That's a reference to Christ. God said at Christ's baptism and at the Transfiguration, "You are my beloved Son. In you I am well pleased." Christ is the supreme Beloved to God the Father. The Father supremely loves the Son. Christ is the recipient of that love from the Father and so that's what he's talking about there at the end of verse 6.

Now in verse 7, "In Him," referring to Christ. He's now shifting, Paul is moving the focus from God the Father and what he did in terms of the nature of our salvation and now he's going to talk about what Christ did because there was a unique aspect to the work of Christ that now he's going to draw our attention to that further undergirds our worship and praise to God. Look at verse 7, "In Him we have redemption through His blood." Christ is the one who shed his blood and so that's how we know that he is talking about Christ now as we move into verse 7. Jesus Christ in this passage, in these 14 verses, is referred to by name or by personal pronoun at least 15 times in the first 14 verses of Ephesians. There is a Christological focus. There is a call to put our attention on Christ as we read through these opening verses of the letter to the Ephesians. As the second member of the Blessed Trinity, he is the focus of our salvation. It is his work upon which all of this depended. Look at verse 7, it says, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us." Jesus Christ, God the Son, in fulfillment of, to carry out the plan of God the Father which was established before the foundation of the world, came to earth in the person of a man and shed his blood as a sacrifice to cover the sins of those who would believe in him for salvation. God the Father chose us, predestined us for adoption. Christ came and shed his blood to remove the barrier of sin that hindered that plan from coming to fruition.

And so we find that in Christ, we have the redemption, the forgiveness of our trespasses. God the Son became a man in perfect righteousness, in perfect sovereignty, in veiled majesty in his flesh, walked the road to Calvary to spill his own life blood so that you and I could be forgiven of our sins. Beloved, let me remind you as we look at this now 2,000 years after the crucifixion, he did that before you and I had done anything. He had spilled his blood, he had secured our redemption before we were born. The act that was necessary to appease God's eventual wrath against our sin was already done. You were born into this world with salvation already charted out for you and the price already fully paid. Before you had a conscious sentient thought, God had planned it all and Christ had paid the price. You didn't know it when you were born; you didn't know it when you were walking in darkness; you didn't know it when you were enjoying sin. God had done a work and had laid the foundation to secure your ultimate eternal well-being and his presence in your family. Praise be to God. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has done such a work for us. This is magnificent! This is unspeakably great! Human language cannot adequately describe this in its introductory chapter, let alone tell the whole volumes of encyclopedias that should be written about it. All we can do is see it from a distance, see it as it were, darkly, so to speak. We can't understand all of the implications of this or all that was involved in the blessed inter-communications of the Trinity before the foundation of the world, but we can see what Scripture says, we can respond in truth even if we don't know the full vastness of it. Scripture tells us that God has blessed us, that Christ has died and risen for us and we are on the receiving end of unmatchable grace.

Beloved, what I trust is sinking into your mind if you are awake and listening to me, what I trust is sinking into your mind is the sense that this is something beyond anything that I could've asked or thought. This is magnificent and it causes me to pour out my heart in worship. Paul expands it beyond the realm of that active redemption on the cross, look at verse 9, it says that, "He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times," look at this, look at how it expands into a vast realm of the universe, verse 10, "the summing up of all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and things on the earth." Christ is going to be the culmination of everything in the universe seen and unseen. All of the purposes of human history and the operation of the universe is going to find its ultimate climax in Christ. That is part of what Paul is including in his praise here. It's not just about our individual salvation, it's about the greatness of Christ and that everything is moving so that ultimately all things will contribute to the praise of the Son of God. That is the direction of the universe. That when God defeats his enemies, when sin is finally banished, it will all result in the glory of Christ. Everything will be summed up and we, you and I, you and I, you and I, look at verse 11, we are predestined for this. It says that, "we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory." When the universe is reverberating and pulsating with the greatness of the praise of Christ, we are going to be a part of that magnificent symphony of worship.

God included us in that. God predestined us. God appointed us to share in that realm of magnificence. It is a great privilege to be a Christian. There is eternal significance to being in Christ and there is an eternal significance that was set in motion before time began and our blessed Lord poured out his blood to secure that place in the redemptive plan of God for us. That's why Paul is praising God here. That's why you and I should be praising him too. God the Father, God the Son have acted on our behalf. Creatures, sinful creatures no less, those who Scripture says that there were none who seek for God and we were one of those not seeking for him in our pre-conversion days and here we are now as believers in Christ, in the sphere of this incalculable blessing. Praise be to God. You know, we were just so wrapped up in the earthly stuff that we were interested in, just wrapped up in our whatever, our relationships or our activities and just blindly going on without any regard for God or his blessed word and now here we are today, in this realm of blessing and able to understand it to some extent and realizing, "What's been given to me is beyond compare." Were the whole realm of nature mine, that would be a present far too small to offer in return in gratitude to thank God for what he's done. "Here Lord, I give myself away, tis all that I can do." This is why we just gladly give all of ourselves over to the God of our salvation. This is why we hold nothing back from him. This is why you as a believer in Christ, cannot reserve a secret realm of sin in the hidden closet of your life. You can't do that. You can't do that when you understand the vastness of the blessing that has been bestowed upon you. This brings a wellspring of powerful repentance to our heart. "Oh God, no, I won't hold anything back. Yes, I struggle but, God, it's not because of subtle opposition to your will. No, Lord, I hand it all over to you. I want the totality of my life to be to the praise of your glory."

But we're not done. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Look at verse 13, "In Him, you also," now it brings us into the realm of time, your own exposure to the gospel, "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise." The Holy Spirit brought salvation home to you. The Holy Spirit secured your soul by name personally. The Spirit did that and sealed you so that you would never be lost. You were sealed to be God's permanent possession.

Now, verse 14, "who is given as a pledge of our inheritance." God has given us the indwelling Holy Spirit and, beloved, there is a significance about that that Paul is particularly highlighting here, the Holy Spirit is God's down payment in your life that he will complete the salvation that he has started in you. It is the pledge of God's future intentions, the Holy Spirit is. He is, the Holy Spirit is, the pledge of God's future intentions. Look at verse 14 again, "with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory." We'll talk about this more in days to come but God the Father chose you and predestined you to adoption in Christ, adoption into his family. Christ redeemed you by his blood with a literal pouring of his blood in a literal time and space historical event at Golgotha 2,000 years ago when the earth split open and the heavens went dark and the temple curtain was split from top to bottom. In that great magnificent moment Christ died for you and then in the realm of your own life, the Holy Spirit took the gospel and brought it home with power and brought you to repentance and faith.

Beloved, step back and try to somehow measure the vastness of this, the infinite worth, the incalculable glory of what we're discussing. The uncreated God who exists in Father, Son, Holy Spirit, one God, one essence, three persons. That God who is beyond our comprehension, who is great beyond our ability to perceive, that God who had no need for you and me, he was perfect. There was no lack in his own being, in the perfection of everything that he was, set his mind, set his purpose and directed the intentions of the universe in part so that you would be brought into the realm of his unspeakable glory, his unspeakable blessedness. There is a Triune nature to salvation that calls forth our praise that staggers us, that humbles us, that brings us to the point where we say with those who spoke in Scripture, "Not to us, O God, not to us. No, not to us, O God, but unto thy name alone be glory."

Now, secondly, it's not just the Triune nature of salvation that we see here. Secondly, it's the transcendent nature of salvation that we see here and I'm using transcendent in this sense: in that it utterly transcends the realm of time. Grace, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit have secured us from eternity past through the realm of time and extending into eternity future and all of that is expressed here in what Paul says in his praise as he expresses praise to God. Let's look at eternity past and we're going to kind of repeat some of the things that we've said but I always find the timelines, the chronology to have that in my mind is always helpful to me in almost any discussion that I have and this is not artificially imposed on the passage, it's right there on the surface. The transcendent nature, it is beyond time and yet it was accomplished in time.

First of all, eternity past. Our salvation originated in God's free choice before time began. Look at verse 4 with me. We'll look at this more closely next week. He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. When only God existed in his Triune perfection, he purposed to create us for salvation in Christ. Before the first second ticked on the world clock, if I can put it that way, before the arrow of time ticked one degree clockwise, before that happened, God had done this in eternity past. The universe was created but before that happened, God had determined to choose us in Christ. Beloved, let me help you think about something that that means. When you're thinking about your life if you're ever prone to think about what your life means or what its significance is or, you know, you step back and reflect. As you get a little older you start doing that a little more, I guess, which the fact that I do that a lot myself probably speaks to my age. I don't know. But here's what I want you to think about: as a Christian, you cannot explain your life by beginning at your human birth. The origin of your life, the significance of your life, the purpose of your life far predates the beginning of your physical existence. We can only explain our purpose properly in Christ. If we go all the way back before the beginning of time and say, "God the Father chose me for salvation," and that is the starting point of understanding everything else. If you don't have that right, you don't have anything else in proper perspective. This gives us a sense of our roots, you know, people are interested in ancestry and all that stuff, that's fine, but unless you trace it all the way back until you get before time, you can't begin to understand it properly. If you miss the beginning, everything else is off whack. You must start before time to understand your salvation. There is a sense in which our sense of pride and our own personal significance, in a way,

just kind of shrivels in light of this. And realize that the explanation of my existence, the explanation of my present salvation, is rooted in something that occurred in the counsel of the Godhead before time began and I wasn't there to influence the discussion. They determined this on their own. God did this for his own glory and for his own purposes. God's purpose for us in Christ was established before you or I had done anything good or bad. Beloved, we are where we are at today as Christians because of a loving choice, a gracious decision that God made before time, not because of something that we did to prompt a favorable reaction from him. Eternity past is the realm where salvation began.

Now, as you go through this passage in Ephesians 1, you enter into the realm of time. You enter into the realm of time: eternity past, now we're in the realm of time. In the realm of time, 2,000 years ago Christ died for sinners, died for us who believe in him. Look at verse 7. We've already looked at it, we're deliberately repeating ourselves to bring out different aspects. Verse 7, "In Him we have redemption through His blood." His blood? When was that blood shed? It was shed in the realm of time; it was shed two millennia ago; it was shed at the cross. In the realm of time something happened to advance the purposes of our salvation and so eternity past where the choice was made, we step through the veil of that out of the mist of that and into the realm of time which we can somewhat more closely relate to and we find in the realm of time that Christ died for us. But Christ was carrying out a plan that was eternally established when he did that. This wasn't an afterthought. Christ's coming wasn't plan B because Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden. This was the plan from the beginning. He is the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world but he's the Lamb who was slain in the realm of time.

Then also in the realm of time, bringing it up into your own lifetime, somewhere in the realm of time if you are a Christian, somewhere you heard the gospel proclaimed. A preacher, a friend, a book, somewhere, somehow to some degree explained to you the basics of the gospel. You are a sinner; you have violated a holy God; Christ is the only Savior; you must repent and believe in order to be saved. Somewhere in time that happened and that is expressed here as Paul continues his praise. Look at verse 13, "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise." And so in the realm of time in your own personal past, during your earthly life, somehow the gospel was brought to you, the Holy Spirit did a work in your heart and you believed in Christ. You thought at the time, "I'm making a decision for Christ." You were not aware, at the time, at that moment, that an eternal plan was being brought to fruition in that moment when you humbled your heart before Christ. We're not conscious of all of that and then we get into the word as Christians and we start to read and we start to say, "Oh, oh my, this was far greater than I had any idea of." That moment when you literally or figuratively got on your knees and confessed your sin and asked Christ to receive you, it happened in time but it was a slice of a far greater plan, of a far more transcendent nature than anything that you could have understood at the time, at that moment.

So in the realm of time, Christ died for us. In the realm of time, we believed. In furtherance of an eternal plan from eternity past that God the Father formed together in the counsel of the Godhead. We step out of time and encounter God the Father in his

plan. We step into time, and we see Christ, we see our belief. And now here we are possessing this great salvation and we look forward onto the outside of time yet to come, we look forward to eternity future and we see that too is included in this passage. Look at verse 14 where it says the Holy Spirit, "is given as a pledge of our inheritance." A pledge for something that we haven't yet received. It's a promise, a down payment, a guarantee that more is to come and that guarantee, the more to come, is our inheritance when we are in heaven with Christ and the fullness of salvation is culminated around the throne. Sin has been banished. Sinners who would not bow the knee are removed from the presence and just the glory of the Triune God and his redeemed people are there with the holy angels to execute his plan for all of eternity. In timeless wonder, timeless worship, timeless glory, we will be in together at the throne. We will enjoy the full inheritance of our salvation after time ends. It's our inheritance. It's what we will certainly receive. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, eternity past, the realm of time, eternity future.

Scripture has given us things here that eye cannot see, tongue cannot express and yet there's more. And yet there's more. We've seen the Triune nature of this salvation, we've seen the transcendent nature of this salvation and thirdly, finally, I want you to see its triumphant nature. Its triumphant nature. And here we have to leave ourselves behind. Here we have to do what is right for Christians to do, what should be the heart of our very existence at all times but here we have to lay ourselves behind, stop thinking about our interests and how it affects us and with unveiled heart, with humbled spirit, we look and we see what the whole purpose of this is. While God has graciously included us in this realm of salvation and he has been gracious and loving and merciful to us and we are secure for all of eternity, there was no possibility that any one of us could have ever been lost because it was God's purpose before time began to secure our salvation for all of eternity but now we have to leave ourselves behind. Now I want you to understand that what we're about to see in this triumphant nature of salvation is that what we're about to look at, it's not about us. It's not about you. It's not about me. Salvation and universal history are about God and his purposes. They are designed for his glory to achieve his will. So we set ourselves aside, we lay all of our baggage, we leave everything behind and we just enter onto the periphery of the circle of glory and we look in. We are on the outside, as it were, now looking into the ultimate purpose of God in the universe, in salvation and in history and we see that it is about him and his purposes. It's about his will, not ours.

Look at verse 5 with me, for example. Paul repeats this three times. He says, "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself," look at it, "according to the kind intention of His will." It's about his will, his kindness, what he generously determined to do. Verse 9, "He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him." Three times in that one verse: God's will, God's intention, God's purpose. It's about him. It's not about us. That's why Paul is praising God, it's because God is the focus of this whole passage. Verse 11, "also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will." It's about God and his purposes, his intention, what he wanted to do. God has ordained this: triumphant, transcendent, Triune salvation

because it pleased him to do so and it is what he wanted to do. And it is not the place, it is not the prerogative of man to stop and blasphemously say, "But God, why did you do it that way?" We do not have standing to ask a question like that. This is about God and his purposes, what God wanted.

It tells us, incidentally, that our inheritance cannot possibly fail. Those of you that come from Nazarene or Arminian backgrounds, here's a word that should cause you to rejoice. Your salvation cannot possibly fail because God has willed it to come to pass and he determined that before time began. He alone will bring it to conclusion and he alone will receive the praise for it. You see, it has to be that way because it's not about us. This is about what God wants to do and it pleased him to do so, it pleases him to display his wisdom and power and love and grace and mercy by directing all of the universe and all of human history to culminate in the glory of Christ and it pleases him as part of those overarching principles, those overarching purposes, to include you and me in the realm of salvation as another aspect of that multifaceted diamond of illimitable carats that display the glory of God in so many different ways. That's why we praise God. And if there was somehow any way that we could forfeit that or lose it, our praise would be diminished. We couldn't really praise here, it would all be conditional. "God, I hope I make it and if I do..." No, that's not the tone of this passage at all. This is unrestrained worship for the purpose and the goodness and the character and the intrinsic greatness of God that we see on display here. It's triumphant because it's his will and its triumphant because God alone, God alone, God alone, only God will receive the praise for it. We will not be boasting in heaven about what we have done.

Look at chapter 1, verse 6. Why all of this? Why this 202 word unit of praise? Why is all of this being said? Verse 6, it's, "to the praise of the glory of His grace." Verse 12, "to the praise of His glory." Verse 14, the concluding note, "to the praise of His glory." As I said before, the scope of this passage is so great that you have to read it multiple times to begin to read it once. Indeed, you could never exhaust the wonder of what is revealed in Scripture here in Ephesians 1.

Let's step back and talk to each other, consider each other here as we close. Christian, God has included you in a Triune, transcendent, triumphant work of grace that you did not ask for, that you did not earn, that he has guaranteed will come to completion in a realm of glory that is far greater than tongue can describe. We are in a highly exalted, noble position as Christians and yet our present experience of it, while it is so far greater than anything that we knew as an unbeliever, the glory of our present position is going to be dwarfed by what is still yet to come. We have barely begun to taste the glories of this realm to which we now belong. You and I once lost in sin, now we're lost but we're lost in a totally different way. Now we're lost in wonder, in love and praise to this unspeakably great God who has done an unspeakably great thing by including us in his unspeakably great salvation plan that will result in unspeakably great glory redounding to him and we will be the eyewitnesses of in heaven throughout all of the unfolding ages of eternity. 202 words taught us that and after 202 words you should see that we have no words that are adequate to return thanks and gratitude to God for what he has done. Your heart should just be humbled and bowed low to worship him.

If you're not a Christian, don't miss out on this: Christ is calling you to come to him and his shed blood for redemption. Christ would extend this manner of grace to you as well. Believe in Christ and be saved and join this great hallelujah chorus whose voice of praise will never end.

Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, what can we say? To add our own words even in prayer, seems shallow just now. You have brought us into a transcendent realm by your Triune work that displays the triumph of God over all manner of human and demonic opposition. Christ will be glorified and, Lord, we can't adequately thank you for your grace which included us in the purpose of your plan. And so, Lord, with the hymnwriter we simply say, here, we give ourselves away, it's all that we can do. And we pray that the simplicity and sincerity of our heart in response to divine revelation, Father, though offered imperfectly in this hour, we pray that your Spirit would transform our self-sacrifice before you here this morning and somehow transform it so that it is a pleasing manner of worship to you. Yes Father, by the Spirit we present ourselves in gratitude for this magnificent salvation which you have wrought on our behalf. We pray in Christ's name. Amen

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