

Palmetto Baptist Church – March 29, 2020

The Wonder of it All! – *Ephesians 1:3-14*

# Wonder of It All

[George Beverly Shea](#)

There's the wonder of sunset at evening,  
The wonder as sunrise I see;  
But the wonder of wonders that thrills my soul  
Is the wonder that God loves me.

O, the wonder of it all! The wonder of it all!  
Just to think that God loves me.  
O, the wonder of it all! The wonder of it all!  
Just to think that God loves me.

There's the wonder of springtime and harvest,  
The sky, the stars, and the sun;  
But the wonder of wonders that thrills my soul  
Is a wonder that's just begun.

O, the wonder of it all! The wonder of it all!  
Just to think that God loves me.  
O, the wonder of it all! The wonder of it all!  
Just to think that God loves me  
Just to think that God loves me

## I. Paul burst forth with praise to God through a doxology.

### A. Paul's praise was spontaneous.

**Overflow with praise to God. (3-14 – one long sentence)**

### **The Berakah (“Blessed be God, who has...”)**

**Berakah**, also spelled **Berakha**, or **Berachah** (Hebrew: “ **blessing**”), plural **Berakoth**, **Berakot**, **Berachoth**, or **Berachot**, in [Judaism](#), a [benediction](#) (expression of praise or thanks directed to God) that is recited at specific points of the [synagogue](#) liturgy, during private [prayer](#), or on other occasions (*e.g.*, before performing a commandment or for being spared from harm in the face of danger). Most berakoth begin with the words *Barukh Attah Adonai Eloheinu Melekh ha-Olam* (“Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe”). (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/berakah>)

**BLESSED BE THE GOD AND THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST...**

(Pillar NT Commentary) After his greeting Paul usually begins his letters with an introductory thanksgiving which focusses on God's work in the lives of his readers (Rom. 1:8; I Cor. 1:4; Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:3). Here in Ephesians, however, the opening paragraph is **an outburst of praise** to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 1:3-4; I Pet. 1:3-5) in typical Old Testament and Jewish style of an extended eulogy or berakah ("Blessed be God, who has...").

**Ideas come tumbling out** as Paul refers to election (v. 4), adoption (v. 5), God's will (v. 5), his grace (v. 6), redemption (v. 7), wisdom (v. 8), the mystery (v. 9), and the consummation of all things (v. 10), before mention is made of Christ as the one in whom Jewish and Gentile believers ('we' and 'you') are incorporated (vv. 11-14). The eulogy extends from v. 3 to v. 14. But the introductory thanksgiving has not been replaced by the eulogy (1:3-14); instead, it follows the berakah in vv. 15-16.

The berakah ("Blessed be God, who has...") is usually connected to a time in which an individual responded joyfully to God's deliverance or provision (Gen. 14:20 [Abram's prayer of praise for his deliverance from the kings who took his nephew Lot captive]; 24:27 [The prayer of praise for God's provision: the servant of Abraham who went to a well and met Rebekah, the daughter of Laban]. The prayer of praise for God's direction: berakah is also used at the conclusion to the books of the Psalter (Ps. 41:13; 72:19-20, etc).

## **B. Paul's praise was meticulous.**

### **1. He reflected on who God is: He is three in one.**

This one long sentence in the Greek present three natural divisions:

- Verse 3-6: "to the praise of his glorious grace" (vs. 6)
  - God the Father chose us in eternity past. (3-6)
- Verses 7-12: "to the praise of his glory" (vs. 12)
  - God the Son redeemed us in the present. (7-12)
- Verses 13-14: "to the praise of his glory" (vs. 14)
  - God the Spirit seals us for the future. (13-14) [cf. verse 13]

He operates outside of time and space (3). He makes decisions outside of human counsel and wisdom (5, 9, 11). He is infinitely wealthy (7, 11). He is marvelously weighty (definition of glory). (6, 12, 14)

### **Defining the Impossible (<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-gods-glory--2>)**

Defining the glory of God is impossible, I say, because it is more like the word *beauty* than the word *basketball*. If somebody says that they have never heard of a basketball — they don't know what a basketball is — and so they say, "Define a basketball," then that would not be hard for you to do. You would use your hands, and you would say,

Well, it is like a round thing made out of leather or rubber and about ten or nine inches in diameter, and you blow it up. You inflate it, so it is pretty hard. Then you can bounce it like this, and you can throw it to people, and you can run while you are bouncing it. Then there is this hoop at the end (but it used to be a basket), and you try to throw the ball through the hoop. That is why it is called a basketball.

They would have a really good idea of what it is. They would be able to spot one and to tell it from a soccer ball or a football.

You can't do that with the word *beauty*. There are some words in our vocabulary that we can communicate with not because we can say them, but because we see them. We can point. If we point at enough things and see enough things together and say, "That's it! That's it. That's it," we might be able to have a common sense of beauty. But when you try to put the word *beauty* into words, it is very, very difficult.

**So, here is an attempt at a definition: the glory of God is the infinite beauty and greatness of God's manifold perfections.** I am focusing on the manifestation of his character and his worth and his attributes. All of his perfections and greatness are beautiful as they are seen, and there are many of them. That is why I use the word *manifold*. Here it is in another sentence: **the glory of God is the infinite beauty and greatness of his manifold perfections.**

## 2. He reflected on what God has done.

- He chose us. (4)
- He predestined us for adoption. (5)
- He redeemed us. (7a)
- He forgave us. (7b)
- He reveals truth to us about His plan (9)
- He blessed us with every spiritual blessing (3) and an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading in heaven for us. And who is by God's power guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time ( I Peter 1:4 & Eph. 1:11-14)

### C. Paul's praise was glorious.

- God the Father chose us in eternity past. (3-6)
- God the Son redeemed us in the present. (7-12)
- God the Spirit sealed us for the future. (13-14)

*I. Paul burst forth with praise to God through a doxology.*

## II. Paul unfolded the mystery of the Gospel with simplicity.

### A. Embrace the mystery of election. (3-6)

(and its accompaniment, foreordination to adoption)

#### Who?

- God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (3)

#### What?

- He chose us (4)

**ELECTION.** The act of choice whereby God picks an individual or group out of a larger company for a purpose or destiny of his own appointment.<sup>1</sup> (Deut. 7:6-8; Jn. 15:16-17; Rom. 9:6-13; I Cor. 1:26-31; Eph. 1:3-14; I Pet. 2:9)

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<sup>1</sup> J. I. Packer, "[Election](#)," ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 306.

**ELECTION** God's plan to bring salvation to His people and His world. The doctrine of election is at once one of the most central and one of the most misunderstood teachings of the Bible. At its most basic level, election refers to the purpose or plan of God whereby He has determined to effect His will. Thus election encompasses the entire range of divine activity from creation, God's decision to bring the world into being out of nothing, to the end time, the making anew of heaven and earth.<sup>2</sup>

## ELECTION

Although the terms “elect” and “election” do not appear with great frequency in most English translations, the range of terms associated with them indicate their importance in biblical theology. While election is associated also with such words as “call/calling,” “covenant,” “predestine,” “foreordain,” and “people of God,” the primary word for expressing the concept of election is the Hebrew verb *bhr* (Gk. *eklégomai*), commonly rendered “choose.” While the term can be used in the ordinary sense of human choice (cf. Gen. 13:11; 1 Sam. 17:40), it is employed primarily to describe God's initiative in choosing a people or individuals for his purposes.

### Old Testament

The classical formulation of the doctrine of election is Deut. 7:6–11. Israel is told: “You are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has *chosen* you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession” (v. 6). God *chose* Israel, not because of her superior numbers or morality, but because of his love. This election of Israel is expressed in God's redeeming power and fidelity to the oath sworn to Israel's fathers. Thus, as the author's development of this theme throughout Deuteronomy demonstrates (cf. Deut. 4:19–24; 10:14–22; 14:2; 26:18–19), God's election of Israel is the expression of his steadfast love and fidelity to the promises that he had sworn to the fathers. Indeed, Israel's history and destiny—the promises to Abraham, the Exodus from Egypt, and the continuing promise of protection from enemies—are aspects of Israel's election (7:8–10). As a consequence of God's choice of Israel, those who are chosen are now required to keep the commandments of the One who has elected them (7:11), for the divine election demands the obedient response of God's people.

The concept of election is most thoroughly developed in the prophetic literature, especially in the work of the anonymous prophet of the Babylonian Exile known as Second Isaiah. In a period of national despair over Israel's defeat, the prophet offers a word of comfort (Isa. 40:9), indicating that Israel has not been rejected (41:9). Indeed, he refers to Israel as God's “chosen” seven times (41:8–9; 43:10, 20; 44:1–2; 45:4), of which all but one reference (43:20) connect the term with the mission of the servant who will be a “light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth” (49:6). Thus the language of election in 2 Isaiah serves as the assurance to a despairing people that Israel has a future that involves, not only Israel's survival, but a blessing to all nations.

Because election is associated with Israel's covenantal obligations, the prophets occasionally reflect on the consequences of Israel's failure to honor her special relationship to God. Amos appeals to the election of Israel when he announces Israel's punishment (“You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you,” Amos 3:2; cf. 9:7). Isa. 65 distinguishes between a “rebellious people” (v. 2) who do not keep the covenant (vv. 2–8, 11–12) and God's “chosen” (vv. 9, 15), who have remained faithful. God promises future blessings for his servants, but punishment for the rebellious people (cf. Isa. 65:15). This distinction between the promises for the “chosen” and the punishment for the disobedient reflects an initial stage in the distinction between “the chosen” and the remainder of Israel.

### New Testament

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<sup>2</sup> Timothy George, [“Election,”](#) ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 473.

The variety of NT witnesses which incorporate the vocabulary of election attests to the continuing significance of this concept in the early church. Common terms are the “elect” (*eklektós*), “election” (*eklogḗ*), and the verb “choose” (*eklégomai*) or terms that belong to the same semantic range (e.g., “call,” *kaléō*). Although it can be used for an individual who is chosen for a specific mission (e.g., Paul in Acts 9:15), the primary significance of election lies in its designation of both Jesus Christ and the community of faith.

### *Jesus Christ*

According to 1 Pet. 2:4, 6 Jesus Christ is the “stone” that was rejected by men but *chosen* by God. Although NT writers only rarely describe Christ as the “chosen one” (cf. the comment of scoffers in Luke 23:35; John 1:34), this christological claim plays an important role nevertheless, for the NT frequently cites passages from the OT which resonate with the election theme. 1 Peter’s reference to Christ as the chosen one (2:4, 6) comes from Isa. 28:16 (cf. Matt. 21:42; Rom. 9:33; also Eph. 2:20). Similarly, numerous NT writers give a christological interpretation of the Servant Songs of Isa. 40–55 (Matt. 3:17 par.; 8:17; 20:28 par.; Acts 8:32–33; 1 Pet. 2:21–25), which describe the chosen one.

### *The Community of Faith*

The NT most commonly employs election terminology to describe the community of faith. In the Synoptic tradition “the elect” are the faithful who appeal to God for vindication (Luke 18:7) and who withstand the eschatological tribulations (Matt. 24:22, 24) before the Christ comes to “gather his elect” (v. 31). Paul also employs election language to describe his communities. He reminds them of their election (1 Thess. 1:4; cf. Col. 3:12). Indeed, he appeals to the election tradition to explain to the Corinthians that such a community composed primarily of the lower classes is the result of God’s election of the weak and foolish things of the world (1 Cor. 1:27–28). The cross itself is nothing less than an example of God’s sovereign choice (1 Cor. 1:21).

The presence of the Gentiles in the Church and the rejection of the gospel by Jews provide Paul the occasion for his most thorough development of the concept of election in Rom. 9–11. The question that dominates chs. 9–11 is: Has God’s election of Israel failed? In his answer, Paul affirms in 9:6–29 that the present situation, in which Gentiles predominate, is a result of God’s sovereign choice. Just as Israel’s entire history rests on God’s election, the presence of Gentiles is a manifestation of God’s choice. According to 9:30–10:21 the gospel has gone out to Israel, which bears the responsibility for its own disobedience. According to ch. 11 the present situation is not final, for the same God who elected Gentiles by grafting them onto the olive tree will also act to bring salvation to Israel. Thus God’s election of Israel has not failed, for “all Israel will be saved” (11:26).

Israel’s election terminology is pervasive in the NT. 1 Peter is addressed to the “elect exiles” (1 Pet. 1:1–2). This author reminds this community of Gentiles that they are “a chosen race” (2:9) insofar as they follow the stone that was chosen by God (2:4–8). The readers of 2 Peter are challenged to make their “calling and election” sure (2 Pet. 1:10). 2 John is addressed to the “elect lady” (2 John 1). Thus Israel’s election language played an important role in shaping the identity of the early Church.

**Bibliography.** B. S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Minneapolis, 1992); W. G. Kümmel, *The Theology of the New Testament* (Nashville, 1973). JAMES W. THOMPSON<sup>3</sup>

- He predestined us (5)

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<sup>3</sup> James W. Thompson, “Election,” ed. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 389–390.

**PREDESTINATION** God's purposes in grace directed toward those whom He will ultimately save to the uttermost.<sup>4</sup>

## **PREDESTINATION**

In its broad definition, the theological affirmation that God has sovereignly and graciously planned for the unfolding history of all things. It is more commonly known according to a narrower definition, that God has decreed either the final salvation or the final reprobation of each person. Election and reprobation, then, are subcategories of the doctrine of predestination. This doctrine is associated primarily with John Calvin and Calvinism, although it finds its biblical roots in a variety of OT and NT texts, was given classic form by Augustine, and was treated by many Patristic and medieval theologians as well as the Reformers. The doctrine of predestination has a number of vexing logical difficulties, having to do mainly with the issues of divine sovereignty and human freedom. It also raises acute pastoral difficulties. Because of these difficulties, the doctrine has frequently come under attack.

In the OT the doctrine of predestination is related to call or election. God corporately calls the people of Israel to be the covenant people (cf. Deut. 7:6–10) and individually calls persons (cf. Exod. 3, Moses; Judg. 2:16, judges; Jer. 1:4–8, Jeremiah). This election was for the purpose of fulfilling the will of God, for blessing the nations, and for executing the judgment of God. Several Psalms also express the confidence, comfort, and wonder of God's election and foreknowledge (e.g., Ps. 139:16; 115:1, 3, 12, 13). In the NT the several Greek words which are translated variously as "predestine," "decree," "foreordain," or "foresee" indicate a wide range of God's activity which centers on Jesus Christ as the means of salvation and includes human persons in this saving plan. The classic predestination texts include Rom. 8:28–30; Gal. 1:15; Eph. 1:4, 5; 2 Thess. 2:13. In these texts the background of predestination is humanity's disobedience and rebellion against God; humanity thus earns God's rightful condemnation. However, God does not leave humanity bereft. God graciously elects those whom God wills to elect. The implications of election, for humanity, are gratitude and service to God and all God's people.

Several options exist in the Christian tradition on stating and understanding the doctrine of predestination. One version, which might be called the "softer" version, states that God elects on the basis of God's foreknowledge. That is, either election or reprobation is contingent on God foreseeing how each person would freely respond to the gospel. On this reading of the doctrine, the justice and fairness issues are somewhat mitigated. Each person, so to speak, gets what he or she deserves. An example of a theologian who has taken, or has tended to take, the approach of identifying God's foreknowledge with predestination is John Wesley, as well as the broad Arminian tradition.

Another option in the history of this doctrine can be identified with Martin Luther. Although Luther had a very strong understanding of election, with related affirmations of the sovereignty of God, he did not wish to state a corresponding doctrine of reprobation. His can perhaps be called a "middle" position, a position with the necessary ingredients for a stronger stand, but one which avoids the most excruciating questions and dilemmas by simply moving them off to one side.

The "harder" version of predestination asserts that God does not merely foresee but actually foreordains. That is, God's election or reprobation is a primal divine decree and does not depend on God's foreknowledge of free human action or decision. Calvin is the name most identified with this position. Although Calvin constantly emphasized the primary purpose of the doctrine of predestination as a call to gratitude and praise, he did not hold back from a full statement of both election and reprobation. The pastoral difficulties of this version of predestination are immediate and extremely difficult. Why does God choose only some and reject others? Calvin said that to ask such questions was to stretch well beyond the limited capabilities of the human mind. The best course of action, according to Calvin, is for believers to thank God for their election and not to probe further the mysteries of God. Calvin's approach to predestination affirms a full and undiluted divine

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<sup>4</sup> Chad Brand, "[Predestination](#)," ed. Charles Draper et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1323.

sovereignty; it nonetheless holds human beings responsible and then warns against the folly of a morbid curiosity about these matters.

A bold new approach to the doctrine of election was offered by Karl Barth. As a theologian of the Reformed tradition, Barth shared with Calvin the convictions concerning God's sovereignty and the reality of sin. However, he interpreted election as accomplished through Jesus Christ, who is the elect of God. Humanity, as united with Jesus Christ, shares in that election.

At its best, the doctrine of predestination emphasizes the free gracious saving activity of God and the grateful response of the believer. At its worst, it suggests that God arbitrarily saves some and condemns others, thus implying a God with lower standards of neighborly love than Christians are enjoined to display. The most helpful way of approaching the doctrine of predestination is to cast its conceptual net widely: it affirms a divine plan and determination for all humanity that conforms to God's eternal will. In these terms, predestination doctrine is not so much interested in the final fate of individual persons, but is a broad affirmation that the love of God, the wisdom of God, and the righteousness of God are the underlying realities of all created life, including each human person. It is God who has made us, and we belong to God. -- LEANNE VANDYKE<sup>5</sup>

### When?

- Before the foundation of the world (4; 2 Tim. 1:9; Matt. 13:35; John 17:5, 24; I Peter 1:20)

### Why?

- To motivate holiness and love (4)

What does the phrase in love modify? Some agree with the NIV that it modifies the word "predestined" (Eph. 1:5). If so, then God's love is seen in predestination. More likely, it modifies the words "to be holy and blameless in His sight" for these reasons: (1) In this context the modifying phrases always follow the action words (vv. 3-4, 6, 8-10). (2) The other five occurrences of "in love" in Ephesians (3:17; 4:2, 15-16; 5:2 ["of love"]) refer to human love rather than divine love. (3) Love fits well with holiness and blamelessness, for this would denote a balance between holiness and love. God is love and believers, because of God's electing love, should manifest love with holiness.

- ESV translations divide Ephesians 1:3-14 into 5 separate sentences. The KJV divides this section into 3 sentences. These divisions reveal interpretive conclusion.
  - For example, what does the phrase "in love" modify? ESV & NIV translations place "in love" at the end of verse 4 but after a period (thus starting a new sentence).
  - KJV connects "in love" to one who is holy and blameless (4) or to the motivation behind God's predestination (5)?
  - Compare Eph. 1 with I Peter 1:13-21 (a call to holiness) and 22-25 (a call to love).
- To connect us into a family (5)

**Adoption.** Theologically, the act of God by which believers become members of "God's family" with all the privileges and obligations of family membership. "Sons of God," a common KJV expression, includes individuals of both sexes numbered among God's children (Is 43:6; 2 Cor 6:18).<sup>6</sup>

- Hosea 11:1; John 1:12-13; Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 4:4-7; Ephesians 1:5-6
  - To demonstrated His complete sovereignty (6)
    - TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORIOUS GRACE, WITH WHICH HE HAS BLESSED US IN THE BELOVED.

<sup>5</sup> Leanne VanDyke, "[Predestination](#)," ed. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1079-1080.

<sup>6</sup> Norman Shepherd, "[Adoption](#)," *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 31.

## **B. Relish the mystery of redemption (7-12)**

Implying forgiveness and grace overflowing in the form of all wisdom and insight [vv. 7-12]

### **Who?**

- **God the Son (6b & 9)**

### **What?**

- **Redemption: to buy back**

**Redeemer, Redemption.** English words derived from a Latin root meaning “to buy back,” thus meaning the liberation of any possession, object, or person, usually by payment of a ransom. In Greek the root word means “to loose” and so to free. The term is used of freeing from chains, slavery, or prison. In the theological context, the term “redemption” indicates a freeing from the slavery of sin, the ransom or price paid for freedom. This thought is indicated in the Gospels, which speak of Christ who came “to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45).<sup>7</sup>

- **Ex. 6:6; Lev. 25:24-28; Is. 43:1-4; Mk. 10:45; Gal. 4:4-7**

- **Forgiveness: to let go**

Releasing feelings of resentment or vengeance toward a person or group who has harmed you, regardless of whether they actually deserve your forgiveness...

- does not mean forgetting, nor does it mean condoning or excusing offenses.

([www.greatergood.com](http://www.greatergood.com))

### **When?**

- In the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4-5)

### **Where?**

- On the cross
  - Golgotha (Matt. 27:33; Mk. 15:22)
  - Place of the Skull (Lk. 23:33; Jn. 19:17)

### **Why?**

- According to the riches of His grace (7)
- Making known the mystery of His will (9)
- Providing us an inheritance (11)
- To reveal His wisdom (11)
- To maximize His glory (12)

## ***I. Paul burst forth with praise to God through a doxology.***

- Paul's praise was spontaneous.*
- Paul's praise was meticulous.*
- Paul's praise was glorious.*

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<sup>7</sup> Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, [“Redeemer, Redemption.”](#) *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1827.

## II. Paul unfolded the mystery of the Gospel with simplicity.

- A. Embrace the mystery of election. (3-6)
- B. Relish the mystery of redemption. (7-12)
- C. Rejoice in the mystery of certification. (13-14)  
The mystery of certification (“sealing) as sons and heirs. [13-14]

### Who?

- The promised Holy Spirit (13)

### What?

- Sealed or guaranteed (13)

### When?

- At the moment you believe (13a)

### Where?

- Inside of you (Rom. 8:9-11)

### Why?

- To the praise of His glory (14)

## Application:

### Embrace the mystery of election

- Nothing takes God by surprise.
- Spend more time praising God for your place in God’s family and less time fighting over your perspective about a flower.

### CALVINISM: TULIP<sup>8</sup>

**T:** Total depravity – Every facet of every person everywhere has been marred by sin.

**U:** Unconditional election – God chooses those to be saved based solely on His will.

**L:** Limited atonement – Christ died only for those who are elect.

**I:** Irresistible grace – The elect cannot resist God’s call to salvation.

**P:** Perseverance of the saints – The elect cannot lose their salvation.

### ARMINIANISM: DAISY

**D:** Diminished depravity – Humanity is depraved, but God uses prevenient grace to restore man’s ability to respond to Him.

**A:** Abrogated election – God bases His election on His foreknowledge of those who freely choose Him.

**I:** Impersonal atonement – Christ died for everyone, making salvation possible for everyone.

**S:** Sedentary grace – God calls everyone to salvation, but many freely reject it.

**Y:** Yieldable justification – The saved can fall from grace and lose their salvation.

### Relish the mystery of redemption.

- Come to Christ
- Tell others about Christ
- Find victory through Christ

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<sup>8</sup> <http://thewardrobedoor.com/2010/08/beauty-in-all-the-flowers-tulip-daisy-roses.html>

## **Rejoice in the mystery of the certainty.**

- The Holy Spirit indwells in you.
- He has deposited gifts to you.
- He is reserving an inheritance for you.