

# "To the Praise of His Glory"

*Ephesians 1:3-14*

The apostle Paul had a very consistent format that he followed when writing his letters. After he initially gives his greetings to the church from himself and those with him, he thanks God for the people of the church before proceeding on to the subject of his letters. Almost always that way. The few exceptions are worth noting.

To the Galatians Paul gives no thanks to them because he was overwhelmed that many of them were listening to false messages. He charges right into the subject at hand. And in 1 Timothy Paul also was concerned for timothy regarding false messengers also and addresses that quickly.

In two other letters he delays giving thanks because he's so excited to share some truths about the gospel. In Romans he gives this lengthy introduction reminding them of who Jesus is before thanking God for them in v.8, and here in Ephesians he doesn't thank God for them until v.15. How come? Because he is so filled with God's joy that he overflows with praises God for all the blessings we have "in Christ".

This phrase "In Christ" or "in Him" fills Paul's letters because he wants to constantly remind us who we are and what we have now that we are "in Christ". You and I are positionally placed in Jesus when we confessed our sins, asked for God's forgiveness, and received Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Jesus died for our sins on the cross and rose from the dead proving He is God's Son. Paul never tires of reminding us of the sacrifice of Christ and what we receive from that once saved. Now that we are 'in Christ' there are major benefits to this relationship. And Ephesians 1 is just filled with benefit after benefit of what we have in Christ.

We become members of an organization or club or team often for the practical benefits they offer. You may save money or have access to things you wouldn't before. They may allow you to travel where you wouldn't normally go. Sometimes we join simply for the benefit of closer relationships. Being in Christ has amazing future benefits but also practical benefits now. Here in vv.3-14 Paul gives us several amazing benefits that we have if we are in Christ.

The amazing thing about the context of what Paul writes here about our spiritual blessings is that Paul wrote this while under house arrest in Rome. Paul wanted those who weren't in jail to be encouraged about what they have in Jesus, even if it lands you changed to a Roman guard. It's so amazing to be in Christ that even jail can't rob you of these blessings. So, Paul begins with praise!

*"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup>For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love <sup>5</sup>He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will— <sup>6</sup>to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One he loves."*

What is it we have in Christ that's so worth praising even if you're arrested for telling people about Jesus? We give praise to the glory of God ...

**Who Plans our Life with Purpose**  
**(1:3-6)**

The word 'praise' is the same word for blessed and blessing. It means 'honour'. Paul wants to honour God because God has honoured us by including us in Christ and then to bless us with spiritual blessings in Christ. Paul sees the big picture even if for the moment he's in a difficult situation. His life still has purpose despite his limitations. He had a great attitude about his circumstances and saw God's purpose in them. During this time he also wrote to the Philippians and said of his situation

*Phil. 1:12 Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel*

Instead of seeing his situation as a setback, Paul saw it as an opportunity. He realized that the greatest thing in life is to praise God for giving us life with eternal purpose now that we're in Christ. We who are in Christ can always help others come to know Christ. God chose us in Him . . .

### ***To live 'set apart' lives (vv.3-4)***

To be 'holy and blameless'. Kenneth Boa, who was imprisoned by the North Koreans in the 1980's for having a bible on him, was asked a few times by his guards why he was happier than they were! His lifestyle revealed the gospel as much as his words. Holy means 'set apart from'. God is holy and sinless. He is set apart from all that is sinful. God wants us to be like Himself, as set apart and as blameless as possible through the Spirit's strength. He chose us with this purpose even before the world began.

These are great verses but also hard for us to fathom that God predestined us and chose us to be recipients of His grace long before we existed. This is why our salvation is not about anything good we have done. It's all about God's perfect goodness, not our attempts to be good. We were separated from God because of our sin. God has to open our hearts to understand grace because we always thought we had to impress God with how good we are. But God's plan for us is entirely of His making. He adopted us as His children which means we were outside of Christ before He chose us. Why did he choose us then?

### ***To bring Him joy and glory (vv.5-6)***

*In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.*

When you give someone a gift, you enjoy seeing the recipient receive it and enjoy it. Well, God is the greatest gift-giver. He thoroughly enjoys opening our minds up to receive Jesus Christ as our Saviour because He is the greatest gift and He brings us true lasting joy.

David wrote in Ps. 5:11,

*But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love Your name may rejoice in you.*

God chose us to give us purpose and joy in this life. Without God and Christ our purpose is self-serving and when this life ends so does our purpose. God's purpose for us here is to bring spiritual blessings and true satisfaction. There's no greater joy than to see people grow in Christ. John wrote in 3 John 1:4

*I have no greater joy than to hear my children are walking in the truth.*

For this Paul says 'bless/honour' the gift-giving, life-changing God and His Son by spreading the news of His forever love. That purpose never changes no matter what our circumstances are.

Paul now moves from praising God for what He has done for us in the past to what Jesus is doing for us now.

*<sup>7</sup>In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace <sup>8</sup>that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, <sup>9</sup>he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, <sup>10</sup>to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.*

How should we now give praise to the glory of God?

## **By Joyfully Serving Jesus Who Completely Paid** **For our Sins (1:7-11)**

Redemption means to pay off a debt. We incur a compounding, unpayable debt because of our sin. God sent His sinless Son Jesus to live a perfect life and be the payment by blood for our sins. Like a slave bought at the market, Jesus pays the price for our sins, accepted by God as complete once and for all payment and now we are free from sin's penalty – hell and separation from God forever. We are . . .

### ***Bought out of slavery (vv.7-8)***

No matter how hard people try to get forgiveness for their own sins by giving confessions, money, good works, etc., they can never come close to paying for their sin. Sin results in death and therefore sin must be paid for by a sinless death. Only Jesus can pay for our sins and offer final forgiveness. And we're constantly covered day after day because we will sin today and tomorrow if not in word or action but in thought. All this through the riches of God's grace which he lavished on us according to His good pleasure – He Himself enjoys giving us the gift of forgiveness in Jesus. How long will this last? When Jesus ...

### ***Bringing all things together (vv.9-10)***

One day, Paul says, God will bring all things in heaven and on earth together under Jesus. Ultimately we are looking forward to the new Jerusalem which comes down on a renewed earth from heaven. Somehow everything going on in the world is part of God's plan to get there, even the things in our life. Use everything God has given us in this world with thankfulness and for God glorifying purposes. But don't put your hope in anything in this world because 2 Peter 3:10 tells us

*<sup>10</sup>But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.*

*<sup>11</sup>Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives <sup>12</sup>as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. <sup>13</sup>But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.*

Jesus paid for and His sacrifice continues to pay for our sins everyday. He's our gracious Lord and Saviour so let's joyfully serve Him investing our lives in what will last.

Paul continues His Trinitarian theology of our salvation turning now to the work of the Holy Spirit.

*<sup>11</sup>In him [Christ] we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him [God] who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, <sup>12</sup>in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup>And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup>who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.*

We also give praise to the glory of God . . .

## **By Trusting the Holy Spirit Who Assures our Salvation (1:11-14)**

Paul's readers understood what a seal was. A ruler or business owner would seal a covenant/agreement with a rope tied around the document, hot wax poured on it and then impressed by the owner's seal or ring. The seal shows whose property this is. Paul is saying when that Holy Spirit's seal is the guarantee of our eternal inheritance. That seal is good . . .

### ***Regardless of our circumstances (vv.11-12)***

Paul repeats the fact we are chosen, predestined and now sealed according to God's plan who works out 'everything in conformity with the purpose of His will'. Nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. If neither demons nor angels can cause us to lose our salvation neither can we. Our salvation is proven not by a decision we made one time but by the evidence of remaining in Jesus based on our decision for Christ. Jesus says He knows us by our fruit. In the parable of the soils in Matt. 13 where the farmer casts His seed on various soil, Jesus' explained in Matt. 13:20,

*<sup>20</sup>The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy.*

Some make an initial decision to receive it. But ...

*<sup>21</sup>But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. <sup>22</sup>The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, [again] but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. <sup>23</sup>But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."*

The only way fruit can eventually grow is if the seed remains in the ground and slowly produces fruit.

Scientists are trying to see if they can live on Mars. A few years back they created a domed controlled environment in Arizona. They discovered that trees grew rapidly in the dome but fell over

before they matured. Why? Because they had no wind. Trees need wind to develop a strong root system. When the tree is stressed by wind the roots spread out to hang onto the ground and at the same time strain themselves to get as much sunlight as possible. The proof of our salvation is our desire to believe and trust in God's Spirit who keeps secure in everything that goes on in our lives – including especially the tough stuff.

Paul doesn't rule out the need for us to make a decision for Christ but the genuineness of our salvation is demonstrated by the evidence of the Holy Spirit in us.

*<sup>13</sup>And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup>who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.*

'To the praise of His glory' – that's the third time. I think one of the basic pieces of evidence of the presence of the sealing Spirit in our lives is praise, thanking God for what's going on in our life and glorifying Him knowing He has a plan even when we're unsure of His plan at the moment. We keep trusting the Spirit to fulfil God's plan of conforming us into the image of His Son Jesus,

### ***Until we're called home (vv.13-14)***

The Spirit is God's promise to us that we are secure in Him until our redemption is complete; either when we die or when we are raptured. It's already a done deal. Why does Paul emphasize this so much here? Because Paul wants to encourage both Jewish believers and Gentile believers that they are fully one in Christ together. In Ch. 2 he will call them 'the new man'. In Ch.4 he will explain more fully how they should live together, demonstrating their unity in Christ so that others will see this amazing work where God is joining former enemies into a new family in Christ.

We have a tendency to take Eph. 1 and apply it to us individually (which is not wrong) and fail to see the contextual direct application which is for the community. We are saved into the body of Christ which is made up of myriads of nationalities around the world. Many of whom were at one time living in opposition to another. God brings former enemies together, in Christ, to produce mini communities of Spirit sealed believers all over the world, to show a divided world the only hope of how to get along and have peace.

CBN and other Christian news sources have reported hundreds of Gazans coming to Christ because they have lost hope in their leaders and in their hate filled religion. There are former terrorists turned Christians who are in Gaza helping people come to faith in Christ. Meanwhile, reports of IDF soldiers coming to faith in Christ have also surfaced. What is God doing during these horrific circumstances? He wants to bring people to faith in Jesus, putting former antagonists together, who now live in Christ for the praise of His glory.

If you are in Christ, you are saved to give praise to the glory of God. But Paul emphasizes here, we're to do it together. Our unity speaks volumes to our community. That's why it's so important for us to serve together, to encourage one another, and build each other up in our praiseworthy faith in Christ. Paul was speaking in plural here – we, us, and even his 'yous' were plural.

Our community identifies us as a collective body of believers. While we have great gatherings together Sunday mornings, I wonder how many of you make no effort to contact another church family member in your week. We aren't saved just for ourselves. We're placed in Christ, sovereignly moved by God to be joined together to each other to give Him praise and glory.

I issue a challenge this week: if you struggle to connect with others in the church during the week, make an effort to do so. Maybe it's simply a text, an email, a phone call, or even a visit. Maybe make a meal for a young family. Offer to do an errand for someone. Maybe plan to invite someone over for a meal or a dessert or some board games or go to a game or event together. We're all glad we're saved and are in Christ. Let's work on being glad together for who we are in Christ and how God has brought us together.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please  
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