

## To the Praise of His Glory

Ephesians 1:3-14

Please turn to Ephesians 1. God has planned what *he* wants heaven to be like. We imagine what *we'd* like it to be. God has his *own* plan for heaven. He has in his mind what would be “heaven” for him, and he’s been working on it for some time. Our text today tells us what he’s up to.

This is God’s plan: he is going to be so generous with us, so gracious, that once we are face to face with him and can understand how deeply he has loved us, how good he has been, we will hardly be able to stop thanking him. We’ll praise and thank him, and then we’ll start to walk away, and then we will be overcome again with gratefulness and delight with God, and we will pour it all out to him again.

We won’t fake it, and we won’t do it because that’s what we’re supposed to do now that we’re in heaven. We’ll just keep being overwhelmed by how wonderful our God is.

God has been working on our salvation from before Creation, and he’s not finished. His plan is that he will be so good to us now that then we’ll keep singing. For God, that’s heaven.

Three times our Scripture today says “to the praise of his glory.” It ends with that, “to the praise of his glory.” God’s glory is his goodness to us. His infinite goodness to us is his glory. I’m going to organize this thanks to God around eight key points.

### **1 God Blessed us with Every Spiritual Blessing (verse 3)**

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has **blessed us** in the heavenly places with every spiritual blessing in Christ.* This first one summarizes all eight. The others give us the details.

God blessed us, that’s the first thing we say. In heaven, with every spiritual blessing. God gave you and me everything he has to give, and it is in another place. God has not held back any kindness, any favour, in that place. We already get a taste sometimes, but mostly we just see it from far off.

*“Every spiritual blessing in heavenly places”* ... what is that? It is not on earth, so we don’t know. We do know this: it is all that God has to give, that’s very good.

### **2 He Chose Us in Christ before the Creation of the World (verse 4)**

***He chose us** in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.*

Say this to yourself: “God chose me before the creation of the world.” How about that!

Some are uncomfortable with God choosing us. It makes people helpless. But that's not how it works. When the Bible calls people to God, it is our real choice. "*Come to me, all you who labour and are burdened,*" says Jesus. Some come to Jesus, some don't. Our choice.

But when the Bible wants to encourage believers who feel weak and doubtful, it is God's choice. "*God is able to keep you from falling, and to present you in his presence without fault and full of joy.*" Ephesians 1 is to encourage us, so it is about God's purpose and plan. He chose us before the creation of the world.

God chose us to be holy and blameless in his sight. Holy and blameless in his presence. We are talking about our future with God. Before Creation, before the foundation of the world, God chose us to end up holy and blameless in front of him. God's plan for your salvation and mine began long ago, and it's not over until we are in front of him. God chose us long ago to end up blameless and holy before him.

### **3 God Predestined Us to be Adopted (verse 5)**

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

A destination is where the trip ends. High school students walk past our place at 8 in the morning, and their destination is the bus stop. Then they get on the bus, and the destination is the school in Steinbach. God marked your destination and mine ahead of time.

Way back there, before the foundation of the world, he *chose* you and me, and he planned to adopt us, bring us into his family, make us his children. Why do this? Because back then already he loved us, and it gave him much pleasure to plan this for us.

Do you enjoy planning something special for someone you love? I do. I'm terrible at coming up with a plan, but if I find a good plan, it pleases me no end to make it happen. So also God. It was his pleasure to do this, and he makes excellent plans!

*To the praise of his glorious grace.* God takes care of us and provides for us, and in response we praise and thank him. That's how basic relationship with God works. He predestined us to adoption, so we will praise him for his glorious goodness to us.

### **4 He Redeemed us Through Christ's Death (verse 7)**

*In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us.*

When the Bible describes humans, it uses darker language than we would use. The human race is under the authority of darkness. When people don't believe, the god of this age has blinded their eyes so they cannot see the light. Every human lives under that authority, we are all slaves because of our own sin.

To "redeem" means to buy someone out of captivity or slavery. There's a price involved, a price to be paid. *The Son of Man came to give his life a ransom for many,* says Jesus. His death was the price of our redemption.

God chose us before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him, and he predestined us to adoption.

But he cannot actually adopt us until he buys us out of the mess we were in. In Christ he did this. We have redemption through his blood, and the forgiveness of sins. That's God's rich grace is toward us. We just have no idea what a bad place we've been taken out of.

Say this to yourself: "God blessed *me* with every spiritual blessing he has. They are already *mine* in his heavenly place. Here's how it happened: Before the world began, God chose *me* to be holy and blameless. He planned back there to adopt *me*, to bring *me* into his family, so *I* could enjoy him and receive a full inheritance. *I* was a captive of darkness, a slave to sin. God bought *me* out of that slavery. He forgave *my* sins."

That's every Christian's story, and we're not done.

### **5 God Told us His Hidden Plans (verse 9)**

*With all wisdom and understanding, he **made known to us** the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure ... to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.*

In the Bible, a mystery is not something that's hard to understand. A mystery is something we'd never have known at all if God had not told us, but once he tells us, it is quite straightforward. What God made known to us in particular is that our Jesus Christ will rule heaven and earth.

God showed us his secret plan because it gave him pleasure to do so. God said, "I'm not just going to redeem them and forgive their sins. I'm going to tell them my whole plan, starting before the world was even created, right up to the new heaven and new earth." He told us his hidden plans.

### **6 In Christ we have become God's inheritance (verse 11)**

*In him we have become God's inheritance.*

There is a Greek word used here that is only this once in the New Testament. It can mean God *chose* us, or can mean God *gave us an inheritance*, or it can mean we have *become God's inheritance*. All three are all true. "We have become God's inheritance" seems best to me because the other two options are already in this thanksgiving, and it seemed redundant to say them again. Us being God's inheritance fits best with this great thanksgiving.

Deuteronomy 9:29, Moses told God, "*LORD, Israel is your people and your inheritance.*" God's people, that's us, are his treasured possession and his inheritance.

When this age is over, *we* receive *our* inheritance from our Father in heaven, who gives his children an inheritance. And, when this age is over, *God* gets *us* as *his* inheritance! It's hardly believable, when we look at ourselves, isn't it, that we would be his treasure, his longed-for inheritance. But it is true.

Deuteronomy 32:8–9 “*God gave all the nations their inheritance, but the LORD’s portion is his people; they are his chosen inheritance.*” Psalm 28:9 “*O God, save your people and bless your inheritance.*” The LORD’s portion is his people, his chosen inheritance is his people.

At least 25 times in the Old Testament, God’s people are his inheritance. It’s also mentioned a few verses later, in Ephesians 1:18. In Christ, we have become God’s chosen inheritance.

### **7 God Sealed us with the Holy Spirit (verse 13)**

*And you also, when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed it, you were **sealed** with the promised Holy Spirit*

When we heard the gospel and believed it, God put his seal on us. He marked us as his property. He’s coming back to get us. When we believed, he marked us, he labeled us as his possession.

In the past I have bought an appliance or a piece of furniture at a store, but I didn’t have a way to take it home. So I paid for it, and the store clerk put a sticker on it that says “Sold to Ed Neufeld.” That means it is already mine, I’ve paid for it, and I’m coming back later to get it.

That’s what God does with the Holy Spirit. God puts his Spirit on all who believe in Christ. God says, “I put my Spirit on this person, that is my seal of ownership. They are bought and paid for. When I’m ready, I’ll come and get them.”

God sealed us for himself with the Holy Spirit

### **8 God Gave us the Spirit as a Deposit to Guarantee our Inheritance (verse 14)**

*The Spirit is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.*

The deposit is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is how God sealed us for himself, and the Spirit is also a deposit of our inheritance. Some translations say “down payment.”

Fifty years ago, I sold a motorcycle to Glen, whom I knew from high school. The price was \$500. He came one Saturday morning, drove the bike, and wanted to buy it. But he did not have \$500. He had \$100. So he gave me \$100 as a down payment. He said, “I’ll come back with the rest of the money next Saturday,” and he did so. The \$100 meant he had promised to buy it. If he did not come back with the rest of the money, I would keep the \$100. So he was committed to coming back, and I was committed to keeping the motorcycle for him until next Saturday. He came back and paid and got the bike.

God said to himself, “I want my adopted children to be certain that I will give them their inheritance. So I will give them part of their inheritance ahead of time, so they can know that I mean this. What part of their inheritance will I give them ahead of time?”

“I know, I’ll give them the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is a part of their inheritance, but I will give it to them ahead of time, to guarantee the rest. The Spirit will be my deposit, my down payment to them. That way they can be sure.”

We are already redeemed, we are bought and paid for, with the death of Christ, and he freed us from our slavery. But he hasn’t come to pick us up yet. In that sense we are not redeemed. We’re free, but we’re still in the old place. That’s why we have a seal. He marked us because he’s coming back to get us. We now are now God’s possession, and the guarantee lasts until he comes back to get us, and then we get the full inheritance, every blessing in heaven.

Our thanksgiving ends, “to the praise of his glory.” God’s glory is all his goodness to us in Christ. God has done these things so we will praise and thank him from the bottom of our hearts. God can’t imagine a better ending to this story than that we pour our thanks to him for how he poured out his love for us. (repeat) We don’t see it now. We’re still mostly blindfolded. But we will see it, and this thanksgiving gives a good sketch of what God has done for us.

Final comment before we close with praise. When we thank God for things, it is usually for circumstances that have turned out well. It is right and good that we thank God when life goes well for us. Let’s not stop that.

But praise to God in the New Testament is rarely that. It is almost always for the kinds of things in our Scripture today, things God gave us in Christ, God’s gifts present and future, things the world did not give, and the world cannot take away. Let’s thank God for our riches in Christ, which circumstances never threaten. Amen.

**PRAYER:** All glorious God, we give you thanks: In your Son, Jesus Christ, you have given us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. You chose us, before the world was made, to be your holy people, without fault in your presence. You adopted us as your children in Christ. You set us free by his blood. You bought us with his death. You forgave our sins. You told us your secret purpose, to bring heaven and earth into unity in Christ. You made us your chosen inheritance. You gave us your Holy Spirit, the seal and guarantee of our inheritance. All praise and glory be yours, O God, for the richness of your grace, for the splendor of your gifts, for the wonder of your love. O Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen. (Adapted from *The Worship Sourcebook*)

**BENEDICTION:** May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace as we trust in him, so that we may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Go in God’s peace to love and serve the Lord.