

July 12, 2015 – Ephesians 1:3-14 (OT: Amos 7:7-15 Gospel: Mark 6:14-29)

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit Together Save You to the Praise of the Glory of His Grace.

Do you ever find it difficult to praise God? As we go through this life we have good days and bad days. It can be easy to get caught up in our day to day difficulties and lose sight of the glory and grace of God.

Our text today reminds us of the great things that the Triune God has done for us to save us. It is a good passage to turn to and consider whenever life makes it difficult to praise God. Here we see how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit work together to save you to the praise of glory of His Grace.

The Apostle Paul here writes, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (v. 3). In other words: May God the Father be praised! As I said, this is not always something that is always easy to do – to praise God, especially when things don’t seem to be going well. But Paul goes on to tell us here why the Father is so worthy of praise.

First, He “*has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places*” (v. 3). What this says is that God does not hold back! He has given you *every* spiritual blessing. He has given you everything that you need for eternal life.

It is important to note that what the Father gives is every *spiritual* blessing in the *heavenly* places. God does not give us every earthly blessing that we may want here and now. While health and wealth are enjoyable, on earth they are only temporary. What God has given you is so much better! The spiritual blessings He has given you last forever and you will enjoy them in heaven, far from the pain and problems of this world.

The next reason that the Father is to be praised is that “*He chose us...before the foundation of the world*” (v. 4). Isn’t that amazing? This shows that your salvation is not based on you – it is not based on what you do – because God chose you before anything was created; He chose you before you ever did anything good or bad.

Growing up, I was never very good at sports – and I am still not. I remember when I had to play whiffle ball (or some other team sport), I was always one of the last to be chosen by a team captain because I was not that good of a player. But that is not how it is with God the Father! He chose you before the foundation of the world! He chose you before all things.

We read here that “*He chose us...that we should be holy and without blame before Him*” (v. 4). That is something that we, by nature, are not. We are not holy and without blame. We often have followed the ways of this corrupt world so that are not set apart to God and He has every right to blame us for disobeying Him. But He chose us to be holy and without blame before Him. This is not something that we become by our efforts, but it is what God does: He declares us holy and without blame because Jesus Christ lived a perfect life and died in our place and rose again from the dead.

And not only that, the Father “*predestined us to adoption as sons...to Himself*” (v. 5). By nature neither you nor I are God’s children because our sin separates us from God. But the Father decided beforehand – before creation – to adopt us as His sons.

When God talks about “*adoption as sons*”, He is not being sexist, but He is using the language of Jesus’ day. In that culture it was the son who received the inheritance. And that is what God is referring to: He has adopted you as His heir. Because God has adopted you, you have an inheritance from Him waiting for you in heaven.

I don't know if you have ever daydreamed what it would be like to be an heir to one of the wealthy families, like the Hearst family, the Rockefellers, or the Meijers. I think it is safe to say that your life be very different if you were an heir to one of these families.

But you have something far greater! You have been adopted as an heir of the Almighty God Himself! The billions you could inherit from one of these earthly families isn't even worth comparing with the inheritance you have waiting for you from your adopted heavenly Father!

And the Father did this all "*according to the good pleasure of His will*" (vv. 5, 9, 11). It was His decision. "*He purposed in Himself*" (v. 9). No one made Him do it. It is "*according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will*" (v. 11). And God didn't do these things for you reluctantly or begrudgingly, but it was His *good pleasure* to bless you with every spiritual blessing, to choose you, and to adopt you as His heir. He wanted to do it!

All this is "*to the praise of the glory of His grace*" – to the praise of the undeserved favor that God has lavished upon you (v. 6).

But God does not give us His grace for no reason. We see here that this grace – this undeserved love – comes only in connection with His Son, Jesus Christ. Apart from Jesus we have none of these blessings, for the Father "*has blessed us with every spiritual blessing...in Christ*" (v. 3). "*He chose us in Him*" (v. 4). He "*predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself*" (v. 5). Over and over in these verses you see the words "*in Him.*" These are two small words, but they are so important. They are the key to all these blessings. It is only in God's Beloved Son that the Father has graced us with all these things (v. 6).

"*In Him we have redemption through His blood*" (v. 7). Jesus bled and died to cover your transgressions – to cover all the times you and I have violated God's law. By nature we were slaves to our sinful flesh, to death, and the devil. But Jesus has redeemed you by His blood – He bought your release. Sin, death, and the devil no longer have power over you. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross gives you the forgiveness of your sins, so that the Father can declare you "*holy and without blame before Him*" (v. 4). Jesus' holy and blameless life is counted as yours.

This is nothing that you or I deserve, for we are not worthy because we have all sinned against God, but this is all "*according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us*" (vv. 7-8). Not only is God rich in grace, but He makes it overflow and abound toward us. It is as if language fails here to describe how great the Father's love is for us in Jesus Christ.

We read here that in Christ God has "*made known to us the mystery of His will*" (v. 9). When God talks about a "mystery", He is referring to something that we would not know unless He revealed it to us. The mystery of His will that He makes known to us here is the things that we have been talking about. We don't see all the spiritual blessings that we have in the heavenly places, but God tells us we have them. We would not know that He chose us before the foundation of the world if He did not here tell us that He did. And when we look at our lives they often seem anything but holy and blameless, but God tells you that you are holy and without blame before Him because of Jesus.

Another part of the "mystery" that God reveals to us is that He gathers "*together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth*" (v. 10). Jesus came in the "*fullness of time*" (Galatians 4:4) and has received all authority in heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18). All things have been brought together under His "dispensation", or to use a more familiar term, administration. The Father has made Him head over all things (v. 22), whether in heaven or on earth.

And it is *in Him* that “*we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will*” (v. 11). That’s a mouthful, but it shows how sure your inheritance really is. This inheritance is given to you in Christ, whom the Father has made the administrator of all things. And it is given to you according to the purpose and will of God Himself. You were predestined to this inheritance by God Himself.

If that isn’t enough, you have the guarantee of your inheritance: *the Holy Spirit of promise* (vv. 13-14). Jesus promised that He and the Father would send the Holy Spirit to be another Comforter when Jesus returned to the Father (John 14:16-17, 25-27; John 17:7-15). That is why He is called here the Holy Spirit of promise (see also Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4).

When “*you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation*”, the Holy Spirit worked faith in your heart, so that you now believe and trust in Jesus. In baptism you were “*sealed with the Holy Spirit*” (see Acts 2:38). In giving you the Spirit, God has put His seal on you, marking you as His own possession. You are His “*purchased possession*” (v. 14), for He has purchased and redeemed you by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Peter 1:19).

And the Spirit is “*the guarantee of [y]our inheritance*” (v. 14). He is the down payment that makes it certain that you will receive everything that God promises you in Christ. Just as God has fulfilled His promise in sending the Spirit, so too will He give you the inheritance He has promised you. When Jesus comes again to claim you, His purchased possession (v. 14), He will say to you: “*Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*” (Matthew 25:34). You will then get to experience every spiritual blessing with which the Father has blessed you in the heavenly places in Christ.

I am not sure that we can fully understand all the things that God tells us that He had done for us in these verses. But may you turn again and again to the great truths that He reveals to us here and remember that God has blessed you every spiritual blessing, chosen you, and adopted you as His heir in Christ. May these truths lead you to praise Him for the glory of His grace which He has lavished on you in the gift of His Son. And may the Spirit keep you firm in the guarantee of your inheritance, to the praise of the glory of His grace.

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