

Redemption Plan

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Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0 : 00] Good morning. It's great to worship with you this morning. For guests here, my name is Sean. I'm one of the pastors here. I have the privilege of bringing God's Word to our church on most weeks.

And we are starting a new series in the book of Ephesians, the epistle of Ephesians, chapter 1. So please turn with me there. I'm going to pray and we'll start.

Heavenly Father, we pray that as your scripture is read and preached, that by your Spirit you would work powerfully in our midst to bring these truths home to us.

So they don't just remain abstract ideas that we keep in our heads, but that they become life-transforming, affecting truths, Lord, realities that we live by.

Speak to us, Lord. We are listening. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Ephesians 1, verses 1 to 14. In love, he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

[2 : 11] In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

In him, you also, when you heard the gospel of his glory. The gospel of your salvation and believed in him were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

This is the word of the Lord. We have all met a Christian like this, who profess to believe everything that Christianity teaches, everything that the Bible teaches, but whose belief is not borne out by their life.

She has no savor of the love of Christ, of the Father's love, of Christ's humility, of the Spirit's power in her life. We've all also met a Christian like this, who knows all the theological terms, who knows all the Bible references, who seems to know everything there is to know about God, but he doesn't know God.

[3 : 55] He has no personal relationship with him. This person is like a tree, right? It has a semblance of health and fruitfulness about it. But when you get closer and you take a look at it, you see that the branches are withered and the fruit has no juice or pulp in them.

There's no spiritual life. And sometimes we think of doing theology in the same way. We think to ourselves of theology as something abstract and impractical.

But that's not what theology, the study of God, is meant to be. R.C. Sproul writes in his book entitled, *Everyone's a Theologian*. He writes this, The purpose of theology is not to tickle our intellects, but to instruct us in the ways of God, so we can grow up into maturity and fullness of obedience to him.

That is why we engage in theology. Now, we begin a new series in the Epistle of Ephesians this morning written by the Apostle Paul around the time 60 to 62 A.D.

He wrote this to a large network of local churches in Ephesus and the surrounding cities. And then, this is considered by theologians and pastors across the generations, widely considered to be the best primer on Christian theology in the entire Bible.

[5 : 12] Because of its remarkable clarity and simplicity in the way it's taught. But Apostle Paul didn't intend to write this so that it can be used for training in seminaries.

He wrote it to local churches, fully expecting it to inform every single believer and to transform their daily lives. That's the effect it's supposed to have on us.

And so, to that end, Paul writes in chapter 1, it's his exaltation in the spiritual blessings that we have as the church, the people of God. He rejoices in the spiritual blessings that we have in chapter 1. And in chapters 2 and 3, he gives us these specific applications of the spiritual blessings that we have as the church. How the spiritual blessings of the triune God were applied to the church to reconcile Jews and Gentiles and then to bring them into unity in the church under Christ. And then, in chapters 4 to 6, Paul gives us the specific implications of the spiritual blessings of the church. How these spiritual blessings are supposed to shape our lives. How we live, our relationships, and our jobs, our vocations.

[6 : 17] So, that's the outline of the whole book. And if you feel like, and if you've ever felt like that your spiritual life lacks vitality, lacks vigor, my prayer for you this morning is that this sermon series would breathe new life into your soul.

That your life would be transformed by it. That your relationship, that your Christianity, your faith would not just be a formality, something that you just go through the emotion, but it would become a vital reality in your life.

That's my prayer for you. And that's the hope for this sermon series. And in this passage in particular, the first 14 verses, it teaches us that it is the very heartbeat of the Christian to bless the triune God who has blessed us out of his grace and for his glory.

So, that's the main point. It's the heartbeat of the Christian to bless the triune God who has graciously blessed us. Now, Paul begins by introducing himself as the author in verse 1 and by establishing his authority.

He says, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. The word apostle means sent out. And the apostle is a witness of the resurrected Christ, according to 1 Corinthians 9.1.

[7 : 31] And this is a person that's directly commissioned by Christ, sent out by Christ to be his witness and a pioneering missionary. So, that's what an apostle is. And Ephesians 2.20 later speaks of how apostles are the foundation of the church.

And then in Revelation 21.14, it envisions the 12 apostles of the church being the foundations of the new kingdom of God. In the same way, the 12 patriarchs were the foundations of the nation of Israel.

So, when he says, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, in a very simple way, Paul's establishing his authority. I'm not writing as just another church leader. I am the apostle of Christ Jesus.

And he's the apostle of Christ Jesus. He's not an apostle of anyone else. He doesn't belong to anyone else. He's not like a politician, right, who is accountable to his constituency and whose job security depends on pleasing the electorate.

He's the apostle of Christ Jesus. He's accountable to no one else. He doesn't have to please anyone else. He belongs to Christ Jesus. And he does Christ Jesus bidding. And so, he writes this with that authority.

[8 : 36] And he's here and he's appointed as apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. It has a divine origin. He wasn't appointed apostle by popular vote or appointed by some human governing authority, but by the will of God.

And having established himself as the author, he addresses the recipients of the letter, continuing in verse 1, to the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus.

This is a remarkable statement because there are both Jews and Gentiles in Ephesus, right, and only Jews were historically referred to as saints, holy ones, those who were set apart for God.

But Paul addresses both Jews and Gentiles together as saints who are in Ephesus, already hinting at the fact that in Christ, God has reconciled Jews and Gentiles and expressed salvation to all the nations of the world.

And then he says that those who are faithful in Christ Jesus, this doesn't mean that Paul is addressing just the faithful Christians as opposed to the non-faithful Christians because there's no such distinction made throughout the book of Ephesians.

[9 : 41] It's referring to those who have faith in Christ Jesus. It's referring to believers in Christ Jesus. So if you have faith in Jesus, then Paul is addressing you directly here, and Paul is addressing all of the Ephesian Christians.

And that means if you are not a Christian, of course, then if you do not yet believe in Jesus Christ for salvation, then all the spiritual blessings that Paul will go on to describe, they do not belong to you.

And my plea with you is that you consider the offer that Christ is giving, the promises that he is making, and that you give yourself to him this morning if that is you. Now after addressing his recipients, Paul greets them in verse 2, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The standard Greek greeting was, it's just greetings, right? That's how they said hello or how are you. It's greetings is what they used to say. James 1.1 uses that greeting. But Paul employs a clever wordplay here.

By switching out a consonant and adding a couple vowels, he changes the Greek word that means greetings to grace. So now that our life as Christians has been so transformed that it's his grace that is fundamental to how we relate to each other as Christians.

[10:55] And grace, as one Bible dictionary puts it, it's the absolutely free expression of the loving kindness of God to men in the bounty and benevolence of the giver.

It's unmerited favor, something we didn't earn. It's out of his absolute freedom, out of his sheer abundance and bounty and generosity. That's the grace we receive.

It's his loving kindness. It's in the Old Testament concept. His loving kindness, it's translated as grace in the New Testament. He refers to his unchanging, ongoing affection set on us, love toward us.

That's grace. He also greets them with peace. The word peace doesn't refer to an absence of conflict merely, but it refers to the Old Testament concept of shalom, which is to say a wellness, a wholeness of being in right relationship with God and with the rest of creation, of being in harmony with God's design and desire for the world.

It's described by the statement, all is well, physically and spiritually. That's shalom. That's peace, and he greets all the believers with this grace and peace from God our Father and God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[12:07] And then that's how he specifies it, right? He describes the source. It's from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is also significant because if you're a faithful Jew, everyone knows that, you know, God is our Father.

They refer to God as our Father. And everyone knows that he is a source of blessing, grace, loving kindness, and peace. But he says it's not just from God our Father, but he says it's also from the Lord Jesus Christ.

So if you're just a faithful Jew at this time reading this, this is a shocking statement that he's saying. It's the blessing, grace, and peace. It's not just from God our Father, but it's also from the Lord Jesus Christ.

This teaches us about the reality of the doctrine of the Trinity, right? Our church is named after that. There's Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, right? There's three persons in one God. God is one essence, one nature, but there are three persons in God.

Now you're thinking to yourself, okay, well, that's, you see, Trinity, that's an abstract doctrine. That doctrine can't translate to my life. But Paul is about to shatter your expectations and tell you exactly why this doctrine is so foundational to how we relate to God in the rest of the verses that follow.

[13:17] And this is a mystery, so I'm not going to try to explain it to you. It's kind of like there's God in three and one. So imagine a child, right, who just learned his additions. He knows one plus one plus one is three.

But no matter how much you try to explain it to him, he's not going to get multiplication. One times one times one is one. It's just not going to make sense to him. In the same way a child, let's say he just learned geometry, two-dimensional geometry, he knows how to calculate the surface area of a square.

But no matter how you try to explain it to him, if you try to explain the volume and the cube in three-dimensional space, that's not going to make any sense to him. So in the same way for us as finite human beings, as we try to make sense of the fact that God is three in one, three in persons, but one in essence and nature, it's going to go right over our heads.

We can't make quite sense of it because God's infinite. He's eternal. And rightly so. I think if we can make sense of everything about God and understand everything there is to know about him, he's probably not infinite because we're not infinite.

And then in these following verses, verses 3 to 14, this is perhaps the most beautiful demonstration of the triune love of God, of the triune God working in concert to redeem humanity, a people for himself in all of Scripture.

[14:36] And they can't be separated. Their works are indivisible, but yet they can be distinguished by according to what each person of this Trinity does. And to that end, the outline I'm going to follow as I preach the rest of this passage is first from the Father.

Salvation is from the Father. And then second, salvation is through the Son. And then third, salvation is by the Spirit. That's the outline I'm going to follow. From the Father, through the Son, and by the Spirit.

First, salvation is from the Father. Paul begins in verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be.

Right. In the original Greek, this is the beginning of one long, beautiful, poetic, impassioned sentence, praising the triune God for his saving work. It's all one sentence, verse 3 to 14.

202 words, 32 prepositional phrases, 21 genitive expressions, six relative clauses, five adverbial participle clauses. You don't have to know all the grammar.

[15:38] It's a crazy long sentence that has just, he's just going on and on. God's amazing. This is what he did for us. Blessed be the Father. That's what he does. All throughout this, but he's blessing God.

It's not a dry, dispassionate theological writing. It's pulsating with life, just overflowing with gratitude and joy for what God the Father has done.

And that's why I said earlier in the summary of this passage, it's the heartbeat of the Christian to bless the triune God who has blessed us. It's what we do as a Christian. That's our very heartbeat. It's not just a duty for us to bless God. It's our very heartbeat. That's what we love to do. It's what gets us fired up. Because as a Christian, above all things, we desire to bless him.

And if you don't feel that way this morning, my prayer is that by the end of this passage, you will feel that way after seeing all that God has done for us. Why does the Christian feel this way? Why does the Christian want to bless God?

[16:35] Paul tells us in the rest of verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

Why do we bless God? Because God has first blessed us. Strictly speaking, right, as Hebrews 7, 7 says, the inferior is blessed by the superior, right?

So we can't, strictly speaking, bless God because there's nothing we can give God that he doesn't have. We can't give him a blessing that he doesn't already own, that doesn't belong to him. So we can't, in a strict sense, bless him.

But we could bless him in a sense that we speak well of him. We praise him. We recognize that he is the blessed one. That's what we do when we bless him. But then when God blesses us, he actually bestows on us blessings because he's the source of all blessings.

He's the only one that can properly bless us. So in verse 3, it says that God the Father has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. And I hope you can see God's heart towards you in that sentence, that God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

[17:46] Every one. Every single blessing. Did you guys catch that? It doesn't say, you know, God gave us a few spiritual blessings or some of the spiritual blessings.

Every spiritual blessing God the Father bestowed on us. So don't believe the devil's lie when he says to you, as he said to Eve in the Garden of Eden, did God actually say you shall not eat of any tree in the garden?

That's wicked slander because God didn't say you can't eat from any tree in the garden. He said you may surely eat of every tree in the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat of it you shall surely die.

God has always been bountiful and generous toward us. But Satan impugns God's character to us, lies to us, and whispers to us, he's withholding something from you.

He didn't give that to you. He forbade you from doing that. If God really loved you, he would have given that to you. If God really loved you, he wouldn't keep you from that.

[18:59] Don't believe it for a moment. God has blessed us in Christ Jesus with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

You might be impoverished here on earth. You might suffer here on earth. But you know what? If you belong to our God, the Father, then you have spiritual riches that all the Warren Buffett's in the world can't even fathom or dream of.

Every spiritual blessing is ours in Christ Jesus because God the Father has given it to us. And Paul continues to describe these spiritual blessings more specifically in verse 4.

Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him. God chose us. The Father chose us before the foundation of the world, before we were born, before the world began.

God chose us as his own to save us. The initiative of our salvation does not lie with us, but with God. His choice precedes even our faith. Lest we miss this truth, he tells us even more abundantly clearly.

[20 : 11] It's verses 5 to 6. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace with which he has blessed us in the beloved.

If there was some standard outside of God's sovereign will that God used to decide whom he will choose as people, this would have been the perfect place to say it, right? He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ according to our pedigree.

He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ according to our virtue. God predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ according to our effort or our level of faith. He doesn't say any of that. He says, no, he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace.

God didn't choose us because he knew beforehand that we would have more faith than people around us or that we'd be more sincere than the people around us or that we'd be more righteous than the people around us.

[21 : 25] God chose us according to the purpose of his will. The criterion for our adoption as sons to God is not within ourselves but it's within the sovereign purposes of God.

And you know what that means? That means, as Christians, we can't gratify ourselves with the thought that, you know, somehow we earned our way to heaven. We can't tell others who are not believers that, you know, if you were as intelligent as I am, if you were, you know, only, you know, as good as I am, if you only had as much faith as I did, you know, then you could be saved but you can't be.

We can't say that to anyone because we have nothing to boast of. It was according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace.

That's why it's to the praise of his glorious grace because if God saved us according to our deservingness, then it would be our merit that gets the credit. It would be our merit that is praised. But because God didn't save us according to our deservingness, but according to the purpose of his will, that's why it's to the praise of his glorious grace. It's his unmerited favor toward us that's highlighted, not our merit, not our deservingness.

[22 : 44] I hope you're grateful for this truth as much as I am because I ask in wonder and amazement sometimes as I look back at my life, as I look back at my life even just this week. Why me, God?

Why would you choose me? Why would you choose me as your own God? Because apart from the work of the Holy Spirit in my life, I'm a sinner through and through.

I'm selfish. I'm prideful. I'm angry. I'm judgmental. Why should he love someone like me?

Why should he save me when there's millions of others? I cannot give an answer. I cannot give an answer. That's what we say.

That's what Charles Spurgeon, the 19th century British preacher, said in his typical, you know, witty way. He said, I believe the doctrine of election because I'm quite certain that if God had not chosen me, I should never have chosen him.

[23 : 53] And I'm sure he chose me before I was born or else he never would have chosen me afterwards. And he must have elected me for reasons unknown to me for I never could find in myself why he should have looked upon me with special love.

So I'm forced to accept that great biblical doctrine. For this reason, all we can say as Christians is blessed be, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

Even as he chose us in him from before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him. And then it says, in love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will to the praise of his glorious grace. Now, this doesn't mean that we don't have any responsibility in our salvation. So please don't hear me saying that. We have to believe in Jesus Christ for our salvation. In a sense, we do have to choose him.

Verse 13 teaches this clearly. The Bible always holds these two truths in tension. Verse 13, read it with me. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

[25 : 22] In order to be saved, we must believe. And in order to believe, we need to hear the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation. So faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ.

Therefore, Christians have the responsibility to preach the gospel so that people would hear. And unbelievers who hear have the responsibility to believe so that they might be saved.

Nowhere in scripture does scripture ever abrogate our responsibility. But that doesn't make verse 4 any less true. God the Father chose us in him before the foundation of the world.

during community group one week, actually Rosa shared what she heard this radio preacher say one time. It's shockingly simple, but it's actually helpful.

So I'm going to share it with you guys. He says, you take the first step, God takes the second step, and by the time you take the third step, you realize that God took the first step. Kind of how it works, right?

[26 : 25] Because election, the doctrine of election, doctrine of predestination, really only makes sense in hindsight. is when you have already put your faith in Jesus, when you've already experienced that salvation, that's when you realize, looking back, oh, wait, God chose me before I chose him.

That's when you realize that. So then if you're not a believer, your responsibility is not to try to figure out whether you're chosen or not. No, your responsibility is to believe because that's the only way you can find out.

Only those who choose Christ discover that God has already chosen them. And divine election isn't some arbitrary dispassionate act. It's the word translated purpose here is actually better rendered good pleasure.

That's what it literally means. It was his good pleasure to choose us. That's how the NIV translates it if some of you guys have the NIV. God chose his people according to his good pleasure.

Verse five further elaborates. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons. God chose us. He predestined us in love.

[27 : 31] The father's love. The father's good pleasure. That's the basis of his election. God's choice was not some arbitrary fiat. It wasn't just some dispassionate decision or a cold calculation of what's going to happen in the future.

No, it was in love he chose us. Out of his good pleasure, he delighted to choose us. Before we were born, before we had done anything good or bad, before we could even deserve his affection, the father chose us and delighted over us.

It was his good purpose, good will to save us. Christians often think of God the father as the strict and austere figure, the severe in his judgments, full of wrath and judgment towards sinners.

Sometimes we mistakenly think that, you know, the father only loves us because Jesus died for us. The father didn't love us. That's why Jesus had to die for us. Now that Jesus died for us, the father loves us.

That cannot be further from the truth. Think of all the passages that talk about why Jesus came. For God so loved the world that he gave his only son.

[28 : 44] You know why Jesus came? He didn't come to purchase the father's affections for us. He came because the father loved us.

He came because the father sent him. He came because father, in eternity past, had his good pleasure on us. His love set on us. That's why he came. 1 John 4, 8-10 says this about God the father.

Anyone who does not love, does not know God because God is love. In this, the love of God was made manifest among us that God sent his only son into the world so that we might live through

him.

In this is love. Not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. Our heavenly father loves us.

I think Christians, this is just my speculation, but that has, I think Christians have a particularly hard time with understanding this truth because many of us didn't grow up with, you know, respectable, loving father figures.

[29 : 55] We have a lot of daddy issues. And so we kind of transpose what we believe about our earthly fathers to our heavenly father. We think of him as angry, unhappy, distant, or altogether absent, maybe even abusive.

But we must not impute such characteristics to our heavenly father. John Owen is one of my favorite theologians. He's a 17th century Oxford theologian.

He writes about this in his book, *Communion with God*, that I'm reading with some of the members of our church together. He writes that nothing grieves God, the father, more than our hard thoughts about him.

And by hard thoughts, he means thoughts that doubt his love for us, his compassion toward us, hard thoughts, thinking of God as this austere, strict, severe figure.

He writes that nothing grieves God more than these hard thoughts because God knows, quote, how it leads us to avoid walking with him, how unwilling is a child to come into the presence of an angry father.

[31 : 02] And then Owen exhorts us, quote, we must remember his kind thoughts towards us which have been from eternity. Let us remember how eager and willing he is to accept us.

If we did this, then we would not be able to bear one hour's absence from him. Instead, we find it difficult to spend even one hour with him. Let then this be the first thought that we have of the father, that he is full of eternal love to us.

Is that your first thought about God the father? That he loves you? He loved you in eternity? In love, he predestined us for adoption to himself as son.

And the metaphor of adoption also beautifully conveys this truth, doesn't it? God's not selecting or hiring his employees here. He's choosing his family. People to adopt to himself as his own.

Now, some of you might have wondered to yourself why Paul had to be so gender insensitive. Why doesn't he say, in love, he predestined us for adoption as sons and daughters?

[32 : 20] I mean, that's really simple to say. Why didn't he just say sons and daughters? Does he only want to adopt men? But this question is actually missing an important point that the verse is making.

And Tim Keller, who was a pastor of a church in New York, shared one time about a woman in his church who helped him to understand this concept. This woman came from a non-Western, very traditional background.

And she had one brother. So there was one son in the family. And as she was growing up, she always knew that her brother would get the lion's share of the wealth and the honor of the family. And basically, what the family told her was, he's the son, you're just the girl. And she was reading Paul's, Apostle Paul's description of our adoption to God as sons.

She realized the subversive power and the magnitude of the promise that God is making because God's not saying you will be treated as second-class citizens.

[33 : 24] He's not saying you're going to be adopted into my family and relegated to this less important role. He's saying that every single one of us, sons and daughters, you'll be adopted to them as sons with the full rights and privileges of sonship.

in love, he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will, the praise of his glorious grace with which he has blessed us in the beloved. Isn't that, I love that. God the Father refers to his son, Jesus Christ, as the beloved. And that status of beloved son is imputed to us through Jesus, through those who are in him.

He does not, God the Father doesn't look at us and he's just like wagging his finger at us like in disgust and disappointment. That's not what he's doing. The God the Father doesn't look at us and shakes his head in disappointment.

God the Father looks on us and says, Beloved, my special possession, my sons. When you really realize this truth, what God the Father has done for us, you can't help but say, Blessed be, the God and Father of our Lord.

[35 : 05] That's what Paul says. That's the first point. The salvation is from the Father. And if salvation is from the Father, it is through the Son. Verse 7 tells us, In him, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses.

Now, up to this point, the verbs were all in the past tense to describe God's choosing, God's election from eternity past. But abruptly now, the verbs switch to the present tense to signal that these are the blessings we currently enjoy.

It's ours. It's ours now. We get to enjoy it now. And he says, We have redemption through his blood. And the word redemption, of course, recurs, probably the greatest picture of redemption in the Old Testament was at the Exodus.

Right? When God, in redeeming his people, in basically trying to rescue his people from slavery to Egypt, he judged, is judged Egypt, and he killed all the firstborn sons of the Egyptians.

But he spared the Israelite firstborn sons because they had a substitute. They had killed a lamb in its place and daubed its blood on the door. So that was how they redeemed their firstborns.

[36 : 20] They were redeemed by a substitute, by a lamb. And then Jesus was the ransom price paid for our redemption. We were enslaved to sin and death.

And our slave master was no interest, not interested at all in letting us go, abusing us and using us for his purposes. And God the Father sends his son as the most costly ransom price he could pay so that we can be redeemed, freed from our bondage to slavery and sin.

That's what Christ did. So we have redemption through his blood. And it's because of his redemption we now have the forgiveness of our trespasses.

Jesus Christ alone could have accomplished this. He could uniquely accomplish this because he was the son of God and at the same time the son of man. God the Father is the only one that can forgive.

God the Father can't come along and say, oh no, you're forgiven, don't worry about it because you're the one that was offended. You're the only one that can forgive.

[37 : 34] Father was the one that was offended. He's the offended party in every sin. Only God can forgive. God the Father at the same time if you, let's say, steal someone's car, you can't then return a bike.

doesn't make sense, right? It has to fit. The restitution has to fit the crime. And it is because humanity sinned, because humanity sinned against God, only a human can rightly represent humanity and bear the punishment that they deserve.

So God is simultaneously the adequate redemption price, the ransom, because he is the son of man. And at the same time, he's able to secure the forgiveness of our trespasses because he is the son of God.

He can forgive us and extend forgiveness. That's why throughout the Gospels when he says your sins are forgiven, all the Pharisees go berserk. What do you mean you forgive his sins? His sins are forgiven. You can't say that.

Only God can say that. He could say that because he is God. He is God. He's the son of God.

Jesus is the one that accomplished this for us. It's 1 Timothy 2, 5, says for there is one God and there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

[39 : 01] And a Christian, by definition, is someone who participates in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That's what it means to be a Christian. That's why Christian, the entry sacrament is the sacrament of baptism.

You're buried and you die to your sin and then you are brought back up in new life in Christ. That's what baptism signifies. So Christian is by definition someone who participates in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

And that's why in the span of these 14 verses of Ephesians, some combination of the phrase in Christ or in him, in the beloved, occurs 12 times. It's almost, it almost gets obnoxious at times if you're trying to, you know, read this over and over again and it's almost like, it's like a crescendo and every instance of it is like an exclamation point in this whole doxology of praise and blessing of God in Christ.

Blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places. He chose us in him before the foundation of the world. He adopted us as sons through Jesus Christ.

Now these, all these expressions teach us two things. First, God the Father does nothing apart from his son. He does everything he does in concert with his son. Second, every spiritual blessing we

receive from the Father is through Christ.

[40 : 25] As Jesus says, right, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. That means every blessing that we have ever enjoyed, every spiritual blessing that we've ever enjoyed, it comes through Christ.

God the Father pours out his blessings on us but not a drop of it reaches us except through Christ. He is our mediator. He is the conveyor. He is our intercessor.

Father. We just concluded a sermon series in the book of Genesis and we know from there that how important it is for God's people to be in the promised land, to be in Canaan, right?

That's, to be in Canaan is to be in God's presence and to enjoy his blessings. To be exiled from Canaan, to be outside of Canaan is to be cut off from God's presence and to not enjoy his blessings.

The New Testament equivalent of being in Canaan is being in Christ. That's not a phrase that we just append to the end of our emails.

[41 : 30] It's a precious phrase that we are in Christ because everything that is good, all that we know about God, all the ways in which we can relate to him, it comes to us through Christ.

And God's ultimate goal in his redemption plan is not just to unite us to him, but as it says in verses 8 to 10, he says, in all wisdom and insight, the Father made known to us the mystery of his will according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth, right?

And the word unite translated as unite here, actually more literally translated to brought under the objection of, to brought under the headship of, actually, the word head is used. And that's what God intends to do, to bring all things, things in heaven and on earth under the headship of Christ and that's God, that is God's ultimate redemption plan.

And that's why the word head occurs several times in the book of Ephesians. Verse 22 later, he says, he put all things under Christ's feet and gave him as head over all things to the church.

That's God's ultimate plan, to bring all things under Christ's headship. And this mystery was revealed to us through Christ. This mystery doesn't refer in the New Testament to something that remains hidden, but something that was hidden, but that God has revealed now in Christ Jesus.

[42 : 58] Now, if that's the case, then we might ask, then why then are there still people who don't believe in Jesus? Why are there angelic beings, demons, people who still rebel against God if God has brought all things under the headship of Jesus?

And this reality is frequently illustrated by comparison to World War II analogy. You guys may have heard this, the comparison between the D-Day and V-Day, right?

So they were having, it was a hard-fought battle on the front lines in the World War II, and the Allied forces invaded Normandy, and there they established a beachhead, basically, from which point they could advance their war.

And the D-Day, which was when they began that excursion to take Normandy, was so significant, it was such a strategic point for the battle, when the D-Day was, when D-Day happened, basically, the V-Day, the Victory Day, was unavoidable.

It was as if that victory was completed when the D-Day happened. So for us, in the Christian perspective, the D-Day is when Christ came the first time. He died for our sins and rose again.

[44 : 14] He decisively defeated sin and death and the spiritual forces of evil. And then the V-Day comes when He returns for a second time, when that victory, that kingdom of God is consummated, brought in its fullness.

It's already here, but it's not yet consummated. That's the reality that we live in. That's why that's the case. So, and then, verses 11-2, He reminds us again that about God's redemption through Christ was according to the Father's sovereign plan.

This is very, it's parallels, verses 4-6, is very similar. And it reminds us, once again, that God's not just reacting, you know, to human history, but He had planned this all along, His sovereign plan to save us through Christ.

So Christ is the conduit of every spiritual blessing that we receive from the Father. And when we recognize that truth in earnest, then we can't help but bless the triune God who has graciously blessed us.

We come to love Jesus because He's the source. He's the one through whom we receive all the blessings of God. So salvation is from the Father, and it is through the Son.

[45 : 22] And now, at the end of verse 12, Paul specifically addresses the Jews. He says, those who are the first to hope in Christ, but then immediately, he addresses the rest of the Gentiles in verse 13 by saying, in Him, you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

So he's saying that the Jews were the first to believe and to experience these blessings, but the Gentiles are also now incorporated into this ultimate plan. And this leads us to our final point, which is salvation is by the Spirit.

In order to highlight this reality, Paul begins and ends his blessing of God in verses 3 to 14 with the mention of the Holy Spirit. Recall what I said in verse 3. You can turn back there with me in verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. All the blessings we enjoy are spiritual, meaning that it's connected to the new covenant blessings of the Holy Spirit, which was prophesied of in Ezekiel 36. Our blessing is of the Spirit of God. And that's why Jesus says, this is a really intriguing parallel in Matthew 7, 11, where Jesus says, If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him?

[46 : 44] And now compare that to the parallel in Luke 11, 13, where Jesus says, If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?

He substitutes the Holy Spirit to good things, to good gifts, because the Holy Spirit is the substance and sum of every spiritual gift we enjoy.

Every good spiritual gift we enjoy is of the Holy Spirit. It's the experience of the Holy Spirit. It's a communion in the Holy Spirit. It's the fellowship with the Holy Spirit. And then, near the end, he says again, When you heard and believed the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, we were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

It's a very cool image. The word seal can refer to a couple different things in Greek as well as in English, right? One sense, it could mean to, you know, clinch something, to secure something, to protect it and to preserve it so that it's there, basically, you know, impermeable to corruption.

And then, now, the second way is that it could be a seal in the sense of an emblem of ownership. It's like a signature. It's like a sign, right? People back in the day, in these times when Paul's writing, had often like precious jewels or a heart stone that had an engraved image on it and they used it to mark things that were precious to them, precious possession, to stamp it and say, this is mine.

[48 : 17] This is, I put my seal on it. And that's what God does. The King of Glory has put a seal on us. He's protecting us, preserving us.

I think both of those senses are here. And that's why, it's confirmed by the following statement. Paul continues, the Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance. It's because we have the Spirit, we can be assured of our future inheritance in God.

He's the deposit. Another translation says he's the down payment. Because we have the Spirit, we can know for sure that we will have the full, the fullness of the spiritual blessings, the consummation of it to enjoy in the future, in eternity.

And then it also refers to it as the seal of God's possession of us. So the ESV that we read from translates it as until we acquire possession of it.

But it's probably better rendered, translated as NIV does it, as the until the redemption of God's possession. That's what that means. The possession throughout this passage that Paul's referring to is the inheritance.

[49 : 27] It's not that, he's referring not primarily to our inheritance in God, what we receive, but he's referring to the fact that we as the church is God's inheritance.

You know, clearly in verse 18. And that's what Paul's referring to. So he's saying, in essence, this, that we are his special prized possession. We are his treasured possession.

He's put his seal on us. This reminded me of a scene from Toy Story 3, I think it was. I don't know if you guys have seen it. The 17-year-old Andy finally goes off to college, right, and he sets aside his toys and he puts them in a bag.

And he meant to put the toys, store them in the attic, but because he stored them in a garbage bag, his mom accidentally throws them out into the street and waiting for it to be picked up by the garbage can.

I know, right, it's, I can't believe it, the mom's cleaning their houses. And now, so because of that, the toys are, toys are just distraught, right, they think that they have been abandoned by their owner. But Woody, right, arguably, Andy's favorite toy, right, he knows that that's not what really happened.

[50 : 36] He knows that they, he meant, the owner meant to store them in the attic, not to throw them away. And so he goes, he follows the other toys and he tries to convince them, but the other toys are just despondent. They're like, no, what if he doesn't want us anymore?

And then, what he does is so cool. He points to his foot, his boot, which has the name Andy written on it. But look at this.

He marked us as his own. We belong to him. That's what God does with us. Seal of the Holy Spirit. Mine, mine, mine, not belonging to anyone else, mine, my precious seal on us.

That's the Holy Spirit. How precious is the Holy Spirit to us? The Holy Spirit was so central to the Christian experience that in Acts, when, in Acts 19, when Apostle Paul encounters a set of believers who are disciples of Apollos, he asks just one simple question.

Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? Because the Holy Spirit is so central to the Christian life and experience. If, then, if you as a believer, if we as a believer live as if the Holy Spirit doesn't exist, if you believe in the Holy Spirit theoretically, but have no experience, no relationship with the Holy Spirit, that's a very troubling sign.

[52 : 07] The Holy Spirit is the one that assures us when we are plagued by guilt, doubt, and fear. It's the Holy Spirit that comes to us and assures us, you are God's prized possession.

You have been adopted as sons. That's what the Spirit does. When we gather together to worship, that He is the one that enlivens our hearts, fills us with joy and gratitude. When we pray to Him, His Holy Spirit is the one that's alongside us, groaning with words that we can't even utter, interceding for us.

That's the Holy Spirit. He's the comforter. He's our advocate. He's the manifestation of the presence of God. He is the bond of our union with Christ.

He's the means by which we have fellowship with God. And when we rightly perceive of that and understand that and believe that, then we can't help but to bless the glorious, gracious, triune God who has blessed us.

To summarize this redemptive activity of the triune God, I know some of it was a little bit heady, but I hope you see the practical applications of it. This is such an important vital truth for us to understand.

[53 : 24] We could use an imperfect analogy to describe this. Maybe think of it as the gift and the deliverer and the gift. I mean, giver and deliverer and the gift.

Imagine that your dad sends you a gift. So he's this precious gift. He wraps it up nicely and he goes to the United States Postal Service and he ships it to you.

And then he gets to you and then you open it and you get to receive it and enjoy the gift that he sent. God the father is like the dad who sends. God the son is like the deliverer, the USPS Postal Service.

They deliver it to you. And the spirit is the gift himself. You receive him. You enjoy him. The presence of God that he represents. That's what it does. And you delight in every phase of it. Right? It's like I I didn't intend to share this but I remember like a long time ago I haven't seen this in forever but watching like a TV show where like they announced that you were like winner of this great prize or something and then the person who just won that right prize just like starts embracing the person that just announced it to them even though that person had I mean nothing to do with it really.

[54 : 35] Right? Just because he delivered such amazing news. Right? But then for us Christ is so much more than that because he's not just a dispassionate detached deliverer. He embodies the message. He's the one that makes the gift possible.

Right? So we delight in the father who sends his gifts and we delight in the son who brings us the precious gifts and we delight in the spirit who applies those precious gifts to us.

That's the relationship that God desires for us. And because and what that means is this in the end from the beginning to the end the salvation belongs to the Lord it's all of him.

And that's why three times throughout this this passage Apostle Paul says to the praise of his glory to the praise of his glorious grace in verse 6 to the praise of his glory in verse 12 in verse 14 the

only proper way in which we could respond as recipients of such amazing grace indeed the only natural way we can respond as recipients of such amazing grace is to bless the triune God who has graciously blessed us to glorify him and and there's one more reason we chose this passage particularly at this time of our church's life and and that's that we get to celebrate the 500th year anniversary of the Protestant Reformation in the coming month next month and and this book is probably as good as any other for celebrating that truth and the Protestant Reformation proclaimed five essential truths they're called they call them the five solas sola is the Latin word for alone right he said that that the scripture alone is the final authority in Christian belief in life he declared that salvation is in Christ alone by grace alone through faith alone and to the glory of God alone and it's this passage demonstrates that last phrase alone to the glory of God alone perhaps better than any other passage in scripture because from the beginning to the end from the giver to the deliverer to the gift all of it was of God that's why it is glory to him alone and not to any other man if God's grace is the river source right then God's glory is the river mouth the ocean to which all of God's spiritual blessings flows it goes from grace to glory and if you you know all of you guys get excited about something perhaps some of you guys are by natural temperament a little terse or not very emotional a little bit you know and you think oh no you know praising God you know that's for those emotional people you know that's you know being you know praising God profusely like Paul is oh that's for those verbose people no that's not for me no when you become a Christian you become a singer when you become a Christian you become a praiser when you become a Christian you become a blesser you can't help that if we can wax eloquently about our favorite TV show or video game if we can speak profusely about our best friend or about how the or about the amazing Super Bowl game last year then we can praise God profusely our praise our blessing should freely and voluntarily just profusely flow roll off our tongues that should be a proper response because we can't help as believers who have been recipients of such amazing grace to bless the God who blessed God we want this not just to be an idea in our heads but a firm belief in our hearts we want to live by this reality not just think of it theorize about it but please by your spirit transform us move us captivate us with the triune love of God in Jesus name we pray what our minds what have been and

[58 : 58] Yah!