

**Ephesians 1:4-6
Salvation Planned**

This morning we return to the book of Ephesians which we started a couple times ago, and then took a break last week to go to proverbs for our Mother's Day and parenting message; but we return to this beautiful, wonderful section of doctrine and theology that we find in chapter one, verses 3-14. This long run-on sentence of praise that's coming from Paul, and we will jump into that. Before we do that though, I would like to get on the same page with you about a concept, and that is the concept of planning. I would venture to guess that most of us would agree with the statement that planning is important - planning is important - did I hear an "Amen"? Planning is important. Have you ever experienced an event that wasn't planned? Isn't that great, just a wonderful feeling, right? You just look around and think, "well this is a joke, this is a nightmare, what's going to happen next? Who knows? Is this thing going to shut down at any moment? Or is it going to erupt into a whole new level of mayhem? Who knows?" And it only gets worse depending on how large the event is or the complexity of the factors involved in the event.

Take for instance the Rose Parade - the Rose Parade - an event where Southern Californians go, "woohoo, we love our winter!" and we can parade it in front of everybody else, right? And so this wonderful event, and you think of this, and there is a lot that goes into the Rose Parade. There's a lot going into the details of this. For instance, just to make a float here, it takes about 20 daisies, 30 roses, or 36 marigolds to cover just one square foot of a float that you might be covering. So all the floats together take approximately 18 million flowers. That's a little bit of work. In addition to that you have 5,000 gallons of glue used on all of the floats, 600 tons of steel for these floats - to build them, 300 horses in every years parade, 700 thousand viewers that are actually there in person lining the streets watching this take place. The marching bands that are chosen for the Rose Parade are chosen two years in advance. You have different details as far as what one estimate says - 80 thousands hours of combined manpower are put into the floats and planning each year. The Tournament of Roses Association has 935 members that help out and then you have to add to that all the other volunteers and businesses and individuals that come together to put this event together as a success. It follows the same route every year as far as its path, when it goes it's a 5½ mile stretch that takes about 2 hours to complete.

In fact, the past Tournament of Roses website specifies that the floats, equestrians, and marching bands travel at a pace of about 2½ miles per hour. So you have to have a pace which is quite leisurely so that all the viewers can actually have the time to take it in and enjoy what they are watching go before them.

Can you imagine if such an event was not planned? It's a joke, right?... “O you have a float? Great! Show up in Pasadena, it will be great! I am sure we will work it out, right? We will all get in line at some point and then we will just go and I am sure it will be a wonderful, smooth, flawless, good time.” And you can see from the blimp view up top how spread out all the floats are and how it's just a train wreck that is happening. It would be a disaster. It probably wouldn't even happen. It's only because of the meticulous planning and the actual - kind of - predetermined thinking, that goes into it, that the beautiful spectacle of the Rose Parade even takes place.

And this morning we return to this explosive kind of praise that Paul is giving in terms of our salvation; and in order to increase in our own worship, and appreciate this model that Paul is setting before us, and appreciate and grow in our praise to God, we have to recognize the planning that has gone into our own salvation. The planning that God has put into the salvation that we are currently experiencing and enjoying. That's what we will see. As we look at our verses, verses 4-6 in chapter 1 of Ephesians. So let's return to Ephesians 1. Let's look at our verses and I will actually read from verse 3. Verse 3 down through verse 6 and we will see the planning of our salvation, “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, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.”

This is our first section here of isolating and studying this kind of overflow praise that comes from Paul in the beginning of this letter - that is this run-on sentence from verse 3 down to verse 14. So to look at this we are going to see two main things that flow out of this. First in verse 4 we see very clearly: salvation's plan of election. Salvation's plan of election. And this is a critical verse for this doctrine that you may have heard of before - the doctrine of election. It is a teaching that is acknowledged by many theologians and

many people of the faith that read through the scripture and recognize that there is this common teaching that surfaces throughout the Bible and that is this idea of God choosing. God electing. God deciding. The doctrine of election. And we see it very plainly if we just look at verse four in the beginning “even as he chose us.” There it is. Very plain, “He chose us.” That word. And even before that we read the phrase, “even as,” leading into, “even as,” - that could be confusing as to how that connects to verse 3, but the NET Bible and the NIV maybe help a little bit when they say “for he chose us.” Alright, all these spiritual blessings, all these wonderful benefits of our salvation, coming down to us, from God, that Paul is now going to lay out and he says, “because” or “for,” and he starts to lay out all these blessings and this becomes the first one that we see, “for he chose us,” - “he chose us,” this is a word, a verb that is used multiple times actually in the New Testament and we see it being used for other instances of God choosing us. For instance, in 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 we read from Paul, “26 For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.”

Very clear that there is a way that God has chosen us and in doing so he has chosen weak and unintelligent people like us to put to shame the strong and the wise of this world. Jesus himself mentioned this as well. John 15:16 “16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide...”

Later on in that same chapter in verse 19, Jesus said, “If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” Jesus himself saying “I chose you, I appointed you, to bear fruit and to represent me in a way the world will not appreciate and will not like.”

Well, what do we see here, we have been chosen as Paul says, and the very clear reference here is not just because of our unintelligence or not because we are going to be separate from the world, but as he says here, He has chosen us for salvation. He has chosen us to be saved. And the simplest and easiest way to see that is when we just read the whole passage. You just

recognize that this whole passage is all hitting at every angle and aspect, past, present, and future of our salvation. All that goes into it. He has chosen us to be the recipients of all these blessings of His grand plan of salvation. This is the doctrine of election. This is the idea that God has elected us, chosen us, to receive all these blessings of salvation. And we learn a little bit more about this. What was involved in this choosing? How do we describe this electing that God does of choosing people like you and I to receive these blessings?

Well the first thing we see is that it is proactive. It's proactive, it's not reactive. God is not reacting in deciding to do this. He is proactively choosing and proactively deciding to do this. In our verse you can see in two words "even as he chose us in him," - "he chose us, in him" - this is something that God decided to do in Christ - in Christ. He didn't choose you upon watching your life. He didn't choose you upon recognizing who your parents were and your lineage. He didn't choose you based upon how good you were. He chose you in Christ. It has zero to do with you, everything to do with Jesus. He chose us in Christ. This is how salvation works. This is the only way salvation can work, when it is in and through Jesus Christ. So this - to put it really simply, one commentator say "God cannot bring sinful humans into His presence forever without Christ having paid for sin." This is the prerequisites, this has to be in place. God did not choose us because there is anything good that exists in ourselves. As Paul said in Romans 3:12 "all have turned aside, together they have become worthless, no one does good, not even one." God didn't choose us because He decided to be extra nice and kind of let the standard slip and He let us slide past without really acknowledging our sinfulness. No, God acknowledged our sinfulness and He maintained the standard. He maintained the standard as Jesus says in Matthew 5:48, "you therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly father is perfect." He doesn't compromise this standard of perfection and holiness and righteousness in order to be with Him. So how can God choose us if His standard is perfection and we are stuck in our sin?

This is why we can say, and we can recognize that Paul says, "he chose us in him" - In Christ. God chose us because of the blood of His Son offered in our place. As Peter says in chapter 1 of his first letter, verses 18-19, "knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but you were

ransomed with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb, without blemish or spot.”

It was because of Christ’s blood that we were bought by God. Clearly God is the one at work in planning our salvation. Clearly He is proactive in all of this. Clearly He is the one deciding among Himself in the Godhead, the Father and the Son, deciding this plan of what Christ will do. And it is clearly through that that you and I are then recipients and chosen as a result. God was the one at work. And the good news of Jesus Christ reminds us of that fact.

It’s not just that God is proactive in what Christ did, but we see even more clearly, that the selection - this choosing - the fact that we have been chosen - is predetermined. It’s predetermined. And it’s very clearly stated, “even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world” - “before the foundation of the world.” That is a very explicit and clear statement. God’s choosing of us was not at the moment of creation. He didn't make mankind and think, “Oh something cool could happen here, let me see what I can kind of mix up with mankind.” No, He didn’t choose us when we breathed our first breath and we entered into the world and said “you know what, I got a good feeling about this baby.” No, God’s choosing of us was, “before the foundation of the world.” That’s what it says.

The preposition in Greek is *pro* and it has the meaning that an action occurred before hand, whatever it is that's being mentioned. That’s how it’s always translated and interpreted, and that's exactly what we have here. It's not an iffy thing, it is a clear statement that Paul makes. God chose the believer before the world was even created. And that is what we would say is in eternity past. He chose you in eternity past.

This is mentioned at other places in Scripture. An example from Paul to Timothy, “therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord nor of me his prisoner, but share in sufferings for the Gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.” Very clear, same kind of expression happening there.

Again later on, even Jesus, when talking about the sheep and goats judgment that will take place at the end, He states, “then the king will say to those on

his right, come you who are blessed by my father, inherit the kingdom prepared, prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Very clear. This has been God’s plan, there was some past thought that went into our salvation. And as Scripture, and as our passage here is making clear, this is something that was before even the creation of this world.

You jump ahead in the book of Revelation and you recognize that those who have their names written in the Lamb's book of life, that has actually been written and established, “before the foundation of the world.” The same expression is used.

And then even in Romans 9, Paul will make this point very clear over and over again, but he uses a historical example with Isaac and Rebekah and their children, Jacob and Esau, and you’ll talk about how God will have His choice of Jacob and it will have nothing to do with the fact that they had done good or bad or they were going to do good or bad in their life, but it's actually before they are even born. This is God’s election, His choosing, and His calling of us.

I know what you are thinking. It’s very possible that you get a little nervous when you hear stuff like this. You get a little uncomfortable. Some people might even have anger. It happens. People think, “God chose me before this world even existed? This is interesting, how does that work itself out? What are the implications of such a statement? I don’t know if I am very comfortable with that. Are you telling me I am a robot? I am a programmed robot? Is that what you are telling me right now? Don’t I have a choice? Don't I have rights? I am an American. I have rights. Right? God can’t just choose me without my consent, can He? Can God do that?”

Well I can give you a few answers: one easy answer is, God can do whatever He wants. God can do whatever He wants. Paul says in Romans 9:14-15, “What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! For he says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.’” God is God. And we are not. He can do what He wants. He can show mercy and compassion on whomever He wishes.

Furthermore we can say more. We can add that such questions and objections are really misplaced. And they are, when we think about it, right?

When we take a step back and we think of the question of, “wait a minute, can God do that? Is God allowed to do that? Can He choose some and not others? Is this really how God can operate? Is this okay?” When we think about those questions, those accusations, they are totally out of line. He would be perfectly righteous to destroy all of us and start over if He wanted to do so. It's the wrong question to be questioning God.

Due to our own sinful depravity, the better question is, why does God show His mercy at all? Why does He show any grace? Why does He have any compassion on sinful mankind? One commentator stated it this way in his quote, he said, “the one who is chosen has no legal claim on the one who chooses. In fact, it is clear in Scripture, that human beings come short of His glory and do not even seek Him. God did not choose anyone because they were holy and thus had a legal claim to be chosen. On the contrary, all people are sinners and deserve rejection. There was no obligation on God’s part to choose anyone, but He freely chose some and this is evidence of His great grace. The point is that if God had not taken the initiative, no one would have His everlasting presence in life. The real problem is not why He had not chosen some but why He chose any. No wonder God is to be praised.” So we are asking the wrong question if we are starting to get nervous and rebel at such a thought of God choosing before our existence.

Finally we’ve got to be content with letting Scripture speak things that are too profound for our comprehension. You think “I am having a hard time, I am really struggling to comprehend and understand this and how it works with everything else.” That makes sense because you are human and you are not God. We have to be okay with that. Scripture declares on the one hand that God has sovereignly chosen all those who will come to Him for salvation. God has made that decision. He has made that choice. It is His sovereign will and prerogative. On the other hand, Scripture gives a legitimate offer of salvation unto all mankind. Scripture constantly gives that offer and invitation to mankind. And a wonderful and beautiful example of this comes from this extended quote here from Jesus. Look at Jesus words and see both of these things at play, “At that time Jesus declared, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; 26 yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. 27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

Wow, that is the sovereignty of God. He can and He will do whatever He wants. But amazingly we go to verse 28, and what does Jesus say next, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Jesus has no problem with this. Why should we? Jesus has no problem with these things being side by side. God is sovereign and He is revealing His truth to whomever He pleases and He is having mercy on whoever He wants to have mercy on and Jesus knows that and He proclaims it, He states it, He isn't scared thinking “uh oh, what are they going to think of Me if I say this?” He boldly proclaims the truth and then He says right there in the same vein of teaching “come” - “let me invite you, let me invite you to come and find the rest that your soul desperately needs.”

These two truths work together. They work together. Scripture doesn't have a contradiction here. Scripture doesn't have a hard time with this. Jesus doesn't have a hard time with this. They work together and they must add to our joy and worship of God. His choosing, His electing of us to salvation is predetermined.

We find more in our passage in Ephesians. We also find that His election and His choosing of us is purposeful. It's purposeful. “Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him.” There is a word “that” indicating the purpose. “That” - why? We should be holy and blameless before Him. God chose us that we might stand out, be different from other people on the earth. He planned for us to be holy, blameless, without reproach. This word actually - the “blameless” word - actually refers to the Old Testament sacrifices that the Israelites were required to bring. When they brought animals to the temple that were to be sacrificed, they needed to be animals without blemish. They would be blameless in that sense and so too our lives need to be blameless; consecrated, holy, set apart unto God.

Now when you look at this statement. The reality is, it's more than likely referring to the end, it's referring to a final position that we will be in when we stand before God and we will be in a final sense, we will be holy, we will

be completely sanctified, alright, we will be blameless when we stand before Him. That's what it says, that we should be "holy and blameless before him," when we come before Him. This is verified in other places in Scripture, in the same letter later on in Ephesians, he says "so that he might present the church to himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish." It's a reference to the end. That time when God presents the church to Himself and as Jude verified as well, "now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy."

This is awesome. Our salvation has been graciously planned in the past, God in His predetermined choosing of us, and electing of us, has made this known and then it has also been so planned in such a way that it includes the final moment, the finality, of standing before God when we will be holy and we will be blameless in the fullness of those words.

It's further evidence that God choosing us is really meant as a once for all choice of us unto himself. It's not a plan that He decided to put into motion that gave the potential for you to be saved. He didn't choose and elect to throw out the option for you. That's not what He was doing. He wasn't giving you the option to be saved. He planned that you would be saved. And the verification of that is this - that you will stand before Him and you will be holy and you will be blameless. That's amazing. That's God's doing and that's God's decision. And that's the effective nature of what God does. It works. He is faithful to His word. He is faithful to His plans. This will take place.

Of course that's not to erase the implications that this has for our life now. If it is true that God planned this in the past and it is true that this is our destination to be holy in the future. Where does that leave us now? Definitely not in a place to sit back and do nothing until that time comes. We are in the place where we understand He chose us to be holy. We are going to be holy. Let's strive to be holy. We are commanded to do so. As Peter makes very clear in his letter, even drawing from the Old Testament, "as obedient children do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'" Don't wait. This isn't a time to sit back and act like God's got it all taken care of and therefore I don't need to act or do anything. This is a time for us to recognize

this and to rejoice and worship Him by striving all the more diligently to be holy to bring glory and honor to Him.

So I will ask you, what level of priority have you given to your own personal holiness? What's the priority level that you have for your own sanctification? How important is it for you? If it was in fact God's plan from eternity past for you to be holy, and if it is God's destination for you to be completely holy, then how should you be exhibiting holiness now? I would hope that you're not taking it lightly but you are striving, and running, with every ounce of energy you have to be holy as that is the purpose that God has chosen us to Himself.

We don't just see the election, the beautiful plan of election as Paul lays out in verse four. We move into verses 5 and 6 and we see salvation's plan of adoption. Salvation's plan of adoption. It's a wonderful picture that surfaces here in verse 5, starting with the last two words of verse 4, "In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons" - "in love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons."

A wonderful glimpse that we get, a wonderful insight into God's own character in all of this. Is He emotionless? Is He Himself just kind of going through and making the plans and not connected to them at all? Not caring at all about what He is doing? Absolutely not. In love, He is doing this. In love. It's the same kind of love that He had when He set His affection and His electing purposes on Israel. As Deuteronomy 7:6-7 indicate for us, 6 "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. 7 It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples." God in His purposes, in His plans, in His ways, in His choosing of Israel and His choosing of you and I, doing it in love. He cares. His affections are set upon us.

As we see very clearly, we continue to be reminded of the temporal nature of this. This was something that happened and took place before our existence. Right, before we had anything to do with it. He predestined us, just like God's election or choosing of us, so to, in this case, His predestining of us, and adoption of us, is something that took place beforehand. The same Greek preposition "*pro*" is being used which is always indicative of

beforehand action. Both these things, being chosen, being adopted, taking place beforehand in God's plan. We have been predestined for adoption to Himself as sons. A beautiful picture. Not just being chosen, but being adopted into His family.

More than likely there is a cultural element going on here with how the Romans viewed adoption. And one commentator states that this word adoption just simply means sonship. It refers to the process in the Roman world by which a child was brought into a new family, receiving all the rights of a natural child and taking the name of the new family. It was all in. It was all in. There wasn't anything held back. If there was adoption taking place, you fully embraced that child. You fully embraced that soul into your family. Not just by name, but even by affection in everything as far as benefits and blessings that would come with it.

Think of the beauty of this picture for you and I. People that were stuck in our sin. Wanting only our sin, dead as Paul will say in Ephesians 2. Dead in our sins and transgressions, and if we did have a master, our master was ourselves, seeking to serve our own fleshly passions and desires and under the control of Satan and his own influence in our life. That's where we were. Serving ourselves. Serving Satan, walking according to the course of this world and that is to be in active rebellion against God. And yet those are the people that He adopts into His family. He adopts the rebels. He adopts you and I. He adopts the people that are set against Him and that's all that we can do. We have one ability in life and that is to run from God because of our depravity. And yet He swoops down and takes us and brings us into His family. An enemy but now seated at His table. Eating with Him. Experiencing His benefits of salvation. It's a beautiful picture and blessing for believers to have. We have been brought near into His family. This is salvation's plan of adoption.

And we learn some details about adoption here as He continues to speak to us in verses 5 and 6. First we see the possibility of this adoption. The only way that this is possible, and this is not surprising for us to see, as the text makes clear, but the only way that this is possible is through Jesus Christ. "In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ." We need this reminder again. It is only through or by the means of the work of Christ that we can be brought into His family.

And he is going to actually explain that more to us in the verses that come. He will explain the work of Christ and how it even makes it possible that a holy and righteous God could bring rebels into His household. As we mentioned earlier, it's not because He looks the other way, it's not because He fudges on His standard and decides to say "it's okay, no big deal," but it's because of the work of Jesus Christ. This beautiful picture of being adopted because of Jesus, we see in John 1:12-13, "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." And as Paul says in Galatians 3:26, "for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith" - "In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith."

As the basis of God's choosing us was His son Jesus Christ, so also the basis of God adopting us is through Jesus Christ. It's only possible, it's only available, it's only acceptable, it only happens because of what Christ has done. His work. Without the work of Christ, we would be unacceptable to God, forever locked out of His house, never welcome into His family. But Christ has changed that for us.

So not only have we been adopted and that's been possible because of the work of Christ, we also see and learn more about God and His character in this process. That is, that this is something that was actually desirable for Him. It brought pleasure to Him. It was delightful for Him. The pleasure in the adoption process, "in love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will" - "according to the purpose of His will." I love that some other English translations talk about how it's according to His good pleasure, to His kind intentions.

One commentator states this, "the choice to adopt the believer takes place in accordance with His pleasure and will, which further points to the depths of His love. It is not a cold, dispassionate choice, but a joyous one. The term for pleasure connotes the delight and joy that attend an action, and here pictures the intense satisfaction of God as He elects a former sinner to become His adopted child. God's will is uppermost as He chooses the individual and calls them to be His own and this brings Him great pleasure," something that we hardly can understand and appreciate.

When we think of our own natural responses and reactions to enemies we could hardly come to a realization or hardly think that we could have joy and pleasure in being on the same team with them and being in the same house with them and enjoying a meal with them. But this is not so with God. He finds pleasure in taking the rebel and bringing them into His family, and making them blessed beyond measure of what they even understand because of Christ. God finds pleasure and delight in bringing enemies into His family. And this needs to become our perspective towards the lost. This has to be the way that we see the lost as well. We need to have the same perspective that God does. And it is so often common that Christians will make themselves on one side and draw the line and put the world on the other and then put up the battle lines and says, “it’s combat time, it’s us against you, it’s Christians against the world.” And such thinking is quite tragic because it misses the heart of God, it misses the desire that God has, the pleasure He actually has, the delight that He has in bringing rebels into His family and seeing them experience His grace, and seeing them have their eyes opened and seeing their hearts turned soft and being able to find the joy that is in Christ alone. This is God’s perspective and it needs to be ours as well, having pleasure in seeing the lost come into His family.

Lastly, in verse 6, we see the praise that is involved in this spiritual blessing of adoption and choosing us. The praise that is involved in both His choosing of us and His adopting. “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” - “to the praise of his glorious grace.” Other translations talk about the praise of the glory of His grace and it might be confusing to think “are we praising His attributes? Are we praising His grace? How does that actually work here?” And it’s probably better to understand the term glory as the main term there receiving the attention, “to the praise of the weight and glory of who God is that is shown in his grace, to the praise of the manifestation of our great God who shows grace to us.” We praise the glorious nature of God that continues to overflow with grace towards us that’s at work in our salvation.

“To the praise of his glory” is possibly the central theme of these verses as well. Look with me at the totality of verses 3-14. We have this in verse 6 mentioned, “to the praise of his glorious grace.” Jump down to verse 12, go to verse 12. We read, “so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.” Go to verse 14,”who is the guarantee of our

inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory.” It’s very likely that this kind of forms the outline for us.

We have this kind of movement that takes place after recognizing the work of God the Father in our salvation, that is choosing us and adopting us and making this plan in eternity past, we give praise and glory unto God. And then he is going to talk about Christ and the work of Christ and what He has done, how He has offered himself on the cross and given us redemption and forgiveness. He has made known to us the mystery of His will in salvation that has been revealed and that is to the praise and glory of God. And then he will talk about the Holy Spirit and how the Holy Spirit has been given to us when we believed this message of Christ and it’s a seal upon our heart. It guarantees that inheritance that we will have when we stand before him and that is also to the praise of the glory of His grace.

It’s all about God. It brings all glory and praise to Him. It has nothing to do with us. It has zero to do with you. Don’t insert yourself into salvation. It’s not about you. It never has been and it never will be. So get yourself out of it. It's not about you. It's about God just loving to show His glory, loving to manifest His character, so that all can see His love, and all can see His justice, and His mercy, and His grace, that comes. And He gets all the glory in the end.

And this is common, you guys actually expect this. Because when you walk in and we start singing songs, you don’t expect us to sing a song, “Lord I lift my name on high, I am so great, I am intellectual, I discovered you God, I am stronger than all these other people, I am smarter...” We don’t sing those songs and if we did you would walk out. It’s so obvious, It’s so obvious just from your own understanding of following Christ that it's not about you. It’s always been about God and His glory and it will continue to be that way and Paul makes that clear when it comes to our salvation. Because some people, they want to put us in the salvation theory especially when you think about this concept of God choosing us and God adopting us and this predestination and how it happened before the foundation of the world.

So people want to make an analogy that sounds real nice that kind of has a little bit of God in there and a little bit of us, “there we were swimming in the ocean and feeling like we were going to drown, but then God came up in a rescue boat and we swam over to Him and then He saved us.” Well that

kind of puts a little bit of you in there so the analogy is not too great. Well some people say, “okay well I was drowning and then He threw the life preserver out to me and then He pulled me in and so that's the way I was saved.” Well I still have a problem with that analogy, there is too much you in there.

I think a better analogy is you are dead on the bottom of the ocean floor, right, the water has filled your lungs, you are a corpse, you are gone, you got nothing. And He swam down there and He pulled you out on to the beach and He breathed life into you. That's what God did. So who gets the glory in that? God. Surprise! Surprise! Nothing to do with us. All praise, all glory going to God. None to us. This is Paul's point. It's Paul's anthem. It's his joy to say, “whether you are eating or drinking, you are doing it to his glory.” It has nothing to do with you. This is what we are after.

Of course, it's only possible, it's only made known and it's only the reason why we can actually have this understanding is because He has given it to us and blessed these things to us in the Beloved. And as your Bible probably says, most of them do, they have the term “Beloved” with a capitalized “B.” A reference, a title, that's given to Jesus. He is the one that is described as the Beloved, when He is baptized in the Gospels. You will remember that God the Father is calling Him His beloved son. When He is on the mountain, transfigured, revealing His glory to His inner three disciples, God the Father speaks again calling Him His Beloved son. And this is the case here; that we have another reference to Jesus, “he has blessed us in the Beloved.” It is in Christ that these blessings come flowing to us. Of course, since we are in Christ, then we too receive the blessings and we are the object of God's love. He doesn't bless us and love us and forget our sin and pretend like it doesn't exist. He blesses us and loves us because we are found in His son, who is perfect and holy and righteous. It is in the Beloved. This is how it takes place. This is the glorious planning that has gone into our salvation. I mean there is so much more that can be said about the topic of salvation but just simply looking back, just simply going back to before you were born, before this world existed, we see so much glory in salvation. So much of what God has done in planning the meticulous details of this, and the Father's work in decreeing and deciding and bringing you near to Himself. That's glorious. That's amazing. That ought to move you to worship. That ought to drive you to be holy, to be blameless. That ought to drive you to bring glory and praise to God, not self. Let's pray that that happens now.

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