**“TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY”**

Ephesians 1:1-14

Whenever I start a new study I like to give a brief overview of it. So let me do that with the Book of Ephesians.

*[Show slide with map]* READ from my two studies the sections highlighted – about the city of Ephesus, when Paul started the church, when he wrote this letter, etc.

The letter to the Ephesians is rich in doctrine. It contains quite a bit regarding the theology of the church. WE are the church. Ephesians talks about who we are in Christ, how we the church were formed, and reminds us of all of the blessings we have in Christ. There are a lot of metaphors used in the NT to describe the church – a kingdom of priests, the bride of Christ, the vine and the branches, a building, a spiritual temple. All of these are similar to OT metaphors for the nation of Israel, God’s chosen people. But there is one exception. There is one unique metaphor used for the church that was not used for Israel – the “body of Christ.” We’ll see as we go thru Ephesians that Paul uses this metaphor frequently to describe the church. And we’ll also be able to see why he uses it.

 Let me begin our study this morning by asking you a question – What is the single biggest thing that has ever happened to you? I’m sure you’ve experienced many wonderful blessings in your lifetime, but what would you say is the biggest? *Our salvation, coming to Christ*

As we delve into the Book of Ephesians we’re going to start off in the first part of Ch 1 by taking a closer look at that life transforming event we refer to as “salvation.” We’re going to look at from God’s perspective.

The language of salvation in the Bible includes (from the O.T.) deliverance, victory, rescue, renew and restore; (and from the N.T.) redeem, regenerate, reborn, reconcile.

So, we are delivered, rescued, saved – but from what?

Romans 5:8-9 says: “But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God.” What is God angry about? Romans 1:18 says, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men [mankind], who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. God’s wrath then is directed toward mankind’s ungodliness. It all started way back in the Garden, Gen Ch 3, with what we refer to as “the Fall.” Adam & Eve’s sin resulted in both spiritual death and physical death. And this bent toward rebellion against God, this sin nature, this ungodliness, has been passed down from generation to generation all the way to us today. We were born into this world as sinners, lost, doomed, helpless, spiritually bankrupt and unable to save ourselves. We needed divine intervention! So God in His wonderful grace saved us. You’ve all shared your personal testimonies of how you came to believe in Christ earlier in your life. You shared your salvation experience from your vantage point. Now let’s see it from God’s perspective…

READ Ephesians 1:1-2

V1, Paul is writing this letter to the “saints who are in Ephesus” and who “are faithful in Christ Jesus.” Who are saints? Christians. A person who has believed the Gospel and has come to faith in Christ. So this letter is written to believers, to the church.

V 1 tells us that Paul is specifically addressing the saints, the Christians who are in Ephesus. Does this mean that what Paul says only applies to them? No, what Paul tells them also applies to us.

V 2 “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” A typical greeting from Paul. Under the inspiration of the HS Paul has a message to us from God Himself. So then, what we are about to read is not just Paul’s opinion. It’s insight that he’s been given by God, God who poured out on us His grace and to whom we now have peace. As saints, as children of God, we are longer under His wrath.

From v 3-14 in the original Greek is one long sentence. It’s as though Paul gets caught up in this glorious thought and can’t stop. The topic that excites him is that of our salvation. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, all 3 Persons of the Holy Trinity participated in our salvation. They all had a part to play in the salvation process.

READ Ephesians 1:3-6

Verses 3-5 focus on the part that God the Father has in our salvation.

V 3, He “has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.” The word “blessed” refers to a gift or a benefit that He has bestowed on us. Over in Eph. 2:8 it talks about our salvation as “the gift of God.” “In the heavenly places” refers to our position in Christ now that we have been saved. Over in Eph. 2:6 it says that He (God the Father) “raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” So God initiated a plan to save us – a gift of salvation to save us from God’s wrath (demonstrating His mercy) but then, on top of that, He placed us with Him in His eternal kingdom (demonstrating His grace)!

So then, looking at these verses, what is it that God the Father did? What was His part in our salvation?

V 4-5, “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world…” “In love He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.” Who chose whom according to these verses? God chose us. When did He choose us? Before the foundation of the world.” So long before I ever exercised faith and believed in Him, He chose me.

I want you to know that I believe in the absolute sovereignty of God. I also believe that God neither forces people to be saved who don’t want to be nor does He keep someone from being saved who wants to be. I believe the Bible teaches the Doctrine of Election (such as we see here in this passage). But the Bible also makes it clear that man is an agent of free will. We read verses such as “Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.” “By grace are you saved thru faith.” “Come unto Me all Ye who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” Both the concepts of God’s sovereignty and man’s free will are taught in scripture. There is an obvious “tension” between these two. At first glance they might seem as though they contradict each other. But, somehow, some way, the two work together in the economy of God. How exactly is a mystery and a discussion for another time.

God the Father chose us in Him (Jesus) before the creation. “Chose” comes from Greek word meaning “to select.” In love God the Father predestined us (determined beforehand) to adoption as sons thru Christ Jesus to Himself. “Predestined” comes from Greek word meaning “to predetermine, to foreordain.”

“Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.” (Baptist Faith and Message)

God the Father in the kind intention of His will, because of His love for us has given us a gift that we did not earn nor do we deserve. He has this great plan for an eternal kingdom and we get to be a part of it.

Did God have to save sinful mankind? Was He obligated to set up a plan of salvation?

No. A host of angels rebelled against God following the lead of Lucifer (Satan). Angels are higher created beings than man (Hebrews 2). But can these fallen angels repent and be saved? No. But God has provided a means by which WE can be saved. Why us and not the angels? Verses 5-6 tell us that it is all because of God’s predetermined plan. Bottom line – He’s God, He’s the Creator, He gets to decide, He makes the rules. This is how He set it up way back when, before Creation.

Paul wraps up this section focusing on God the Father at the beginning of v 6 with the refrain, “to the praise of His glorious grace.” And then he goes right into the next section which focuses on God the Son, “the Beloved.”

READ Ephesians 1:7-12

V 7, we have “redemption thru His blood” (death on the cross). 1 Cor. 6:20 says “For you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”

V 7, “the forgiveness of our trespasses.” “Trespasses” comes from Greek word which means “a false step, a transgression” Which trespasses have we been forgiven of? All of them!

V 8-9 “In all wisdom and insight He made known to us… the mystery of His will.” This mystery, what was hidden to OT saints that was revealed in the NT, is the church that Jesus established. Later in Eph 3:6 we read: “This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.” In the church, Gentiles get to be a part of God’s kingdom. Not just the Jews.

V 9, “Which He set forth in Christ.” God the Father’s had a purpose (v 9) and a plan (v 10). Jesus Christ came down to earth to fulfill them. Jesus was fully obedient to do the Father’s will, even to the point of death on a Roman cross.

V 11 “In Him [Jesus] we have obtained an inheritance.” We are heirs with Christ! Rom 8:17: “And if children, then heirs--heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ;” Gal 3:29: “And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise;” Titus 3:7: “so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life;” James 2:5: “Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?”

We are the beneficiaries of what Jesus did for us. Paul ends this section about what God the Son did with the refrain, v 12 “to the praise of His glory.”

Which takes us to the part that God the Holy Spirit played and continues to play in our salvation…

READ Ephesians 1:13-14

Notice that in the first part of v 13, we ourselves played a part in our salvation. What did we do? We “heard the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation, and believed in Him [in Jesus].” When we heard the gospel message in a sermon, in a lesson, in a song, however we heard it, we responded to it and believed in Jesus. We exercised faith and believed. Paul will expound on this some more later in Ch 2, v 1-9.

Well, when we responded by an act of our faith this is what the Holy Spirit did…

V 13, “He sealed us.” Eph 4:30 says the Holy Spirit of God was the One “by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” The Greek word “sealed” indicates security and permanency. This is the reason why we Baptists hold to the Doctrine of Eternal Security.

V 14, “Given as a guarantee of our inheritance.” “Guarantee” is from Greek word that means a down payment. In financial terms, the word described an amount put aside to secure a larger, longer-term financial transaction. “Until we acquire possession of it.” You could put it like this: “the deposit of HS is a little bit of heaven in our lives with a guarantee of much more yet to come.”

Paul’s focus here in Ephesians is on the role the HS plays in securing our salvation. I want to mention one other thing the HS does in regard to our salvation and that is what Jesus taught in John 16:8: “And when He comes [the Helper, the HS], He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.” So the HS plays a key role in the salvation process by convicting us of our sin and our need for a Savior and then once we’re saved He seals us, He secures us.

This section ends with the refrain, “to the praise of His glory,” V 14.

So to summarize, (1) we are the church, people make up the church. It is the body of Christ, a living organism, made up of many parts, all working together for one purpose – to glorify God. (2) The church was part of God’s plan before the foundation of the world, before we were ever born, before the world was even created, before Adam and Eve ever sinned. (3) In His sovereign plan, according to the purpose of His will, God chose us – He chose you and me – to be a part of His church. (4) God the Son in obedience to the Father came down to earth and took on human flesh, dwelt among us and redeemed us by His death on the cross. (5) The Holy Spirit then came to us at a point in time and He convicted us of our sin, our need for a Savior, and Jesus’ righteousness, how He provided the full payment for our sin, and of the coming judgment. (6) We hear the truth, the Gospel message and then we exercise our free will and by an act of our faith we believe. We trust Christ to save us. (7) The Holy Spirit then seals us for the day of redemption. We are secured eternally. And nobody can snatch us out of the Father’s hand, not even ourselves.

I don’t know if you have ever contemplated your salvation from God’s perspective, but it’s truly an amazing thing! Just to think that the God of the universe thought of us, you and me, as important enough to save. That’s an overwhelming thought! It must have overwhelmed Paul too because in verses 15 and following he breaks out into a prayer of thanksgiving. We’ll look at that next week.