

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

They are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye mistakes can be found. So he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabible.org.

Date: August 30, 2009

Title: The Immeasurable Redemptive Work of the Triune God

Text: Ephesians 1:3-14

Theme: The Triune God redeems His people by forgiving their trespasses against Him.

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Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in **the Storyline of the Bible**. She is determined by design to have a **God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching** focused on personal **discipleship** through intentional and systematic instruction; a **Global-impacting mission** that resolves to be a **church planting church**; and a **Grace-based fellowship** where disciples are invited to live under a **reigning grace** characterized by a **Gospel-driven sanctification** that celebrates a divine **monergism** to the Christian life.

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Introduction:

In Paul's opening statement there is an avalanche of descriptive words that unveil what God did in the securing of His people for Himself. Verses three through fourteen are one sentence in Greek. There are over 200 words in this one sentence. This section is often called a "doxology" because it recites what God has done and is an expression of worship to honor Him.

Our paragraph begins with the word "blessed." It is the word from which we get our English word "eulogy." This word is used eight times in the New Testament. It is always used in the context of God (Mark 14:61; Luke 1:68; Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 2 Cor. 1:3; 11:31; Eph. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3). The word carries the idea of adoration, worship, and glorification. Thus, the context is that of a praise/hymn. We must keep this in mind when setting ourselves to understanding the opening paragraph. It was not meant to be a point of division or even theological debate. Its intent was to set us on a path of personal praise.

This becomes notable and apparent as we work through the thought. The conclusion should become obvious and spontaneous.

THE BIG PICTURE:

The Storyline:

The election of Israel and her deliverance from Egypt pictures the electing activity of God and His deliverance of those elected from the land and reign of sin and death. Here is a picture realized and a promise fulfilled.

The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians gives us opportunity to pause and once more reflect on the enormity of God's grace in the securing for Himself worshippers who will verbalize their praise of Him forever. To think that God wrote a story that includes such significant displays of a grace that is freely bestowed and lavishly dispensed is and should be staggering. Here we see how each member of the Tri-unity engaged so that His people would be redeemed from sin's debt by canceling the stronghold it had on them. This is the part this letter has in the unfolding of God's grace toward the undeserving, the unworthy, and the unwanting. This is the story behind all the stories you and I live in and tell. No matter who we are or what we might be engaged in, this is the foundation from which all of life is lived.

The Problem:

What is our problem? Our problem is in the casual manner that we think on and treat the redemption from sin that the triune God secured for transgressors. Initially we are overwhelmed with the thought that God loves us and is willing to save us from sin. Yet, in time we forget what this means. The Holy Spirit demands and desires that we not forget. Here is the story of how God forgave His people their trespasses against Him.

Questions:

1. What part does each person within the Trinity have in the securing of God's people?
2. What part do individuals have in securing their place as God's people?
3. What purpose lies behind the choosing and pre-planning? What is the outcome of God's activity?
4. How is our redemption accomplished? What action did God have to do to secure our redemption?
5. What are you thinking, what are you feeling?
6. What parts do Ephesians play in the revelation of God's person and work?
7. What does it mean when we suggest that the election of God is primarily corporate and not individual understanding that the corporate is made up of individuals?

Verse 3

1. Because the blessings are "spiritual," does this make them any less real?
2. Is a spiritual blessing tangible?
3. Why should the believer consider himself blessed?
4. With what has the believer been blessed?
5. Why this song of praise?

Verse 4

6. When did this "choosing" take place?
7. Why did God choose us before the foundation of the world?

Verse 5

8. What does the idea of adoption convey?
9. Is there any room for boasting on behalf of the adopted?

Verse 7

10. What is verse 7 doing?
11. How is the Beloved Son described?
12. What price was paid for our redemption?
13. What does redemption do?
14. What motivates God to redeem?
15. Where is boasting in all of this?

Verse 9

16. What is v9 suggesting?

Verses 13, 14

17. What guarantee do we have that it will come to pass?
18. What is this sealing of the Holy Spirit of promise?

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

To Know: The Holy Spirit desires for us to know the immeasurable nature of God's provision.

To Choose: The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose His sufficiency to save rather than relying on our own inability.

To Feel: The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of resting in His finished work.

Outline:

The whole theme is centered on our redemption. In this one paragraph we are confronted by the weight of what God, in the totality of His essence and economy, has done for us. Why should the believer consider himself blessed? With what has the believer been blessed? Why this song of praise? This sentence/paragraph answers for us these questions.

We know who is the primary cause or mover and it is God. We know who are the recipients of God's action and it is the "us." But who are the "us"? The "us" are all those from every tribe, tongue, people and nation in every era found in every geographical location who have loathed themselves and looked to God alone and only for the salvation of their eternal soul. This passage speaks to a distinct stage in the drama of redemption. It speaks to those who are "in Christ." Yet redemption does not have either Jew or Gentile, male or female, and bond or free. Redemption rejects ethnicity, gender and status.

I. The immeasurable work of God involves the Father (vv. 3-6)

Notice how initially, because God is blessed, He can bless. This is equally true when we speak of God blessing us with spiritual blessings. These blessings find their nature in who God is.

A. He blessed us (v. 3)

1. How did He bless us? - by placing us in Christ (v. 3)

Everything we enjoy as the people of God are from God and sourced in Jesus Christ, the Messiah King. In Jewish thought, "the king represents his people, so that what happens to him happens to them, and what is true of him is true of them."¹

"As far as Paul is concerned, any picture of God which doesn't now have Jesus in the middle of it is a distortion or a downright fabrication."²

Notice the emphasis the story of God places on the Son of God.

- v. 3 Spiritual blessings in Christ
- v. 4 Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world
- v. 5 Adoption as sons through Jesus Christ
- v. 6 He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved
- v. 7 In Him we have redemption
- v. 9 He made know to us the mystery of His will
- v. 9 He purposed in Him
- v. 10 All things are summed up in Christ
- v. 11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance
- v. 12 We hope in Christ
- v. 13 You were sealed in Him

He is no less or no more important than the other two persons within the Trinity, yet the Godhead wrote the story in such a way that the Son, Jesus Christ stands center stage in the great redemptive story of God. "Paul, almost relentlessly, sees that everything the one God has done he has done in and through Jesus the Messiah."³

Notice how Paul speaks to the economy of the Trinity when he says, "The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Yet throughout this initial sentence there is also the ontology of the Trinity by the workings of all three persons within the Trinity.

I believe we read "spiritual blessings" and "heavenly places" as something that is less than real. Yet the Scripture always rents the veil that separates the spiritual from the secular, the heavenly from the earthly.

B. He chose us (v. 4)

"Chosen" (**eklegomai**) = To choose, select, pick or call out. Divine election is a constant theme in Paul's letters (Rom. 8:29-33; 9:6-26; 11:5,7,28; 16:13; Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13; Titus 1:1). This word complements the idea that the Church is a called out assembly. We have been called out of the kingdom of darkness and called into the kingdom of His beloved Son. It is impossible to get around the idea that God has always and will forever set apart His people by calling them out.

1. When did He choose us? - before the foundation of the world (vv. 4a, 5 [cf. "predetermined"])
2. Why did He choose us? - to be holy and blameless before Him (v. 4b)

Because our trespasses have been forgiven, we can now be holy and blameless before Him. If there were any unforgiven sin, we would be unholy and censured. The idea that you and I have any unforgiven sin in our lives is contrary to this thought.

By the time we reach the end of this doxological statement we see the certainty of His work to bring us before Him holy and without blame.

The word "holy" in verse 4 and in verse 1 are the same words. "Holiness is the result - not the basis - of God's choosing."

I believe it would be foolish on my part to venture too far into the discussion as to whether or not this or that idea is correct as it relates to Systematic Theology. This discussion can legitimately happen in other context. However, I would be equally amiss if I did not point out what I believe the text does say. **First**, God chooses us/the church. This appears to be primary. **Second**, those who are chosen to be in Christ do hope (v. 12), listen and believe (v. 13). **Third**, how these two elements interface has depths that we are not humanly capable of plunging. **Fourth**, although we seem to idolize the individual in our current culture the

emphasis for Paul is on the Church as a whole and not on you as an individual. He has chosen you only as you are a part of the larger whole.

“In this section Paul is thinking of the Christians as the chosen people of God, and his mind runs along three lines.”⁴

- a. He thinks of the fact of God’s choice.

“Paul never thought of himself as having chosen to do God’s work. He always thought of God as having chosen him. Here precisely lies the wonder. It would not be so wonderful that man should choose God; the wonder is that God should choose man.”⁵

- b. He thinks of the bounty of God’s choice.

“God chose us to bless us with the blessings which are to be found only in heaven. There are certain things which a man can discover for himself. God chose us to give us those things which he alone can give.”⁶

- c. He thinks of the purpose of God’s choice.

“God chose us that we should be holy and blameless.” Somehow the Christian is neither of the world nor from the world. Christians are to be notably different than the non-Christian.

C. He adopted us (vv. 5, 6)

The word “predestined” means, “To decide or mark out the boundary beforehand. To foreordain, predetermine.” Predestination means to “pre-determine.” “He predestined us with the goal of adoption.

1. How were we adopted? – Through Jesus Christ for Himself.
2. On what basis were we predetermined for adoption? – On the basis of His kind intention of His will.

Throughout this sentence there is constant reference made to purpose and plan. Let us never forget that God is the author of a story He wrote, whereby, He would gather around Him worshippers from every era, ethnicity, geography and gender.

3. Why were we predetermined for adoption? – So that we would be to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

Grace is God’s response to man’s need. God’s dealings with us are on a grace basis. Any other basis would lead to our damnation. The ultimate goal of this activity is that we might be to the praise of His glory. We are testimonies to His grace.

I fully recognize that grace is a prevailing theme of all our studies. At the centerpiece of the biblical story is Jesus Christ. The Godhead's activity to us through the Son is all grace driven and for His glory.

You and I do not find ourselves in this privileged position because of our intellect or anything innate. We are here only because He freely bestowed on us our position in the Beloved. It is because of the Beloved that we are a blessed people.

II. The immeasurable work of God involves the Son (vv. 7-13)

A. He redeemed us (vv. 7, 8)

"To redeem" means "a releasing effected by payment of ransom; redemption, deliverance, liberation procured by the payment of a ransom. To buy back, to buy out of slavery (cf. Gal. 4:5; Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5).

"It is the word used for ransoming a man who is a prisoner of war or a slave; for freeing a man from the penalty of death. In every case the conception is the delivering of a man from a situation from which he was powerless to liberate himself or from a penalty which he himself could never have paid."⁷

It is impossible to separate our paragraph from the imagery and greater story of God as told in the nation of Israel. God redeems His people from the land and reign of sin and death.

1. What does our redemption result in? – the forgiveness of our trespasses (This becomes necessary in light of 2:1 – "dead in trespasses and sins")

Our outstanding sin debt was forgiven thus redeeming us from its control. Our sin debt against God has been cancelled, pardoned, forever and always removed. This thought ties in with our adoption by the Father through Jesus Christ.

Adoption in the context of Roman culture and law spoke significantly to this idea. "The person who has been adopted had all the rights of a legitimate son in his new family and completely lost all rights in his old family. In the eyes of the law he was a new person. So new was he that even all debts and obligations connected with his previous family were abolished as if they had never existed. This is what Paul says that God has done for us. We were absolutely in the power of sin and of the world; God, through Jesus, took us out of that power into his; and that adoption wipes out the past and makes us new."⁸

2. What means were used to cancel sin's debt? – through His blood

"The cost of Christ's blood is the measure of the wealth of God's unmerited favor to every believer."⁹ "That our redemption cost so great a price, the blood of Christ, is the supreme

evidence of the riches of the Divine grace. And the measure of what God does for us is nothing less than the limitless wealth of His loving favor."¹⁰

3. On what basis were we redeemed? - According to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us.

Notice how this note is struck throughout this opening sentence (vv. 6, 12, 14). What God does is done for His glory. We are the beneficiaries of His purpose to glorify Himself through the redemption of transgressors. "In proportion to God's grace we have forgiveness."

- B. He made known to us the mystery (vv. 9, 10)

There is a mystery previously hidden but is now being made known. The revelatory mystery involves the notion that the Gentiles are now fellow-heirs and members of God's redemptive work. Paul was specifically the one to whom God officially revealed church truth (Eph. 3:8). The mystery of His will is specifically the full revelation of the plan of redemption.

1. On what basis was this knowledge given? - According to His kind intention which He purposed in Him
2. What is the content of this mystery? - The summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.

The consequence of God's redemptive activity unites all things in Christ. Every division and dissension that exists in the body of Christ is completely contrary to the cross work of Jesus Christ. There is a future point in time when the full culmination of God's story will be performed. It is to this event that all of history is not only pointing, but also rushing toward.

The word choice is telling. "Gather together" (**anakelphalaiomai**), means, "To sum up, to repeat summarily, to condense into a summary." It is only used twice in the New Testament (Rom. 13:6; Eph. 1:10). All things shall ultimately be gathered under one head, being Christ.

This is one of the aspects that make the Christian unique within the world. We believe history is "His story." "Andre Maurois says: 'The universe is indifferent. Who created it? Why are we here on this puny mud-heap spinning in infinite space? I have no the slightest idea, and I am quite convinced that no one has the least idea.'"¹¹

All of God's actions are orchestrated in such a way as to bring Him the greatest glory and for the recipients good. In the outworking of God's eternal purpose each part is masterfully played and laid. What we currently see through a glass dimly will be openly and clearly seen in the encroaching future.

- C. He secured for us an inheritance (vv. 11-13a)

Again, let us continue to cast our current study in the drama of Israel's deliverance from Egypt and the hope of their promised inheritance. God is fulfilling in Christ His promises to His people. We are receiving an inheritance. Notice four aspects of this inheritance.

1. The inheritance was **predetermined**

Same Greek word found in verse 5 (**proorizo**)

2. The inheritance was according to His **purpose and plan** who works all things after the counsel of His will,

"Purpose" (**prothesis**) means, "A setting forth of a thing, placing of it in view." "Worketh" (**energeo**) - "To be operative, be at work, put forth power." This is an interesting play on words with **boula** and **thelema**.

"The combination of **boulen** and **thelematos** gives a forceful emphasis of God's sovereignty for including the Jewish believers in the Church."¹² "His will may be disobeyed, but his ultimate purpose cannot be frustrated, for He overrules the disobedience of His creatures in such a way that it sub serves His purpose (Acts 4:27-28; Prov. 16:4)."¹³

3. The inheritance was so that we would be to the **praise** of His glory.

"Christ is the center of God's plan. Whether the universe or the individual Christian is in view, it is only in relationship to Christ that there is a meaningful future destiny."

4. The inheritance is **appropriated** by believing the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation (cf. Rom. 10:17)

What is the inheritance? Does our passage reveal to us the nature of this inheritance? If I am controlled by the immediate context, then the inheritance is the redemption from sin's sentence by the forgiving of my trespasses and my adoption into His family. The Holy Spirit is God's guarantee that He will complete the work He alone began. There is an "already-not yet" aspect to God's redemptive activity. I am saved, I am being saved, and I will be saved. The certainty of all this sits embedded in the Trinity of God. Friend, let us remember that what was secured by grace cannot be sustained by works. There is nothing about any of this that speaks to your strength or sufficiency. It is always and forever about Him.

Not only is this the redemption of the church but also the redemption of all things by the summing up of all things in Christ. This is the fuller and holistic aspect to God's eternal purpose.

- D. He sealed us with the Holy Spirit of promise (v. 13b)

What guarantee do we have that it will come to pass? Vv. 13,14 “The sealing of the Holy Spirit” “God is the one who seals, Christ is the sphere in which the seal is done; and the Holy Spirit is the instrument of the seal.”¹⁴

III. The immeasurable work of God involves the Holy Spirit (vv. 13b, 14)

A. He is the seal

“Sealed” means, “To set or mark with a seal.” The divine ownership of the believer and the divine guarantee of eternal security because of the indwelling Holy Spirit who Himself is the seal (cf. 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 4:30). God has sealed us with the Holy Spirit. This makes us secure concerning our end. It is His stamp of approval and identifying us as true.

B. He is the pledge

“Earnest” means, “A good-faith down payment.” The pledge speaks to a future point assuring the completion of the transaction. “The word Paul uses for ‘guarantee’ here is a word used at the time in legal or commercial transactions.” When my wife and I purchased a home we gave a ‘down payment’, guaranteeing the full sum to come in the future when the details were complete.” Unlike our transaction which we can default on or lose, this transaction has as its source and certainty God Almighty the Holy Spirit. “The spirit is the ‘down payment’: part of the promised future, coming forwards to meet us in the present.”¹⁵

“The Greek word is *arrabon*. The *arrabon* was a regular feature of the Greek business world. It was a part of the purchase price of anything, paid in advance as a guarantee that the rest would in due time be paid.”¹⁶

1. The seal identifies ownership

“The possession of the Holy Spirit is the seal which shows that a man belongs to God.” Paul says as much in Romans 8.

2. The seal guarantees the outcome

God will finish what He began (1 Thess. 5:23, 24). All whom He calls will come. What God predetermines will come to pass. What is this sealing of the Holy Spirit of promise? **First**, it is the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit. **Second**, it is the guarantee of the Father that He will keep His word. **Third**, it is the assurance of the believer that God will keep His word.

3. What is the outcome of this immeasurable work by the triune God - to the praise of His glory

Let me illustrate with an image found throughout the Bible found in Isaiah 19. Listen carefully to this language.

¹⁸ “In that day five cities in the land of Egypt will be speaking the language of Canaan and swearing [allegiance] to the LORD of hosts; one will be called the City of Destruction. ¹⁹ In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD near its border. ²⁰ And it will become a sign and a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt; for they will cry to the LORD because of oppressors, and He will send them a Savior and a Champion, and He will deliver them. ²¹ Thus the LORD will make Himself known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day. They will even worship with sacrifice and offering, and will make a vow to the LORD and perform it. ²² And the LORD will strike Egypt, striking but healing; so they will return to the LORD, and He will respond to them and will heal them. ²³ In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrians will come into Egypt and the Egyptians into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. ²⁴ In that day Israel will be the third [party] with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, ²⁵ whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, “Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance” (Isa. 19:18-25).

Isaiah 20 paints their current predicament, but Isaiah 19 speaks of a future where all the nations shall worship God. What God promises in our current passage through sealing and pledging He will perform. Currently it is impossible to think of Egypt, Assyria and Israel as co-pilgrims and identifiably the people of God, yet God has made a promise and He will keep His word.

Shepherding the Sheep:

1. Have you been forgiven of your trespasses? If not, then none of this is true of you. The only way for you to receive this blessing is by believing the message of truth. There is nothing more or less than you can do.
2. If you have been forgiven of your trespasses, then you need to start praising God for the wonder of all this.
3. Let us not cheapen the immeasurable nature of our inheritance by treating it so casually. The entire Godhead is brought into play in order to set aright your displacement from God.

“We should remember that all genuine Christian life and action flows out of worship. True worship of the true God cannot help telling and retelling, with joy and amazement, the story of what this God has done in Jesus the Messiah.”¹⁷

4. Here you are sitting in the Ephesian Church and the pastor stands up and reads this epistle to you. What are you thinking? What is your response? Let me suggest several.
 - First, God loves us and accepts us as sons in Christ Jesus.
 - Second, we are here by His design.
 - Third, He takes pleasure in what He is doing in us.
 - Fourth, we are recipients of His grace.
 - Fifth, we are here for His glory.
 - Sixth, our end is certain, we are eternally secure.
 - Seventh, we can live a victorious, confident life in Christ.
 - Eighth, we have no room in which to boast or glory in personal accomplishments. It is all of Him.

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- ¹ N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: the Prison Epistles*, 6.
² N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: the Prison Epistles*, 5.
³ N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: the Prison Epistles*, 6.
⁴ William Barclay, *Ephesians*, 77.
⁵ William Barclay, *Ephesians*, 77.
⁶ William Barclay, *Ephesians*, 77.
⁷ William Barclay, *Ephesians*, 81.
⁸ William Barclay, *Ephesians*, 80.
⁹ BKC.
¹⁰ Salmond.
¹¹ William Barclay, *Ephesians*, 81.
¹² BKC, Dallas, p. 618.
¹³ Bruce, *Ephesians*, p. 263.
¹⁴ BKC, Dallas, p. 619.
¹⁵ N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: the Prison Epistles*, 13.
¹⁶ William Barclay, *Ephesians*, 87.
¹⁷ N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: the Prison Epistles*, 6.