

PLANNED GRACE: CHOSEN (Ephesians 1:1-14)

Intro: Today we begin a 12 week sermon series working verse by verse through the book of Ephesians: **One of, if not the, riches and most beautiful books of the bible! If you had the words of this book, 6 short chapters, flowing in your heart, you would not only be completely transformed you would be a bible expert.**

Now lets dive in: For The first few verses give us a good introduction to the book as a whole:

The author of Ephesians is the missionary, pastor and key leader of the 1st century church, Paul...

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God (v. 1)

The people receiving this letter are Christians, gathered together as the church, in ancient city of Ephesus:

To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus (v. 1)

Now there are a few things that we need to understand about the city of Ephesus:

Ephesus was the 4th largest city in the world at the time this was written. (250,000 people).

Historians tell us that Ephesus was as a **wealthy city**, however it was also a **sex-crazed, materialistic, politically corrupt city!**

Not only that, Religiously, it was a out of control.

The city had 50 different temples, including the largest Temple of the ancient world, dedicated to **Artemis**, one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world.

So, Its no surprise then that since Ephesus was a sex crazed city and a very religious city that Most of the temples offered some kind of prostitution as part of their worship rituals to their so called gods.

“What happened in Ephesus stayed in Ephesus”

But, what’s interesting about this letter is that, given the filth of their city, it isn’t focused on telling people what to do or what not to do! **That is not the message of Ephesians!**

The message of Ephesians is found in the very next verse:

² Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 2).

“Grace” is the message of Ephesians and Paul’s goal is to see God’s people awakened to the Good News of God’s Grace.

Hence we read in Ephesians 5:

This is why it is said: "Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you" (Ephesians 5:14).

Ephesians is an **alarm clock** that awakens you from the delusion that life depends on what you do or don’t do and frees you to live by the grace of God!

When the prophet Jonah woke up to God’s grace he declared

“Salvation comes from the LORD,” - Jonah 2:9

And that’s the message of Ephesians! From beginning to end, salvation belongs to the Lord, even your faith, is a gift from God!

The empty wisdom of human religion proclaims:

- **What goes around comes around.**
- **God helps those who help themselves.**
- **You get what you pay for.**

But grace speaks an entirely different word!

- **By God’s grace, we get what someone else paid for. We get what Christ paid for!**
- **By grace, God helps those who not only *can’t* help themselves, they don’t even want to.**
- **By grace, what goes around stops at the foot of the cross, never to come around again.**

What we need isn’t a **better purpose**, another **prayer**, or another **plan for self-improvement**. What we all need is to “WAKE UP” to God’s wonderful and undeserved love. We need to WAKE UP to the grace of God!

Reality is we are so prone to fall asleep and forget that we are saved by grace and live by grace! And Ephesians is 6 chapters unpacking the riches of God’s glorious Grace!

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace 8 that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, 9 he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, 12 in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.
This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Paul comes right out of the gate praising God! Why? Because God the Father has given us Every Spiritual blessing there is!

- Not just some but EVERY last one of them!

Q: Where does Paul say we find them? “In Christ”

- In fact, 11x in this one long 202 word Spirit-Inspired run-on sentence we are reminded that all of God's blessing are found “In Christ”

Just so we are clear: Blessed is a very churchy word. “Bless them” “Bless their heart” “God bless you”. To be *blessed* or to receive blessing from God is literally to receive life from God who is the source of all life!

What Paul is driving home is that there is no blessing to be had, no life to be had outside of Jesus Christ!

We spend our lives **counting our worries**, counting our **problems**, counting **our days**. This morning let us count a few of the infinite blessings we have been given by God in Jesus Christ!

Q: How has God blessed us in Christ Jesus?

1. GOD CHOSE US

4 For **he chose us** in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

This is an awesome statement! Before the world was ever established, God knew you and loved you.

IOW, There has never been a time in all of eternity past when God did not know you, cherish you, and planned to redeem and save you!

Ultimately what this means is this: **Before we had done anything good or bad God chose you!** He knew you! He set his love on you!

ILL: My first Car -When he looked under the hood he said I needed an new transmission. I needed new wires, new.... I needed a new car! The owner probably knew this and that is why the price was so good! At that very moment I wanted to give it back.

BL: God knew what was under the hood before he choose you!

- **Which means you don't have to be holy to be chosen by God.**
- **The Crushing blows of what you have done, you've done to much, you gone to far....**
- **God saying it doesn't matter because he chose you before you could do anything good or bad!**
- **God chose you knowing full well that you and I were messed up under the hood and he choose us to repair us, to make us new!**

4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world **to be holy and blameless in his sight.**

- **God chose us before we had done anything good or bad, yet he chose us to make us into something!**
- **He is going to make us holy, he is going to make us blameless, but this is not why he choose us!**

Q: WHY DID HE CHOOSE YOU?

In one of the most beautiful and mystifying passages of the OT, when God was explaining to Israel why he chose them he said this,

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, 8 but **it is because the Lord loves you. - Deuteronomy 7:7-8**

Before we ever did anything good or bad, before the foundation of the world, God set his love on us just because!

- Love doesn't really have an explanation!

ILL: I think of it as the way I love my daughter, Kennedy.

That's the one relationship where I experience love for someone that doesn't have an explanation. I don't love her because she is lovely, I just love her.

I have no questions that God chose me, because I am quite sure that if God had not chosen me I should never have chosen him; and I am sure he chose me before I was born, or else he never would have chosen me afterward; and he must have elected me for reasons unknown to me, for I never could find any reason in myself why he should have looked upon me with special love. So, I fell like I am forced to accept this doctrine. - C.H. Spurgeon

ILL: VOICE

God spun his chair around before you ever started singing! I want you on my team!

APP: Q: How do I know if I'm chosen?

Now, Christian, if you're struggling (because many do) wondering if you're chosen, you can know your chosen if you're convicted of your sin and you trust in Jesus Christ.

- Do you trust in Jesus? Do you hate sin and love Jesus?
- Do you recognize that you have rebelled against God and deserve death?
- Do you recognize that Jesus died in your place?
- Do you recognize that Jesus drank every last drop of judgment in your place on the cross?

If you answer yes, then you are chosen!

3 Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

APP: For the Christian in here this morning that full of despair, doubts, or your like me and your weary - God wants us to hear not his whisper from heaven but his shout. And his shout from heaven says, "Before the foundations of the world, I chose you! I loved you! and you are mine!"

Let that wash over you this morning...you are chosen! You are loved! You belong to God!

T/S:

2. GOD ADOPTED US

In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Adoption means that we weren't part of his family, but he made us part of his family.

And this is not God merely tolerating us!

APP: I tolerate hot humid Atlanta summers! I tolerate the Atlanta Traffic. I tolerate a bad back, I deal with it! When I tolerate something I typically still don't like it, I just put up with it!

God does bring us close to just tolerate us!

No, God looks at us who have everything wrong with them, and he says, **Im not just going to bring you into my house as an employee, I want to make you family!**

Christianity is all about a relationship with the Father!

- Its about God taking people who are foes and making them family!
- Its about God looking at rebels, members of a traitor race. And saying "I'll make you mine."

Listen, We have family that have found out the worst thing about us and want nothing to do with us anymore! God knew the worst thing about us beforehand and still chose to bring us into his family!

T/S:

Q: How did God Make You His?

7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace 8 that he lavished on us.

The way God makes us his, Paul says, is through the blood of Jesus, Through the forgiveness of sins.

Listen when we come into this world, its like God gave us a pen and every action we do is permanent.

Q: Now, Have you Ever tried to erase something with a pen? It doesn't work. Just makes more of a mess.

- No matter how hard you try, no matter how much good deeds you do, they cant take away your sin debt! You cant erase it!

Future Obedience Doesn't Cancel Past Debts! Only The Blood of Jesus Does!

On the cross, Christ purchased our salvation in full to set us free. Paul puts it like this in Colossians:

13 When you were dead in your sins . . . God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. 15 And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross (Colossians 2:13-15)

BL: For God to PROVIDE such a sacrifice for our sins is amazing Grace. But For God to BECOME the sacrifice for our sins is grace beyond our comprehension!

Q: What does it mean to be forgiven “In Christ”?

Best way I can explain this, to be “In Christ” is to think of it in terms of **Geography**

Say its December and you live “In Chicago”

- There are many things you have to put up with “**In Chicago**”: You have **snow you have to shovel, freezing below zero** temperatures you have to deal with, **frustrations and inconveniences** that take place because you are in a place where things are really really cold!

But what if I told you about a glorious land call “Hawaii”

- In Hawaii they **don’t know what snow is**, In Hawaii they **don’t wear snow boots**, in Hawaii they **don’t have to shovel snow**, in Hawaii they don’t have to **scrap the ice off their cars**, in Hawaii they don’t **need space heaters** because its **80% every day of the year!**

So when Paul says we have been forgiven “In Christ” he is saying

- “**In this world**” you have to deal with the **guilt of your sin**, its their, you cant change it, you cant erase it. **Oh but in Christ...**
- **For those of us who are “In Christ”** - There is **no such thing as guilt**, In Christ there is **No condemnation**, In Christ there is **No punishment**, In Christ there is **No shame!**
- Why? Because when I am in Christ, God took **my sin, shame and guilt** and **put it on Jesus**
- **So when he looks at my past, whats going on in your life right now, and your future he sees Christ!**

If your in Christ you are guilt free! You are forgiven of all your sins! Because of the blood of Jesus!

7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace 8 that he lavished on us.

Q: What does Riches mean? It means **God’s grace Never runs out! Forgiveness never runs out.** Forgiveness is **never withheld!**

- **IOW**, There will Never be a time when come to God with confession and repentance and he says, **Im spent!**
- It means, **there is No line you cant cross that God’s grace hasn’t already been and pulled someone back home!**

APP: So what does this mean for you right here right now: It means When accusers, whether physical or spiritual, come at you and say, “You don’t deserve heaven or God!” How do you respond? A Christian can say, “**Absolutely! You don’t know the half of it! I deserve death! But God has lavished me with the riches of his grace found in Christ Jesus!**” And his grace never runs out!

T/S

Q: How Sure Can We Be That We Will Make It To The End?

13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.

Beautiful way this passage ends: **Its says God the Father CHOSE US, God the Son Saved Us, God the Holy Spirit Seals us!**

God the Holy Spirit in the Christian is God’s **mark, his seal, his signature, or his downpayment** that the same way God started **this work, he is going to finish this work!**

That why Paul in verse 14, says God the Father has given us the Holy Spirit as a **“deposit guaranteeing of our inheritance.”**

Here is the thing: When you give someone a downpayment your saying **“I’m good for rest of it.”**

- **A downpayment is you guaranteeing your coming back to pay the remaining balance!**

The Holy Spirit’s work in our lives assures us that God is going to finish what he started!

**OUR GREAT GOD DOESN'T OVERPROMISE AND UNDERDELIVER
OUR GOD DOESN'T DO THINGS HALF WAY!
NO, WHAT OUR GOD STARTS, OUR GOD COMPLETES!**

6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Q: Practically, What does this mean for us? It means there is nothing in the universe strong enough to remove God’s chosen ones from his hands.

- **Not your sin.**
- **Not your fears.**
- **Not the darkness that gnaws at your heart that no one else knows about.**

- **Nothing in your future.**
- **Nothing in your past.**
- **Nothing in all creation.**
- **Nothing period can separate you from God's love.**

38 For I am **convinced** that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

T/S:

Q: Why Did God Do It This Way?

From vs. 3 when the process of our salvation begins to vs. 14 when it is over, God is one taking all the action!

In this is one, long 202-word sentence **there are 24 verbs, or action sequences in it: God does 20 of them, and only 4 of them we do.**

- vs. 3, God blesses;
- vs. 4, he chooses;
- vs. 5, he predestines and adopts
- vs. 6, he bestows grace;
- vs. 7, he redeems and forgives;
- vs. 8, he lavishes;
- vs. 9, he makes known and he purposes;
- vs. 10, he unites together in Christ;
- vs. 11, he works;
- vs. 13, he seals.

What 4 do we do?

- vs. 13, we listen
- vs. 11, we receive
- vs. 13, we believe
- vs. 12, we hope

Q: What part of salvation are we responsible for? ABSOLUTELY NOTHING! We did all the sinning. God did all the saving. From begging to end the work of Salvation is a work of our Triune God- God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit!

BL: **We get the grace; God gets the glory.**

Q: Why does God do things the way that he does them? For the praise of his glory!

That why Paul repeats the phrase "To the praise of his glory" 3x!

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— 6 **to the praise of his glorious grace**, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

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