

## **The Longest Sentence** (Eph 1:3—14)

The longest sentence in the bible is also one of the most powerful passages in the bible. I think it would be of great benefit for us to look into these verses deeply and allow them to be at home in our hearts. The words of the Apostle Paul serve to lift us to a place of which we can only dream. But, even that does not describe the glories that are ours. “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us” (Eph 3:20). Let us begin by taking it verse by verse, and at some points, phrase by phrase, and even word by word.

### **Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,**

Praise is due to the Father! Our relationship with the Father is dependant upon Jesus Christ. Jesus declares that “no man can come to the Father except through me.” The Father is introduced to us for the first time in Jesus. “No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*” (John 1:18). True praise comes from an appreciation of the Father. True praise comes from a deep knowledge of the Father and His ways. The Father is worthy of our praise. We could rightly pronounce these words but not truly be praising the Father. Paul goes on to tell us why the Father is worthy of a response such as this. We in this age have a special reason to pronounce such a deserving response to the Most High God and Father.

### **who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ...**

Paul gives us some context for the thought of praise to the Father. There are some special things the Father has done which should give us cause to erupt in praise. He has blessed us. Everyone wants to be blessed. Many of our prayers revolve around us asking for God’s blessing for ourselves and others. This verse says that God has blessed us already! Blessing is identified and appreciated by those who are knowledgeable of what the Father has done for us. What is meant by the phrase “heavenly realms.” It refers to the source of the blessings. The blessings are outside of this world, not related to or have their origin in this world’s frame of reference. We will define the blessings more later in the passage, but we can see from this phrase, they are not necessarily related to earthly things. But, note that all earthly things came from God. We are not saying that these blessings are for a later use. They are revealed to us now and have great benefit here and now.

“With every spiritual blessing in Christ” is also important in identifying the source and quality of these blessings. First, the idea that “every” spiritual blessing is

mind blowing. Does “every” mean every? Most will limit God here when God has not limited Himself. If God says “every,” why should we back away from this word? We are dealing with a God who can deliver “every” if He desires to do so. We already saw that the blessings are out of this world, in the heavenly realms. Notice the “every” is not divided up into some for you and some for me. The word means that I have “every” spiritual blessing and so do you. This will limit exactly what the blessings are as we shall see later.

“Spiritual blessing” Some have thought that because the blessings are said to be “spiritual” in nature that they are not tangible, material and useable in this world. God is a spirit. The material world came from a being who is invisible. Everything that has been created is a spiritual blessing. What does God have in mind by telling us that “every spiritual blessing” is ours? Is this an exaggeration? Some have read right past this phrase and applied lesser meanings to it. They seem to doubt that the words can mean “every spiritual blessing” and seek something they can imagine. For some reason, we simply doubt that God means what He says here.

Admittedly there are difficulties with interpreting this phrase literally. First, how could this happen for everyone? Second, why would God do this for everyone? These questions are answerable from the text. When a verse presents such insurmountable ideas, we should not shrink into our viewpoints, but search the context for the intended meaning. The last two words “in Christ” tell us some of what is Paul is referring. The “every spiritual blessing in Christ” is a target for the blessings.

#### *Everyone in Christ is ONE*

The phrase “in Christ” is exclusive. Not everyone is in Christ. The “every” blessing is limited to only those in Christ. Really, God has blessed his Son in limitless ways. He has given everything over to the Son.

<sup>2</sup>My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, <sup>3</sup>in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 2:3, 4).

The mystery of God is that God has taken numbers of people, Jews and Gentiles, and placed them “in Christ.” By virtue of that fact, they receive all the blessings Christ has. We share everything with Christ. Since this is so, when God looks at us, He sees us as His Son. The mystery is that we are so united to Christ that we are said to be married to Christ. “This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church” (Eph 5:32). Married to Christ means that we are ONE with him, we are bone of his bone, flesh of His flesh. We are members of His body. “But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit” (1Cor 6:17). We are forever linked to Christ in this way. If then, you are “in Christ” then you are a new spiritual creation, you are no longer Jew or Gentile,

you are Christ's, His bride, ONE with him in a special relationship. That is the mystery. "His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace" (Eph 5:15b). He created ONE "new" man, not an old man. When we believe in Christ, we are no longer a Jew or a Gentile (1Cor 12:13).

### SON

The idea that God has united us with His Son in such a way that we are said to be one with Him is interesting. Paul gives us more on just what all this means when writing to the Galatians.

<sup>16</sup>The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed, meaning one person, who is Christ. Gal 3:16

Paul makes it a point that the promise referred to Abraham's seed, not seeds. He is saying that the promise is not referring to those who are under the law, it refers to Jesus Christ. In other words, some Jews were saying that the promises were given to those who keep the law, but they were given 430 years before there was a law. The promise is not dependant upon the law at all. So Paul makes the point that the promises refer to one, not many. In Christ all the promises are fulfilled. If God were to make the promise conditioned on those who keep the law, then the promise is invalid.

<sup>26</sup>You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, <sup>27</sup>for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup>There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup>If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Gal 3:26-29

We are sons of God. This is so because we have believed in Christ. It does not matter if you are a Jew or Gentile as long as you belong to Christ. Notice another benefit of this is that we are said to be "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." What does it mean for us to be Abraham's seed? He described what and who the "seed" was in verse 16. The seed is Christ. This verse is saying that you are so united to Christ, that you are here identified as the SEED, not many seeds, but the seed, who is Christ. Many have said that we are Abraham's spiritual descendants. But this thought is the same thought the Jews had, and Paul corrected this by saying that it referred to ONE seed, not many. We, who belong to Christ, are not many descendents, but ONE, Christ.

### *What does it mean to be a son?*

Jesus Christ is the original Son of God. We are adopted into the family as sons. But, what does this adoption mean? The way we view adoption is we see a child who has no parents and we may have compassion on this child, so we adopt them into our family and raise them as our own. However, this is not what is in the Apostle Paul's mind. He is thinking of Roman style adoption. The child, or

adult would be heir to everything the king or father had, and would rule in his father's place. The adopted child/adult may be one in the same family or one in another family. This adoption was a privilege, not simply parents trying to take care of an orphan. The adoptee would receive all the rights and privileges of the father. Many times the Caesars of Rome would look for a successor, and if they did not think anyone in their family was worthy of such a position, they would look outside the family for a suitable candidate. When a candidate was found and at the proper time, there would be an adoption ceremony to confer the rights and privileges of adoption. Paul briefly explains it in the following verses, linking our sonship to this form of adoption.

<sup>1</sup>What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. <sup>2</sup>He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father.  
Gal 4:1, 2.

Paul gives us an analogy to describe what he means by saying that we are sons of God. Notice the heir, the child "owns the whole estate." The child will most likely not be distinguished at all, until the time set by the father for him to assume his inheritance. The Son's inheritance is that he will take over all the rights and privileges of the father. He will rule with all the authority of the father. This type of adoption is everything the father owns. In this analogy, the father is God the Father, and the Son is the Lord Jesus Christ. The Father has only one Son, who will inherit all things

Luk 10:22 "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*."

Joh 13:3 *Jesus*, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God,

Joh 16:15 "All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose *it* to you.

Joh 17:10 and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them.

These verses declare that "all things" belong to the Son. They were given to the Son by his Father. So, the Son is the rightful heir of all things. We are one with the Son; therefore we also have an inheritance. Our inheritance is the same inheritance- "every spiritual blessing in Christ." Stop for a minute and look at the attitude of the Son, Jesus Christ. He knew that this was his destiny. He knew that he had this great inheritance and spoke confidently of it. If we have been given the same thing, the same inheritance, why are we so slow to believe this

truth about ourselves and begin to conduct ourselves with the confidence as sons?

Rom 8:32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

<sup>4</sup>But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, <sup>5</sup>to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. <sup>6</sup>Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." <sup>7</sup>So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir. Gal 4:4-7.

To recap, God blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ. Therefore, we have all of God's wealth. We have all of God's power and authority, just as Jesus says, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." (Matt 28:18). Why do we have all this? It is because we are "in Christ." What it means to be in Christ is that we are ONE with Him. We are married to Him. He is the vine and we are the branches. We are His body and He is the head. He is the groom and we are His bride. We share all the He has. Just as it says in the eternal, infallible word, if we are sons, then we are also heirs. God is the one who "made" us sons and He also is the one who "made" us heirs. Everything we have is through Christ. We might as well get used to the thought that we are SPECIAL! This is not something you read and just go about business as usual. God is telling us something He has done that is worthy of the highest recognition! Can you believe it? Do you believe it? This is the thought that shines through to our minds and erupts into the highest praise for the Father.

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

This next verse tells us why we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing. It tells us how such a thing happened to be in the first place. God made a decision that we would have this blessing, this privilege before the creation of the world. The text says He "chose" us. The Greek word is eklegomai.

G1586 eklegomai

Thayer Definition:

- 1) to pick out, choose, to pick or choose out for one's self
  - 1a) choosing one out of many, i.e. Jesus choosing his disciples
  - 1b) choosing one for an office
  - 1c) of God choosing whom he judged fit to receive his favours and separated from the rest of mankind to be peculiarly his own and to be attended continually by his gracious oversight
    - 1c1) i.e. the Israelites

1d) of God the Father choosing Christians, as those whom he set apart from the irreligious multitude as dear unto himself, and whom he has rendered, through faith in Christ, citizens in the Messianic kingdom: ([Jam 2:5](#)) so that the ground of the choice lies in Christ and his merits only

Part of Speech: verb

A Related Word by Thayer's/Strong's Number: middle voice from G1537 and G3004 (in its primary sense)

The middle voice is important here. It speaks of an action performed by the subject with reference to himself. In this verse, then, it means that God chose us out of the world for Himself. The "for Himself" means that He chose us for His purposes, for His benefit. God selected us out, he choose us out of the human race. Why? He did this for His own purposes. His choice is a special choice. He did not randomly pick us out; He made a discerning choice, a determined choice for us and not others. The middle voice means that He did not choose us because of something in us. He did not choose us for some foreseen good or choice on our part. He did not choose us because He knew that we would choose Him. He chooses us as a sovereign act of His volition. This is a special choosing. This can best be illustrated by the example of Jacob and Esau.

Rom 9:10 And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived *twins* by one man, our father Isaac;

Rom 9:11 for though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to *His* choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls,

This verse is a good example of God's sovereignty. God choosing Jacob certainly did not have anything to do with Jacob, but God chose him for his own reasons and for His benefit. He did not choose Esau. He could have chosen Esau if He wanted, but His choice was Jacob. Notice God goes out of his way to make the point that His choice had nothing to do with the twin's behavior, for they were not yet born. So, his choice is not at all based on the individual, it is a matter of God's sovereign will.

Some would still say that God choose Jacob because He knew that Jacob would one day come to believe in Him. They say this based on God's omniscience, but the verse above detaches all merit from God's choice. Truly, God could have chosen Esau, and we would have been using the phrase, Abraham, Isaac and Esau. We cannot intrude in the area of God's sovereignty; we must simply respect His choices. God did not consult us and did not need to do so to make this decision.

Paul's point here is that no Jew would object to God's choosing when it came to forming Israel. No Jew questions those choices of God; since they stand on the fact of those sovereign decisions (see Rom 9:7-14). Each step God took in forming the nation of Israel was simply God's sovereign choice. When He called

Abraham, He told him he was going to have a son. Then, He rejected all human efforts and said “in Isaac shall thy seed be called.” The problem the Jews had with Paul’s teaching is that of election. Paul was now saying that the church is elect. God has chosen us in Christ. They continued to hold on to the fact that God had also chosen them. Paul is attempting to show them that God had another plan for us, called the mystery. This plan was hidden from everyone, but now God has chosen to reveal it to those of us in Christ. Having said all of this, we need to stop for a minute and define the purpose of election.

### *The importance of the purpose of Election*

There are many theories of election. These theories have shaped the way many have interpreted the bible. It is important to know the major views in order to understand the issues we will discuss. Calvinism and Arminianism are the two dominant views, with another view gaining momentum because of human logic. I’m not sure if there is a name for this view, which is somewhere in the middle of the two dominant views. I will try to summarize the views.

John Calvin the reformer was the originator of these ideas. Calvinism states that God is sovereign and chooses some to salvation, and leaves others in just condemnation. It further states that from eternity past, before there was any creation, that God sees all of the masses of humanity and elects or chooses “some” to be saved. Since this is the case, God does not judge the sins of the world in Christ, but only those who God previously choose. This is where the idea of limited atonement comes into play. Calvinists have an acrostic they use to encapsulate their views—TULIP.

**T** -- total depravity. This doesn't mean people are as bad as they can be. It means that sin is in every part of one's being, including the mind and will, so that a man cannot save himself.

**U** -- unconditional election. God chooses to save people unconditionally; that is, they are not chosen on the basis of their own merit.

**L** -- limited atonement. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross was for the purpose of saving the elect.

**I** -- irresistible grace. When God has chosen to save someone, He will.

**P** -- perseverance of the saints. Those people God chooses cannot lose their salvation; they will continue to believe. If they fall away, it will be only for a time.

Calvinism is a system that claims to uphold the sovereignty of God. Their theology is called “Reformed Theology.” They feel that God chooses who will be saved from eternity past. God then, when He is ready, will simply regenerate them, and give them the faith to believe in Christ. They will belong to God forever. God must reach out and regenerate them as the first action, since they are totally dead and totally depraved and cannot respond in any way to God.

They further believe that God will keep those who receive this salvation. There is certainly more to Calvinism, and I hope to have only captured the essentials here.

Arminianism believes that God choose certain ones from eternity past also. Jacobus Arminian was a contemporary with John Calvin. His teachings were a response to Calvinism. He believed that God choose some, but His choosing was based on His knowledge of how men would respond. Christ died for everyone and every man has a chance to be saved. God made provision for all and leaves the choice with man to determine his destiny. The teaching further states that it is possible for a believer to fall from grace and loose his salvation. Therefore, Arminianism has been characterized as a salvation by works belief.

Many have modified both positions and call themselves 3, 4 or 5 point Calvinists. Or, some may believe the Arminian way but do believe in eternal security. The view I mentioned earlier is the middle of the road view. They, like Arminianists will reject the extreme views of Calvinism. They will also reject some of the conclusions of Arminianism, like salvation by works and embrace eternal security and unlimited atonement. You should have some thoughts on these important issues. Where do you stand? I once stood in the middle of the road view. I did not like the conclusions of Calvinism. I think the plain sense of the scripture is counter to their teachings (John 3:16-18, 36; 1John 2:2). Also, I reject the Arminian view of salvation by works and accept eternal security (Rom 8:1, 35-39; John 5:24). I also see that the Arminian teaching of free will is biblical. God designed and created this free will for man and angels.

#### *The purpose of election is not salvation*

All the camps mentioned are trying to define election. But, one thing all have in common is they think the purpose of election is salvation. I believe that election speaks of purpose. God's purpose drives election. If we can identify the purpose of election, then we can examine the motives and intentions of God. If God choose some for a specific purpose out of the human race, then that purpose must be unique. Salvation is not in view, for God offers salvation to everyone without exception. If God were to elect or choose some to salvation and not others, then this is a limiting of those who can be saved. Calvinists say that the cause of anyone's salvation is God's choosing. If this is so, the reverse can be stated. The reason why people are lost is because they are not chosen. Everyone is born in sin, condemned at birth, spiritually dead and all are under the wrath of God. If it is as the Calvinists say that God specifically picked out some and not others to be saved, and God is the sole cause of salvation for anyone, then God is responsible for those lost. They ignore all the passages that say that salvation is offered to everyone without exception. They ignore the direct statements of scripture where Christ died for everyone without exception. They say it has nothing to do with the free will of the individual.

On the Arminian side, they have ignored some of the words in scripture used for election/predestination. They have done so because they have not liked the conclusions of the Calvinists. But the scripture says what it says and it does not matter what our preferences happen to be. God did choose some, it does not depend on who and what they would be or decisions they would make. God's choosing of some is a matter of His sovereignty. It is not a matter of our choice. God's choosing is specific. Why say such things if His choosing is not specific? Why would God say He selected or choose some if anyone can be the chosen by their own will? The Calvinists have not misunderstood the words. God really did choose some. In saying He choose some, it is undeniable that He did not choose others. Armenians reject this and say that it only speaks of God's foreknowledge. They say that God knew, so His choice was dependant upon our will. This is incorrect. It may fit neatly into what is reasonable or logical to give an explanation, but it is incorrect. They are guilty of ignoring the Word of God because it does not make sense to them. So, the battle rages on between the two camps. One side is insisting that God is sovereign in His choosing some, even if He appears to be unjust in neglecting the masses of humanity.

If my only hope of salvation lies in God choosing me, and He did not choose me, then I have no hope. The Arminianists argue that it simply cannot mean that. They read and depend on the passages where salvation is offered to everyone universally. Christ died for all and therefore no one is left without hope for salvation. Therefore they ignore the words of scripture because it does not make sense to them. This leads down a path that is dangerous. The scripture says what it says for a reason. It is not subject to our reasoning. His thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are His ways, our ways. We have to trust Him, and we will see that He is more logical and sensible than any reasoning of man.

#### *Another view*

There is still another view. This is the view I hold which I already mentioned briefly. The purpose of election is NOT salvation. Once this is understood, then God is not viewed as picking some for salvation and leaving others to condemnation. The purpose of election is God choosing some to be in His Son. This is a special blessing, not given to just anyone because God specifically choose certain individuals to be "in Christ" from eternity past. This choosing is simply grace. It is not based on any supposed good, or any decision of any person. This choosing is simply the sovereign choice of God in choosing some out of the saved of all ages.

There are those of all ages who have salvation. But, in this age, which is called the "mystery" age, God is calling out His sons and daughters in Christ. Jesus Christ is the Son to which God the Father conferred all things as mentioned earlier. Paul says that "all things were created by him and for him" (Col 1:16b). Think of it, God wanted to have an heir, and He did so in His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

<sup>10</sup>In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering

God's intention was to bring "many sons into glory." Right now those sons are being called out of this world, out of Adam, out of the Jews and Gentiles. They are being called into one body, which is the body of Christ. No one ever knew this; no one ever had a clue, for it was hidden in God. Now that it has been revealed, it is right here in the words of scripture; but it is ignored, diminished and made to fit within the boundaries of human reason. This is in the category of "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND *which* HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM." (1Cor 2:9). As this is revealed to our spirits, as this is unfolded in our minds, it causes in our souls an eruption of praise. This is the same praise we read about in verse 3. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"!

When you find out that you are chosen, you should have a question in your mind. What is interesting today, is people are not asking the question—Chosen for what? If God selected you for a specific purpose, that is nice to know, but what is that purpose? If I stood before a room of people and picked 10 people out of the audience and brought them up on the stage. They should have some curiosity about *why* they were chosen. In fact, there should be a burning question in their minds to see what they have been chosen for? Why did I call *them* up to the stage? Christians today are chosen, especially selected out by God from eternity past for a purpose. I have identified that purpose and it still goes right over the heads of some Christians. They say, "Yes I'm chosen in Christ, adopted as a son, predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, but what else is there?" So, do you understand that you were chosen? And, have you asked the question, chosen for what?

### *Choosing is special*

Being chosen is a very special privilege. When it says you were chosen, or elected, it means that God especially picked YOU out. Some as they begin to understand the privileges in this age feel blessed because they live in the most exciting time ever. But, they don't understand *why* they live in this time. If God especially picked us out of all the masses of human beings, then that is special. It was God who decided to give you life, to create your life and cause you to be born into the world. God selected you to live in this age, to be *in* His Son. Therefore, God is the reason you were born in this age, it did not just happen by chance. God created you and directly gave you life right now! He could have given you life in the antediluvian age, or the age of Israel. He could have brought you into existence in the tribulation, or millennium, but He did not. He specifically choose you to be born in this age, when the fullness of time had come, God created you. Our Lord's birth was certainly not by chance, God the Father specifically brought Him forth at a time He designed beforehand. Your birth happened in just this way. God selected you to be born now! Maybe it should

begin to dawn on you that God has a direct purpose for your life. God placed you exactly where He wanted you. At this point, all I can say is "*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

To recap, we found that God is worthy of praise says Paul. It is because of the things mentioned in the following verses. We have received **every** spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ. We spoke of the only way this can happen that everyone gets *every* blessing in Christ. How did this happen? Verse 4 says, "just as he choose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight." This is the reason we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing. This choosing is special. God picked us out, selected us out of this world to be sons that would stand before Him holy and blameless.

#### *Holy and Blameless in His sight*

No one would ever claim this for themselves since we all came out of Adam. At least we should say no one should claim this for themselves. To be holy means to be set apart for God's special purposes. We as believers are all in this sense holy, which is where the word "saint" derives. We should also realize that this status has been conferred on us by grace. It has nothing to do with our attempts at living righteously, for we were so designated at the moment we were saved. It has to do with the work of God. To be blameless means that we are faultless, without spot or wrinkle. No one can point the finger at us for any reason. To be blameless means that we stand before a righteous God who is the highest standard. We stand before the just God who condemned the entire human race because of the one sin in Adam. To stand before God's presence in this state is all grace. Nothing we have done could ever impress God as far as our standing. God did a complete work in grace, bringing us from such depths as to say we were dead in trespasses and by nature children of wrath.

There is only one who is holy and blameless. That one is the Son, Jesus Christ. The only reason God sees us as holy and blameless is because we are in Christ. God will never bring up what we once were in Adam. This is refreshing to know since our lives in Adam are associated with sin, guilt, shame and darkness. This is a testimony of God's incomprehensible grace which is freely given to us. God sees us in the same way, no exceptions, as He sees His Son, perfect! "Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers" (Heb 2:10).

### **In Love he predestined us...**

The words, "in love" should go with the next phrase, which is the motive for predestination and is another act of sovereignty on God's part. The Greek word for "predestined" is *proorizo*.

Thayer's Definition

- 1) to predetermine, decide beforehand

## 2) in the NT of God decreeing from eternity

God decided something beforehand, from eternity past, just the same way He choose us. "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers" (Rom 8:29). This verse gives us more information on just what was pre-planned for us before the creation of the universe. We have a life that was planned for us, to be marked out according to the pattern of His Son. So, God choose us, that is, He selected us out, picked us especially for His own purposes and pleasure. Then, God predestined us, He marked out the kind of life we would have, and that life was to be patterned after the very life of Christ. Not only are our lives patterned after Christ, but what we think also:

"No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began" (1Cor 2:7).

I hope you are beginning to see that our lives are special. God called us to something that is so beyond our human existence, that it simply is overwhelming to think of now. His "secret wisdom" is later referred to as the "deep things of God." We have been predestined to glory. We are God's children and He has united us with His only Son Jesus Christ. Our lives are now merged with His and we share everything He has. What does a Son of God do? The Son was destined to rule over all things. That is the quality of life the Son has, everything will be placed in His hands. He is the owner of all things. I like what our Lord said when standing before Pilate. Stop and just look at the confidence He has as he stood there, beaten, bruised and bleeding.

<sup>33</sup>Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

<sup>34</sup>"Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"

<sup>35</sup>"Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"

<sup>36</sup>Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."

<sup>37</sup>"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." (John 18:33-37).

Jesus knew why He was in this world. He stood there with absolute confidence in His position. He realized that He had a great destiny, and no one could shake Him from that resolve. He is the Son and with that distinction comes certain rights and privileges. Most will not dispute that Jesus is who He knows He is, but when it comes to our position in Christ, few see all that it involves. Christ walked around with a confidence and dignity that spoke of His high calling. He knew and embraced His destiny. We are slow to realize our destiny. "He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" (Luke 24:25, 26). Just as they were slow to believe, so are we. God has given us tremendous privilege and some of us still behave as though we are still in Adam. Just as not many saw Christ's greatness; few see the great position to which we have been placed. "For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him" (Phil 1:29).

### **...to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ...**

We have been predestined to what? We have been chosen to what? This next phrase answers those questions. Our calling is to be adopted as His Sons. Again, this is Roman style adoption, where the heir inherits *all things*! Who is the heir? But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe" (Heb 1:2). The Son is the rightful heir of all things. We are not adopted to be sons alongside Jesus Christ. We are adopted to be sons through Jesus Christ. The original Son is the pattern and we are all "created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph 2:10b). Our adoption as sons is very significant. The adoption refers to our privileges as sons. It speaks of our inheritance that is ours because God made us His sons. Normally adoption would not cause us to think in terms of inheritance, but this Roman style adoption was *for* the very purpose of inheritance. God is blessing us tremendously by telling us we are adopted to be sons through Christ, and many simply look right past it.

<sup>7</sup>So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir. (Gal 4:7).

### **...in accordance with his pleasure and will–**

Now, we approach the intentions of a sovereign God. Why did He do this? Why did he choose us and adopt us as sons? Why is our life predestined? Simply put, it is "in accordance with his pleasure and will." That is like asking someone why they did something. The reply we get is, "because I wanted to and I get pleasure from doing what I want to do." In the Old Testament, someone could ask God, why have you created all this? God's answer would have been, I am God, and I wanted to, I can do what I want to do. But, for us, God's answer would

be, I am God, and I wanted to, I can do what I want to do, but let me tell you why I have done the things I have done. You may do many things, and to others those things may not be logical. But, if questioned, you do them because you have the right to do them a certain way. Sometimes we do look at God as not having the right to have things His way. We do not see Him as a person who can make decisions apart from what seems logical or right to us. God has a distinct purpose in mind, and when He goes about executing that purpose, all creation and all creatures are affected. To make sense of this, we must know God's will. I always marvel at this passage, ""For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD" (Isa 55:8). Unless God reveals His thoughts to us, we will not understand His ways. And, we certainly cannot understand why God would derive pleasure from doing something we don't understand. We think the world revolves around us- wrong, it revolves around God. The phrase comes from His sovereignty.

God has a right to be. He has thoughts and desires and can act in the way He chooses. We give the right to each other to think in ways that we do not understand, but we accept them because we know that others have different personalities and simply have ways different from us. God is an individual. There are ways He has that we may not understand, but we must give Him the respect to be Himself. God has a will, a purpose, and a plan for creating all this. He even created us, we did not evolve, God directly created us, personally. God is the one who made me, me! God can do anything He wants, and no one can stop Him. He is sovereign. And, when He does what He wants to do, He is pleased with His will. God has not left us to wonder about the thoughts behind His ways. He has revealed the hidden motives of His heart. He has revealed the reason for the decisions made and courses of action taken. We serve a Good God, which is why praise explodes in our hearts when we think of what the Father has done. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph 1:3a).

God derives pleasure from His will to choose us, predestine and adopt us as sons through Christ. I know God purposed in Himself these things from eternity past, but only now, in this age are these intentions coming to light. Only now are these holy purposes unfolding in our understanding. God is pleased to have us as sons. He made all the arrangements from eternity past and now they are coming to light. I think I can understand why God is pleased with this course of events. He takes pleasure in seeing His plan for us unfold.

### **...to the praise of his glorious grace...**

God has lifted up His grace as deserving of praise. Grace helps us to see a side of God we cannot see by simply looking at His mighty works in creation. God cannot express His grace in perfection. He must demonstrate it on those totally undeserving of His affections. When someone does something we want them to do, it is easy to be kind to them. But, when God found us, we were enemies,

dead in trespasses and sins, by nature objects of wrath and hostile to His righteous ways (Rom 5:8, 9; 8:7; Eph 2:1-4). If God did nothing for us, this is the state we find ourselves in, and we are totally helpless to do anything about it. Because of the sin nature we received from Adam, we wouldn't want to do anything about it. This is where grace comes in. God had a plan to rescue us from that state, from that mindset and from that condition and that way is through Christ.

*God's grace is deserving of praise*

When we consider the grace of God, we can see a complete picture of who God is. We see in it a story of how God had to condemn us because He was holy and righteous. We were creatures from His hand and His justice had to completely condemn us, no exceptions. This speaks of the holiness of God. We serve a God that is righteous and He executes that righteousness in perfect justice. This means that God's standards are very high. He has the highest standards there are, and those standards are not passive. God cannot simply let us be sinful while He maintains His integrity. Everything exists in God and He will judge that which is displeasing to Him. Sin, evil and unrighteousness cannot abide in God and for Him to bear with us the way He does is amazing.

God is longsuffering, patient, merciful and gracious to us. So, we must know that when God worked out a plan to reconcile us, God had to take into account who He is (holy) in order to reconcile sinful man. Any solution would not do because there can be no compromise of God's righteousness at all. Mercy, grace, patience and longsuffering do NOT mean that God relaxes His perfect standards for one second. God figured out a way, a plan to reconcile man and still maintain perfectly His righteousness. Knowing God, we must know that whatever He worked out, it had to meet the rigorous, uncompromising and inflexible standards of His holiness. God does not relax His standards, there is no grading curve, and there are no exceptions that can be made. If God is going to have a relationship with man, it *must* be on His terms.

Man generally does not understand this about God. But this is the reality and this is the God who created us. It is no surprise then, that there is only one way of salvation. There are not *many* ways, but there is just *one* for all. Man balks at that statement and quickly remarks how unreasonable they think it is. But, it really does not matter what sinful man thinks, he has no standard of holiness to maintain. We must also know, that whatever that one plan of salvation is, it is perfect and satisfies all the demands of holiness which would of necessity be imposed upon it by God Himself. God did not stop at salvation, but He figured out a way to bless man even more than He would have ever been blessed if He had not fallen. God goes beyond restoring what was lost; He had a plan to bring some into a relationship of sonship. God choose some to be in His Son. God figured out a way to adopt some to such privilege, a place of highest honor and dignity while still maintaining His holiness. They stand before Him, themselves holy and blameless in His sight. This plan is characterized by one word- GRACE.

*This grace is worthy of praise.*

This grace speaks of the very heart of God. It speaks of the generous nature that is motivated by a heart of pure love. Before bestowing grace, He must eliminate all vestiges of sin, unrighteousness and evil. Only then is God free to display ALL that He is in grace on those whom He has chosen. One verse says it well,

<sup>32</sup>He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Rom 8:32

This plan is by the grace of God and it is not cheap, for it cost God much. The cost can never be appraised by man, but from God's standpoint, He gave up everything to accomplish it. He went the whole nine yards and more. God did not withhold anything from us. He gave until it hurt and then, He *gave* some more.

<sup>18</sup>For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, <sup>19</sup>but *with the precious blood of Christ*, a lamb without blemish or defect. <sup>20</sup>He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. <sup>21</sup>Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

**...which he has freely given us in the One he loves....**

Part of the plan is that this wonderful grace, which benefits us in infinite ways, is given to us without cost in Christ. Wherever you read about grace in the bible, its nature is always free. The freeness of grace to us means that we cannot do anything to get grace. Grace is not bestowed on a reward basis. God has given grace on the basis of a gift. Our merits, works, obedience or sincerity will not move the heart of God to be gracious to us. Salvation is by grace, and certainly this grace where God chooses us to be His sons through Christ is by grace. None of us earned or deserved this. There is nothing in us that moves the heart of God to favor us. We are not "sons" when God finds us. Some would like to think of themselves that God saw their uniqueness. They reason, "God choose me because He knew I was special. He knew I was a diamond in the rough." WRONG! Everything we are, God made us. The only thing that we were was dead in trespasses in sins, like the rest of mankind we were by nature objects of wrath (see Eph 2:1-4). But God loved us, not because of who or what we were. And, God choose us for His own purposes and plans. He gave us this grace, not based on human merit or worthiness, but simply motivated by love and His sovereign will to do so. God is free to do as He pleases, and it pleases Him to give us this level of grace. God's choosing is always by grace.

<sup>5</sup>So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. <sup>6</sup>And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace. Rom 11:5, 6

<sup>10</sup>Not only that, but Rebecca's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. <sup>11</sup>Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: <sup>12</sup>not by works but by him who calls—she was told, “The older will serve the younger. Rom 9:10-12

The focus of this grace is directed in Christ, the one He loves. God always favored the one He loves and that is the eternal Son from eternity past, and the only begotten Son when He came to this earth as a man. God's special grace is that He choose us to be in the Son and share all the benefits of His love and favor on the Son. We are going along for the ride. This ride does not go up and down, like a rollercoaster, it goes straight up, “And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:6).

### **In him we have redemption through his blood...**

This next phrase introduces the thought of how we came to be in Christ. It describes the work of which God used to bring us out of Adam and into Christ. Even though we can talk about eternity past and how we were chosen, predestined and adopted, the reality is God found us in Adam, condemned, wicked and under the bondage of sin. God's plan for us includes salvation. We are not chosen to salvation, we are chosen to be in Christ. Up to now, our salvation was not mentioned, and it is only mentioned here in passing to note the completeness of this special grace given us in Christ. We have redemption through the work of Christ. Redemption speaks of the purchasing of a slave from the slave market. We were in chains of darkness; we were in the bondage of sin when Christ paid the ransom price for us. Then He purchased us and we became His.

<sup>19</sup>Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; <sup>20</sup>you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body. 1Cor 6:19, 20

The blood is a type, speaking of death and life. In the Old Testament, the Priest would make a sacrifice by cutting the animal's throat, and the animal bled to death. The animal's life was represented by his blood. As the blood drained out of its body, the animal died. The animal always died, so in this way the “shedding of blood” means death. It also means that a life was given. Next, the blood representing the animal's life was collected in a bowl and used to make atonement for the people. In this way, the blood represented the life of the innocent animal being used to make atonement. For this reason, God prohibited eating blood.

<sup>13</sup> " 'Any Israelite or any alien living among you who hunts any animal or bird that may be eaten must drain out the blood and cover it with earth, <sup>14</sup> because the life of every creature is its blood. That is why I have said to the Israelites, "You must not eat the blood of any creature, because the life of every creature is its blood; anyone who eats it must be cut off." Lev 17:13, 14

The blood represented the animal's life. This innocent life was sacrificed for the people's sin. Although Christ did not bleed to death on the cross, it was there that He laid down His life for us. The "just for the unjust" says Peter. The Father poured out the sins of all on Christ and judged Him. This judgment is what it means by us having redemption through His blood. This is what it means by the phrase, "Christ died for us." So, with all of the riches and privileges found in Christ, we also find redemption, a purchasing of us through the work of Christ on the cross. We certainly did not have any part in this for we were the ones in bondage, slaves of sin. Redemption does not come any other way other than through the blood of Christ. Again the blood means death and life. Death to Christ meaning He was judged for our sins, but His life is applied to us. The life of Christ was sacrificed for us to make perfect atonement and accomplish our redemption where the blood of animals was never sufficient.

### **...the forgiveness of sins...**

In Christ, we also have forgiveness of all of our sins. Redemption and forgiveness speak of reconciliation. Christ may have died for all of our sins, but it is not until reconciliation occurs that we are said to be redeemed and forgiven of our sins. This forgiveness is all grace, we do not earn or deserve to be forgiven, but God worked it out because He punished His own Son for those things for which we should have been punished. The punishment was so complete, that God holds no bitterness or wrath in His heart, but He has forgiveness.

<sup>12</sup>giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. <sup>13</sup>For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, <sup>14</sup>in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Col 1:12-14

We have redemption and forgiveness because of the work of Christ. So, in Christ there is abundant provision for us. All these things are said to reside in Christ. This leads us back to verse 3 and 4 where every blessing was in Christ and God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. God made provision for everyone who is in Christ. Redemption and forgiveness speak of what God had to do for his sons to bring them to a place of blessing. We had to be redeemed and forgiven and this grace has been extended to us and we stand in it in Christ. We are assured that these things no longer have any power over us. We no longer are slaves, we are sons. Those things which could have

separated us from our Father have been taken care of completely by our Lord. This information is given us to develop boldness, or a confidence that we are God's children! This confidence did not exist in the Old Testament, but it is unique to this age. We are His children and He wants us to have the consciousness of children, not slaves.

<sup>1</sup>The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. <sup>2</sup>If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. <sup>3</sup>But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, <sup>4</sup>because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Heb 10:1-4

<sup>13</sup>When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, <sup>[b]</sup> God made you <sup>[c]</sup> alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins

<sup>16</sup>Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Heb 4:16

<sup>19</sup>Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, Heb 10:19

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. 2Cor 3:12

### **...in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding....**

We focus our attention now on the source of this blessing, the “riches of God’s grace. These riches are not the world’s riches. These riches are related to God and they are related to this *special* grace where He has given to some in this age. The quality of this grace has to be unique, which is why I call it “special grace.” This special grace is said to be lavished on us.

The Greek word for "lavish" is perisseuo, per-is-syoo-o

Thayer's Definition:

To be over and above, to abound, abundant, better, to have more than enough, having abundance, increase, lavished, left over, surpass, surplus.

Earlier we saw how God’s glorious grace was to be praised. This word has levels of understanding according to your spiritual growth. Until you understand what God has freely given us in grace, you cannot fully appreciate the word. You will read the word grace, and read right over the richness of its intent. God has done something special in grace, and if you don’t see it, then it is not special to you. Grace is said to be “lavished” on us. We have received more of the grace

of God than anything we could imagine. Paul is using one word to illustrate the bountiful favor, the surpassing, abundant, abounding and overflowing blessing God has generously given us. This giving, which is beyond measure, speaks of a heart of love. Again, the appreciation of this love is directly related to how you understand what God was pleased to do for His children. He is doing this not because He is obligated to do so, but purely out of a heart that loves us and wants to provide everything for us.

God's grace is the same grace whereby anyone in the world was saved. This grace is always free, never is it earned or deserved. From Adam to that last person who will be born, they will know of the grace of God to some degree. But, in this age, God is pleased to lavish grace upon us. What does this mean? It means that we are recipients of the most marvelous, astounding thing that has ever happened to any human being. God has chosen us to be in His Son. We have been "predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers" (Rom 8:29b). We are sons just like Jesus Christ, the firstborn, is a Son. We are united to Him, just like Him, bone of his bone and sharers together of everything he is and possesses. You may say to yourself, I heard all this before. But, don't look over this too fast. God is telling us something here that you may have missed. First, some are in Churches that do not teach that we are anything special over Abraham, Moses and the other Old Testament saints. Therefore, all the purpose of this language is lost and is forced to mean that we simply have salvation. But, more than salvation is referred to here. Take your time and read the verses below to make sure you see the distinctions made concerning this uniqueness.

<sup>6</sup>And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. Eph 2:6, 7

<sup>2</sup>Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, <sup>3</sup>that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. Eph 3:2, 3

<sup>8</sup>Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, Eph 3:8

<sup>5</sup>the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel <sup>6</sup>that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. Col 1:5, 6

<sup>14</sup>The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 1Tim 1:14

<sup>9</sup>who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, <sup>10</sup>but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. 2Tim 1:9, 10

<sup>13</sup>Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. 1Pet 1:13

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup>through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Rom 5:1, 2

### **What is so special about this grace?**

While it may be argued from scripture that we have this special grace, we still must distinguish it from every other application of grace before we see its uniqueness. What does this grace do for us? We would expect that it would somehow make us different or change us so that it is evident to all. Remember, we are going to be shown off to all in the coming ages of eternity future (Eph 2:6, 7). What makes us so special that he chooses us over all the other saved people of all ages? We have already answered this by saying that it is grace and a heart of love that is the cause. But, OK, let's admit we are special, what does that mean? We are sons, but what does that really mean? How are we different from let's say, Abraham, Moses, Daniel or John the Baptist? As we take a break from the text, I will attempt to answer these questions.

*What has God made of us?*

The first place to start is what God has made us.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 2Cor 5:17

The word "new" is the Greek word "kainos" Thayer has, "as respects substance of a new kind, unprecedented, novel, uncommon, unheard of" This word "new" means that God created something different in anyone who is "in" Christ. God did something special when He placed us in Christ. This is something He has never done before, it is new.

<sup>4</sup>We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. Rom 6:4

We arrived in Christ by means of the baptism of the Spirit. This verse brings out that it is through baptism that we may live the “new” (kainos) life. If we are created new, certainly a new life would need to be given us to live. But, the baptism of the Spirit is the cause of us being “in Christ.”

### *The Baptism of the Spirit*

There are many ministries of the Holy Spirit in our lives in this age. There is regeneration, indwelling, filling, sealing, gifting and the baptism of the Spirit. Never before has God the Spirit been given to any human being in this degree before, with the exception of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Baptism in every case means- identification. It means that the properties of the one object being baptized, are changed by properties of the other object in which it is baptized, or identified. I realize this sounds technical, but it is necessary. The Holy Spirit, baptized us into Christ. This results in our properties changing into what Christ is, in fact, we are a “new” creation. The change in us can be looked at in a negative way and also a positive. Lets take this passage of scripture in Romans.

<sup>1</sup>What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?  
<sup>2</sup>By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Rom 6:1, 2

Most interpret this as someone asking if they can simply keep sinning so that grace may keep increasing as in Romans 5:20. They think it is individual acts of sin, when really the sin nature’s rule or control over us is the subject. But notice the answer to the question, “By no means!” Meaning absolutely not, wrong thinking, reject this thought! Then he gives us the answer as to why. “We died to sin: how can we live in it any longer?” Most would like to read this as, “we *should not* live in it any longer.” But, that is NOT what it says. It is an impossibility of us living in the sin nature any longer because we died. Death here means that we have been separated from our sinful nature. That separation is final. There is a boundary setup that you cannot cross over. You died to the sin nature, you were separated from the sin nature once and for all, and it can never be your nature again. This shows that we have been changed, even without our knowledge, and changed by the baptism of the Spirit.

<sup>3</sup>Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Rom 6:3

You may not have known about it, but you were identified with Christ and the properties of Adam mentioned in Romans 5 do not have any power over you anymore. Note that you have been changed, but this is a spiritual change that is not automatically detected in the physical. But, it is a real change and God recognizes it just as we recognize someone who we see. Another result we have is,

<sup>4</sup>We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. Rom 6:4

There is a new life that is ours in Christ. This life was not available to us prior to the baptism of the Spirit. This life is drastically different from the life we had in Adam. <sup>13</sup>“For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink (1Cor 12:13).

#### *A deeper look at baptism*

When I say that the baptism identifies us with Christ, so that we share all that He is, I mean everything. We were born in Adam and we took on all the characteristics of Adam, his nature, imputed sin, death, condemnation and unrighteousness. When we were baptized into Christ, we share all that He is. What is He? We should know that our Lord Jesus Christ has two natures, divine and human. If we are going to share all that He is, we would need to be identified with His person. It is the person of Christ that has two natures and His person has consciousness in both natures simultaneously. The doctrine is called the Hypostatic Union and identifies the relationship of the natures of Christ. It also spells out the way those natures are united in one person. It further says, “Undiminished deity and true humanity in one person forever.”

How did Jesus the Creator, who is God (John 1:1-3) come into the human race? We know He did from John 1:14 which says that “the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” When Jesus walked on this earth, was He really a man? Yes, He was in every way as we are, except He did not have a sin nature. In the incarnation, we find that the Father imputed the life of Christ to the fetus that was formed in the Virgin Mary. Our life happened the same way, except He *created* our life at that time and imputed it to the fetus as it left the womb. And, this is how we became a human being. That is also how Jesus became a human being. The life that was imputed to that fetus in Jesus’ case was the same life that exists in the divine nature, the same life, “He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:2, 3).

#### *Life is bound and defined by nature*

In Christ, we saw that the life He once had was separated from the nature He has. In the case of Jesus, He never stopped being God when His life was imputed to the fetus and He became a living soul. This is why we say that Christ has two natures. Being God, He cannot add anything else to His Divine nature, it is immutable. If you add or take something away from the Divine Nature, it is no longer the same nature, it is something different. Also, you cannot take away or add something to the human nature, by doing this you destroy the human nature’s properties. This did not happen as both natures remain separate and distinct. By coming into the world as a man, he added something to his person, without changing the fact that His person was still

bound to His Divine nature. We are separating the life from the nature here to understand the incarnation.

*What part of Jesus Christ became a man?*

This question can only be answered one way. First, there are two parts to Jesus, His person and His Divine nature. Second, His Divine nature could *not* have been made man. The nature of God would have been violated by mixing it with human nature, and the Divine nature would have been changed, which is impossible because of immutability. The only choice is His person came into the Human race and became a man. The life of Christ, which is His person, became a man. When His person united itself with human nature, it was bound to that nature forever. Jesus can no longer stop being human than He can stop being God. If Jesus was to be truly human, which I believe He was, He would need to operate and have the same properties as human beings have. He would get tired, sweat, bleed, and could be subject to death, and none of those things could have happened for Jesus as God. He was true humanity.

<sup>16</sup>For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. <sup>17</sup>For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup>Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. Heb 2:16-18

*Something special about the life of God*

We already took a look at how the incarnation took place. The person of Jesus took on a human nature forever. He is now the God/Man, one person sharing two natures forever. But there is more to this, the person of Jesus Christ is unique. We know now that when we speak of God, we could be speaking of the nature of God with all of its attributes. Or, we could be speaking of the person of God, the Father, Son or Holy Spirit. The life of the person of the Son is the same life as that of the Father and the Holy Spirit. Their life is identical, meaning they have the same "kind" of life, but are different persons. They all have the same kind of life which is bound to the same nature- Divine. The reason they are God is because of their nature. Life is bound and defined by nature. Each person is rightfully called "God" because each one has the Divine nature. These persons have always existed, they never had a beginning. There can be no person like these persons we call a trinity because they are the only ones who existed eternally and have the Divine nature. They are the cause of all the effects of the all things visible and invisible.

The incarnation opened up some information about God that we did not know. In general, the New Testament has given greater revelation of God, but there is one point we should consider now. The Father was able to impute the life of the Son minus the Divine nature into the human race. What we see in this is that the life of the Son must be compatible with the life we have.

<sup>3</sup>Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. John 1:3

This verse tells us about the person of the Son, spoken of here as the Word. He created all things. He is the source of life for all things, plants, animals, man, angels and any other category I may have left out. He is the very source of animate and inanimate things. This verse is sufficiently saying that the Word (Jesus) is the creator of all things.

<sup>4</sup>In him was life, and that life was the light of men. John 1:4

This verse brings out another truth about the Son. The very life that is in Him, “that life” is the same light (life) that is in man. This verse is not referring to salvation, where man is enlightened spiritually, it is referring to the life we have is directly created after the pattern of the life of the Son. Notice also in this verse, the life of the Son was the light of men. Life and light are used interchangeably and are referring to the same thing. Take a look at the next verse. “The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it (John 1:5). The “light shines in darkness” is a reference to the life of the Son coming into the world. Notice that the life of the Son is called light, but it was called life in verse 4. Then John goes on to say that John the Baptist is not that light, but came only as a witness to the light. What is this “light” he is referring to? It is the life of the Son. The very thing that gives the human nature existence is the life that is imputed to it. The imputed life is what lights up the body, makes it alive.

<sup>9</sup>The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. John 1:9

The true light is the life of the Son who came into this world, He is the one promised from the foundation of the world to come and provide a way of salvation. Notice, the reference here is not to salvation, for the true light/life of the Son “gives (that same life) light to every man.” There is something that every man has that was imparted by the Son, and it is the very life we possess. Again salvation is not in question since everyone will not be saved. In verse 11, the Son was rejected by his own people, and in verse 12 those who do receive Him have been given the right to be children of God. We know these verses are not referring then to the spiritual life we possess when we are saved, which is dependant on our believing in the Son.

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:26, 27

We are said to be created in the “image” of God. There has been much speculation about the meaning of this phrase. Many have tried to interpret this

and have fallen short of its intended meaning. Commentaries have much to say about this also. To me, there is only one thing this can refer to, and we can rule out all the things to which it cannot refer. I see four possibilities:

1. "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness..." Physically speaking, some say, man looks like God. Some have taken the position that God really looks like a man. I do not think this is possible from the scriptures God has revealed in the word. God does not have a body like ours, God is not human being, He is Spirit, and has a different nature than ours.
2. "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness..." Some have jumped to the conclusion that man must be God. This falls short also, since man does not look like God in any way. God is a Spirit. God is omnipresent and man is limited to space and time and ignorant. To summarize point 1 and 2, we do not look like God and God does not look like us.
3. "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness..." Another view, there is an invisible part of man, his soul. The soul has mentality, volition, emotion, consciousness and self-consciousness. The view is that the soul shadows the attributes that God Himself has. This is true to some degree, but we cannot say that God possesses a soul. A soul is something unique to man. Also, from God's creation of man, the result is that man *became* a living soul. God provided the spark of life to the body and man became a living soul. Nowhere is God referred to as a soul or becoming a soul. Also, John 1:4 says "In him was life, and that life was the light of men." Notice it is "*that life*" that is the very light of men. The very thing that was in God, He created and put in man. We would not say that a soul was in God and He put a soul in man. The soul is related to humanity. To me, this view fails to capture the sense of the passage.
4. "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness..." After reviewing Genesis chapter one where this is found, it seems that God gave all kinds of life to a variety of species. There is a familiar phrase found in the context "...according to their kinds..." Plants and trees are created "...according to their kinds." The fish and mammals of the sea were created "...according to their kinds." All animal life was created "...according to their kinds." Even though it is not said, I believe that all angelic life was created "...according to their kinds." But, when it comes to man we have "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness..." To me, this along with John chapter one (1:4) is saying that we were created by God "...according to their kinds," and in their image. This refers to the life we have, *not* our nature. We do not have the nature of God, but the life that he created in us is not plant, animal or even angelic, but it is the same type of life He possesses.

### *Jesus' Incarnation*

The incarnation is interesting in this regard. The same person who created all things, the same person who was *with* the Father in eternity past who is God, that person who also has the divine nature, has come to take upon himself, his

person, the human nature. Simply put, He became a man. “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Remember, His divine nature did not become human, but His person also took upon Himself human nature.

### *Man's incarnation*

The creation of man is usually not referred to as an incarnation, but a creation. Man literally did not exist before birth, except for those who are said to be elect. In this category, elect persons still did not exist, except that God always knew they would. It could be argued that God in His omnipotence knew everything and everybody. But, the scripture says directly that He knows about elect persons and has also predestined them. While they did not literally exist, they did exist in the mind of God. They are part of the evolving plan of God which He purposed in Himself from eternity past. At the proper time, God brings these individuals into the world to take their appointed places. Because of the problem of sin, all men are born in Adam under the bondage of sin. As a result, the law which is fueled by the justice of God condemned man. “But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons” (Gal 4:4, 5). Just as Jesus Christ had an appointed time to come into the world, the sons which He rescues also have an appointed time. We are here because God choose to bring us into the world at *this* time.

### **To recap, what is so special about this grace?**

All this talk about baptism, person and nature is important for us to see what is so special about grace. God baptized us into the person of Christ. This means that we are identified with the person and we share everything the person is and has. What does the person have? He has two natures, divine and glorified human nature. We share all that He is in both natures. Jesus has blazed the trail by coming into the world as true humanity. His person shares two natures. God identified our person with Christ. This is what it means to be “in Christ.” The analogy is that we have been married to Christ. We are so united with Him that we are said to be “one.” This is the great mystery that Paul writes about in Ephesians,

In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. Eph 5:28-32

*Can we really share in the Divine nature?*

Yes! This is special grace that has been extended to us in Christ. This is the secret that has been kept hidden from everyone. Just take a look at the following scriptures with this understanding.

So then, no more boasting about men! All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God. 1Cor 3:21-23

Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! 1Cor 6:2, 3

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. 1Cor 6:15-17

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. Rom 8:15-21

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. Rom 8:29, 30

So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir. Gal 4:7

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. Col 2:9, 10

And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. Eph 1:22, 23

and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. Eph 3:19-21

Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. Heb 2:11

Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 1Pet 1:4

Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. 1Pet 1:13

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. John 17:20-23

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. 1John 3:1-3

There is certainly something special as you read those passages. I hope you can begin to see this special grace that has been lavished upon us. It is not simply what believers of old had. It is unique to us and if we do not see it, we will neglect this so great salvation. If we fail to see it, then it is a disregard for the very things that are at the heart of God. These things bring Him pleasure and are the intention of His heart from eternity past. When we ignore them, we ignore the greatest thing God has ever done, bring forth His Son! And, in His Son, bring forth many sons to glory. When a new baby is born, the parents are glowing. That glow is shared by everyone who loves the parents and new child. God had children, and the real story is how He accomplished this. This marvelous plan to bring about “many sons into glory” is pure a marvel, since none of God’s standards are violated in the process.

**And he made known to us the mystery of his will**

We now come to the mystery. At this point, we have already been introduced to the mystery, but we should note a few more points about this doctrine. We see in the mystery more uniqueness to this grace that has been given to us. What is the mystery? The mystery is that from eternity past, before all creation, before time, God choose us to be in Christ. He also predestined us to be adopted as His Sons. It is that God would bring "many sons into glory." The mystery is the age we live in, which is the time for God to reveal and call out His sons from the Jews and Gentiles. And, all of this, God choose to keep hidden within himself. He revealed much to angels and man, but did not choose to reveal this information which was the entire motivation of His heart. It no longer is a mystery because it is revealed. The word was employed to let us know that it was not revealed to anyone prior to it being revealed after the resurrection. No one knew *anything* about this information. It was not revealed in the Old Testament, in prophecy or any form whatsoever. The bible tells us that it was "hid in God" (Eph 3:9). Some have argued at this point, claiming that this information was known in the Old Testament. Why would someone want to argue this when the bible plainly says it was *not* revealed? Let us look at the testimony of scripture.

Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him. Rom 16:25, 26

In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. Eph 3:4, 5

Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. Eph 3:8, 9

I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. Col 1:25, 26

The question of whether it is or is not revealed is answered for me. It was not revealed. That means that you cannot discover this doctrine from reading the Old Testament. You may find great revelation of God to man, but this information was not given. Again, this reminds me of this special grace, which is reserved for us. There are some systems of theology which would minimize such ideas as us being special. If you belong to one of these schools of thought, you have not viewed these passages this way, but allow the passages to say what it is they are saying. He, God, made this information know to us, not Israel,

and that is significant. Also, it is the mystery of His will. It was not an afterthought of God; it was “his will.” Whenever it comes to God’s will, we ought to sit up and take notice. People are always puzzled about what God’s will is for their lives. If you desire to know God’s will, you must first pay attention to the passages where He *tells* us His will. God is saying that this is what He wants, this is what He wanted from eternity past, before all creation. He kept it a secret from man; even angels, including Satan, did not know anything of this hidden desire.

### **according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ**

God made this information known to us according to His good pleasure. In other words, God was pleased to reveal His intentions to us. To me, this is exciting news. The greatest thing, the most luxurious blessings of grace overflowing to us has been directed towards us. When it finally dawns on us that this is God’s will for us, and that we were targeted, a smile should begin to dawn on our faces. We are not in this position by chance but by His will, His desire and by a specific plan which was hidden until now. You may have been able to read the Old Testament and know about Jesus Christ, the messiah. You may find prophecies of His birth, some of His activities, His death, resurrection, ascension and session, but what He purposed for us and kept hid in himself is not revealed. His plans for us, who were chosen “in him” from the foundation of the world were hidden within Himself. This is exciting to me and I feel very special. It motivates me to learn more of what God planned for me and to order my life according to this great purpose.

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Eph 4:1

The NIV here has “which he purposed in Christ” which I do not find in the text. The idea is that God the Father was pleased reveal the intents of His heart at this time. The intents of His heart were kept secret and to himself. The words “in Christ” are not found in the Greek. So, the thought is that God purposed this in Himself, referring to the mystery which is that He choose us “in Christ.” This hidden information, which is the very purpose of God creating all things, was hidden from all Old Testament believers. We could ask the question, why would God hide this information? No one can accurately answer this question but the Father Himself. God has His own purposes for doing what He does. But, we do know that if there was little understanding about the messiah, certainly this information where we are “in Christ” would not have been understood.

The mystery is what we have been referring to all along. We are discovering that this information was a mystery. And verse 9 adds that it was God’s pleasure to reveal this mystery to us. Now, we must note that God has given us a word to encapsulate this entire understanding in one word- mystery. When Paul refers to

the mystery, then, he is telling us something that is unique to us and VERY special. We can learn much from looking at the passages where it is spoken, for there are many facets of this mystery. It is related to God's wisdom at times, and sometimes his riches. Let's look at some distinct passages.

the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the **Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery**, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Col 1:26

His purpose was **to create in himself one new man out of the two**, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. Eph 2:15, 16

This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are **heirs together** with Israel, **members together** of one body, and **sharers together** in the promise in Christ Jesus. Eph 3:6

Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach **to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ**, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. Eph 3:8, 9

My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have **the full riches of complete understanding**, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, **in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge**. Col 2:2, 3

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, **the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints**. Eph 1:17, 18

Some points we can make from the passages on the mystery:

1. The mystery is not directed only to Israel, but also directed toward the Gentiles
2. For the first time in history, Israel and the Gentiles are together in one body
3. Once a believer in this age, no longer do racial distinctions matter (see 1Cor 12:13, 14; Gal 3:28)
4. The mystery is frequently related to vast riches and great wealth
5. The mystery was hid in God from eternity past before it came to be revealed

6. The administration of the mystery refers to this time period where God is ruling His household according to His master hidden plan
7. The mystery is related to our inheritance in Christ
8. Pastors are supposed to be stewards of the mystery teachings (1Cor 4:1)
9. The mystery doctrine establishes a new way of life for the believer, never before revealed
10. There is now no excuse for ignorance of the mystery

**...to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—**

When a wise and complex plan comes together, it is a wonderful thing. The greatest plan *ever* is spoken of here. This plan is to choose some and bless them with every blessing of inheritance before the universe was created. To adopt them as sons in Christ and to predestine their lives is what God planned for these special chosen ones who were destined to be “in Christ.” All of this was a mystery. But, not every part of the plan was hidden. God had to create a universe. God had to create angels and man; and He gives them free will. Sin happened and God still demonstrated His character of love, compassion, patience, longsuffering and of course, grace; and His plan moved on. Christ came into the world, and was crucified and all the sins of the world placed on His shoulders. He bore our sins in his own body on the wood says Peter. What we will see following is this perfect plan will accomplish everything it ever intended.

*The Ultimate Plan*

The planning from eternity past, the careful attention to detail of every phase of the plan was for a specific purpose. Many of the parts of the plan may seem to be unrelated, but they are working together to accomplish the goals in the mind of God. Many will stop at the plan of salvation and assume that this is the ultimate plan of God, to save man. Salvation is certainly thought out and executed by God, but it is not everything God had in mind. Whatever God had in mind, it could not take place until salvation was executed. The ultimate plan depends on salvation; it expects that salvation would be a component part. Salvation is like walking through a door to get to the ultimate plan. We must go through that door to realize all that God planned for us. And, we do go through that door and only then can we see that God has planned something for us so extraordinary that we can hardly believe it. But we do wrap ourselves around it; we embrace it because we know God desires this for us and is pleased to reveal Himself in this way. He had allowed us to see the ultimate plan, deep into His heart. The mystery says that God hid these things from everyone. These things are called the “deep things of God.” We do not refer to the wisdom of the world, “No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began” (1Cor 2:7).

This plan was to be put into effect “when the times have reached their fulfillment.” When is this time? Is it now or is it future? It is future; it is still yet to come. This time refers to us receiving our resurrection bodies. In our passage, Eph 1:5, God

says He predestined us to be adopted as sons, and this was in eternity past. In Galatians 4:5, He sends the Son to redeem us that we might receive the adoption. In Romans 8:15 says that we have received the spirit of adoption. But later in that chapter we read,

Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. Romans 8:23

We are adopted the moment we believe in Christ, but we have not received the fullness of what God planned in adoption. This verse says that we groan inwardly, eagerly waiting for this adoption which is related to us receiving our resurrection bodies. There are many biblical analogies to use here to convey this idea. In our passage, it refers to the time when we stand holy and blameless in His sight. It refers to the time when the Lord has washed us with the water of the word to present us to Himself a glorious church (bride), not having spot or wrinkle. It refers to the time when our marriage to the Lord is consummated. It refers to the time when we shall be "like" him for we shall see Him as He is. It refers to the time when Christ who is our life appears and we also appear with Him in glory. It refers to the time when we drop out of these bodies of corruption and are clothed with our heavenly garments. It refers to the time when we realize the suffering of the present time was not worth comparing with the glory to be revealed in us. It refers to a time in which all creation is waiting and groaning to be delivered by our presence as glorious sons. The Father has highly favored us by conferring on us the full rights of sons at this time. We are married to the Son, Jesus Christ. What great love He expresses towards us. What tender care He provides for us. He knows we will have a troublesome time in this world before He comes back, so He tells us,

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." John 16:33

What great love He expresses to us and He makes promises to come and get us.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going." John 16:1-4.

You must see the yearning heart of love the Son has for us as He pledges His return to receive us, to never leave us. He promises to send a comforter while He is away, who will remind us of Him and tell us all of His intimate thoughts. Our Lord cherishes us and will surely come to receive us to Himself.

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words. 1Thes 4:16-18.

I don't know about you, but I long for that time when I shall see Him, in all His glory. I eagerly wait for that "blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (Tit 2:13). I think I understand why Paul said, "I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far" (Phil 1:23). We need to see clearly the hope set before us. If we do, it will develop in us a deep love which can only be satisfied by our Lord Jesus Christ. We will long for Him and that day just as a bride in eager expectation for her wedding day. Paul had this anticipation, and after completing his course on earth, he notes, "Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing" (2Tim 4:8). Do you long for this time? Does it fill your thoughts with expectation and awe? Do you see the hope?

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. John 3:2, 3.

### **...to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ...**

As we look at the consummation of this magnificent plan which was born in the mind of God from eternity, we tend to focus on ourselves. It will be glorious for us to behold Him, but there is more than personal impact that results from the plan being fulfilled. All things are affected, all things are changed. We find that our Lord is very hub of all creation. All creation and created things respond to Him. "The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed" (Rom 8:19). Our Lord is the rightful ruler of all creation. Even though this world is said to be ruled by Satan (John 14:30; 16:11; 2Cor 4:4), we know that Christ will eventually take His rightful place. He is sitting now at the right hand of God until His enemies are made a footstool for His feet. When all things in heaven and on earth are brought together in Christ, we who are united to Christ, are included in that statement. We are his body "the fullness of him who fills everything in every way" (Eph 1:23b).

*The Vision of God*

Sometimes it is helpful to stop and look at things from God's standpoint. After all, He planned all of this, and He created and set everything in motion. We need to be on the same page He is on. We need to see the vision of God in doing all of this from the top down instead of the bottom up. Can we know what that is? Certainly! He has revealed it to us. We need to see that God has not been haphazard in His thinking, but deliberate. There is a verse that speaks to this and gives us the understanding that the world we live in, the things that are going on around us are not uncontrollable and as crazy as you may think. Many people look at their surrounding and come to the conclusion that there is no God at all. They think thoughts like, if there was a God, He wouldn't let all these things happen. They think that there would be no suffering since He is a good God. There is a message God would have us to know.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. Rom 8:28.

All things, this means that where you are, the circumstances in which you find yourself, this chaotic world which no one seems to make sense of, all things that are going on here, now. God works! God is using these things to work something out. These things are not against us, they are being used for us. God is orchestrating all of this, which seems to be out of control, a mess, but God is on the throne. He is using these things; He has a purpose for allowing this state of affairs to go on. If there is pain, even this is being used to God's glory. If there is suffering, it is not in vain, there is a purpose. Things do not just work out, someone is working them out. Things do not just happen; God has a plan for us to view these happenings in context. God works these things with a plan in mind, a purpose He is working toward. He works "for the good of those who love him." We might not consider what happens to us in this world "good," but God does. He is working in our lives and what He is doing He considers to be according to His good and perfect will.

Those who love Him are believers who have come to understand what God is doing. Those who have come to love God are not just anyone who says they love God, but it is a believer who is here now and has come to love God and *understands* His perfect will. We know God is working on our behalf, we understand what He is doing and we have come to love Him. Those who love Him are further defined by "who have been called according to his purpose." We know that this verse refers to us in this time, who are the called, the elect, the very ones he predestined to be adopted as sons in Christ. We are not simply out here in the world fending for ourselves; God is working in our lives and the surroundings we find ourselves in, for our good, according to His plan. Remember, the things are working according to HIS predetermined plan, His will, not our plan. If you are looking at things you consider good or bad and judging your life by them, you have not understood this verse. If you do not know God's

plan, you cannot judge if it is working out or not. Therefore, we need to judge our lives according to God's plan.

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. Rom 8:29

This can change our outlook on life as we submit to the Father's will for our lives and as He seeks to conform us to the very image of His Son. Those same ones He foreknew, predestined, and conformed to the likeness of His Son is for a reason. The reason is that the Son might be the firstborn of many brothers. The firstborn Son is Christ, the many brothers are us who are united to Him and said to be in Him. Christ is the pattern; we are created in His image. What are we? We are just like Him. We look like Him, we have His mind, and we share all that He is. How did we come to be His sons in Christ? God planned this from eternity past; He knew us and choose us to be in Christ then. He also brought us into the world, gave us His life as human beings in Adam. He sent His Son to redeem us, call us and justify us. Later He will also glorify us and we will stand in His presence blameless, without stain or blemish, just as He planned for us. What is going on now is according to His perfect plan. All that He planned for us will come to pass. It may not seem to you that God is working toward this plan, but He is working things out, according to His plan. I am happy to know that I am a part of God's ultimate plan. It is my goal to walk in such a way that speaks of the dignity and honor God has bestowed upon me.

### **In him we were also chosen,**

In Him refers to our Lord Jesus Christ. We were chosen to be "in him." This is special as I already pointed out, but this section turns our attention to the fact that we are part of a plan of God in which is found the purpose behind all things. We will develop this as we go on. But, we were chosen, picked out, selected out, of the saved of all ages for a special purpose of God. God did not reveal this purpose, but hid it in Himself until He began to reveal it in this age. This phrase needs to be understood in the context of the next phrase to see the added emphasis.

### **...having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,**

We have been chosen in Him and because of this, our lives have great purpose. This verse says that we have been predestined, which means that our lives were marked out specifically for a certain purpose. Our predestination is in accordance with the plan of Him, the Father. The plan is where the Father "works out everything" in accordance with His perfect will. What Paul is saying is

that our lives have something to do with the overall working of God in all things. All things refer to the entire working of the universe and all the creatures. It refers to the entire creation of God. A question comes to my mind. Why did God create the universe and everything in it? Would you like to know what God was thinking when He created all things? What was His motivation as He created the hosts of angels? Guess what? We have the answers to these and more questions.

God started with the thought that He wanted to have an heir. This heir would inherit all things. This heir would rule and rightfully so, for this heir was responsible for creating all things, "things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy" (Col 1:16-18). The person of Jesus Christ is the same one, "whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe" (Heb 1:3b). The person who is the Son, is the heir, this person took upon Himself human nature, not angelic nature when He came into the world. But remember, it was the same person who created all things.

For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"? And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." Heb 1:5, 6

But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy." He also says, "In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end." To which of the angels did God ever say, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"? Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? Heb 1:8-14.

The Son is special. All things revolve around the Son. He is unlike any angel, in fact, in His humanity, God commands all the angels to "worship him." In the Son, there was also the plan of salvation, where God would reconcile fallen man to Himself, "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph 1:7a). But God's secret plan, which was not revealed to anyone is that He wanted to bring not just His Son forth as the rightful heir of all things, but that He would create us "in Him."

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. Rom 8:29

He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Rom 8:32

In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. He says, “I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises.” And again, “I will put my trust in him.” And again he says, “Here am I, and the children God has given me.” Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil. Heb 2:10-14

These verses are amazing to me, especially when I think about all that God has planned for me and expects of me. Knowing this, it demands a response from us. If you understand this, you should be motivated to work together with God to fulfill this great plan. Now we know that our existence is not in vain. Now we should understand that our purpose here is tied to something greater than we can physically see. It does not matter what your circumstances are, whether rich or poor, slave or free, God is working things out according to a predetermined plan. This plan involves everything we see around us. You can be sure that God is working in your life and you need to accept that He knows what He is doing. He has not forgotten you and one day you will stand before Him in glory with the full rights of sons, holy and blameless in His sight. I am overwhelmed by the Spirit of sonship and the spirit of adoption which is in me. The Spirit has opened my eyes to see the deep things of God, and what do I see? I see a God of love, and a love that cannot be measured in human terms.

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup>may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup>and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Eph 3:18, 19

Paul prays for us, that since we may be grounded in love, that we would have power. Many think of power as something that can move mountains. They think of explosive power. But, this power is the power to “grasp,” that is, to comprehend or understand something. What we need power to understand is the love of God. Paul goes as far as saying that we may understand love in a basic way, but it takes power to comprehend the full dimensions of the love of God. We need to see it in its fullness, how wide, long, high and deep this love really is. We cannot see this on our own because this love “surpasses knowledge.” This love was not known in the Old Testament because it was not revealed then. In a basic sense, all believers know the love of God. But, this

love requires more than basic spiritual knowledge, it is entering into the deep things of God. This love is something we know only because God has given us “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation” (Eph 1:17). This results in us being filled with all and to the measure of the “fullness” of God! It may be helpful to look at two commentaries on Paul’s words here.

**“That ye might be filled with all the fullness of God**

Note the recurrence of that; that He would grant you; that ye may be strong; that ye may be filled. Which is better rendered unto, to the measure or standard of. Fullness of God is the fullness which God imparts through the dwelling of Christ in the heart; Christ, in whom the Father was pleased that all the fullness should dwell (Col 1:19), and in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead (Col 2:9).” (Vincent’s Word Studies)

**“That ye might be filled with all the fullness of God**

Among all the great sayings in this prayer, this is the greatest. To be Filled with God is a great thing; to be filled with the Fullness of God is still greater; but to be filled with All the fullness of God, utterly bewilders the sense and confounds the understanding. Most people, in quoting these words, endeavor to correct or explain the apostle, by adding the word communicable; but this is as idle as it is useless and impertinent. The apostle means what he says, and would be understood in his own meaning. By the fullness of God, we are to understand all those gifts and graces which he has promised to bestow on man, and which he dispenses to the Church.” (Adam Clark’s Commentary on the Bible)

The old phrase “knowledge is power” is true. But we also learned that the reverse is true, “power is knowledge.” Take time to drink deeply of these truths. And, as we walk away, let us know that our Father, who is worthy of praise, has not held anything back from us. We can marvel at how unselfish, how generous and giving He really is. He did not even hold back the prerogatives that belong to His person. I like what our Lord said when He took upon human nature, “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (Phil 2:6, 7). In every way we turn, God has richly blessed us. God did not only bless us with things, but He did not withhold from us His own person. God blessed us with everything He is! He can do no more. This should hopefully add great value to the phrase, “God loves you.”

*...to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ...*

We must stop to make a point about the “love of Christ.” Literally it says that the love is directed toward Christ. Where are we in this picture? We are “in Christ.” Yes, Christ is the focus of the love of the Father. This love is so deep, wide, long and high that we can not comprehend it without supernatural intervention. This quality of love is more than what is in the boundaries of knowledge. This is more than the love that the average believer can understand. We are privileged to know “this love that surpasses knowledge” (Eph 1:19). The Father loves the Son

more than we can know. Love is the focus, and it is all directed toward His beloved Son. The reason we are told of this love and given strength to comprehend it is that we are also the focus of this surpassing love. Paul tells us in another place that this love is a comfort and demonstrates our eternal security.

<sup>35</sup>Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? <sup>36</sup>As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." <sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup>For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup>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. Rom 8:35-39

Why is love given such focus in the passage? I think it is certainly interesting that we find that at the very center of the being of God, we find this gracious, generous unselfish love. The very accusations of Satan, the slanderer, are leveled against this very thought. Satan accuses God of being manipulative and unloving, rigid and stubborn. But, God demonstrates His love for us in this way, while we were His enemies, He sent His Son to die for us (Rom 5:8). And, at the heart of it all, what emerges is the love of God. To make such accusations to the person of God is tremendously arrogant, when He really is intrinsically a good God. More than that, we have a God whose very motive for all that He thinks and does is unselfish love. I can now understand why His thoughts are not our thoughts, and His ways are not our ways. We are by nature selfish, arrogant and only concerned about things that benefit us. We get these character traits from Satan, who has infused our nature with his traits. But, God rescued us from this state and flooded our hearts with the Holy Spirit and love.

This portion of scripture is helpful for us to know that we are part of a greater plan. This plan may not be seen by the casual observer, but is detailed in the passages of scripture for those who have power to grasp. Before you can see the love of God in all its magnitude, you must see all that God has done in grace. If it is missed, you will certainly not be able to know whole heart of God, who planned such glories for His children. You need to see the overall plan of God as it unfolds before you can evaluate the individual pieces. And, God has given us the detail in a way He has not done for anyone else but those dearest to His heart. Before we can understand the love of God, we must understand His motives.

**In order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory...**

Paul points out that those who first trusted in Christ are the ones to whom this plan was first revealed and the first recipients of this grace would be "for the

praise of His glory.” God’s purpose is to bring many sons into glory. The first ones are special in the sense that they are the first to hope in Christ. Hope here is used rather than believe to indicate that the understanding of our esteemed privileges we have as chosen, predestined and adopted sons. This is what is in the apostle’s mind and this is special because the first ones blazed the trail for the rest of us. How we arrived in Christ is found in the following verses, but this verse tells us that Paul anticipates many more sons and this brings praise to the glory of God. The plan of God being worked out in us brings glory to God and will stimulate praise. This is the greatest thing God has ever done. This brings praise to His glory. We are part of that glory being referred to here. “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Rom 8:18). That glory to be revealed is what cries out for us to understand now and to live our lives in keeping with this greatest of all plans.

Let’s take a look at the phrase, “for the praise of his glory.” It is interesting that we are viewed as the glory of God. We noted earlier that our sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory what will be revealed *in* us. Speaking of glory, our Lord says to the Father, “And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began” (John 17:5). What was Jesus asking for here? As God, He cannot ask for something that He already has. And, He is asking for something He had before His incarnation, but does not have now. This is the glory of God! This glory of God is already in His divine nature, and now He is asking that it be bestowed on His human nature. Remember, the same person who is standing there in Jerusalem is the same person who is God. Later in that same chapter, Jesus says “I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one” (John 17:22).

We are given the same glory that Christ was given. What glory is this? His pre-incarnate glory. In His pre-incarnate glory, He existed as God. So the glory referred to here is the glory of God. The Son was asking for something that He knew He could have, but obviously not in His state of humiliation. The Son was not asking for something it was not fitting for Him to have. The Father was not violating any rules to grant this request. The request was to have divine glory in His humanity. Christ says in His prayer that we He has “given” us His glory. I’m not sure how many times you read past this, but please stop and think about the implications of this statement. The glory is the divine approval, the divine splendor. The glory is that which creatures identify as a characteristic of God. In the Old Testament, the glory was a sign of the presence of God. Sometimes it would appear in the cloud, and on top of the mountain as a consuming fire. One thing to note, if anyone in Israel saw this, they knew it was the manifest presence of God on the scene. There are numerous passages that demonstrate this (Exo 16:10; 24:17; 29:43; Lev 9:23; Num 14:22; Deut 5:24; 1Sam 4:21; Psa 21:10; Psa 24:10; Isa 42:8; Isa 48:11; Isa 59:19; Eze 9:3). The glory is a sign of the presence of God. There are other passages that link the glory of God to us as well.

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. 19The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. Rom 8:18, 19

This verse is filled with deep meaning. What is this glory that will be “revealed” in us? What kind of glory is this? The passage also says that it will be revealed. That is to say that the glory is already in us but will be unveiled, uncovered at some point. The creation (Col 1:15-17) waits in eager expectation for the glory in us to be uncovered. I have to simply say, wow! What does all creation have to do with us? Why is it that all creation is eagerly waiting for us? Who do you suppose that we are if all creation is waiting for us?

When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Col 3:4

Our life is the life of Christ, for we are one. What belongs to Him belongs to us. Our Lord walked around on earth telling all that He owned everything that the Father has. We share everything that Christ has, including glory. In a few of the passages quoted above on glory there are some statements that need explanation.

"I am the LORD ; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols. Isa 42:8

For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another. Isa 48:11

These verses say that God's glory belongs only to God. He will not give his glory to anyone else. But we read above that we are given divine glory. Is this a contradiction? NO. I point it out because it makes a point we need to consider. In context, God is referring to giving His glory to idols. Man wants to worship idols and tries to invest these idols with the divine presence. As I mentioned before, the glory signified that God was on the scene. John Gill has some interesting comments on this phrase:

**“and my glory will I not give to another;** that is, to another god, to a strange god, to an idol; as that has not the nature, it ought not to have the name of deity, nor divine worship given to it: this the Lord will not admit of, but will punish those, be they Heathens, or are called Christians, that give the glory to idols that is due unto his name. This is not to be understood to the exclusion of the Son and Spirit, who are with the Father the one Jehovah, and share in the same glory; the Son is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the Spirit is the Spirit of glory, [Heb 1:3](#) nor will he suffer the glory of the justification, salvation, and conversion of men, to be given to their works, will, and power, which is entirely due to his own grace, to the blood and righteousness of his Son, and to the energy of the divine Spirit.” John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

Note that Gill makes an exception to this verse. He makes the statement that the Spirit and the Son “share in the same glory.” This is important to our understanding of how we can be included in the glory of God. Recall that we are joined to Christ. The analogy given to explain this is one that God coined “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). This same verse was quoted by Paul in Ephesians 5:31, when he is giving his discourse on husbands and wives. But there, it is followed with, “This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church” (Eph 5:32).

*We are the bride of Christ*

Being the bride of Christ, we are destined to be glorious. There is another verse to consider. This verse seems a bit strange, but here it is:

8For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; 9neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. 1Cor 11:8

The church is the woman, the bride. We can see that God created the woman for the man. The woman was taken out of the man and is actually a part of the man. The woman is bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. The woman is uniquely tied to the man and “the woman is the glory of man” (1Cor 11:7b). The woman is under the authority of the man, just as Christ is head of the church. The woman is beautiful to behold, just as the Church will be one day. The man has authority, and is responsible for protecting and leading the woman. Christ died for the Church. He completely gave Himself for her. The man loves and leads the woman with divine insight. Christ washes and purifies the Church with the water of the word, and He will “present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless” (Eph 5:27).

While in the human race there is male and female, but in Christ, we are all the Church, the bride of Christ and must submit to our head, who is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So, we all have the role of the woman who responds to the head with respect and submission. The woman was created to be a helpmeet to the man who had the authority over all the earth. When the woman was created by taking a rib out of Adam and when she was joined to Adam they became one. Automatically, the woman also was raised to the position of ruler of all the earth.

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground” (Gen 1:27, 28).

The man as well as the woman was given complete rulership over all things on the earth, air, land and water. Remember the woman was a helpmeet to the man; she was not in authority over the man. In the relationship they were “one.”

We are helpmeets for our Lord in rulership over all things. A helpmeet is one who has a support role. We are not the Lord, Christ is Lord. We do not make plans, He does and we support Him in whatever He chooses. We trust Him to lead and guide in whatever direction He sees fit. We were chosen in Him before the universe was created. We were predestined and adopted as sons in Christ. We are joined to Christ and we automatically, just as the woman, rule and share all the privileges of His position. The woman was taken out of the man, she was bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. Theirs was a relationship that went beyond mere words. Adam knew that the woman was not just some woman, but was a part of him. “In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church” (Eph 5:28, 29).

After the first marriage, we find that there is something special about the husband/wife relationship that goes all the way back to Genesis. Bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh, the man and woman are bound together when that marriage is consummated. The woman was separated from the man, created out of the man, and then in marriage, they are again united as “one” when they consummate the marriage. From the beginning we were chosen in Christ, even before we existed physically. But God gave us life in Adam, not “in Christ.” We grew up in Adam and we thought that was our home, but then we received the call. That call to fulfill our destiny was heard as we listened to the gospel message.

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. Rom 8:29, 30

Here is our story. We have just about come full circle. The only thing we have not experienced is the glorification promised here. Christ is in glory now. “When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (Col 3:4). This is more than just words, it is a promise. When will He appear? We are not sure, but we know He is coming for us because He promised. He said “if it were not so, I would have told you.” So, we have this assurance “while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

**And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation**

In the previous verse Paul mentions that he was of the small group who was the first to hope in Christ. But these glorious privileges are not limited to that small group, he goes on to state that we also are in Christ. He tells the sequence of events that led to us being in Christ. We know that all those magnificent events spoken of previously can be ours as also since Paul used the phrase, "you also were included..." The apostle John quotes the Lord when he says, "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message" (John 17:20). I am included in Christ and therefore all the benefits and privileges flow to me.

We should also note that in all the verses mentioned in Ephesians chapter one, no human obligation was imposed upon us. We viewed the plan of God from the top down instead of from the bottom up. And, after all, we should really want to know what God thinks since His thoughts are much higher than ours. In all those verses covered, there was no human obligation, but only God's thoughts, plans and actions. Paul is writing to believers, so he is not telling them how to be saved. He is telling them how they received such wonderful blessing and privilege in Christ. How did we get to be in Christ? As we have already covered, it was not by accident. Before the universe or anything was created, God chose us to be in Christ. He adopted us as sons, and He predestined us to have a life that is beyond imagination.

It is to say that there may have been ten things to do before you would be at home in Christ. Now, eight of those things have already been done by the time we get to this verse. Just because we heard the good news and believed in Christ as He was revealed to us does not mean we can have all the blessings of being in Christ. You did not just happen to be here at this time, you cannot choose when you would be born, but God can. God ordained all of this in order to bring you home in Christ. The saved of all ages believed in Christ as He was revealed to them. But, believers of all ages are *not* in Christ. Paul mentions how you arrived in Christ because it is related to you receiving the greatest blessing ever. It is like you walking through a door and finding out you are wealthy beyond measure! How did you get to this blessing? Many things had to happen from the top down, but from the bottom up, all you did was walk through the door of salvation.

The process here is that you heard the word of truth. Not everyone will give the gospel a hearing to understand the true issues of the gospel. Hearing the word of truth involves the ministry of the Holy Spirit in common grace. The gospel is spiritual information and since we are spiritually dead from birth in Adam, we cannot understand it on our own. The Spirit approaches every person and attempts to reveal the creator, our Lord Jesus Christ. Everyone will have a chance to be saved. No one is excluded from salvation. The greatest sacrifice and demonstration of love was when Christ died for us. For God to judge all of the sins of the entire world, and not have a way to communicate this information would be poor planning. As I write this, people are dying and going into eternity.

They need information in order to make their choice. If they do not have any information, they cannot make informed decisions. No one will stand before God and say they did not have ample information to make a decision. They will however stand before God, but they will be “without excuse” (Rom 1:20).

I reject the idea that some have never heard the truth. If we were dealing with man, and man's limitations, I would have to agree. There is no way man can take the message to everyone and witness the truth. God *must* be involved in the process, and we have the testimony from His word that He is. God the Holy Spirit goes to every person ever born and tries to reveal the truth to them. They may reject that truth, but it doesn't stop the Spirit from going to each person to reveal the truth. “When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me” (John 16:8, 9). The work of the Spirit is universal, to the entire world. To say that some people are out in some remote areas and have not had other contact with human beings may be true, but they have had contact with God the Spirit. God gave them life and knows where they live.

“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.” (Acts 17:24-27)

The word of truth is the gospel of salvation. Truth is reality, not ours but God's reality. Only God can tell us what really is and is not. What you see, may or may not be according to the truth. We grew up accustomed to the lie and the false reality of this world. But, the truth of the gospel is the good news of salvation through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The gospel is the story of man and his horrible condition before God because of Adam. Man is born in Adam in a state of depravity, sinfulness, and condemnation. Have you ever heard this expression when someone is having a bad day, “I must have got out of the bed on the wrong side this morning.” Well, everyone born in Adam is on the wrong side of God. We all start out on the side of judgment and condemnation and are subject to His wrath. The Spirit has to first reveal this truth about us before He can reveal the solution to the dilemma. God has to tell us the bad news before we can learn the good news. Some refuse the bad news and then the good news is distorted. Paul was one of those who thought that by looking to the law and seeking to obey it, he would be saved. The law only shows man's depravity and sinful nature, and condemnation before God. Finally Paul did get the message and says, “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Rom 7:24, 25). Paul was excited at this point. I hope you have come to understand Paul's

excitement in your life and realized that we are all prisoners of sin and cannot free ourselves. Then, and only then, does Christ appear on the horizon where we place our complete and total trust in Him for our soul salvation.

## **Having believed...**

This verse is given as a past accounting of how we came to be "in Christ." What does it mean to believe? This question has been clouded with so many meanings that the original meaning is sometimes lost. The enemy would certainly have it that way. This is the very point a person can go from darkness to light and therefore the very point to confuse and obscure. Believing means simply that God has brought you to a place where you see your total helplessness. You see now that your soul is lost before God. That you are under the wrath of God and you can do nothing about it. Knowing this, you realize you are in a desperate situation and then the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ appears to you. He appears as your only hope, your only way to be saved. He is certainly qualified to save you and now you can see Him for who and what He really is. Perhaps you thought you saw Him before, and even believed in Him, but you were not ready because you still had imbedded in your mind that you were really not so bad. You imaged that you were really not as bad as others. You thought you would be excused in some way because you tried so hard. But, now you see yourself according to the truth; you see what God has seen all along. Now, Jesus Christ is not just an icon, He is truly everything the title says of Him- Savior!

Now your view is clear. You finally can look away from yourself and ask God for a solution. Salvation is a matter of desperation in every case. Even in the physical, the savior is saving someone who is desperate, at their wit's end or has gone down for the third time. The person is totally helpless to do anything and would certainly perish if it were not for the savior. The savior usually risks their own life trying to save others. It is like what happened at the bombing of Federal building in 1995. Many were trapped in the rubble. Some risked their lives to go into such an unstable environment to save others. Some have given their lives trying to save others. The firemen and police officers were also a good example of this when they responded to the terrorist attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>. I can think of the time my father was swimming in a lake in New Jersey. Although he would admit he was not the best swimmer, he could hold his own in the water. But, something happened that day and he was in trouble. He struggled to save himself with every ounce of energy in every muscle of his body. Finally, he had no more fight left. He had taken in too much water and he succumbed to the murky dark waters that seemed to be pulling him down. Simply put, he gave up. But, someone on shore happened to see him flailing and marked the spot where he went down. He jumped in, swam to that exact spot and dove down. He found my Father on the bottom of the lake and pulled him up, and on to the shore. The paramedics were called immediately. Those there did the best they could to revive him, but were unsuccessful. Then, the

paramedics came and took over. They worked on him until they realized that there was nothing more they could do. After a time and with no response from him, they gave up on him. But, just then, my mother screamed out, "Keep working, don't stop, *please* don't stop!" They began again reluctantly, and a minute later, my father miraculously began to cough up water. He recovered and is still with us today. I guess there may be many saviors in this true story, but the one that is largest in my mind is that man (I wish I knew his name) who jumped in and saved him from the bottom of the lake. I thank God for that man, and I thank God for my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who saved me.

When you come to the end of your arrogance, Christ will be there waiting to save you. When you come to the end of your strength, the Lord will be there. Many may think I am being too strict in my understanding of salvation, but Jesus Himself said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matt 9:12, 13). The so called "righteous" think they are already saved, but in reality, they are self righteous and lost. They are not seeing God's holy and perfect standard or righteousness. They resist the ministry of the Holy Spirit and settle for their imperfect and shifting standard. They are truly deceived, just like the apostle Paul. "For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death" (Rom 7:11). Because of Paul's zealotry for the law and righteousness, Paul's sin nature made him think he was obeying the law perfectly. Of course, those areas where he was weak and failing, he would simply excuse himself. But when Paul stopped resisting the ministry of the Spirit, he saw the true standard of God, and he saw himself. Paul could now see what God had been seeing all along, the truth about who he was. So, in desperation, Paul cries out, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" (Rom 7:24). No more would he excuse himself, no more could he assure himself he was keeping the law. Paul is now ready to be saved. Prior to this, God was working with Paul but he was not ready. But now, he is desperate.

There is only one solution and that is the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. "Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom 7:25). Are you thankful for Jesus Christ? Did He save you? Only you can answer that. Paul found the answer, and His salvation is complete. It satisfies everything Paul needs before a holy God. Jesus saves from an eternal destruction. His salvation saved us from an eternal misery that would have been ours for sure. I have nothing but respect, admiration and love for Jesus. Just the mention of His name brings to mind His mighty works on my behalf. Some who are unbelievers have used that name in vain. That name, Jesus, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Yet, some use that name in anger, frivolity and rejection of all that He is and does. What comes to my mind is to pray for them, "for they know not what they do." To curse the only hope of salvation is certainly not wise.

Many have come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. They can identify with the attitude of extreme gratefulness for the things He has done. Now we can see why Mary worshipped Him in this manner, "Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume" (John 12:3). Others there at the scene could smell the fragrance as it filled the house. They wondered why this woman would sacrifice so much for Jesus. After all, that perfume could have been sold for a nice some of money. To some, it was like she was wasting it, just pouring it on the ground. But, they did not know what was in Mary's heart. When it comes to what Jesus meant to her, money was no object. There are more important things in life than money. Mary found her Savior and Lord, and no amount of sacrifice could ever repay the Lord, but she was motivated to worship Him in this manor. Mary is not alone in her adoration of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; we also are compelled to give of ourselves, our money, our time, our influence and our utmost respectful love. When we see that He gave so much, without measure, totally selfless, without regard for Himself and His personal safety, we can only admire and adore Him. *Whatever* He asks of us, we should simply respond with, "*done!*"

#### *What believing is not*

Sometimes we need to mention the negative so there can be a context to understand believing better. Remember, if believing is the only responsibility on man's part in the salvation process, this is the one point Satan would seek to distort. Believing in Jesus Christ for salvation is simply trusting, depending or relying on Jesus for your soul salvation. It comes with an understanding that salvation is in no other or nothing else. It is a trust that abandons all to Christ and depends on Him to do what He can only do, save. It is not promising God anything, for there is nothing for you to do. It is not committing your life to Christ, for you are dead and have no life to give. There is absolutely nothing God can do with our dead lives, which is why He creates in us a new life. We have nothing to give, we can only receive. Believing in Christ is not repenting of your sins. God has already judged all your sins in Christ completely. The Father is satisfied with the work of Christ on our behalf. If we are to have any attitude about our sins, let it be that the Father is satisfied with the work of Christ on our behalf. Promises to give up sins and reform your life to be saved show that you do not understand how complete the work of Christ is for you. Reformation is not the issue, your life is dead before God and no amount of earnest and sincere works on your part will move the heart of God. The Father only respects one life in the entire human race. There is only on person who has ever met the uncompromising standard of God perfectly, AND, was judged for all your sins as well. That person is the Lord Jesus Christ. Commitment, dedication and good works only come after you have been completely saved by the grace of God, never before. Believing does not mean you are perfect or deserving of anything, it means that you are trusting in Jesus and His works to save. Believing is not bartering with God, you have not other options, and you have nothing with which

to barter. A person who says they believe and does those things is an insult to the Father who planned and made perfect provision in every detail for your salvation. It is also an insult to the Lord Jesus Christ who performed ALL the work necessary to save you at a tremendous cost. For you to look aside from that to your dead life and think that it can somehow substitute for the perfect work of Christ and His perfect life shows that you do not understand or appreciate this so great salvation which was bought and paid for with the precious blood of Christ.

### **...you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,**

The first thing we note here is that after we believe in Christ, we are marked "in him" with a seal. This is an immediate result for everyone who believes in Christ in this age and there are no exceptions. The second thing we should note is that in the bible, there are no references of anyone being unsealed. If sealing is a deliberate act of God, unsealing would also be. But we have no evidence of this, but we later see that the sealing is a guarantee of us receiving something from God. No human obligation has been imposed upon us except that of believing the Gospel. We did not do anything to be sealed, so there is nothing to fail that would put us in jeopardy of losing this seal. Why talk of this? Because some have tried to say that sealing is temporary and can be lost. The verse does not say this, and there is no other that I know that even hints at it. Therefore, it is sheer speculation. And, it seeks to take away from the glorious truth that is expressed here.

The seal has a couple of primary meanings we should note. 1. The sealing is a signature guarantee. The ancient rulers would seal a correspondence with hot wax and press their signet ring into the wax for two reasons. First they wanted to assure the receiver that this correspondence came from them, for no one else had that ring and it guaranteed that the King sent this letter. Second, the recipient of the letter would be able to look at the wax seal, if it had been broken or tampered with; they were not to trust the contents of the letter. This was a form of encryption practiced even then to insure that the message from the king was authentic. 2. The sealing is a mark of ownership. The sealing signifies that the one marked is owned by God. "Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his..." (2Tim 2:19a). We still use this form of sealing today. When a rancher owns cattle, he puts his mark on them to identify those cattle as his own. God owns us, we are bought, paid for and are His possession.

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body. 1Cor 6:19, 20

You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. 1Cor 7:23

God owns us and that is all there is to it. Some do not believe this and think they can make decisions which would be independent of God. If God owns us, we can only do what He permits us to do. To me, it is a matter of security that God owns me. He can decide to leave me here to glorify Him, or He can take me home if He chooses. Either way, God will be glorified. "For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord" (Rom 14:7, 8).

### **...the promised Holy Spirit...**

The Holy Spirit is the seal. God has given us the Holy Spirit and this is a unique event in history. We actually have the Spirit forever, which means He is a part of our makeup as new creations in Christ. Just as Christ had/has the Holy Spirit without measure, so we too have the same makeup as our Lord. I believe the promise of the Holy Spirit goes back to the prophecies of Jesus Christ.

I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." Luke 24:49

"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Matt 3:11

For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." Acts 1:5

There is no need to look into the Old Testament to try to figure out what the promise of the Spirit is, it is not revealed there. This is a part of the mystery doctrine. God has hidden this information until now. There are only references to the promise in the Gospels, but it is fulfilled when God the Holy Spirit has a ministry to all of us who are saved in a special way. Jesus promised the Spirit, "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you" (John 14:16, 17). The Holy Spirit is the promise and upon believing, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit comes to us, He brings those ministries we mentioned earlier, regeneration, indwelling, filling, baptism, sealing, gifting and teaching and still others. Never before has any believer ever had this kind of relationship with the Holy Spirit.

### **...who is a deposit...**

The Holy Spirit is also said to be a deposit. We have been reading all throughout chapter one of Ephesians about the bountiful grace of God. We read how we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ. We

have been chosen, predestined and adopted. We are one with Christ in a special relationship. We share all that He is and has. This is our destiny, and the very reason God put into play all things. All creation is driven by God's infinite purpose to have sons in Glory, conformed to the same image as the original Son, who is Christ. In everything and in every way, we have been graced out with special grace. Now that Paul has turned his attention on us, He shows us yet another marvelous blessing. And, that is the fact that we were sealed with the Holy Spirit who is a deposit.

A deposit is a guarantee of something. But, what are we guaranteed and why? First we must understand the deposit. God has promised us great things. When we look at ourselves after reading those verses in Ephesians one, we see that we are special, but it may not appear this way to us. As the revelation of just "who" we are dawns on our consciousness by means of the Spirit, we really have to accept it all by faith. Truly the bible says what it says and we cannot deny that we have been given all things, but it does not yet appear a reality because we are still here in this world and under suffering. We do not look any different than the world and on the surface, we have no more influence or recognition than we had before we believed in Christ. What God has done for us is to give us a deposit for two reasons. First, to show that He means business and His intentions and blessings are not fanciful or whimsical but are genuine, tangible assets which we can take to the bank. And second, to give us encouragement of who we are and the surety of what we have been promised.

Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek. Heb 6:16-20

This is the exact thought of why we have been given the deposit. In a real estate transaction, a deposit is needed to show that the borrower is serious and is engaged in the deal. In other words, if someone was purchasing a home and did not put any money into the deal, they may simply change their mind and back out of the deal. The deposit assures that the buyer has something invested and is not likely to walk away from that deposit, but see the deal through. But, when God promises us something, we are talking about someone who has the utmost integrity. Also, He was not bound to promise us anything, this is His pleasure and will to do so. And, on top of that, it is given in grace, free of any human obligation other than simply believing in the Lord Jesus Christ to save. Then, if that were not enough, He gives us a deposit to guarantee what is to come.

*We have the deposit now!*

God has already given us a portion of what we will receive later. “but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (Rom 8:23). The first fruits of the Spirit is another way of saying we have been given the Holy Spirit, who is a deposit. If we have been given a deposit, the nature of it is that we have it now! I have asked some if they know what this deposit is, and what does it guarantee? This is a teaching that is not commonly taught, but it needs to be taught more. How can we be greatly encouraged if we do not know the hope set before us, and we know nothing about the deposit? We first have to receive it by faith, because faith reaches out to the reality of what God actually has done for us. Once believed, God will make this deposit known to us. It will actually go beyond faith into experience.

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Rom 8:15, 16

This is the actual deposit. God is telling us that He will make His presence known to us. This is our deposit, our assurance that God will do exactly what He said He would. The Holy Spirit is the deposit and it makes great sense to me, that if God wanted to give us a portion of our inheritance now, to demonstrate that He means business here, and that He would give us the Holy Spirit. Of all the ministries of the Spirit already mentioned, we must take note of the ones that speak of our inheritance. In the verse above, it is the “Spirit of sonship.” This is where the Holy Spirit gives us that sense of belonging to the family. That we are in fact sons, in the same way that Jesus Christ is the original Son. We are adopted into this sonship. Now this is a fact and the scripture bears this out for sure. But, God does not stop there, He wants us to have an experience that gives us the confidence that we are sons. For this, He gives us the deposit, the Spirit of sonship. There is nothing I can write here that will give you this experience; it is God Himself who provides this. This experience does not happen for everyone at the same time; it is a matter of revelation and this through growth. Why do I come to this conclusion? Because Paul in Ephesians one is praying for us to see something. That we would have the Spirit of wisdom and revelation (Eph 1:17); and, “I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints” (Eph 1:18). Paul is praying that believers would see this, that this information would be revealed to their hearts. This information is not even known let alone received in the heart. Then, Paul links this information to our “glorious inheritance.”

There are other passages that speak of believers being ignorant of the fact that God the Holy Spirit is in them.

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? 1Cor 3:16

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own. 1Cor 6:19

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Rom 6:3

Just as there is milk for the new believer, there is meat for the mature believer. New believers cannot assimilate the deep things of God. Not only new believers, but believers who have been around for awhile and still have not grown up in their salvation. "In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!" (Heb 5:12). For believers in this category, they may have the deposit, but they will certainly not know they have it by experience, but only by faith. These believers should have grown up, but instead, they need milk again!

### **...guaranteeing our inheritance...**

Everyone likes a guarantee. Even a pessimist with all their doubts and negativity wants a guarantee. I am glad that we can have assurance in the Word that we are dealing with God who is not like man. When He promises us something, it is for real. There are some important things we need guarantees to confirm that will change the way we conduct our lives. For instance, salvation is guaranteed. We will never be lost. "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1). Once in Christ, there is *no* possibility of condemnation. Some will not believe God no matter what is promised them. I do not believe this is God's fault, for He cannot make us trust Him. If we fail to believe, we must take responsibility for it. "He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" (Luke 24:25). Let us not be in this category of those who do not trust the word of God.

Our guarantee in this passage is not referring to salvation. Although, salvation is a part of it, the direct reference to what we are guaranteed is our inheritance. If we have an inheritance, we are heirs, and if we are heirs, then we are sons. This is working backward from the reasoning of Paul. "So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir" (Gal 4:7). What is our inheritance? It is all that God has done for us in the previous verses. Our inheritance is related to our position in Christ. Our inheritance is what God has made of us by means of the baptism of the Spirit where we are joined to the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul tries his best to convey this information by saying that we were chosen before the universe was created. We were predestined to be conformed to the very image of His Son. In Christ, we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Not all understand that they have such an

inheritance and what this blessing means. They do not know that through their salvation, they have been given “an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you” (1Pet 1:4). Our inheritance is not what was promised Israel, which is the land, but it is to share the same inheritance as the eternal Son of God. This we are guaranteed!

Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. 2Cor 1:21, 22

### **...until the redemption of those who are God's possession...**

When we speak of redemption, we think of the fact that Christ redeemed us by His work on the cross. We think of salvation, of which redemption is an important part. Redemption speaks of purchasing a slave from the slave market. Redemption also speaks of the cost God spent to rescue us from certain destruction. “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (1Pet 1:18, 19). In one sense, we have already been redeemed when we were saved. But, redemption has a fuller meaning also. It has to do with the time when we are completely released from these bodies of corruption. It refers to a time when God can bestow on us all that He promised as sons. “Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (Rom 8:23).

God has in mind something more when He says “until” the redemption. The deposit is all we will receive “until” later when we receive the full inheritance. If the deposit means that we receive 1 percent of our inheritance now, then when we receive our resurrection bodies, we will receive the other 99 percent. So, it stands to reason that if God has given us a deposit, who is the Holy Spirit now, and this guarantees us more later, then when that time comes, God will certainly deliver on the remainder of our inheritance. I like the way Paul says puts it.

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir. Gal 4:4-7

Are you aware of the tremendous cost paid to redeem you? God sent His own Son to redeem us. The mission is accomplished and we are now safe in Christ. In Christ we have all the fullness of God. Our God and Father did not simply restore us to what Adam was in a perfect state, He had plans for us that go beyond anything Adam ever had or will be. Our redemption speaks of how God

accomplished this feat. Sometimes we need to just stop a minute and review the record of just where we came from and where He brought us. These verses cover the full scope of our redemption.

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. Eph 2:1-7

### **...to the praise of his glory.**

It is fitting that the longest sentence would begin with praise to the Father and also end in the same lively praise. Praise is not a manufactured or measured response; it comes spontaneously and unashamedly from a heart of gratitude. In Revelation chapter 4 and 5 we are given a picture of heaven and the worship from the four living creatures and the twenty four elders. There is a continuous praise that comes from these creatures day and night. They are said to shout in loud voices as they fall down before God, "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being." (Rev 4:11). Praise comes from an appreciation of the person God and what He has done. Right now, we may not understand why these creatures have such gratitude that they continually display this praise. But, when we get into eternity, I believe we will understand better. Praise is not some requirement that we must do when we get to heaven; it is an overflow of gratitude and thankfulness to a being that so deserves it that we cannot stop. Praise is not measured; it comes from a deep appreciation of God. At this point, a story from our Lord may help us understand more:

Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. "Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said. Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured

perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." Luke 7:40-47

All of us have been forgiven much, but not all of us may realize it. But, when we do get into eternity, we will have the correct perspective. Then, we will see the Lord who is worthy of our praise and adoration. We will be willing to give Him the abundance of our praise and worship without limits. We will also realize that this God is truly the most loving, unselfish, giving and patient person even beyond our understanding of those words. God does not measure out His love when it comes to His sons. Here He displayed His generous character in giving all to us. The Father is worthy of praise. Paul understood this and begins this discourse with those words. But, he did not leave it at that, he shows why the Father loves us and is deserving of such adulation. If you have followed each verse, each phrase and each word, then you also know why we should bow the knee before the Father and worship. I do not think we should solicit praise for God. If you know God, then you will give Him praise.

Giving God praise is not simply standing in a church service with your arms raised and waving and singing hymns. Anyone can do this, but true praise is an attitude of the heart that affects the entire life. To praise someone is to cherish them or to honor them. This attitude will be seen while at church, work, school home or wherever the person happens to be. This praise will compel us to want to know Him more, to get closer to the one who loved us so much. We will have a thirst for Him and His word in order to know even more of what He has done; and to know what He wants us to do. The Father will be the most important focus of our lives. Doctrine will be our link to Him and His thoughts. His presence will be our joy and happiness as He resides in our hearts. The expression of our love for Him will be seen in our humility and obedience as well. Our Lord said it best, "but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me" (John 14:31). Worshipping God for many is confined to a church building. When they leave, they go on with their lives as though God was only in that building. Lip service will never substitute for praise because it comes from a heart that is transformed. It comes from a yielded heart that seeks to know Him. We do not want to be like the Samaritans where they thought they were worshipping the true God, but Jesus said, "You Samaritans worship what you do not know..." (John 4:22a). Knowing God is more important than trying to manufacture praise and worship.

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." John 4:23, 24

My tongue will speak of your righteousness and of your praises all day long.  
Psalm 35:28

## In Conclusion

I cannot begin to exhaust all there is in these twelve verses. I'm sure someone will read this and think I have missed this or that point. I covered the verses the way I see them and I can only see what God has revealed to me. For those who have read this far, it says that you have a desire to know God. I hope what was provided here this does move you a little closer to that goal. Where do we go from here? We continue in the power of the Spirit to concentrate on the word, uncovering the deep things of God. We are uncovering those things which belong to us. Just as our Lord told those Pharisees, "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me" (John 5:39). Our Lord knew that the scriptures revealed Him. Those Pharisees were standing in front of the very one to whom the words described and they did not know Him. For Christ to know that those scriptures were about Him, means He must have poured over them. He must have devoured them and knew the scriptures just as well as He knew himself.

The epistles speak of us, those who have been chosen by God for a special purpose. I have tried to develop the uniqueness of that purpose and the position and also the glorious privileges which are a part of it. The scriptures reveal a mystery that has been hidden in God before the creation. We have the privilege of knowing this information now. God revealed it to us in the epistles. We should also pour over them to glean every detail, every thought the Spirit is willing to reveal to us. Let us not be guilty of neglecting the word as the Israelites did. Even though the mystery has been revealed, it is still a great mystery for many today. Many churches never talk about such things and treat them as though they are not in the scriptures at all. Some read these passages and read right over all the richness and wealth found in those verses. God has entrusted this special message to Pastors (1Cor 4:1, 2). It is time to take a fresh look at the thoughts in this passage to make sure we have what the Father intends we have.

We have come full circle. God had this magnanimous plan from eternity past before He created anything. As far as we know, this is the first thing God ever thought about. He specially choose us to be in Christ even then and this is His will, His good pleasure. Human history is the story of how we came into this world, separated from Him and in a state of enmity and death. It is the story of how the Lord from heaven came to rescue us in order that we might receive the full rights as sons. The mission was accomplished. But, it was not over there, it continues to tell of how God loved us so much and how He had a plan all along to bring many sons into glory. It tells of a plan to take some from the human race, and conform them into the very image of His Son. Who and what are these sons? These questions are answered for us in the text as well as the other epistles. And finally the story tells of how God kept this plan hidden and to Himself. But, now, He has revealed it to those for whom it applies. In this we see the character of the God who is responsible for all these things and through

all the majesty, awe, power and holiness, we see at the very center of His being, a heart of immeasurable love.

Up to now I have been careful to distinguish between Jesus the “Son” and we who are “sons” to make sure there is no confusion. Really, after all that has been said, this is not accurate. There is only one Son. There is not a Son and sons as one may be led to think by reading those distinctions I pointed out in the discourse. There is only one Son- and we are that Son. This is not due to anything we can do or have done, but it is a testament to the overflowing grace of God given to us in Christ.

Paul spoke of this in terms in which we could relate. He calls it the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, unsearchable riches, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge and the deep things of God. Something there should get your attention to let you know that God has given us something that “eye has not seen nor ear heard” when it comes to these things. Paul is straining his vocabulary to describe something that is immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine. He made such a shocking statement about staying here or leaving through death to be with Christ, “I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far” (Phil 1:23b). What does Paul know that is better by far? He knows that God has blessed him “with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph 1:3). Paul wanted this special information to be known to everyone, and he comments about his motivation, “To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.” (Col 1:29).

It is an honor to just know the Lord Jesus Christ personally through salvation. Beyond salvation, we have been blessed in a way that goes beyond knowledge. We are joined to the Son of God. We are married to Him so that everything true of Him is now true of us. In this union with Him, we share everything He has. We fully possess on another. We are joined eternally to a divine person. All that He is in His person including both natures divine and human, we share! Who are we? We are bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh. We are the fullness of Him. “... and so shall we ever be with the Lord...” When He appears in glory, then shall we also appear in glory. What will we be like? We will be like Him. We share his life, destiny, honor, position, Sonship, all blessing, all things, and even His battlefield rewards. We share His relationship with the Father, His very thoughts, and even His glory. What more could be done for us? What does He have that we do not share? We have been predestined to be conformed into His same image. I say all this without exaggeration.

My purpose in writing this to share the light the Lord has shown me. If pray the same prayer Paul prayed,

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may

know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

As you grow up in your spiritual life, this is what God would have you to know. These are the “deep things” of God, the very meat of the word. Since the bible mentions milk and meat, we should expect that there are the basics of the word; then, there is the meat, the deeper things for the mature believers. At every level, there is something to glean from this document. If you do not come to the same conclusions I have, that is OK. But, do not stop there, what are your conclusions? I would be interested to know your thoughts about these things. If you have questions, please ask. Questions present a side I may not have considered.

Finally, I leave you in the hands of our Father who loves us more than words can describe. I leave you in the hands of the Son, who also loved us and demonstrated it by giving His life for us. I leave you in the hands of the Holy Spirit who reveals these deep things of God to us. If you have humility and submit to God, you are in good hands. God rewards those who diligently seek Him. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, body and strength. Knock and the door shall be opened to you, seek and you will find. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you. All of these expressions are absolutely true. Do you want to know God? If so, He will reveal Himself to you. God is more real than we are, for He created us. I would like to close with these words.

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen. Romans 11:33-36

In Christ, Doug...

05/27/05