

Ephesians 1:1-14  
The Son's Role in Salvation  
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**CALL TO WORSHIP**

NKJ Now when (the Lamb) had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before (Him), each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying:

"You are worthy to take the scroll,  
And to open its seals;  
For You were slain,  
And have redeemed us to God by Your blood  
Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,  
And have made us kings and priests to our God;  
And we shall reign on the earth."

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice:

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain  
To receive power and riches and wisdom,  
And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying:

"Blessing and honor and glory and power  
Be to Him who sits on the throne,  
And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"

Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.

Revelation 5:8-14

### **INVOCATION**

Heavenly Father, we praise You today for the unsearchable riches of Christ. For in Him, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us.

O Lord, we confess that we have at times lacked the faith to esteem the reproach of Christ as greater riches than the treasures of this world.

Forgive us, O Lord, for we are members of Your church which Jesus purchased with His own blood.

And now, O Lord, enable us this morning to sing to Jesus a new song, saying, "You are worthy, for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth."

## SERMON

We are continuing today our look at Paul's opening words in his epistle to the church at Ephesus. A few weeks ago, we began looking at the first fourteen verses of this inspired letter. Paul begins this epistle with a psalm of praise to the living and true God giving thanks for the blessings of salvation. This opening psalm can be divided into three sections, each section ending with some variation of the phrase, "to the praise of His glory." We see some variation of this phrase "to the praise of His glory" in verses six, twelve and fourteen. Each of these three verses ends a section of this psalm of praise. Verses three through six praise God the Father as the one who planned and ordained our salvation in eternity past. Verses seven through twelve praise God the Son as the one who accomplished this salvation at a certain point within history. Verses thirteen and fourteen praise God the Holy Spirit as the one who applies this salvation to God's people within history.

We have already looked at the work of God the Father, but we will quickly review that today. God the Father is the Sovereign Lord of history who has planned all that comes to pass and who controls the historical process. Verse eleven says that God the Father works all things according to the counsel of His will. Not just some things or most things but all things, to the fall of the sparrow and the number of hairs on our heads.

God the Father is also the Lord of sovereign grace. He chose us before we chose Him. In fact, He chose us even before we existed, even before the world existed, even before time and history started. He chose us in Christ before the foundation of

the world. His choice was unconditional. He did not choose us because we first chose Him. He did not choose us because we were holy and blameless. Rather He chose us as rebellious sinners with the plan of transforming us into a people of faith, with the plan of making us holy and blameless. He elected us to be His special people. Just as surely as He chose Israel to be His special people in the Old Testament, so He has chosen us today.

1 Peter 2:9-10

- 9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;
- 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

Titus 2:13b-14

- 13 ... our great God and Savior Jesus Christ
- 14 ... gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

According to Ephesians chapter one, verse five, God the Father predestined us. This means that in eternity past God drew the circle of His unconditional love around us. He surrounded us with His love even as the mountains surround Jerusalem. He established our destiny to be adoption to Himself as legal sons and heirs through Christ Jesus.

His love for us is unconditional, like the love of a good father for his first new born child. His love for us is unconditional because He accepts us not based upon our performance but based upon Christ's performance in our place and on our behalf. He accepts us not based upon our works but based upon Christ's works in our place and on our behalf.

His love for us is also transforming. Verse four says that He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless. Think of a handicapped young girl whose father regularly sends her to physical therapy. The physical therapy is difficult and painful and tiring, but through it the young girl is gradually learning to walk. She gets frustrated and wants to give up. She goes to her father and says, "Daddy, don't you love me the way that I am." The father replies, "Yes, dear, I do. But I also love you too much to allow you to stay the way that you are." That is the way God loves us. He loves us in Christ unconditionally. In that sense, He loves us the way we are. But He also loves us too much to allow us to stay the way that we are. He chose us in Christ to be holy and blameless. He chose us in our sins, but He chose us to change us. He put us into a faith relationship with Jesus. You can't be in a faith relationship with Jesus without its changing your life.

Let us now look at the work of God the Son in our salvation. God the Father planned our salvation, but God the Son intervened at a certain point in history to accomplish that salvation. Jesus did the work of salvation, and God grants us the benefits of that saving work by putting us into a saving union with Jesus. Notice that verse six says that God made us accepted

in the Beloved, which is to say, in Jesus. Our saving union with Jesus is key to our salvation, and we consciously experience that saving union as our faith in Jesus, as our resting in Jesus alone for our salvation. Then verse seven begins with the words, "in Him," that is again to say, in Jesus. Verses seven through twelve of our text for today explain how our being in Jesus, being in this saving union with Jesus, results in our salvation.

We will examine the work of God the Son under three headings: past redemption, present reconciliation and future riches.

We will begin by looking at past redemption. Verse seven in our text says, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Redemption, of course, is one of the main Biblical metaphors for Christ's work of salvation. The picture is that of someone who has been kidnapped or enslaved, and then someone pays the ransom price necessary to buy that person freedom. This is certainly an apt analogy to our salvation. The devil had taken us captive to do his will, he claimed us as belonging to his evil kingdom of darkness. We were also enslaved by our inner sinful desires, which dominated our hearts and minds. The devil had tempted our forefather Adam to join his rebellion against Almighty God by sinning against God, by transgressing God's law. Adam had succumbed to the temptation and had fallen into sin. Then Satan claimed not merely Adam but the whole human race as those who were both guilty before God and enslaved by sinful desires and thus his fellow outlaws and rebels.

This seemed like a hopeless situation, and would have been had God not sent to Adam's race a Seed Redeemer who was a son of Adam who descended from Adam by an extraordinary generation. He was a son of woman born of a virgin. He was bone of Adam's bone and flesh of Adam's flesh; yet He was not guilty of Adam's first sin and He did not inherit Adam's sin nature. His human nature was morally pure and pristine. In some mysterious way, the miracle of the virgin birth enabled Jesus to be a true human, a true son of Adam, and at the same time insulated Jesus from the guilt of Adam's first sin and from the moral corruption of the human race.

Jesus was also fully divine. Being the eternal Son of God, He became man, and so was and continues to be God and man in two distinct natures and one person forever. He was the Son of God, and God the Father is uniquely the Father of His divine person. He became the Son of Man, and the Virgin Mary is His mother of His humanity.

In this unique sense, God the Father is Jesus' Father and the virgin Mary is Jesus' mother. This unique individual, Jesus of Nazareth, was the one human being in all of history who was qualified to pay the ransom price of salvation. The ransom price was His blood, or more specifically, His bloody death upon the cross as a sacrifice for our sins. We were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. His human suffering paid the human penalty for human sin. And the divinity of His person gave that human suffering an infinite worth such that when He was slain, He redeemed to God by His

blood a multitude beyond numbering out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

The redemption metaphor is rooted in the general concepts of ransoming the one who is kidnapped and redeeming the one who is enslaved. This metaphor is also rooted in the specifics of the redemption of Old Testament Israel out of their slavery in Egypt. At the time of Moses, the blood of the Passover lamb was applied to the doorposts of Israel. As a result, the angel of death, the tenth plague upon Egypt, passed over those houses marked with the blood of the lamb. Today Jesus is our Passover Lamb. He delivers us from spiritual death. He redeems us from spiritual bondage to sin. He rescues us from Satan as our taskmaster and Pharaoh. He removes us from the Egypt of this world as a system in rebellion against God.

The metaphor is redemption. The root reality is forgiveness. Through His paying the just penalty for our sins, Jesus satisfied God's just demands against us. He took upon Himself the curse of the law which resulted from our breaking the law, that we might be blessed of God. His suffering totally paid the ransom price. He paid the sin debt against us in its entirety. We know this because before He died, He cried out, "It is finished!" We know this because the grave could not hold Him and He rose from the dead. The wages of sin is death, and His resurrection from the dead testifies that He paid the wages of our sin in full through his suffering upon the cross. Because God's justice against us had been satisfied, God was freed to be merciful to us. God forgave our sins. God freed us from our guilt. God erased our sins, cast them behind His back and into the depths of



the sea. God separated us from our sins as far as the east is from the west.

This was from beginning to end an act of grace, an act of undeserved mercy and kindness, an act of unmerited favor. Verse seven is enclosed before and after with statements declaring that this act of redemption is an act of divine grace. After verse seven, in verse 8, is the statement that this work of salvation is an abundant, lavish and rich endowment. Verse 8 says that God made His grace to abound to us. This is no skimpy gift reluctantly given like the penny thrown to the beggar. This is a super-abundant gift whose worth is beyond all measure. The grace of God is an infinite ocean of mercy whose depths cannot be fathomed and whose shores cannot be seen.

Before verse seven, in verse six, is the statement that God by His grace made us accepted in the Beloved. This is another statement of the abundance of God's grace to us.

If we want to translate this verse more literally, it says "to the glory of His grace, with which He graced us in the Beloved." God graced us with grace and favored us with favor and pitied us with pity by putting us into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Jesus, our Redeemer, is here called the Beloved, a name which appropriately expresses the relationship of God the Son to God the Father. Within the mystery of the Trinity, there are eternal love relationships. The Father loves the Son, and the Son loves the Father. This language of love also applies to Jesus in His humanity. God the Father loves Jesus the man with the love and

pride of a father for an obedient, submissive son who delights in doing his father's will. Jesus humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the painful and shameful death of the cross.

Jesus is the Beloved of the Father both in His divinity and in His humanity. The fact that God has saved us in the Beloved and through the Beloved is the measure of God's love for us, His people.

John 3:16

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Romans 8:32

32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

We have considered the past redemption. Let us now go on and consider the present reconciliation in verses nine and ten. We must remember that Adam's eating that forbidden fruit in the garden was an act of war against Holy God. Adam's fall into sin caused a cosmic rift between heaven and earth and disrupted the sweet fellowship between God and humanity. In a moment's time, Adam went from peace with God to war with God, from fellowship with God to enmity against God, from God's blessing to God's wrath, from light to darkness. Jesus has come to pick up the pieces and to put everything back together again, to put

everything back in order. The man Christ Jesus is the one Mediator between God and humanity. He has come to reconcile sinful man with his Maker, to end the enmity and to restore the fellowship, to bring peace on earth.

The moment an individual enters into a faith relationship with Jesus, he goes from enmity to fellowship, from wrath to blessing and from darkness to light. He ceases to be an enemy of God and becomes God's beloved friend. He ceases to be a rebel against God and becomes one whose heart desire is to please God. He is at peace with God. And when a person is at peace with God, he has stopped kicking against the pricks and fighting against reality and living in a sinful fantasy world. When a person is at peace with God, he is able to begin the process of putting his life back together. When a person is at peace with God, he is on the road to recovery.

According to verse 9, this work of reconciliation began at a point in history called the fullness of time. This was when the last grain of divine preparation had fallen into the bottom half of that hour glass of history called BC or "before Christ." The bottom half of the hour glass was full, and the appropriate time had come for the work of Christ. The fullness of time was also the point in history at which the world was ready for the spread of the gospel message. The Greek empire of Alexander the Great had established Greek as the common language of the world. The Roman empire had established a unified government that forced hostile nations to live at peace with one another and a system of roads that facilitated travel between nations. At the same time, people were becoming skeptical of pagan philosophy

and dissatisfied with pagan religion. At this point in history, God had prepared the world for the dispersion of the gospel messengers throughout the nations of the world. At this point in history, God had prepared the world for the communication of the gospel in a common language. At this point in history, God had prepared the world for the consideration of the gospel as a new message. It was the fullness of time.

And that brings us to our last point, the future riches. Verse eleven says that "In Him also we have obtained an inheritance." The Greek word here translated "inheritance" has as its root idea the casting of lots. This was the original literal meaning behind this word which came to refer to an inheritance. Now the meaning of a word is based on its common usage and not on its original literal meaning; that is to say, its etymology. Yet the etymology of this word is useful in that it reminds us a significant inheritance in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, God redeemed Israel from her bondage in Egypt and gave her as an inheritance the promised land, the land flowing with milk and honey. God distributed this inheritance to the twelve tribes by the casting of the lot. We read about this in the book of Joshua. God controlled the casting of the lot and used it to distribute each parcel of land to the tribe which God wanted to receive it. That limited Old Testament inheritance distributed by the casting of the lot was a picture and pledge of the ultimate inheritance which Paul is referring to in our text using a Greek word which reminds us of the casting of the lot.

The ultimate and eternal promised land, the ultimate and eternal inheritance is the new earth which the saints of God will inhabit

for eternity and where the saints of God will find ultimate and complete rest from their enemies. This is our hope. This is what we look forward to. This is the inheritance we will ultimately receive. We can be sure of our obtaining this inheritance because the God who sovereignly controlled the casting of the lots when He distributed the land among the twelve tribes of old is still the sovereign Lord. He is working all things according to the council of His will. He is in total control of everything from the fall of the sparrow to the number of hairs on our heads. With such a sovereign Lord and Savior, we can be secure in our future. We have an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, an inheritance that does not fade away, an inheritance that is reserved in heaven for us, an inheritance where thieves do not break in and steal and where moth and rust do not corrupt and destroy.

Our passage for today reminds us of what Jesus has accomplished in history, what Jesus will do in the future and what Jesus offers us today. Based on His unique person and work, He now offers us redemption and reconciliation and riches. Beloved, are you ready to experience true freedom? Are you ready to make peace with God? Are you ready to receive an eternal and secure inheritance? Beloved, do so today while there is still opportunity, while there is still breath within your body. Today is the appropriate time. Today is the day of opportunity, and we have no promise of tomorrow. Look to Christ alone for your salvation. Look to Christ alone to make your right with God. Rest upon Him and receive Him. Identify with Him through baptism. Identify with His people through the local church. Live each day in fellowship with Him. You will find in Him redemption and reconciliation and riches beyond measure.

## **BENEDICTION**

NKJ Blessed is the Lord God of  
Israel,  
For He has visited and  
redeemed His people.

...

To grant us that we  
Being delivered from the hand  
of our enemies,  
Might serve Him without fear,  
In holiness and righteousness  
before Him all the days of  
our life.

NKJ And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word  
of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an  
inheritance among all those who are sanctified. Amen.  
Luke 1:68,74-75; Acts 20:32