

Every Spiritual Blessing

Part II: The Son

Ephesians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus:

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

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love

5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ

10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.¹

11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,

12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

Father
Predestined
it

Son
Paid for it

¹ **Markus Barth** translates it, “All things are to be comprehended under one head, the Messiah, Those in heaven and upon earth—under him!”

- ¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,
¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it,² to the praise of his glory.

(Eph 1:1-14)

Solas in the Sentence

LELAND RYKEN HAS A BOOK on Proverbs called *Short Sentences Long Remembered*. In it, he explains that “the basic unit of a biblical proverb is the single sentence” and “the simplest form of proverb ... is what is grammatically called a simple sentence with a single independent clause in contrast to a compound sentence with two independent clauses.”³ I took the first ten proverbs of Solomon, added up their words, and came to an average of 6.6 words per proverb. Ephesians 1 is no proverb. It contains the longest verse in the Bible, indeed in all of Greek literature (**Ephesians 1:3-14**). We saw that there were 202 Greek words in it. If you divide this by our

² Literally, “until we acquire possession of it” is “for the redemption of the possession.” “Redemption” is literally in this verse and is the same word found in vs. 7. I have no idea why the ESV did not want to translate the word.

³ Leland Ryken, *Short Sentences Long Remembered: A Guided Study of Proverbs and Other Wisdom Literature*, Reading the Bible as Literature (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 31.

average for a proverb, you could have almost 31 proverbs in this one sentence!

Last time I told you that **Sinclair Ferguson** calls this, “A sentence begun in eternity.”⁴ But he has more to say about it than that. In a sermon he called it “the most amazing sentence that has ever been written in any human language ... breaking all the ordinary rules of human writing.”⁵ Trying to make sense of why Paul would do this, I think he captures it as well as anyone. “It pours out of him. He is so conscious of the indescribable character of God’s grace that he feels that to use the odd naughty rules of grammar to contain it in simple sentences or in the occasional compound sentence is to demean its wonder. It comes out like a great thunderstorm falling from the skies, like some great waterfall pouring out of him in a great torrent ... It has so gripped his mind and his understanding that he’s just got to go on.” In other words, the subject matter with which Paul begins this letter is so majestic that no normal mode of writing or communication can contain it. It must break all rules because its topic

⁴ **Sinclair B. Ferguson**, *Let’s Study Ephesians* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), 7.

⁵ This and any following quotes are from **Sinclair Ferguson**, “Ephesians 1:1-14, Part 3 (MP3),” in *Exposition of Ephesians 13-Part Series by Dr. Sinclair Ferguson* (Uploaded: 7/11/2012), <https://www.monergism.com/legacy/mt/mp3/exposition-ephesians-13-part-series-dr-sinclair-ferguson>.

breaks all normal understanding. Spectacular truth needs a sentence like none elsewhere written to match it.

Previously, we focused on vv. 1-6, paying particular attention to vv. 3-6. In it we saw the first of five spiritual blessings in this sentence. Philip Ryken, Leland's son, calls this the first of three movements that God plays in "the symphony of our salvation." Thus, the focus of the sentence: salvation.

There are three movements because each is associated with and facilitated by a different Person of the Trinity. The first movement "tells how the Father chose us before the foundation of the world ... The Father is the administrator of salvation, and he oversees the process from beginning to end." The second movement, which we will look at now, focuses in on the Son. "It is through the Son that we achieve salvation and come into full relationship with the triune God."⁶

Yet, in thinking about the sentence again, I was gripped by something else. The focus of the Father's movement is summed up in the purpose given for the Father's choice. He

⁶ Michael LeFebvre and Philip Graham Ryken, "The Word of the Trinity in Salvation," *Crossway* (May 5, 2011), <https://www.crossway.org/articles/the-work-of-the-trinity-in-salvation/>.

calls it, “the praise of his glorious grace” (Eph 1:6). It is, perhaps more than anything else, God’s *grace* that has gripped Paul’s mind. **Grace alone**. When the Reformed spoke of this “*sola*” of the Reformation, they meant God’s predestining love for his elect before the world began that was the beginning point of their definition of grace. Electing love is sheer grace. There is no other way to describe it.

But we can speak of something else in the same breath as Paul. This is the idea of **God’s glory**. The reason God chose anyone is not because of anything good in us, but only because it is “according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace” (5-6). This is what the Reformers spoke of when they said, “**To the glory of God alone.**” We will see it again later.

Of course, all of this is found in the words that the Apostle is writing in this one eternally glorious sentence, words that we call holy Scripture. That is, we know about these truths because of Scripture. No man taught this to Paul, but the Word of God himself did. This is no fabrication of yours or any other created creatures’ mind, for no one but God would conceive of such a thing. Thus, we know about it from **Scripture alone**.

Then there is something that is coming very soon in **Ephesians 2:8**, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.” Faith becomes the only instrument means through which “every spiritual blessing” contained in the sentence is brought to you.⁷ Thus, **faith alone**.

That leaves only one other *sola*, and it is basically the second movement of our symphony. **Ephesians 1:7-12** tell us the means by which this grace comes to us: **Christ alone**. It then gives us three ideas which constitute the second, third,

⁷ Calvin’s commentary on this sentence is very helpful in helping you understand the various “causes” of salvation. He describes “the foundation and first cause” as eternal election. The “efficient cause” is the good pleasure (or divine kindness) of the will of God. The “material cause” is Jesus Christ. The “formal cause” is the preaching of the gospel. The “final cause” is the praise of the glory of his grace.

**Calvin’s Causes of Salvation in Ephesians 1
(see his commentary and Institutes 3.14.21)**

First Cause	The fountain	The eternal election of God	1:3-4
Material Cause	That out of which something is made	Jesus Christ and his obedience to death	1:5-7
Efficient Cause	The chief agent causing something to be made	The good pleasure of God; his love	1:7
Formal Cause	The design or idea followed in making something	The preaching of the Gospel	1:8
Final Cause	The purpose for which something is made	The praise of his glorious grace	1:12
Instrumental Cause	The means or instrument by which something is made	The Spirit’s illumination, that is, faith	2.8

and fourth of the five spiritual blessings named in the sentence (the first being election). This is what we will be looking at today.

Five Spiritual Triune Blessings (Cont.)

Ephesians 1:7 begins, “**In him...**” This is already the fifth “**in Christ**” in this chapter, and fourth in this sentence. There are six more to go just in this sentence alone! This is because everything here is and must be funneled through Jesus Christ. Why? Well, the answer is what we will look at, but the question itself is one that so many have problems with: **the exclusivity of Christ** and why it is that Christianity insists that he is the only way to the Father. Why? Because it is only through him that the following blessings are obtained.

Spiritual Blessing #2: Redemption in Christ (vs. 7-8)

This leads us to the first of the blessings that are brought through Christ. “**In him we have redemption**” (7). **What is redemption?** When you understand what it is, you will understand how very great this blessing is. **Bryan Chapell** calls

it the beginning of a great “**reclamation process.**”⁸ What is being reclaimed? Slaves from their slavery. The word “**redemption**” (*apolutrosis*) describes **release from bondage**, usually by means of a price paid.⁹ It is the deliverance that comes because a ransom has been paid.¹⁰

The word includes two aspects that John Murray calls redemption accomplished and applied. The accomplishment was **a provision** of a ransom price to satisfy for guilt. This accomplishment was the death of Jesus Christ as the perfect sacrifice for sin. Thus it says, “**We have redemption through his blood.**”

The application is the actual **granting** of all the gracious gifts which make up a completed salvation.”¹¹ This is what

⁸ **Bryan Chapell**, *Ephesians*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 34.

⁹ **Allen C. Myers**, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 876.

¹⁰ See **John Murray**, *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955), 43. Murray has a helpful explanation of how the various words used to describe Christ’s work satisfy different aspects of the problem our sin has created:

John Murray: Different Aspects of Christ’s Death		
Sacrifice	Satisfies	Guilt
Propitiation	Satisfies	The Wrath of God
Reconciliation	Satisfies	Alienation from God
Redemption	Satisfies	Bondage and Slavery

¹¹ **Robert L. Dabney**, *Discussions by Robert Lewis Dabney: Evangelical*, ed. C. R. Vaughan, vol. 2 (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1891), 308.

we will see next time in the fifth movement of the symphony with the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who applies every benefit of Christ to us and who releases us to a liberty that is nothing less than the liberty of the glory of the children of God.¹² Therefore, “Redemption implies the application of Christ’s atonement”¹³ to the elect.¹⁴ He is speaking to saints who have been redeemed.

¹² Murray, 43.

¹³ William Greenough Thayer Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, ed. Alan W. Gomes, 3rd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 2003), 743.

¹⁴ **Going Deeper.** Beginning nearly the turn of the 19th century, Reformed theologians started distinguishing between “atonement” and “redemption” such that men like Dabney, Shedd, and Hodge would say that atonement is unlimited, but redemption is limited or to put it another way, the provision is unlimited but the application is limited. This has been very confusing to many people because while older Reformed theologians often made the same kind of conceptual distinctions in terms of Christ’s death being *sufficient for all* and *efficient for the elect*, they used different language to do it. David Ponter explains, “In classic Augustinian thought ... the redemption *and* the expiation both had universal and particular referents and aspects. For example, in classic Reformed thought, an objective payment (as a satisfaction) was effected by the shedding of Christ’s blood, which properly ‘bought’ and ‘redeemed’ all mankind. However, the subjective application to any given man was conditioned by faith and repentance. Thus, in this line of thinking, there was redemption accomplished and redemption applied: the latter being universal, the former being limited. And the application of the redemption, itself, was twofold, redemption applied in the effectual call, and redemption applied in the *final eschaton*.” David Ponter (ed.), notes 2 and 4 in Unknown Author, “For the Theological Magazine: Redemption and Atonement, Not the Same” in *The Theological Magazine*, vol. 1 (New York: T. and J. Swords, 1796), 207-211. <http://calvinandcalvinism.com/?p=5382>.

You can hear in this explanation something that may remind you of Murray’s *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*. Murray is using the older language, though he is using ideas that were not in the original Reformers regarding the provision—that the provision is also limited (i.e. the idea of a limited atonement). I agree with Ponter that this distinction which Murray is either unfamiliar with or did not understand or just didn’t like is really important to grasp. I would recommend the following page to see examples of what they are talking about: “On the Distinction Between Atonement and Redemption,” *Calvin and Calvinism* (May 8), http://calvinandcalvinism.com/?page_id=7341.

The great biblical analogy is that of Israel being set free from the slavery of Egypt. The Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel himself, set Israel free not because of anything in them but simply, “Because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers.” This is why he “has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt” (Deut 7:8). Israel’s Exodus is our story as Christians. But how?

Jerome explained, “The one who is yet to be redeemed is a captive” (Jerome, *Epistle to the Ephesians* 1.1.7). If we need redemption, what need redemption from something? Obviously, we are not slaves to Egypt. If our benefits are spiritual benefits, the slavery must match it. Thus, Scripture talks about us as being born slaves to sin (John 8:34; Rom 6:16-20), the devil (Heb 2:14-15), and the fear of death (Rom and Heb just cited). Thus Jerome adds, “He has ceased to be free by coming under the power of the enemy. So we are captives in this world and bound by the yoke of slavery to the principalities and powers, unable to release our hands from our chains.”¹⁵ One of the early English Reformers expands

¹⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all quotes from the Fathers are from M. J. Edwards, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture NT 8. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999).

it and says, “By Christ we are redeemed from the malediction of the law, from sin, death, hell, eternal damnation, and from all captivity and thralldom of the devil” (Lancelot Ridley [d. 1576], *Commentary on Ephesians*).¹⁶

Sadly, this doesn't mean people don't like their bondage while in it! Plenty of people enjoy their slavery to these things. But slavery, by definition, means lack of freedom, submission to something higher than you, and the necessity of doing your master's bidding. It is truly amazing to watch people in the same breath scream out how free they are and at the same time see that they are totally incapable of extricating themselves from these three things. It is self-deception, yet the very proof that such a thing is true. The pastoral words of Martin Bucer need to be heard again,

Whatever is redeemed was once under someone else's control. So we were once bound to the tyranny of the devil because of our sin, for the devil works effectively in unbelievers. Let us therefore acknowledge the sad state of our nature and our servile condition, from which only Christ was able to set us free by his blood. By this we are reminded of just

¹⁶ Unless otherwise noted, all quotes from the Reformers are found in Timothy F. George, “General Introduction,” in *Galatians, Ephesians: New Testament*, ed. Gerald L. Bray and Scott M. Manetsch, vol. 10, Reformation Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011).

how awful sin is, because it could not be wiped out by people or angels but only by the incarnate Word and by his most shameful death, so that we might be delivered from that death that we ought to have suffered on account of our sins. We are only really free when the Son sets us free, as John says.¹⁷

(**Martin Bucer**, *Lectures on Ephesians*)

Those who mock Christ truly need to **understand what they are mocking**. This about the “blood” again. God did not grant redemption to us that cost him nothing. Jesus Christ had to die in order for it to be granted at all. This was **absolutely necessary** in order to satisfy the wrath of God against sin. Of all the deaths of men, this death was unique, for in it the *only* innocent man suffered the greatest suffering anyone has ever endured. The cross itself was bad enough, perhaps the worst form of torture ever invented, some say. But his suffering went far deeper, for on the cross which spilt his blood, the eternal Son of God was for the first and only time forsaken by his eternal Father. And he did this not because someone took his life, but because he gave it up willingly that you might have life in return. Our redemption

¹⁷ **Timothy F. George**, “General Introduction,” in *Galatians, Ephesians: New Testament*, ed. Gerald L. Bray and Scott M. Manetsch, vol. 10, Reformation Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 248.

cost God *everything*! How indescribable is the grace of God towards you?

This life is described in the next word, which also happens to be parallel to redemption. “**Forgiveness**” (Eph 1:7). **Forgiveness** means that a debt has been cancelled. It is the “remission” or “cancelling” of a debt of penalty.¹⁸ It is a truly powerful word when you understand who and what has forgiven. It is the forgiveness “**of our trespasses.**” “*Trespass means a falling to the side of ... a deviation from the path of truth and righteousness.*”¹⁹ It is all of your temptations and failings to stay on the narrow road not being held against you.

The parallel in Colossians 1 says, “**In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins**” (Col 1:14). Sin, the **missing of the mark**, the falling short of the glory of God. Our trespasses and sins are a violation of holy law and breach of covenant with an omnipotent God. In other words, what is being pictured here in this **first great benefit** that comes through Christ is rebellious, hateful enemies of God being granted pardon at the cost of a perfectly innocent man, God in human flesh, who died so that we might have such a thing.

¹⁸ Chapell, 35.

¹⁹ William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Ephesians*, vol. 7, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 83.

Yet Colossians adds not merely our sin, but also the spiritual enemies of our souls, which we have seen here too. “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col 1:13-14). Are you starting to get a picture of just how serious this slavery of yours was, and if you are not in Christ, still is?

Christians rarely talk about this; I think because we barely understand it. But birth into the domain and kingdom of the spiritual forces in heavenly places explains the reason why slavery to sin is so impossible to free ourselves from. Look at the crazy world around you, see the insanity multiplying daily, and realize this is what God has redeemed you from. Do not be surprised at what you see but know that God’s power has worked in you and will work in you through the Gospel proclamation that Jesus Christ sets men and women free from such terrible bondage and darkness. Look to him and him alone. The Son of God sets people free.

Words cannot express my feeling of total inadequacy to explain to you what this means. It has to be how Paul felt, and his words are so much greater than mine. So all that is left is to go back to the source. “According to the riches of his grace” (Eph 1:7). He returns to the grace of God which

came from eternity past, but through the death of Jesus Christ has made it possible that we could have such benefits.

Where were you when it was planned? Where were you when it was executed. This is the point of grace. You weren't part of it, but if you are in Christ then you are recipient of it. If you are not in Christ, then look to the Son and be set free.

Look at what it says next. “Which he lavished upon us” (1:8). To lavish is to **splurge**, to binge, to go above and beyond all you could ask or imagine. What is he lavishing? The riches of his grace, the forgiveness of sins, the redemption from sin, death, and the devil. Freedom. All this comes through the person and work of Jesus Christ. This is the reason why he is the only way to the Father. No one else has or could ever do this. No one else has or could atone for sin. No one else has or could appease the wrath of God. No one else has or could rise from the dead by his own power to bring such things to those he chooses. People can't his kingdom and benefits it with their eyes until they are given sight. Yet, it is the most real thing that has ever happened and to see the beauty of holiness and forgiveness is to glimpse God himself.

The way he brought it to pass, it says, is with “**all wisdom and insight**” (8). This does not refer to his giving us all wisdom and insight, because obviously we do not have that (though he has given us true wisdom and insight in Christ). Rather, it refers to his own. **Wisdom** is that **secret directive** of thought that guides all that God does, thereby making it good, moral, righteous, and holy. **Insight** is that **illumination** only God has that makes what he does infinitely perfect in every way. In other words, God did not do this willy-nilly. It was not Plan B. This all began in ages past, over uncountable lapses of time, with God knowing and doing it thoughtfully, deliberately, knowingly, wisely.

Spiritual Blessing #3: Knowing the Mystery (vs. 9-10)

The third blessing in the sentence, the second that comes through Christ, is **illumination** or “**making known to us**” (9) something. This “**illumination**” is juxtaposed with God’s own “**insight**” from the previous word. In other words, what God has wisdom and insight in eternity past to do, he makes known to you in Christ. And what is that? It is called insight into “**the mystery**” (9).

Chapell says, “In the New Testament a mystery is not so much characterized by complexity or intrigue, as by timing. A mystery is a truth once hidden that is now revealed (Rom 11:25; Col 1:26). It could not be seen before, but now it can.”²⁰ What is this mystery? It is the will of God. This again refers to the secret will (see Eph 1:1, 5) of God hidden in ages past to do something in Christ.

This secret will of God made known now was “... according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ” (Eph 1:9). In other words, in Christ the mystery is revealed. In Christ the veil is taken off of our eyes. In Christ we see the Light. In Christ, Truth is known, evil is exposed, Beauty is glimpsed, Eternity is grasped, Forgiveness is had, Love is known.

“In Christ” is the first thing to see here. It is in Christ that these things are made known. That is, they come in Christ. A second thing to observe is that it is through Christ, that is through who he is, what he has done, his obedience, his miracles, his teaching, his sitting with sinners and tax collectors, his dying on a cross, his overcoming death itself. This is the Gospel. This is where the mystery is solved. This

²⁰ Chapell, 37.

is why this rightly belongs to the benefits that come through the Second Person.

This is also why unbelievers always remain in the dark. They refuse to come to the only one who unlocks the mystery of God. It is only in Christ that the puzzle pieces fit. All those question people have about suffering and death and “**why would God do _____.**” They only make sense in Christ. Suffering only makes sense in view of the Suffering Servant. Death only makes sense in view of the one who conquered it. Questions about God’s fairness or his goodness only can finally be understood when they are put into the crucible of the God-man’s life, death, resurrection, and ascension.

But many of those are not even in view here. Rather, the Apostle is thinking about **other things**. **Vs. 10** explains that he set them forth in Christ “**as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.**” This verse has been important to **Dispensationalists**, because the KJV translates the ESV’s “plan” as “dispensation.” The very roots of Dispensationalism are found here.

All older Dispensationalists believed that Paul is talking about a future time, i.e. the Millennium.²¹ Curiously, some Progressive Dispensationalists interpret it as referring to what is taking place right now.²² This is also how some of the Fathers took it.²³ The key is the phrase, “the fullness of time.” In Galatians it uses the same phrase. “When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law” (Gal 4:4). This obviously refers to today. And, of course, this is exactly what all of these spiritual blessings in heavenly places are talking about. They are blessings we receive today.

And yet, the rest of the verse creates some difficulties. It says that there was a plan for the fullness of time “to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth” (10). The word “unite” is more literally a cognate for the term

²¹ Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody, 1965), 27; *The Scofield Reference Bible: The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments* (New York; London; Toronto; Melbourne; Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1917), 16 and 1250; Clarence Larkin, *Dispensational Truth, or “God’s Plan and Purpose in the Ages”* (Philadelphia, PA: Clarence Larkin, 1918), 26.

²² Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), 115.

²³ E.g. Chrysostom, *Ephesians Homily 1*; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5:20.2.

“head.”²⁴ Think of Christ the Head of the church for instance. The word is better translation as “summed up” rather than “united” because of what is said to be summed up.

Chrysostom said, “Everything is summed up in him [in] a single head to all creation, both angels and humans.” It is the “angels” part that sounds strange. It shouldn’t. Think about what we’ve already said about the supernatural here. Many commentators refuse to say anything at all about the heavenly beings. Perhaps it is because it doesn’t make a lot of sense. How does Christ’s work make Christ the head of them?

Calvin, admitting that they are included asks, “But why are heavenly beings included in the number?” His answer is that, “The angels were never separated from God ... Angels are said to be *gathered together*, because men have become members of the same society, are admitted equally with them to fellowship with God, and enjoy happiness in common with them by means of this blessed unity.”²⁵ I don’t disagree with that, but I do not think he goes far enough.

²⁴ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 88; Chrysostom *Ephesians* 1.1.10.

²⁵ John Calvin and William Pringle, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 205.

Marius Victorinus (290-364) thought, “It is not all things indifferently that are restored but all things that are in Christ— both those that are in heaven and those that are on the earth but only those that are in Christ. Others are strange to him. Whatever things then are in Christ, it is these that are revitalized and rise again, whether in heaven or in earth. For he is salvation, he is renewal, he is eternity” (**Marius Victorinus**, *Epistle to the Ephesians* 1.1.10). He is correct that all things restored by him are “in Christ.”

However, others have said that this includes even fallen angels. Not that they are saying that God somehow redeems fallen angels. Not at all! Rather,

Eph 1:10 affirms that all of creation will be consummated in Christ. This is presented as an essentially future event when all of humanity and all of the spirit world will be brought into complete subjection to the Head. The evil spirit “powers” are included ... We may infer that these “powers” will at the time of the consummation be completely disarmed and no longer able to tyrannize the church (Eph 6:10ff.; 4:7) ... In the context of Ephesians, this “summing up takes place in the subjection of all things to the Head.”²⁶

²⁶ **Arnold**, *Power*, 68. This thought can go back all the way to **Irenaeus**. Note the chain of thinking. “His [future] manifestation from heaven in the glory of the Father ‘to gather all

Some think this summing up is already complete. Professor Arnold explains,

In a certain sense, this interpretation is also true. Christ has effectively broken the hold of the “powers” on humanity by his resurrection (1:20ff.) and he has already effectively become Head of the church (1:22). The final summing up has in no way taken place, however. The “powers” are still in rebellion against Christ attacking the church (Eph 6:10–20) and are effectively working in unredeemed humanity.²⁷

Such is the power of Christ and his Gospel. However, remember what Hebrews says. Though God has given him all authority because of his death and resurrection, “**At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him**”

things in one’ and to raise up anew all flesh of the whole human race, in order that to Christ Jesus, our Lord, and God, and Saviour, and King, according to the will of the invisible Father, ‘every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess’ to Him, and that He should execute just judgment towards all; that He may send ‘spiritual wickednesses’ (Eph 6:12) and the angels who transgressed and became apostates, together with the ungodly, and unrighteous, and wicked, and profane among men, into everlasting fire; but may, in the exercise of His grace, confer immortality on the righteous, and holy, and those who have kept His commandments, and have persevered in His love ... and may surround them with everlasting glory.” **Irenaeus**, *Against Heresies* 1.10.1.

²⁷ Arnold, *Powers*, 68-69.

(**Heb 2:8**). There is a consummation of all things, and this is all part of the eternal plan which nothing can thwart.²⁸

The whole point of this is that the spiritual blessings in Christ extend to you in such a great capacity that God will bring about total reconciliation of the entire universe. The great rebellion of angels in days of old will not be able to stop the omnipotent power of God through Christ and his cross. Indeed, even now they hold no power over the Gospel. What if we once again believed this truth and started telling people about it? Has God not proven time and again his power over the darkness when the church proclaims this message of Christ? Jesus is the final solution. It was planned out before the ages, before there even was rebellion or even creatures. This moves us to the final of three blessings that come to us because of Christ.

Spiritual Blessing #4: The Divine Plan (vs. 11-12)

²⁸ “In Eph 1:10 Christ is from eternity given the commission to be head over all things ... Colossians 1:15-16 fixes Christ’s finalized role as head over all things. According to Col 1:20-22, 2:14-15, and Eph 2:14-16 this victory is gained through the crucifixion, an event ordained to accomplish an unexpected result in the opinion of evil spirits (cf. 1 Cor 2:8). Christ’s resurrection reversed the effect of sin and won human salvation (Col 2:14) while disarming these enemies (Col 2:15). His ascension, enthronement, and present rule over the church and over the world are Christ’s means of subjugating the powers in the world to come (Eph 1:20- 23). Christ’s future and total conquest will come at his appearing to the world (1 Cor 15:26- 27).”

Ronn Johnson, *Dissertation*, 193.

Vs. 11 begins, “**In him.**” Again, Christ is the obvious center of this new thought. “**In him we have obtained an inheritance.**” In other words, redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, the riches of his grace lavished upon us are not future for those in Christ. They are our present reality. Why? Because someone told us about the Gospel and the Spirit worked in our lives.

What is this “inheritance?” **Lloyd-Jones** calls this **the great theme of Epistle and of the whole of the New Testament**, which is seen best beginning in the second chapter.²⁹ **We will look at it more in vs. 14** next time, but it is enough to hint now that it is being called sons of God, even as he said back in **vs. 5**.

The thing about it here is that thinking about all these things causes the Apostle to return to the theme of the first spiritual blessing: **predestination**. Predestination is such a comforting, delightful doctrine to anyone who knows the depths, not of their friend’s depravity, but their own. To the Christian who looks inside and realizes the ruin and misery that has resulted from their own hands and feet, the venomous words that have dripped off of their lips, even the noxious thoughts that have poisoned their own heart—against

²⁹ **Lloyd-Jones**, *God’s Ultimate Purpose*, 211-212.

both neighbor and God, **predestination is that one doctrine and brings the most wonder and awe.**

Why? Because it started the whole thing. This is what brought about the work of God in Christ. Why? This is the most unfair thing in all the world and thank God because it is pure love and grace.

The Apostle gives a **“why” of predestination** that comes to his thoughts, and then he answers that with a **“what.”** Why has God predestined us to adoption as sons and given us all these blessings of redemption, illumination, and an inheritance in Christ? Many people think that the answer somehow has to reside, even if only a little bit, in them. Ferguson shows you the undo torment that not believing or understanding this doctrine creates.

If it has not dawned upon me that all that I am and all that I receive as a Christian believer comes to me exclusively because of the grace of God in Jesus Christ and not because of anything I am in myself, then I have not yet really understood the mystery of the Gospel in such a way as that Gospel will really give me assurance of salvation. So long as you think that the grace of God depends upon something in you,

so long you are going to be uncertain whether there is there is enough in you to qualify for the grace of God.³⁰

Predestination is the first and greatest guard against any idea that there is something in you that caused God to shower his grace upon you. For where were you when he predestined you? You simply weren't there.

Instead of something in you as the answer to the "why," Paul says this is all his grace because it was his "purpose" to "work all things according to the counsel of his will" (11). God is the one working. God is doing all things here. All you do is receive the benefits of God in Christ. God is the one working all things. Not just some things. Not a few things. Not everything except those things that you and others thwarts because he gave you freewill. All things.

He works all things out. Not according to your will. Not in spite of your will. Not as Plan B or C or Z. God is not playing craps with the universe. This is not a game of dice. All this is in accordance with the counsel of his will. In this case, the counsel is the counsel of the Triune God. This is **not divine council stuff here**, except in as much as he is

³⁰ Ferguson, sermon.

telling them now the same mystery that he has told you. Rather, this is **the triune counsel of the Holy God**, the Covenant of Redemption as we call it. This is his plan, in eternity past, which the Persons of the Godhead took counsel together to create and carry out in time. That's the point of this sentence. That's the majesty of these truths.

Our last verse adds a “**what.**” “**So that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory**” (12). Here we have those initial converts to Christianity—Jew and Gentile in Ephesus that came to Christ through the proclamation of the Gospel some 1970 years ago. You and I are not among the first. They were. And this showed the world something brand new, unheard of in human history. That the God of glory was seeking glory for himself by redeeming people out of slavery to the powers and principalities, forgiving their sins, and bringing them into the family of God and that he had not forgotten his own people—the Jews—in the process.

The long millennia of total world darkness, save the light of the nation of Israel, was finally abating. The Sun of Righteousness was dawning upon all. God was having mercy. And why? For the same reason he does all things. “**To the praise of his glory.**” **To the glory of God alone.** I

told you we would see it again, so that the Father might be praised for his plan and Christ might be worshiped for his performance.

We still have one more Person of the Holy Trinity to see in this greatest of sentences. His is the work of application. Until then, I plead with you to see the love and kindness and mercy of God in Christ alone. He has done everything you need to receive these benefits. He has done all the Father required and won for himself the honor as a man, and as the God-man he is bringing all things in heaven and on earth into subjection to himself.

He is the King and he demands and deserves your allegiance. Look to him and nowhere else. Understand the graces poured out for you in these things and find continual wellness for the sin that yet remains until that day when all things will be **summed up** in the mysteries now proclaimed to you: our glorious **Head**—the Lord Jesus Christ.

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