

Worshiping God the Father

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You can open your Bibles to Ephesians chapter one. “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

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, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved. 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 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth.

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, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. 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, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory.”

Let’s pray. Father, You have allowed some of Your thoughts, Your purposes and Your plans to be revealed to the holy apostles and prophets by way of Your Spirit. You have revealed, and they are being declared. You’re letting us in to the realm of Your own knowledge, Your ways and Your purposes. Lord, there is a reason why You have told us these exact things. And I pray, Lord, give us the grace as a church to be able to draw out, to suck the nectar out, whatever that is. Lord, may You help us to just span the depths and to reach the heights and to be able to lay hold. Lord, I pray that we would be changed as a result of the rich truths that are found here. Lord, I can speak, and I can say things. These are your truths, and I pray that You would empower them in a way that would help us to be what You want us to be. We find in Your Word that You are looking for those to worship You in spirit and truth. And I pray, Father, that as we go through these verses, may that be a reality. May we be those kind of people: worshipers in spirit and in truth. Lord, may our capacity to be that be enlarged. We ask for help in this place. I ask in Christ’s name, Amen.

Well really, verse 3, the first word - Blessed. Paul pretty much sets the agenda for my sermon as I am going to transition from verse 2 to verse 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.” Blessed be the God and Father. Now look, if we read this calmly and coolly, if we just simply read this like sometimes we are so apt

to do; if your devotional time lands you in Ephesians chapter 1, you know, probably you just woke up and you're barely even into your coffee, and you start reading this - "Blessed be the God and Father," I don't doubt that most of us have read that verse without feeling the passion that Paul felt with it.

And you know what the struggle is? It's kind of like sitting in a service - I was speaking to somebody this week, and they said that they believe their lost and they've been sitting in a service, and they've been watching Christians. And this guy said that he saw other Christians as they were talking about the truth from John 17 about the fact that the love that God has for His Son, we get drawn into that love. The love God has for His Son is the same love He has for us. And this guy was saying that it was being shared in a prayer meeting, and that God's people were relating to that, and there was some excitement. And he said, "I couldn't enter in." And sometimes, we are in the same place, even if we are Christians. We can look at the apostle Paul, we hear him explode out. Paul starts with this tremendous burst of praise, and obviously he wasn't faking it. It came from some reality that was welling up within him. And the problem that we have is, we sit back and we don't feel what he feels.

Now, obviously, Paul knows what he is about to say. And how he feels in this "blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" is obviously coming from what he knows he is about to say. If we had the ability, I was just thinking about this. Obviously, nothing about this required Paul to actually cry out audibly with his voice. You know, you can feel excited on the inside, and then pen that on paper. And I was thinking, even if he didn't make any external noise, there is a decibel level to this. I mean, as far as what was happening in his heart and came out through the end of that pen. And I was just thinking that if we had the ability to measure the decibel level of Paul's heart, what is this? Is this cold, cool, calm, collected, dry, emotionless? I think it's a shout. Right? That's what you're getting from him. And that's what these truths ought to do to us.

You see, the first thing we recognize is this: Even if I don't feel like Paul feels, I recognize that this truth ought to produce that response. And if it's not producing that response in me, well, a couple of things might be the issue. One, I may not understand the things Paul understands that produced this. And if that's the case, then I need to understand them. The other thing is, I might be exposed to the same truths, but like this guy that was talking to me, it is possible to sit among God's people and hear the truths that they are hearing, but not feel the joy that they feel. Why? Well, because you are on the outside looking in. And so, you don't want to be there. I mean, Jesus says, "Come to Me," there is no reason to stay on the outside. "Come, come," He is inviting you to come.

But when I see this, you see, this is kind of a barometer on our own spiritual well being. Because I look at the apostle Paul, and I say, you know what? Sinner saved by grace; he is an apostle, he is under inspiration. He obviously, being under inspiration, means Paul is showing the proper proportion of affection and heart and joy. He is under inspiration as he's reading this. But you got to believe the Spirit of God is carrying him along in more than just what to say, but how to say it. And if he is saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;" if he is erupting in praise, the Spirit of God is leading him along. And so what I can do is use that as kind of a mirror, and I look at that and I say, "Does that resemble anything in my life?" Now look, Paul undoubtedly had the mornings, you've heard Andy Hamilton say -

dead as a hammer. You know, we can all relate to that. The times when we have gone to the Word of God, and how many of you have tried to read the Word, and you know, you're falling asleep.

Once in a while, my wife will try to leave coffee alone, and she says, "I just can't do it, because I fall asleep," when she is studying the Word. Maybe some of you can relate to that. You try to read the Bible at just a time when you are distracted, or a time of the day that's not good. We all know that. Paul would have known that. But what we can do is, we can look at this and we can say this is a measurement. This is a barometer. This is a thermometer. This is a measuring device of how it's proper to respond to the kind of truths that Paul is going to lay out before us. You know what the proper response is to these things? Praise. The proper response is worship. If the truths that we learn do not produce worship and praise and outburst, then we are really not processing them right, because God wants us to process them this way. Praise and joy and worship and exaltation and adoration; that needs to be our response.

We need to recognize this. Why did God save us in the first place? Why did God even plan this? What Paul is going to repeatedly tell us is: For His glory. He wants to be recognized by this. He wants us to glory in Him. He wants us to come back to Him. He wants us to take and embrace these truths, and drink them in, and see who He is; and He wants response. That response that can just look at the truths of salvation and look at the truths of God's character, the God behind all these aspects of our salvation, that God who did these things.

We sang it in the song about the angels. I mean, one song we said was that the angels basically can stop inquiring; they can stop asking. But, (how did the line go?) [Audience Speaks]. Say it loud. [Audience Speaks]. The angels what? [Audience Speaks]. Yeah, "Inquire no more." What? You know, that's Wesley lifted up with great ability in song writing. But, and I recognize what he is saying. Do you recognize what he is saying? Why would he say that they can inquire no more? [Audience speaks]. God is enough? Probably what he means there is that such things have happened and been brought to the surface and made public, that they need not inquire anymore. Christ has done what Christ has done. I don't know, but the fact is, inquisitive and inquiring and finding out and learning, and coming to greater and greater knowledge, and seeking to look into these things and processing them, and coming to know more and more who He is, and having a response on our part that reacts to these truths that we come to.

Brethren, let's just think about worship for a second. What is worship? Is worship just basically bringing up a chorus, you know how it is in some churches, any of you been in a church where they just sang the same chorus over and over and over and over, any of you been exposed to that? And you know what? The thought is, that produces worship. What that produces is mindless affection, and that's the devil's playground, when we don't think. That's not what Scripture wants of us, that's not what God wants of us. Listen, what worship is, is when our minds first lay hold of doctrine; when it lays hold of truth; and we are so moved by that truth that it moves our heart, and moves our affections - to where? - to where we feel small because we see He is big. Where we recognize how big He is. Where we are brought to a place of recognizing what God is, and who God is, and the greatness of who God is, and things about His character and His attributes.

Brethren, God saved us the way God saved us to teach us about Him. The reality of eternal life is

to come to know God. And God does what God does so that He might be known by what He does. He did not do this salvation just because; He did it because He meant for the angels to inquire. He meant for us to watch. And He meant for us to learn, and He meant for us to be filled with wonder and to be blown away. And you see, when I grasp doctrine — deep, heavy-duty doctrine — about who God is, that's where my affections get lifted up and they break forth, because I'm impacted by this. Not this chorus over and over that kind of fills me with this fuzzy feeling. Typically, chorus singing like that and those kind of worship services aren't really the kind of biblical worship that we find here. What Paul is going to do is take us to the mountain ranges of some of the most majestic truth imaginable.

I mean, you can hardly compare. I recognize, Romans, yeah that's long and extensive and takes us deep. But as far as the majesty of our salvation, really there is no more majestic Epistle in our Bibles than what we are going to find right here in Ephesus. I mean, this is Paul taking us up into the heavenly places again and again and again. And what he says is, "For the praise of His glory." This is what it's all about. It's that I see who God is by what God has done, and the glory is revealed to me. And what that does is, it gets processed here; but God did not mean for us to stay here. God did not just make us thinking creatures, He made us feeling creatures and He gave us affection. These cold reformed churches that don't want to show [affection], you know, the kind of churches that rebuked Bob Jennings for raising his hand, that is not what God wants. He doesn't want us so cold, in light of these truths, that we don't respond to them. He wants us to respond. And that's what Paul is doing. You see, the thing about it is, we typically are going to respond after we hear what Paul says; but because Paul is the author, he knows what he is going to say before he says it. That is why he is erupting in "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" as he is getting underway. Because he already knows, he is already feeling the glory resonating with himself.

So, what is happening here? I'll tell you what is happening. You open this letter, and you've got Ephesians who are now Christians. Who are they? They are saints. They are full of faith. They are in Christ. They are objects of God's grace and peace. These guys were idol worshipers not too long ago. It's kinda like the people in here. I was at Craig's on Friday night and we got talking about the place that we used to work in Michigan; and part of the time I worked there, I was lost. And it really started making me think about when I was lost. Sunday mornings - a time to clear the cobwebs out of your head from the sin the night before. We got a room full of people that 10 years ago, 20 years ago, 25 years ago, just like these Ephesians, going our own way, doing our own thing. And now you have saints. It's like, how is all this made possible? How does this happen? What accounts for Christians? That's really where Paul is going with all this.

What accounts for our salvation from God's perspective? Where does he start? Oh, he doesn't start with us. He doesn't start with our faith. He doesn't start with our freewill. He starts with God. And he starts with God in eternity past, before the foundation of the world, because our salvation isn't a reaction in time. A lot of people have this idea: "Oh, Adam fell, now God had to come up with some way to resolve that." No no no no no. Before the foundation of the world, God had already purposed to save. You see, that means that God knew we were going to fall beforehand. "Why did He make us?" You see, a lot of times, people ask that question, "Wait! If God knew we were going to fall, before the foundation of the world, why make us at all? Or why not make us to not fall?" Don't you recognize, it's because the fall, it's because

Satan being here, it's because man being in the state man is in, it's because of the whole way that this whole matter is orchestrated in this world today; brethren, it's not like this by chance. It's like this because this is how God thought to most precisely demonstrate Himself to us.

Don't you recognize if there wasn't sin, there is much we would not know about God. If God didn't rescue people from sin, there would be much we would not know about God. God does what God does to put Himself on display. And the thing is, before you say, "Well, that sounds selfish. That sounds self-absorbed." But the thing you have to recognize is this: That God is who God is, and this stuff all resonates with the glory of who He is. And the thing is, He really is indeed worthy; and when He demonstrates these realities, they really are glorious. And to be objects that He saves and reveals these things to, is, brethren, for a created being, this is the height. This is the height of love, and this is the height of God's compassion and kindness. What you have to recognize is this: if eternal life is to know the one true God and the Christ that He sent, for God to do the things that He's done so that we might come to know Him in a way that we would have never known Him, if He had not allowed man to fall into sin and to be rescued from it, what God is doing is He is opening our eyes to realities about Himself that are going to pull us in and sweep us into the glory, more than we ever would have been able to otherwise. To God's elect, this is a manifestation of love to us that really should blow us away.

So, I want to point something out right here at the beginning. We need to recognize this. The key to worshiping God is not repetitious choruses. It's not soft music that's going to start playing five minutes before I finish the message, and get turned up by increments as I get to the end. What Scripture tells us, the very heart, the very fuel of true worship is knowledge. Don't miss that. A lot of people scoff at doctrine as though it's not needed. "Doctrine, it's a lot of [learning]. Doctrine divides." Listen, doctrine divides because truth divides. And truth is always going to divide us from those who hold to error. But the thing is this: Doctrine is teaching. And the truth is that worship is going to come as we come to have a fuller and greater knowledge of who God is.

Knowledge; you say, "Are you sure? Are you sure?" Yeah, I am sure. A lack of knowledge is at the root of most of our problems. Just look at the letter here. Ephesians 1:16, let your eyes cruise to the next page probably, Ephesians 1:16, "I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers," How is Paul praying for them? "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him." Did you get that? This is his prayer. "Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know - there's knowledge - that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you." Now go further, Ephesians 4:13. We see that Christ gave gifts to men, and He gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers - to do what? - to equip the saints for the work of ministry. When you get to verse 13, "Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God." You see, that is the direction. That is where we are headed if we want maturity. That is where the church gets built up. That is how the church doesn't get blown about by every wind of doctrine. That is how we defend ourselves against the wiles of the devil and all the errors in this world. That is how we defend ourselves against worshiplessness. How? Knowledge. Knowledge. Your hearts enlightened so that you may know something.

If you don't know..., listen, ignorance is a problem in the church. Ignorance. Ignorance does not help. Bible-less Christians, if there is such a thing, is bad news. It leads to all manner of decay and breakdown, instability and weakness and sickness. The key to worship is knowledge. A lack of knowledge, a lack of understanding, what does it lead to? It leads to all manner of things. It's the root of so many of our problems and our troubles.

Doctrine is what we need. And what the apostle Paul is going to do is, he wants us to praise God, as he's going to give us some of the richest, deepest, most amazing doctrine. Why? I mean, what happens when you fill your head with truth? Well, what happens is, for one thing, your faith cannot latch on to what you don't know. We are to be people who walk by faith, but your faith can't be rich and full and overflowing if there isn't something there to believe. But the other thing is, as Christians who possess the Spirit of God, what is interesting is, the Spirit of God works in conjunction with the Word of God in such a way that as we come to know, God moves. Your heart is enlightened. What happens is: light in the heart. What happens is, things become clear and you behold them. And as you behold them, you experience them. And what God does is He visits us in that truth. God comes. We heard about it from David. He talked about the root of all of our joy. It's got to do with the presence of God. Brethren, this isn't just some dry, dead Book. What we read is that the truth here is active and it's powerful. And what happens as we behold these things is, God rushes in with His presence and He causes us to experience these things. It impacts us.

So, I was meeting with a brother, Thursday maybe, who presently is in another church. And he and his wife are contemplating moving to this church; and he wanted to meet with me. As we were discussing things, we got to talking about accountability partners. Let me tell you something; I see this on a regular basis. Young Christians who feel like, "The secret to me really becoming a godly man, or godly young woman - I need a mentor. Or, I need an accountability partner." I see that on a regular basis. Listen, think about the moral compulsion behind an accountability partner. "OK, I am living my life, and I am thinking, 'You know, if I fall into that sin, I'm going to meet with Joe on Friday, and I'll have to admit it to him.'" Let me tell you something: Paul doesn't believe that the primary thing we need to live the Christian life is an accountability partner. I'm not necessarily knocking that we hold one another accountable. But listen, if you're going to hold one another accountable, then you need to do what Paul did. Not just say, "Tell me about your life over the last week, did you sin or not?" You need to be implanting the same truths into the heads of your brethren that we see being put in their heads right here in this letter. This is what helps.

I'll tell you this: When somebody is beholding glories of God that impact their lives, when God sweeps in with His presence as you come to know some new reality, some new glory about the God behind your salvation, and you're affected by that, and you see His greatness and your littleness, and you feel adoration and you feel praise, brethren, there is a moral compulsion behind that unlike anything in an accountability partner; unless the accountability partner is sharing truth with you that brings that thing to reality in your life. But the moral compulsion of me feeling the embarrassment of sitting down with you on Friday morning, for you to ask me about my life, is minimal compared to the moral compulsion that Paul knows comes forth from big views of God. We need to be clear on that. Because what he means is,

we need to spend a lot of our time digging deep.

I mean, we get further on in this letter, and Paul is actually praying; his desire for them is that they would have the ability to comprehend or the power to comprehend with all the saints, what is the height and depth and length and breadth, and to know the knowledge of Christ that surpasses knowledge. I mean, there is a power, there is an ability. We've got to dig. There are expanses, and he says it's beyond knowledge. But that's never to make us stop dead in our tracks. That's to go deeper and deeper and deeper. It means that no matter how deep you go, there is always more to go. You can never feel like, "Oh well, I've got there; I've achieved this."

A lack of knowledge, brethren, a lack of knowledge - basic test of Christianity. Let's talk about this. As I said before, seeing Paul erupt like this in light of these truths, we have to ask ourselves this: When we go deep, does it produce the same thing? This is really a test of Christianity, because God does say in John 4, that Jesus says that God is seeking worshipers. He is seeking worshipers in spirit and truth. They have the truth; and in spirit - the insides, the affections, the heart - they worship Him. That's what He is seeking. That's the kind of worshipers that He makes; not the kind that do it coldly, callously.

Now what we need to ask ourselves is this: (Brethren, I am not saying do you live on in the heavenly places all the time. I am not asking you whether you experience one continuous outpouring of the Spirit in your Christian life. I've been a Christian long enough to know that's not even close to realistic.) But, I want to ask you this, because this really is a test of Christianity: As those people who God is making into worshipers in spirit and truth, do you know this reality? Do you know what it is to dig into the depths of doctrine, and come up with the riches of it and have it thrill your soul, and to feel adoration and praise, and to feel like, "Blessed be the name of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Do you feel that? Whether it comes out in exactly those words, but do you feel the thrill? Do you feel the joy? Do you feel the delight? Because, brethren, I'll tell you this: When you walk out into the world with that reality, you don't sin lightly.

You can go visit your accountability partner; and yeah, you gotta meet with him a week later, and you don't want to fall again, 'cos you don't want to admit the same thing to him. But see, there is a different moral compulsion. And if your heart is lifted up with gladness and you've got glorious views of God, I mean, you've been walking up on the heights of the mountains, you've tread in those special places and you've come close to Him and close to His presence in the truth of His doctrine, you don't lightly sin after you've been there. You may lightly sin after you've been with your accountability partner, but you would not lightly sin if you've been with God, and in His presence in the riches of His Word, and it's come with power to your soul. You don't lightly go sin. It impacts. This is what we want. We want this kind of impact from Ephesians. We want it to weigh heavily on us.

Brethren, the world is full of grumbling, complaining. But when you are shouting, "Blessed be the name of God the Father; of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," when you are shouting out like that, brethren, again, that is the cure-all of being like Israel in the wilderness; being upset. Why? Because if you're experiencing these things the way they are meant, God meant you to experience the realities behind your salvation. He means for you to experience them. And if you do, you come to recognize that to

be one of the people of God is such a high privilege. To be granted that privilege to come into His presence and to have your eyes opened, to have them enlightened that you can comprehend, a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of these things, it's difficult to feel like you're not getting your fair share, and to grumble and complain when that's been the case.

Brethren, worship, worship; that needs to be one of the primary reasons of why we preach, why we teach, why we do some of the things we do. Brethren, some of you have wondered, "Hey, why have we moved the seats?" We did this last week and we heard numerous people say, "Eh, we don't like it; we don't like it." Primary reason, which was accomplished; Now this whole thing is in process. So, don't be discouraged by the fact you couldn't see this today. We obviously recognize that there are things we have to deal with, and hopefully when we are done, but the primary object was to keep the traffic coming in and out during the services at the back where you can't see it. Why? Because, brethren, when we had the pulpit over here, and some brother is up, and he is preaching the Word of God, and he is preaching these very truths that ought to thrill your soul, guess what? Constant streams of traffic at both end. And I'll tell you this: If you are sitting back here, and a brother is hitting you with some truth that ought to cause you to shout, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and right then, your head turns to see who didn't get out of bed on time, it's very doubtful the very next instance you're saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Why? Distraction.

Brethren, the one primary thing that I have been grieved about with this building, ever since we've been here, is the traffic that interrupts. You have men handling the Word of God, the doctrine of God, the truths of God that are supposed to impact the people of God, that saved the lost sheep of God, and we've got people streaming in and out of here very casually. Worship. Worship. This is a big thing. God does what He does; God takes notice when we give the due emphasis that we should give to seeing Him, and beholding Him. And so, hopefully when this is all done, you won't be able to see outside, you won't be able to see anything, you won't be able to be distracted. And after the first week, I recognized that having the people move in and out, (and we're going to bring even the people way back, we don't want to move the Spanish speaking section yet,) but the reason I am explaining this to you is because worship has been the driving motivator in my own heart ever since we've been in this building to actually re-position things.

Worship. Undistracted. Well, the worship that we are looking at here - look at the text - Verse 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Blessed be the God and Father - Paul's worship starts with the Father. And so, as a worshiping church, you know I mentioned this in the first message on Ephesians, that we need to be really careful that all of our worship does not start and end with the Lord Jesus Christ. Listen, we need to worship Christ. He is worthy. Worthy is the Lamb who was slain (Rev. 5:12). We need to sing that and shout that. But we want to be very careful in our song, in our worship, in our preaching. The worship of Scripture starts with the Father, and you see this everywhere if you have eyes to see it.

Let's just think about this. Now look, worship is Trinitarian. There's no question about it. There is no question about the fact that all three Persons of the Triune Godhead are worthy of praise; are involved in our salvation. Ephesians is Trinitarian. I mean, through and through; just look right here where we

are at. You have, “Blessed be the God and Father” in verse 3. You have the Lord Jesus Christ, the second Person, the Son of God, right after that. You see verse 5, there’s Jesus Christ, but it’s the purpose of the Father’s will, to the praise of the Father’s glorious grace, (which if you follow this, you see that that’s exactly what’s happening,) with which He has blessed us in the Beloved. The Beloved is Christ. In Christ we have redemption through Christ’s blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of God the Father’s grace, which God the Father lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of God the Father’s will, according to His purpose which He set forth in Christ.

You get down to verse 13, “In Christ you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Christ, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of the Father’s glory.

Like I say, if you read this whole thing through, you’ll see this is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. What we are going to see as we march through these verses, especially in chapter one, you are going to see the different ways, the different responsibilities of each of the Persons of the Godhead with regards to our salvation.

But this worship begins with the Father, and I want you to see this. Notice Ephesians 5:19, turn later in the book. I just want to give you a feel for this in the New Testament. We read these things, but sometimes we don’t... We read it, we understand it, we see what it’s saying, but it almost takes somebody coming along and saying, “Look, if you really study the New Testament, you are going to find that the vast majority of times that God is thanked, it’s the Father. The vast majority of times where prayer is specifically delegated to a certain person of the Godhead, it’s to the Father. Where praise and worship are found being expressed towards God, it begins with the Father. I am not saying exclusively. Undoubtedly, the Son is brought in, in a way that the Spirit is not. But even there, we would say the Spirit is worthy. We are going to see what the Spirit does. The Spirit seals us. The Spirit intercedes for us. The Spirit causes us to be born again. The Spirit of God is very much involved in our lives, and we are going to look at the doctrine of the Spirit of God as we move through this.

But right now, I just want to start where Paul starts. And he starts by praising the Father specifically. And if you look here at Ephesians 5:19, “Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,” and you’re making melody to the Lord, and typically we can look at the Lord here as being the Son of God, the way that it’s used here. Notice this, “giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We have access only through Christ; only being in Christ. God makes it clear to us. This is what we are going to find: You can’t pray to the Father, you can’t worship the Father, you can’t thank the Father, except you have access through the Son. The Son is the way to the Father. In Him. In the Beloved. But it’s the Father who is thanked.

Now if you jump; don’t jump, just let me quote this to you. Colossians 1:3, “We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you.”

Or Colossians 1:11, “May you be strengthened with power, according to His glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the

inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of His beloved Son.”

Colossians 3:17, “Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

Or Romans 15:5-6, “May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus - notice this - that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

That’s us. With one voice. With unity. Paul’s desire is that they would glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is essential because there can be a tendency, and you see it in churches where the focus of worship is almost exclusively and primarily Jesus Christ. And I am not in anyway, (don’t misunderstand me here, don’t misunderstand,) I am not saying that Jesus Christ is not worthy of our praise. But I am saying that the apostle Paul starts, worship starts, Jesus Christ said, “My Father is seeking those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth.”

We need to remember the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Why should we praise? Praise, why? Well, it’s because we find admirable qualities. Praise comes from praiseworthiness. We find admirable qualities. It has to do with giving credit to where credit is due. That’s essential. That’s huge. Who is responsible for what? Oh, this is one of the reasons why we want to have accurate views of who is ultimately responsible for our salvation. Listen, say what you want, Arminianism kills worship. Now look, Calvinism can kill it too if we are not careful. They have their different ways that they do it. But who is responsible for what? You get this people, Jeremy has had lots of interaction lately down in Laredo with Arminians, and they like to talk about “freewill.” There likes to be this focus on God waiting for sinners to come to Him, and he wants to boast in what man can do. But brethren, if we want to know why we should praise, pay attention to doctrine. Why? Because the doctrine tells us who is responsible for what.

I mean, one of the problems is that Arminianism tends to be a little unscholarly. Often, Arminians don’t know their Bibles. I am not saying reformed people have the corner on this. And I am not saying you can’t find Arminians that aren’t theologians and know their Bibles extremely well. But lots of people who want to really amp up man’s responsibility in salvation, (and man is responsible; and he is responsible to repent and believe,) but what Paul does is he takes us behind the scenes. He pulls back the curtain and he says, “Let’s see this thing from God’s perspective.” Why should we praise? Well, because the doctrine shows us why we should praise. It shows us who we should praise, and what we should praise them for. If we would worship the One who deserves the worship of the salvation of sinners, then pay attention to the doctrine. And what does it say? What is Paul teaching us here? Go back to Ephesians chapter 1 if you are not already there.

Does Paul burst forth with “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” as he ponders the amazing freewill of man? Brethren, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” Why? Because of what He has done, not because of what man has done. This does not start with man’s faith; it does not start with man’s repentance; it does not start with man’s freewill; it does not start with man coming to God. What it starts with is: God is the One who blesses us with every spiritual blessing in the

heavenly places. And what are those spiritual blessings in the heavenly places? It's all the things that we receive and already have been blessed with and we possess currently if we are Christians. And it's staggering. We are no paupers in this room if you are a Christian. The things that you possess are unbelievable if you have not looked at the fullness of these things. You would hardly believe that sinners could actually be possessors of the things that we are going to find we are possessors of.

But just listen to this: God is the One who has blessed us, in Christ, with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He (that's the Father) chose us in Christ. He chose us. It doesn't say we chose Him. Paul does not start there by saying, "We have to choose Him, We have to go to Him." It's true, we do have to choose Him, we do have to go to Him, we do have to believe in Him, we do have to call on Him, we do come unto the Christ that bids us to come unto Him; but that's not where it starts. Because by the way, what Paul is going to do is he is not going to start at the point where we believe, because salvation never starts at the point where we believe. He takes us to eternity past. Why? Because that's where your salvation starts. Christian, did you know that? Paul wants us to know that.

Look at this: He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him. Did you know that about your salvation? God chose you. Your salvation was determined long before you had any will at all, whether it was free or not so free. Long before you had a will, God chose you. You say, "God chose who is going to be saved?" Well then, that means that He, on purpose, passed over and did not choose a whole bunch of other people." Yeah, that's exactly what the Bible teaches. "What? Ultimately, it's not my decision?" Well, you can read Scripture as plainly as I can, and those three words are pretty plain: God chose you. Pretty simple. That kinda kills a lot of error in the world, right? God chose you. "Seriously? Before I was born; before my parents were born; before Adam was born; before the foundation of the world?" Yep; and in fact, in this very letter, it talks about God's eternal purpose. This happened in eternity past.

There wasn't actually a meeting, undoubtedly, but whenever that decision was made, hard to lock things in time or even talk humanly speaking, but you weren't at the meeting. And I wasn't at the meeting. We didn't help Him make this decision. "According to the purpose of His will."

You see what it does? If you really become gripped by it, this is what is happening to you. I mean, you're getting smaller; and in your eyes, He is getting bigger. And you know why people don't like this? Because they don't like a big God, because big Gods are scary. But you see, big Gods, big Gods are praiseworthy. When our ideas about God are small, our worship is small. When our ideas about Him are big, our worship, I mean, the response — Brethren, you know, when those people outside Sinai were hearing the laws being given and God speaking from Sinai, and they were down there trembling, and they said, "Moses, you got to go talk to Him for us," God didn't fault them for all that trembling. In fact, God said, "You're right. You're right. Moses you better come speak on their behalf."

When people tremble, God says, "To this man He will look." Trembling is a good thing. Trembling is a good response to the truth. Oh, so is joy. So is "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." But Brethren, what I want you to recognize is this: We are going to move through the different qualities, the different characteristics, the different realities of our salvation, but God does not intend for

you to simply be caught up with what He has done for you. It is only proper handling of doctrine and of the truths behind our salvation if we look at what all those realities of our blessings tell us about Him. You see, you can be really selfish, self-interested and self-focused. You know, it's kinda like Pliable walking with Christian in Pilgrim's Progress, "Well, tell us about all the things we are getting." And sometimes, that's just carnal. "Tell me all the good things I am getting." Listen, Paul isn't saying, "O how wonderful is our salvation," as he starts this. It is. But you see where it all goes? You see where the focus is? You see what Paul is doing? Paul is repeatedly going to tell us, through these verses, that this is for the praise of His glory. This is for the sake of us worshiping Him.

Notice verse 5, "He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ." "Oh, this is great! I'm adopted." But see, he doesn't stop there. He doesn't start there, and he doesn't stop there. He starts with "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and he is telling us about our adoption, not just so that we can say, "This is great. I am adopted by God." But where does it end? Where should it end? "According to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace." You are going to see that kind of thing repetitiously thrown at us through this first chapter. Why? Because that is key.

You see, brethren as we go through Ephesians and we think about our salvation, what you have to recognize is this: This is meant for your worship; this is meant for you to see the greatness of God. You are meant to look at Him bestowing all the blessings— this fullness of blessings in the heavenly places— and look past and see what kind of God does that speak to me about. And then you get to, "He chose me in eternity past." Get your eyes off you. If you leave your eyes on you, you're missing what Paul is doing here. Paul takes us up into these mountain ranges, brethren, not so that we can look at ourselves in the mirror. He wants to show you what's true about you so that you can see what that says about God. That's the issue. You will praise the Father when you recognize what it is that the Father is doing in the midst of all of this, and what it is that He is demonstrating about Him. Pay attention to the doctrine because the doctrine tells us who our God is. Doctrineless churches don't know God how God ought to be known. God gives us this Book so that we might know Him. That's the primary reason of truth.

Look, there is a lot of things that are true in the world. But we have a Book that's true; primarily the reality about this Book is that it gives us the truth about who our God is, and what He has done; what His Son is like. What we find here is this: The doctrine tells us who is worthy of the praise. The doctrine tells us who has done the things that have been done. God chose us before the foundation of the world, and He chose us in Christ, never separate, never outside.

Brethren, I just want to end with this; I also want you to think about this: As we think about God, again we can just pass over these things, if you notice verse 2 and verse 3, you have a lot of similar words but some variation in preposition and conjunction. Verse 2, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." There is actually a variation in possessive pronoun here too. But notice this: you have "God our Father," and "the Lord Jesus Christ." Grace and peace come from both of them. And then, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now, like I say, there is a lot of identical words there, but there is a difference in possessive pronouns, there is a difference in conjunction, there is a difference in preposition there.

I want us just to think about this for a second as we close. When Jesus Christ is called Lord, I know many of you know the Greek word, Kurios. But do you know that in the Greek Old Testament, that is exactly the word that is used for the four consonants (YHWH) we typically pronounce Jehovah, or Yahweh. What Paul is saying is, this Jesus Christ is the Old Testament Yahweh. This is Jehovah. If you were Jewish 2,000 years ago, you'd pick up on that in a second. What Paul is doing here is, he's saying grace and peace come to you from God the Father, there's a conjunction there - and. Seriously? The grace of God and the peace of God flow from two Individuals? Who in the world could be worthy to stand on the other side of a conjunction like that? He says, it's Jehovah. "What?! Jehovah? Lord? Yahweh? You just mentioned God the Father. Who is Jehovah? Who is the Lord?" He says it's Jesus of Nazareth. It's the Messiah.

What he is saying is, here is the One who is worthy to stand next to God the Father. And you have to see how He stands next to Him. He stands next to Him as the begetter of grace and peace. It comes from Him. Paul puts Jesus by the side of God, co-equal, bestowing grace and peace, right along. From God the Father and from the Lord. And you know what? He can do so without any irreverence or disrespect to God at all.

"God the Father," we don't typically say it like this, but "God the Father and Jehovah." That's how the Jews would have heard that. It's like, isn't God the Father Jehovah? Trinitarian mysteries, brethren. You know, brethren, the Son of God is right there next to God, and He is worthy to stand there. I mean, doesn't Scripture say, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God." Here He is, with God. Stands with Him, with a conjunction between - 'and'. He is with God, and He is God. He is Jehovah. It's the same truth. And I'll tell you this: The cults can scoff, Islam can mock, but this is Christianity.

But we are talking about the worship of the Father, because in the next verse, the meaning is totally different because it's not separated by a conjunction. They are separated by a preposition. Notice: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now we often think about God as the Father. And by the way, we spoke about this a week and a half ago in a Wednesday service. God being the Father stresses equality. Jesus referred to God as His Father, and the Jews pick up stones to stone Him with, because He made Himself equal with the Father. But take Father out for a second. If you remove "and Father," you have this: "Blessed be the God of our Lord Jesus Christ." And when you read further down in Ephesians, in verse 17, "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ" - there it is. You say, "Oh, is it even safe to remove "Father" from it?" Yeah, Paul does. A little later in the letter, He removes it.

Now think about what this says: God is God of the Lord. Have you ever said it like that before? God is Christ's God. You say, "Really?" Yeah. We have to stop and think. God is our Lord's Father, and our Lord's God. We must worship the One who is the God of Christ. And we say, "How?" Well, there's mysteries here. But what I can tell you is this: I can tell you that when Jesus came, this is said. When Jesus came into this world, God was His God. You may remember Hebrews 10:5-7, "When Christ came into the world, He said, 'Sacrifices and offerings You have not desired, but a body You have prepared for Me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.' Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God.'" So when He came into the world, God was Christ's God. Think about this: He hung crucified, many of you know, you can recite it, you know these words, "My God, My God..."

When He came incarnate, God was His God. As He hung dying, crucified between heaven and earth, God was His God. Remember right after He came out of the grave, the first one He had dialogue with was Mary. Do you remember what He said? “Go tell My disciples...” He said that He was going to go to His Father and their Father. “I am ascending to My Father and Your Father, to My God and your God.” And then when He ascended to glory, and He is at the right hand, you know, it’s the ascended Christ that shows up in the book of Revelation. And He says, “To everyone that overcomes, I will make you a pillar in the house of My God.” Is God the Father Christ’s God only in His humanity? I don’t know. He says in John 6 that His life is derived from the Father. It’s never said that the Son is a God to the Father. But the Father is Christ’s God.

Now what should we do with this as far as worship of the Father? I can tell you this, in the Old Testament they loved to say it (and you can find this in the book of Acts as well,) God was called the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. And if you were a Jew, there was something to that. You know why? Because they were the forefathers to whom God had made the promises. And when you saw Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, you saw God possessing them as a people, and you’re one of their descendants, it told you about the promises that were made, and it told you about the position that you had with that God, being an offspring of Abraham.

What are we to make of it? When God now, brethren, now God has revealed to us; what we have to remember is this: Every time God reveals Himself by a new name, He means to teach us more about Himself. I’m amazed; In glory, Christ said He is going to reveal to us His new name (Revelation 3:12), which means there are realities about Christ you do not now know. I mean, that may not come as any surprise, but when He specifically says, “I am going to reveal Myself to you by My new name, He means I am going to show you things about Myself that have not yet entered into your minds.

And so, as God comes along, and we move and we transition from the God of Abraham to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, it speaks something to us. And what does it speak? Brethren, the feeling is, in those words to Mary, “I have not yet ascended to My Father and your Father; My God and your God.” I would say this: Though I recognize God is a Father to Jesus that in certain ways declares His co-equality, and so certainly He is a Father to Christ in ways that you and I cannot enter into, I get the feeling that when He said those words to Mary, He was not seeking to call difference or to emphasize any of the differences. He was seeking to emphasize that which is true of us, because it’s true of Him.

You see, one of the truths that you are going to find throughout this book is our union to Christ. And the reality is this: In the same way that the Israelite could look at Him being the God of Abraham, and say, “That speaks to me about the promises that are mine; that speaks to me about the connection I have to Abraham now.” God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, what it speaks to us is my identity with Christ. And if Christ can say, “My Father and My God,” I can say, “My Father and My God,” and I am brought into that love, and I am brought into that relationship. Oh, I remember being at these preaching modules that they had up in Shreveport, and Andy Hamilton was speaking, and he got to where he said, “Brethren, we are going to be swept right into the Trinitarian relationship and into the Trinitarian love.” Brethren, this ought to blow us away. When you see “God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” don’t be detached from

that. There is reason for you to say, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” because of that identity.

Brethren, we are in Christ. To be in Him is to have what He has. To be in Him is to go where He goes. To be in Him is to never be without Him. It’s to have the inheritance that He has. It’s to have a relationship with God that, as the Mediator, (I know you can’t separate God and Man when it comes to Him,) but brethren, I’ll have you know that as a Man, and as our King, the King of Israel, and as the Messiah, as the Mediator, He served God, and He prayed to God, and He trusted God, and He loved God, and God was His God. And He has drawn us into that. And we are one with Him, and we are attached to Him. And if God blesses you, brethren, you have to get this. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,” brethren, if you are blessed in Christ, you are blessed indeed. This is real. May God give us the ability in the days ahead to go where we need to go to just try to feel some of this.

Father we thank you. We want to bless your name. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Lord I pray that the truths of Ephesians that in the weeks ahead, it would make our hearts jump, that there would be a glow, there would be a fire, there would be a warmth, there would be a drinking in of these realities that would affect us, change us, make us all the more worshipers in spirit and truth. I pray that within these four walls, in the months ahead, that you would cause true worship to break forth in this place. We desire that. Lord, we want to glorify you. Create in us, Lord, the right heart, the clean heart, the united heart, the worshiping heart, that we might be a people of Your own possession and a people for Your own glory. That in whatsoever we do, whether we eat or drink or whether we study the book of Ephesians, we might do everything to the glory of our God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.