

Date: 18 June 2023

Scripture Passage: Ephesians 1:3-14

Title: God's Plan Of Salvation

Introduction

- We saw last week that this epistle was written to Christians. To the saints in Ephesus. This week, we come to this message “God's plan of salvation”. There was once a preacher by the name of Charles Simeon. He was a pastor in Cambridge, England. He was influential in sending chaplains to different countries through the East India Company. Many of the students who were converted under his ministry went on to become chaplains and missionaries all over the world. When he was old and was dying, he had a servant who took care of him. While on his death bed, he said to the servant, if you want to know what I'm thinking now look at Ephesians 1:3-14. Right. So this is the passage we want to consider today. It is an extremely rich passage. A renown preacher like Charles Simeon reveling in a passage like this as he was dying, there must be something special and rich about this passage.
- Before engaging in a task, good to have overall view, the stages, then the steps. For our purpose today, we want to have an overview of what is being taught. Then we zoom in and focus on what is being taught. We are unable, therefore, to cover many things in this first pass. It is like a bull's eye concentric circle. We want to start out at the outermost ring, then we move inward towards the center. So we have an overview, and then we focus by coming closer, and closer still to the middle.
- In this message we want to see God's plan of salvation. We start out by looking at God's overall plan of salvation revealed to us all. And as we zoom in, we see God's plan unfolded in history. As we dig further into God's plan in history, we come to see that the plan stretches from eternity past and going to eternity in the future. We then see where we are as an individual, in relation to God's plan unfolded in history. So again, starting from God's overall plan, then going to God's plan unfolded in history, then we see where we are in relation to all that. Knowing God's plan of salvation gives a sense of destiny & purpose to our Christian life.

I. God's overall plan.

- **The Father has chosen certain individuals to be saved, in Christ, giving spiritual blessing (v 3-6).** We now consider the first part of God's overall plan for salvation. In this passage, we see that the Holy Trinity are involved in our salvation. God the Father (v3), God the Son (v10), and God the Holy Spirit (v14). It shows to us that the true God is one, and yet he is three persons. And the three persons are equal, and they work in harmony. They do not clash. That is the trinitarian God revealed to us in this passage. And we begin with God the father in v3-6. **Read Eph 1:3-6.** The focus here is on the work of the father. It is he who decides, it is he who chooses, it is he who determines! **Chosen (v 4)** So who chooses? Is it we choosing to accept God, or is it God who accepts us? We see clearly here that it is God the Father who has chosen us from eternity pass.

So the father is revealed as the one choosing certain individuals to be saved. And they are going to be saved in Christ. Look at v4, it says “just as He (the Father) chose us in Him (Jesus Christ the son) before the foundation of the world”. Before foundation of the world, so not based on any good in you (v 4).

So when did God the father choose us to be saved as Christians? It was before the foundation of the world. He had **predestined (v 5, 11)** so. Before even the world was made from eternity in the past, he has already planned all this. He has planned for the salvation of certain people from the human race. So it cannot be based on any good in you. You were not even conceived! Salvation is all by God's initiative, which is not based on what we do or what we will do. Before we ever exist, God already planned it all. That means that salvation is totally of grace. It is God's favor shown to us who are undeserving. It's not because God foresaw into the future that we will be doing good. No! God is the one who created all things and all beings. He existed from eternity. He is God. He does not need us. It is God's plan from eternity to choose certain people for himself out of his abundance of grace. He didn't need to choose anyone, but because He is full of grace and mercy that he chose us.

Why did God choose us to be saved? It is "according to good pleasure of His will" (v 5). So it cannot be because of because of good he has seen in us. He knows and it cannot be because of good deeds that we will do which he has foreseen before us. Salvation is totally of God's grace according to His good pleasure. **Rom 9:13, 20-21**. Who are we to protest or to say whether God is fair? Has God no right? He is the creator of us, he created the whole universe, does he have no right to chose who he wants to save and who he does not? He is the potter and we are the clay.

How then can God send me to Hell? He didn't choose me, how could he then blame me and send me to hell? Oh my friends.... Who are we to question our creator? We should have the right attitude. We should instead be asking, why does God save anyone at all? We have all sinned. We are born with a sinful nature. **Explain original sin**. We sinned in Adam. We sin in our life. We deserve eternal damnation. But God through his grace and mercy has given us a way to be saved, and that is through his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Plead for mercy! Come before him and repent from your sins, and put your faith in the finish work of Christ death on the cross. When you do that, Christ death will have paid for your sins, and his righteousness will be regarded as yours. Come before him and submit yourself to the king of kings. You will know then, that you are a chosen one. Not accepting this truth does not make it less true. It only shows your rebellion, proving the sin that you have.

- **Instead of fighting it, lets hear the good news (v 9-10).**

Instead of fighting this truth, lets hear the good news. **Read v9-10**. God actually took it upon himself to reveal his will to us. And to save certain people. So that we will enjoy the blessing of knowing him as our God. God no longer is this distant being, but we are not adopted as His children. We can call him Abah father. We approach Him with our needs knowing that he will listen to us. **Read v5**. God has revealed himself as the almighty one who has chosen certain people from eternity in the past to be his in Christ. There's no other savior but in Christ. There is no other way but his death on the cross to make us right with God. We must listen and take heed.

What was not fully revealed in the past now revealed to us through apostles (cf Rom 16:25-27). When the right time arrived, Christ came (Gal 4:4). People from all over the world called to faith in Christ. There are many who will hear the gospel call. But only those who are chosen will respond to it. When the time came, the promised savior Jesus Christ came to this world. The son of God took upon himself perfect human nature while remaining God. Jesus Christ is God and man in one person. And the promise is that in due time all things will be put under his rule. All creation will be under his. In due time, all suffering and pain will be no more. Death and decay will be no more. All the disorder that we see, all the things that cause us to be disturbed, to be confused, to be so frustrated, to be angry. All of those things will be no more. This is the promise to those who are saved in Christ.

- **All accomplished by Christ, and gained by being "in Him." (v7, 10, 11, 13).** What is done to/for/in us, & what we gain by it. How will all these be accomplished? The inheritance that is promised to God's chosen people will be fulfilled by Christ. **Read v11**. We see "in Him" also in v7, v10, v13. It is all to God's glory, for our good.

All creation will placed under Christ's rule. Suffering & pain, death & decay, disorder & chaos, all no more. Sin & effects removed, 'cos creation originally very good. Meant for men to enjoy. What of those who are passed by? Not saved. Enough said of them in Bible to make clear what will happen to them. More emphasis placed on the saved. In the first place, undeserving, like others. God' glory made more obvious by their salvation.

We move on to the second part of this message. Namely God's plan unfolded in history, then we see where we are in relation to all that. We will see that God will do something **to** us, **for** us, and **in** us. **To** us, **for** us, and **in** us. In the present, we see what God has done to us. In the past, we will see what God has done for us. And in the future, we will see what God has done in us.

II. God's plan unfolded in history.

- **Present: Adoption & acceptance (v5, 6).** Done to us: God the Judge adopts us as children.

In the present, what is God doing? He's calling certain individuals to himself. Those who respond to the call, who come to faith in Jesus Christ, they have been chosen by God from eternity. It is our duty to respond to the call of the Gospel. When we respond to the call of the gospel and trust in Jesus Christ to be saved, we are adopted by God. God accepts us as a child of His. **Read v5-6.** So what has he done to us? He has adopted us. When he adopts us, he also accepts us. He adopt us because Christ death on the cross has paid for our sins. And he accepts us because Christ' righteousness is regarded as ours. We will no more be damned into hell. There is no more uncertainly. We are one of His and He has promised to never leave us nor forsake us. It is as though you have arrived home, you have found your comfort in Christ. We now belong to the family of God. Remember the story of the prodigal some in Luke 15? **Got his inheritance early. Wallowing in foolishness of sin. Got so hungry. "Father I have sinned against heaven and against you". He confessed his sins against God in heaven and his father. Father then gave robe to cover shame, ring to testify sonship, sandals to signify freedom. Hugged him, kissed him, asked for a great feast, in celebration.** All God wants is genuine repentance. Christ has done it all on the cross. Just like the prodigal son, we ought to humble ourselves and come to Christ for forgiveness. God the Judge will not only declare us not guilty, but will adopts us as children.

- **Past: redemption & forgiveness (v7-8).**

And the past is "Redemption and forgiveness". In v7, it says " in Him we have redemption through His blood". So when we ask for forgiveness of our sins, we need to know who paid for our sins. It is Chris death on the cross and his blood has washed away your sins. Without His death, there is no payment for your sins. Without his blood shed on the cross, there is no cleansing for your sins. Don't seek forgiveness from god, but depend on your own effort. Don't seek forgiveness on your terms, but humbly submit to God and plead for mercy. So what is done for us? We are redeemed, i.e bought back. Christ laid his life down in the place of His people, that they may live. His death has paid the full payment for our sins. And what is the blessing to us? Forgiveness of our guilt. We have offended our creator. He is good a perfect and holy. We ought to be condemn to hell, but by grace we have been forgiven by Christ death on the cross. God no longer needs to punish us. Before we were saved, our guilt weighed heavily on us. Our future was dark as we were headed for destruction. But now the we have repented from our sins and trust in Christ, our future is not bright.

- **Future: Sealing of the Spirit & guarantee of inheritance (v 13-14).** Done in us: the sealing of the Spirit. As goods were sealed in those days. The Spirit is the seal, not what He does in us (Cf 4:30). Ownership, security, genuineness. Not all who profess to be Christians are truly the Lord's. Blessing to us: guarantee of inheritance, i.e. arrival in heaven, with all blessedness. Deposit, or downpayment, guaranteeing full payment. In this case full enjoyment. What you miss, if not His. Not for you to know God's choice, but to trust Christ (v 12).

The final point, the future. The sealing of the Spirit & guarantee of inheritance. Just as how the prodigal son was given a ring when he return to signify that he was a son, we are also given the seal of the holy spirit to show that we are God's children. While the ring can be taken out and put back on, when the Holy Spirit is given to you, he doesn't leave you (unlike the Old Testament times). the Holy Spirit is himself the seal. **Read v13-14.** It is not what the Holy Spirit does on you or in you. It's not the action of the spirit. But it is the spirit in himself that dwells in you. The spirit himself is a seal. Just like in the old days where they use a wax seal to

show the authenticity of a letter. Or to show that the letter is secure and has not been tampered with. And the letter belongs to the name written on the envelope, not to others. It speaks of security. It speaks of authenticity. It speaks of ownership. When you have the Holy Spirit in you, you are a genuine Christian. Not in name only and not just putting on a show. It also shows that you are secure. You will never be lost. You are forever God's child. And thirdly, it speaks of ownership. You belong to God. You are an adopted child of His. The devil can never take you away. You are no longer of this world. Do you comprehend that? When you are a Christian. The third person of the Godhead dwells in you! He begins to transform you and you will live in a certain way. People will see that. You are a genuine Christian and you truly belong to God. And your life will be lived in such a way as to glorify God. You are guaranteed an inheritance in heaven.

Summary

- The true God has revealed Himself as consisting of three Persons. No other god. The true God has planned to save for Himself a people from eternity past, to stretch to eternity future. The true God has assured us of our salvation by showing the unanimity of the three Persons.

How much you miss out on if you are not in Christ. Life on Earth to the day when you die will have no uncertainty if you don't have the Holy Spirit in you. Look at your life, does it show that the Holy Spirit dwells in you. Does it show that you belong to Christ? Those who truly belong to Christ have nothing to prove. They just quietly live out. The Spirit in them enables them to obey God, and people can see that this is a true child of God. He is growing in holiness. He's growing in usefulness. He's growing in fruitfulness. He may never be perfect on this earth, but nevertheless he's striving, by the help of the Spirit in him, he is striving and growing from one degree of Holiness to another, until that day when he's called home. Then in heaven he will be there welcoming us. And we will rejoice together in heaven, sharing in the inheritance that now belongs to us together, because Jesus Christ is truly our savior. Oh My friends. The trials and sufferings of this world is nothing compared to Eternal Glory.

With these thoughts, we come to a close. The true God has revealed Himself as consisting of three Persons. From eternity past, God has already planned to save for Himself a people. And those who are saved will be with Him forever and ever. What a wonderful God to show a way of being saved through His grace and mercy. He does not need us, but yet He chose us from eternity past to be included in His company in eternity future. And while on this earth, we want to bring glory to Him, we want to praise Him. We want to live to His glory. May God show His grace upon us as we strive to live a holy life.