

"Safe"

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[0 : 00] Well friends, let's turn our Bibles please to Ephesians chapter 1. Ephesians chapter 1. We're going to read from verse 4b, it's really verse 5, down to verse 10 of Ephesians chapter 1.

Well, Ephesians chapter 1 beginning to read verse 4b, this is the word of God.

In love, he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.

To the Pious 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.

[1 : 27] Amen, this is the reading of God's inspired and in Erum's word, let us turn to the Lord in prayer.

Father, as we come to your word now, we pray that you would give us insight and understanding. We pray, Father, that this word would do our souls good, that this word would encourage us, that this word would build us up in our most holy faith.

We pray, Father, that you would grant us attentive hearts, grant us attentive minds, and may we wrestle with the things of God this evening we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, it would be helpful if you have that passage open in front of you, if you still have your Bibles open at Ephesians chapter one, and we consider these verses through verses five through ten.

Those of you who don't know, Suzanne, my wife and I, we have four children, we have Noah who's six, we have Eli who's four, Judah who's two, and Eva who is eleven months.

[2 : 40] And one of the things that we committed to do for our children was to set aside a little bit of money for them each month so that they had a little nest egg built up by the time they turned 18.

It is not much, it's not an extravagant amount by any means, but it's a little bit that will help them once they turn 18 do what they need to do. But the problem for them is that all the benefits of it come in the future.

Written into the eye says an agreement that you can't touch this money until the child turns 18. So if needs come up now, it's no use to them. If they say a toy they want to buy in the supermarket, this money's no use to them. If they want to buy some new shoes, this money's no use to them.

This money only has benefits for them in the future. This money only has benefit for them when they turn 18. And to many of us, I think that's how we can treat our salvation.

Our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ has benefits for us in the future. Our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is our ticket to heaven. Our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ guarantees that we'll go to heaven and not hell.

[3 : 50] But in the nitty gritty day to day life, in the nitty gritty of your life day by day by day, you think well what is the purpose? What benefit does saving faith in Jesus Christ really make? What difference does it make to my life as I go day by day by day?

And Paul here writing to the church in Ephesus reminds them that not only does their salvation, not only does their faith in Christ have benefits in the future, not only will it benefit them on that great day of judgment, but that actually their faith in Jesus Christ, their salvation, has benefits in the here and now.

Their faith in Jesus Christ has benefits in the day to day life. And actually their faith in Jesus Christ has benefits in the past.

We want to use those three headings and think about these five verses together this evening. We want to see the past, the present and the future.

We want to see how faith in Jesus Christ has benefits for us in the past, how it has benefits for us in the here and now, and how ultimately it has benefits for us in the future as well.

[5 : 09] So first of all we want to see how faith in Christ has benefits in the past and we see that in verses 5 and 6, verses 5 and 6 of Ephesians chapter 1.

If you were here this morning you may remember where we finished off. We finished off with that great assurance that Paul has given the Ephesians that they have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ, that they have everything that they could possibly need in Christ.

We saw that as we came to verse 4 of chapter 1 that Paul started to list these benefits. He reminded them of what these benefits were. He reminded them of what these blessings were and the first one we saw this morning was that they had been chosen before the foundation of the world. And as we come to verse 5 tonight then, it's really a sort of continuation of that theme. We read in verse 5 that in love God predestined us for adoption of sons through Jesus Christ.

We thought this afternoon a little bit about some of the arguments for predestination. We saw how ultimately predestination is the only thing that allows God to be God. We're not going to rehearse those arguments this evening, but we do want to draw some truth out of this.

[6 : 24] We do want to encourage our souls with some thought from what we read here. And the first thing we notice in verse 5 is that predestination is an act of love.

In love, he predestined us for adoption. Predestination isn't a response by God to the love that we have for him.

Predestination isn't a response by God to the obedience that we offer to him. Predestination is simply the sovereign act of a loving God.

It was purely out of love that God predestined us for adoption of sons in Jesus Christ. You see, often times predestination can be viewed as the act of a vengeful God.

Robert Burns is perhaps most famous for this, of course, where Robert Burns' bones are. What did Robert Burns say about predestination?

[7 : 34] That he sends one to heaven and ten to hell and all for his own glory. According to Robert Burns and his theory predestination is really designed to send ten people to hell.

But in order to do that, God has to save sons. It's the act of a vengeful, spiteful God. And yet Paul says here, no, actually in love, he predestined us.

In love, he chose us for adoption through his son, the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, God was under no compulsion to save any of us.

There are none of us here gathered here this evening who were especially worthy of salvation. God could have left us where we were in sin and misery and we would have had no right to complain.

We would have no grounds for disagreeing with him. And yet in love, he moved towards us.

[8 : 35] And yet in love, he predestined us. And yet in love, he chose us in his son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But we also notice that we're predestined for adoption. And again, that's a tremendously reassuring thought for us, isn't it? Because I know I'm a sinner.

You see, I know how far short of God's mark I fall every day. If I'm honest with myself tonight, I know how far short of my own standards that I fall every day.

And yet God has predestined me. God has chosen me in eternity past. God sent Jesus Christ into the world while we were yet sinners.

Christ died for the unrighteous to bring us to God. My continuation in the Christian life doesn't depend on my obedience.

[9 : 39] Jesus Christ died for me while I was yet a sinner, while I was yet a rebel before God. If God accepted me in Christ, if God predestined me in Christ for adoption in eternity past.

If God predestined me when he knew the worst about me. If Christ died while I was yet a sinner. Will God not reject me now that I'm clothed in the righteousness of Christ? Will God not reject me that I'm clothed in the obedience of his Son?

And notice what we're predestined for. We're predestined in love for adoption as sons. This is simply breathtaking.

We're adopted as sons and daughters this evening of the Most High God. We're adopted into God's family through the sacrifice of Christ. He is our elder brother.

[10 : 52] God is our father. The scene in Truly We Can Cry Together Tonight. Abba, father. Because God is our father. And again it helps us to remember who it is who was writing this.

This was Paul who was advancing in Judaism beyond all his peers. This was Paul who was so zealous for the laws of the Father. This was Paul who would never dare speak the name of God. And yet here he is telling us that in Christ, here he is telling the Ephesians that in Christ, they have been predestined to be adopted as sons of God.

That they can call God Father. Suzanne's mother fosters children. She takes them as babies usually and keeps them for a few months.

In an ideal world she sends them back to their birth parents after things have been worked out. But it doesn't always happen and sometimes the children have been adopted.

[11 : 58] It's one of the most...in some ways it's one of the saddest sites you can see. But actually to see a child being adopted is also one of the most wonderful sites that you can see.

The parents saying to that child, well we may not have birthed you but we love you. We may not have birthed you but we bring you into our family. Accept you into our family is one of the most wonderful things that you can see.

And yet friends tonight consider that God does that with each one of us in Christ. That God brings us, God draws us, God adopts us into his family.

In Jesus Christ tonight we can say that we are part of the family of God. In Jesus Christ tonight we can say that God is our Father. That in Jesus Christ tonight we can say he is our elder brother. And we have all of the claims that are his. We have all of the rights and privileges of being a member of the family of God.

[13 : 06] It's simply breathtaking isn't it? That the God who set each star in place.

That the God who formed the world that we see around us. The God who spoke and it came to be. Adopts us into his family tonight.

Takes us to be his sons and daughters to see him in. It's one of the most neglected doctrines in the Christian faith.

I think there's doctrine of adoption. What it means for us to be children of God. It's one of the most reassuring things we can think of.

It's one of the most reassuring things that we can think on. Because we're accepted not on our own merit but on the merits of Christ. We're brought in here not in our own merits but on the merits of Christ.

[14 : 13] All of this happened Paul says. All of this happened according to the purpose of his will. Verse 5 at the very end of verse 5. That's what we see. It was what God wanted to do.

It was what God purposed to do. It was what God willed to do. It wasn't under compulsion.

It wasn't forced. It wasn't that somehow God had his arm twisted up his back. This was what God willed to do to adopt us as sons. This was what God wanted to do to take us as sons and daughters this evening.

We see what we've been predestined for. We see that we've been predestined for adoption. Why verse 6 to the praise of his glorious grace.

With which he has blessed us in the beloved. Why did God do what he did? Why did God purpose to have us adopted? Why did God will that we should become sons and daughters this evening?

[15 : 21] To show his glorious grace. To show his unmerited kindness and favour to sinful fallen humanity.

That's the benefits of salvation in the past. If you like we're adopted. We're predestined to be sons and daughters of God. We're predestined according to the will of God.

To show he is to display the grace of God. That's what happened in the past. That's the benefits in the past. Secondly we want to think about the benefits in the present.

How does this affect us in the here and now? How does this change day to day life in 2020? We see part of the answer in verses 7 through 8.

What are the benefits of salvation here and now? Well Paul says verse 7. It's in him we have redemption. Now we need to understand and unpack a little bit that word redemption.

[16 : 24] It's a marketplace term. It carries with it the idea of buying something back, of setting something free. I asked Murdo when I was coming up here.

I said you know what do you want me to wear Murdo? This is what I usually wear when I'm preaching in Dumfries. He said to me you can wear a collar if you want. I didn't have a collar. I said that's not really an option.

He said you can wear your suit and tie. I thought well I don't really have a suit and tie either to be honest. I had one tucked away at the back of the wardrobe somewhere. He got it out and it was absolutely filthy.

I thought this suit needs to go to the dry cleaners. It took him to the dry cleaners. The woman gave me this little slip. She said come back in a couple of days. I'll give you this slip with you and we'll get your suit sorted out.

So that was fine. I gave her my slip and she said that will be 1150. I'm charging it to Murdo so it's fine. That will be 1150 please Mr. Keyen.

[17:27] In a real sense I redeemed my suit from the dry cleaners. I bought it back. I set it free from being held captive by the dry cleaner.

And that's what Paul says here in Ephesians 1 that we have been redeemed. That we have been set free. That we have been bought back.

It's in Christ that we have redemption. It's in Christ that we have been set free. But that maybe raises a question for you. Well what are we held captive by?

You see as we gather this evening there's none of us are being held here against our will. There's none of us here are in chains. There's none of us here are in handcuffs. So what are we held captive to?

What do we need to be set free from? What does Paul tell us in a few verses, a few words time? It's in Christ we have redemption through his blood.

[18:26] What do we need to be set free from? What do we need to be bought back from? The forgiveness of our trespasses. Trespasses is a tremendously old fashioned word.

It's perhaps a word that we only really know today from the Lord's prayer. But it means a wandering off the mark. It means a going our own way. Going off the path that has been set.

And the path that's been set for us is of course the word of God. Wandering away from God on his word. That's what it means to trespass. And that's what we need to be set free from.

And that's what each of us is enslaved to tonight. That's what each of us is held captive by tonight. This desire inside of us to go our own way. This desire inside of each of us to go our own path.

To ignore God and his word. That's what each of us is like by nature. Such the nature we received from our Father Adam.

[19:35] Ever since that moment in the Garden of Eden. Ever since then each of us has been born with that bias away from God. And his word with that bias away from God.

And his path. But yet Paul says tonight to the Ephesian Christians. It's in Christ. You have been bought back.

It is in Christ that you have been set on the right path again. It's in Christ that your sins are forgiven. It's in Christ that you can know freedom.

And how does Paul say that he does it? Well it's in him we have redemption. It's in him we have been bought back high. Through his blood.

That's why we read from Leviticus 16. We knew our Bible's. We knew the sacrifices in the Old Testament. We knew that they were bloody affairs.

[20:37] You think about what we read in Leviticus 16. Think about that blood that was sprinkled. To cover the sins of the priests. To cover the sins of Aaron.

And here Paul says well it wasn't the blood of bulls and goats. It wasn't the blood of calves slain on Jewish altars.

But it was the blood of Jesus Christ. That sets us free. It was the blood of Jesus Christ. That would atone for our sins.

Christ set us free by becoming our substitute. Christ set us free by becoming the sacrifice in our place. By shedding his blood. Giving his life as a ransom for many.

If you're trusting in Jesus Christ as your Savior tonight. If you're looking to him in faith. You can know that you are redeemed. You can know that you are set free.

[21:43] You can know that you are brought back. You can know that the price has been paid. That's the benefit of salvation in the here and now. No longer do I need to carry my sin on my shoulders.

No longer do I need to wander from God. No longer do I need to go off his path. But instead I can know the peace of sins forgiven.

Instead I can know the assurance of conscience cleansed. That confidence not in ourselves. Don't misunderstand me. Don't misunderstand me. Not in ourselves.

But confidence in Christ. Knowing that his blood has been shed in my place. Knowing that the perfect, spotless, sinless Lamb of God has given his own blood.

So that mine will not be required. And again all this happened in the Lord's verse 7. According to his grace.

[22 : 54] The riches of his grace. It was grace that caused God to do this. It was grace that meant God acting in the way that he did.

Not that we deserved it. Not that we had earned it. But the grace of God.

And I love verse 8. Please look with me at verse 8. What does Paul remind the Ephesian Christians of? That it's according to the rictus of his grace verse 7. Which he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight.

This wasn't an adequate amount of grace. This was lavish grace. This wasn't just a sprinkling of grace that God gives us. It's lavish, lavish, lavish grace.

There can be no greater gift than this this evening. There can be no greater sacrifice offered or demanded.

[24 : 06] Because in Christ God has lavished grace upon us. In Christ God has given us that super abundance of grace.

It's the benefit in the past that we've been predestined for adoption as sons. The benefit in the present that we can know that redemption of God. That redemption of Christ.

But what about the future? What about the future? What does our salvation have in the future? We see that in verses 9 and 10. The first thing as we come to verse 9 that Paul assures the Ephesian believers of.

Is that this mystery has been made known to him. Making known to us the mystery of his will. This isn't something that can be discovered.

This isn't something that a good detective can work out for himself. This is a mystery that God has to reveal. This mystery that was set forth in Christ.

[25 : 20] What is that mystery? What is the mystery that God has shown us? We see verse 10 as a plan for the fullness of time.

To unite all things in him. Things on heaven. Things on earth. The mystery was verse 10. A plan for the fullness of time.

This mystery was a plan for when the time was just right. We see Paul uses a similar expression in his letter to the church in Galatians 4.4.

Paul reminds us that when the fullness of time had come. The fullness of time had come. What happened? God sent forth his son born of womb and born unto the law.

And redeemed those who were under the law. The fullness of time was just right. The fullness of time was when the time was perfect and God sent forth his son.

[26 : 20] And here I think we can argue that it means much the same thing. As we read a plan verse 10 for the fullness of time. God sent forth his son.

God acted to bring about his plan. God acted to bring about his purposes. And what was his plan? What's the end to which everything's working? Well that all things would be united to him verse 10.

Things in heaven and things on earth. See that's where this world is ultimately going.

That's where this world is ultimately heading tonight. That day. That day when all things will be united to Christ. That great and final day of judgment.

That great day when there will be a new heavens and a new earth. That great and final day when all will see the glory of Christ. That great and final day when faith becomes sight.

[27 : 27] But there's a problem isn't there? Because what does Paul say here verse 10? He reminds us that that plan is for the fullness of time. What is it to unite all things in him?

To unite all things in heaven and things on earth. Now if we read that verse in isolation we can make it sound a little bit like universalism.

A little bit like the idea that at the end of time everyone somehow will sort of be saved. We're not quite sure how but ultimately that's what God's working towards. All things being united to Christ.

But what does Paul tell us elsewhere? What does Paul remind us of elsewhere? The passage that came to my mind as I was preparing this was that great passage in Philippians 2.

That great passage that speaks about the humility of Christ. Who thought not equality with God, a thing to be grasped but instead emptied himself taking the form of a servant.

[28 : 32] Humbling himself even to the point of death. Even death on a cross. But what happens then? God exalts him.

God gives him the name that is above every name so that at the name of Christ every knee will bow. Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Well that's in the Bible but how does it help us understand what we read here in Ephesians 2? In Ephesians 1 sorry. On that day when Christ returns every knee will bow.

On that day when Christ returns every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. In a sense everyone will be united by that prospect.

But yet some of us will do it willingly. Some of us will shed tears of joy as we see the Savior return.

[29 : 37] That's that moment when faith gives way to sight. When we see Him as He is, when we see our elder brother and our Savior some of us will gladly bow the knee and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

But some of us will do it out of compulsion. Some of us will be forced to our knees by the sheer sight of the majesty and the glory of Christ.

All things will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. But when that day comes, when you bow your knee will it be willingly to a Savior that you've loved and served?

Or will it be under compulsion to a Savior you've always rejected? What makes the difference tonight is whether we're redeemed or not.

Whether we've been set free by Christ or not. We'll gather tomorrow morning around the Lord's table.

[31 : 05] If you have been redeemed, if you have been set free, if you have been bought by Christ. Then please come. Share the meal with your brothers and sisters. Share the family meal together.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank You this evening for Your Son, Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank You indeed that one day every tongue will confess, one day every knee will bow. We pray, Father, that You would draw us to Yourself so that we do it willingly.

Give us that faith so that we will not be forced to our knees under compulsion. We thank You for the benefits of salvation in the past. Thank You that You have predestined us to be sons and daughters of God.

Thank You for the assurance of salvation in the present that we can know that we are redeemed. We can know that we have been bought back. And we thank You for the benefits of salvation that are to come.

[32 : 26] And we thank You that day when we see Christ as He truly is. Help us long for that day. We pray. Come, Lord Jesus.

Amen.