

"Glorifying"

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[0 : 00] Let's turn friends please to Ephesians chapter 1. We're going to consider these verses 11 through 14, these verses as we find them here in Ephesians chapter 1.

As I was telling you last night, I have four small children ranging in age from 6 down to 11 months. One of the questions that I most often find myself asking these days is why are you doing that?

The strangest example was one day coming down from the shore to find one of our children sitting in a laundry basket. Now obviously the question was well, why are you doing that? Is there a sudden shortage of seating that now we need to come into your laundry baskets as emergency seats?

Has something catastrophic happened while I've been in the shore that suddenly laundry baskets are appropriate places to sit? And his response was simply well, there was a cushion in it.

So of course what else would you do but sit in it? Now who put the cushion in the basket? I don't know, but at least there was a rationale, at least there was a genuine thought process that went in to his actions.

[1 : 12] And Paul's asking us a question as we come to Ephesians 1 this morning. Paul's answering a question for us as we come to Ephesians 1 this morning.

He's asking us the question well, why did God save us? Why did God predestine us? Why did God choose us to be his people? Out of all of the masses of humanity, why did God choose us?

And the answer we see repeated twice in this section. Why did God save us? We see at the end of verse 12 to the praise of his glory.

We see it at the end of verse 14. Why did God save us to the praise of his glory? This section that we're coming to in Ephesians 1, this first 14 verses as we have them in our English translation, are all one long sentence.

It's one long sentence of praise that exudes from Paul's heart as he considers God, as he considers the greatness and the majesty of God, as he considers the salvation of God, this doxology, this praise, flows out of his heart.

[2 : 27] And as we come this morning, we want to ask ourselves the question and answer the question from the passage, why did God save us?

He did it for his own glory. Now if we said that, that would be breathtaking arrogance, wouldn't it? That would be an astonishing view of the worth of yourself.

If we say that we do things for our own glory, it's just ridiculous. But when the God of the universe does it for his glory, when the God of the universe does it to display his grace and majesty, it is the greatest thing that there is.

Think about our own short sarcasm, what does it ask us? What is man's chief end? Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

Why does God save us so that we might glorify him and ultimately one day enjoy him forever? We want to see three things from this passage. Think about three things from these four verses.

[3 : 42] Firstly, we want to see how we're predestined to his glory, how the predestination shows us the glory of God. Secondly, then we want to think about how we are in Christ to his glory, in Christ to his glory.

And then thirdly, we want to think about how we're guaranteed to his glory, guaranteed to his glory that Paul reminds these Ephesian believers that they've been sealed, that they've been given the guarantee, they've been given the assurance of the Holy Spirit.

So firstly then, we want to think about being predestined to his glory, predestined to his glory and we see that in verse 11. Last night we finished by thinking about what the ultimate plan of God was, we saw that in verse 10, the ultimate plan of God was that in the fullness of time all things would be united to Christ, united by his life, death and resurrection, all things would be united in him.

And as we come to verse 11, we can easily misdefect, because in our English translation it starts a new paragraph here, but as I just said, we can easily misdefect that this is all one long sentence. So as we come to verse 11, the first two words that we read are in him.

And the question for us then is, well, who is the in him that it's talking about? Well, it's Jesus Christ, is it? The Christ that we see in verse 9, the Christ who ultimately, one day all things will be united to.

[5 : 12] And it's in Jesus Christ that we have obtained this inheritance. Now we all know what an inheritance is, don't we?

We all know what it is to inherit something from someone. It's something that's given to us that isn't ours by right. It's something that's passed on to us from someone else.

So it's in Jesus Christ then that we have this inheritance. Let's try and unpack that a little bit. Let's try and think about that a little bit more. It's in Jesus Christ that we've been given something that isn't ours by right.

It's in Jesus Christ that we've been given something that isn't ours by nature or by birth. It's in Jesus Christ that we have obtained this inheritance.

And it's only in Christ that we can obtain this inheritance this morning for us. It's only in Jesus Christ that we can have something that is not ours by right or by birth.

[6 : 18] Because what is ours by birth? What is ours by right? Well, it's sin, isn't it? It all reminds us in Romans all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

The Sammet reminds us that He's been sinful from His first beginning, sinful from the moment He was conceived in His mother's womb. That's what's ours by right. That's what's ours by birth.

But it's in Christ that we have received this inheritance. It's in Christ that we've received this thing that is not ours by right or by birth. It's in Jesus Christ that we can know sins forgiven. It's in Jesus Christ that we've received the inheritance of eternal life this morning. It's not ours by right. It's not ours by birth. It's not ours by nature but it's ours in Him. It's Jesus Christ who gives us that righteousness that's foreign to us. We've obtained this inheritance Paul tells us. We've obtained this inheritance again notice verse 11 and we've obtained this inheritance being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will. We've received this inheritance this morning because it's the will of God that we should receive it.

Because it's the will of God that we should have it because it reflects His glory and His character. Suzanne's my wife's grandmother died a while ago. My wife's grandmother was Doreen Boyd who was the wife of the late principal Archie Boyd from Edinburgh Theological Seminary. She died a few months ago and she left me some stuff in her will. I was quite excited by this. Some of the stuff that was hers was given to me I think actually probably it was principal Boyd's. What did she leave me in her will? She left me a copy of the Blue Book of the Practice of the Free Church of Scotland.

Now it sits in my book case. Why? Because it was her will that I should have it. It was her desire that I should have this keepsake, this memento. Why are you in Christ this morning? Why do you have salvation this morning? Why do you have this inheritance this morning?

[8 : 48] Quite simply because God has willed it and because God worked all things according to His will.

Now maybe you're here this morning and you don't believe in Jesus Christ yet. Maybe you're here this morning and you're outside of Christ and you think well that's great. This is actually good news for me because it gets me off the hook doesn't it? If I'm outside of Christ it's actually God's fault.

If I'm outside of Christ then it's because God hasn't willed my salvation therefore I'm off the hook. It's our responsibility to believe. It's our responsibility to make the most of our salvation.

It's our responsibility to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. It's a similar idea to what we see elsewhere in Scripture isn't it? Think about those men who killed the Lord Jesus Christ.

As they put the nails into His hands and His feet as they put Him on that cross. We're reminded that they were responsible for their own sin. We're reminded that they were responsible for their own actions. God allowed it to happen but those men were responsible.

[10 : 19] We're not in Jesus Christ this morning by accident. We haven't received this inheritance by accident. We've received it because God willed it. What a reassuring thought to know that.

But as we come to the table this morning as we distribute the elements amongst one another God has chosen us from eternity past. God has willed and worked your salvation from eternity past.

God has called you to be conformed to the image of His Son. It's not an accident. It's not a fluke of nature. It's not a quirk of circumstance.

But it's like God willed it. We know there may be many days. Many days when we may not choose Christ. Many days when our faith feels weak and feeling. Many days when indwelling sin seems to be getting the better of us. Many days when perhaps being a Christian seems too difficult. Many days when perhaps being a Christian the cost seems too high.

And yet on those days we can rest on the fact that we have an inheritance in Christ. But God has chosen us. We're predestined this morning for His glory. We're predestined this morning to showcase His grace and mercy and love to a watching world.

[12 : 06] So we're predestined to His glory. Secondly then we want to see how we're in Christ to His glory in Christ to His glory. And we see that in verse 12 verse 12.

And as we move into verse 12 we notice that Paul begins to make this distinction. Don't we? What does he say in verse 12? So that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of His glory. Now what's the distinction that's being drawn here? Why does Paul say we who were the first to hope in Christ? As we read that you see I think we can read it from a what are we 21st century perspective. And we read into this text the distinction that's being drawn here is between Paul the Ephesian believers and the early church and us today. That's the distinction that we think is being drawn here but I don't think that's the distinction that Paul's making. We need to remember the context as we come to the Bible. We need to remember the context as we come to these letters. Who is Paul writing this letter to? He's writing it to a group of largely Gentile believers. He's writing it largely to a group of non-Jews. And he's saying to them we as in the Jews who were the first to hope in Christ. That's the distinction that he's drawing between the Jews and the Gentiles. Between the Jews and the non-Jews if you like. Between those first generation of Jews who believed and the Gentiles who would come later.

The Jews were by and large the first ones to believe in Christ. The first ones to recognize who he was. What he came to do. And of course that makes sense doesn't it. Because we can't read the Bible. We can't read the New Testament in isolation. We have to read the New Testament in light of the Old Testament. We have to read the Old Testament in light of the New Testament. The Jews were the ones who had the promise of the Messiah. The Jews were the ones who had the promise of God's chosen King. The Jews were the ones who were looking for a Savior. And as Christ comes on the scene.

The Jews are the ones who think could this be the Christ? Could he be King David's greater son? Could he be the one that we've been looking for? They have the history. They have the understanding.

They have the expectation. True some rejected him. Some refused to believe that Jesus was truly the Christ. Some said is not this Mary's boy? Or not his brothers and sisters here with us?

[14 : 44] And yet some believed. And they were by and large the ones who were the first to hope in Christ. I'm sure most of you this morning are familiar at least with the TV show Dragons Den. It's not a show that I watch I have to say but it's a show that I'm sort of familiar with. For those of you who aren't familiar with it the whole idea of the show is that the budding entrepreneurs come and they pitch this idea to a group of rich businessmen and women with the idea of getting these rich people to invest in their company. The whole premise of the show is that this company will be so irresistible that this company will show such potential for growth.

That the businessman's going to want to get in first. The businesswoman's going to want to get in early to secure their share. And that's what Paul says here about the Jews. They were the first to hope in Christ. They got in early as it were at least some of them did. And not again that this was done to the Priests of His glory. But how? How was this done to the Priests of the glory of God?

How was the fact that they were in Christ? How did that show the glory of God? Well the Jews have been waiting haven't they? Some of them had anyway. Longing, looking, waiting for King David's greater son, waiting for the Messiah to come. Think about when John the Baptist burst on the scene. People were were were waiting with such expectation, such hope that as John appeared on the scene they began to ask themselves could this be the Christ? Such was the sense of their fervour, such was the sense of their expectancy. Remember another occasion where they wanted to make Christ their King by force? That they were going to compel him to be their King.

Such was their sense of excitement, such was their sense of expectancy, such was their sense of longing. But imagine then being one of the Jews who found Christ, who found in him the forgiveness of sin, who found in him the hope that they'd be looking for.

Imagine the rejoicing, imagine the prayers that they would have given to God. Think about two all testament, two examples that we see in the New Testament, sorry, two examples from the early life of Christ. Think about that prophet as Anna, she who lived in the temple.

[17 : 45] And she sees Christ, what does she do? She begins to praise God. She knows who Jesus is and thanks God that his promise is fulfilled. Think of that other man who's there, that old man Simeon, who when he sees the Christ says, what thank you Lord, that your servant can not part in peace.

How we need to pray for, how we need to look for the evangelization of our friends, the Jews. You must never forget that they are the vine and we as Gentiles are the vine that has been grafted on. The Jews here are the first to believe, the first to hope in Christ, the Jews of the Old Testament, people of God. And how we need to pray for their salvation.

How we need to pray that God would once again do a mighty work in their midst, that they would turn to him to display his glory. So we've seen that other people are predestined to God's glory. We've seen how people are in Christ to God's glory. And then thirdly, finally, this morning we want to see how people are guaranteed to his glory, guaranteed to his glory.

I think we see the fact that Paul's talking about the Jews as we come to verse 13. Because what does he say as he comes to verse 13? In him you also, in him you also Ephesians believers, in him you also as well as the Jews, when you heard the word of the truth, etc, etc, etc. He's brought into the discussion on, he's taken it one step further. The Jews, yes verse 12, were the first to hope, but you also, verse 13, hope in Christ. When you heard the word of the truth, when you heard the gospel that was preached to you, when you came to believe in him. What does he say? You were sealed verse 13, and the verse 13, you were sealed with the same promised Holy Spirit. So what forms part of Paul's thinking isn't it in the whole of the Galatian letter, the whole of the letter that Paul sends to the church in Galatia. That in Christ there is neither slave nor free, that in Christ there is neither dune or Greek, that in Christ there is neither master nor servant, but Christ is in all and all are in Christ. And here we see the working behind that theology, here we see the working behind that thought, all have received the same Holy Spirit, all have been sealed, been guaranteed with the same Holy Spirit. And therefore all are equal. The Jews might, yes, be the Old Testament people of God, but they need to believe in Christ and be sealed with the Spirit. The Gentiles might be the ingrafted branch, but they need to believe in Christ and be sealed with the same Holy Spirit.

And that's a challenge to us this morning friends, isn't it? Because the same is true for us. The challenge to us is to see all Christians this morning, all genuinely converted Christians as those who've been sealed with the same Holy Spirit.

[21 : 31] You see for the Jews at one point it would have been absolutely unthinkable that the Gentiles would be grafted on. It would have been absolutely unthinkable that the Gentiles would be considered the people of God, those Gentile dogs considered as the people of God.

I'm not sure of your exact situation this morning and the exact people that perhaps you struggle to relate with, the people you struggle to get on with. Yet the reality is that if they're in Christ then they've been sealed with the same Holy Spirit that you have.

The reality is that if they're in Christ they belong to the same Savior and belong to the same God that you do this morning. And therefore you must relate to them as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Can I hold the sin against a brother whom God has forgiven? Can I hold the sin against a sister who has been redeemed by the blood of the Savior? Who's been sealed by the same Spirit?

This Holy Spirit Paul says verse 14 is the guarantee of our inheritance. It's the guarantee of the promise to come until we actually acquire possession of it.

[23 : 02] The phrase that Paul uses here is the idea of leaving a deposit. It's a down payment.

It's a promise that there's more to come. And that says Paul is the ministry of the Holy Spirit in this world. To be that guarantee, to be that seal, to be that deposit of more to come.

I grew up in a small council estate in Carrick Fergus in Northern Ireland. Our money was always tight so we used to buy a lot of stuff on credit, you know, TVs, fridges, anything really that they would give us on credit we would take it.

But as you went to the shop they always insisted on a deposit. They always insisted that you pay so much of the cost up front to prove that there was more to come.

And that's what Paul says here. This Holy Spirit this morning serves as the guarantee that there's more to come. The Holy Spirit sees us, guarantees us. The Holy Spirit is the down payment that there's more to come. That there is, as Paul puts it, an inheritance awaiting us in the future.

[24 : 24] That eternity spent with God and with fellow believers. Now please don't mishear me this morning friends. Please don't misunderstand me. This isn't an attempt to downplay the ministry of the Holy Spirit. This isn't an attempt to somehow make the Holy Spirit less than fully God. But rather it's his ministry to seal us.

It's his ministry to keep us. It's his ministry to guarantee us for the future that awaits us. And it's a lovely thought to finish with this morning really isn't it?

Because I want you to think this morning. I want you to think this morning of what is the most Spirit filled experience that you've ever had.

Perhaps it was listening to a particular preacher giving a particular sermon that you can still remember to this day. With a spirit move where your heart was stirred by what the Spirit said.

Perhaps it was during a particular time of worship and praise to God with brothers and sisters. That the Holy Spirit moved your heart, stirred your heart and gave you that excitement of what was to come.

[25 : 46] Perhaps it was during a particular communion season that as you gathered around the table you felt the presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit stirring up your heart and your affections.

Think on it friends. Whatever that experience is for you this morning. However deeply it moved you and I say this with reverence and with respect. However deeply it moved you. That experience has bought a down payment. That experience has bought a deposit. That experience has bought a guarantee that there is more to come. That day when we gather around the throne of the Lamb. That day when the number of the elect is full. That day when we're gathered with people from every tribe and language and tongue and nation worshipping the Lamb. That day when we see Jesus for who he truly is.

As we gather around the table this morning. We're showing that in a little way.

As we gather around the table this morning what are we declaring to one another. We're declaring that we belong to Christ. We're declaring that our sins have been forgiven.

But we're also declaring that we're one in Christ. That we share the one bread and we share the one cup. We share the one hope of resurrection to come.

[27 : 43] And we share the one spirit who has sealed us. Who has guaranteed us until the day that Christ returns.

Or until the day we go to glory. Let us pray together now. Amen. Heavenly Father indeed we thank you for the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We thank you for his sealing of us. We thank you for his guaranteeing of us. We thank you that indeed this world is not all that there is. But that we have a better home that awaits us.

That this world is not our home but we're simply passing through. And we pray Father now as we gather around the table that you would unite us in that same spirit.

Unite us in that one spirit. May we be fed by these elements that are set before us this morning. May we have our walk with you strength and may we have our faith increased. And may you go before us we ask.

In Jesus name. Amen. Well in just a few moments we're going to gather around the table of the Lord.

[29 : 18] It's important to say this morning that it is the Lord's table. It is for those of us here this morning who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is as Paul reminds us in words that we'll read in just a few moments. It is a command of Christ that we remember his death until he comes.

If you are in Christ this morning if you have had your sins forgiven then you have no business staying away from this table. It is a command of your Savior that you come. I invite you to come in the name of the Lord and we'll gather around the table as we...

As we prepare ourselves to come to the table we want to consider two questions this morning. These are questions that I have devised or answered. These are questions that come from the larger catechism of the church, the larger catechism of the Westminster standards.

The first is this. What is the Lord's Supper? If we're going to come and celebrate the Lord's Supper this morning we need to understand what it is. We need to understand what it is that we're doing. What is the Lord's Supper? The answer is given thusly.

The Lord's Supper is a sacrament wherein by giving and receiving bread and wine according to Christ's appointment his death is shown for him.

[30 : 55] And the worthy receivers are not after a corporal and carnal manner but by faith made partakers of his body and blood with all his benefits to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

What are we told about the Lord's Supper then? That it's a sacrament. That the Lord's Supper are visible words to us where we give and receive bread and wine.

The elements that are set before us this morning will remain bread and wine. There will be no change in them. Donald MacLeod, my Systematics Professor at college used to tell us that in the sacrament you don't get a better Christ but you get Christ better.

You get a real tangible sense of the death and resurrection of Christ. You get things that you can feel with your hands and taste with your mouth. A sacrament is a visible word.

A sacrament as we come this morning declares to us Christ's death and resurrection. We're told that the Lord's Supper is by Jesus Christ. It's an appointment that Jesus Christ made.

[32 : 22] On the night when he was betrayed he took bread and gave it to the disciples, ordered them to remember him. It's important to say that this morning that as we come to the Lord's table we come in obedience to the command of Christ.

This isn't something that is instituted merely by the church. This isn't something that men have thought up that's a good idea. This is commanded by Christ. We're told by the larger Catechism that as we come we remember the death of Christ.

We remember the body which is given for us. We remember the blood that was shed for us. We remember the real, the real, the real sacrificial death of Christ.

As we come this morning we come to something much more than just an empty symbol. As we come this morning we come to something that is much more than just a ritual to be performed.

As you come in Christ this morning you come to have your souls fed. As you come in Christ this morning you come to be built up in your most holy faith.

[33 : 50] You come to strengthen your walk. One of the other things that question told us is that it's only those who come in a worthy manner who receive the benefits.

It's only those who come in a right manner that receive the benefits of the sacrament. So that leads us into our second question. What is required to the worthy receiving of the Lord's Supper?

It is required of them that would worthily partake of the Lord's Supper. That they examine themselves with their knowledge to discern the Lord's body. Of their faith defeat upon Him.

Of their repentance, love and obedience. Less coming unworthily they eat and drink judgment to themselves.

How can you assess this morning if you're coming in a worthy manner? Look at your heart.

[34 : 52] Does your heart earnestly say I am trusting in Christ alone for salvation? Can you honestly say I have living active obedient faith in Jesus Christ?

Am I living a life of repentance, love and obedience? Not that we do that perfectly of course, but that when we feel we repent, that when we sin we come to Christ.

If the answer to those questions is yes then by all means come. Come and share the family meal. Come and share with your brothers and sisters.

Come and feed upon Christ in your hearts. Come and be thankful for His life and for His death. Come and be strengthened and grow in grace.