

God's Eternal Plan for Us.

Text: Eph. 1:3-14

The celebration of Christmas has been going on for quite awhile. We celebrated the birth of God's Son, Jesus Christ, ten days ago. And today our celebration of Epiphany continues the celebration, and our readings from Ephesians adds an eternal dimension to the purpose of the celebration:

God's Eternal Plan for Us.

God has a plan. That plan is centered IN CHRIST JESUS. And the plan involves you and me. The question for each of us to ponder is this: Do you trust God's plan?

For those of us who were together here on Christmas Day morning, we heard read, the beautiful words from the Gospel of John chapter 1: **In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.** The Word is Christ Jesus. The eternal plan of God is about the Word. The Word was before the world was made. What does this mean for us? It means that God loved us, then, already from the beginning. In verse 4, from Ephesians 1, we heard read: **For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.** God did not fall in love with us. Rather, He loved us because He IS love, in spite of our sins, which separated us from Him. God loved us before the world was made, because His love had a purpose and a design that set the pattern for all that would happen in the world. What was that purpose, design, the plan? **He chose us IN HIM...to be holy and blameless in His sight.**

How do we know that God loved us already before the world was made? Because in verse 5, He planned to make us His sons and daughters. Look again at what it says, **In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.** How did this happen? Through Jesus Christ. In verse 7, we are told that: **In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.** Jesus would effect the forgiveness of our sins by His sacrificial death on the cross. And in His grace, God would also attach us to Jesus by faith, so that we would enjoy and have for our very own -- the forgiveness of our sins. Verse 7 says that the forgiveness of sins is **in accordance with the riches of God's grace.** This is how His plan would work out in time to make us holy and blameless before God the Father.

What I have just shared with you is an overview of God's eternal plan for us. Now,

allow me to get into the specifics concerning our text from Ephesians chapter 1. As one would read the Greek version of verses 3-14, it is actually one long sentence. This section of Scripture is often called a "doxology," because it recites what God has done, is an expression of worship to honor Him, and speaks of the Trinity. Verse 3 speaks of the blessings we have through the Father. Then in verses 4-13, we have those blessings that come through the Son, and in the closing verses of 13 and 14, we have those blessings through the Holy Spirit.

If you have ever read Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, in its entirety, you will see that Christ is the center of God's plan. The phrase -- "In Christ" -- is mentioned fourteen times. It is mentioned nine times, or in a similar way, in our text. To be "in Christ" refers to the spiritual union of Christ with believers. It is only in relationship to Him that there is a meaningful future, an eternal plan. The Apostle Paul is speaking of those chosen, those believers in Christ Jesus, who respond to God's call.

Let's see God's Blue Print Plan for us.

In Christ -- **1:3** we are **blessed...with every spiritual blessing**. What does this mean? We are made alive with Christ" and share in His exaltation in heaven. What are these spiritual blessings? Being chosen by God for salvation, being adopted as His children, forgiven, insight into God's Word, the gifts of the Spirit, God's intimate relationship with us in Christ Jesus. These blessings come of His spiritual realm.

In Christ -- we are chosen. **1:4** *God chose us in Him*. Divine election is a constant theme in Paul's letter not only to the Ephesians, but also his letters to the Romans, Colossians, twice to the Thessalonians, and to Titus. Being chosen is emphasized in the phrase Paul uses as those God predestined. As God's chosen we are referred also as His adopted. What makes God's plan so unique, as mentioned before, we became His chosen before the creation of the world. This holiness is imparted to the believer because of Christ. Being chosen emphasizes that salvation depends totally on God. We did not influence God's decision to chose us. He saved us according to His plan and grace. Speaking of grace...

In Christ -- **1:6** *grace, which he has freely given us* God's grace is free. It is not earned or deserved. For later, in Eph. 2:8-9, Paul writes, **For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**

In Christ -- **1:4-5** *in love...predestined us to be adopted...through Jesus Christ*. We belong to Jesus Christ. He bought us. He redeemed us. With what?

In Christ -- **1:7** **redemption through His blood**. What does this mean? **the forgiveness of sins**. This is the ransom necessary to free us sinners from the bondage of sin and the resulting curse imposed by the law **the wages of sin is death** -- the necessary death of the Lamb, Jesus Christ.

In Christ -- **1:9** *he made known to us the mystery of his will* -- His plan. What is this mystery all about? His suffering, death, resurrection, His Headship. God's purpose and plan for sending His Son, Jesus, was to unite us with Him in the one body. And this body of believers have One Head.

1:10 *to bring . . . under one Head*. Paul is saying that in a world of confusion, where things do not "add up" or make sense, we look forward to the time when everything will be brought into meaningful relationship under the headship of Christ Jesus and the Father.

In Christ -- **1:11** we are chosen to carry out God's **plan...purpose...will**. How are we to do that?

In Christ -- **1:12** *in order that we...might be for the praise of His glory*. Proclaim to others what He has done in Christ. God's plan, purpose and will is to offer, to proclaim salvation to the world. We are to proclaim repentance and forgiveness.

In Christ -- **1:13** hearing and believing the **word of truth...the Gospel...salvation...marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit**, who is working the faith in us, and

In Christ -- **1:14** **guaranteeing our inheritance** in heaven.

The presence of the Holy Spirit in us demonstrates the faith He gives us, proves that we are God's children, and renews us through His Word. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we can say with the Psalmist, (ch. 51:10-12) **Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me**. The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives is not only transforming us now, but also preparing us for eternity in heaven.

