

Paul Tells Us Who God Is

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[0 : 00] that through your word written, you by your Holy Spirit will take this written word and through it bring life to our hearts, forgiveness of our sins, comfort and hope in our lives.

Father, these are great promises that you've made. And we know you are a great God. Give us grace to receive these promises as we turn our hearts and minds to this word.

We ask in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen. For a moment to help me with this passage. But I thought I'd play a little game with you.

What do these words have in common? Hematology, plutocrat, philosophy, ignorance, mystery, economy, cephalic, phallic, evangelical, soteriological, hagiography, plutocrat, paion.

Can you figure them all out? I hope I've got you all totally mystified.

[1 : 46] They're all words that we might use in English, which, the root of which, is found in some word in this passage. And if you're very clever, you could go through and figure it out.

Meanwhile, I'll go on with this sermon. That's, now, there's also a reference to the god Apollo.

And the very clever ones might find that. I'd love to know if any of you could find that. But, it's there. I know, because I looked it up in the dictionary an hour ago.

It's not something I knew before late this afternoon. But if any of you are that intelligent and wise, I would be pleased to meet you. There is, there is, one word, paion, which is used in Greek, and is translated in verse 12, to the praise of his glory.

And then at the end of the passage, it again speaks about the praise of his glory. And it uses that same word, paion, or paion.

[3 : 02] And, so I've asked Mr. Norman to play one for us, just any one he could think of, in order that we might become aware that this whole passage is written to the praise of his glory.

And our response to God is that we should live to the praise of his glory. So it is a paion of praise, and as you think about it, I'll get Ed to play one to remind you of exactly how glorious and triumphant a passage it is.

Mr. Norman, if you will. Ha, ha, ha. Ha, ha, ha. Thank you very much.

Ha, ha, ha. Ha, ha, ha. And we could go on, but that's what it is. Um, I have been reminded by my learned friend, Mr. Greenman, who's going to be preaching subsequently in this series, that this whole passage is one sentence.

Now, I, I don't know that any of you would ever have lived back in the old days when you had to parse sentences sentences.

[4 : 42] Well, if any of you are grammatically very able, you might go to work on this one sentence and see if you could divide it up into subject and object and verbs and nouns and clauses and all sorts of things like that.

But listen to it while I read it once again as one sentence. If I can, I don't know if I can, but it's, just think that this is one. And, and imagine the, the, the condition.

I mean, you talk about the inspiration of scripture that Paul could take it in hand to put this one sentence down or to speak this sentence so someone else could put it down.

And this is what he says. I mean, it's a, it's an amazing statement because it's ecstatic, obviously, on the one hand. and yet it is the most profoundly theological statement you could ever imagine on the other hand.

You know, it doesn't go off into a never, never world. It's a profoundly theological statement, but it's expressed in some kind of almost ecstatic condition as Paul, having opened it with verses one and two, gives this sentence.

[5 : 59] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the

world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed upon 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 for he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight 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 according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his own will.

we who first hoped in Christ have been destined appointed to live to the praise of his glory in him you also have heard the word of truth the gospel of your salvation have believed in him were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory.

One sentence and what a profound sentence it is and what a great thing it would be if you could memorize that statement if you take it as it's written here and commit it to memory so you can walk the seawall and say it you can ride your bike and say it you can turn off your car radio and say it it can be from your heart a praise to his glory in saying these very words it gives you a basic Christian theology you would understand countless passages of scripture simply because you come to know the import and content of this single passage and to know what it is that Paul is saying in it it is a tremendous passage of scripture that's the first thing one sentence and one which sums up in this sort of you know it's a kind of tripping over itself in all the fullness of the awareness of who God is and how he works in our lives well that's the first thing

[8 : 47] I want to tell you that it's one sentence the second thing I want to tell you is that it says who God is now this may not seem very profound to you but the God in whom we believe is 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 it goes on and on and defines and fills out the whole of the definition of who God is and so it answers that in a profound question in a profound way and you must be aware of that because when people ask you do you believe in God you perhaps could answer them yes I believe in 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 and you could go on like this

I mean it would rather stagger them and they asked you a simple question and expected a simple answer but it's what you mean whether you say it all or not is another question but it's what you mean when you say you believe in God this is what you mean this is the God whom you have through response to the gospel come to believe in this is who he is this is the God in whom we believe and so it answers that question and answers it in a profound way the second thing or the third thing one long sentence who is God the ultimate reality it talks here about the ultimate reality and it talks about it in verse 3 he has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places now that's the the heavenly places refers to the ultimate reality this is a continuing phrase that runs throughout the whole of the epistle to the Ephesians it's in 1-3 1-20 2-6 3-10 and 6-12 if you want to know but you'll see it again and again as you read through and heavenly places is the place where the reality really takes place it's it's the place where

Christ is real where Satan is real where the battle and struggle between good and evil is real where the victory of Christ has been established it is that reality to which we are connected we there there is over on Main Island a telephone system and on Main Island there is an a little office probably about the size of that chapel over there and it's full of machinery which is clicking and clacking and going on and making an enormous noise and because of that the telephones on nine different islands in the Gulf Islands all work through that office that's the reality of what happens when you pick up your phone what happens when you dial a number what happens when your phone rings what happens when you speak it's all dependent on that most people don't even know it's there or don't even know such things exist but they do and that's the reality the reality is not the circumstances or biographical detail of your existence or your existence or your existence any more than the telephone company is your telephone or your telephone or your telephone the thing is where all these things come together and where lines are exchanged and numbers are dialed and lines are crossed and all those things take place that's the reality and the reality of our lives is the heavenly the heavenly places in Christ that's where that's where our life really is it's not here the devil wants us to make to make us think it's here here subject to disease here subject to death

subject to fatigue subject to tyranny subject to all sorts of the devil's work and activity he wants to make us think this is the reality

Paul is confident that this is not the reality the reality is heavenly places the heavenly places which he speaks about the place where the reality of who Christ is and the victory that he's won is established and unquestioned my life and I'm sure this affects you too you know it consists perhaps in talking to this alcoholic in talking to this young lady in trouble in talking to this person in hospital in talking to this person who is in a paroxysm of fear in talking to this person who is facing separation one compounded human tragedy on top of another until you don't know whether you can take any more and you wonder what it all means and why it's all happening now and all the wonderful people to whom it's happening and why should this take place and that becomes your reality and you are simply drowned by that terrible engulfing reality that's coming over you all the time that's what I experience and I feel so much of the time but that's not the reality the reality is here where God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places that's the reality that's where our life is that's where the issues are decided that's from that's the place from which the meaning of our life is derived and we need to know that and we need to be powerfully reminded of it because when our belly aches we have no other reality than our aching belly and when our bank account is overdrawn we have no other reality than the fact we've got no money and we can go on and on and on creating these I'm bold to say these artificial realities which occupy and concern us all the time my body is caught in the grip of disease what other reality could there possibly be there is another reality and that reality is what Paul is speaking of here when he says blessed be the

[15 : 49] God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ what I'd like you to do when you take this passage home is go and take your little felt pen if you have one or anything else and look at what happens we think religion is helping your neighbor giving a cup of cold water walking the second mile we've reduced it to not committing adultery not stealing things we do and most people define religion in those terms and those are very inadequate terms ultimately fairly insignificant even though they can be the means of our expressing another kind of reality but this is the kind of reality they must point to if they are to have any meaning at all this is the reality where God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ in the heavenly places that's the reality then I want you to look at the fact that all well I don't know that they're all there I mean but you can you can work it through

I've made a list here which I'm going to throw at you but I'm throwing it at you not because I expect you to take it all in but I want you to see that we're talking here not about the annual report in which this many meetings were held this many prayer meetings this many people came to church this many communions were served this many people were visited and so on like that that we've done that that's not what it is the reality of our faith is the fact that our God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ at work in us by his Holy Spirit that it says this about him and you can go through the passage and underline this for yourself he has blessed us he has chosen us he has destined us he has adopted us he has made his purpose known he has bestowed his grace upon us he has redeemed us he has forgiven he has lavished upon us his goodness he has made known to us he has willed for us he has set forth before us he has united us in Christ he counsels us he has appointed us to live to the praise of his glory those are the things which describe the activity of God in these few verses what do you have to do with that well you are not the initiator you are not the father you are not the one who has done it it is

God the father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has done it you and me because of his activity and his grace and not by any virtue of our own but we can say in response to that I am chosen I am blessed I am destined I am adopted God's purpose is worked out in my life God has bestowed upon me his grace he has redeemed me he has forgiven me he has lavished his goodness upon me he has made known to me his will he has set forth before me the truth of the gospel he has united me with others in Christ he counsels me and he has appointed me to live to his praise that's what's happened to me by the activity of God and you see that is irregardless of the condition in which you find yourself at any given moment sick or destituted or on your death bed these things remain true this is the God who has acted towards us in Jesus

Christ this is the God who's choosing and who's destining and who's adopting and who's purpose and bestowing and graciousness his redemption his forgiveness this is the God who has worked this so that it is a reality in us by his Holy Spirit and all this is in Christ once you finish looking at all the verbs which begin with God has which God is the subject and we are the object look at all of

those and then look at what somebody used to call the theology of prepositions as we find a preposition is a little word which is in a preposition before a noun or a verb expressing relationships and so these relationships which are described by these prepositions are and look at them we are in Christ in him

I'm going to miss them call them out to me do you see any more in love on us in him to us all these things are the relationship in which God has blessed us bringing us into this relationship with him this becomes the reality of our lives and the whole passage ends when it says to us in this passage I mean there's I hope that you'll come over and discuss this passage because it's far too full for me to do to do justice to it but I want just to arouse your eternal curiosity about it I say it eternal because it'll never be satisfied if you try and explore all that lies here but the

[21 : 46] God who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus has sealed this with the promised Holy Spirit which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory that's the condition in which we are all these things belong to us according to God's promise promise this promise is sealed by the Holy Spirit and we have the guarantee of it in the indwelling of his Holy Spirit the guarantee of the fullness of what will be what God is going to give us ultimately he has given us now in the seal and bonding of the Holy Spirit so that we have the present assurance of the ultimate fulfillment of the purpose of God which is expressed in this passage that's what it means let's pray

Father that we could share the ecstasy of Paul as he under the inspiration of your Holy Spirit spoke these words and in it encompassed not all but so much of all that you have done for us and are doing in us and purpose to do with us in Christ not for our own benefit but for the praise of your glory that we might be enabled to live for you amen some of you will want to sit and some will kneel but let's continue in the work of prayer

God only wise hear our prayers this evening not according to the wisdom of our asking but according to the greatness of your mercy let's pray tonight for the church throughout the world the church that Christ came and died for which Paul has sung about tonight in this passage we'll want to pray tonight for the service of evangelism which is coming up in October as we always do we'll want to remember those we know in our families or amongst our friends perhaps at work or at school who are going through troubled times right now and then we'll conclude our time of intercession with a prayer of thanksgiving together so let's pray

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light look favorably on your whole church that wonderful and sacred mystery by the effectual working of your providence carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up and things which have grown old are being made new and that all things are being brought to their perfection by whom by him through whom all things were made your son Jesus Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit one God forever and ever Amen again on October the 18th the Lord's servants Pat Patterson will be with us and we'll have an opportunity to share with ourselves and those we know who don't know Jesus yet the mystery of the gospel and the glory of it so let us pray for all who have not received the gospel of Christ let us pray for all who have not heard the words of salvation for all who have lost their faith for all whose sin has made them indifferent to Christ for all who actively oppose Christ by word or deed for all who are enemies of the cross of Christ and persecutors of his disciples for all who in the name of Christ that persecuted others that God will open their hearts to the truth and lead them to faith and obedience merciful God creator of the peoples of the earth and lover of souls have compassion on all who do not know you as you are revealed in your son

[27 : 50] Jesus Christ let your gospel be preached with grace and power to those who have not heard turn the hearts of those who resist it and bring home to your fold those who have gone astray that there may be one flock under one shepherd Jesus Christ our Lord Lord in your mercy hear our prayer there are those we know who are suffering so perhaps in a moment of silence now we could just remember those who we want to remember in our prayer tonight perhaps you want to mention a name or situation aloud please do that now Lord we pray for all who suffer and are afflicted in body in mind or circumstance we pray for the hungry and homeless the destitute and the oppressed and all who suffer persecution or prejudice we pray for the sick the wounded and the handicapped for those in loneliness fear and anguish for those who face temptation doubt and despair we remember the sorrowful and the bereaved for prisoners and captives and those in mortal danger we pray that God in his mercy will comfort and relieve them and grant them the knowledge of his love

and stir up in us the will and the patience to minister to their needs

Lord in your mercy could you take the green book of alternative services and turn to page 129 and we'll pray together the first general thanksgiving prayer at the top of the page page 129 so together almighty God father of all mercies we your unworthy servants give you humble to a goodistles for us then the inside we call haha answer two the answer 2 ■ a man barbarism said we've seen 2 2