

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, I'm sure I did more than that.

Evangelical, soteriological, hagiography, plutocrat, paean. Can you figure them all out?

[1 : 42] I hope I've got you all totally mystified. 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 the 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...

[2 : 43] There is one word, paean, 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, paean, or paean.

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 paean 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. All right. And that's all. Amen.

[3 : 57] Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you very much.

And we could go on, but that's what it is. 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 don't know that any of you would ever have lived back in the old days when you had to parse sentences.

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 just think that this is one.

[5 : 18] And imagine 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 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 1 and 2, gives this sentence.

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.

[6 : 42] 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.

[8 : 21] 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 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 way.

And you must be aware of that, because when people ask you, do you believe in God, you perhaps could answer them.

[10 : 03] 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 when 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.

[11 : 20] Now that's 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 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. There is over on Main Island a telephone system. And on Main Island, there is 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.

[12 : 36] 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 places in Christ. that's where our life really is.

It's not here. The devil wants us to make us think it's here. Here, subject to disease. Here, subject to death. Subject to fatigue.

[13 : 48] 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.

[15 : 13] 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 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 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.

[16 : 44] 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. 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 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.

[18:05] But 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's 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're not the initiator. You're not the Father. You're not the one who has done it.

[19:13] 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 is made known to me. His will, he has set forth before me the truth of the gospel. He's 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 deathbed. These things remain true. This is the God who has acted towards us in Jesus Christ.

[20:27] 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've finished looking at all the verbs which begin with God has, of 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.

[21:51] 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, you know, 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 you'll, it'll never be satisfied if you try and explore all that lies here. But, the 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.

[23:57] That's what it means. Let's pray. 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. Amen. 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.

[26 : 15] 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, one of 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 have persecuted others, that God will open their hearts to the truth and lead them to faith and obedience.

[28 : 54] 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, Jesus Christ.

Let your gospel be preached with grace and power to those who have not heard it. 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 a situation aloud.

Please do that now. Now. Lord, we pray for all who suffer and are afflicted in body, in mind, or circumstance.

[30 : 27] 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. 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 thanks for all your goodness and loving kindness to us and all whom you have made.

We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life. But above all, for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace and for the hope of glory.

[32 : 27] And we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be honour and glory throughout all ages. Amen. Amen. Ed has a song for us now, and it will be the offertory hymn. The hymn is called the name of the Ed of New York and it's 307 of the fall. The E minute gauges
Fyreau Fyreau CHOIR SINGS

CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS
CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS
CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS Sing out the chance of Zion, For sin and redeemer's blood.

[35 : 36] Jesus, whom their souls reviled, They sent gifts and priests to God.

His tears of peace, people praise you, For the soul to raise some siempre,■■ shaving, crates of
peace on the surface, He does no care about the free wizard.

Sing, Osei X yes, thy razes be, Which you may see on earth.

God's side, O beauty. My love for you. Praise the Lamb.

The day's wedding, all you rose in all the fresh air, so rejoiced as in treasure, young God's power,
and in the fire.

[37 : 07] Just a reminder that after the service, there is coffee and tea in the Trundle Lounge. And
Harry is looking forward to speaking with whoever wants to come and talk about that marvelous
passage and explore that more deeply.

Let's kneel. Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than
all we can ask or think, to him be glory in the church, and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever
and ever.

Amen. Amen.