

Chosen, saved, and sealed

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[0 : 00] Well, if you have your Bibles in front of you, please turn to Ephesians chapter 1.

And we're going to pick it up at verse 7 and read through to the end of the chapter.

As you make your way to Ephesians 1 verse 7, it began last week with the ultimate purpose of God saving a person is to the praise of God's glory.

That you're saved so that you can give God praise. In fact, you give God praise because you're saved. And praising God is simply recognizing God for who he is.

And worship, properly understood, though much more could be said. But the very basic level of worship is the creature responding to the creator in the way that he should properly understand.

[1 : 10] That God being creator, us being the creatures. So God has chosen us before the foundation of the world in Christ Jesus to be holy and blameless. And now in verse 7, this is how he saved us.

So in him, now hear God's word. In him, we have redemption through his blood for 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 his will. As a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him, we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.

So that we who were the first to hope in Christ, might be to the praise of his glory. In him, you also, when heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

Who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

[2 : 43] That the God of our Lord Jesus, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him. Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you.

What are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints? And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe? According to the working of his great might, that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him the right hand in the heavenly places.

Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the age to come.

And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Well, may God bless his word. And before we sing, I really want you to sort of take in what's being said there, especially in the last bit, that it would be hard even for someone who is naturally pessimistic.

[4 : 01] You know, if you're pessimistic before you're saved, you're likely to be pessimistic after you're saved. If your cup is half full before you're saved, you're likely to be half full after you're saved.

Your psyche remains generally the same. But there's absolutely no person who can be remained pessimistic when they read a passage like that.

It's not about God winning. It's about, in the end, there is going to be innumerable amount of Christians filling this world. The world doesn't end in negativity where God loses this battle only to

rejoice in heaven with those he just managed to get in.

That's not the way it works. God, in time, in Christ, unites all things in heaven and on earth and under the earth. That's so good.

And we haven't got time to go into that, but never forget it. We're going to sing, and then we're going to come back. Well, please, if you have Ephesians 1 there open before you.

[5 : 16] So, as you make your way back into Ephesians, let me remind you that last week in Ephesians 1, the first six verses, we understood salvation from a slightly different point of view, and that is before the foundation of the world, we were chosen in Christ Jesus by God to be holy and blameless.

And therefore, the purpose of salvation is not for you to become a believer. The purpose of salvation is not for God to get you out of hell, if you're heading that way.

The purpose of salvation is not for you to be brought into a community. All of these things are included. But the purpose of salvation is for the praise of God's glory, that you would become a worshiper.

And the reason for that is because God created us as worshippers, not just people, but worshippers. And a worshiper is someone who responds to God as he should.

That the relationship between God and man is perfect. And that's worship. Where man is able to reflect God in the way that he lives, and he's able to respond to God as he should.

[6 : 39] Not speaking back to God, not telling God or arguing with God. You can wrestle with God, of course, as many of the saints did. But there's a very clear connection between God and man in the beginning, and that's worship.

And it's broken by sin. And of course, as the train goes by next door, you can bless them. I'm actually on Sunday school next morning.

I'm going to make sure they're a lot quieter than that. I don't know who's preached. Francis, you're preaching next Sunday, so wait and see. All things are predestined, right?

Well, in Ephesians chapter 1, God predestines all things to the praise of his glory. And one of those things is that you're able to praise God for his grace towards you.

Now, what we have here is an extension now to what's already been said. And as I said, over the last week, I've had a good dozen people all in some way or other ask me the same type of question regarding predestination.

[7 : 57] And predestination is not a word to be frightened of, and its meaning is beautiful rather than ugly. And its assurance is greater than any other type of assurance that you can receive.

The fact that God makes a decision on your behalf that keeps you secure. That makes you the person that he wants you to be.

That this is in God's hands. And that he works all things together in order for that to happen. That every moment of your life is worked together so that you become exactly the way God wants you to be.

Your hair color, your eye color, where you live, who your parents were, how you were brought up, your background, your foreground. Everything is there.

It's not a case of it just being woven in, as though certain things take God by surprise along the way. And he's able to weave that into your life story.

[8 : 56] No, those things are there on purpose. They're not woven in. They were always meant to be factored in. Because we're shaped by the people that we're around.

And we're shaped by other factors in our life. And this teaches us both just how good God's grace is, how great his love is, and just how bad sin is.

Some of us have backgrounds. And I don't want to say that mine is necessarily worse than yours. But I had a background where I got to see all the varieties of sin growing up in a home that was unchristian.

Violence, drunkenness, all of those type of things. And I look back and while I think, well, it would have been nice not to have it. What I know because of it, I could not have known if I didn't have it.

So God predestines all things. And I might want to complain. But it's met only with God's grace. That what people meant for one purpose, God always intends for a completely other purpose.

[10 : 01] God is intending it, even though other people are doing it. But God's intention behind it is very different. So the core of this message is not really to focus on the fact that God is in control of everything.

I want you to be assured that he is. I want you to be assured that he is in control of everything. And I can explain it at length in other ways if you'd like at another time.

But there's great assurance in God taking full control of your life. But many people struggle with that issue of control. Well, how much is God in control and how much am I in control?

And I don't have time this morning to be able to answer that question. And even if I could, I wouldn't be able to answer it to your satisfaction. Because at the end of the day, there is a mystery here that we must simply bow down and honor God rather than go, I'm able to understand it at the same level God can.

There's a point at which we must simply bow down and worship. Because we've reached our limits. So the issue here this morning is not to answer that question.

[11:18] However, I'm aware I might raise a whole load of new questions that I'm not going to be able to answer here either. But what we are dealing with this morning is God's grace.

And God's grace properly understood means that once we've understood God's grace towards us, all of these other subjects fit into place. It's a bit like putting the big things in the box first.

And once you've got the big things in place, then suddenly that bit where you didn't know where it went suddenly just fits. So there is an order to the way God wants us to understand things.

The Bible is written from beginning to end. It starts with God creating because that's the point where we need to begin. It doesn't start at redemption.

It starts at creation. And there's a reason for that because God makes things fit together. He not only makes them beautiful, but they logically fit.

[12:17] They are perfectly packed throughout his history. So everything begins to fall into place. And when you read Ephesians, you need to have read the Old Testament and the New Testament up to this point.

And the reason for that is imagine it doing like a jigsaw puzzle. That in most cases, when you have a square jigsaw puzzle, you have four bits that are unique. And you know where they go.

It doesn't take any working out. They're called the corners. They have two straight edges. And if it's a square jigsaw puzzle, you know that one goes the upper left, one goes the upper right, lower right, and lower left.

Without any difficulty whatsoever, you know where they go. And then you have other pieces which are slightly more difficult, but still not as difficult as the middle.

And that is all the pieces with the straight edges. And then you put them in place because you know they go in between the corners. So now, just by thinking through how God orders his theology out, these things, now you're getting the picture.

[13:23] Now the difficulty comes with when you're doing the middle parts, the in-between parts. And so for some of us, reading Ephesians feels like starting a thousand-piece jigsaw in the middle.

But it only feels like starting a thousand-piece jigsaw in the middle because you've not read the edges and corners. The reason why Ephesians is where it is is because the thought process behind it is that you would have read up to that point.

That you would have read those straight edges and corners so that when you get to Ephesians, suddenly these details fit in with the larger picture that you've already had.

So Ephesians doesn't then feel like you're learning to swim in the deep end. Predestination, adoption, election. How am I to cope with all of these heavy words that are pulling me down?

Well, they're not heavy once you've had your swimming lessons through the Old Testament and partly through the New. You've learned how to swim and now you're strong enough to be able to take this on.

[14:32] And that's what Paul is anticipating, that you have this background knowledge to stand on. So it's not as if one bit is more difficult than the other.

It's just learning things in order matters. Because that's how it fits together. Learning things in order matters a great deal.

So Paul does explain as he goes, which is the grace of him here in the way that he writes. But more importantly, that when you understand the big things, the little things find their place.

You know where they fit automatically. So here's the summary of what we have read so far.

Essentially, chapter 1 can be divided into three main sections.

That you are chosen by God, you are saved by the Son, and you are sealed by the Spirit. So you're chosen by God before the foundation of the world. You're saved by the Son in time.

[15 : 31] That is the cross, the death, and resurrection. And you're sealed with the Spirit for eternity. That this is how God saves you and God keeps you.

He chose you before the foundation of the world. He saves you in time. And now, of course, there's two time frames here. There's the one time frame where Jesus Christ lived, died on the cross, and rose again.

And then there's the time frame where you actually realized what Christ has accomplished for you in your own repentance and belief. That's when you realize the accomplishment of Christ.

And then God gives you his Spirit as a guarantee, as an assurance that what Jesus did, he did for you. And this is why, that while I don't like the phrase, once saved, always saved, I'm not all that keen on it.

But it is true that once God has saved you, that he's saved you. There's nothing you can do to undo that salvation.

[16 : 35] There's nothing you can do to turn that around and become unsaved at any point.

Because this is grace. This is the work of God. It had nothing to do with you in its accomplishment.

Yes, you repent. Yes, you believe. Yes, you turn. Yes, you follow. No, but essentially the beauty here is what God does for you. And that, essentially, is salvation by grace.

When we say that we are saved by grace alone, that's what we mean. When we sing that we are saved by grace alone, what we are singing is that God chose us, the Son saves us, and the Spirit seals us.

That's salvation by grace alone. And that's the beauty of what God has done for us. And then as he goes into chapter 2, you get those famous couple of verses in 8 and 9.

So Paul lays it out in chapter 1, and then he restates it in chapter 2, so that you're absolutely clear that you're saved by grace alone.

[18 : 02] That even the faith that you have has been given to you, not a result of your own doing. Now that is glorious.

That is beautiful. That is so assuring. And if you're thinking at this point, well, that seems like a very limited amount of people, well, get to Revelation.

And you'll begin to realize that when John looks up and he sees all these saints, that he can't even count how many there are. Thousands upon thousands, 10,000 upon 10,000.

So the idea that God has only kind of saved a small amount of people out of human history. No. When you read Revelation, it's a number that cannot even begin to be numbered.

No one can get close to numbering it. This is the grace of God. Now, having explained in simple terms what this section is about, chosen by God, saved by the Son, and sealed by the Spirit, we begin to recognize that the way it is accomplished is through Christ, through his death and through his resurrection.

[19 : 14] And most importantly, drawing attention to the fact that the forgiveness of sins is a direct result of not God speaking words, but of God dying for you.

That the way a person is forgiven is not by telling them that they are forgiven. That's how they find it out. But the way they are forgiven is through blood.

So this is the first major section. We are redeemed, verse 7, through the blood of Christ. So forgiveness, your forgiveness, the forgiveness that you know and love and experience, or you should know, comes to you via you hearing the word.

You find out about it because God's speaking to you. You know that God has forgiven you because you hear the word. But hearing the words, I forgive you, is not how you are forgiven.

You are forgiven. You are forgiven by Christ Jesus dying on the cross for you. And when you find that out, then you hear those words, you are forgiven.

[20 : 21] Now my forgiveness is rooted in something that has accomplished. Now God's word accomplishes, he speaks and he creates things. But forgiveness has to deal with a particular problem.

And that problem is sin. Sorry, redemption has to deal with a particular problem. And that problem is sin. Forgiveness is what we are forgiven from.

And that accomplishment happens through God giving his son. We are saved by the son. Chosen by God and now we are saved by the son.

Which is a reference to the cross. So when God predestines us in Christ Jesus, that's what he's predestined. That's what's happening. That's what he's making sure will happen.

That the life of Christ on the cross ties in with your life. This is why Romans 6 is so important. Remember, I'm fond of saying that Christ did not die to give you life.

[21 : 26] Christ died so that you could die. Christ lives so that you could live. Because it's a non-negotiable. All sinners must die. So you can either die in Christ with a prospect of resurrection.

Or you can die outside of Christ with a prospect of resurrection only to the judgment seat of God. You know, where you will have to take the weight of your own sin upon you.

So this is how Christ accomplishes it. That when he dies, he's dying in our place. Which means that we're sort of dying in him. He takes care of death for us.

He takes care of that judgment of God for us. And now, what do we need now that we have died to sin? Well, now we need a resurrection. But I can only be raised from the dead in the person who can be raised from the dead.

And so as Christ rises, I'm raised. And that's redemption. Redemption is God giving his son as the cost. What it actually costs for you to be forgiven.

[22 : 33] For you to actually be forgiven. It requires the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the value of your life to God.

So the idea is no big deal. No, it's a really big deal for you to be redeemed. For me to be redeemed. Redemption means the price that God paid so that you can be forgiven.

And the price that God paid, verse 7, is redemption through the blood of Christ. Which is the cross of Christ. His death on your behalf. And verse 9 is what happens when we come to know this.

That God makes known to us the mystery of his will according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ. Now we know forgiveness. So God forgives us in Christ Jesus.

And then at a later date we find out about it. When we hear those words that you could be forgiven in Christ Jesus. And we go ahead and tell the whole world. So God's mandate is really quite clear, isn't it?

[23 : 38] You know, the Great Commission is not leave somebody out. It's go out into the whole world telling them that whosoever believes shall not perish but have eternal life.

Just go and tell them. And the accomplishment of Christ is realized in the lives of people who repent and believe.

And so properly understood, a person is not just saved from, but they're also saved for. And so if we're going to talk about salvation properly, it shouldn't be in terms of just one directional.

That this is what I'm saved from. I'm saved from sin and death. That's true. But where are you after you have been saved from sin and death? Where are you now?

Well, you have been saved for God. You have been saved for the praise of his glory. You have been saved for worship. In other words, when God saved you in Christ Jesus, he had something else to do with you.

[24 : 43] There was something more that he was going to do. That salvation is a part of your life which is at the beginning. Which then allows you to live the life that you now live in Christ Jesus.

That's the beauty of what God has done for us. That's the accomplishment that he has made. And so in verse 11, we have it reaffirmed in a slightly different way.

That in him, we have obtained an inheritance having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things to the counsel of his own will.

In other words, everything that God does, he does on purpose. Everything that God does, he does on purpose.

Absolute purpose. Nothing is a mishap. Nothing is a mistake. He lavishes wisdom on us in purpose. He lavishes his grace on us in purpose.

[25 : 50] He lavishes the forgiveness on us, the redemption. All of this is done on purpose. And we obtain this inheritance on purpose. The purpose of God's will.

It's all planned out. And God follows his own plan to the T. Just perfectly bringing into existence the things down through the time.

And this is why it's called a mystery. That even though it says here that we can understand this mystery, the only part of the mystery that we can really understand is that everything works according to the will of God.

And this is why so many Christians can wrestle with the same issue. The one same issue for their whole life. For their whole life. And I've wrestled with many of these issues.

But the only way to control that wrestling or for someone to win in this situation and it's God is to submit to what the word is actually saying.

[26 : 55] And so just on a plain reading alone, just on a plain reading alone, it's not all that difficult to read that you're chosen by God, that you're saved by the Son, and you're sealed by the Spirit.

And that's salvation by grace. Without any sort of major interpretational differences between us, just a plain reading of Ephesians 1 is a reading of the fact that you're saved by grace alone.

Now, not only are you saved by grace alone, that what happens out of that is the assurance that you have is by grace alone, that you're sealed with the Spirit.

You'll notice that as Paul prays for the church, he prays for a number of different things. That he's heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He does not stop to, he continues to give thanks for them.

But he prays, verse 18, that they're having their eyes and heart enlightened, that they may know the hope that is called you. And what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in all the saints.

[28 : 05] God's ultimate purpose is to make you like Jesus. And your will, your will is still being conformed to Jesus.

This is why that some mornings you can get out of the bed and you want to be like Jesus. And other mornings you get out of the bed and you don't want to be like Jesus. I don't want to be like Jesus today.

There's, there's, there's, it's just, it's just too much responsibility. And yet God gave, and I'm, God gave men broad shoulders for a reason.

And God made women the way he did for purposes as well. And there's nothing worse than to see, for instance, a man not take responsibility. It's just nothing worse than not owning up to your own sin and not taking responsibility.

And again, there's nothing worse for, for a woman on the other hand to have one, one upmanship on her husband. It's just, there's nothing worse than that.

[29 : 08] I mean, if you want to see the downgrade of a marriage quicker than anything, then you put those two things together. You know, a lazy husband who doesn't take responsibility. And, and a wife who wants one upmanship over her husband.

And she managed, you know, well, I made him think it was his idea, right? I, it sounds funny, but it's really not good.

And, and this, this kind of structure that, that happens just to get the way, just to get what you want, is, is not the kind of thing that God has saved us for.

And so, properly understood, God, a man, a man should never complain that he has too much to carry. God made you to carry things. And, and, and a woman, uh, who often, in the church, carry more than men, uh, which is an embarrassment to all the men in the church, frankly.

Um, at the same time, shouldn't, shouldn't seek, uh, a greater authority over the man to the detriment of that relationship.

[30 : 16] And so, when we're talking about God saving people, you'll notice that he saves us into the church. He saves us into the church. That none of us are saved independently of Christ or each other.

That the fact that God put us together is staggering. You know, the fact that, you know, that we can sit and chat and have a good time with one another, that we can gather with one another.

That one day that we're going to be in, in heaven or, and earth, that the new earth, let's not forget about the new earth. That we're going to be in the, in the new heavens and the new earth. And there's going to be none of, none of the things that we dislike about each other are going to be there.

We're just, we're just going to, we're suddenly, it's going to be, you're, you're, you're not as annoying as I used to know you back on earth. It's, this is, this is wonderful. But you won't even consider that because those type of thoughts won't enter in.

But we're not there yet. So everything is being worked according to the purpose of God's will. We are still being made to be like Jesus. And the reason why is because you're not like Jesus.

[31 : 26] The reason God is making you like his son is because you're not like his son. It's, it's, it's as simple as that. So everything that God does is that he chooses you.

He saves you by the son. And now he seals you into this glorious inheritance. Now to be sealed with the spirit. Now for those of you who've been around long enough, you'll know that I did a

lengthy series on the Holy Spirit.

And I spent two messages just on this idea of what it means to be sealed by the spirit. So I'm going to give you both of them now in absolute sentence form.

The first is this, that being sealed with the spirit means that you're sealed into an assurance. The promise that God has promised to you, the inheritance that you will obtain, that you have been sealed with the spirit so that no separation can happen between you and God until that day.

Or there'll be no separation on that day either until you receive that inheritance. You have been adopted into the family of God. You have been sealed by the spirit or with the spirit so that you cannot be lost.

[32 : 38] You were once a lost child. God has brought you home and you will never be lost again. You are sealed so that you will never run away from home.

And you were sealed so that you will never get lost from your home. You are being brought into this glorious inheritance. And the other type of sealing is the seal of approval.

That God has placed on you his seal of approval in God the Holy Spirit. That God approves of you. That God is not angry at you for anything.

And it's tempting to think God must be angry with me because of this or that. No. God is not angry with you. Ever. Never angry with you.

Never angry with you. And so as you pray, we recognize that God's not angry with us. God lavishly loves us. There's so many hurdles that we have to get over ourself because of what we think God is like.

[33 : 41] So God seals you. And it's hard to know exactly which way. And so I think it's probably best to understand it in this double meaning.

That you're sealed in terms of assurance. That is, no separation can happen. And you have the seal of God's approval because God has given himself to you in God the Holy Spirit.

So you're forever is. And you have his approval. So as you walk out, it doesn't matter wherever you walk, do you walk around as someone who belongs to God?

Do you walk around your home with a spring in your step because you're a child of God? Wherever you are, whether it be in the supermarket or walking down the road or you're posting a letter or you're driving the car, do you have the sense of who you actually are?

That you are actually God's person? I don't think many of us do. I think too many of us need to wake up and realize that God would rather see your face than the back of your head.

[34 : 56] And I'm saying that to all the super hard workers in this church. Listen, I love you to bits and I love the fact that you work so very, very hard. But every now and then, God would rather see your face than the back of your head.

I know that you do it all for God. But God would rather you spend time just you and him. And that's really important.

To be able to stand here and listen, I know all of my failures. They're easily pointing, my children can point them out to me whether they realize it or not. God, on every day, where I'm failing.

And it's embarrassing and it's hurtful. And when you realize just, you know, you have those days where you think you've done a good job. And then the next day cancels every day out previous that you thought you'd done a good job.

It's just, my word, have I not changed at all? You know, if you're married, it doesn't take too long to realize that you're not perfect.

[35 : 58] You know, the first year, you're still trying to convince the other person you are. In fact, the first year, you're still living as though you're single. And you're not quite used to, we're no longer two but one.

And these things kick in. There's nothing like marriage to point out just how bad you are and how good you are.

The relationship does that. But you have God's approval. So, Paul prays, thanking God for these people. Thanking God for them.

Thanking God for what God has done for them. That God has chosen them. That God has saved them. That God has sealed them.

And these people are saved into Christ and therefore into the church. There is no Christianity independent of the church. Because Christ is the head of his church, which is the body of Christ.

[37 : 00] And so, all of Christianity exists within the church. When a person is saved, they're saved into the body of Christ. They're not only saved into Christ, they're saved into the body of Christ.

Christ. And therefore, what we have here is the result of those whom God has saved. If indeed, you have repented and believed.

And I believe many of you are that I know. And that's good. That one day, that who we are today, that we're always going to know each other from here on in.

That we're always going to be friends. We're always going to be brothers and sisters. We're going to be even better brothers and sisters in glory. We're never going to be apart. I'm joking.

I just hope there's separate rooms. Well, here's the exhortation. The exhortation is this. Don't be afraid of what God has done.

[38 : 00] And if you truly believe that salvation is by grace alone, then what you believe is this. That you are chosen by God. God. Saved by the Son.

And sealed with the Spirit. Chosen by God. Saved by the Son. And sealed with the Spirit. And what that means is this.

That you are instantly recognizable. That the work of God in the life of a person is instantly recognizable.

And the reason why it's instantly recognizable is because it stands in clear distinction to the work of man. The reason we can point out what salvation looks like is because it's God's work, not man's work.

This is why Paul goes on to say in chapter 2, you have been saved by grace through faith, not of your own doing. He's drawing attention to the clear distinctiveness of the work of God in the life of a person.

[39 : 07] And this is why you look different. This is why you are different. This is why you will sit in a building with different people who are different from you.

Because it is the distinct work of God. And here's the thing. That this distinct work of God is continuing to happen.

That the great commission to go out and tell every man, woman, boy and girl what God has done. That whoever believes. I mean, isn't that the call?

That whosoever believes shall not perish but have eternal life. Isn't that how God makes known his work and his accomplishment to the world?

So we remember that the purpose of salvation is not to make believers. The purpose of salvation is not to stop people going to hell. The purpose of salvation is so that people would praise God.

[40 : 08] The purpose of salvation is so that people would praise God as they recognize that salvation is by grace alone. By grace alone in God choosing you.

By grace alone by Christ saving you. By grace alone in the spirit sealing you. That's salvation by grace. Amen.

Amen.