

In Him

Ephesians 1:9-12

John 14:1-14

John 14:15-31

Psalm 16

Open your bibles with me this morning to Ephesians chapter 1. That's right, we are still in chapter 1, there is so much here to unpack so we are just taking our time as we work our way through the verses. Over the past few weeks as we have looked at the first few verses of this chapter we established a few very important things that I just want to sum up quickly this morning. But before we do that, let us go ahead and read starting in verse 1, to 14.

As was pointed out a few weeks ago, Paul establishes his authority in the writing of this book by identifying himself as an Apostle, so we, as the readers of this letter may know the weight and validity of the things of which he will be writing. And we can also determine from the letter that he is writing to the saints, to the believers to the churches in Ephesus. So we can also determine that this letter is going to be rich in theological content for the assumption is that the readers, being believers will have the spirit to help discern the things that Paul is writing. We also talked about the concept of eternity and sovereignty and how we as humans have a very limited understanding of those concepts. But that is where the holy spirit comes in, that is where faith comes in, for though we may not fully grasp the inner workings of these things, God has spoken to us through his Apostle Paul in this letter speaking of these things so we should be listening up as we seek to understand, to learn, and to grow more in Christ.

The next important take away from the first few verses is the fact that God calls individuals, not corporations. God has a justified holy people, who make up his holy church, the eternal body of believers who are made up of saints throughout all of time, from all over the world. This calling into the faith that is mentioned by Paul, is a perfect, effectual calling, drawing us personally and individually into this corporate nation of believers who are in Christ, and Paul has given us a sneak peak into the inner workings of that reality here in this letter. There are some very profound statements found here in this letter pointing to the reality of God's sovereignty. One of them is verse 4, "Just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world" God knew you before the world was, and if you are here today a believer in Christ, know that this was no accident or coincidence. It was the working of God in his sovereign will to show you grace and mercy, to open your heart and mind to the sinful rebellion you were locked into, and to free you from those things by his blood. There is no chance, there is no if, there is only the certainty of God through the intimate, and personal calling of his people. We don't know who God has chosen to reveal himself to, and we don't know when, so as his children it is our reasonable service to be a witness to this hope so that others may hear and believe.

God in his wisdom, has chosen that his gospel message be delivered through his children, it is by the hearing of the word that God works conviction in the hearts and minds of individuals. So, we are to proclaim it openly to the world, because we do not know whom God has prepared to hear it and respond. As Paul points out, God has his people, his people he has known before the foundation of the world. Unlike us, God exists outside of time, a concept we can barely grasp because time is such a part of our own lives, everything for us is linear, a forward movement leaving behind that which was.

But God is eternal, in fact, he is the one who created time itself so he as the creator is not bound to the rules and regulations he set forth for us his created beings. So we must understand this profound statements like the one Paul makes in verse 4, through our understanding of God as the sovereign one in whom all things exist, and without whom would be nothing. So when he says, I knew you before the foundation of the world...we have no grounds to argue against that, as much as it flies in the face of our own desire to be the masters of our own lives, the reality is we are held in God's hands, and we are his created beings to do with as he pleases. And he has chosen, for his own purpose to reveal himself to some as Paul writes in verse 9. "Having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself." Without God's revealing of his purpose and will in us, we would not know him. To the world, the will of God is a mystery, one that most could care little about as they go about their daily lives. But to us, whom God has chosen out of the world, that mystery has been revealed, the mystery of redemption, of his grace, and of his mercy that we should be partakers of it, simply because God has determined it to be so.

We have no way of knowing, or understanding why God would chose some and not others, but we know that this is a reality for he has revealed this mystery to us. So many look at this understanding that God would chose some, and not others as offensive or that God is unloving to let any perish. But the reality is the fact that God has saved any is a great mercy. The arguments against this idea of God's sovereignty in salvation stem from a misunderstanding of mankind's position before God. There is a presupposition that mankind is basically good, therefore in a sense God owes salvation. But that is not only a misconception, that is flat out wrong. Mankind is lost in sin, and without God's personal intervention we would happily continue on our path to damnation. This rebellion, and sinful arrogance that is a part of each and every person only perpetuates our lost condition even more. By that I mean, the great deception of mankind is that he thinks that he is good, that he thinks he doesn't need a savior, that he believes as long as my good outweighs my bad God will reward me.

But what did Paul write in Romans? Lets go back to chapter 4, verse 1. "What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness."

So many are working in a debt and wages system, even many believers are still stuck in this cycle as they are looking to the law as their guide, looking to their works instead of simply resting in the reality that we are found justified in the one who was sent, we are found righteous by the blood of Jesus Christ that was shed for us. There is no debt, there is no wage, there is only grace and mercy, and that is given out to whomever God desires, determined simply by the good pleasure of his own will. God intends for us to know and understand his saving purpose, therefore, by the grace given to us we can have knowledge and in site into the mystery of his will, and as we see in verse 10, the will and purpose of all of this is so that God might gather together in one, all things in Christ, that which is in heaven, and on earth. Christ is the center of all, he is the expressed image of God and all things have been put in his hands. We really get a sense of this in this chapter for Paul lays out a bunch of "in him" statements.

Verse 3, We have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, In Christ.

Verse 4, Just as he chose us In Him before the foundation of the world.

Verse 7, In Him we have redemption through his blood according to the riches of his Grace.

Verse 9, revealing to us the mystery of his will which he has purposed In Himself.

Verse 10, That he may gather all things which are in heaven and on earth In Him

Verse 11, In Him we have an inheritance, predestined according to him who works all things according to His will.

Verse 12, That we who trust In Christ are to the praise of his glory.

Verse 13, In Him, you also trusted after hearing the word of truth, in him who you are sealed with the promise of the holy spirit.

Verse 19, So that we may know his exceedingly great power toward us who believe which he worked In Christ when he raised him from the dead.

There are 9 instances in this chapter alone pointing to all things being In Christ, Gods saving purpose, planned from all eternity, had the united of all things in heaven and on earth in Christ as the final goal. This mystery has been revealed to us, that Jesus is the only way as he told his disciples. Which we read this morning in John chapter 14, “Thomas said to him, Lord, we do not know where you are going, and how can we know the way? Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one can come to the father except through me.” There are those who claim a belief in God, but they deny his son, they deny the one whom God has put all things under his feet, they deny the one in whom God is uniting all things, a faith that denies Christ, is a faith that denies God's salvation work. To put simply, without Christ, you are lost in your sins and destined for hell. Without the atoning work of the Son of God sent to be that mediator on your behalf, there is no salvation, there is no redemption, there is no being right before God.

Even Abraham believed in the promised one to come, not having the evidences, the knowledge, and the revelation that we have today Abraham believed that God would send one who would bring about the redemption of mankind, because God promised him that he would do so through the giving of a son. So there is no excuse, all of the evidences are there, the mystery of God has been revealed through his Son, but in spiritual blindness, and darkness mankind rejects the one who was sent. And even goes to the extent of attempting to believe in God while rejecting his son. This is a great delusion, and the work of Satan, that so many can be so close and yet not attain. That is why salvation must be a work of God who sovereignty works in the lives of his children, drawing them to himself. Awakening them from the slumber and darkness of our lives, to be full of his grace, mercy and hope. Continuing in chapter 14 of John, Philip said, ' Lord, show us the father, and it is sufficient for us.' Jesus said to him, Have I been with yo so long and yet you have not known me? He who has seen me has seen the father, so how can you say, Show us the father?

The centrality, the importance of Christ is paramount to belief and faith. The mystery of God has been revealed through his Son, and by his Son we may see, and know the father. There is no faith outside of Christ, there is no redemption outside of Christ, there is no hope, outside of Christ for God has chosen to put all things in his care and it is only through him that we may find the mercy and grace to believe. The statement Paul makes in verse 10 points to the sovereign reality of God in salvation, building upon the statement in verse 4, that God has chose us before the foundation of the world, so that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather in one all things in Christ.

If you are God's if you are one of these chosen before the foundation of the world, your time of salvation, that time of turning from your sinful rebellion to a glorious worship of God through Jesus, was also predetermined to occur at a specific time and place, with all circumstances surrounding it ordained to bring you to that moment. Think of how profound that is, God has orchestrated events in your life to draw you to him, and he is still doing the same today, the events, trials, and things in your life now are designed to continue to draw you to him, to strip away all power and control you believe you have so that you can rest solely, and completely and only on him. And it is there that we find peace, when we rest completely upon God, understanding that whatever our situation may be at the time it is God working to draw us closer to him. With the end goal as stated in verse 10, to gather together in one, all things in Christ. We are living in the “gathering state” right now, God is actively working to draw all things toward himself until that great day of his return when all shall see him, the day that Paul talked about in his letter to the Romans, that all of nature groans, waiting for that revelation, waiting for the culmination of God's purpose on earth.

Drawing all things to himself, in which we as his children are inheritors of his promise, inheritors of a better land, no longer will be travelers through this weary world, but we will one day be home in the presence of our Lord and Savior. That is the end goal, that all whom has been predestined shall gather together in the heavenly places to live forever in the presence of our creator and father. But that day is not yet, and we do not know when they day may be, in may be 100's or 1000's or 10,000 years from now, but all those who have, and will die who are his, will be raised up in that last day, there will be none of Gods people left out, or missing from that final role call. There should be great peace found in the reality of God's predestinating saving grace, for there is no chance, there is no maybe, there is only certainty and guarantees as the inheritors of that promise.

And as Paul writes in verse 12, in which we close this morning. “That we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of his glory.” That is why God has and is doing what he is doing, it is the praise of his glory. Our salvation, is to the praise of his glory, our redemption, is to the praise of his glory, our lives in which we are to reflect the realities of God's love in us, is to the praise of his glory. All things are gathered together in him, to the praise of his glory. What a sweet place to live, in the glory of God. To be recipients of his grace, to be the objects of his mercy, there is no greater place to be, there is no greater rest then to rest in him through all things. And that should be our mantra as believers, in all things, to the praise of his glory. In trials and tribulations, not my will Lord, but yours be done, to the praise of your glory. In times of blessing and abundance, being thankful for the provision of the Lord, to the praise of his glory. In all things, giving thanks knowing that all things come from the Lord who loves us, who is working to draw us closer to him, who provides for us in all things, and in whom we have inherited all things.