



EPHESIANS

LIVING THE NEW CREATION STORY

Ephesians Resources



Challenge:

Read Ephesians EVERY DAY

Read Ephesians in one sitting

Memorize Ephesians ch. 1 (particularly 20-23)

Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ. For he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in love before him.

Ephesians 1:3-4, CSB

He predestined us to be adopted as sons through
Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good
pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace
that he lavished on us in the Beloved One.

Ephesians 1:5, CSB

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he richly poured out on us with all wisdom and understanding.

Ephesians 1:7-8, CSB

He made known to us the mystery of his will,
according to his good pleasure that he purposed in
Christ as a plan for the right time—to bring
everything together in Christ, both things in heaven
and things on earth in him.

Ephesians 1:9-10, CSB

In him we have also received an inheritance, because we were predestined according to the plan of the one who works out everything in agreement with the purpose of his will, so that we who had already put our hope in Christ might bring praise to his glory.

Ephesians 1:11-12, CSB

In him you also were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and when you believed. The Holy Spirit is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of the possession, to the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 1:13-14, CSB

“Ephesians is not a doctrinal treatise in the scholastic sense of that term. It is, rather, a drama in which Paul portrays the powerful, reality-altering, cosmos-transforming acts of God in Christ to redeem God's world and save God's people for the glory of his name.”

Timothy Gombis, PhD. (The Drama of Ephesians)

What is the Meaning of life?

What is our Purpose?



“Sometimes I’ll start a sentence and I don’t even know where it’s going. I just hope I find it along the way.”

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Ephesians 1:3-4, CSB

In the “Heavens”?

In Him?

But the most prominent function of the "in Christ" language in this passage is to indicate the reality that believers have been incorporated into Christ. The people of God are not merely loved by God or saved by God; we are brought into God. God has done something outrageous to us, bringing us into Christ so that we now have a completely new location on the cosmic map. ... We are no longer in the realm dominated by the fallen powers, subject to their enslaving power. We are now "in Christ," which becomes our fundamental identity, opening up for us an entirely new range of options for behavior, relationships, patterns of thought and speech and the future trajectory of our lives.

- Timothy Gombis

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Ephesians 1:9-10, CSB

God always had in mind that one day heaven and earth, the twin halves of the original good creation, would be brought together into one, summing up all things in the Messiah, the truly human one. [...] The creator God is not allowing creation to fall apart.

- N.T. Wright

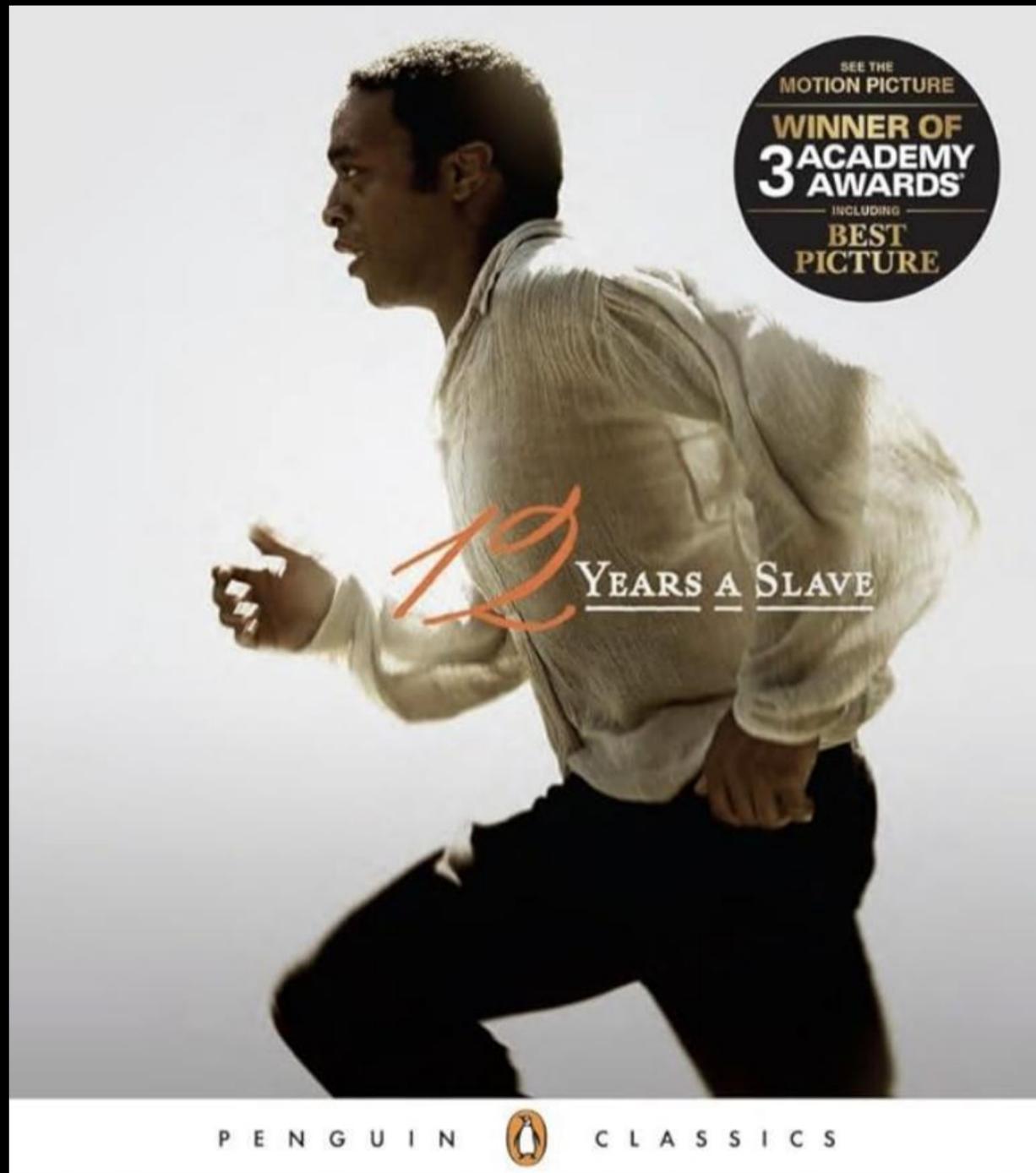
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Ephesians 1:13-14, CSB

Sealed with the Spirit



SOLOMON NORTHUP

Twelve Years a Slave

Foreword by STEVE McQUEEN

Introduction by IRA BERLIN

Afterword by HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR.

BLESSED...

Chosen for Mission (to receive and reflect God's presence)

Adopted (into the family of the King)

Redeemed through his Blood

Inheritance

Sealed with the Spirit
(as the first installment of New Creation)

All the Activity
of GOD (Father, Son, Spirit)

“This is the ultimate aim of humanity—to live for the praise of God, to let all we are and all we do be doxology, a giving of glory to God.”

- Ben Witherington

Outline

Dismiss Kids

Announcements:

1. Baptisms - Easter Sunday

Series Intro:

1. We are, as a community, going to walk through the book of Ephesians for the next nine weeks.
2. Now, Ephesians is a book we could spend nine years going through slowly, turning over every rock and examining in detail every line.
3. Even in preparing the sermon for this section, I was struggling because it is so deep with dense, rich theology!
4. But my desire is that this would open our eyes to the over-arching story of Ephesians that Paul is giving us - a story that is OUR story we are invited to live out!
5. QR Code - document with book recommendations, video recommendations, and a reading and memory verse challenge plan
6. **SLIDE** - Challenge

[Read Text] - Ephesians 1:3-14

SLIDE - ³Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ. ⁴For he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in love before him. ⁵He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace that he lavished on us in the Beloved One.

⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸that he richly poured out on us with all wisdom and understanding. ⁹He made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he purposed in Christ ¹⁰as a plan for the right time—to bring everything together in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth in him.

¹¹In him we have also received an inheritance, because we were predestined according to the plan of the one who works out everything in agreement with the purpose of his will, ¹²so that we who had already put our hope in Christ might bring praise to his glory.

¹³In him you also were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and when you believed. ¹⁴The Holy Spirit is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of the possession, to the praise of his glory.

[Christian Standard Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2020), Eph 1:3–14.

Hook -

1. [story of hanging out with Cody in Seattle - discussion about the absence of a shared story of meaning in society - which thus produces competing stories of nationalism and progressivism void of God]

Tension:

1. **SLIDE** - What is our purpose? What is the meaning of life?

Transition into the text:

1.

Bible: Eph. 1:3-14

1. Preliminary things to know
 - a. One sentence in the GK - 202 word sentence - longest in the NT by a longshot!
 - b. One long run-on sentence (Paul would have been docked points in English Lit. Class) -
 - i. **SLIDE** - THE OFFICE MICHAEL SCOTT REFERENCE
 - c. "A clumsy sentence" - one scholar
 - d. "the most monstrous sentence conglomeration ... I have ever met in the Greek language." - one scholar
 - e. It feels like words just flow out of Paul - like he cannot help it!
 - f. But is there intentionality to this "monstrous sentence"?
 - g. Well, we're going to see...
2. [Exposition] - Before we dive into the fascinating details of this text
 - a. I want to preface our time with this:
 - i. Paul is more Jewish than we often imagine him to be
 - ii. His view of the world is Jewish - but he reorients his vision Jesus as the fulfillment of and new chapter to Israel's story
 - iii. So, as we explore this, I'll be making comments on how this connects with Israel's story, which helps us make sense of our story right here, right now.
 - b. ³ Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has **blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ.**
 - i. First, a couple of preliminary definitions
 1. **SLIDE** - The Heavens - Define
 - a. Not a three-tier vision (hell, earth, heaven)
 - b. 1. Heavens as sky, 2. heaven as where God is and where Jesus is at God's right hand, and where the saints are, 3. Heaven realm where there is a cosmic struggle between light and the darkness (God and the forces of darkness)
 2. **SLIDE** - "In Him"
 - a. I've been trying to wrap my head around this
 - b. This is not a "physical thing" - I literally am in the body of Jesus like red blood cells
 - i. But at a level, we are - Paul is going to carry this theme of believers being the BODY OF CHRIST - THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF JESUS BY THE SPIRIT OF JESUS
 - c. This feels a little abstract and in the clouds - but what does this mean for us right now in 2026 in Belgrade, MT?



- i. **SLIDE** - But the most prominent function of the "in Christ" language in this passage is to indicate the reality that believers have been incorporated into Christ. The people of God are not merely loved by God or saved by God; we are brought into God. God has done something outrageous to us, bringing us into Christ so that we now have a completely new location on the cosmic map. ...We are no longer in the realm dominated by the fallen powers, subject to their enslaving power. We are now "in Christ," which becomes our fundamental identity, opening up for us an entirely new range of options for behavior, relationships, patterns of thought and speech and the future trajectory of our lives. - Gombis, 69
 - ii. Belonging. We belong to HIM and to one another IN HIM!
 - iii. Incorporated into Christ
 - iv. Participation (baptism - participating in the death of Jesus in the past and participating in his resurrection in the past as we look ahead to our death and resurrection in the future).
 - v. Identity.
 - vi. Union.
 - 1. All of the benefits in Christ are ours...
 - a. Paul is going to elaborate on those benefits...
 - b. What are they?
 - c. Look at v. 4!
- c. ⁴ For he **chose us in him**, before the foundation of the world, to be **holy and blameless in love before him**. ⁵ He predestined us to be **adopted as sons through Jesus Christ for himself**, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace that he lavished on us in the Beloved One (Jesus is the beloved one - as the Father declares at his baptism when he says "this is my beloved son").
- i. This brings about a major theological debate: does God chose us or do we choose him for our salvation?!
 - 1. This is an inadequate summary of the discussion here
 - 2. If you want to go deeper, I'd love to discuss this further
 - 3. For now, Let's reframe this with the story of Israel in mind
 - 4. These words - Chosen + Election - Deeply connected with Israel's story

- a. Individualistic vision - like what Frankl saw as one soldier lazily used his finger to determine the fate of the Jews in the concentration camp (gas chamber or work)
 - b. But this election of Israel is Corporate, not individual
 - c. Israel was the elect one, chosen for a purpose to be God's servant, that all nations might worship God
 - i. "God chooses Israel with the aim that the relationship between God and the people of Israel is to be so beautiful, fascinating, and compelling that it will draw all of the nations to God." Stephen E. Fowl, *Ephesians: A Commentary*
 - ii. Holy and blameless - This is Priesthood language - Chosen to be in His presence and reflect his presence to the world, that the whole world would be drawn to God
 - 1. Holy and blameless - CHARGED with language of Torah (particularly Leviticus)
 - a. Israel was to be a priestly nation
 - b. Worshiping God alone and extending the worship of God
 - 2. Chosen for mission - not simply an eternal fate
 - 3. How did they do?
 - 4. Not good.
 - 5. Enter Jesus.
 - d. Christ is now the Elect One, the chosen one.
 - e. We are IN CHRIST
 - f. We in Christ are then elect, chosen for a purpose - as Israel was and Christ was - to be God's servant and the means by which God's purposes for the world are brought forward.
 - g. I wish we could continue but if this has peaked your interest or stirred up more question, please, let's talk further about this! (Let's wrestle with the texts together)
 - h. But I want to move on from "chosen" to the next word expressing the benefits and blessings of being in Christ...
5. Adopted as sons through Jesus Christ
- a. Why the exclusively male language?
 - i. Sons of God - a statement of royalty in the Roman world (that was far more patriarchal than the early Church)
 - ii. Caesar Augustus declared himself the Son of God - which was his declaration of his right to rule over all the known world



1. Augustus was ADOPTED by Julius Caesar - his uncle - meaning, he was CHOSEN to be his successor...
2. The Romans idea of adoption - political purposes to extend the family line and retain power within the family
- iii. So this word, ADOPTED AS SONS...
 1. Meant that we - men AND WOMEN - are brought into the family of the King, that we may co-rule all of creation under the rule of God like it was always meant to be in the beginning! (Image of God - Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky)
 2. What was unique in the early church was that the rights of sonship were extended to women.
- b. The OT talks about Israel as God's Son.
 - i. "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son." Hosea 11:1, NIV
 - ii. God calls out of Egypt his people who He adopts and calls His Son
 - iii. Now, in Christ, God's true SON, we are adopted into the family of God.
 - iv. But hold onto that story of Israel being brought out of Egypt - and look at v. 7.
- d. ⁷ In **him we have redemption** through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸ that he richly poured out on us with all wisdom and understanding.
 - i. Church, this is an echo of Israel's story of being redeemed from Egypt by the blood of the lamb without blemish
 - ii. But instead of being enslaved to Egypt, we were enslaved to Sin.
 - iii. This conveys the image of bondage + debt that we cannot get out of - a mess of our own doing because of our propensity to look out for ourselves at the expense of others in great and small ways
 - iv. Forgiveness of the mess we have made is made available by Jesus, the innocent one, taking responsibility for our mess - for he was the only one who could sort our mess out and get us out.
 - v. But this is not a message of "Jesus died for your sins so that you can do whatever you want in the present before leaving earth to go to heaven."
 - vi. NO!
 - vii. Look at the next verse!
- e. ⁹ He made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he purposed in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the right time—to **bring everything together in Christ**, both things in heaven and things on earth in him.

- i. Far from escaping earth to go to heaven, God's will - a mystery that is now revealed in Christ - was to bring heaven and earth together - God's glorious presence and our presence on earth - together in Christ!
 - ii. **SLIDE** - God always had in mind that one day heaven and earth, the twin halves of the original good creation, would be brought together into one, summing up all things in the Messiah, the truly human one. [...] The creator God is not allowing creation to fall apart. - N.T. Wright
 - iii. This is what we look forward to: A renewed creation under the reign of Jesus free from the curse of sin and death
 - iv. The earth is the Lord's (as Psalm 24 says) - and everything that is Christ's is ours if we are in HIM
 - v. MEANING...
- f. ¹¹ **In him we have also received an inheritance**, because we were predestined according to the plan of the one who works out everything in agreement with the purpose of his will, ¹² so that we who had already put our hope in Christ might bring praise to his glory.
- i. What's this about an inheritance?
 1. Let's talk about how this connects with the story of Israel
 2. Israel was liberated from Egypt
 - a. by the blood of the lamb,
 - b. they have the dwelling of God in their midst via the Tabernacle,
 - c. followed the presence of God by the pillar of cloud and fire,
 - d. into their promised inheritance (the Promised land)
 3. So we are liberated from slavery to Sin and Death
 - a. by the blood of the True Lamb of God,
 - b. God dwells in us by the Spirit of God (the new temple/tabernacle)
 - c. AND (as Israel followed God via the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night) so we follow God by the Spirit
 - d. into our future inheritance that is the New Creation (Heaven and Earth re-united) - creation liberated from Sin and Death.
 - ii. Again, the story is not about escape from earth into heaven, but renewal of earth with the union with heaven - the presence of God
 - iii. And guess what!
 - iv. There's a foretaste of that future inheritance of new creation for us who are in Jesus a new creation
- g. ¹³ **In him you also were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit** when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and when you believed. ¹⁴ The Holy Spirit is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of the possession, to the praise of his glory.
- i. By the Holy Spirit - we are New Creation - we are made new - and this is a foretaste of what God is going to do for all of creation.



- ii. Therefore, we are to be together a working model of God's new creation vision (as Wright talks about)
- iii. This is the down payment, the first installment, of the glorious act of grace God is going to do for the whole world.
- iv. But I want you to notice this phrase in particular this morning...
 - 1. **SLIDE** - Sealed with the Spirit
 - a. Look back at v. 7 - Once owned by Sin, now redeemed/repossessed, owned by Christ by his own blood that was shed
 - i. We Americans don't like the language of being "owned."
 - ii. We want freedom and autonomy. We want to be owned by no one or nothing.
 - iii. But that's not the deal.
 - 1. We are all owned by something - something is the master of our life
 - 2. Even "freedom and autonomy" are owners - and they are actually vicious owners.
 - 2. But here's the Gospel - You are HIS
 - a. There is NO BETTER OWNER OVER YOUR LIFE THAN JESUS
 - b. Some of you need to hear this this morning: if you are in Christ, you are HIS!
 - i. No matter what comes your way, you are HIS.
 - c. Some of you may be wondering, well, how do I know if I am His?
 - i. Have you been baptized?
 - ii. Have you lost confidence and hope in the things of this world or yourself, and re-oriented your confidence and hope, thus swearing allegiance to Jesus?
 - iii. Have you noticed the new creation evidence of the Holy Spirit's activity in your life to form you more into the likeness of Jesus?
 - 1. Someone who walks in peace, love, joy - even toward your enemies or those you do not enjoy being around.
 - iv. Additionally, here's my encouragement for you: instead of placing confidence in your own improvement, your own goodness, place all of your confidence in Jesus -
 - v. When it comes to belonging to Jesus - instead of, Oh I prayed that prayer that one time, or I felt close to God during a particular season of my life, -



instead, let the words "I belong to HIM, I am HIS" sink into the depths of your soul

- vi. In the ancient world, a wax seal was used to identify possession
- vii. The Holy Spirit is the seal of identification that Jesus place on us, declaring "YOU ARE MINE"
- d. Some of you may be feeling anxious about death and where you're at with God
 - i. Friends, GOOD NEWS: In HIM, you are sealed by the promised Holy Spirit - Jesus looks at you and declares "You are MINE!"
 - ii. Imagine what spending a few moments each day, saying to yourself, "I belong to Jesus - I am sealed by the Holy Spirit." or praying, "Jesus, I am yours."
 - iii. Rest in that identity - You are sealed by the Spirit, declaring that in Christ you belong to God.
 - iv. **SLIDE** - 12 years a slave illustration
 - 1. Solomon Northup - A free black man in 1841 - Drugged and delivered into Slavery
 - 2. Re-named "Platt" - given a new identity (a slave, owned by slave owners)
 - 3. He is a slave for 12 years
 - 4. He tries to show that he has illegally been brought into slavery
 - 5. But to no avail for 12 years...until one day...
 - 6. one day, a sheriff comes up to him in a field that he is working in and asks him who he really is.
 - 7. Slave owner says "He is mine"
 - 8. His friend, Mr. Parker, says, "I have papers saying he is free! I dare you to fight this in court."
 - a. Slave owner yaps at Solomon telling him, You are mine. Where do you think you are going?
 - b. Mr. Parker tells Solomon, "ignore him."
- e. Church, you were once enslaved to the power of Sin and Death.



- i. Unlike Solomon Northrup, this was on us. We were deceived and continue to be deceived by the enticing power of Sin.
- ii. But Christ has brought you back - He redeemed/re-possessed YOU
- iii. And to prove this, He has sealed you with His Spirit
- iv. Jesus has the legal papers - You are FREE from Sin. You are His!
- v. The world, our sin-propensity, and the forces of evil may tell us otherwise,
- vi. But we are to ignore these voices, and cling to Jesus and hear his voice: "Pay no attention to those voices. You are MINE."

Main Idea:

1. I cannot help but sense these words flow out of Paul's heart - like poetry rooted in reality, the true story of life and freedom made available in Christ.
2. Unlike Michael Scott who starts a sentence and doesn't know where it is going end up, Paul is very intentional with this 202-word sentence.
3. To summarize, this overflow of praise with rich theology in every word, declares the wonders of the blessings available when we are IN Christ
 - a. Meaning, when we say, "Jesus, I am yours." Jesus responds, "And everything I have is yours."
 - b. What is this? Material blessing?
 - c. No...though there are material blessings God bestows on us...this is not what Paul has in mind...
 - d. it is this: That in Christ we are ...
 - i. **SLIDE** - Blessed
 - a. Chosen
 - b. Adopted
 - c. Redeemed through his Blood
 - d. We have an Inheritance
 - e. Sealed with the Spirit
 - ii. **AMAZING!** But, what now?
 - e. I want you to notice one more thing about the text:
 - i. **SLIDE** - This is all the activity of God
 1. But this is not just God the Father. This is the Trinitarian GOD at play here
 2. This is the trinitarian GOD who does everything for us - to invite us into the overflow of the life and love of the God-Fellowship that is the Trinity (the Father, Son, and Spirit - delighting in and loving



one another - and creation being an overflow and sharing of that divine-love-fellowship)

3. Part of the weakness of many churches at the beginning of the twenty-first century is that our doxology [worship through songs of praise] is not trinitarian enough. - Marva Dawn
 - ii. This is praise of the TRINITARIAN activity of God
 - iii. But what now? What is our place in this? If God is active, what are we?
 1. Our activity is to receive and to respond - To the praise of His Glory
 2. **SLIDE** - This is the ultimate aim of humanity—to live for the praise of God, to let all we are and all we do be doxology, a giving of glory to God. - Ben Witherington
- f. This is the story of God and all God has done for us in Christ Jesus.
- g. And now, we live to adore God and God's goodness and all his uncountless blessings, both material on earth but especially the blessings in the spiritual realm of our chosenness for mission, adoption into the royal family, redemption from the powers of sin/death, and our being sealed by the Spirit as a first installment of the glory to come in the restoration of all things - our inheritance
- h. And we live to draw near in relationship with God and reflect to others the goodness of God - to the praise of his glory.

Return to Hook:

1. As I was wrapping up my time with Cody, he was talking about our call to be priests - to reflect the goodness, love and wisdom of God to the world, and to contend on behalf of the world for the peace and goodness of God...
2. And I thought about the essence of this passage - embedded in it is a story, and the call is to respond in praise and reflect His glory.

Final Statement - Call to Repentance and Baptism (Easter)

Let's pray

