

Blake Gillen
Cornerstone Bible Church
September 21, 2022

When the Plan of Salvation Comes Home
Ephesians 1:1-14

Thank you for being here tonight. The title for our lesson tonight is When the Plan of Salvation Comes Home. The first question I want to ask tonight is - Why are we doing this class on Wednesday nights? I don't mean that like, why are we here when we could be doing other things. I know you could be doing other things. My question is more - why do we need more Bible teaching? Don't we get enough?

Obviously, there are no shortages of opportunities for adults to grow in Christ here at Cornerstone. We receive top quality preaching on Sunday mornings from Kirk in Romans right now, which is the greatest letter ever written. There are small groups and men's studies and women's studies throughout the week. Go to panera bread on a day that ends in Y and you will usually find saints from Cornerstone encouraging one another over a sandwich or some soup. Why one more class on Wednesday nights?

My goal in this mid-week class or other mid week adult classes is to look at specific areas of the Christian life where we can all do a little better for the glory of God. I want these mid week classes to feel more like a rifle. I want us to put specific areas of the Christian life in the crosshairs.

I grew up in Texas and lived in Kansas for ten years so I do have a little history with guns and killing animals. The goal of this mid week class is to focus on a major area of the Christian life and study God's Word so we can do a little better in this area for the glory of God - The area of the Christian life we want to zoom in

on is the home - marriage and family and this would obviously include singles and widow's as well.

How are you doing in your home when it comes to glorifying God? Maybe a better question is, "How do you know how you are doing in your home?" Is there an objective standard we can use to determine how we are doing? Yes. God's Word lays out very clear instructions on how to please God in our homes. There's a role in the Bible for everyone in every home - husbands and wives and children and singles and widows. No one is left out. **Ephesians 5:22-6:4 is a section in Paul's letter to the Ephesians that shows us how to live as wives and husbands and father's and children so we can know how we are doing and where we need to change.**

But before we get to that section in Ephesians 5:22-33 I want us to spend a few weeks working back through the letter. I want to step back and get a running head start. There are some basic questions that need to be answered before we look at our roles in the home:

There are three questions Paul answers in Ephesians that will help us:

1. **Am I saved?**

The part of the letter about salvation comes before the part in the letter about the family. Salvation is where Paul starts the letter. Paul knows that you and I cannot be who God wants us to be in the flesh. We need the Savior and we need the Holy Spirit.

The first three chapters lay out the glorious riches of our salvation. Ephesians 1-3 describe the church's calling and Ephesians 4-6 describe the church's conduct. Paul starts his letter praising God for the spiritual blessings that He has given us in Christ. That's what we will close our time with tonight. Then Paul

prays for the church to receive wisdom and revelation from God to know God better, including the power that we have in Christ. The same power God used to raise Christ from the dead resides in us. This is what Paul does throughout Ephesians - he writes truth and then he stops to pray. **His prayers are based on what he writes.** Paul knew what he could do and what only God can do. Paul can write truth but only God can make it effective in our hearts. Paul writes truth and then he asks God to help us understand it.

In Ephesians 2, Paul describes our new position in Christ. Paul reminds us in chapter 2 of our pre-conversion condition and it's not pretty. Ephesians 2:1-3 reminds us that prior to our salvation we weren't in very good shape spiritually. We were spiritually dead - dead in trespassers and sins, deceived by the devil, doing the desires of our flesh and mind and were by nature objects of wrath.

What changed us? Who made us different than the world around us? **Two words in Ephesians 2:4 - But God.** God's grace took us from being dead in sin and made us alive together with Christ. *Now we are still a piece of work, but we are God's piece of work.* Ephesians 2:10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." We are not saved by good works, but we are saved for good works.

We are not only made new in Christ individually. **We are also made new in Christ corporately.** To be saved is to be brought into a new union with Christ and with all those who share in this union. This is Ephesians 2:11-22. This is the church. In Ephesians 2:11-22 Paul explains how Jews and Gentiles are all part of one body. Paul states the truth of our union, explains it and provides the results of it.

This is one thing I am very grateful for that I don't think I fully understood when I get saved. **I didn't know that when God saved me He would give me so many amazing brothers and sisters in Christ to follow Him with.** My best

friends are all believers. I wouldn't be where I am without the help of God's family. I am so thankful that growing up in Christ is a community project. We need one another to be who God wants us to be. There are lots of one another that help us grow in Christ.

Then Paul writes about why he willingly suffered to make Christ known. Outside of Christ, I am not sure anyone suffered more than Paul to make the gospel known. In Ephesians 3:1-13 Paul explains why suffering was a privilege.

Suffering was a privilege for Paul because the gospel was so glorious to Paul. These people were troubled by Paul's suffering. He addresses their concerns for him by telling them not to lose heart over what he is suffering because it's for their glory.

What is a point I am making? When it comes to the practical areas of the Christian life we need to slow down and tap the breaks. Paul never told anyone what to do first. Paul always told people what God has done for them first. If you're ever struggling obeying a command of Christ slow down and go back and remind yourself what Christ has done for you. What we do flows from what God has done, is doing and will do for us.

There's only 1 command in Ephesians 1-3 - **Remember**. Remember how far off you were when God brought you near through the blood of Christ. That's the only command in the first 3 chapters of Ephesians as Paul reminds these believers all that God has done for them in Christ.

So, the first thing Paul helps us with in Ephesians 1-3 is salvation. **We have to be saved before we can glorify God in our homes.** Paul never assumed salvation and he never exhorted believers to obey apart from salvation.

Then in chapter 4 the main word we see through the rest of the letter is walk. This is the next thing we see in Ephesians before Paul gets to the family. This is the next question we have to answer to be who God wants us to be.

1. Am I saved?

2. **Am I walking worthy of my salvation?**

Ephesians 4:1-16 shows us how to walk worthy, how to balance the scales between our position and our practice. To glorify God our new goal is to bring our practice of the Christian life closer to our position in Christ. Our position is perfect because we are seated with Christ in the heavenly places. **Our practice still has a long way to go.** We will never ever live up to our position in Christ, but we are still told to make every effort to do it. **Every time we take a step in the right direction God is glorified and we mature in Christ.**

As a baby believer I remember being on a bus in California with the soccer team heading to play a game in san diego. I was listening to a sermon and the guy said that every time we know obey Christ in the Spirit God is glorified. Every time? I think that means worship is supposed to be a way of life.

Paul spells out what the worthy walk looks like from Ephesians 4:1 all the way to 6:9. He walks us through the worthy walk. **There are no excuses because the same power that raised Christ from the dead is in us.** To walk worthy of our salvation we need to walk in unity, holiness, love, in the light, and in wisdom. **Paul puts the part about families in the section on walking in wisdom.** The believers needed wisdom to please God in the home and so do we.

The final word that I think helps us think right about Ephesians is warfare.

Ephesians describe our spiritual wealth in Christ, our walk in Christ and then Paul finishes with a sobering reminder. **We're in a war.** Walking worthy won't be a cakewalk. Why? Satan and his cosmic forces are against what God has planned for us in the church. Everyone united to Jesus Christ is in a spiritual battle with rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. That's Ephesians 6:12.

We need to be sober about this, but we don't need to be scared.

Ephesians 6:10-20 is God's plan to help us stand firm against the evil one.

That leads to our third question:

3. Am I aware that Satan opposes my attempt to live for Christ?

Every believer needs God's resources to stand against evil powers. That's what we have. Paul ends the letter explaining what to do - be strong in the Lord, how to do it - put on the whole armor of God and why to do it - Satan has a strategy. Paul finishes the letter asking for prayer to keep boldly and clearly proclaiming the gospel. Why? The gospel is what changed these people.

That's really the flow of the letter. So much more could be said about Ephesians, but I walked you through the letter because ***I want you to be reminded that you that God's plan for the family will be opposed, but God gives every believer everything we need in Christ to be who God wants us to be.*** No matter how wicked our culture is or becomes we are enriched in Christ to keep living for His glory.

Do any of you think it was easy to be a Christian in Ephesus when Paul wrote this letter? No. These believers in Christ were a little flock. They were in the major minority. There was temptation to sin on every street corner. People around them were really good at doing whatever the sinful desires of their flesh and mind came up with. That's who all these people - stay with me here - WERE. Paul reminds us why we're different and how to live each day differently because of our salvation.

No matter how hot Satan turns up the temperature against Christians, God has already given us everything we need to glorify Him no matter what. We can live smack dab in the middle of wickedness and thrive in our relationship with Christ and we can have homes that are filled with holiness and the fruit of joy that comes from doing God's will.

Any thoughts or questions before we look at our first principal tonight on how to glorify God in our homes?

Here's the first principle I want to share with you tonight - To glorify God in your home you need to stay the most excited about who God is and how God has saved you. **To be a blessing in your home keep saturating your soul with who God is and how God has blessed you and keep returning praise to God.**

To be a blessing in your home salvation can never get stale. When salvation gets stale obedience becomes more and more of a challenge. Obedience to Christ flows from being in awe of Christ. This is why we have to begin in the beginning of Ephesians. Maybe you're here and you can remember times when you couldn't wait to worship God. You walked with God in the cool of the day, not exactly like Adam, but you know what I mean. Getting alone with the Lord and praising God was the highlight of your day.

I don't know why but maybe that's changed over time. You still know that worship is what you should be doing but you're struggling with the motivation to keep doing it. I'm not sure there's a better motivation to get back on track than Ephesians 1:1-14. Paul walks us through some very important doctrines here that for various reasons have divided believers in Christ. But that is not why Paul started his letter to the Ephesians this way. He was not trying to be divisive. **He was trying to unite the people of God around the common cause of celebrating their salvation.**

Please turn back to Ephesians 1:1-14 and notice how Paul starts this letter reminding these believers who God is and how God blesses His people:

Notice in Ephesians 1:1-14 how Paul walks believers back through the gospel:

Ephesians 1:1-14

Eph 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus:
2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,
4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love
5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,
6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.
7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,
8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight
9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ

- 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.
- 11 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,
- 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.
- 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,
- 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Three times in these verses Paul reminds us that the entire plan of salvation is about glorifying God. One of my favorite books on marriage is called *Love That Lasts: When Marriage Meets Grace*. In the first chapter the authors ask a very important question, “Does your marriage find its hope in the gospel of grace?” They begin with a reminder that grace is one of those words that we hear often because its important...but then we lose all sense of how important it is because we hear it so often.

These verses are rich. Why? Because they describe the riches of God’s grace. What is God’s grace? Jerry Bridges defines it as “undeserved favor to those who deserve God’s wrath.” We’re reminded here that God’s grace comes to us through the gospel and the gospel is the means by which we receive and experience God’s grace.

God didn’t have to do any of this. He chose to do it. Aren’t you thankful that God has a plan for this broken world? Aren’t you thankful that before God made the world He designed the plan of salvation and which undeserving people would be a part of His plan? In these verses Paul redirects our focus.

I love this description of how God’s grace redirects our focus, “Grace redirects our focus from our guilt to God’s forgiveness, from our failures to Christ’s perfect righteousness, from our total inability to God’s complete sufficiency, from all we feel burdened to do to all Christ has already done on our behalf.” - Gary Ricucci

This reminds us that all God glorifying marriages flow from sound doctrine. Nothing is more important in the Gilliones Home (That's the name of the group text between me and my two older girls) than our theology. Nothing is more important in our families than what we believe about the gospel. This comes first and everything flows from it.

How can these verses help us, especially as it relates to our families? Before we walk through these verses tonight I want to begin sharing a true story I read a while back that really sets the stage for this study on the family from Ephesians. Years ago a new year was beginning at a church and the pastor decided to try something on his church. An experiment. He had been there for a while and so he decided to change something up. He did something he had never done before - **he chose to preach on God's character without giving one word of application.** He knew this was abnormal. He believed that helping people with application is an essential part of preaching. **But he chose to preach on God's greatness without telling the church what to do.**

This is what he wanted to find out - this was the purpose of his experiment as they started a new year together, **"Would the passionate portrayal of the greatness of God in and of itself be enough to meet the needs of people?"** Are you with me so far? Is the greatness of the glory of God enough to meet the needs of God's people?

He did his best to proclaim the greatness of God that morning from Isaiah 6. He proclaimed the majesty of God without telling the people what to do. What he didn't realize as he preached was that there was a family in the church that was really hurting. **The week leading up to that Sunday morning they had discovered that their child was being sexually abused by a close relative.** As you can imagine, it was incredibly traumatic for the family. They were there that Sunday morning and sat under that message. The family listened to that sermon on God's greatness without receiving a word of application. **They just sat there and listened with broken hearts.**

A few weeks later the father stopped the pastor who preached that sermon on the first week of January. He informed the pastor about what had happened and then he said, “These have been the hardest months of our lives. Do you know what has gotten me through? The vision of the greatness of God’s holiness that you gave me the first week of January. **It has been the rock we could stand on.**”

This is what the pastor learned from his experiment - “The greatness and the glory of God are relevant. It does not matter if surveys turn up a list of perceived needs that does not include the supreme greatness of the sovereign God of grace. That is the deepest need. Our people are starving for God...So I am persuaded that the vision of a great God is the linchpin in the life of the church, both in pastoral care and missionary outreach. Our people need to hear God-entranced preaching. They need someone at least once a week, to lift up his voice and magnify the supremacy of God. They need to see the whole panorama of his excellencies.”

I once heard it said that if you preach to hurting people you will always have a congregation.

Do any of you think that there were people who read Ephesians several thousand years ago who were hurting when they received this letter? I think so. What do hurting believers need the most? Hurting people don’t need less of the gospel. They need more of the gospel. They need to know who God is and how God blesses His people.

That’s really the main idea in verses 3-14. After Paul greets the church in the first two verses he spends the next section worshipping God. Paul is in prison when he writes this. Prisons back then were not like holiday inn expresses today - you didn’t wake up with warm cinnamon rolls waiting for you. No. Paul wrote from prison and yet his heart is full of worship. Why? Paul knew who God is and

how blessed he was and how blessed every believer is in Christ. **Paul didn't take the gospel for granted.**

We can't either. Gary Ricucci reminds us again, "When we grasp the depth of God's love revealed in the gospel, when we rest in the joy of God's forgiveness toward us in the gospel, when we experience God's transforming power in us through the gospel, and when we begin to emulate the pattern of humility and obedience we see in the gospel, what a wonderful difference this will make in our lives and marriages. Nothing is more essential to a marriage and nothing brings more hope, than applying the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Look at verse 3. What similar word do you see three times in Ephesians 1:3. This entire section from Ephesians 1:4-14 flows from and explains verse 3. The main idea in this verse is bless or blessed. "Paul uses 'bless' three times in verse 3. Paul reminds us that God is blessed, and He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing." One author writes, "You don't have to be a seminary graduate to understand that when an author uses the same word multiple times, it must be important! That is certainly the case here."

In Ephesians 1:1-14 Paul points us to two very important truths that are foundational for happy homes. These are two things we need to be doing regularly:

1. Worship God for Who God Is - Ephesians 1:3a
2. Worship God for What God Gives - Ephesians 1:3b-14

Paul starts by worshipping God for who God is. Worship in the Bible is always a response to who God is. Notice in verse 3, the apostle Paul, writing with the authority of Christ immediately points us to who God is, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The word blessed is where we get the word eulogy. It means a good word. The eulogy is the part of the funeral where someone stands up and says good things about the person who has died. Paul knew God is the living God and that God is blessed. That's who He is. He's the blessed God. **It means that God is the only One of whom only good things can be said.**

A pastor named David Hegg, who will coming to speak at our marriage conference in November says it this way, "Simply put, God is the only one of whom only good things can be said. In fact, of all those who could be 'eulogized', only God is worthy of the highest and best things that can be said. Going beyond that, if you were able to say all of the good and great things you could think of about God, they still would not measure up to the good and great things that could be said! His goodness and greatness are far above even our greatest attempts to express or even imagine them. Let me put it another way: You and I could never exaggerate God's majesty or His knowledge, His love or any of His divine characteristics. We could never overstate His attributes. Using all of our imagination, and then wrapping it in our finest vocabulary, our declarations about God would still fall way short of the truth about Him in every case. This is what Paul is asserting when he states that God is 'blessed.'"

One interesting thing in verse 3 is the verb tense Paul uses - He says that God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. Has blessed points to the fact that God did all of this in eternity past. Wow. Where are these spiritual blessings found? God has blessed us in Christ. This is Paul's favorite description of a Christian.

On Wednesday morning our men are doing a study of salvation. Next week we will be discussing union with Christ. I'm not sure if you've heard about union with Christ, but it's a really big deal in the Bible. Paul traces every spiritual blessing back to Christ. In the book we are reading the author's remind us:

“Paul says in Ephesians 1:3, our union with Christ is the source of every spiritual blessing we receive—from the Father’s election in eternity past, to the Son’s redemptive life, death, burial, and resurrection, all the way to the glorification of the saints with Christ in heaven. For this reason, the great theologian John Murray called the believer’s union with Christ “the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation.” It is the unifying principle of all soteriology, spanning from eternity past to eternity future.”

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones puts it well: “If you leave out the ‘in Christ,’ you will never have any blessings at all.... Every blessing we enjoy as Christian people comes to us through the Lord Jesus Christ.”

God is blessed

God has blessed us in Christ

God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places

All believers have already been blessed with the positional spiritual blessings that Paul is about to enumerate. We share equally in these blessings because they are all ours *in Christ*. I don’t know if you have a favorite verse or if you need a favorite verse but Ephesians 1:3 is a good one. Especially if you are discouraged. Ephesians 1:3 tells us who God is, when God blessed us, with what God blessed us, where God blessed us and how God blessed us.

Peter reminds suffering Christians of something similar in 1 Peter 1:3-5:

- 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
- 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,

- 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Peter and Paul both remind us that God is blessed and then tell us why we should join them in worshipping God. I think this is helpful for us. Helpful for our homes. The Bible never tells us to praise God without providing reasons to do it. In verse 4 all the way to verse 14, Paul traces our spiritual blessings in Christ. He traces the work of God the Father in verses 4-6, the work of Christ in verses 7-12 and the work of the Holy Spirit in verses 13-14.

Later on Paul is going to describe the unique roles in the home. There is a specific role for the wife and a specific role for the husband. It's not surprising that the roles Paul lays out are under attack today. Before Paul gets to our roles in the home, he reminds us in these verses that each person of the Trinity plays a role in our salvation. Roles don't originate in marriage - They originate in the Godhead.

"The concepts and roles of headship, leadership, subordination, and submission did not originate in a particular culture, period of history, or religious tradition. Defined roles and distinct functions are timeless and divine, because they are part of the order of the Godhead, the Trinity. The persons of the Godhead are one in essence and equal in nature, attributes and perfections, they differ however in role."

That's what we see in Ephesians 1:4-14. Paul starts praising God the Father for blessing us with election. Election is an astonishing blessing, for it has to do with God's loving choice of certain individuals to be His own. It is not dependent on human faith or deeds (Rm 9:10-13), since election happens before the foundation of the world.

The purpose of our election is that we would be holy and blameless. He chose us to be holy and blameless and He makes us holy and blameless through the work of His Son. Another blessing is predestination. We are included in His purpose. His plan is our adoption. His motivation is love. All of these blessings

are the results of His grace and motivate our worship. Notice the end of verse 6, “to the praise of the glory of His grace.”

That’s how Paul ends each of these sections on the role of the Father and the Son and the Spirit. To the praise of His glory.

Then, beginning in verse 7-10 Paul reminds us what God’s plan is. How the plan happens in time. Notice in verse 10 he writes about the plan for the fullness of time. God’s will pertains to God’s plan and through God’s plan we have redemption. All of our trespasses are forgiven by Christ. It’s clear in these verses that Jesus, the Messiah, is the focus of history. Jesus is the focal point of God’s plan and the One in and through whom God restores harmony to all creation.

In Christ we have an inheritance. Literally we are made His inheritance. At the end of verse 11 notice how many things God works according to the counsel of His will, “God works all things according to the counsel of His will.” It is God’s will that we Gentiles be included in God’s plan as God’s inheritance. That’s amazing.

What happened to us when we heard the gospel and believed in Christ?
Ephesians 1:13-14, In him you also, when you 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.”

This is another blessing with which we are blessed. We are sealed by the Holy Spirit. Because they heard and believed (cf. Rm 10:14), they also have received the blessing of the Holy Spirit. Concerning the Spirit, first, He seals. In the ancient world a seal both protected and announced ownership (cf. Ezk 9:4–6). Thus, God’s own are fully secure and will most certainly receive eternal life (the inheritance). Second, He is the Spirit of promise because the OT promised He would be given (Ezk 36:25–27; Jl 2:28–29). Third, the Spirit is called a pledge (cf. 2Co 1:22; 5:5). He is a good faith deposit that guarantees future completion, that

is, the redemption of God's possession (Mal 3:17; 1Pt 2:9). Finally, just as with Jews, so also Gentiles are to the praise of His glory.

Where does Paul begin his letter to the Ephesians? He starts by redirecting our focus to the God who is blessed and who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ and then he traces those blessings and shows us how God's plan has been worked out in Christ and applied to our hearts through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Paul doesn't start his letter to the Ephesians telling them what to do. No. He starts with what God has done for them.

This is foundational for all of us. Before we can be who God wants us to be in our homes we all need to get to the cross and make sure that what happened on the cross happened for us. John Stott says it like this, "Before we can begin to see the cross as something done for us, we have to see it as something done by us." Before we can be the men and women God wants us to be in our homes we need to make sure we are included in the plan of salvation and responding to what God has given us with continual heartfelt worship.