

Freedom – God’s Plan of Salvation

10/4/26

Ephesians 1:3-14

Sunday AM

DYK – there’s an organ behind your sternum called the **thymus** that helps to develop your immune system. What’s fascinating is that the thymus reaches its greatest size early in life, and then, as we age, begins to shrink in a process called **involution**.

Now, this might be normal for the thymus, but it should never be for a Christian. Yet sadly, too many of us are spiritually larger at the start for Jesus than we are at the finish. We begin w/ passion, hunger, and a desire to walk w/ Jesus. But along the way, instead of growing, we begin shrinking.

Are you larger for Jesus today than when you first came to know Him? Do you crave His Word, long for His presence, and seek to fulfill His mission? B/c if not, you may be experiencing a **spiritual involution**.

Today in our **Freedom** series, we’re jumping into Ephesians. In many ways, Ephesians looks at the problem of **spiritual involution** by reminding us that salvation isn’t only about how we **start** w/ Jesus, but also how we **grow** to become who He saved us to be.

In vs. 3-14, Paul explains how this is possible. In one sentence in the Greek, he unfolds God’s master plan of salvation saying it was **planned** by the Father, **purchased** by the Son, and is **preserved** by the H.S.

I Salvation was **PLANNED** by the Father

For He (God) chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love, He predestined us to be adopted as His sons thru Christ, in accordance w/ His pleasure and will – to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves.

To say God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility constitute one of the great mysteries of the Bible is a profound understatement. For generations, Christians have debated **if man chooses God**, or **if God chooses man**? And the answer is – YES.

Still, while *chosen*, *predestined*, and *adoption* are big theological words, Paul didn’t give them as doctrines to debate, but as truths to embrace and reasons to worship. **His goal wasn’t argument, but adoration.**

He didn’t write – *Blessed be God b/c I finally figured out predestination/election*. Instead, he essentially said – *Blessed be God b/c before I ever knew Him, He knew me. Before I ever pursued Him, His grace was already pursuing me. Before I ever had a plan for God, God had a plan for me.*

So, Paul isn’t trying to start an argument – he’s just saying that salvation originates w/ God so all praise and glory belongs to the Creator and not to us.

TBS – sin has separated us from God rendering us incapable of saving ourselves. So, we don’t need spiritual improvement; we need rescue b/c we can’t climb our way to God, behave or perform our way to God, or pay our debt. This is why God stepped into our helplessness – to save us from ourselves.

Yet Scripture also says we must respond. God is sovereign, yet we’re responsible. He takes the initiative; yet we must respond. How these truths fit together is a mystery, yet Scripture teaches both.

So, rather than trying to solve the mystery, let’s celebrate what Paul makes clear. God’s plan involves (3) extraordinary realities: **Jesus** is the means, **holiness** is the measure, and **adoption** is the method.

A God Chose JESUS as the Means

From the beginning, God's plan of salvation has been centered in Jesus. The cross wasn't God's response to an unexpected problem; it was always God's Plan A.

Salvation is to be found thru Jesus alone; in all the world there's no one else whom God has given who can save us. Acts 4:12 (GNB)

Think about it – if our sin could've been forgiven any other way other than the cross, then the cross was unnecessary. Yet there's no other way – Jesus is the only way, the only truth, and the only life.

At the appointed time, God entered our world in the person of Jesus to do for us what we could never do for ourselves – He went to the cross, paid for our sin, and opened the way for us to be reconciled to God.

B God Chose HOLINESS as the Measure

Chosen people are chosen **for** something. Paul says God chose us to be holy/blameless in His sight.

holy – to be set apart from sin unto God. IOW – it's God who makes us holy so we can walk in holiness.

When we trusted Christ, our old self was crucified w/ Christ (Galatians 2:20), and God gave us a new position. Paul describes it this way in Colossians 1:

He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of His Son w/ whom we have redemption thru His blood the forgiveness of sin. Colossians 1:13-14

This is **positional holiness**. We're not holy b/c of what we've done for God, but b/c of what He's done for us. He's rescued us, set us apart, and has given us a new identity in Him.

And this new position is intended to produce a new practice. B/c God has set us apart we can now live differently from the world.

So, b/c Jesus has set me free, I'm no longer a slave to the appetites/ambitions of the flesh. I'm now free – and responsible – to live differently: **dead to sin and alive to God**. IOW – I don't pursue holiness to earn God's acceptance; I pursue holiness b/c, in Christ, I already have it. ***Holiness isn't the price of God's acceptance; it's the product of God's grace.***

C God Chose ADOPTION as the Method

In love He predestined us for adoption to sonship thru Jesus Christ.

As we discussed in Galatians, this may be one of the richest pictures of salvation in Scripture. God could've forgiven us and allowed us to exist somewhere on the outskirts of heaven. He could've cancelled our sentence and called it even. But He did far more than acquit us. He adopted us.

In the Roman world, adoption gave a son a new family, a new identity, a legal standing, and a full inheritance. His old obligations were cancelled b/c he now belonged to a new family. Paul said this is what God has done for us. Born into Adam's fallen race and condemned by sin, thru Christ, God rescues us and brings us into His family.

Think about it: God didn't change our destination; He changed our identity. He didn't get us out of judgment – He brought us into His family.

II Salvation was **PURCHASED** by the Son

In Him we have redemption thru His blood the forgiveness of sins, in accordance w/ the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us w/ all wisdom and understanding.

Notice how v. 7 begins – ***In Him. Everything the Father planned, the Son accomplished.*** At the cross, Jesus paid the price for our forgiveness/redemption.

A The Son Purchased **REDEMPTION**

As we discussed recently, in the Roman world, slavery was common. But a slave could be freed thru the payment of a price called ***apolutrōsis***. This is word Paul used here for *redemption* – IOW – we were enslaved to sin, but Jesus paid the price w/ His blood, and thru Him we have been set free.

The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Mark 10:45

For you know that it wasn't w/ perishable things like silver or gold that you've been ransomed from the worthless way of life handed down to you by your ancestors, but w/ the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb w/out blemish or defect. 1 Peter 1:18f

At the cross, Jesus bought our redemption thru His blood. So, while our freedom might be free to us, we can never forget that it cost God everything.

B The Son Purchased **FORGIVENESS**

Remember Jesus' words in the upper room when He served the cup? *Drink it, all of you, this is my blood, which seals God's covenant, my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins.* Matthew 26:28

forgiveness (*aphiemi*) means to send away, to repay, and cancel a debt. This picture is portrayed in the Jewish sacrificial system that Jesus fulfilled.

Once a year, on the day of atonement (Yom Kippur) the high priest presented (2) goats before the Lord. One was sacrificed as a sin offering, and its blood was carried into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled on the mercy seat. Over the 2nd goat, the high priest confessed the sins of Israel, and the goat was sent away into the wilderness, symbolically carrying the people's guilt away. One goat pictured the **atonement made**; the other pictured the **guilt removed**. And both ultimately point us to Jesus.

On the cross, Jesus became our scapegoat. His blood was a sacrifice to cover our sins and His death served to take away our sins as far as the east is from the west – where they'll never return to us.

III Salvation is **PRESERVED** by the Spirit

Now – before we look at the work of the H.S., notice our responsibility to respond to God.

You were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him w/ a seal, the promised H.S., who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession; to the praise of his glory.

having believed is an aorist, active participle – meaning the subject is responsible to believe. Once true belief occurs, the H.S. seals our salvation. IOW – God has done everything for us to be saved except make us believe. We each must decide to either accept/reject Jesus as our Savior and Lord.

A seal in the ancient world declared ownership, authenticity, and security. A ruler would press his signet ring into wax to mark something as belonging to him. Paul says God has sealed us; not w/ a baptism certificate or denominational label, but w/ the H.S.

A A Seal of **OWNERSHIP**

God's seal declares – ***this one belongs to Me***. Think about that. The enemy may accuse you. Your past may haunt you. Others may reject you. But God's seal says this person belongs to Him.

B A Stamp of **AUTHENTICITY**

God's seal also authenticates our faith as genuine. **Romans 8** says if we don't have the Spirit, we don't belong to God. So, when the H.S. takes up residence w/in us, He leaves evidence – changing our desires, convicting us of sin, and producing spiritual fruit.

C A Seal of **ASSURANCE**

Third, the H.S. is God's seal of assurance – as He is – *a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance*.

The word refers to a 1st installment or down payment to guarantee the remainder will follow.

We have a modern picture of this whenever someone purchases a home. They put down earnest money to say they're committed to completing the transaction. God does something infinitely greater. He doesn't give us money as His guarantee. He gives us Himself.

The H.S. living in us is God's guarantee that what He started, He'll finish. Our future is secure in Him.

The Father planned it. The Son purchased it. And the Spirit preserves it.

Remember the Thymus? As we age, it begins to shrink. And while it might be normal for the thymus, it's not normal for the Jesus follower.

Yet sadly, too many Christians seem to live this way as there was a time when they were more passionate about Jesus than they are today. But according to Ephesians 1 this should never be our story.

Before the foundation of the world, the Father planned our salvation. At the cross, Jesus purchased it. And the moment we believed, the H.S. sealed our salvation. As a result, God has given us a new **position**, a new **identity**, and His **Spirit** to live w/in us as proof of a genuine faith transaction.

So, God didn't save you just to get you into heaven someday. He saved you to make you like Jesus today.

Which brings us back to the question: ***Are you larger for Jesus today than when you first believed?***