



1/12/25; Pastor Lenard Tavernelli—Ephesians 1:3-6 -- Union with Christ: An Extravagant, Planned Grace

Main Idea: Praise God our Father for how He has extravagantly blessed us in Christ according to His eternally planned grace.

Summary: People make plans but sometimes those plans are thwarted for reasons beyond our control. But this is never the case with God—His plans ALWAYS come to pass—exactly as He intended. Today we read Eph. 1:3-14, one long sentence, for the context of 1:3-6. God is here revealing the Trinity's involvement in our salvation from eternity past. The Father initiated the plan of salvation, the Son accomplished it and the Spirit applies it. We would never know this on our own. God's eternal plan described here is unfathomable to us. But His extravagant, unspeakable love in Christ takes words and breath away—and the only possible, proper response is to fall on our face in worship and wonder. He elected and predestined you, dear Christian, in eternity past for salvation and gave you EVERY spiritual blessing. This is not cold theology. In this life and in eternal heaven, the overflow of our hearts is: "To the praise of the glory of His grace".

Sermon Outline:

- Praise God because He has extravagantly blessed us in Christ (1:3)
 - God spared no expense in blessing us in Christ. These spiritual blessings include election, adoption, heirs, forgiveness, God's love upon us, residence by the Spirit, etc. They are all ours now—to be realized in full later.
 - Rom. 8:32 "He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things"
- Praise God because He chose us to be holy and blameless in Christ (1:4)
 - The doctrine of election / predestination has unfortunately caused controversy and hard feelings among Christians. Christians can gracefully disagree on this topic—they are still saved. Some believe that while God is very involved in our salvation, it is ultimately we who choose God (we cast the deciding vote). Pastor Lenard noted the bible, including today's verses, point in a different direction—that God is the decisive author and finisher of our salvation (which removes pride where I think I deserve God's favor more than you). On our own, we are spiritually dead and walking to hell. Moreover, there is nothing good in us commending God to save us. We were unlovely, rebellious enemies. Yet, in His immeasurable love toward us, He elected some for salvation. We are all deserving of hell. It's pure grace anyone is saved—and salvation is offered to all. And if we are saved, it is not to a passive, comfortable life. Rather, we are to be holy, set apart for good works to God and others.
 - Eph. 5:27: "...so the church might be glorious...without spot or wrinkle...holy without fault".
 - 1 Peter 1:19; We are cleansed "...with the precious blood of Christ...a lamb without blemish or spot".
 - Eph. 4:13; "until we all attain to the unity of the faith...to maturity...of the fullness of Christ"
 - 1 John 3:2; We are God's children now...when He appears we will be like Him because we shall see Him as He is".
 - Deut. 7:6; Israel- "You are a holy people...chosen...treasured possession...out of all the people's...on earth. You were the fewest. Chosen because the Lord loves you and is keeping His oath...to redeem you".

- John 15:16; “You did not choose Me but I chose you...that you...bear fruit...so that whatever you ask...He gives you”
- Praise God because he predestined us for adoption as sons thru Christ (1:5-6):
 - God does not act on us against our wills but He changes our hearts of stone to be alive to Him (Ezek. 11:19, 36:26)
 - Eg; Grenada vs Granada. On our own, we would choose and end up in a bad destination--hell. We needed God to predestine us.
 - In 1st century, only sons got inheritance. In Christ, all are adopted as “sons”: man/woman, slave/free; black/white, Jew/gentile.
 - God will NEVER unadopt you—as can happen in USA to some kids today. Unlike us, He is faithful to His promise.

Discussion Questions (select several to discuss):

- Re-read Eph. 1:3-14 s-l-o-w-l-y. What strikes you the most?
- Have you ever been overwhelmed with an overflow of praise considering what God has done for you in Christ? Describe.
- Why do you honestly think God chose you for salvation—and not, for example, your unsaved neighbor or relative? Do you wrestle with that? How? Have you come to any peace about this?
- For what purpose do you think God saved you—or anyone?
- Do the “every” spiritual blessings Eph. 1:3 says you have feel real to you? Are they life-changing? Why/why not?
- God did not have to tell us Eph. 1:3-14. Why do you think He did? What might you be missing otherwise?
- Pastor Lenard noted that God chose Israel historically (Gen. 15:5-6). In Christ, God’s people (Jews and Gentiles) are the church. Why do you think God did it this way?