

Ephesians 1:4b-8 “ A Sacrifice of Praise”

Our text this morning is starting in verse 5, but for the sake of continuity let's read verses 3-6...

EPH 1:3-6 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he 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 through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will - to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves."

As I've stated before Paul is ecstatic about his relationship with Christ, as well as ours. He recognizes that all spiritual blessings in the heavenly realm come from Him, not the least of which is our salvation. And his natural response is praise and adoration. But Paul is not simply giving us a glimpse into his own appreciation of Christ, but is showing us by example how we should view and respond to God's grace in our lives.

Do we bless God as we give back to Him our allegiance and obedience? Do we bless and praise God as we come before His throne and say, 'here I am Lord, use me.' Our sacrifice of praise to God is not only with our lips but with our entire being.

Paul brings this out in ROM 12:1 "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship."

We are to be holy and pleasing to God because He is a holy God who has brought us into His family: like Father, like son. We are to be imitators of Christ as we are conformed into His image through the power of the Holy Spirit as we submit to Him.

And so when we saw last week how we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world we must not think that we were chosen without a specific purpose. That purpose is to be holy and blameless before Him.

There are two aspects of being holy and blameless. There is a positional holiness and an experiential holiness. Positionally we stand as those set apart for God because we are no longer viewed by God as enemies. We are holy in the sense that our guilt has

been taken away by the blood of Christ. Our sin no longer separates us from our Lord and Creator.

This is why we are viewed by our Father as blameless, without stain or wrinkle or blemish. This position was secured by Jesus Christ. When Paul encourages husbands to love their wives, he shows them the kind of love involved and what that love of Christ accomplished when writing to the Ephesians.

EPH 5:25-27 "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless."

This is not some pie in the sky hope we possess. You and I in Christ are actually and really accepted by the Father as truly holy in our position before Him, people who are set apart for Him because we have been set apart and covered by the blood of the Lamb.

Paul puts it another way in COL 1:22-23 "But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation - if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel....."

And so when the Father looks on His people He sees righteousness which is pure and holy and enables us to have a right relationship with Himself, but this righteousness does not come from us, it comes from our perfect substitute and sacrifice, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And so in that sense we are positionally set apart, we are declared to be holy for God. The term used in theological circles, and should be used by all Christians, is justified. But God does not save us to be only positionally holy, He desires a people who will faithfully represent Him in this world, and be holy in our actual behavior.

This behavior reflects our position before God. After all, if we have been declared holy, and we actually are in Christ, then being new creatures in Christ we must show that to be true.

Paul puts it as simply and succinctly as possible in 1TH 4:7 "For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life."

This is not some new and unique N.T. doctrine. God has always intended to have a people represent Him in this world. Even with Israel God gave the command in LEV 11:44 "I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy...."

And so when we talk about being chosen in Christ we must understand that to mean that we are also chosen for a purpose which God is working out in our lives as we submit to Him and follow Him and seek to live lives that honor Him.

EPH 2:10 "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

God wants to use you. God wants to take you and mold you with the express purpose of showing the world that we serve a holy and righteous God as we live holy and righteous lives before Him in this world.

But it's so important to get a proper understanding of our position before God so that our motivation will be one of desiring to praise our God with our lives. And this is what Paul is about to do in our text this morning.

EPH 1:5 "In love He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will - 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves."

This is an amazing truth because it shows us what our heavenly Father's motivation was in choosing us before the foundation of the world. Notice that in some of your Bible's the phrase "In love" is kind of dangling between verse 4 and verse 5.

In the Greek the punctuation could possibly allow that phrase to be connected to either verse. And so it could read, "that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love." In this case the one loving is us. We are loving God as we are holy and blameless. And this is certainly true.

But that little phrase, "In love", could also be connected to verse 5 which would then read, "In love He predestined us to adoption..." Many commentators believe that since the overall context is dealing with what God has done for us, the phrase "In love" should be connected to an action on God's part.

And so what we are shown is that God's motivation for choosing or predestinating us was birthed in a love for us. This love of God did not originate in anything lovely found in us, since we would prove ourselves to be sinful creatures. Rather it was founded in the mercy of God who chose to love us despite ourselves.

Again, as we saw last week, this does not mean that God's love was not manifest to the world as Christ came into this world as a man, and that Christ Himself commanded all men everywhere to repent and believe. And yet we are told quite plainly that He chooses. His choice is based on His own will which pleases Him, not on anything found in us. There is nothing lovely in us that would qualify us for a right relationship with God.

But keep in mind that we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world and so God's love was already set upon us even before we would actually be born into this world with a sin nature and prove ourselves to be sinners, who, in reality, were at enmity with God, until we repented of our sin and embraced Christ by faith.

In love God chose to make us a part of His family. This is what verse 5 is telling us.

EPH 1:5 "In love He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will -"

His love is infinite and everlasting. In eternity, before the foundation of the world God predestined us to adoption. To predestine means to predetermine. Predestine is made up of two Greek words: pro, meaning before and horizo, to mark out. God marked us out before time. And He did this with the purpose of bringing us into His family. "What He did for us was a result not of sheer determination but of supreme delight." (Hendrickson)

We see this in the concept of adoption. When a family adopts a child, that family makes a choice. That child, who has no hereditary claim on that family, is brought into that family as though he did. He now shares in everything that family possesses. He becomes a virtual member of that family and even receives the name of the father of that family.

As far as the world is concerned there is no difference between that adopted child and a child who might be the natural offspring of that couple. They both share equally in that family.

In a sense this is what God has done with us. He has adopted us legally. Our adoption is in Christ. What makes it legal is what Christ has done in purchasing us and redeeming us by His blood.

We see this in GAL 4:4 "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."

God views every one, who has truly placed their faith in Christ, as His son or daughter. And with that comes the full rights of sons and daughters. Like that child who was once not a member of that earthly family, but has now become a member, it shares in all that family has to offer, even an inheritance.

They were once not a member, but now, because of a choice the parents made, they are a member. Peter talks about this same arrangement in a spiritual family setting.

1PE 2:10 "Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

Being adopted is a beautiful arrangement of grace which we receive from our heavenly Father. But unlike the earthly arrangement, our heavenly adoption gives us something no earthly parent can ever dispense; a new nature.

We are given the Spirit of our Father and with that a nature which is new. It's a nature which seeks after God and desires to grow in this heavenly family.

ROM 8:15-17 "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs -heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."

This adoption was arranged in eternity, but finds its fulfillment when we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation. When we humbly come to our Lord and repent of our sin, seeking His forgiveness, we receive the son-ship which He promises.

JOH 1:12-13 "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."

This is what being born-again is all about. We are not only born of the Spirit and given new life, but we are born into a heavenly family with God being our Father. Like that couple adopting a child and loving him, our heavenly Father extends His love to us and desires a relationship as a son or daughter would have in an earthly family. Except our heavenly Father is perfect in all His ways with a perfect love that never ceases.

He is a Father who forgives our sin. He is a Father who promises an eternal inheritance. We are heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ. And this blessed adoption we possess, will come to fruition on that final day when we are either resurrected from the dead or are transformed in the twinkling of an eye to be with the Lord when He snatches us away to be with Him forever more.

ROM 8:22-23 "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."

We who are in Christ are all part of the same family. We all possess the same hope and the same promises with an inheritance which is everlasting; an inheritance which is ultimately found in Christ. We have been given His Spirit as a down-payment

What God started in eternity past He will fulfill and carry on into eternity future with His children in Christ sharing in His Kingdom forever. Can we count on this from God? You bet.

2CO 1:21-22 "Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come."

This is a hope which is sure. But it's a hope which must see our Sovereign God's love and grace extended to us in Christ, even before the foundation of the world. All of this was done, as we see in the rest of verses 5 and 6, "in accordance with his pleasure and will - to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the [Beloved]."

We may be the objects of His love and grace, but it is only because of His Beloved that we are able to share in that love and grace. It is Christ Jesus who is the true object of the Father's delight and pleasure. We being in Christ share in that life. And because we are

covered in His blood we belong to the Father and are seen as most precious and loved of God.

This is why it's so important to understand that no matter what else is going on in this life we have a family that we belong to, with God being our Father, who is infinitely concerned with us and our growth and our ability to represent Him in Christ.

He has given us His Spirit and has sealed us for the day of redemption. He has given us a new nature which longs after Him. But if we are not willing to walk in that new life; to walk in the Spirit by faith, we end up short-changing ourselves, as children blessed of God, and instead of showing ourselves belonging to our Heavenly Father we will look more like every other family on this earth with no hope outside of Christ.

The life we possess in Christ is always designed to bring praise and glory to the Father. As children of the Most High God how should we be representing Him in this world? Are we relying on His power and grace and strength or are we trying to be children who, like our own little ones at times who say, "leave me alone!"

Our heavenly Father never wants to leave us alone. He is intimately involved with us and wants us to be intimately seeking His will. As we do this by faith, we will find that being an adopted child in the family of God can be a real pleasure as we please the One who gave us hope and life and new birth into an everlasting Kingdom.

But this new birth carried a high price for the One who purchased us.

EPH 1:7 "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace 8 that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding."

When we began this letter we noticed that in verse three Paul begins to praise God for all the spiritual blessings we have in the heavenly places in Christ. Adoption is one of those heavenly blessings. But here in verse 7 we see that this blessing was the result of Jesus Christ dying for us.

"In Him we have redemption.." The word redemption in the Greek is apolutrosis and it means "the act of ransoming in full." There would be no need to ransom us in full if we were not being held in bondage. A full ransom speaks of paying the entire payment. The payment was spelled out by God in the Garden of Eden.

If you eat of the fruit you will surely die. That death was a separation from the body, which is physical death, and separation from fellowship with God, which is spiritual death. That price needed to be paid by man to satisfy God's justice because of sin entering the world through Adam's disobedience.

Because of sin you and I and all men are held hostage without hope. God Himself chose to pay that price for sin when He sent the Son of God, Jesus Christ into the world. His love for us, however, could not ignore His hatred for sin which must be dealt with legally.

This is why the Son was chosen before the foundation of the world to die for our sin. Justice had to be served. And since man was the one who sinned, a man had to pay that debt. This is why Jesus was born of a woman. He was truly man and yet fully God.

Since Jesus was a perfect substitute He could stand in our place and take our guilt and pay our penalty in full. We were sold into slavery to sin. But Christ Jesus bought us back and brought us to Himself. The debt has been paid in full. There is nothing now to stand in the way of our relationship with God if we are in Christ.

Paul put it this way in ROM 8:32 "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all -how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"

The "all things" which He has graciously given us are all those heavenly blessings which are from above in Christ, and the greatest blessing is a restored relationship with our heavenly Father who does not count our sin against us because it was paid in full, it has been completely removed. There is no double-jeopardy with God.

Once you have been forgiven in Christ you are sealed for the day of redemption. Your sins are removed from God as far as the east is from the west. We see this graphically displayed when Israel was commanded of God to take two goats and cast lots between them. One goat was to be sacrificed, the other was let go into the wilderness.

LEV 16:9-10 "Aaron shall bring the goat whose lot falls to the LORD and sacrifice it for a sin offering. But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD to be used for making atonement by sending it into the desert as a scapegoat."

What we see here is that the one goat takes the penalty which is death, but the other goat takes the sins of the people of Israel and carries them away from the camp into the wilderness, never to return. The point is that the sins are not to be associated with the people since they have been paid for.

However, this same process was repeated once every year as a reminder of sins and how the hope ultimately does not lay in a goat but one who would come to take away sins once for all.

The prophet Isaiah records these words given to him from God. The Lord is speaking in ISA 44:22-23 "I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you." Sing for joy, O heavens, for the LORD has done this; shout aloud, O earth beneath...."

MIC 7:19 "You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea."

This is what our redemption is all about. The ransom has been paid. The captives have been set free and we no longer belong to our old master, Satan. We have a new master and Lord who has purchased us and purified us from all sin.

1JO 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Notice in our text that God has forgiven us "in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding."

Someone who is wealthy may give of his riches, but if the wealthy gives according to his riches that is abundantly more. The second one gives according to the amount of his wealth. This is how God gives to you and me in Christ. He doesn't simply dip into His wealth and give us a little something, He gives according to His wealth and gives abundantly to His children.

His grace is lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. In other words, He doesn't give indiscriminately, but with purpose. He may give abundantly to you in a way that is different when He gives abundantly to me. He gives as the need arises. But the operative word here is "give".

He is the giver of every good gift. And being children of the Most High God He knows how to give us good gifts. But they will be

gifts which are in accordance to His will, since He is the all wise God. Remember God gives and forgives "according to His riches" which are infinite in nature.

These are some of the heavenly blessings we have in Christ which are continually being abundantly bestowed on us by our Lord. But the reason for these blessings is not that we can play with them like some child with a toy, but to use these blessings to honor and glorify Christ as we are useful in His Kingdom.

Remember, it is by grace through faith that we are saved and it is still by grace that we live and move and have our being. Each day is to be a day living in God's grace and the gifts and blessings He bestows, and being thankful that we have been purchased by a loving God who wants to have fellowship with us.

The riches of His grace are boundless. But this grace extended to us by a loving God is what gives us our hope and reason for getting up each morning to face a new day. It is Him we want to please and serve, and it is Him we want to seek, knowing we will be with Him forever because He chose us in Christ and purchased us with His life, death and resurrection.

I'll let Paul close with this thought found in this very letter in EPH 3:16-19 "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."