

The Trinity's Preserving Grace for the Perseverance of the Saints (Eph. 1:3-14)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on December 26, 2010

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I can't think of any better way to introduce our study in Ephesians 1 today than by way of personal testimony. The truth of our text today has had a profound, personal and practical impact on my life. I grew up in a wonderful Christian home. All of my family has been with us this week for Christmas and as we think of memories and joys of family growing up, I am reminded how blessed I was to grow up in the Christian home I did, with a mom and dad who love the Lord, and with brothers and sisters who love the Lord and are walking with Him and seeking to raise children to do the same. Not that every stage of life could be an episode on the Hallmark channel; we're sinners with struggles like everybody else. But with a Christian home to work through them, and a family that loves each other despite each other's flaws and failings, we were blessed.

We weren't and aren't a perfect family, by any stretch of anyone's imagination, but these holidays have for me been reminders of how God's grace worked in our lives to change us from what we once were. When I was 4 or 5 years old, my parents tell me I prayed the sinner's prayer or some equivalent in the bathroom before I took my bath one night. I was baptized (not in the bathtub, but in the church), and I say "my parents tell me I prayed the sinner's prayer" because I honestly don't remember that day, or much of anything at that age, but I'm told I said the right words. I probably had some degree of sincerity and desire to be with the Jesus I'd heard about in Sunday School and at home, to the degree a 4/5-year-old can.

I was blessed to not only grow up in a Christian home, but in a missionary home, with a dad who was a pastor and my true hero. We went to church every Sunday morning, SS, Sunday night and midweek prayer meetings, all the things Christians do, or used to do in those days. At times we were in AWANA and I was blessed to learn many Bible verses that I still remember to this day. We were always in Christian school and had Christian friends and had Christian music. As Grady Toland once sang, we had everything but "Christian cars, Christian Fords with Christian doors, Christian carpet on our floors. All but Christian pets and Christian vets, and we could speak Christian-ese if you please. We had our own little Christian world in which we could all just live and breathe." Now there *was* someone I knew growing up who was a non-Christian. In fact he was very close to me. I knew him very well. He was ... me.

None of those Christian things had made me a Christian, nor do they automatically for anyone. Please understand how thankful I was and am for my upbringing, and if you have a Christian home, praise God for it! But please also understand my upbringing didn't save me or prove that I was truly regenerated. Please also know that this was a critical issue in the Bible for Jews who had grown up in the faith of their family, as well as 2nd generation Christian recipients of the NT letters, and it's equally utterly essential for our day as well, to understand biblically both conversion and assurance because I know there are other young people like me (and older).

I thought I was converted for many years when I was not saved. I had a false assurance based on some of those things I just shared, but as a teenager God in His grace through His Holy Spirit and the truth of His Word came upon me and acted upon my soul in a way I can't take credit for.

He convicted me of my sin, changed me from within, enlightened my eyes to see sin for what it really is, grace for what it really is, Christ for who He really is, and the HS generated new desires and hungers for these things that I hadn't had before; God's Word, to not sin *against my Lord*. The Holy Spirit grabbed me and gripped me and made me certain that I was going to hell despite all of those "Christian" things in my background, it was like my Philippians 3 moment, all else was rags and rubbish, I wanted Christ, needed Christ, pleaded with Christ. I understood later that wasn't mere free will or Phil's doing, that was God's free sovereign grace that saved my soul, and God's Spirit sealed me. He marked me at that moment by G.R.A.C.E.

NIV: ¹³ *And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,* ¹⁴ *who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.*

Now, one of the dynamics a young believer encounters after the Holy Spirit takes up residence is that testing and doubts will come. Paul talks about how to deal with those in chapter 6, and we'll see those together sometime next year, but for me, I didn't have the helmet of salvation securely on my head for awhile. I didn't have any real security in salvation. I had the HS within me, but I didn't know how to use the Sword of the Spirit yet to fight off enemies of doubt (what's the Sword of the Spirit? ... The Word of God).

I had saving faith but it wasn't yet a shield of faith extinguishing the fiery flaming arrows of the evil one, the accuser of the brethren who would accuse me that I wasn't really brothers with the others. I knew enough truth to be saved, but didn't know how to put it on. Paul didn't want that to be the case with the Ephesians, and by the Holy Spirit's inspiration, this is written for believers today, too. And we don't have to wait till chapter 6. Paul draws attention to the HS and his role in salvation right here, Eph. 1:13-14. God the Holy Spirit seals every true believer in the true gospel, and He truly secures, safe-keeps, and spiritually indwells them to ensure it.

But one dynamic when new believers continue to sin, and now have heightened awareness of it because of the convicting HS within now, that very presence within them that God intends to give assurance causes some to struggle with assurance. For me, I struggled many times with being assured that I was truly saved, precisely because of my inner conviction from the HS that I know now was not a natural thing, but a supernatural work on my spirit.

I didn't mentally doubt God's Word too often (though Christians can and do wrestle with doubts). I didn't believe a true believer could lose his or her salvation, I just doubted mostly whether a constant sinner like me could be a true believer (not horrific outer sins, but deep within). I wasn't struggling with worse sins than other teenage guys, I just knew God's holiness through the Holy Spirit in my heart and I knew how unholy my own heart was in the lust of the world and the flesh and the pride of life, and I would weep and couldn't sleep as I poured out my heart to God so many times and pleaded for mercy on me a sinner. I didn't doubt Christ or that He could save, I doubted myself whether I could be or was.

I had gone on a couple different missions trips and had shared the gospel with people, some of whom apparently even believed it and received it and put their faith in Christ and became saved.

But still I wasn't always certain I had truly done the same. I was attending the Master's College during the Northridge earthquake. As I was jolted awake I vividly remember thinking I was going to die and I cried out in my heart for God to truly save me that time, just in case I hadn't truly before. It wasn't till my last couple years at that Christian college (despite all the good gospel teaching I'd received my whole life) that I began to gain more assurance of salvation as I had to do a research paper and presentation on this subject for an elective class I took, and I read the book *Saved Without a Doubt*, by John MacArthur.

It was a personal private struggle I didn't tell and haven't shared with many, but I share it today in the hopes that the help I found in God's Word will help others like me, whether it's others growing up in Christian homes or with Christian stuff in your past that you are trusting in wrongly or taking false assurance in *your works*, or if it's others like me later who do have the HS at work within you and are saved but you need His help to gain assurance of this HS.

My hope and prayer is that these truths God the Holy Spirit taught me He would teach to you in the way only He can today, that the same Spirit who inspired His original Word written on stone in the days of Moses, that this same Spirit would inscribe His words on the tablets of hearts today, on new hearts by new covenant grace.

J.C. Ryle is one of my favorite theologians and writers of the 19th century. In his excellent book *Holiness*, he began his chapter on assurance with these words I echo: 'I shall consider it readily, and at the same time with fear and trembling. I feel that I am treading on very difficult ground and that it is easy to speak rashly and unscripturally in this matter. The road between truth and error is here especially a narrow pass; and if I shall be enabled to do good to some without doing harm to others, I shall be very thankful.'¹

Let's start with the context, looking at the whole before we look at the Spirit's part in v. 13-14. The sentence begins in v. 3, longest in the Greek NT, very highly structured text, with very high theology. Paul had a very high view of God that transcended the prison he was in and launched him into the heights of worship in v. 3-14. Outline:

- v. 3-6: God the Father's role in salvation (past tense)
- v. 7-12: God the Son's role in salvation (present tense)
- v. 13-14 God the Holy Spirit's role in salvation (future)

In our looking at all those details, I hope we didn't miss the big picture. When I was in that class on salvation hearing presentations on the doctrines of grace, God the Holy Spirit opened my eyes to the bigger picture of a bigger God than I had imagined, a big God with a plan much bigger than me but that amazingly included me. As my view of God increased, my doubts in self decreased the more I saw how big God was and that I could rest in this big God. I began to see the whole Trinity was involved in salvation, the hand of HS was in me, none can snatch me from Son's hand or Father's. The Father draws us, the Son reveals Him to us, the HS regenerates us. The Father plans redemption, the Son purchases it, Spirit applies it. We sang earlier, "We believe in God the Father, we believe in Christ the Son, we believe in the Holy Spirit ..." and this passage is very similar to that and the doxology hymn "Praise God from whom all blessings flow, praise Him all creatures here below, praise Him above ye heavenly hosts, praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost." That's what Paul is doing in Ephesians 1:3-14 as well.

He begins “Praise be to / Blessed be the *God and Father*” (v. 3-6) then he praises *God the Son* in v. 7-10, then praises *God the HS* in v. 13-14, and each time each section ends with the phrase “to the praise of His glory” before moving on to the next member of the Trinity (v. 6, 12, 14). Each person in the Godhead / Trinity is glorified in the saving of a sinner and the complete Trinity is completely committed to keeping them totally saved from first to last, not based on the sinner’s goodness or worthiness, but based on God’s grace, and God’s glory, and God’s infinite worthiness. So let’s praise the God from whom all blessings flow, as the end of v. 3 says, and praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost with Paul today:

The Father’s Role in Salvation (v. 3-6)

1. He gave us every blessing we have (v. 3)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ

Every good thing we have is from above, from God the Father, as James 1:17 also says. All of it is a gift from God, none of it is good that we earn or deserve, every good or blessing we have spiritually is from God alone. We don’t gain or maintain heavenly or spiritual blessings by earthly effort. *God the Father blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places*, and if you doubt His love, then you need to count the scriptural blessings He gives us, name them one by one as you read v. 3-14, as we’re going to do today.

Now who is the “us” who receive these spiritual blessings in v. 3ff? If you look back at v. 1, Paul is writing to “*the saints ... and the faithful in Christ Jesus.*” Those are not two different classes of people, the Greek construction² in Paul’s writing is here simply two different ways to describe believers: *saints* (set apart to be holy) are also *faithful in Christ Jesus*. The saints are faithful, they continue in the faith, they persevere in the faith, that’s the idea of the classic doctrine “perseverance of the saints.” The actual phrase appears in Rev. 14:12 “This is the *perseverance of the saints* who keep the commandments of God” (NASB). They endure, continue. And verse 3 makes clear this blessing of perseverance is part of the gift and blessings God the Father gives to those He has set apart and made saints who are faithful. God’s preserving grace is the spiritual blessing we need for perseverance in the faith, by His *preservation of the saints*, God’s enabling, empowering, ensuring, eternally securing grace that keeps me enduring and persevering.

Jesus said “*He who perseveres till the end shall be saved*” (Mt 24). God also says in Ps 97:10 “***He preserves the souls of His saints.***” Paul’s confident assurance to the end of his life is in 2 Tim 4:18: “***the Lord ... will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom***” (KJV)

2. He CHOSE us (v. 4)

⁴*just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.*

He chose us, not because we were holy or blameless, but in order to make us holy and blameless, in other words, like Christ, in Him. He chose us not based on a contribution we brought into the world, He chose before the world existed, unconditionally, unilaterally, unexplainably except by grace on us undeserving and naturally unimpressive to God.

The book of Revelation says God has a Book of Life with names of those He's chosen and written in it before the creation of the world. God's not as some see Him, a Santa Claus with naughty and nice lists based on performance. Some people's view of God is more fairy tale than biblical truth. God knows that I've been bad, not good, and you, too, but He chose to put a whole bunch of bad people like me and you on His list to receive His gift of eternal life. Why me? No idea...but I know from Scripture He didn't write my name down when I did good and doesn't erase it when I'm bad.

This truth gave me great security, because as long as I looked to myself, I knew myself, and if salvation at any time was dependent on myself, I wouldn't be saved or keep myself saved. But as I looked to God in Scripture, and as I knew God, He's faithful where my faith fails, God can't deny Himself (2 Tim 2:13). Besides, my faith didn't start all this in the first place; *He began* the good work in me, *He will be faithful to complete it!* (Phil. 1:6). "*He chose us,*" v.3 says. If we're ones with true faith in Christ from v. 1, He chose us, not based on us, but before we were born, and in spite of how sinful He knew we would be after we were born! These 3 words can change your life if you let them! "*He chose us! He chose me!*"

Not because I'm so great, but because He's so great! For me, that changed my life greatly and gave me great security and purpose in a great God whose grace was greater than my sin and whose plan and purpose was bigger than just me, a God great enough to use even sinners like me! What greater motivation for the Christian life is there than so great a salvation and calling (Ephesians 4:1ff)! I have a great and sovereign God loving me, what great assurance and great significance and meaning that gives to life! There's more ...

3. He Predestined us (v. 5a)

*In love*⁵ *He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will*

Someone once said "If you fear that God will stop loving you, the greatest thought to overcome that is that *He never started* loving you." He loves His children *with an everlasting love*, as Jeremiah 31:3 says, and because it never "started," it will never end, either. God also told Jeremiah "*Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you*" (Jer. 1:5). To "know" a person biblically is deepest relational expression, even used of most intimacy in marriage (ex: "*Joseph did not know Mary until after she gave birth to Jesus*" Matt. 1:25).

God tells Jeremiah He foreknew him, long before he was born, He set His love upon him. God determined to know deeply and enter into a covenant love relationship with him, in a different way than He knew others or other things, an intimate personal relationship. Paul is telling these believers (and us) a NT version of same truth, that God has predetermined to save some and make adopted sons who He loves intimately, personally and permanently as His own.

If you study the word "chose / chosen / elect" from v. 4 in the NT letters, you'll find that it's never used of someone who doesn't get to heaven, and the same is true of this word "predestined" in v. 5. You don't find the word "predestined" used of those who go to hell nor *chosen/elect/called/predestined* who don't make it to heaven.

Someone asked couple weeks ago, what about Judas? In Jn 13:18 Jesus said to the 12: “*I do not speak of all of you, I know the ones I have chosen*” and it explains He was speaking of Judas who wasn’t chosen to salvation and later lost it, he was never saved (1 Jn 2:19).

Jesus does use the word “called” one time in a parable (Matt. 22), in the context and sense of an invitation: “*many are called but few are chosen.*” In other words many receive the general call or the invitation of the gospel, but of those, few are chosen and end up at the table. Not all are chosen, not all will be saved, but we invite all.

God’s sovereignty never negates our responsibility/evangelism. I fully believe v. 4-5 and I equally want to frequently and fervently plead with sinners to repent believing they may be one of His elect. And if you’re *not saved*, but maybe think you are, as I once did, I pray God can use His Word and Spirit today to shake you from false security, to awaken you to your true need, true regeneration, as He so graciously did with me. Then you can have true security. Not all churchgoers are saved, that’s why I lovingly challenge you at times. Scripture tells unbelievers “repent, call on the Lord,” and Scripture tells *believers once they’re in the fold* they were and are “called *by the Lord*, elect, chosen, predestined.” In the NT epistles written to Christians, those terms always refer to people who are saved and will all make it to heaven, none getting lost on the way.

If you turn back to Rom. 8, there’s maybe the greatest example of this, which leads us to the 4th thing God the Father does in Eph. 1:

4. He Adopted us (v. 5b)

Paul says in Ephesians God predestined us to adoption as sons, and I want us to see once again how Paul uses those words in Rom. 8:

¹⁵ *For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!”*

[then he also uses “predestined” in v. 30]

God is now our dear Father and we are adopted as loved sons. This term was used in their day for a legal permanent adoption. Once adopted, you don’t get un-adopted because of sin. Rom. 9:3 gives Israel as the prime illustration of that, and Rom. 11:29 uses Israel as Exhibit A proving “*the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable*”

I think this truth of adoption is my favorite truth in Ephesians (at least this week :). This truth alone gave me great assurance and I think any person in this room can understand this point. A child may do many mistakes that hurt his parents but nothing will make him not a child or change who the real father is. And as God’s children, even where we fail and fall, a loving Father uses it all for discipline (Heb. 12) and for our ultimate good as our Abba.

²⁸ *And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.* ²⁹ *For those whom He foreknew* [like Jeremiah, loved beforehand with an everlasting love not based on performance], *He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;*

³⁰ and these whom **He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified** [none are lost!] ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? ³³ Who will bring a charge against God's elect?... ³⁸ **For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities [that includes Satan], nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

That's assurance: God's choosing, calling, predestining, adopting love that is unbreakable, unshakable by anything in the universe!

5. It's ultimately about His glory, not us (Eph. 1:6)

"... to the praise of the glory of His grace ..."

There's something much higher than us that drives God's love *for us*. Each member of the Trinity is committed to glorify each other. There's a higher love Father, Son, and Spirit has for each other and glorious gracious sharing of that with their creatures to join in the glory and to enjoy God forever with them! Keep a finger in Rom 8, but back in Ephesians 1, it's the Father's love for His beloved Son that ultimately drives His love to those who are in Christ. And as we move to the next point, to the Son's role, this gets even more assuring! God the Father's unchangeably great love for His Son who never changes is the most secure place to be if we're in Jesus who's always the beloved Son in whom the Father is *well-pleased!*

John Newton, slave-trader-turned-songwriter-of-Amazing-Grace, put his hope in Christ who's the same yesterday, today, forever:

'I am a poor, changeable, inconsistent creature; but he deals graciously with me: he does not leave me wholly to myself [we are in Christ] I have such daily proofs of [my natural sinfulness] ... to cover me with shame ... and make me thankful if I am permitted to rank with the [lowest] of those who sit at his feet. That I was ever called to the knowledge of his salvation, was a singular instance of his sovereign grace; and that I am still preserved in the way, in defiance of all that has arisen from within and from without to turn me aside, must be wholly ascribed to the same sovereignty: and if, as I trust, he shall be pleased to make me a conqueror at last [like Rom. 8:37], I shall have peculiar reason to say, Not unto me, not unto me, but unto thy name, O Lord, be the glory and the praise!'³

The Son's Role in Salvation (v. 7-12)

1. We are in Him (v. 7a; John 10:27-29; 2 Cor. 5:17, 21)

Those first two words in v. 7 make the difference for all eternity. That little prepositional phrase changes everything and is the only explanation for any blessings (v. 3ff) or blessed assurance. "*In Him / in Christ*" was everything to Paul. Look at 2 Cor. 5:17. You don't see other biblical writers use it very often, but Paul uses it some 170x, including it or equivalent 10x in this one sentence (v. 3-14)!

To be *in Christ* is great security, because no one can pluck us out of His hand, or out of the Father's hand, as Jn 10:27-29 says. To be in Christ, in union with Christ, is the source of all security. We've also looked at the cross-reference in 2 Corinthians 5:17 recently:

*“Therefore if any man is **in Christ**, he is a new creation, old things have passed away, all things have become new.”*

The Bible never talks about assurance as saying a prayer; the way the Bible describes who is “in Christ” is the phrase “*new creation*.” Think regeneration, transformation, new things have come into the life, new desires, new hungers, new affections, new loves, new life. Don't trust in mere words on someone's lips in a sinner's prayer as proving regeneration, look for the work of God in a sinner's life. Has there been change, old things passing away, new things come? This passage says in the most emphatic Greek construction, *anyone in Christ new creation* (no verbs – very emphatic) and then it says all things have been made new, old passing away. Salvation isn't a mere change of eternal destiny – it changes everything in this life! Not just where you go when you die, it changes how you live. Not an overnight change or complete in this life, but process, progress. If 2 Cor 5:17 hasn't occurred in you, Paul says you're not in Christ

Parents, children's workers, everybody, 2 Cor. 5:17 needs to be a part of your theology and thinking. Memorize 2 Cor. 5:17. If you already know it, make it part of your mindset about who is truly in Christ, not your feelings or false assurances of something he or she did when they were little or many years ago. This is no little issue. We don't do little Johnny any favors to assure him he was saved because of a little prayer he said as a little boy even though for all 10 years since, he's lived unchanged, with little inner interest in the things of God. Little known fact: *that theology (pray a prayer, your soul is set) was invented mostly in 20th century America*. I have little interest in what's brand new in church history and not in the Old or New Testament. Lawson: “if it's new, it ain't true.”

The new paraphrase of 2 Corinthians 5:17 by many today would be “if anyone is in Christ, *he prayed a prayer once ...*” and based on that false premise, false assurance has permeated a generation of young people 60-80% of which prayed a prayer when young but then leave the church soon after they leave their parents home. It doesn't help the situation when these youth aren't being challenged with the true gospel and repentance and what Christ actually called for, and it doesn't help when parents remain sure little Johnny is saved no matter how many years his life has little or no fruit. I was that little Philip once ... PTL I was challenged with the truth. Jesus says “many say Lord, Lord” but don't know the Lord (Matt. 7:21).

Paul says whoever's in Christ is a new creation, i.e., regeneration. The evidence of regeneration is seen over time, not proved by what you did or said at one point in time. Regeneration is a critical truth and doctrine, and for those who have been regenerated (made new) the 2nd critical doctrine of Christ's work in Eph. 1:7 is redemption

2. We possess His Redemption (v. 7b, 5:25-32)

⁷ *In Him we have redemption through His blood ...*

In Eph. 5, we see Christ's commitment in redemption expounded as a husband covenanting with a bride He's utterly committed to:

5:25b “... *Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her,* ²⁶ *so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,* ²⁷ *that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.*”

Christ didn't just die for the church, He lives for her and loves her despite her sin and spots and wrinkles. Christ doesn't just justify (declare righteous), He also sanctifies (make more like Christ) and cleanses us by His Word (v. 26). “The church” here isn't a *building* or *bodies* in it on Sunday, the true church is the *body of Christ* made up of true *believers* truly in Christ, His *bride* committed to Christ and He to them in a personal relationship of covenant love, an inseparable union like v. 31 says, joined together, one flesh. We are members of His body, v. 30 says, another level of assurance. Christ isn't going to throw away His body parts, and He isn't going to divorce His bride that He paid His own blood for to redeem. In v. 29, Christ cherishes us as His bride, and Christ cherishes us far more than any human cherishes things of his life! Christ nourishes and cares for us, v. 29 says, on a deeper level than any human does. What blessed assurance if Jesus is mine ... and I am His! PTL!

3. We possess His forgiveness _____ (1:7c, 4:30-32)

Ephesians 1:7 adds “*In Him we have ... forgiveness of sins*”

For all who are in Christ, all sins, past, present, and future are paid in full by Christ on the cross, and won't be paid by us in hell if we are in Christ, we have this glorious *positional forgiveness*. There is also a *parental forgiveness* we still need in this life to restore our relationship with God when we sin. Family members aren't kicked out of the family for sins within the family, but they do need to ask forgiveness and repent to restore relational unity and intimacy. So a child of God does need to come to His Father in this way, and he is still capable of even serious sins against others but should repent

4:31 *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you [believers still deal with these sins], along with all malice.* ³²*Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.*

Even when we need and seek relational forgiveness and restoration we're not to lose sight of our upward forgiveness we already have in Christ that should motivate us to repent of sin and be like Him.

4. We're part of His plan that won't fail (Eph. 1:9-11)

⁹**[He] made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself** [NKJV of v. 10] *that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth in Him.* ¹¹**In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will**

It's all of Christ: His plan, His pleasure, His purpose, preserving by His power, predestining, His providence working all things in the universe according to His will for His glory and for the

good of those in Him. The supremacy of Christ and His sovereignty over all things is the central point of all. The greater your view of Christ and His sovereignty the greater your assurance, comfort, and hope!

5. It's ultimately about His glory, not us (v. 12)

¹²*to the end that we who were the first to hope [or trust] in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.*

The Spirit's Role in Salvation (v. 13-14)

1. He enables us to believe (v. 13a; 1 Cor. 12:3, 9; Jn 3:6-8)

¹³*In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed...*

The Spirit's sealing ministry in some English translations makes it sound like it occurred after we believed, but we need to also keep in mind other passages that inform us the Spirit was at work in us *before* we believed and *had to be at work in us* so we could believe

1 Cor. 12:3 “*no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit* [Rom. 10:9 says you must say Jesus is Lord to be saved, but Paul says in 1 Cor. 12:3 no one can truly say it without the HS and v. 9 says the same Spirit gives faith as one of His gift]. The HS is at work in us before we believe and when we believe and after we believe. God the Holy Spirit is the final and fullest assurance for the believer, by His work within us. It's not ultimately the SS teacher who gives a believer assurance, or even Scripture proof texts alone, it's God the Spirit who speaks assurance to God's adopted children by Spirit-produced evidences of the new birth.

Let me introduce these points today and we'll continue next week.

Think C.R.I.B.S. to remember the Spirit's role in our new birth:

Convicts and illuminates [John 16:7-14]

Before we believe the HS convicts us of sin and illuminates us to see Christ for who He really is. His work continues after salvation from within us, as He continually convicts and illumines us to Christ and truth, that's one evidence that the HS is within us.

Regenerates (imparts life)[John 6:63-65, Titus 3:5]

Jn 6:63 *“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing... Titus 3:5 calls it “regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit”*

We'll see evidences of HS-regeneration next week

Indwells permanently [John 14:16-21]

John 14:17 is the promise that the HS would be in them, and v. 16 says this Helper would be with them forever. Then v. 18 is the great promise “I will not leave you as orphans” ... how? By the HS

Baptizes spiritually [John 1:33-34; 1 Cor. 12:13]

This is another tie that binds, another assurance: the HS baptizes us and puts us into this body of Christ spiritually once for all. Baptism signifies our immersion in and union with Christ and His family. I didn't bring myself in this family and I can't bring myself out.

In physical baptism or joining a local body of Christ physically, that doesn't make you saved (baptism and membership in a church are important not to get to heaven but to represent spiritual realities on earth). But spiritual immersion, spiritual identification inseparably in Christ by the work of the HS is a proof of salvation (next week).

Seals till final salvation [Eph. 4:30, despite sin]

1. He seals us at conversion _____ (v. 13b)

4 main truths end of v. 13 conveyed in Bible times:

1. Security
2. Ownership
3. Authenticity / Genuineness
4. Identification (examples of each next week)

2. He is the Spirit that fulfills promises _____ (v. 13c)

End of v. 13 calls Him "*the Holy Spirit of promise*"

Because He fulfilled promises in the past, we can have the full assurance He will keep future promises

3. He is the pledge guaranteeing inheritance _____ (v. 14a)

(NASB) ¹⁴ *who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession ...*

We're made heirs of salvation, and the HS is given as a pledge or deposit or guarantee of foretaste of the glory divine to come when we're born of the HS

4. It's ultimately about His glory, not us (v. 14c)

... to the praise of His glory.

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Amen. Glory to each! An old hymn "Gloria Patri" (2nd century) sounds a lot like how Paul began this 1st century letter to the Ephesians: "*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.*"

Or a more recent hymn: "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!

Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!

Heir of salvation [that's v. 14, inheritance],

purchase of God [that's v. 7, redemption],

Born of His Spirit [that's v. 13], washed in His blood [v. 7].

This is my story, this is my song [I hope it's yours too or will be]

Praising my Savior all the day long!"

¹J. C. Ryle, *Holiness : It's nature, hindrances, difficulties and roots* (Evangelical Press reprinting, 1995), p. 100.

² *NET Bible Notes*: 'The construction in Greek (as well as Paul's style ...) suggests that the saints are identical to the faithful ... See M. Barth, *Ephesians* (AB 34), 1:68 and *ExSyn* 282.'

³ John Newton, *The Works of John Newton - Volume II*, Letter 5 to Rev. Mr. B.