

Jason Upchurch - Ephesians 1:6-10 - Praise God for Predestination - Part 3

I want to open with a little illustration of our passage this morning and it's an illustration about fireworks.

One of my favorite parts about summer is the 4th of July. I love fireworks. They're beautiful and loud and really just fascinating. I like them all. The large booming ones. I like the small white ones that shoot out low and fast. I like the ones that make huge rings like Saturn. The popping ones. But my favorite part of any firework show is the grand finale.

The point of the grand finale is not to try to watch each individual firework and figure out what it is and what it does. The point of the grand finale is to be overwhelmed by the wonder of the whole thing. It's to sit back and bask in the awesomeness of the display.

Theologically, that's kind of what this is at the beginning of Ephesians. It's not a grand finale, it's really a grand kickoff. All the amazing glory of God is on full display right up front. And I think the point of this is the same as the grand finale in fireworks: to make us just stand in awe. Swear of God for who he is and what he's done.

These truths about the predestining work of God and doing all things according to his will and his sovereign work in salvation aren't so that we can fight with other people over them. It's so we stand in humbled awe of God.

And we're unpacking each little part because it is so rich and there's so much to consider. But really, I think the goal of Paul here is for us to read through this little section in the 20-30 seconds it takes and just be blown away by the awesomeness of God.

But in order to appreciate the depth of this section, I do think it's important to slow down and take it all in. And that's what we've been doing. As you know, this section revolves around the doctrine of predestination: The choice of God in eternity past to choose some for salvation and others for damnation, without any regard to merit.

That doctrine doesn't just exist all on its own. Predestination connects to dozens of other doctrines as well. In many ways it's like the central nervous system of theology connecting everything together.

We saw it connects to our praise and worship in **Vs. 3**. It connects to our eternal rewards. It does that because it's connected to the eternal nature of God and the eternal relationship between the Father and the Son so it's Trinitarian in nature. Predestination has everything to do with our holiness because we were predestined to godliness. And of course it links to how we are even saved and the permanence of salvation.

I remember one time talking to someone about eternal security, the doctrine that once you are saved you will never lose or forfeit your salvation.

John 10:28: I give them [his sheep] eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

But this person didn't like the doctrine of predestination. And I said, go look at all the passages you love that show you can't lose your salvation and almost every time the reason given for not losing salvation is grounded in predestination. We were chosen by God, given to Christ and kept because we are his.

John 10:29: My Father who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of his hand.

The only reason our salvation is secure is because God chose us and gave us to the Son and Christ ain't losing us. And the Father ain't losing us.

So this morning we're going to keep unpacking these amazing truths about predestination. We've seen 6 truths so far in this passage.

7) The glory of predestination.

The very first point in this series was that our responses to predestination is praise. And specifically we praise the Father. But I want to key in on something that's throughout this passage that might be easy to overlook. But I think it's important. What specifically about the Father are we praising? Let me read and see if you can find it. **Read 5-6, 12, 14**

When we think of praising the Father because he loved us and predestined us, what specifically are we praising? We are praising his glory. Paul mentions the glory of God 3 times in this section. Once is specifically the glory of his grace.

What does that phrase mean "to the praise of his glory?"

Think of it this way. Imagine a star player on a sports team. They get all the glory. When they get all the glory what are they getting? They're getting all the praise and attention and credit for what they've done. People are cheering them for their skills and ability that has carried the day.

The same is true with God. When we praise his glory we are praising his greatness, his grandeur, his awesome power and wisdom to do whatever he wants to do. That is what it is to be God: God can do whatever he wants to do. And he can predestine according to his own will and he does so for his own glory.

This is the ultimate purpose in all that God does is to bring himself glory and praise. He wants us to praise his greatness.

So watch how this works: in eternity past God made a promise to the Son. The Son would redeem people from their sin and give them eternal life through his death, burial and resurrection. The Spirit would fill them and empower them to praise the Son. The people would then honor and glorify the Son for his work of salvation. And the end result of us praising Jesus for his work in saving us is that the Father receives glory - he receives credit and praise for planning all of this and bringing it to pass.

From eternity past what God has set out to do is bring glory to himself. To bring himself praise and honor. In the grand scheme of things, in the grand scheme of eternity, all of creation and redemption are to do one thing: cause us to praise God for how amazingly great he is.

Now, listen: that can sound really unusual because it's sinful for us to do that. It's sinful for us to seek our own glory.

If we've got a kid who wants to go play soccer and we ask them why they want to play soccer, imagine if they say 'I just want people to praise me for how amazing I am at soccer. I want to hear them sing songs about me and fall down at my feet and worship me for my soccer abilities. I want people who follow me no matter where I go and honor me.'

If we had a kid say that, that's a problem. And what often happens is that we think since it's wrong for us to think that way, it's wrong for God to think that way. But it's not.

Everything God does is so that he is praised. He is the glorious one. And in all he does - predestination included - he gets all the glory. All the credit, all the praise, all the honor. Because he has done it all.

This is why in reformed circles people will often say that the foundation for all we do and all God does is for his own glory. It's true. Even hard things, even difficult things, even predestining things. All are for the praise of his glory. And it's good and right for us to praise him.

So we have the glory of predestination. Next we have the first of a whole bunch assorted benefits of salvation. A lot of times salvation is described in analogies. We're raised from death to life. We're given new hearts. We become the bride of Christ and Jesus is our husband. We are sons of God, he becomes our father. Those are all analogies the Bible uses to help us understand salvation.

Well, we some analogies are connected to predestination.

8) Predestined to be adopted. Read 4-5

I think most of us know that adoption is a way to describe our salvation. Adoption is the legal and loving act of bringing a child who is not your own into your family as a full member. Legally, there is no distinction between an adopted son and a natural son.

Broadly speaking, in the US adoption establishes a legal parent-child relationship. I'm going to read some of these and I want you to think about how they relate to our adoption in Christ. Because many of our practices are true across cultures and across time.

Adoption establishes a legal parent-child relationship. This is usually signified by changing the last name of the child. But there are also inheritance rights that come with adoption. In many cases, when you stand before the judge to adopt a child you have to swear under oath that your adopted child will inherit a portion of your estate when you die.

Foreign adoption also usually conveys citizenship rights as well. If you adopt a child from a different country, they usually become a citizen of this country by virtue of the citizenship status of their parents. Christian's are citizens of where? Heaven.

There are other benefits as well - legal and financial protections. Here's another benefit that happens with adoption: the biological parents cannot reclaim custody. Once you're in the family, you're always in the family.

Because our culture is crazy right now some of those are being challenged but those truths, historically, are what adoption is.

For our purposes what I want to focus on is this little phrase here. **Read 5**

We've already seen that the motivation for God to predestine anyone is love. That's why he did it. But what we need to understand is that the type of love we're talking about is quite literally a fatherly love. In love he predestined us for adoption as what? Sons.

There is a fatherly, paternal love that God has toward all those who he predestines. Because he predestines as the Father, he predestines us into his family. But we're not predestined to be nephews, We're not predestined to be cousins or neighbors. We're predestined to be sons.

I mean, just imagine your favorite memory with your father. Or imagine your favorite memory with your son. It's a sweet and good moment. The greatness of that fatherly love is a fraction of the greatness of the eternal love God the Father has for you.

Jesus says in **Matt 7:11**: If you then who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

The predestining work of God is that his fatherly love for you was so great that not only did he save you from sin and hell and death, but he chose to make you a son by adopting you into his family.

Paul says he predestined you for adoption **to himself** - he wants you for himself. This is how precious you are to the Father. Not because of any good thing in you, but simply because he chose you for himself to be his Son. He chose that. He wants you in his home to be part of his Kingdom.

And this adoption is in and through Jesus. **Read 5**

How did we become sons? Through Jesus. Because he is the eternal Son of God, through faith in him we become the sons of God. We're not divine like Jesus. But we receive the same inheritance he does. We will be raised with Christ. We will reign with Christ. He is the firstborn among many brothers.

Rom. 8:15: says that when we're in the Kingdom we are not fearful slaves. We're sons: "we have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry 'Abba! Father!'"

It's not just that God has a fatherly love for us, he wants us to have a warm affection for him. I call my father Pop or Dad - these are terms of affection. That familial affection is what God wants us to have for him.

All the warm fatherly divine affection that God has for his Son, Jesus, he has for us because of Jesus. We enter into the household of faith because of Christ who is also beloved of the Father. **Read 6-7**

We have this adoption because we are one with Jesus. And because Jesus is beloved, we are beloved too. It's a beautiful picture.

9) We also have redemption. Read 6

What is redemption? It is the purchasing of something.

When you go the store to purchase a gallon of milk, you redeem the milk. You exchange money for milk.

And our salvation is often referred to as a redemption. That God redeemed us. He bought us back. Bought us back from what?

When you look throughout the Bible at concept of redemption it almost always has to do with slavery. From the earliest chapters.

Exo. 6:6: I am the Lord and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgement.

Israel was trapped in Egypt. They were slaves and they couldn't free themselves. Their oppressors were too great, they slavery too burdensome. So God delivered them out of their slavery. He redeemed them: took them from slavery.

If you remember the price to get out of Egypt was one lamb or goat. Spotless, pure, the blood smeared on the doorpost.

And God told them to not only remember their slavery in Egypt but remember he was the one who brought them out.

Deut 15:15, 24:18: You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord you God redeemed you, therefore I command you this today...

Turn to Rom 6:15-23. We see this truth all over the NT as well. But I think there is nowhere quite as explicit as **Rom 6** where we see the transfer from slavery to sin to slaves of righteousness. **Read 15-23**

God delivered us from sin and slavery to sin to being slaves of righteousness. Like Israel in Egypt, we were incapable of freeing ourselves. God had to set us free.

Gal. 3:13: Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

Tit. 2:14: Jesus gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and purify for himself a people for his own possession.

Part of the salvation we have was a rescue plan from God. We were trapped in our sins.

You guys have probably seen those old videos of Harry Houdini, the escape artist from decades ago? They'd put him in a straight jacket, lock it up, throw him in a tank of water and somehow he'd get out. He had hid a key or a pick or something where he could get out of an impossible situation. Honestly those videos always

stress me out because even though I know the outcome I have no idea why someone would intentionally lock themselves up like that.

But what made the escape so great is that it seemed impossible. How do you get out of something like that? You can't and he did.

Listen, there's no spiritual Houdinis. There's no one so clever, so agile or so righteous that they're getting out of sin. Those who are outside of Christ are enslaved to it and the only way out is for God to sovereignly redeem you out. And that plan of redemption, rescue was eternal. **Turn back to Eph. 1.** What were we redeemed with? **Read 7**

We were redeemed with the blood of Jesus. The blood of Jesus really refers to the death of Jesus. His life was expended so that we could live. The only way it was possible to redeem us out of sin and slavery to sin was for God the Son to take on flesh and die to pay for our freedom. That was the only way.

10) God Predestined to Forgive you. Read 7

This is a quick point but I think it's important. Redemption and forgiveness are related. The way that we were redeemed is by Jesus paying the penalty for our sins.

That truth is summed up in **Matt 18** with the parable of the unforgiving manager. Remember the guy who owed 10,000 talents to the king? Somehow this man had borrowed an impossible amount of money and somehow lost it all. He begged the King to forgive him rather than put him in prison and the King forgave him.

That's a picture of our salvation. We owe God for our sins - we should be praying daily. "Forgive us our debts" because we sin daily. And what God did was to predestine our forgiveness. He knew we would sin against him, he knew we would rack up fresh debts every day and he planned to forgive us for them.

He knew in eternity past that we would constantly violate his righteousness and trespass against his commands and yet he planned - on purpose - to forgive us.

You remember the rest of the parable of the unforgiving manager? The problem was that after he was forgiven he went out and found a guy who owed him some money. Not 10,000 talents, but still a lot. And then he demanded that guy pay him right then and there. And the point was that although he had been shown amazing mercy he couldn't show other people that same mercy.

Here's the deal: We have to plan to forgive people. I'm just going to tell you right now that there are people in your life who will wrong you over and over. Sometimes you have to remove them, but other times when they ask your forgiveness and repent you have to forgive. Why? Because God in Christ forgave our sins. He planned to forgive them.

And we have to plan to forgive others. Jesus says: If you forgive others their trespasses, then your Heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

That's a scary threat. If you are unable or unwilling to forgive others it's probably because you've never been forgiven yourself. If you're keeping records of wrong, bringing up past sins and past failures there's a good chance you haven't had your record forgiven.

That's the point of the parable with the 10,000 talents. How could someone have 10,000 talents forgiven and that not change them? How could they stay the same?

Those who have been forgiven have experienced the immense forgiveness of God. He planned to forgive us. **Read 7-8a**

That forgiveness is according to the riches of his grace. And he takes that rich grace and lavishes upon us.

Imagine you have a rich uncle. That uncle wants to take you to Disneyland. So he flies you to CA, you're in flying coach. And then you get to the airport and rent a Geo Metro that's been smoked in. You drive to a hotel that's run down and unseemly. And you go to Disneyland but you don't eat there because he says it's too expensive.

And you're thinking to yourself, isn't my uncle rich? Doesn't he have millions? Maybe this is how he got rich - maybe he's a penny pincher.

I think that's how we often view God with his mercy. He is merciful, but he doesn't want to give it out. He could pour out grace on you - and he does - but just enough to get you in. But that's not our God. He's rich in mercy, and he lavishes us with that mercy. And, he predestined to do that.

GO back to the rich uncle. He says, listen, I'm flying you and 10 friends first class to Anaheim. There's a limo waiting to pick you up and you're staying in the penthouse suite at the Disneyland resort. There's already a catered dinner there. Here's vouchers for food and clothes for the next 4 days at Disneyland, get whatever you want.

That's lavish.

That's the kind of richness of forgiveness that God pours out on us in Christ. He's not miserly. He's not skimpy. He lavishly forgives us. Super abundant with more left over.

And he predestined to do that.

Side: God predestined to forgive us, we have to plan to forgive others. How are we going to lavishly pour out forgiveness on them like God poured out forgiveness on us?

11) God predestined us to show us mysteries. Read 7-10

There are several times in the New Testament that the authors talk about mystery. When I was first a Christian I thought these were things God was trying to keep from us. You think of a mystery movie or novel the idea is we don't know what's really going on. Things are hidden.

Well in the Bible when it talks about mystery it's not talking about things that are hidden, it's talking about things that have been revealed.

They were hidden in the OT. God had a plan revolving around Jesus. And he didn't give away all the plan. But now in the NT he has revealed what that plan was.

That's why when we read the OT a lot of the prophecies of Jesus and promises about the Christ can seem vague and we didn't know how everything connected together. But then when we read the NT it seems obvious.

But now we know that he's the Son of God and Son of Man. We know that he's prophet, priest and King. We know that he has a better covenant than the old. We know that not only does he die and rise, but he ascended and reigns. We know he's coming back to judge and every knee will bow. **Read 10**

All things in the whole world revolve around Jesus. All things in the spiritual world revolve around Jesus. The entire redemptive history and plan revolves around Jesus. And we've been let in on that. God let us in on that. He planned that we would be part of this unfolding plan which was a mystery.

That was his plan, his purpose Paul says.

Listen, God never does anything by accident. He doesn't make things up as he goes. Every step is planned out. Every promise is carefully crafted. Every blessing you have, the forgiveness you have - all of it. Is carefully crafted by God to bless you and bring him glory.

Pray