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Ephesians 1:3-14

I am so impacted by the purpose of the church as we are going through these passages, and even considering the daily hope of the gospel. The gospel is not just for individuals. It's the start of the church. I talked with a woman a few days ago who said that when we get to heaven, she knows that people always talk about getting to see their loved ones... but she believes we won't even notice each other for at least a hundred years because we will be so focused on worshiping the Lord as we see Him in all His glory for the first time. I think she has a really sweet point. But I have to say, I kinda disagree. 🤔 Yes, I absolutely believe we will have inexpressible joy, worshiping our Lord, celebrating how deep our worship can go when we're free of the flesh. But our God is such a God of relationship that I think we will also be in awe of the sweet connections we get to have with each other as we're free of our flesh... free of misunderstanding... free of comparison... free to love without fear. I pray that we can have glimpses of that more and more here on earth as we together expand our understanding of our unity as the church, and our worship of the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ.

*Blessings,
Jonna*

This is a passage I know and love well. But I realize that I often read it wrong. Paul is writing to the CHURCH at Ephesus, not just to individuals in the church. It's so easy to think of this as applying to me, but not keeping the perspective of the whole church. Paul uses the words "we" and "us" 10 times. And when he says "you" he is speaking in the plural... you all, collectively. O Lord, please help me to see US as the body of Christ, the church. Help me to remember that I'm not on an island with You. It's not You and me... and then everyone else. You are a God of unity and relationship. Help me to always keep that in my mind and heart.

So... what does Paul want US, the church, to understand from Ephesians 1:3-14? I'm going to break this down in little pieces because Paul packed SO MUCH truth into a very small space. But it's all so important, so life changing if we will believe it!

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with

every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places..." Paul couldn't help but bless our Father in heaven. He's our FATHER, a relationship and adoption made possible through His perfect Son, Jesus Christ. We bless Him because He has blessed us, His church, with every spiritual blessing, brought down to us from His heavenly throne. He did not give us leftovers or crumbs. He's lavished His goodness on US, His church.

"even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him." This is huge. In the same way that He blessed us with every spiritual blessing, He chose us to be in Christ Jesus before He even spoke the world into existence. He chose us for a purpose... not just to be saved from the condemnation of sin, but to be saved from the current effects of sin. Instead of being steeped in sin and continuing to fall into corruption because of our selfish desires, God wants us to be holy and blameless before Him.

That can be a little overwhelming! Does He expect me to MAKE myself holy and blameless? No. It's His plan and purpose to make His people holy and blameless. That is a spiritual blessing from heaven. God is holy and blameless... and He planned for us to be holy... pure, sanctified... and blameless... in the legal position of innocence... even though apart from Jesus, we would have been condemned forever.

"In love He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved." I have to break this part down a little more...

In love... Why did God bless us and predestine us to be holy and blameless? Because He loves us! Love wants the absolute best for someone. God knows that holy, pure, innocence is what we will love the most, and it will satisfy us the most.

He didn't just predestine us to be holy and blameless. He predestined us to be adopted, to be His children... through His Son, Jesus Christ. O Lord, please don't let us take this for granted!!! It was Your PURPOSE ALL ALONG, Your GOOD PLEASURE, to send Your Son so that we could be adopted! It was because of Your grace, the generosity of Your love, that You blessed us with salvation IN Christ Jesus, Your beloved Son.

There are so many benefits to belonging to You, the one we can now call Abba Father...

"In Him we have redemption through His blood..." We WERE dead in our sins, slaves of the domain of darkness. But Jesus redeemed us. He paid our debt, and it cost Him His blood. Even if we were to shed our own blood, it would not be enough to cover our debt. But Jesus was the blameless and innocent Lamb of God who took away our sins with His blood. With His redemption, we receive...

"the forgiveness of our trespasses..." O Lord, You nailed our debt to the cross. There is nothing we need to do to earn forgiveness from You. That is SO HARD to grasp when I know I still sin. But You also know that I still sin. Your word says in 1 John that You know we still sin... and You,

Jesus, are our advocate and replacement payment for our sins... even now! O Lord, please help us to encourage each other with those words. It's so easy to forget! It's so easy to minimize Your sacrifice.

But this forgiveness has been granted to us... "according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us..." This is a spiritual blessing from heaven! You have lavished us with the generosity of Your love, Your overflowing grace for us. This is true for all believers no matter what. Your grace is not dependent on our perfection. It is dependent on Yours. You don't change. You are perfect in love, perfect in holiness, perfect in compassion.

You lavished Your grace on Your adopted, chosen, beloved children "in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of His will..." You are not foolish in Your plan, but wise. You are not ignorant, but understanding. You wisely know that we have no hope apart from You. You didn't ignore Your wisdom and understanding to save us. You used this spiritual blessing from heaven to save us, because WE were fools! WE were ignorant!

You chose us, adopted us, redeemed us, forgave us, and lavished Your grace on us with wisdom and insight "according to His purpose..." This has been Your purpose from before the foundation of the world. We didn't pursue You. You pursued us. That was ALWAYS Your plan.

Your plan was set in motion before the foundation of the world... a plan "which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time..." Galatians 4:4-7 says that "when the fullness of time had come," You sent Jesus so that we could be adopted as Your children. That was always Your plan.

But there's more to Your plan... It was always "to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth in Him." Your plan was never for us to be individuals in Your kingdom, but a united people, all of us believers IN CHRIST. Jesus is the bridge that brings salvation AND unity with You AND with all Your people. Revelation 21 tells us that someday we will have a new heaven and new earth, and we will together dwell with the Lord forever. This is His plan and it WILL be fulfilled.

"In Him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of His glory."

As I see this, I realize that it's not just the words "we" and "us" that Paul keeps repeating. It's the words, "IN CHRIST... IN HIM." These words are repeated ELEVEN times! Without Jesus, none of this blessing is possible. IN Jesus, because we have believed that He rose from the dead and confessed that He is our Lord, we have all this blessing.

God works ALL things according to the counsel of His will. I may not understand what He's doing when my circumstances don't make sense to my finite mind, but I can be sure that He IS working everything according to His wise, insightful plan.

His plan was to save people like Paul, the people who were the first to hope in Christ, so that they could "be to the praise of His glory." In other words, their life could honor Him. Their lives honored His glory with praise so much that 2000 years later, their hope spilled over from generation to generation all the way to the church today. Wow. Their inheritance of eternal life is my inheritance... and the body of believers' inheritance. That's incredible.

I think of my own family and what I know of my history. I basically know a little bit about my grandparents and a speck about my great grandparents. That goes back maybe 120 years or so. The history of what God did through His Son pouring into the lives of the first believers has stayed strong for 2000 years. God is at work, lavishing us with His blessings.

I know all the blessings Paul described were not just for the first believers, but for all believers. He made that clear next. He said, "In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory."

In Him, you also... just like us... when you heard and believed... when you heard the gospel and believed the truth that Jesus is our salvation... were saved. The evidence that the same blessing poured on the first believers is still true for us is that we all have been sealed by the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus promised in Acts 1:8. The Holy Spirit is our constant reminder that we have this incredible inheritance of heaven IN CHRIST. The Holy Spirit has sealed us with God's royal seal. He has guaranteed with no exceptions that we belong to Jesus and the Father. We are His children, His beloved, His redeemed ones.

O Lord, please help us, Your church, to not take this blessing for granted. Please help us to cooperate with You in making us holy and blameless before You... You have declared over us what You are now doing in us. Please help us not to stand in Your way, but to run with You wherever You want to take us. Please help us to grasp that Your heavenly blessings are exponentially greater than any temporary earthly blessings this world has to offer. Please help us, Your church, to be a voice of blessing for the next generation, that the message might live on in the power of the Holy Spirit at work through us, as in Acts 1:8. Praise You for Your love that will not die, that will not forget us, that will not leave us. Amen.