**God’s Eternal Purpose**

**Introduction:**

Ephesians 1:3-14 is all one sentence in the original Greek language. As a result, these verses contain a uniformity of thought, a central message. That message is that it was God’s eternal purpose to offer salvation to fallen humanity in Jesus Christ and to bless mankind spiritually in Christ also.

**Body:**

1. **It was God’s eternal purpose to make known the mystery of His will.** (Luke 1:8-9)

**Verse 8:** “Wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence.”

* The subject of this statement is the grace of God, which was introduced at the end of verse seven. God has caused His grace to abound toward us in wisdom and prudence. “lavish on us”
* It is in the gospel that this wisdom and prudence are given. Verse nine ties this wisdom to the will of God, which is His revealed word. Everything that pertains to life and godliness is provided in the word of God; His word furnishes us with everything we need in order to reach spiritual maturity. “insight and discretion”
* Paul affirms that God’s grace abounded, exceeding what might have been anticipated. “In that grace He provided that the apostles and spiritually endowed teachers should have wisdom and prudence abundantly in carrying forward the provisions of His grace.” [Lipscomb, p. 21]
* “The meaning here is, that, so to speak, God had evinced great *intelligence* in the plan of salvation. There was ample proof of *mind* and of *thought*. It was adapted to the end in view. It was far-seeing; skillfully arranged; and carefully formed. The sense of the whole is, that there was a wise design running through the whole plan, and abounding in it in an eminent degree.” [Barnes, p.24]
* The gospel displays the infinite wisdom of God, both in the manner by which it was originally delivered and dispensed, and in its contents. (Romans 11:33)
  + - 1. God used the best possible wisdom in causing the gospel to be delivered and spread among the race. The apostles were given the revelation by inspiration, and miraculous powers were provided them by which they confirmed the revelation. Even their avowed enemies could not deny the reality of the supernatural works they accomplished.
      2. One who learns God’s word, understands it, and lives by it, has a measure of God’s wisdom. *Prudence* refers to practical wisdom; it speaks of wisdom in practical application.

**Verse 9** “Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself.”

* “The apostle declares the God has made known unto us (the apostles and prophets: Ephesians 3:5) the mystery of His will.

1. “The word *mystery* means literally something into which one must be *initiated* before it is fully known and then anything which is concealed or hidden. We commonly use the word to denote that which is above our comprehension or unintelligible. But this is never the meaning of the word in the New Testament. It means there some doctrine or fact which has been concealed, or which has not before been fully revealed, or which has been set forth only by figures and symbols. When the doctrine is made known, it may be as clear and plain as any other. Such was the doctrine that God meant to call the Gentiles, which was long concealed and which was not fully made known until the Saviour came, and which had been till that time a *mystery* – a concealed truth – though when it was revealed there was nothing incomprehensible in it.” [Barnes, p.24]
2. The Greek word *mystery* (musterion) is a military term; it was used in reference to a secret military plan drawn up by the commanders of an army and which was hidden from view until it was put into operation. The mystery of the passage is not information that is beyond human comprehension, but was information that could not be known by man without God revealing it.

* God’s great plan had its inception before the foundation of the world. (Romans 16:25-26) [**Vine, Vol. 1, p. 320**]

God has made fully known His will for man’s salvation – the gospel, in our age – the gospel age. (Ephesians 6:19) This revealing was “according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself.” It was God’s kind intention, His good will, to save mankind, His creation. We are saved because God wanted to save us. The plan He chose to do this was entirely His choice alone; since He is the sovereign God we have no right to question it – ever! Why is salvation only in Christ? Because God chose to put it there!

1. **It was God’s eternal purpose to gather together in one all things in Christ.** (Luke 1:10)

**Verse 10** “That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in Him.”

* The word translated “dispensation” (oikonomia): “Primarily signifies the management of a household or of household affairs (oikos, a house, nomos, a law); then the management or administration of the property of others, and so a stewardship. . .In Ephesians 1:10 and 3:9, it is used of the arrangement or administration by God, by which in ‘the fullness of the times’ (or seasons) God will sum up all things in the heavens and on earth in Christ.” [**Vine, Vol. 1, p. 320**]

A passage in Colossians is very helpful. (Colossians 1:19-23) It was God’s plan or arrangement to bring Christ into the world to offer up His body on the cross and to shed His blood for mankind. “fullness of the times” (Galatians 4:4) God established His own time-table for sending Christ to earth. There are many things involved. Man had to learn that he could not save himself and that sin deserved punishment while obedience will bring blessings. This plan, the gospel, will continue until Christ returns. Then the redeemed of all ages will be taken to heaven by Christ and enjoy the bliss of being in God’s presence. (I Thessalonians 4:15-18)

1. **It was God’s eternal purpose to grant an inheritance to those who trust in Christ.** (Luke 1:11-12)

Verse 11 “In Him” – in Christ This inheritance includes those spiritual blessing Paul has just discussed as well as the promise of eternal life in heaven. (I Peter 1:3-4) We are God’s inheritance “in Christ” because He predestinated us according to His purpose. This predestination was not arbitrary. God did not arbitrarily choose certain individuals to be saved and others lost. Rather, He chose to save all those who believed and obeyed the gospel message, which act placed them “in Christ.” (Galatians 3:27) This was God’s plan or purpose from the beginning. To reject it is to reject God! (Luke 7:30)

**Verse 12** The purpose [the aim] of our being saved, of receiving this inheritance, is that God might be glorified. (Romans 11:36)

1. **It was God’s eternal purpose to seal with the Holy Spirit those who were to receive the inheritance.** (Luke 1:13-14)

**Verse 13** Notice the order. Trust can come only after the word of truth is heard and accepted. The word of truth is the gospel, which is the instrument to the means of salvation. (Romans 1-16) Then having exercised their obedient faith which put them into “Him whom they had trusted,” they were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. A seal in the 1st century was placed on letters and important documents to identify the document with the owner. Christians, those in Christ, are identified by the Spirit as belonging to God because they have believed and obeyed the gospel. We are stamped with God’s ownership.

**Verse 14** The Spirit is a down payment of our inheritance, a pledge that the rest will follow. The Spirit, through the Word, promises that if we remain faithful, we will receive the full inheritance in heaven. Even the apostles longed for this. (Romans 8:23)

**Invitation:**

All those “in Christ”, His body, the church, who remain faithful can look forward to that glorious day when they are ushered into heaven with their new, glorified bodies. Why are you waiting?

Bobby Stafford April 6, 2014