

Main Idea: We believe in Soli Deo Gloria, which means “glory to God alone.” God the Father deserves our praise for three reasons mentioned in Ephesians 1:3-6.

General observations about Ephesians 1:3-14...

1. This passage is one long sentence in the original.
  2. This passage is written to saints, to people who are in Christ (1-2).
  3. This passage exhorts us to praise the Triune God...
    - a. For what God the Father has done for us (3-6)
    - b. For what God the Son has done for us (7-12)
    - c. For what God the Holy Spirit has done for us (13-14)
- I. God the Father deserves our praise because He blessed us (3).
- A. The scope of this blessing is comprehensive.
  - B. The nature of this blessing is spiritual.
  - C. The source of this blessing is Christ.
- II. God the Father deserves our praise because He chose us (4).
- A. He did it in Christ.
  - B. He did it before He created the world.
  - C. He did it with a purpose in mind.
    1. The purpose of election is our holiness.
    2. The purpose of election is God’s glory.
- III. God the Father deserves our praise because He predestined us (5-6).
- A. The purpose of His predestination is our adoption.
  - B. The means of His predestination is Jesus Christ.
  - C. The basis of His predestination is His sovereign pleasure.
  - D. The result of His predestination should be the praise of the glory of His grace.
    1. We must make sure that we are putting our total trust in God’s grace.
    2. We ought to be looking for ways to bring attention to God’s grace.

Make It Personal: When we embrace Soli Deo Gloria...

1. We reject the sacred/secular dichotomy.
2. We reject man-centered theology and methodology.
3. We rejoice in seeing God receive what God alone deserves.

### *Scripture Reading: Romans 11:25-36*

SDG. Johann Sebastian Bach put those three letters at the bottom of every manuscript of music he ever wrote. No, he knew they were not his initials. They were an intended reminder to all who would play and enjoy his music of where the honor should go.

George Frideric Handel did the same thing when he wrote *The Messiah*. By putting those three letters on the page he was acknowledging where this now classic work of art came from and where all the praise should go.

SDG. Soli Deo Gloria. Glory to God alone.

Who gets the glory for what happens in our lives? In our families? In our work? In our ministries? In our salvation?

Five hundred years ago the Protestant reformers affirmed five important non-negotiables in their answer to the all important question, how is a person saved? By grace alone (*sola gratia*), through faith alone (*sola fide*), in Christ alone (*solo Christo*), according to the Scriptures alone (*sola Scriptura*), to the glory of God alone (*soli Deo gloria*).

This morning we consider the fifth. Who should receive the glory for salvation? In the Vatican there is a beautiful fresco that features Mary high and exalted, with Christ and the Father seated on either side of her.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>\*\*</sup>Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from a message delivered at WBC on 12/6/09.

The Roman Catholic church venerates Mary. At the heart of the Rosary is the “Hail Mary,” which says in part, “Hail Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.”<sup>3</sup>

This is a vital question, isn’t it? Who gets the glory for the salvation of sinners? The Protestant reformers said, *Glory to God alone*.

You say, “Perhaps the reformers just misunderstood Rome. Surely Rome wouldn’t deny glory to God alone, would it?” In 1954 Pope Pius XII issued an encyclical, *Ad Caeli Reginam* (“Queen of Heaven”), that instituted the feast of Queenship of Mary, establishing as the official teaching of the church that Mary reign as queen of heaven alongside her Son, King Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

Friends, the only appropriate response to God’s salvation (not to mention everything else in our lives), is *Soli Deo Gloria*, glory to God alone. The Bible makes that clear from cover to cover, but I want us to see the call for *Soli Deo Gloria* in one specific passage.

According to Ephesians 1:3-6, God alone, and ultimately God the Father, deserves our praise for three reasons.

First, let’s set the stage with some general observations about Ephesians 1:3-14.

1. *This passage is one long sentence in the original.* From verse 3 through verse 14, it’s one packed sentence in the Greek text, and I mean *packed*. According to my count, there are 202 Greek words. You get the feeling that when Paul starts talking about what God has done for us in verse 3, he can’t stop. He goes on and on and on, with phrase after phrase describing how God has blessed us.

Commentator William Hendricksen likens it to a snowball tumbling down a hill, picking up volume as it descends. E. K. Simpson says Paul here is like a long-winded racehorse, galloping onward at full speed. John Mackay says our text is comparable to an opera which contains successive melodies that build on previous ones. Armitage Robinson suggests it’s like the preliminary flight of an eagle, rising and wheeling around as though for awhile uncertain what direction he shall take in his boundless freedom.

That’s Ephesians 1:3-14. A snowball, a racehorse, an overture in an opera, an eagle in flight. It’s the product of a Spirit-filled man who was overwhelmed with the greatness of God!

2. *This passage is written to saints, to people who are in Christ (1-2).* That’s vital to remember, for we’re going to be reading some amazing blessings that God has given. But who are the beneficiaries of these blessings? Paul makes that clear in verse 1. He is writing, “To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus.”

If you are a saint, that is, a *holy* person, and you are if you are *in Christ*, then you’re about to behold blessings that God has given you. If you are *not* in Christ, then you are reading someone else’s mail, which could be your mail too, but you must put your total trust in Christ.

3. *This passage exhorts us to praise the Triune God.* Notice the first word of verse 3, “Praise!” Some translations say, “Blessed (Greek *eulogatos*)!” Paul begins his letter informing those who are in Christ Jesus that God is worthy of commendation, of being spoken well of (that’s what it means to bless someone). He is worthy of praise.

But this is no generic God. He is a *Triune* God, for although He is one in essence He exists as three persons. And the apostle identifies these three persons in this sentence, highlighting their unique yet related activities associated with our salvation.

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<sup>2</sup> R. C. Sproul, *Are We Together?*, p. 101.

<sup>3</sup> Sproul, p. 103.

<sup>4</sup> Sproul, p. 106.

Think of it this way. In the passage before us, the apostle is calling on us to praise the Triune God...

**a. For what God the Father has done for us (3-6)**

**b. For what God the Son has done for us (7-12)**

**c. For what God the Holy Spirit has done for us (13-14)**

And lest me miss the goal of this doxology, Paul repeats a purpose clause three times in this 200 word sentence. After highlighting God the Father's activity, Paul states in verse 6, "*to the praise of His glorious grace.*" After highlighting God the Son's activities, Paul states in verse 12, "*for the praise of His glory.*" Finally, after detailing God the Spirit's activity in our salvation, Paul says it again in verse 14, "*to the praise of His glory.*"

The point is clear. There's only one fitting response to the saving work of the Triune God. Glory to God alone.

A month ago we looked at verses 7-12 as we explored Solo Christo. Now let's back up to verses 3-6 where we'll find three reasons for Solo Deo Gloria.

### I. God the Father deserves our praise because He blessed us (3).

Verse 3, "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." God deserves to be praised. Who is He? He's the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. What has He done? He has blessed us. What's true of this blessing? Paul mentions three things.

**A. The scope of this blessing is comprehensive.** "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us...with *every* spiritual blessing in Christ." Not a few blessings, but *every* blessing. That's the scope of the Father's blessing to His children. He's given us all we need so that we might be everything He wants us to be and to do everything He wants us to do. His blessing is *comprehensive*.

**B. The nature of this blessing is spiritual.** He has blessed us "with every *spiritual* blessing." What are *spiritual* blessings? In the Old Testament, God promised He would bless His people if they would obey Him. With what kind of blessings? Often, the blessings were material. For instance, in Deuteronomy 28:1-14 God promised to reward Israel's obedience with many children, good harvests, healthy livestock, journey mercies, and prosperity, in other words, with *material* blessings.

What about this side of the cross? Does God still provide for the material needs of His people? Yes (Matt. 6:33; Phil. 4:19), but the distinct blessings of the new covenant age are *spiritual*. Our Father has blessed us with every *spiritual* blessing, says Paul, which I take to mean blessings pertaining to the realm of the spirit. And the agent who administers these blessings to us is the One whom the Son predicted in John 14:16-17, the third person of the Trinity, God the Holy Spirit (of whom Paul will have more to say in this letter; in 1:13-14; 1:17; 2:18, 22; 3:16; 4:3-4, 30; 5:18; 6:17-18).

As Charles Hodge explains, "These blessings are *spiritual* not merely because they pertain to the soul, but because derived from the Holy Spirit, whose presence and influence are the great blessing purchased by Christ."<sup>5</sup>

In the verses that follow Paul himself will identify what these blessings are that the Father has given to us and the Spirit applied to our benefit, such as election (4), predestination and adoption (5), redemption and forgiveness (7), wisdom and understanding (8), and a sealing that guarantees our inheritance as sons and daughters (13-14).

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<sup>5</sup> Charles Hodge, quote taken from John Stott, p. 33.

And where are these spiritual blessings? In the *heavenly realms*. Why there? Because that's where we find the source of these blessings. Who is that?

**C. The source of this blessing is Christ.** "...with every spiritual blessing *in Christ*." The only way a person can receive the Father's blessings is through His Son, Jesus Christ. The spiritual blessings are *in Christ*. That's why they're in the *heavenly realms*, for that's where Christ now is. Indeed, in the first fourteen verses of Ephesians, Jesus Christ is referred to fifteen times. Verse 2 says that grace comes from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 5 says that adoption comes through Jesus Christ. So does forgiveness (verse 7). So does the gift of the Holy Spirit (13).

The point is, if you don't have Christ you are flat broke and blessing-less. You're spiritually bankrupt, helplessly and hopelessly in debt. That's how we all came into this world.

But if you have repented of your sins and received Jesus Christ as your Savior, you have been blessed and are the possessor of every available spiritual blessing. It's all yours, and it's yours because God the Father gave it to you in His Son.

Let me give you a couple of texts that elaborate on this marvelous truth...

Romans 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 One who gave us His Son has given us along with His Son everything else we will ever need!

2 Peter 1:3 "His divine power has given us *everything we need* for life and godliness *through our knowledge of him* who called us by his own glory and goodness." Notice that we have everything we need through our knowledge of the One who called us.

If that's true, why do so many Christians lead defeated lives? Here's a prime reason. If you don't know what you have, you won't live as you could.

It's kind of like a gift card. Suppose you gave me an Olive Garden gift card. But suppose I didn't know what a gift card was for. And three months from now you asked me how I liked eating at Olive Garden, and I replied, "I haven't eaten there. I couldn't afford to. I just don't have the money."

You'd rightly say, "What are you talking about? You didn't need any money. I gave you a gift so you could eat at Olive Garden, all expenses paid."

It's true. If you don't know what you have, you won't live as you could. If you don't know what you have, you'll likely respond angrily at work just like your unsaved peers do when they don't get their way. And you'll let the unstable world situation rob you of your joy just like it's doing with your unregenerate neighbors. And you'll give up on difficult people in your life, and keep floundering in grip of destructive habits, and live a roller-coaster life, just like the world around you does...if you don't know what you have.

So what do you have? It's better than a gift card. If you have Christ, then you have *every* spiritual resource you need to live the kind of life that pleases your Father. That means you can control that anger at work, and you can have joy when the nation is divided, and you can keep loving that hard-to-love person, and you can overcome that ungodly habit. And you can do it because your Father has blessed you with every spiritual resource you'll ever need.

And for that He deserves your praise! But there's more.

## II. God the Father deserves our praise because He chose us (4).

Verse 4 "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."

Notice the connective word "for" and remember this is still the same sentence. Verses 3-14 are like a telescope. The points are not parallel, but sequential. One thought

pulls out of the previous thought and elaborates it and builds on it. And then the next thought, and the next, like a telescope that opens up in sections.

In verse 3 Paul says that the Father blessed us. Now in verse 4 he begins to explain how He blessed us, moving from a general statement to particulars. He *chose* us, and because He did He deserves our praise.

By the way, keep that in mind as we explore this wonderful doctrine of election. Some people say this is a bad doctrine, even the devil's doctrine, according to some. But Paul said that when properly understood, this doctrine results in praise to God. So don't be afraid of it. Just humbly get to know the truth of it, and God will receive praise!

So what do we learn about election from verse 4? Paul says that the Father chose us. Who is *us*? Verse 1 clarifies that "us" refers to the saints in Ephesus, the believers who are in Christ Jesus. Paul's talking to Christians. What's true of Christians? The Father blessed them, says verse 3. And the Father chose them, says verse 4.

Notice three things about the Father's activity of choosing.

**A. He did it in Christ.** "For He chose us *in Him*." *Him* takes us back to verse 3 and is a reference to Christ. On what basis did a holy God chose unholy and sinful people like us? We certainly did not deserve to be chosen. He chose us *in Christ*. He chose us, not on the basis of what we would do, but on the basis of what His Son would do.

**B. He did it before He created the world.** "For He chose us in Him *before the creation of the world*." When did the Father set His affection on us? When did He purpose to rescue us from our sins and make us His children? Before He ever created us. In fact, He made the choice before He ever created the first molecule in His universe.

Please notice that the emphasis in verse 4 is not on *what* God foreknew, but *who* He foreknew. Before He ever made us, He chose *us*. The salvation of mankind, then, begins with God and not with mankind. "You did not choose me, but I chose you," said Jesus in John 15:16.

It's important to keep in mind that the Bible says that a sinner left to himself or herself does not seek God. Romans 3:10-11 declares, "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God."

So if a sinner will not seek God, as that text indicates, how will a sinner ever be saved? The answer is that God must take the initiative. And He has. "For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world."

Who chose a people in Christ from eternity past? God did. Who designed and initiated their salvation? God did. Who then deserves praise for the salvation we enjoy? God alone does.

This isn't the only time Paul talked about the Father's sovereign love, for you'll find it throughout his letters. For instance, he began his epistle to Titus in Titus 1:1-2, "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of *God's elect* and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness— a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time." (see also Rom. 8:28-33 and 2 Tim. 1:9-10).<sup>6</sup>

But the question is, *why*? Why did the Father choose us? According to verse 4...

**C. He did it with a purpose in mind.** Actually, a twofold purpose, one given in verse 4 and the other emphasized throughout this passage. Here's the first, "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world *to be holy and blameless in his sight*." It's unfortunate that in most discussions of election, not enough attention is given to the end of verse 4. What's the purpose of the Father's choice?

1. *The purpose of election is our holiness.* He chose us *to be holy and blameless*.

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<sup>6</sup> For other biblical writers, see 1 Pet. 1:1-2 and 1 John 4:10.

Some people say, “If you believe in election, you’ll have a license to sin, for you’ll conclude, it doesn’t matter how I live, since I’m one of God’s elect.” But that’s not true, not if we teach election the way the Bible teaches it. Yes, election involves a people that God has chosen. But it also involves a purpose. God chose a people unto a purpose. What’s His purpose for His beloved people? His purpose is their holiness. The doctrine of election is actually an incentive for holiness, not an excuse for sin.

Brothers and sisters, this is God’s agenda for us. It’s why He set His affection on us in eternity past. He’s intent on forming a people who resemble His Son, a people who were once sinners but who have become holy and blameless and fit for His presence.

And here’s where verse 3 fits in. Why did God bless us with every spiritual blessing? Why did He give us the “gift card”? It’s not so we can fulfill *our* agenda in life, but *His*. He’s given us every resource we need to be all that He wants us to be, and that’s to be people who are holy and blameless in His sight.

Yet there’s another reason for the Father’s choice. The first is our holiness, but that’s a means to an ultimate end.

2. *The purpose of election is God’s glory.* “To the praise of His glory” as Paul will emphasize in verse 6, again in verse 12, and again in verse 14. That’s why God chose to save an undeserving people from eternal destruction and grant them eternal life in His Son. For the praise of His glory, and specifically, for the praise of the glory of His *grace!*

I mentioned earlier how Rome undermines Glory to God Alone by elevating Mary. But many evangelicals in essence do the same thing, not by elevating Mary, but by elevating themselves.

Think about the way people are often invited to come to Christ. “Dear sinner, God has provided salvation for you by sending His Son into the world, who paid sin’s penalty on the cross, then conquered death. He’s done all He can do. Now you must respond.”

Is that true? Who is responsible for the sinner’s salvation? Some say, “Well, God made it possible, but I had to choose it.”

Granted, you did have to choose it, but how did you do that? The Bible says you were dead in your sins. What does dead mean? Dead means you were incapable of responding. You couldn’t choose, or do anything else. So how did you?

How you answer that question determines whether it’s Glory to God *Alone*, or Glory to God *in part*.

We need to think carefully about this, for God’s glory is at stake. R. C. Sproul can help us. Listen to his explanation of Soli Deo Gloria:<sup>7</sup>

At the heart of the sixteenth-century controversy over salvation was the issue of grace. It was not a question of man’s need for grace. It was a question as to the extent of that need. The church had already condemned Pelagius, who had taught that grace facilitates salvation but is not absolutely necessary for it. Semi-Pelagianism since that time has always taught that without grace there is no salvation. But the grace that is considered in all semi-Pelagian and Arminian theories of salvation is not an efficacious grace. It is a grace that makes salvation possible, but not a grace that makes salvation certain...

The biggest question any semi-Pelagian or Arminian has to face at the practical level is this: Why did I choose to believe the gospel and commit my life to Christ when my neighbor, who heard the same gospel, chose to reject it? That question has been answered in many ways. We might speculate that the reason why one person chooses to respond positively to the gospel and to Christ, while another one doesn’t,

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.ligonier.org/blog/soli-deo-gloria-god-alone-be-glory/>

is because the person who responded positively was more intelligent than the other one. If that were the case, then God would still be the ultimate provider of salvation because the intelligence is His gift, and it could be explained that God did not give the same intelligence to the neighbor who rejected the gospel. But that explanation is obviously absurd.

The other possibility that one must consider is this: that the reason one person responds positively to the gospel and his neighbor does not is because the one who responded was a better person. That is, that person who made the right choice and the good choice did it because he was more righteous than his neighbor. In this case, the flesh not only availed something, it availed everything. This is the view that is held by the majority of evangelical Christians, namely, the reason why they are saved and others are not is that they made the right response to God's grace while the others made the wrong response.

We can talk here about not only the correct response as opposed to an erroneous response, but we can speak in terms of a good response rather than a bad response. If I am in the kingdom of God because I made the good response rather than the bad response, I have something of which to boast, namely the goodness by which I responded to the grace of God. I have never met an Arminian who would answer the question that I've just posed by saying, "Oh, the reason I'm a believer is because I'm better than my neighbor." They would be loath to say that. However, though they reject this implication, the logic of semi-Pelagianism requires this conclusion. If indeed in the final analysis the reason I'm a Christian and someone else is not is that I made the proper response to God's offer of salvation while somebody else rejected it, then by resistless logic I have indeed made the good response, and my neighbor has made the bad response.

What Reformed theology teaches is that it is true the believer makes the right response and the non-believer makes the wrong response. But the reason the believer makes the good response is because God in His sovereign election changes the disposition of the heart of the elect to effect a good response. I can take no credit for the response that I made for Christ. God not only initiated my salvation, He not only sowed the seed, but He made sure that that seed germinated in my heart by regenerating me by the power of the Holy Ghost. That regeneration is a necessary condition for the seed to take root and to flourish. That's why at the heart of Reformed theology the axiom resounds, namely, that regeneration precedes faith. It's that formula, that order of salvation that all semi-Pelagians reject. They hold to the idea that in their fallen condition of spiritual death, they exercise faith, and then are born again. In their view, they respond to the gospel before the Spirit has changed the disposition of their soul to bring them to faith. When that happens, the glory of God is shared. No semi-Pelagian can ever say with authenticity: "To God alone be the glory." For the semi-Pelagian, God may be gracious, but in addition to God's grace, my work of response is absolutely essential. Here grace is not effectual, and such grace, in the final analysis, is not really saving grace. In fact, salvation is of the Lord from beginning to end. Yes, I must believe. Yes, I must respond. Yes, I must receive Christ. But for me to say "yes" to any of those things, my heart must first be changed by the sovereign, effectual power of God the Holy Spirit. *Soli Deo gloria.*

It's all about Him and His praise, beloved. The truths we're pondering are designed to produce praise for Him, praise from our lips and our lives. Yet there's more. Yes, God the Father deserves our praise because He blessed us, and chose us. Thirdly...

### III. God the Father deserves our praise because He predestined us (5-6).

He *decided beforehand* to do something with us. That's what "predestined" means (see its use in Acts 4:28). What did God decide before we ever existed to do with us?

Verses 5-6 "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."

The word "predestined" ("predestinated" in the KJV) is actually a participle in the Greek text and modifies the verb "chose" in verse 4. God *chose* us, having *predestined* us. So Paul is pulling out another section in the telescope of verses 3-14. Here he informs us that it was on the basis of God's predestination that He chose us. It's because God predestined us that He chose us, both actions occurring before He created the world.

A lot of people are confused by this wonderful truth. It's actually quite beautiful and breathtaking. We learn four important insights here concerning predestination.

**A. The purpose of His predestination is our adoption.** "In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons."

Adoption is a beautiful thing, isn't it? When two people say, "We're going to adopt a child. We're going to give a needy child a place in our family."

That's the decision that the Father made before time began. He decided beforehand—before we existed, before we ever thought of Him—that we would enjoy the privileges of sonship. He thought of us and chose to adopt us, unworthy sinners though we are, to adopt us and make us His children.

This is the purpose of His predestination. He wants adopted sons and daughters to join Him at the dining room table.

**B. The means of His predestination is Jesus Christ.** "In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons *through Jesus Christ*." That's key. Sinners can't dine at the table of a holy God. A holy God must punish sinners for their rebellion. So how can a holy God adopt sinners into His family?

Here's how...*through Jesus Christ*. The Father purposed that His Son would shed His innocent blood to provide forgiveness for guilty sinners (as explained in verse 7). His Son would literally die in their place and conquer death for their benefit. They would indeed become adopted as His sons *through Jesus Christ*.

That's why we must tell our friends about Jesus, beloved. There's no other way. "He who has the Son has life, but He who has not the Son doesn't have life (1 John 5:12)." "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God," says John 1:12. To become a child of God a person must believe in Jesus Christ, for adoption comes *through Him*.

My friend, do you want to enter God's forever family today? You can! How? By repenting of your sins, receiving Christ Jesus as your saving Lord, and believing in His worthy name. And once you're born into God's family, you'll discover that the miracle birth happened, as John 1:13 explains, because you were "born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."

It's the means of His predestination. He brings people into His family *through Jesus Christ*.

**C. The basis of His predestination is His sovereign pleasure.** That's what the end of verse 5 says, "In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, *in accordance with his pleasure and will*." On what basis did the Father predestine to adopt His sons and daughters? Was it because of something He anticipated they would do? Did He choose them because He knew that they would first choose Him?

No, not according to 1 John 4:10, "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."



So on what basis did the Father set His affection on us? Why did He choose to adopt us into His family? Paul says He did it *in accordance with his pleasure and will*. In other words, He did it because it pleased Him to do it, uninfluenced by any external influence. He predestined us to sonship on the basis of His own pleasure and will.

But to what end? For what reason did the Father predestine us to become His children? Verse 6 tells us. “To [note the purpose clause] the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.”

There’s the reason. God wanted to put His grace on display forever and ever. By nature, God is gracious. But how could He put His grace on display? Grace is demonstrated when you show *undeserved* favor. And that’s what God purposed to do. He determined to create a world, knowing that world would turn against Him and deserve His wrath. But out of that rebellious humanity He would adopt as His children a people who would not deserve it, whom He would reconcile to Himself through the sacrifice of His own precious Son.

Which brings us to one final thought regarding predestination.

**D. The result of His predestination should be the praise of the glory of His grace.** Not debating whether we believe it, but being overwhelmed by the reality of it. God predestined us to be adopted as His sons and daughters through Jesus Christ...*to the praise of the glory of His grace* that made it all possible!

When you’ve experienced the undeserved love of another, how can you refrain yourself from giving honor to the one who initiated that love?

There’s a great scene in *Saving Private Ryan* that comes to mind. The movie begins when an elderly World War II veteran visits the Normandy American Cemetery in France and falls to his knees in front of a gravestone. The rest of the movie tells the reason for the man’s emotion. James Francis Ryan was one of four brothers who each were serving their country in WWII, but within days and unbeknownst to James, the other three siblings were killed in battle within days of each other. When General George Marshall discovered that James alone was still alive, he ordered that James be found and returned home to his grieving mother.

But the problem was, from the resulting confusion of the Normandy invasion, no one knew where James was. And so the General ordered Captain John Miller and six Rangers from C Company to find him and bring him home to safety. And that’s what they did. Captain Miller and his men found Private Ryan, and in their attempt to rescue him, they all died. They all died so that he might live.

The movie concludes with Private Ryan as an old man falling to the ground forty years later in front of Captain Miller’s gravestone, weeping at the thought that he’d been given a life to live because these men had died in his behalf. He turns to his wife and asks her to confirm that he has led a good life, one worthy of the sacrifice made for him.

Even Hollywood gets the point. When you’ve experienced the undeserved love of another, how can you do less than live in ways that bring honor to that person? If that’s true of a fellow soldier, how much more of a rebel? We were rebels. We were enemies of God. But because of His grace, He blessed us in Son. He chose us in His Son. He predestined us in His Son.

And the only appropriate response is *Soli Deo Gloria*. Glory to God alone.

Make It Personal: When we embrace Soli Deo Gloria...

1. *We reject the sacred/secular dichotomy.* Which is the very thing many religious groups promote. They say some things are sacred (like a church building, or a monastery), and some things are secular (like your business office or classroom). Some activities are sacred (like singing hymns and reading your Bible), and some activities are

secular (like raising a garden and fixing a flat tire). And God cares about the sacred, so they say, and doesn't care about the secular.

Not so, said the reformers as they read their Bibles. "Whether you eat, drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God," says 1 Corinthians 10:31. Which means that everything we do is either for the glory of God, or it is not.

So yes, read your Bible and sing songs to Jesus. But also go to school, and work your job, and do everything else *solus Deo gloria*, for the glory of God alone.

2. *We reject man-centered theology and methodology.* Man-centered theology says it's all about you and me. God sent His Son to die because we are worthy. He needs us. He exists for us. The greatest sin, it's been said, is low self-esteem.

And man-centered theology leads to man-centered methodology. The seeker movement said find out what people want in church services, give it to them, and your church will grow.

I remember someone telling me when I first became a pastor, "You need to sing certain emotional songs after you preach to 'prime the pump.'" In other words, God made salvation possible, but it's up to us to get them to respond.

But Jonah 2:9 says, "Salvation is of the Lord." Singing the right song can't enable a sinner who is dead in his sins to respond. But the Lord can. Salvation is His work from start to finish. "From Him, through Him, and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory. Amen (Romans 11:36)."

So the need of the day is for God-centered theology and methodology.

Parents, can you imagine driving thirty hours across country, arriving at the Grand Canyon, walking over to the edge, and watching your kids take one quick peak and then ask if they could go back to the car and watch another DVD? If that happened, you'd give your children a quick pep talk on the importance of appreciating greatness, and you'd probably give them some education to help them appreciate the true greatness of the site they have the privilege to behold!

I think that's what happens in church far too often. We don't think we come to church thinking rightly about the greatness of the Person we've come to worship. We've got a tiny view of a breathtaking God, and if that's case, we need God to do what God alone can do.

Open our blinded eyes that we might see and know and rejoice in Him!

That's one of the reasons why we desperately need solid Bible study rather than frothy devotionals, for just like our kids, we need education to help us grow in our appreciation of true greatness. My friend, when we gather on Sundays, we're gathering in the presence of One of whom it can be said, "Glory to Him alone!"

3. *We rejoice in seeing God receive what God alone deserves.* When you're in the presence of something great, it's like a magnet to steel. You have to see it. You want to experience it. You long to know more of it. ESPN understands that, which is why they show "the play of the day" over and over, and you watch it every time too. We long to be amazed by greatness. We were created that way, to live in awe of the Greatest Being in the universe.

*Soli Deo Gloria.*