

Ephesians 1:3-6 "Giving Praise for the Gift of God the Father" **

Main Idea: God the Father deserves our praise for three reasons mentioned in Ephesians 1:3-6. This morning we want to make some general observations about the whole passage of Ephesians 1:3-14 and then ponder these three praise-worthy activities of the Father.

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.

Response: As we prepare to celebrate Christmas, let's give the Father what He deserves!

When I was a child around ten years old, my family headed west on a summer vacation. My parents, brother, sister, and I loaded into our Vista Cruiser station wagon and began driving from Ohio to Arizona. We were going to see the sites of our beautiful country, but our chief goal was the Grand Canyon. After finally, after nearly two thousand miles of interstate traffic and close to thirty hours of "I spy with my little eye" and other car games, we arrived at our destination. And were we excited!

You can't adequately describe the Grand Canyon with words. To say it's "big" is a severe understatement—it's 270 miles long, 15 miles from rim to rim, and about a mile deep. To describe it as breathtaking gets closer, but still misses the mark.

Upon arrival, we looked at the Grand Canyon from several vantage points up on the rim. And that was amazing, yet it wasn't enough. You can't just see the Grand Canyon. It's something you have to *experience*, at least that's the way we felt about it. And so my father, brother, and I took off on a walk down into the canyon, and the further we walked, the further we wanted to walk. We just *had* to reach the bottom. And so after I can't recall how many hours of trekking, we reached our goal, engulfed in that huge gorge, about a mile below my mother and sister who were waiting at the top (the fact that they were literally waiting for us is another story; we didn't tell them we were going to the *bottom*!).

The fact is, 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. It's 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. In fact, we were created that way, to live in awe of the Greatest Being in the universe.

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 compared with the triviality of another DVD!

I think that's why people yawn in church. Strike that. I think that's why **I myself** go through the motions far too often at church. I 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, it's no wonder why church bores us.

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, "There is none greater!"

And what happens on far too many Sundays happens at Christmas, too. Far too many people are not amazed by the greatness of the person and event we celebrate at Christmas. So God's Son was born in manger. Cute, sure. Inspiring, sort of. But breathtaking? It ought to be. Why then isn't it? It's because we don't grasp the true greatness we're beholding in the event called the incarnation.

God became a man. That should raise some questions for us, like... Who is this God? Why did God send His Son into the world, and what did His Son accomplish by robing Himself with human flesh anyway? We often think about Christmas from the human perspective—what it meant for Mary and Joseph, for the shepherds and later for the magi. But what did Christmas mean *to God*, and specifically I mean *to the Triune God*?

We find the answers to those and a host of other related questions in the passage we're going to consider this week, and the Lord willing, for the next two Sundays. Our text is Ephesians 1:3-14, but I

want you to know at the outset we're not coming to this text merely for information. The text itself makes it plain that the information we're going to learn about God should result in something in our lives, and it's not to get back in your car and watch your DVD. What's the proper response to true greatness? You're going to find out shortly.

I've entitled this series, "*A Trinitarian Christmas*," for reasons I'll explain more fully in a moment. To begin, we need to make some general observations about the whole passage of Ephesians 1:3-14.

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.

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. Think of it this way. In the passage before us, the apostle is giving us three reasons why we ought 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)

That's the skeleton of the text, and we're going to take a close look at the flesh that Paul puts on those bones in our series. But I want you to see right up front the goal of this doxology. There's one purpose clause that Paul repeats three times in this 200 word sentence. Take a look and you'll see that after highlighting God the Father's activity, Paul states in verse 6, "*to the praise of His glorious grace.*" Then after highlighting God the Son's activities, Paul states in verse 12, "*for the praise of His glory.*" And 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. You'd better not go back to your DVD player in the car, my friend, not after what we're about to learn. Once we see the greatness of the Triune God, there's only one fitting response. It's

to live *for the praise of the glory of the grace* of this majestic, rebel-saving God!

I'm convinced that Ephesians 1 is a great Christmas text, for this passage helps us see that there's a lot more giving associated with Christmas than most people realize, *Trinitarian* giving! We're going to look at the Father's gift this week, the Son's gift next week, and the Holy Spirit's gift in two weeks. In verses 3-6, we discover that God the Father deserves our praise because of three activities He did in our behalf.

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? Primarily material blessings. 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 spirit in 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."^[1]

Beloved, please beware of the preacher who promises you quick ways to get God to prosper your bank account. Does our Father prosper His children with material blessings? Sometimes. But not always, as Paul himself affirmed elsewhere, "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty (Phil. 4:12)."

The blessings that our Father has given to all His children are *spiritual* blessings. 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—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).

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. On the other hand, 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 expound 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 (that's not a hint, just an illustration!). 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. You know, two girls in college, rising cost of food. 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 throw a temper tantrum at work just like your unsaved peers do when they don't get their way. And you'll let the sinking economy 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 stock market tumbles, 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 resolve to say no more and

no less than God has said about this amazing doctrine in His Word, and you'll be just fine, and He'll 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 our 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).^[2]

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*. 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 you. It's why He set His affection on you 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.

But 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*!

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, 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, even frightened 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.*"

I read that and it reminds me of an announcement that Aaron and Laurie Cook made to our church family last Sunday evening. "We're going to adopt a child," they shared. "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 that we would become His adopted sons and daughters. 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 decided to adopt us, unworthy sinners though we are, to adopt us and make us His children. That's the purpose of His predestination. He wants 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.* He purposed that His Son would become a substitute (as we'll see in next week's text), that His Son would shed His innocent blood so that guilty sinners might receive His forgiveness. His Son would die in their place and conquer death for their benefit. They would become adopted as His sons *through Jesus Christ.*

That's why we must tell the world, 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*.

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 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? Was it because He knew they would believe in Him, and so He responded to their anticipated belief? 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, beloved? 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 will 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.

Our response to these realities should be twofold.

1. *We must make sure that we are putting our total trust in God's grace.* Not our goodness, for we have none. It's His grace, my friend. That's where our trust must be, in the saving grace of a sovereign God!

2. *We ought to be looking for ways to bring attention to God's grace.* That's why the Father blessed us, chose us, and predestined us, so we would live for the praise of the glory of His amazing grace!

How do you bring attention to His grace? For starters, believe it. Affirm it. Then sing about it in a moment. Then when you leave this room, tell others about it. There is a God who saves undeserving sinners through His Son! But don't just use words. Bring attention to His grace by the way you live. Be filled with grace in the way you treat people. Give them a taste of your Father's grace so they'll want more!

Response: As we prepare to celebrate Christmas, let's give the Father what He deserves!

No passage explains the wonders of the Father's sovereign love any more fully than Romans 8:28-33. Let's conclude by pondering this amazing announcement: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? 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? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies."

**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.

[1] Charles Hodge, quote taken from John Stott, p. 33.

[2] For other biblical writers, see 1 Pet. 1:1-2 and 1 John 4:10.