

Ephesians 1:3-14  
July 15, 2018 – 8<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

## Begin and End with Praise!

‡ Chosen...not frozen (vv.3-10)

‡ Chosen...well spoken (vv.11-14)

In the Name of Jesus our wise and insightful Savior, dear children of God:

If you've ever watched world class athletes perform, they make it look easy, don't they? Then watch children try to imitate their moves, and it may seem comical – until you try. So it is with God's Son our Savior in the Gospel. Last Sunday (Mark 6:1-6) Jesus endured bitter opposition from relatives in His home town of Nazareth. He leaves amazed at their unbelief, but then goes right to work **“teaching from village to village”** all around Galilee. He makes it look easy, still reaching out to His townsfolk by miraculous grace. Jesus trusts God's Word to work because He keeps working God's Word. Jesus' twelve disciples in today's Gospel (Mark 6:7-13) will have to rely on God's Word to work a kind reception for bare necessities like food and shelter. Jesus is teaching us to sow the seeds of the Gospel by telling everyone we can, but then leave the results to Him. Amos in our Old Testament lesson (7:10-15) was rejected and told to go back home. But God knows who belongs to Him. To rely on this fact brightens our lives to reflect new life in Christ. Trusting Jesus, each day we can **Begin and End with Praise!**

‡ Chosen...not frozen (vv.3-10)

This is where it gets personal. How do you know at the end of the day that God still wants you to come back to Him in prayer and **Praise**? Maybe it was another day of doubts when you kept wishing for a stronger faith that seemed far away. Maybe you were harsh with your wife or disrespectful to your husband or disobedient to your parents. Maybe the way others treated you made you wonder if God still cares. “Does He really want me in His family? Does He want me to go to heaven?” **Frozen** – with fear?

Then you get a letter in the mail. Not just a text or an email, but a long, carefully written epistle that not only feels good in your hands but warms your heart. Did you catch the very first word? **Praise!** **“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.”** (NIV84) Maybe you're uncomfortable that the first word is translated, **“Blessed,”** by the KJV and EHV. Sometimes we feel like John the Baptist saying he needed sinless and holy Jesus to baptize him. We need God to bless us. So why are we blessing God? Literally the original Greek word means to *speak well of* someone. But the idea also includes wanting their plans to succeed. When God's plans succeed, you win. **“Bless we the Lord”** delivers fearless living.

God's warehouse in heaven is set up to distribute all the fruits of the Spirit right to your heart and home: **“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control”** (Galatians 5:22f NIV84) – everything you need to succeed day by day. Faster than Amazon could deploy a drone, the Holy Spirit opens the warehouse and wings your way with rich supplies for soul and spirit. Don't worry about a bill. Your Brother Jesus paid already. Your membership was established before the world began. God the Holy Spirit delivers day and night. **Praise** – yes! And **bless** God's plans!

**“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. 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. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.”** (NIV84) The debt of sin we could not pay, Jesus paid with His blood. Like slaves set free in the market place, God adopted us as His

children with the full rights of sons because that was His desire and purpose. God's grace does not depend on what you think or feel or how you react to it. God did the choosing – not you – and God chose to chart your life in order to bring *his glorious grace* home to your heart. Every day is mapped out, plotted for maximum blessing to bring the freshest, tastiest fruits of faith to bloom in your life.

Note: You were **Chosen...not frozen**. Some talk of “irresistible grace” or “once saved, always saved.” That’s not what God says. He warns your sinful nature about falling away. But He warms your new heart with comfort that He has always known you by name, always planned to make you His own, always worked to bring you to Himself in peace. He has done this by revealing a *mystery*, a divine truth we could never have discovered ourselves. For your days and nights to **Begin and End with Praise!** God wants you to know a secret. *“He made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment – to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.”* (NIV84)

Let’s say you’re planning a family reunion. First, everyone needs to know *when* it will be held. Second, everyone needs to know *where* they’re supposed to go. Time and place may all depend on who’s *paying* for it. But then one of your rich relatives writes, “Ya-all come up now. Plenty of room at my place. Tickets enclosed, spending money too. Don’t worry about food – my grill is set up and ready for steaks or chicken “on the barbie.” Wine and beer, I’ve got that too. Just come with your family, and I’ll be glad to welcome you.” See how it all comes together in Christ? *Right time: last trumpet; right place: glories of heaven; fully paid: Jesus’ blood; cooking: Christ will serve.* Just pretend you’re a prime steak: **Chosen...not frozen.** Enjoy the light of Christ to **Begin and End with Praise!**

### ✠ **Chosen...well spoken (vv.11-14)**

“To be honest with you....” Don’t you wonder if someone says that, “What? Have you been lying to me before?” God is always honest with us. You can trust your time and eternity to Him because His Word is **well spoken**. For you, the **Chosen**, everything is said as needed for your heart and home.

Whenever the Holy Spirit speaks of predestination, it’s in a context of comfort. You’re hearing one of the finest examples in this first chapter of Ephesians. But if I told you another place is Romans 8, maybe your eyes would light up because you know, “Romans 8 is the Great Victory Chapter.” Comfort!

You see, God speaks of predestination as knowing someone beforehand and directing their life. But predestination always moves in only one direction. God never chooses to damnation. Listening to this is prime evidence that God has you going the way He wants for blessings and peace with Him forever. Think of your heavenly Father rubbing His hands together, high-fiving Jesus and the Holy Spirit. And all in sync God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – says: “I love it when a plan comes together!”

*“In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession – to the praise of his glory.”* God has your soul like a brand new car, sealed by the Holy Spirit and protected as His investment. He caused you to hear, to believe, to be saved – guaranteed.

Imagine you’re on the pitching deck of a boat in stormy seas. Soon your vessel will disappear into the deep. From high above beams a bright spotlight. Every now and then you hear powerful rotor blades cutting the salt spray. One by one you and your crew are lifted to safety. Sadly you realize there’s nothing you could do for the members who abandoned ship too soon or ignored all calls for assembly. They partied below decks while you waited for rescue in bad weather. Tired and soaked with hope, you rise to the rescue chopper. On board you look into the kindest eyes you’ve ever seen and realize it’s the face of your best Friend from childhood. Warm and safe at last, bless God for **Praise** unending. Amen.

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