



I knew it would happen eventually, but my gambling addiction has finally caught up with me. About two weeks ago I received this voicemail on my phone. I have an app that converts the voicemail to a text and sends me an email. Here's what I found in my inbox.



New message from: [REDACTED]

Yeah Dave this is Roger. Need a card player Chris can play this afternoon so if you can make it. Give me a call. Alright. Thank you.

I was half tempted to call Roger and tell him I'd love to play cards with them. Except my name is not Dave and I don't know who Roger and Chris are. I thought it was a hilarious call for a wrong number. Something tells me they were not going to be playing Uno that afternoon. I highly doubt that it was high stakes poker game but there was probably some money exchanged among them during that game.

Playing cards is harmless but gambling is a serious matter. It is very easy to get entangled and even addicted at some level. I know a guy who started betting on sports and he is attracted to the long shot odds. If he bet \$500 on the underdog he could win \$2000. That's very dangerous but also very enticing. That's how a true addiction can get started.

Gambling is not always risking money. Here's a good definition of gambling: Risking something of value now to gain something of greater value in the future with no guarantee of success. By this definition, even buying a house is a gamble. You gamble by hoping that you did not just buy a money pit. You gamble by hoping that the housing market will not crash, like it did in 2008. Karen's brother still owns a house in Michigan that he can't afford to sell because it is so far under water still. In this definition, there is all kinds of gambling. Starting a business is a gamble. Planting corn is a gamble. Using our broader definition, most of life fits into this definition. There are lots of risks but no guarantees.

But I love the gamble of a Filipino student I met on Tuesday night when we went to Bridgepoint. We went there to help them enjoy a night of ice skating but also have lots of conversations with

them and to pray for opportunities to share the gospel. I shared the gospel with a group of five students, two of whom were believers. One girl named Sheena told me how badly she wants to be a missionary. She feels called to be a missionary in Bangladesh to share the gospel and to fight child trafficking. But she has a serious obstacle in front of her. In the Filipino culture it is very common for parents to make enormous sacrifices to raise their children and give them the best chance for success in life. Sheena's mother made great sacrifices for her and now Sheena feels an obligation to pay her mother back and take care of her as she grows old. Rather than give her a little money over a long period of time she hoped to give her one large lump sum all at once so she could then go to the mission field. She took a gamble by applying to enter this program because they only take the upper level students. She was already working two jobs and was looking for a third job which would bring her to nearly eighty hours per week. She is working herself to exhaustion to save up money for her mother. You could say that she is fulfilling the definition of gambling. She is risking something of value now—her time and her health—to gain something of greater value in the future—the mission field—but with no guarantee of success.

Life is like this, isn't it? My taxes are due tomorrow and I've waited until the last possible day to send that check. That's guaranteed—death and taxes—as the saying goes. But little else is guaranteed. But as believers, we do have an absolute guarantee—our future resurrection. I haven't read this passage in a couple of weeks so let's pick up at verse seven.

7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

11 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, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. 13 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, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

1. The resurrection is our inheritance.

This is resurrection morning when we celebrate Jesus' resurrection and his victory over sin and death. Of course we should celebrate the resurrection since it is the pinnacle of human history. Those of you who know Tim Chaffey may have seen his video on Facebook. In the video they challenged believers to make sure to include the resurrection when you share the gospel. I considered it an important challenge as we do often almost 'skip over' Jesus' resurrection and get to the forgiveness of sins part. It's kind of strange that we do this and I know I've done it myself, because the resurrection is the linch pin in the gospel. Without it, everything falls apart. Without it, there is no forgiveness of sins.

As all important as the resurrection is, it was not the end game. The resurrection was not the end but rather a means to an end. Jesus was raised from the dead so that you and I can be raised from the dead. And I don't just mean in a spiritual sense. Far too many believers forget that the end goal of our salvation is the resurrection of our physical bodies. Our resurrection is the completion

of our salvation. Our resurrection is our inheritance. This passage promises that “we have obtained an inheritance.” The inheritance is already ours. Notice the past tense. We have obtained it. It is already assigned and guaranteed to us.

Our ultimate inheritance is not a what but rather a who. Jesus is our true inheritance but our resurrected bodies will be the way that we experience Jesus. Just as Jesus rose from the dead and is in a glorified body, so will all believers be raised to life and live in glorified bodies.

2. The resurrection fulfilled the mysterious plan of God.

making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

Paul said that God has made known to us the mystery of his will. But whenever we see the word mystery in the Bible we tend to freeze up. What is a mystery anyway? Is it like a mystery novel, like an adventurous story? Is a mystery like something mystical, like the occult, something hidden, that we may never know? There are certain things about God that we just cannot wrap our minds around. That’s why we freeze up. The Bible is enough of a mystery at times we don’t like it when it suddenly announces, “OK everyone, this next part is very mysterious. You may as well close your Bible because you probably won’t understand it anyway.” It’s kind of like sitting in an advanced calculus class and the professor says to the class, “Just so you know, the next test will cover things I don’t even understand. Good luck.”

That’s why we freeze up or tune out when we see the word mystery. But here’s the part you need to know. When Paul uses the word mystery he also explains the mystery. Mysteries are not so mysterious once Paul explains them. There are no cliffhangers here. For example, Col. 1.26 reads, “the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints.” In the next verse Paul revealed the mystery, which happens to be the same mystery in this passage. To get the answer to this mystery, we need to jump to chapter 3.

For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— 2 assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. 4 When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. 6 This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

That’s it. It’s spelled out as clear as it could be—the gospel is for the Gentiles as well as the Jews. If you were living during the times of the Old Testament, the mystery that has now been revealed was not obvious to you. There were always hints of it. The Genesis 12 blessing to Abram included a wider blessing, “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” When God first spoke to Abram about becoming a great Jewish nation there was a foreshadowing of a greater blessing—all the families of the earth shall be blessed. So there was a promise of greater blessing extending beyond the Jews but had you lived in ancient times, this wider blessing would not have been very obvious to you. Even from our perspective, as we read the Old Testament, this wider blessing to the Gentiles doesn’t exactly jump off of the page. There are numerous examples but as Paul wrote in chapter

three, they were *not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit*. It was revealed but it was mostly hidden.

This is also true of Jesus' resurrection. There are numerous Old Testament prophecies about the Suffering Servant and the death of the Righteous One, but there is very little about Jesus' resurrection. The clearest verse is found in Psalm 16:10.

BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES,
NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY.

Peter quoted this verse in his famous Pentecost sermon in Acts chapter two. He preceded the verse with this explanation. "God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it" (Acts 2:24). Peter knew that Psalm 16 was a prediction of Jesus' resurrection.

Paul also quoted from Psalm 16 in Acts 13.

"As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way:

'I WILL GIVE YOU THE HOLY *and* SURE *blessings* OF DAVID.'

"Therefore He also says in another *Psalm*, 'YOU WILL NOT ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY.' (Acts 13;33-35)

This was clear to Peter and to Paul but not to most people in their generation and those who came before. Jesus' resurrection and the fact that it would extend to all nations, tribes, peoples and languages, was a mystery mostly hidden for ages.

Here's another mystery which relates directly to our own resurrection

50 I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. **51** Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, **52** in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. **53** For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

But even here the mystery is explained. In order to receive our resurrected bodies, we must be changed. Our current bodies cannot be raised to heaven because but they must first be changed. That will happen instantaneously when Christ returns. Now even with this explanation, I can't say that I understand how this will happen. What if you been dead for a thousand years? Will God reassemble our original molecules into a new glorified body? We don't know and won't ever know until after it happens—and even then, it may not be explained to us. But we are told exactly what we need to know. But prior to Paul's explanation, it was a mystery. It's still somewhat of a mystery but it less of a mystery than it would have been otherwise.

All of this illustrates an important principle: God tells us everything we need to know but not that which we do not need to know. We understand the resurrection—Jesus' resurrection and our own future resurrection—but prior to Peter and Paul, it was little understood. Those generations did not need to know all of the details but they were told what they needed to know.

Do you see how this can apply to so much of our lives? Life is full of questions and we wish that God would speak more clearly. It is tempting to demand that God answer our questions. Sometimes we feel like we must have answers or else we can't move forward. God must tell us what we need to know or else we will lose faith in Him. But don't you see that the very thing which you think could harm your faith is the thing which God is using to build up your faith? God's plans are revealed at just the right time. Jesus' death and resurrection, the believer's future resurrection, all were largely hidden for millennia. But that does not change the fact that God's plans would be perfectly fulfilled. If it were necessary that you know the answers that you seek, God would tell you. He does not withhold good from his children nor does he reveal that which is not necessary. His timing and his plan are always perfect. This becomes even more clear in verse eleven.

3. We were predestined to be resurrected.

Our inheritance—our future resurrection—“was predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.” Do you see how one purpose statement is layered upon another purpose statement? We were predestined according to the purpose of him. His purpose prevailed and could not be thwarted. But more than that, his purpose was accomplished by “him who works all things according to the purpose of his will.” Our predestination was part of God's greater purpose but it was just one part. God does all things according to the purpose of his will. There is nothing outside of his sovereign power.

Paul is describing God's unconditional freedom. God does not consult us. He does not wait on us. He does not depend on us. He does not need us, he merely acts according to his own purposes and will. This does not make you into a tiny ant or a mindless robot but it does speak of his care for all people. If he did not possess this power, how could he have brought all of the players in the crucifixion drama together so perfectly?? If God were not sovereign, how could he have raised Jesus from the dead. If God were not completely sovereign, then he could not give us a 100% guarantee of our resurrection. We want to call our own shots but we must realize that our place of greatest safety is not trying to blaze our own trail but simply falling in line behind the Master.

4. The Holy Spirit guarantees our resurrection.

13 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, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

We want guarantees in life. Thirty years ago when we were first married, I was looking at some used cars under a tent in a parking lot. I expressed a little interest in one car so the salesman jumped into action. We sat down and went over the price. He wanted me to put some earnest money on the car to hold it. As an excuse I told him I didn't have a checkbook with me. He suggested that I could leave my watch as a guarantee that I would return with a full down payment. It was a \$100 Seiko watch that my parents had given me for Christmas when I was a teenager, so there was no way I was going to just hand it over to some random car salesman. But I understand that he wanted some kind of guarantee to hold the car for a while.

The future resurrection of believers is guaranteed not with gold, silver or precious stones, but by the Holy Spirit himself. He is our guarantee and the seal of ownership which guarantees our resurrection. Cows and horses are branded. Official king business is sealed with a wax ring sealed with the king's signet ring. But the seal by the Holy Spirit is a personal seal of ownership.

And we need a guarantee of some kind because the inheritance, while set aside for us, is not yet ours. The Spirit is our seal of guarantee "until we acquire possession of it." In chapter four, Paul wrote, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30). The day of full redemption has not yet come and neither has our inheritance. But just as surely as Jesus was raised from the dead, all believers will be raised when Christ returns.

The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance, the guarantee of our resurrection. Yes, it is 100% guaranteed, which is not just good news, but great news. If you have placed your faith in Christ alone, your resurrection is 100% guaranteed. You can "gamble" on that bet because it is absolutely guaranteed.

But the reason it's guaranteed is because the Holy Spirit actually dwells within us. God abides with us, which means that we have the immeasurable greatness of his power at work within us. It means that he has sealed our inheritance. When you sinned yesterday, it was covered by the blood of Christ but you also have the infinite power of the Holy Spirit within you to fight the next battle against sin.

Remember the Filipino girl named Sheena who longs to be a missionary? I said that she has no guarantee of success. And that is true. She has a hard road ahead of her and if you happen to remember to pray for her, that would be wonderful. She may not be guaranteed to get to the mission field but she is guaranteed success because she has the immeasurable power of the Holy Spirit within her. Her future is guaranteed by her resurrection and her present is guaranteed by his presence and power. Make no mistake. She is taking a gamble. She is giving up her time and her money now to get to the mission field later. She has an eternal perspective. She knows that her resurrection is guaranteed so it's worth the gamble.

In this light, we can create a new definition of gambling. Risking something of value now to gain something of greater value in the future with an absolute guarantee of success. If her resurrection is guaranteed, then this frees her up to risk all kinds of things in the pursuit of a higher calling. She can risk/give up her time, her fun, her finances, her very future. She can risk all of these because they when she "gambles" with them, she is still has a 100% resurrection guarantee. She is not risking all of these valuable things in order to get the guarantee but rather because she already has this guarantee. She is freed up to pursue God's calling on her life. This young Filipino believer could teach us a lot about what it means to have an eternal perspective.

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April 16, 2017