



## Part 2

*3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who **has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing** in the heavenly places, **4** even as he **chose us** in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love **5** he **predestined us for adoption** as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, **6** to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. **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**.*

We now have a mere sixteen days until the presidential election. I am guessing that our congregation leans Republican, I know we have some independents and a smattering of Democrats, but I trust that we don't have any undecided voters in our midst. Think about it—how can you be undecided about such an important topic this late in the game? The debates drive me crazy for several reasons, but other than the question, “who won the debate,” the most common question is, “Did it change anyone’s mind? Did any of the undecided voters lean toward a decision?” Come on! What is either candidate going to say at this point to persuade you? And if you are persuaded at this stage, you are probably making your decision based upon something frivolous and fluffy. You have to decide and then you have to elect your candidate.

You can argue about whether or not this is the most important election in your lifetime. I know it is for Ryan, because he gets to vote for the first time! But unquestionably the most important election in our lives is the one that God did from before the foundation of the world.

This is part two in our series on Lavish Grace—uncovering the immeasurable riches of Christ toward us who believe. Last week we covered the first of these riches—adoption—and the second is the doctrine of election. In the first chapter of Ephesians, there are three different words which convey this idea.

- *even as he **chose us** in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. (4)*

The word “choose” is often translated as “elect” and is the key word in the doctrine of election. It simply means “to chose.” Notice that the choice was made “before the foundation of the world.” Furthermore, we were chosen to be “holy and blameless.” And how does one become “holy and blameless?” Such a state can only be achieved by the miracle of new birth. Apart from the atonement and righteousness of Christ, we could never be holy and blameless.

- *In love 5 he **predestined us** for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will (4-5)*

To predestine means “to decide beforehand.” We are predestined to for adoption as sons. The adoption and entering into the perfect relationship with the father is what is in view here. Moreover, God decided beforehand that we should be one of his sons and daughters “according to the purpose of his will.”

Put together, these first two words more or less correspond to what you and I do when choosing our candidate. First, we choose beforehand whom we will vote for and then we cast our vote—we elect our candidate. Using these Biblical terms we could say that we predestine our candidate and then we choose our candidate. First we decide and then we vote.<sup>1</sup>

- *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 (11)*

If you have a NIV Bible, this verse says, “In him we were also chose, having been predestined...” Most other translations have the phrase “obtained an inheritance.” The idea here is the casting of lots. It is a word that conveys choice and obviously God is the one doing the choosing.

Not everyone likes this word election because it seems to place the choice for salvation on God. If God is deciding before the foundation of the world whom he will choose, then how does that effect our faith? Since the concept of election is all throughout the New Testament you cannot escape it so some people will say that God elects those who have already chosen him. In other words. I place my faith in Christ and it is on that basis that God elects me. First, I choose God and then he choses me. But I think you will see that this idea of election quickly loses all meaning of election. It would be like casting a vote for president on Wednesday, November 7<sup>th</sup>. By that time the election will already be decided and my vote would be meaningless (not to mention illegal!)

When election is understood as the sovereign choice of God, there are three wonderful results.

1. It eliminates all boasting. There is no way I can take any responsibility for my salvation. As the old hymn says, “Nothing in my hands I bring.” It reminds me that I truly am “poor in spirit.” It crushes my pride and self-sufficiency.
2. It increases God’s glory. If I don’t get any of the credit then it means that God will get 100% of the glory. However, if my decision is the deciding factor in my salvation, then I deserve some credit for making the wise choice.
3. It demonstrates God’s unconditional love for me. Verse five says, “In love he predestined us for adoption.” Love is the motive of God’s sovereign choice in election. This doesn’t mean that I was inherently lovable but just the opposite. I was so unlovable that God had to demonstrate his love for me by choosing to sacrifice his Son instead of me.

Do you understand a love that has absolutely no conditions attached to it? Most of us struggle to grasp this massive idea because all of our relationships have conditions hanging on them like a ball and chain. As long as the other person meets with your specifications and demands, you will always love them. IF they perform, THEN you will love them. What’s worse than having conditions attached to our love for others is the fact that we don’t even communicate what those conditions are. Not only do they have to meet your conditions for you to love them, but the other person has to guess what they are supposed to do. But God’s love toward us founded from before the foundation of the world is an unconditional love.

4. It increases thankfulness and worship. If I cannot boast and if God gets all the glory, then I am automatically more grateful for my salvation. I perceive his love as greater than I did before.

The next jewel in our spiritual treasure chest comes in verse 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.*

Seals have always been applied to official documents. As soon as Joseph was raised to second in command of Egypt, Pharaoh gave Joseph his signet ring so that he could place the official seal of Pharaoh on all documents. The bearer of the signet ring was a bearer of power. The seal made by the ring was a claim of the highest authority and everyone had to obey its inherent authority. The seal of the Holy Spirit first of all is a seal of his authority over us. The very fact that he can place a seal on us reminds us that he is God and we are not. But it is also much more than an impersonal statement of authority.

Some of you in this room have probably branded cows or pigs. Hot iron branding is still the law in some western states so it is not just an arcane practice from the Old West. Why would anyone want to place red, glowing steel on the hide of a poor defenseless animal? I am making it sound much worse than it is, but we know that a brand is applied in order to signify and prove ownership.

This is one of the reasons for the believer being sealed by the Holy Spirit. It is a seal of the Lord's ownership over us. Now at first glance, that may sound like the same thing as having authority over us but it's much more personal than that. Listen to the language that the Lord used in Malachi 3:17. "They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him." Yes, God does have ownership over us. He possesses us, but he calls us his "treasured possession."

I think even the most callous among us have at least a hint of romanticism within them. For example, let's say that two young people—Eva and George, are falling in love with one another. This is no casual relationship. Eva is falling hard and falling fast for George. She thinks that he is really "the one." She loves his hair, his eyes, he's got a great job, he goes to church, he's got a cool car. Eva thinks that George very well could be Mr. Right. What is more, Eva feels that George is falling for her just as much as she is falling for him. They have this mutually developing relationship that is really exciting. Even George and Eva's friends think they are perfect for one another.

Then one day Eva gets this mushy love letter from George professing his love for her and ending the letter this way. "Eva, I love you. You are my treasured possession." Do you think that Eva would like to hear these words from George? All of us want to belong to someone else. None of us want relationships merely for the sake of relationships. We want our relationships to matter. We want people to think that we are special. In short, we want to be someone else's "treasured possession."

You know how I know this for certain? Facebook. You only need to spend about fifteen minutes on the wonderful wizard of facebook to know that people are dying for decent relationships. Rick is single. Rick is in a relationship. Rick is single again. Now Rick is in a relationship. Good for Rick! Rick doesn't know what he wants but he thinks he can find it in a girlfriend. In a myriad of ways you see people's insecurities of all ages—children, teens and adults. You seem them longing for not just a girlfriend or a boyfriend, but a best friend, a new friend, a "I only know you because you're are friends with my cousins' boyfriend's uncle's third grade teacher" kind of a friend.

We want to be someone else's treasured possession. Yet we have the Father who adopted, who sent his Son to die for us, who sent his Spirit to seal us and he says to us, "You, my son, are my treasured possession. You, my daughter are my treasured possession. I value you above all created things." He values us, not because we were inherently valuable and lovable, but just the opposite. He values us because he chose to love us from before the foundation of the world. He values us because he placed his value on us. Do you see how that works? We are his treasured possession because we have been purchased with the righteous blood of his Son.

This book you are holding is a love letter signed in blood. But until you grasp this you will forever look for love in all the wrong places. You will place a value on your failing human relationships and at the same time be angry with God for not giving you better relationships. You will keep walking back to the dried up well hoping to satisfy your thirst while you pass by the stream of living water that not only can satisfy your thirst, but this well is a person who wants to satisfy your thirst because you are his treasured possession. The seal is not a thing or an it, it is a

person. You and I have not been sealed by the Holy Spirit but with the Holy Spirit. He is our seal. This is what it means to be sealed with the Holy Spirit.

But there's more. Paul said that the Holy Spirit *who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory*. First of all, notice that it is the Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our inheritance. The Holy Spirit did not place a seal upon us but rather is our seal and in the same way the Holy Spirit did not give us an guarantee of our inheritance, he himself is our guarantee.

But to have a guarantee means that we have not yet acquired our inheritance in a full sense. But we have to ask another question—what exactly is our inheritance? We are used to thinking in terms of inheritances as things, money mostly, and material goods. But the inheritance that is awaiting us is not an it, but a who—God. Yes, we will be free from pain and free from the burden of sin and death will be cast from our midst, but all of these extra benefits will be true only because God is there. The Lord's presence is what makes all of these other things both possible and present. Therefore, if our inheritance is a who—God, then it makes total sense that the guarantee of our inheritance is also a who—God. The Holy Spirit is a foretaste of the presence of God that we will experience for all eternity. It is like the old Fanny Crosby hymn.

Blessed assurance Jesus is mine.  
O what a foretaste of glory divine.  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God.  
Born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.

When we think about the Holy Spirit it can be a hard concept to grasp because most people tend to think of the Holy Spirit as some sort of impersonal force. After all, it is much easier to picture God as a Father and Jesus as a Son because these are fundamental relationships that we understand, but the Holy Spirit seems less like a person. It doesn't help when the King James Bible calls him the Holy Ghost. That's probably kind of spooky for a young child. You teach them saying, "Did you know that the Holy Ghost is inside of you?" If all they know of ghosts is what they see on TV and in the movies, a Holy Ghost sounds just a little bit better than a "regular" ghost.

The Holy Spirit is not a ghost, but he is a spirit being and the third member of the Trinity. He is fully God and he not only is the seal and guarantee of our inheritance, we are also baptized with the Holy Spirit and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. These are two more riches of the lavish grace that has been poured out on us.

The baptism of the Spirit is very often misunderstood. If you have spent any time in a charismatic church, you know that they define the baptism of the Spirit very differently. For a charismatic or Pentecostal, the baptism of the Spirit is a secondary act of the Spirit that happens some time after conversion. For some in these movements, your ability to speak in tongues is the evidence that you have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. For the more extreme Pentecostals, you can't even be saved if you don't speak in tongues.

But the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a secondary act of the Spirit later in life. It is what happens to every believer at the moment of conversion, as Paul made clear. *For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.* (1 Cor 12:13) You can also see the natural implication of Christian unity—“we were all baptized into one body.” Even though all believers do not act like we are unified, the fact is that in the spiritual realm, we are all one in Christ.

Being baptized with the Holy Spirit is more or less the same thing as being indwelt by the Holy Spirit. At baptism, he takes up residence in our lives.

*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.* (1 Cor 6:19-20) Jesus is coming again but in the meantime, the third member of the Trinity dwells within every believer.

Therefore, the Holy Spirit himself is a seal that guarantees our inheritance, we are baptized by the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit dwells within us. These are but a part of your riches in Christ, the lavish grace that God provides. But it is all worthless to you. It does you no good whatsoever unless you choose to believe it. You see, too many Christians are like the misers who stuff their mattresses with twenty dollar bills. What good is a pile of money going to do for you if it's stuffed in your mattress? Likewise, what good are these riches to you if you have stuffed them in your proverbial mattress?

Each of these truths first requires you to believe them so that you can act on them. Did you notice the immediate application of the fact that the Holy Spirit lives within you?

*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. **So glorify God in your body.***

Everything we do with our bodies—our physical bodies but also our thoughts, emotions and actions—either bring glory to God or they bring shame to his name. So if you actively believed that the Holy Spirit dwells within you, isn't it that much more likely that you would want to glorify God in your body.

More than that—all that you do as a believer comes from the Holy Spirit. The Spirit empowers you to fight sin; to be bold in the sharing of your faith; to be courageous when you feel like cowering in a corner; to fight against the daily degradation of our surrounding culture; to love your enemies when you'd rather turn your back. All power for Godly, Christians service comes from the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, the Spirit guides you into all truth. The Spirit illuminates the Word of God or else it would be impenetrable to you. The Spirit not only illuminates the Word but he gives you faith to trust what it says.

The Spirit equips you for service to the Lord by giving you spiritual gifts and helping you to develop spiritual fruit in your life. The God begins your faith, moves your faith forward and finishes your faith by being the seal that guarantees your inheritance.

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<sup>1</sup> I don't mean to imply that this God elected us in this precise order—first he decided and then he chose. That may be the case but I think the Bible doesn't necessarily separate them that cleanly. Predestination and election mean essentially the same thing.