

Behold Your God

Ephesians 1:3-14

BI: Everything in the Christian life falls into place as we learn to delight in, love, and worship the Lord our God from the heart.

Introduction:

This morning, since I was out of the pulpit last week and will be again next week, I want to take an aside from the gospel of John just for one Sunday. Part of the reason is that once we get back into the Gospel I want keep the momentum going without being interrupted. On the other hand, I also see this as an opportunity to remind us of the most important thing in the Christian life. So turn with me in your Bible to Ephesians chapter one.

Paul's epistle to the church in Ephesus is one of the most practical treatises on the Christian life found anywhere in the Bible. The second half of book covers such hands-on issues as spiritual growth, discernment, moral purity, personal integrity, anger, reconciliation, godly speech, forgiveness, sexual sin, humor, drunkenness, thankfulness, music, marriage, parenting, relationships on the job, spiritual warfare, and prayer. These are all important issues and we need instruction on them so that we can walk in a manner that is pleasing to the Lord.

However, Paul want's us to understand that the Christian life doesn't begin with mastering certain attitudes and behaviors. The Christian life begins with seeing, savoring, and delighting in the majestic and awesome glory of Almighty God. For the Christian

the main thing is NOT a definable ethic but a God-entranced worship. Worship is first. Not mission. Not evangelism. Not morality. The beginning of living for God is loving God. And the beginning of loving God is having a clear vision of the Glory of God.

A. W. Tozer wrote:

Without doubt the mightiest thought the mind can entertain is the thought of God ... That our idea of God correspond as nearly as possible to the true being of God is of immense importance... A right conception of God is basic not only to systematic theology but to practical Christian living as well. It is to worship what the foundation is to the temple; where it is inadequate or out of plumb the whole structure must sooner or later collapse. I believe there is scarcely an error in doctrine or a failure in applying Christian ethics that cannot be traced finally to imperfect and ignoble thoughts about God...¹

Long before Paul writes the first word about the Christian's life, he reminds us of the glory of the Christian's God. So stand with me and let's read Eph. 1:1-14

Read Ephesians 1:1-14

The book of Colossians is very similar in structure and purpose to the book of Ephesians. And in Colossians when Paul talks about how to begin to change and grow as a believer he tells us that path of legalism, mysticism, and asceticism are of no value at all. Rather (Col. 3:1), he says, we are to "keep seeking the things

¹ A.W. Tozer - *The Knowledge of the Holy*.

above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God”

Paul says the same thing in Romans 12, “Keep being transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Again, in 2 Cor. 3:18-19, by beholding Christ we are “transformed into His image from glory to glory.” I understand “beholding Christ” to be the same things as setting our minds on Christ. To behold Him is to think about what God reveals about Him. To behold Him means to consider deeply the truth about Him; who He is and what He has done. To behold Him is to delight in, to be satisfied, and sometimes overwhelmed by the majesty of His glory.

And that’s what Paul offers us when we begin reading his letter to the Ephesians. He doesn’t offer us philosophy, or psychology, or therapy. He simply expounds on the glory of God.

These first 14 verses are a stunning example of Paul in worship. It’s as if we come upon Paul just as he is poking his head through the clouds into heaven itself and hear him calling down to us the glory of what He sees.

These first 14 verses constitute kind of a spontaneous doxology to God from the apostle. It is a deep song of worship that strikes us almost as doctrine set to music. He begins his thoughts in verse 3 but then the more he thinks about the greatness and glory of God and the spiritual riches he has lavishly poured out upon undeserving sinners like himself (and you and me), the more enraptured he becomes by the grandeur of it all, and the more he gropes for words to express the inexpressible. In fact, if you were to see this in the Greek it would become apparent that Paul doesn’t even bother with sentence breaks. He just carries the whole thing on and on all the way through verse 14.

There are three things I think Paul wants us to do as a result of these verses. First, He wants us to Delight in the glory of God's Person. Then He wants us to Delight in the glory of God's Presents. Then Finally, He wants us to Delight in the glory of God's Promise.

First, Paul wants us to...

I. Delight in the Glory of God's Person:

1. Notice with me his first words in verse three. "Blessed be the God and Father our Lord Jesus Christ." The word "blessed" here is *eulogeo* from which we get the word eulogy, which is a message of praise or commendation. Paul is saying, "Let me tell you how wonderful God is!"

2. This is pure worship! Paul is inviting us to join him in worship! Why? Because this God is the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

4. When you talk to people about who God is you discover very quickly that many people who say they believe in God really believe in a god of their own understanding, their own making, or a god that someone else has created for them. But God does not give us the freedom to define Him as we wish. Who is God? He is "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." He is the One who in eternity past devised the plan of redemption for sinners before there was even such a thing as sin in the world. Again and again in the gospel of John we read that Jesus came because the Father sent Him.

(5:23) "He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him."

(5:36) "the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify... that the Father has sent Me."

(10:36) Jesus is the “Son of God” whom the Father “sanctified and sent into the world.”

5. There are some who view God as stern and harsh and judgmental and reluctant to forgive. Jesus, in their minds, however, is kind, gracious, and forgiving, but the Father? Not so much. Paul dispatches this kind of thinking with one stroke of the pen. The Father isn't a reluctant Savior! He is the One who initiated the idea of redemption from the beginning. It was His love for the world that moved Him to send His only Son into the world to save sinners. Why should we love, worship, and delight in God? Because He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was the initiator of our salvation. He is the One who gave Jesus His name, which means “Jehovah Saves!”

6. But that's not the only thing. The Father sent Jesus to be the source of our salvation, and that's fantastic! But the Father also sent Jesus to be the One through whom we are blessed with “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” Praise His Name!

- A. Did you know that everything God gives you comes from the Father, through Jesus Christ (or “in Christ Jesus”)? The Father is the sources of all “Spiritual Blessings.” Paul is not thinking of Physical/Material blessings. Yes, in one sense, everything we have comes from God, but the most important and valuable things are spiritual. They come to us by the H.S. from “heavenly places.” Why “heavenly places?” Because that's where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.
- B. What He talking about? He's talking about all the things that He has promised to those who love Him and eagerly await His appearing. And Paul us going to talk about those things specifically in the following verses. But first He

wants to get our focus on the person of God. He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- C. Beloved, Behold your God. He is not the God the world wants Him to be. He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and the initiator of our salvation. So let your soul delight in the Glory of God's Person. Second, Paul invites is to delight in the glory of God's Presents.

II. Delight in the glory of God's Presents:

1. By "presents" I mean gifts or "spiritual blessings." In the previous verse he called them "every spiritual blessing in heavenly places." But now He get's specific. So what are these presents from the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? (Note: there are four things I want to highlight here and you will have opportunity to identify the one that speaks most powerfully to you in your small group this week).

2. Frist: "He chose You" (read v. 4).

- A. The GK word for "chose" here is eklego, meaning "to call out." The form of the verb indicates that God is making an independent choice. He makes it by Himself and for Himself.
- B. This is in part what it means to be God. He has the freedom to choose as He pleases to accomplish all His holy will. For example,
 - 1) (Gen. 18:19) The Lord Chose Abraham.
 - 2) (Deut. 7:7-8) The Lord Chose Israel from among all the nations of the earth.

- 3) (1 Tim. 5:21) The Lord chose the angels of heaven (“chosen angels”).
 - 4) (Luke 6:13) The Lord chose the apostles by name.
 - 5) When God revealed Himself to Moses on Mt. Sinai He said, “I am the Lord, and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and I will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.”
- C. How many of you know that the reason you are a Christian today is because God chose you? You may say, “Well I remember when I chose Him” and indeed you did. But God’s was a completely independent choice. Yours was dependent upon the move of the H.S. in your heart redeeming your will so that it would desire what it should; namely, God. The apostle John says, “We love [God] because He first loved us” (1 Jn. 4:19).
- D. Three times in this text Paul indicates that God’s primary purpose in electing (or choosing) was “the praise of His glory” (6, 12, 14). Our proper response to the truth that God has chose us is to worship, adore, delight in and glorify God. When was the last time you were moved to worship and adore God because of the revelation that He chose you? We should often be moved to pray with David (Psa. 65:4), “How blessed is the one whom You choose and bring near to You, To dwell in Your courts. We will be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, Your holy temple.”
- E. O beloved, does your soul need a little jolt to help you help you “rejoice in the Lord?” What Paul is saying to us Behold Your God! Consider how good He has been to you who were dead in trespasses and sins. By the sheer impulse of His grace He (4) God chose you. Like a man who

chooses a wife and sets her apart for himself, so God chose you, set you apart, and declared you “holy” so that you could live in communion with Him forever. You belong to Him because He chose you from before the foundation of the world. Every spiritual blessing in Christ is yours because He chose you! Oh the joy! Oh the security! Oh the rest and peace we have when we believe what God has revealed. You belong to Him because He chose you. This is the first of God’s presents; the first “spiritual blessing” you have from Him in Christ. But there’s more.

3. **Second: He Adopted You (5-6).**

- A. Read v. 5-6
- B. Here Paul focuses on the incomprehensible and unconditional love of God expressed in our salvation. When God set His love upon us we were like sick, helpless orphans facing inevitable death. But even before our birth into the world God had a plan. The fact that He chose us to be His own is one thing, but to be adopted into His family is magnificent beyond description.
- C. The purpose of election is relational. Adoption is a family word. It is the means by which a lost and parentless child is legally and lovingly brought into a home to become a permanent member of the family.
- D. What does it mean that God has adopted us as sons? Historically, under Roman law adoption secured for the adopted child a right to both the name and the property of the person by whom he was adopted. Adoption was not just a term of identity, but also a term of privilege, rank, status and position. Paul uses the term adoption NOT so much to speak of our salvation in Christ, but our position in Christ. Since we are in Christ we are coheirs with Him. In other

words, whatever the Father has given His Son as an inheritance He has also given us.

- 1) Heb. 1:2 Jesus is called the “Heir of all things.”
- 2) Rom. 8:16–17 calls us “heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ....”
- 3) Eph. 3:6 says that we “are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel...”
- 4) Jam. 2:5 “did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?”

E. So perhaps now we begin to see why Paul speaks of adoption here. The whole point of the passage is to magnify the magnificent glory of God in the hearts of His people to the fullest extent possible. And it would have been magnificent if the extent of God’s love for sinners was merely the payment our sin-debt and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness. That would have sealed our salvation, but it wouldn’t have set the glory of God’s love on display in fullest measure. The fullest display of the glory of His love and grace would happen when instead of capturing His enemies and killing them for treason, He captured and forgave us. Then in a stunning and unimaginable act of lavish grace He adopted us into His family and elevated us to the status of His only Son and heir of all things, Jesus Christ.

F. Beloved, Behold your God! For just a moment try to focus your mind as you should and revel in the magnificent glory of the eternal Creator King who loves. He loves you. He chose you, and He adopted you into His family so that you

are heir of all things with Christ! And what prompted God to do all of this? (5-6) He did it “according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.” In other words, He did it to glorify Himself by doing good to us, through Jesus Christ (He is the “beloved”).

- G. Paul wants us to be deeply affected by these truths. That’s why he wrote in v. 18, “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.
- H. So I say again: Behold Your God! Forget about yourself for a moment and gaze into the majesty of the One who is committed to displaying His glory in a way that cancels all our demerits, makes you righteous in His sight, and elevates you to a status we would not even think possible for human beings to enjoy. But Paul isn’t finished yet. There is a third “present” or “spiritual blessing” Paul mentions. He chose you, He Adopted you, and...

4. Third: He Redeemed You (7-8)

- A. The question that naturally rises is, “What made us eligible for such the awesome promotion of status and privilege that adoption brings? If all this is true, how did I get?” Answer: Your adoption came at a great price and Jesus willingly paid it.

Read 7-8

- B. The word “redemption” means “deliverance by payment of a ransom.” The picture here is not so much that we were

orphans being cared for in an orphan home, but that we were orphan-slaves hopelessly subjugated to the wicked taskmasters of the flesh and sin. As Paul explains in chapter 2, we were (1) “dead in our trespasses and sins,” and (2) “without hope and without God in this world.”

C. That’s where Jesus steps in. Seeing us, as it were, on the auction block of sin, God looks on us with compassion and lays down the required ransom to set us free. And what is the required ransom? What is the only acceptable price for the purchase of hell-bound sinners who have lived their entire lives in rebellion against God’s rule? The Bible says, “The wages of sin is death,” so there could be only one acceptable ransom. Death. And that payment was satisfied when Jesus offered His life in our place.

- 1) Paul wrote to Timothy, (1 Tim. 2:5-6) “For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all...”
- 2) To Titus (2:13-14) He wrote about “Our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His possession,
- 3) And Peter said (1 Pet. 1:16), “You were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.”
- 4) Jesus Himself explained (Mar. 10:45) that “Even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many”.

- D. Now that's grace! But it's not "chincy grace." No, Paul says (v. 7) this is "according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us!" "Lavished" means "abundance," "more than enough," "excessive amounts," "overflowing." If a thirsty man asks for a glass of water and someone turns on a fire hydrant. That's lavish. If a poor man needs \$5 for a meal and someone give him \$1,000 – that's lavish. My friend, this is how God deals with repentant sinners. His grace has no limit, His love has no measure, His power has no boundaries that He can't exceed for our good.
- E. So I say again, Behold your God! What kind of God is this who willingly pays for the freedom of His enslaved enemies? What Kind of LOVE is this that God would treat His only Son as if He had lived my life of immorality, rebellion, and sin so He could treat me as if I was as good as God? But this God willingly did for us. He paid our ransom so that He could adopt us into His family to the praise of His glory.
- F. Paul wants us to be amazed by this; to delight in it; to feast on it and revel in the wonder of it all. That's why in 3:8 he gets on his knees before the Father and prays, that we "may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God."
- G. What are the "spiritual blessings" God has given us in heavenly places? God chose you. God adopted you. God Redeemed you. Fourth,

5. Fourth: He Enlightens You (8-12)

- A. Read 8-12
- B. The word for “wisdom” here is Sophia. It emphasizes the knowledge of ultimate things such as life and death, God and man, righteousness and sin, heaven and hell, eternity and time. This is wisdom from the mind of God.
- C. The word for “insight” refers to practical understanding of principles for everyday living. You see, God could have adopted us as His children and yet not opened His life to us. But He didn’t do that. He actually goes a step further and takes us into His confidence.
- D. You might remember in John 15 where Jesus tells His disciples, “No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.” Because we are God’s sons and daughters He reveals His purposes plans to us. He tells us what He is doing and He even gives us a significant role in bringing it all about.
- E. Because God has opened His mind to us, we understand the origins of life, the progressive plan of history, the culmination of time and life in the eternal. We understand that God is moving history toward an ultimate destination, namely (10) the “summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on earth.”
- F. These are things that completely befuddle the unbeliever. In fact, they often take offence at what appears to them to be our credulous confidence in the Bible. But the reason we are so confident is because God has opened the eyes of our minds so that we can understand, believe, and relish His purposes and plans - the great mysteries of life revealed in His word.

- G. But it's not just the really big things that He has revealed. God has also granted us all the divine insight we need to handle the practical challenges of life. Things like child training, and marriage, integrity on the job, reconciliation, and contentment in life, how to love, how to confront sin, and how to forgive. All of these things are an illusive mystery to the natural man. As soon as he thinks he's got it all figured out it slips through his fingers like sand. The theories of Dr. Freud are replaced by the methods of Dr Spock, who is displaced Dr. Phil. And nobody agrees with anybody else! Hellouise contradicts Ann Landers whose counsel is trumped by Dr. Laura, whose show is ridiculed by the so-called medical elite!
- H. You try to bring all this stuff together to map out a plan for how to approach life and you'll really get lost. Talk about a confused mess! But we don't have to be confused about these things. The philosophies of men come and go. As the prophet Isaiah put it, "The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of the Lord abides forever."
- I. How gracious of God to reveal His truth and bring us in on His plans. How wonderful that He chose us, adopted us, redeemed us, and enlightens us. These are some of the Presents of God for which we worship him.
- J. And that brings us to one more thing. Paul calls us to delight in the Person of God, the Presents of God, and now He calls us to

III. Delight in the Promise of God:

1. Read 13-14

2. Paul says that something happens when a person hears the message of salvation and believes. Namely, that person is “sealed” with the H.S.

3. A seal in Paul’s day was an official mark of identification that was placed on a letter or contract or other important document. It was usually made with melted wax that was impressed with a signet ring, which had an exclusive design. The seal identified the document with the person who wore the ring.

4. Usually, an official seal was a mark of Security, Authenticity, Ownership, and Authority. In this case, however, the H.S. is given as a pledge of our inheritance. He is, as Paul calls Him here, the “Holy Spirit of Promise.”

5. Now, what is the connection between the H.S. as a seal and the H.S. of Promise? I take this to mean that that God has made us many precious and magnificent promises related to our future with Him. But His promises were not simply give with words. He has sent His Spirit to indwell us as kind of a seal that guarantees that all God’s promises are true.

6. Another way of saying it is that God has given us the H.S. as the first installment of the infinite inheritance that will be ours in the fullest sense when we see Christ face to face.

A. How do we know that the promise the inheritance is real?
Because we know the H.S. is real and at work in our lives.

- He works first to convict us of sin righteousness and judgment by which He then administers the saving grace of God.
- He empowers us to love and serve others through our spiritual gifts.
- He gives us the wisdom of God as we ask for it from the Father.

- He enables us to forgive the unforgiveable, to love the unlovable, to serve expecting nothing in return, to speak truth even to our own hurt, and to do 10,000 other things that are contrary to our sinful nature.
- He enables us to believe and obey the word of God without considering the commands of God burdensome.
- He fills us with a love for God and bids us come and worship.
- In all of this (as Paul says both in Galatians and Romans) God’s Spirit testifies to our spirits that we are children of God.

F. Now we understand that we experience all of this in an incomplete and imperfect manner. I never love, serve, forgive, or worship perfectly. But the Spirit’s work of empowering me to do and experience these things however imperfectly is a gift of God to us. It is a foretaste of heaven. It is “earnest money” on the vast inheritance that we will receive when we see Jesus face to face.

G. Why is Paul telling us these things? Because He wants us to be overwhelmed by the kindness, grace, and love of God for us.

7. So I say to you one final time, beloved, Behold Your God. Meditate on Him. Delight in Him. Wonder and be amazed at Him. Worship Him.

Conclusion:

How do I “Behold the glory of God?”

1. You're are going to have to make some choices. You're probably going to have clear away some of the clutter in your life that does nothing to help you "set your mind on things above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God."

- Maybe a little less Facebook or Pintrest
- Perhaps cut back hours at work
- Maybe turn off the radio in your car so you can think about things that really matter.

2. You are probably going to have to add some new disciplines to your life. For example,

- You may want to wake up a little earlier so you have more uninterrupted time with God, to pray and to read His word.

Young David Brainerd, once wrote in his diary:

"Tuesday, December 9, [1741]. I was in a comfortable frame of soul most of the day; but especially in evening devotions, when God was pleased wonderfully to assist and strengthen me; so that I thought nothing should ever move me from the love of God in Christ Jesus my Lord. Oh! one hour with God infinitely exceeds all the pleasures and delights of this lower world."

- Memorize Scriptures that point you to His glory
- Read good books (Attributes of God, Gospel Primer, Valley of Vision, etc) to help fan the flame of your affections for God.
- Look for His glory in creation
- Look for His goodness in circumstances and talk to people about what you see.

3. I believe that as you begin meditating on the glory of God you will find that the benefits far outstrip your expectations.

C.H. Spurgeon:

Oh, there is, in contemplating Christ a balm for every wound; in musing on the Father, there is a quietus for every grief; and in the influence of the Holy Spirit there is a balsam for every sore. Would you lose your sorrow? Would you drown your cares? Then go, plunge yourself in the Godhead's deepest sea; be lost in His immensity; and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul; so calm the swelling billows of sorrow and grief; so speak peace to the winds of trial, as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead (C.H. Spurgeon on January 7, 1855) (Knowing God, p. 14)

BI: Everything in the Christian life falls into place as we learn to delight in, love, and worship the Lord our God from the heart.

Small Group Questions:

Oct. 4, 2015

“Behold Your God!”

- I. At the beginning of this message Pastor Dan talked about the most important thing believers must do in order to grow, change, and conquer temptation and sin in their lives. Read the following passages of Scripture and discuss what the most important thing is.
 - a. Colossians 2:20-3:2
 - b. Romans 12:1-2
 - c. 2 Corinthians 3:18

- II. Taking us through Ephesians 1:3-14 Pastor Dan identified three things that this passage should inspire to do. The first was that it should inspire us to Delight in the glory of God’s Person. In verse how does Paul identify God? Why is this something that should inspire us to worship Him?

(Salvation was initiated by God the Father. It was His great love that moved Him to send Jesus to pay the price for my salvation)

- III. The Second thing this text inspires us to do is to Delight in the glory of God’s Presents (gifts, spiritual blessings). Paul speaks

of three presents (or spiritual blessings. They are 1) that God chose you, 2) that God adopted you, 3) that God redeemed you, and 4) that God enlightens you. Of these 4 spiritual blessings which one is most wonderful to you and explain why.

- IV. The Third thing this passage inspires us to do is to Delight in the glory of God's Promise. What does it mean that the H.S. is the "seal" ("pledge" or "down-payment") on our inheritance? How does seeing the H.S. at work in your life encourage you to trust God's promises for the future?

(Seeing the H.S. work in my our lives should show us that God is serious about His promises. He promised to send us His Spirit and it is obvious that He did. But the H.S. is only the beginning of God's promises of future grace. All of His other promises bot for this life and eternal life are worthy of our complete trust. We can hang our very lives on God's promises).

- V. By way of application, what practical steps might we take to enable us to worship and delight in God more than we do?