The Triune God: How God Chooses, Redeems and Seals His Own

Ephesians 1:3-14

**Introduction**

 Good morning! Today as we honor the gift of fatherhood, we are going to take a few moments to look carefully at what Scripture teaches us regarding the perfect God who exists in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The concept of the trinity is found in Scripture going all the way back to creation when God spoke the world into existence. When God speaks during creation He always refers to Himself in the plural, for example He said “let us make man in our image” (Genesis 1:26). What we learn as we read through the pages of Scripture is not only that God is made up of three unique persons, but also that each aspect of God has a particular purpose. As we look at our passage today we will learn that it is the Father who has chosen us for adoption to be heirs with the Son through salvation, it is the Son who has redeemed us through His blood and then it is the Holy Spirit who seals us by guiding us in this life as we prepare for an eternity in the presence of God.

 Before we read the passage together, we need to understand the audience of the Epistle of Ephesians. The church in Ephesus is the audience of this letter. That author, the Apostle Paul, refers to these believers as “faithful in Christ Jesus.” The church in Ephesus is a strong congregation that is doing the good work of evangelism. The purpose of this letter is to encourage them to keep doing this good work and to help them understand what the ultimate result will be for their faithfulness. Our passage today comes from the first chapter where Paul reminds the people of the way that salvation happens and the role that each person in the trinity plays.

**Please read with me Ephesians 1:3-14: “3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He favored us in the Beloved. 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our wrongdoings, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight 9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He set forth in Him, 10 regarding His plan of the fullness of the times, to bring all things together in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. 11 In Him we also have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things in accordance with the plan of His will, 12 to the end that we who were the first to hope in the Christ would be to the praise of His glory. 13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of the promise, 14 who is a first installment of our inheritance, in regard to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory.”**

**The Father Has Chosen Us (vv. 3-6)**

 The first person of the trinity is God the Father. The Father is the One who knows all things, is the creator and sustainer of all things and as the Apostle Paul explains is the One who had chosen us before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him. When considering this verse, we understand that before God had ever spoke this universe into existence, He knew everything that would ever take place as well as those who would come to faith in Him. This speaks of the attribute of God known as foreknowledge. When we say that God knows all things we are saying that God is outside of time, so He knows what will happen in every situation because He can see history laid out before Him in a moment. Having this knowledge makes God the ultimate possessor of wisdom. When Paul writes that God has chosen us before the foundation of the world this means that God has desired that His creation has a relationship with Him and by choosing those who would come to faith, He has established this relationship with His creation.

 The concepts of election as well as foreknowledge bring up one of the most difficult topics to discuss from Scripture. The question is whether mankind can choose to come to faith in God or if this is something that has already been predetermined. This is a hard topic because if God has already chosen those who would come to faith in Him then where is the free will to make that decision? When we discuss topics like this, we are talking about an area of study known as soteriology, which is the study of how salvation works. In the history of the church there have been two primary positions taken on this topic. The first position is known as Calvinism, named after John Calvin whose writing developed this view. According to Calvinism “God sovereignly elects individuals to salvation based solely on His will, not on anything they do or will do” ([www.gotquestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org)). The view says that since man is flawed by sin, he does not have the ability to choose God and therefore it is the work of God who reaches into the life of that individual to begin the process of salvation. So, it is not by choice that someone becomes a believer in Christ and comes to faith, it is entirely the work of God. This position does have some critics to it because it removes any choice on the part of the person therefore free will does not play a role in the salvation of that person, it has already been predetermined.

 The other position on this topic is known as Arminianism which makes the case that God elects those who will be saved based upon His foreknowledge meaning that He knows beforehand who will eventually come to faith in Him or not. The major difference between Calvinism and Arminianism is that in Calvinism God is totally in control of salvation whereas in Arminianism God elects, but there is also human responsibility to choose to accept His offer of salvation. This view is focused more on the freedom and responsibility of humans to choose to accept God’s offer of salvation, however God already knows who will either accept or reject His offer.

 As your Pastor I would like to take a moment to share with you my personal view on this issue. Before I do so we all need to keep in mind that the way salvation works is in the hands of holy God and that as we have said so many times in our past Sunday’s together, He is the one who we can trust to do what is right and just in every situation. With that being said, I have to say that I find myself to be in the middle of these views. I do acknowledge that everything that happens in this world is under the sovereignty of God just as the book of Daniel has said several times. Nothing can happen without His knowledge and direction, but I also have to say that God in His Word has allowed His creation to choose whether to follow His ways or go their own way. Let’s use one example to illustrate this further. In the Garden of Eden when God placed the tree of knowledge in the center of it, He did so with the knowledge that man would sin and through that sin His plan of salvation would come to fruition through Jesus Christ. However, He still placed that tree there allowing Adam and Eve to choose whether they would follow His command or reject it. We know that Adam and Eve chose to disobey God by eating the fruit, which brought the curses of sin and death into this world. God knew what Adam and Eve would ultimately do, but He still allowed for them to make that choice. This is the reason that I find myself in the middle of these two views. Now, please understand that I am a fallible human like everyone else sitting here today so it is very likely that I am not 100% correct. What I can be assured of however is that God is in control and that He always acts justly.

 As we continue to verses 5 and 6 Paul says that we have been predestined for adoption as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ. Paul is saying that through God’s knowledge that He has brought us into His family to be co-heirs with Jesus. He has done this because of the good pleasure of His will. God has saved us because His will is good in the fact that He wants to have a relationship with us. He sent His Son to earth to live a sinless life and then die for the sins of all who come to trust Him as Savior so that His glory and love might be proclaimed through all of creation. When we think of being adopted it is just like a family taking in a child through adoption. When that child has been legally adopted that means the child is a legal member of the family who has access to everything that the other children have as well. When God adopts us as His children, we inherit the blessings of salvation and will be in the presence of our Father for all eternity. Once again, God’s grace is on full display offering salvation to all who trust in Christ even though there is nothing that can be done to deserve such grace.

**The Son Has Redeemed Us (vv. 7-12)**

 The second person of the trinity, Jesus Christ the Son, is also God and has fulfilled the plan of God by redeeming those who place their trust in Him. Starting in verse 7 Paul writes that we have redemption through the blood of Christ because His shed blood has paid the price for all sins that we ever commit against God. God has allowed this because He has lavished on us the grace that we do not deserve. Our lives are no longer defined by all the sins we have committed, rather our lives are now defined as forgiven sinners who have been restored into a healthy relationship with God.

 The role that Christ plays in salvation is central because “there is no other name under heaven though which we may be saved” (Acts 4:12). When Jesus Christ came, He made known the mystery of His will by showing us the Father in human flesh. At the Last Supper the disciple Philip asked to see the Father. Jesus responded by saying that those who had seen Him have also seen the Father. This speaks to the perfect unity that exists between the Father and the Son. All that Jesus taught and everything that He did was a perfect reflection of the will of the Father. The life He lived on this earth pointed people to the Father because He did all things to carry out the will of His Father. Therefore, when Paul writes that God brought all things together in Christ, he means that Jesus has made known to creation the full plan of salvation.

 As we see in verses 11-12 Paul says that we who trust in Christ have obtained an inheritance through Christ as well. What he is saying is that all who place their trust in Jesus Christ have received the promise of salvation and a place with Him in heaven. In other words, our future has been secured. We no longer must fear the grave or be afraid about what happens after this physical life ends. God has received glory because of the work of Christ and has given all those who trust in Christ the blessed assurance of salvation.

**The Holy Spirit Has Sealed Us (vv. 13-14)**

 As we discuss the last two verses of the passage today, we now will discuss the third member of the trinity, the Holy Spirit. We have discussed so far that God the Father has chosen us and is the creator as well as the sustainer of all things. The Son has redeemed us through His sacrifice and has made God known to humanity through His life and ministry. The third member of the trinity is the member that guides, comforts and instructs the believer in Christ. Paul says that the Holy Spirit has sealed us with God the Father and Christ the Son after having listened to the message and come to belief in it. Being sealed means that we are now under the guidance and ownership of God. He is with us through the Spirit as we read and study His Word. He also guides us in our prayers and strengthens us as we share the good news of the gospel with others.

 In all these ways the Holy Spirit is the comforter of our souls. In addition to all that He does for us and through us, Paul writes that He is the first installment of our inheritance. What he is saying is that when someone comes to faith in Jesus Christ, they are sealed with the promise of the Holy Spirit to guide them. This is the first promise, but after we have passed from this world, we will inherit the other promise which is hope for a future life with God in His presence. The Holy Spirit reminds us of all the things that Christ taught, and He helps us to understand the words of Scripture which are the words that lead to eternal life. In our lives today it is the Spirit that helps us to discern that which is from God and that which is false or from an unclean spirit. Discernment is a great gift that the spirit gives so we need to use the gift God has give as we work to build His kingdom here on earth.

**Applications**

 Let’s spend a few moments seeing how knowing the role of each member of the trinity has an impact on our lives today. As we said when we were discussing God the Father, what we have learned is that God has chosen us before the world began meaning that our lives are rooted in God’s eternal choice not based upon our merits or the things we have done. We need to remember that our loving God has chosen to redeem humanity who turned its back on Him. A vengeful or hating God would not allow anyone to be saved or to be in His presence. May we never forget that God shows great mercy and kindness in the fact that He has shed His own blood to pay the penalty for sin.

 Secondly, we discussed the Son Jesus Christ. He is our redeemer who has purchased our salvation through His shed blood. Not only has Jesus paid the price for sin, but as Paul tells us He has brought each of us into the family of God through adoption. You and I are now part of the family of God through the saving work of Christ. Once again, our lives have importance and matter because we have been created for the purpose of bringing glory to God. He not only has created us for fellowship with Him, but He also paid the penalty of sin so that we could enjoy that fellowship that had been broken. Life has meaning because of the Lord!

 Finally, we discussed the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit that seals us as a child of God and serves as the constant guide through this life. When thinking about the Spirit it is easy to think of Him as a kind of invisible force, but He is God’s personal presence with us guiding us to make certain that we stay on track as we travel through this life to our eternal home. This is the promise that God has made in His Word that He will always be with us and will never forsake His people. We can have confidence that we are in the presence of God while in the Spirit, so what we are called to do is allow the Spirit to lead us in the way of God allowing Him to work through us. The helper, as Jesus calls Him in the Gospel of John, is just that. He helps us every day as we do the work of ministry as a church family.

**Conclusion**

 As we conclude our time together this morning let us quickly review what the Apostle Paul has taught us in today’s passage regarding the work of the holy trinity. He tells us that God is the Father who has planned all things in the world. He is the creator and sustainer of everything that exists. The Son, Jesus Christ, has accomplished all the work that the Father gave Him to do making salvation and the forgiveness of sins possible. And thirdly, the Holy Spirit is the application and guarantee of the promise that God has given that He will be with us always guiding and comforting those who trust in Christ. The presence of the trinity is another reason why God is a merciful and compassionate God. He not only has created us and given our lives purpose, but He has redeemed us and given us the gift of help as we work to live in a way that glorifies Him. This is a good Father. As we honor all Fathers today may we also honor God our Father for showing such love and care for His creation.