

A Series on Ephesians
“To the Praise of His Glory” (Ephesians 1:1-14)
January 3, 2010 by Kevin Haah



I. Happy New Year!

I think as we approached the New Year, many of us made New Year's resolutions. According to one study, the most popular New Year's resolutions this year are:

5. Stop smoking
4. Reduce debt
3. Go on a diet
2. Save more money
1. Exercise more

Our family sat around the table around midnight of the New Year. We all shared our New Year's resolutions. Kaetlyn wants to learn Korean. Bennett wants to learn piano. Eliana wants to be a better artist. Grace said something about becoming more consistent in our family devotional time and exercising. I said something about running a marathon, and Grace laughed at me.

Now, at the same time, I have been meditating on Ephesians 1:1-14 this week. This passage and the resolutions I was making didn't jive that well. Most of our resolutions are about us, improving us, being a better us. But, Ephesians took me to a completely different paradigm, a completely different way to view life and the New Year. It was focused on something completely different. It was all about God. It was all for and to the **GLORY** of God.

Let's go to the Book of Ephesians.

- Now, some of you might be wondering why I chose Ephesians. I chose Ephesians because it is one of my favorite books in the Bible. One scholar called it: "the divinest composition of man." This book was John Calvin's favorite book. Another scholar said: "The understanding of the gospel in Ephesians challenges and redefines the superficial understanding of the gospel prevalent in our day." It is short but it is deep. It takes us deep into the mysteries of God. It reveals to us stuff that angels

even dream know about. We are going to take a few months to study this book. There are only 6 chapters but it is so rich in content that we are going to take it real slow. It's going to be meaty. It's going to challenge some of our superficial understanding of things. We're going deep! Roll up your sleeves and let's go!

To 1:1:

¹Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:

Grace and peace from God our Father and Lord Jesus Christ.

- Apostle Paul wrote this letter to “saints” in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus. Does this mean he wrote this letter to the saints, the super Christians, the really faithful ones? No. Saints means set apart. So, it just means that they were set apart. Also, the faithful does not mean faithful in the sense of being loyal, but in the sense that they are believers. It means that the letter was written to those who God has set apart and believes in Christ Jesus. So, Ephesians is written not to really high and up people; it is written to ordinary people like us. So, when you read this and you don't understand it, don't give up. It is meant for ordinary Christians. It is meant for us.
- Then, Paul starts a long “doxology” in verse 3 and ends in verse 14. It is actually in one sentence. We don't have it in one sentence but in Greek, it is actually one sentence. He is so passionate about God's glory, he can't stop. He keeps on going. He says:

³Praise 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.

- It starts out with giving praise to God because he has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Paul is writing from prison. We know that from later on in the book. But, he breaks out into praise. He is not focusing on his own situation. His chains. His lack of freedom. His oppression. He starts out with God and focuses on not the physical situation, but on heavenly blessings.
- What are some of those heavenly blessings?

⁴For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. (that's amazing! He chose Kevin Haah even before the creation of the world to be holy

and blameless in his sight) **In love** ⁵he^[c] **predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ** (he predestined Kevin Haah to be adopted as his son—we'll be talking more about this passage next week when we dive into the question of predestination), **in accordance with his pleasure and will** (it made him happy to do it—what's an amazing gift)— ⁶**to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.** ⁷**In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace** ⁸**that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.** ⁹**And he^[d] made known to us the mystery of his will** (he revealed to us his mysteries, which he said even angels hunger to know) **according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,** ¹⁰**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.**

¹¹**In him we were also chosen,**^[e] **having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will** (WHY, WHY did God chose us? Why did he predestine us? Why did he lavish all these gifts upon us? Why did he adopt us? And Why did he reveal these great mysteries to us? WHY??), **in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.** (why did God do these things?? **IN ORDER THAT WE MIGHT BE FOR THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY!!**) ¹³**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,** ¹⁴**who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession** (WHY DID GOD include us in Christ and mark us with the seal of the Holy Spirit?? Why did he give us the Holy Spirit??—**to the praise of his glory.**

- There is a lot of stuff here and we will dig into them next few weeks. But today, I want to look at this passage from the end. **WHY DID GOD DO GIVE US ALL THESE SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS? WHY DID HE DO WHAT HE DID? WHY? SO THAT WE MIGHT BE FOR THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY!** It is for His **Glory** that we exist, it is for His **glory** we have been adopted as sons and

daughters. It is for His **glory** that we have been redeemed. It is for His **glory** that we have been given the Holy Spirit.

What is glory?

- People talk about the glory of the sun, for example. The sun is dazzling. It's beautiful, powerful and radiant. Yet, it's not manageable. It's dangerous. It can burn you and kill you.
- Or people talk about that movie, Glory. It's about a black regiment in Civil War. And at the end, if you've seen the movie, everyone dies. What is glory?
- The word glory in the original language is the word meaning "to be heavy, weighty." Glory can mean weightiness in the physical sense--when you think about the glory of the ocean or the mountain—but, most of the time, it means weightiness in the sense of importance, magnificence, praiseworthiness.
- So, the glory of God has to do with the weightiness of God in the sense that his importance, magnificence, his praiseworthiness of his qualities and attributes are incomparable to those of others.
- Compared to the glory of God, everything else is like nothing. Compared to his power, everything else is like nothing. Compared to His holiness and goodness, everything else is like evil. Compared to his purity, everything else is like dung. Compared to his beauty, everything else is hideous. Compared to his wisdom and knowledge, everything else is like stupidity. Compared to his love, everything else is like murder and hate.
- It's like putting a couple of coins on a scale on the one side and a bulldozer on the other side. The glory of the bulldozer completely overwhelms the coins. It's as if the coins were not there. The glory of God cannot compare to anything because it is absolutely overwhelming.

- Just think for a moment about who this God is that we worship.
- Psalm 19 says “**the Heavens declare the glory of God.**” The heavens show us just how big, how huge, how unfathomably powerful and magnificent our God is. Just think about the size of the universe that God created just by the word of his mouth. We live in a galaxy called Milky Way. And our solar system relative to the Milky Way is the size of a quarter in the Milky Way galaxy the size of North America. And Milky Way galaxy is one of billions of galaxies. Our God is huge. We are tiny.
- Psalm 147:4-5 says: “**God determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name. Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit.**”
- Yet, this God cares for us. Loves us. He chooses us before the creation of the world! In love, he adopts us as his children. He came to this dusty planet and went on the cross to die for our sins to redeem us and free us from slavery of sin.
- Apostle Paul, right from the beginning, he starts out with a DOXOLOGY. Dox means glory and ology means a statement. This is a glory statement. He end this doxology by saying: TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY!
- In Romans, Apostle Paul explains the gospel of Jesus Christ, and then, he breaks out into doxology in 11:33-36:

33Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable his judgments,
and his paths beyond tracing out!

34"Who has known the mind of the Lord?

Or who has been his counselor?"

35"Who has ever given to God,

that God should repay him?"

36For from him and through him and to him are all things.

To him be the glory forever! Amen.

- When you think about how huge God really is and how little we are, and what he has done for us, we can't help to break out into a doxology: "For from him and through him and to him are all things. That means everything. Everything we have come from God, came through God, and it is meant to glorify him. Ultimately, everything is for the purpose of giving God glory.

In other words, it's all about God and His glory, and it's not about me. It's not about ME, MY family, MY stuff, MY job, MY health, MY, MY, ME, ME. It's about God and giving God glory!

This New Year, we need a lens change, a paradigm shift.

- We need to look into the right end of the telescope.
- We often look through the wrong end of the telescope and say: Lord, look at me. It's all about me. Look at my needs. The world revolves around me. God is out there to serve me. God is out there to answer my prayers. God is out there to bless me with a good job, a good husband or a wife, and a good life.
- We live in a "me-centric" world. i.e., everything revolves around ME ... my happiness ... my wants ... my needs ... ME!
- Let me ask you something: How many times a day do you think about God? What he wants. What he thinks. And how many times a day do you think about yourself? Your needs, your desires, your wants.

- Then, sometimes, something happens in our lives where it doesn't make sense anymore. God, are you out there? Why aren't you answering my prayers? Why aren't you giving me the stuff that I want? Why is this happening to me? Some of us start getting angry at God. We get bitter at God. That's the reason some of us walked away from God. God stopped making sense to us.
- Folks, life works better if you look at the telescope from the right side. It all makes better sense if we look at it from the right side and look at the GLORY of GOD, what He is all about.
- When we look up, we begin to see his glory.
 - begin to see beauty that we can hardly even fathom.
 - We begin to see love that utterly destroys our sense of love—love that was willing to come down here in the person of Jesus and live for a while among us so that we can behold his glory.
 - We begin to see his wisdom. The things that God has been saying to us no longer become one of the options, but the weight of his word, the glory of his word, begins to overwhelm other thoughts and opinions.
 - We begin to see his power.
 - We begin to see his mysteries.
 - We begin to see how huge he really is and how small we really are.
- And when we continue to look up, look through the right side of the telescope, we begin to see that God's number one priority is His Glory, that God is motivated by his glory, and that God wants us to share in his glory.

- God's priority is that He receive all the honor and glory. If God had a "To-Do" list, it would consist of just 1 THING ... "How can I reveal My glory?" "How can I receive the most glory? God exists to showcase GOD.

- Why did God create the universe?

Psalm 19:1 says: "The heavens declare the glory of God"

- Why did God create for Himself the people of Israel?

Isaiah 43:7 – "I created for my glory."

- What is God up to in history?

It is about revealing his glory to everyone on earth. Isaiah 40:5.

- Why did Jesus come to earth?

To show his glory. John 1:14 says: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

- So, what is the purpose of lives? Why did he choose us? Why did he redeem us? Why did he save us?

Apostle Paul put it this way in 1 Corinthians 10:31: "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

One author of the Perspectives Course reader put it this way: “But the ultimate value of their salvation is not to be seen in what they are saved from, it is what they are saved for that really matters. People are saved to serve God in worship.” People are saved to glorify God.

2 Corinthians 3:18 says: “**18And we, who with unveiled faces** (Paul is talking about Moses, how he had to keep his face veiled because he was reflecting the glory of God after his encounter with God but how this veil also symbolize an obstacle to understanding the true glory of God) **all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.**”

Our job is to reflect God’s glory. Not to seek our glory, but to reflect God’s glory. God is like the sun and we are like the moon, which merely reflect God’s glory.

- That’s why the Westminster Shorter Catechism, starts out like this:

Q. 1. What is the chief end of man?

A. Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

- I heard someone who said it like this: “I exist for God; God doesn’t exist for me. I need to live accordingly.”

Now, this truth is that God’s number one priority is his glory, not mine--takes us out of our comfort zone, our self-centered world. God is all about God. I so desperately want it to be all about Kevin.

- Some of you might wonder why God seeks his own glory. I think you are bothered because you are annoyed by people who are full of themselves, people who are show-offs, people who are so insecure that they need other people's compliments to shore up their own weaknesses. And plus, didn't the Bible teach us to be humble and not seek my own good?
- But, there is a huge difference between God and these people. First, God is not weak and he has no deficiencies. As we read earlier: "For from him and through him and to him are all things." So, God does not need to receive glory because he does NOT have any deficiencies. So, the superficial similarities between the insecure show-offers and God must be explained another way.
- Put another way, it's not like God created us in order to experience receiving love and glory for the first time. The Triune God has been loving and giving each other glory for eternity.
- John 17:4-5, 24 give us a hint of the interaction among the triune God:

4 I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

The loved each other, affirmed each other, honored each other for eternity. What we experience in drops, they experience in ocean full. So, if they don't need to be glorified, what is the reason for commanding us to glorify him? **It must be to share in their glory and love.**

24 Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

- A couple of thoughts on this might help you think this through. First, I don't think we should think of glorifying God merely as a duty. If you think about it, when we enjoy and value someone or something, we can't help but to praise that person or thing. *Every enjoyment overflows into praise!* People do it all the time. People praise their spouses, lovers, their children, their school, their favorite team. Why do they praise? Because every enjoyment overflows into praise. That's why God commands us to praise him and glorify him. It is a command to delight ourselves in Him. When we delight ourselves in Him, we can't help but to overflow in praise.
- Second, think about how we come to glorify anything. When we come to realize the reality of the glory, then we change our actions in accordance with that reality.
 - Let's say you have this dish you've been using to feed your dog. Then, someone who is an expert in ancient artifact comes to you and tells you that that dish is actually an 8th Century treasure worth millions of dollars. You've come to the realization of the glory of the dish. Then, you are going to give the dish its due glory. You're not going to use it as a dog dish anymore. You're going to cherish it. You are going to place importance, weight, or glory to the dish. It is completely natural
 - Someone told me that his life has completely changed. He realized the truth of the gospel of Jesus. He is coming to

realize more and more of who God really is—the glory of God. As a result, his life has completely changed. He quit something. He is starting something else. He can't get enough of God. It's because he is giving value, weight, and glory to where it is due.

- Our problem is that we often treat light things as weighty things and weighty things as light things. When we realize the true value, we can't help but to treat weighty things as weighty things and light things as light things.

- In the passage today, Paul is saying that when you come to realize the glory of the spiritual blessings in Christ that we have been given, you can't help but to glorify Him. We'll be looking into what these spiritual blessings are.

Now, how have we been doing? How have we responded to God's glory? How are we going to approach this new year? For His glory or for ours?