

Loved with Everlasting Love Part 3

By Paris Reidhead*

We are considering the sovereignty of God as it is set forth, at least for the time, in Ephesians the first Chapter. Let us pray. Our Father we asked that Thou will open the eyes of our understanding, that the eyes of our understanding maybe opened that we may know. There is so much that Thou has prepared and has for us. And Father we would have a holy greediness, a desire to have and appropriate and use. Everything in Thy grace Thou did see we need to bring glory and honor and praise to the Lord Jesus Christ. And so to that end we ask now that Thou would speak to our hearts as we think, as we study, as we listen, and speak, grant our Father that we will sense that Thou art here ministering directly to us. We ask it in Jesus Name and for His sake. Amen.

What we have seen so far in Ephesians might be summaries in this fashion. Before the foundation of the world, God is Father planned and purposed our salvation. In the fullness of time, He sent His Son the Lord Jesus Christ and the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross provided everything that the Father had planned and purposed. Now, the Holy Spirit, God the Holy Spirit, is ready and willing and certainly abundantly able to perfect in us everything that the Father planned and purposed and the Son provided. Thus it is that the trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all involved in our salvation.

But if you will notice verse 6, "Having" in verse 5, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." (Eph. 1:5) What was the outcome? "To the praise of the glory of his grace." (Eph. 1:6a) That's what it is all about. That we should be "to the praise of the glory of his grace."

Now that's why the Father planned what He planned. That's why He purposed all that He purposed. That we should be "to the praise of the glory of his grace." Now He didn't put in any unnecessary. He didn't leave out anything that was necessary. Absolutely everything required for us to be "to the praise of the glory of his grace," is included. "To the praise of the glory of his grace."

In verse 12, we have to go back to verse 11, "In whom, [Christ] also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ." (Eph. 1:11,12) Everything that the Son provided by His death, His life and His death was again that we should be "to the praise of the glory of his grace." And in verse 14, we are speaking now of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, let me read verse 13 first, "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." (Eph. 1:13,14)

So what's the ultimate purpose? The glory of God. "To the praise of the glory of his grace." Therefore, any thought that salvation is basically you and me centered, we are definitely involved, but the end, the ultimate end of it all is the glory of God. Therefore for one to say, "Well, I am forgiven. I am pardoned. I know that if I die, I'll go to Heaven. There are other things in the Scripture. There are other heights for the eager to climb, other plateaus for the zealous to reach. But as far as I am concerned I am satisfied. I am forgiven. I am pardoned. I know that if I die, I'll go to Heaven." You know there is something dreadful about that, isn't it? It is a perversion. It's missing the whole point that God was so careful to explain here that everything that as Father He planned and purposed, everything as Son He provided, and everything now that His Holy Spirit He wants to effect and complete in us is to the end, "to the praise of the glory of his grace." Not our comfort, not our convenience, not our pleasure, but to His glory, His praise.

You know there is a way that you can preach the Gospel with about the same mortal quality as in instructing someone on how to hold up a filling station. Why does a person hold up a filling station, if they do? The answer is to get something for nothing. To take the results of someone else's labor. To steal, if you please. To garner for oneself that which they have not, don't deserve, don't own. There is a way to preach the Gospel that has the same mortal quality to it as instructions on how to hold up a filling station or rob a bank.

If we lose sight of the fact that sin is a high, heinous crime against God, and sinners are criminals. We think so much about the fact of the congenital aspect of sin. That we are born of fallen parents and we have fallen natures. You know a person who has

congenital syphilis may feel terribly sorry for themselves, but they can never feel guilty. The parent who acquired the disease can feel guilty, but the child can only feel self-pity. And if sin is nothing more than a congenital disease inherited from parents, there is never the possibility of one feeling guilty. But sin is not a disease. Sin is a crime.

Reaching the age of accountability in a person, chooses deliberately commits themselves to a course of depriving rightful sovereign of the worship and adoration and obedience that He desires. And thus everything in the Scripture treats sin as a crime and sinners as criminals.

Well, look at it for a moment. What is it? Well, first sin is treason. It is denial of rightful sovereignty and rightful government. Secondly, it's anarchy. It is refusal to submit to any government. I'll do what I want to do. The sinner is a trader. A sinner is an anarchist, more than that he is a rebel. He lives in life long defiance of right and proper government. As long as he lives, he lives as a rebel in rebellion. And then it is also transgression, when the fence is there to keep him from someone else rights and privileges. The sinner with high disregard of rules and fences, transgresses cuts across. It's worst, another element that gives all of these crimes insult of the highest order. A sin is enmity toward God. The carnal mind is enmity toward God and is not subject to the law of God, indeed it can't be because of what has happened in the very essences of sin which is treason and rebellion and anarchy. I am going to do what I want to do.

Now, when you once see that you understand that God's plan and God's purpose has to deal with all of the ramifications of this thing of sin, has to deal with them. God is the one now who has to deal with them, with the sinner and his crime. So everything that the Father planned and purposed was designed to deal with the sinner as a criminal. In a sense that even His Son identifying Himself with sinners was treated as a criminal by a society that in which He was born and lived. The Jews, the Romans, He died a criminal's death. He died on a cross. The cross was reserved for traders against the government of Rome. Rebels against government, anarchist was only used for such. And yet from the Old Testament it'd been prophesy that He would die on a cross.

Do you remember when David brought the ark back after it had left the Midianites? They had set it on a new cart with oxen that had never pulled a yoke. David thought that was a pretty smart way to go. So he had a cart made and he put the Ark on it. And you remember how it started to tilt and Uzzah put his hand out to touch it and instantly he died. Well, why? It says, "David was wroth with God, anger with Him," because he died. (II Sam. 6:8) David was trying to do a good thing, but he didn't understand. And so he left it there and went back to Jerusalem and then he got the Scripture. What did he find out? He found out with God's people there was a right way to carry the Ark, "to the praise of the glory of his grace," is the only way to do it.

How? Well, he had to take young men 30 and not yet 50, Levites, and it took two staves. One staff through the rings on one side and one staff through the rings on the other side and was carried on their shoulders. What are the two staves? Well, if you take those two staves, what do you have? You have a cross. "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." (Gal. 3:13) Now why? Because the sinner was a trader. The sinner was a rebel. The sinner is an anarchist, so everything God planned and purposed was to show the sinner the nature of his crime and to deal the crime as it is.

Now for one to present the Gospel to a person and imply that sin is only a disease and not a crime. And to do it in such a way that sinner is never awakened to his estrangement from God, never convicted of his crime, never changes his mind about who is to be, because if he doesn't know that the crime is defrauding the rightful God of the worship and the honor and obedience that He deserves. If he doesn't understand that how can he change his mind about it. How can he change his mind? How can he repent, if he doesn't understand what his crime has been? If he thinks it is only a congenital disease then he is going to simply feel sorry that he had parents such as he had way back to Adam and mother Eve, but if he realizes at the age of accountability he committed himself to a life of crime, a life of treason, and anarchy, and rebellion. Then awakened by the Spirit of God, convicted through the Word of God by the Holy Spirit, and brought to repentance a change of mind — this one now... So there is a way I say in which we can preach the Gospel that demeans the grace of God and means the response of person so counseled will be one of simply further selfishness, for one to have immunity from justice while continuing in the crime. So everything that God does, He does to the end. What? "To the praise of the glory of his grace." That's what the Father purposed and planned, that's what the Son provided. Now that's what the Holy Spirit is going to perfect.

What are the ministries of the Holy Spirit? Well, the first that we find is the ministry as the spirit of bondage akin to fear, not that He produces bondage or creates fear. But He is the Holy Spirit that reveals to us as sinners that we are in bondage to the god of this world because of our crime of treason, and rebellion and anarchy and that there is good ground for us to fear. And that is the awakening ministry of God the Holy Ghost.

Now God does this, God the Holy Spirit does this without any response on the part of the sinner. The sinner doesn't have to ask God to do it. A sinner doesn't have to know about it. There are some things that have been done, however. There are some things that must be done, but not by the sinner. And it is with him we are dealt with for the moment. So the first ministry of God the Holy Spirit is the ministry of awakening, in which the Holy Spirit reveals to men their bondage and the grounds of their fear. The reason they should be afraid of God, because of their crimes.

And the second ministry that happens is conviction. When He, the Spirit truth has come, He will convict. Now the sinner doesn't have to ask the Holy Spirit to convict. He doesn't have to pray for conviction. This is something He will do. He does it in His sovereignty. There are responsibilities of others, we'll deal with those. Right now we're talking about the sinner in relation to the Holy Spirit's work prior to the awareness of forgiveness.

So the first is awakening, the second is conviction and the third is repentance. That's the Spirit of God that reveals that this is through conviction reveals that it is a crime that at the age of accountability one did choose to rule in his own life and play god in his own life and sit on the throne of his life, a throne that was made for the Son of God Himself. And so it is the work of the Spirit of God to incline our hearts to repent and to quicken us.

Now the reason why men don't repent, is not because they can't repent, but because they won't repent. They have everything requisite and need prior to repent, for repentance is a change of mind and the only one thing that God has given us total control over is our minds. The only thing we control is our thoughts. The reason why sinners don't repent is not because they can't, but because they won't and it is the work of the Spirit of God. You've sung it for years it is, "Incline us to repent and our sins lament!¹" that's the work of the Spirit of God. Awakening, conviction, repentance.

And now faith, here again how many different kinds of faith do we find if we search carefully? Well, we find that there at least four, maybe more: The first I call a head-faith namely an intellectual assent to what is written. A function of the intellect, this is the Bible. This is the Bible. Okay, so that's the Bible. It's an old book, yes. God inspired it, yes. It says, do you believe it? Sure, why shouldn't I, I believe it, why not. A function of the intellect that's a head-faith.

And then there is dead-faith which is an appropriation of religious rituals and taboos. My wife and I found that among the Muslims in Africa. They had memorized the Quran a book as large as the New Testament from Matthew through I Peter. They'd memorized it. And they believed it, intellectually. They had no argument with it. But if you were to ask them, "Does that make you alive? Does that give you life?" "What do you mean life? Of course, it doesn't." It gave rules, it gave instructions, it gave obligations, but it didn't give life, nor did their observance of the rules and the instructions give peace, dead-faith.

Then there is a third kind of faith. I called it a devil's-faith mainly an emotional response to what is written. I'm corner sure I'm a trader and a rebel and yeah God has say, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Eze. 18:20) And have their part in the "lake of fire and brimstone." Not a particularly appealing situation. What's the alternative? Well, here is heaven. Hey, that's a good deal. What's it going to cost me? Jesus paid it off. I like that. I like the terms. What do I do? Believe. What does believe mean? Well, here it is. Well, sure I believe. What have I got to lose? I have everything to gain, nothing to lose. I'll believe. Of course I'll believe. It says, "The devils believe, and they tremble," but they remain devils. (Jas. 2:19) Why? Because they have that kind of faith.

There's a fourth kind of faith. And that is heart-faith and the Scriptures says, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." (Rom. 10:10) And the heart is the totality of the being, the entire being, the mental, the emotional, the volitional aspects of totality experience and that heart-faith. Oh it has elements of intellectual quantity to it of course. There are appropriations to be made and there is an emotional concomitance certainly, but there is an entirely different quality to it.

¹ "Depth of Mercy! Can there be" By Charles Wesley, 1740.

And that's what we find here when it says that in this 13th verse, "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of salvation: in whom also after that ye believed," (Eph. 1:13) That's heart-faith, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness."

Heart-faith and that's based upon awakening, and conviction, and repentance. That's why Paul said when he was in Ephesus, "House to house night and day teaching." Teaching what? "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 20:20,21) They went that way there and there could not be saving faith without real repentance. Repentance and faith.

Now I grew up with the type of teaching that says, repentance was Jewish, it was a work. It has nothing to do with the period of grace. But Paul was talking to the Gentiles and telling them that he was with them for a period of months, "House to house, night and day teaching repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." They were Gentiles and so there isn't any question in my mind at all. I don't believe anyone else is arguing to the contrary today though they did at one time, that there is less than the requirement of repentance as a prerequisite for heart-faith.

Now here we have it, "In whom also that ye believed...ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." (Eph. 1:13) Now let's look at that for a moment. You're familiar with the Wesleyan revival in England in the early part of the 18th century...in church where his father had been rector for many years. Now what was his crime? Why would the...and he was an Anglican clergyman, an ordained Episcopal Priest. Why was it he couldn't preach in an Episcopal church? They'd closed the churches through the country to him. Was it that the Episcopal Church at that time was modernist and he would believe the truth? Oh no. Have you ever read the 39 articles of the Episcopal Church? Well, if you haven't, I recommend that they are very good reading. Those 39 articles are about as orthodox and as kosher theologically as you'll find anywhere.

Wonderful. Indeed. True marvelous statement of truth. Why was it then that they closed the church? I'll tell you. John Wesley² said, "That it was fine. There was no problem about having children baptized." You see everybody in England was a member of the Church of England. That was excellent. Surely they came under the watchful care of the church certainly, but no one had the right to claim that they had been forgiven of their sins and were children of God unless they had experienced the witness of the spirit. That's why they closed the door of the church to John Wesley. [Question from the audience] Well, that is they might say that, but having been year among them, I would find that they are just as opposed to what I am saying as anyone else would as the Anglican were. Because whether that person makes a verbal statement when their twelve or 50 or whether they are baptized as infants is not significant in light of what Wesley was teaching. Mainly, that no one had the right to think themselves a child of God unless they had the witness of the spirit. The witness of the spirit to the new birth this was the 'not without which.' And the Church of England closed its doors to Wesley and drove him to the fields.

And so who'd he preach to? People that have been baptized as infants in the Church of England. What did he tell them? He told them repent and believe! He preached the law, the Holiness of God, and the righteousness of God. And what happened? Well, as he preached, people were awakened. They call that a time of awakening under Wesley's ministry. Awaken and they were convicted. Of what? Of their crime against God and they repented! And they believed. And what happened? They received the witness of the Spirit. That they were born of God and he took those people had thus experienced and put them into a little group. A little "Class Meeting" he called it, eleven with a leader. They would meet every morning or once a week or twice, whatever they could usually at 5 in the morning. By the way, he always gave an invitation when he preached, he always did. He never preached without an invitation. You know what his invitation was? "If the Spirit of God has awakened you, if you are convinced of your crime and you desire to repent and receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and your Savior meet with me tomorrow morning at 5 o'clock."

I'll tell you, now that's going to sift a lot of the chaff out the wheat, isn't it? Anybody who just got emotionally excited is going to find a reason to pull the covers up just give me 5 minutes more. The only ones that are going to get up at 4 o'clock and go 4 or 5 miles down the road to meet with John Wesley in some cold room in England are the ones that say I must have peace with God or I die. These that did come, these that did have the witness of the spirit, he put them into these little class meetings. But that is why the churches of England closed to him.

² John Wesley (1703-1791) Anglican cleric, Christian theologian, and founding the Methodist movement

I remember a pastor some years ago who had heard that I was proclaiming, "As I am what I am" for I haven't changed in 40 years, 35 years at least. It took me 5 years to find out what to preach. And he stood in the pulpit. I was sitting over in the side. And he reached over, "There are some people that go around saying that the only way you'll know your saved is that you have a tickling under the 5th rib in emotional excitement and stimulation. And I say that's heresy the only way anyone will ever know that he's saved is because he takes a verse of Scripture and he stands on it!" And the people said, "Amen!" to him.

Well, the first thing the witness of the spirit is not a tickling under the 5th rib, not a tickling under the 5th rib. What is the witness the spirit? Well, Job gave us the key. The part of a man that knows the things of a man "is the spirit of man that's in him." (Job 32:8)

Already, I am going to ask you a serious of questions. Don't respond. You would be embarrassed. I want you to get the point. How many of you are here? Raise your hands. Alright. How many of you are married and know it? Raise your hands. What part of a man is it that knows that you're here? Your feet. Your sit. Your back. Your eyes. What part of a man knows you're here? What part of the person knows they're married? Job said it. Part of a man that knows the things of a man "is the spirit of man that is in him." What part of you knows your name? What part of you knows your education? What part of you knows whether you are working or retired? What part of you knows all these things, that's your spirit. Word of God says it.

Now when one is dead in their sins their spirit is estranged from God and they know it. They know it. "There is no peace saith my God, to the wicked." (Isa. 57:21) "The wicked are like the troubled sea...cast up mire and dirt." (Isa. 57:20) Continuous seething the spirit of the wicked. You mean to say that God did not know that there is no peace to the wicked. He said it and it wasn't true. Of course it's true. Of course it's true.

What is spiritual death? You go to your television set and you turn and put the power on and there is no picture and no sound. What do you say about it? It's dead! What's that mean? All those workings inside rusted down to powder and has no form any more, no shape. It just sort of weeshee self-destructed. What does it take to make a television set dead? Just one little transistor out, one little connections broke. It is surrounded by television impulse, but it isn't receiving it. So sinners live in the presence of God, but their receiving set is broken and they know it or at least they're not getting any broadcast from God. They are dead.

What does that mean, that they ceased to have human personality and human capacity? No. It means there is no communion between God and that heart. They are without communion, without contact. Does that mean God isn't there? No. Paul said, "In him we live, and move, and have our being." (Act 17:28) He is not far from every one of us. In the sinner the receiving set is dead. Why? Because of the crime, self-love, selfishness, I will rule my life, I will be god.

Now awakened to the danger, convicted of the crime and changing one's mind and believing what happens or as we said here sealed with "that Holy Spirit of promise." What happens? Well, it's resoldered where that wire was broken the Spirit of God resolderes it. They begin to get the broadcast from the antenna of Calvary. And what does it say when they hear that broadcast? What does it say? It says you can call all mighty God before whom you tremble, Abba Father.

When you were speaking about working in New Jersey, when I was pastor in New York City, there was an Inter-Varsity staff worker by the name of Harriet Marsh. We were talking to this point at an Inter-Varsity alumni gathering up at Cedar campus in Michigan and when we finished Harriet said, "I'd like to give a testimony." She said, "I was a student at Douglass College. Then it was Douglass College in Rutgers University. I came on the campus from an Agnostic home. I considered myself an atheist, an intellectual atheist. I happen to see a young woman who had the most radiant smile and the most shining face of any person I had ever met. I knew nothing about her, but I said I'm going to find out. I am going to have her my roommate. I want to find out what is it that makes her translucent, glow. And I got her name. I found out who she was and I applied and asked that I become her roommate. I had some connections there, so it was arranged and I found out that she was very active in the Christian group on the campus. That she loved Jesus Christ with all her heart and just seeing her, being with her as my roommate won me and I professed faith in Christ. But I had one professor that thought that I as a young intellectual and an atheist was too good to lose. So he kept putting pressure on me for many, many months that I was throwing my life away associating with these freakish evangelicals. And finally he convinced me that this was just an emotional something that had happen to me. So I went one day to the prayer meeting that I usually attended. And I told them I wouldn't be praying with

them anymore. I wouldn't be attending the Bible studies or the groups any more. That I had decided that I had been deceived, self-deceived not by them, that this whole Christian thing was a myth had no relevance to an intellectual life and that I was throwing it all over. I would be happy to be with them as friends, but I would under no circumstances to talk to me anymore about Christianity. And they with tears in their eyes agreed that they would still be my friend they wouldn't talk to me about Christianity. They never told me that they won't talk to the Lord about me though. I knew better than to ask them that. And if what I was saying was true it wouldn't make a difference any way. Well, I saw them and I continued. They respected what they promised. And the months went on, still a roommate, still at the college, but never attended their groups or involved in any way.

"One day in the library I was reading, I came across the Agnostic's prayer and it made an impression on me. And you know what it is? Oh God, if there be a God save my soul, if I have a soul. I wrote it down and I was walking home and this was going through my mind. When I got to my room, my roommate who I accepted to be there wasn't there and a note she'd be gone for the afternoon and evening. And so I was alone and I locked the door. I didn't want any of her friends bumping in on me and I decided that I would give this a try." Now, this is an Agnostic's prayer and so she said, "I coached it. I got it clear in my mind and then I was going to sit there at the desk and pray. No, that's not really fair. We knelt when we prayed. So I'll kneel." And so she said, "I knelt. Going over this prayer in my mind." And then she said, "Well, some people fold their hands, so the least I can do is fold mine, wouldn't hurt anything." She said, "I kneel and folded my hands, all the while repeating those words." And then she said, "I opened my mouth and I said, 'Dear Father in heaven.'" She said, "I burst out crying. When I got into the position of prayer, something within me said, 'Dear Father in heaven.'"

You see that's what He said, "In the fulness of time God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law that we might receive the adoption of sons. And since we are sons, He hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, whereby we cried, dear Father" in heaven. (Gal. 4:5,6) "Abba, dear Father. Abba, Father." "Seal with that holy Spirit of promise." Whereby we say almighty God Abba Father. Dear Father.

The witness of the spirit. What is it? It is the part of a man that knows the things of a man, that the part of a man that knows almighty God is his Father through faith in Christ. That's what Wesley told England. It was that message that brought England from the abyss into which France would fall. Pulled it when it was over, pulled it back and saved it. Perhaps that's the message that is needed in America today. With 50, 80 or 100 million people that claim to be born again and only a hand full that can cry, "Abba Father," from the heart.

Father in heaven we come to Thee in the Name of Jesus Christ. Thou sovereign of all grace, Thou God of all grace, Thou that hast ordained Thy Holy Spirit would be the Spirit of adoption. No one in the universe has the right to usurp the sovereign prerogatives of the third Person of the Trinity. You alone has the right to tell one who has been the child of the god of this world that he has taken out of the family of death and put into the family of the Father. Oh what crimes we've committed Father in our zeal by telling people before they had an opportunity to hear from Thy. How many have been still born? We asked Thy Father today that we may recognize the sovereignty of the Holy Ghost. That He alone has the right to say and witness and certify a man passed from death to life. Oh that we might take that time that is required with those Father that Thou hast given us the privilege ministry they might at the very beginning of their Christian walk. Learn from Thee that they have passed from death to life. We can tell them how bad they are and how gloriously Holy Thou art. We can tell them what they've done and tell them what Thou hast done. We can tell them what they must do and what Thou wilt do, but only Thou cast tell them when it's done in their hearts. So to that end Father, we ask again that we'll respect the sovereignty of the Holy Ghost in those areas that He has reserved to Himself. We thank you now for this time together and for this people and ask for something from this hour may redound yet to the glory and honor and praise of Jesus Christ in whose Name we ask it. Amen.

* Reference such as: Delivered at the 4th Presbyterian Church, Bethesda, MD on Sunday Morning, August 29, 1982 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.