

## God's Testimony of You

Ephesians 1:3-14

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I spent the first 20 years of my Christian walk believing that God held me responsible to get and stay saved. I had literally been told that Jesus did all He could do for me and the rest was now up to me. And for me, there was no "good news" in that. It was a miserable experience of a synergistic, false gospel within a popular Pentecostal denomination. You might imagine then how relieved I was when I learned the truth that my salvation is of the Lord, from start to finish (see Philippians 1:6). On that day the mental and spiritual clouds parted and I suddenly felt genuine hope in Jesus Christ. I had always wanted to be a Christian, but self-reliance offers no assurance or comfort in relation to salvation. So, when I learned that Christ had *not* come to make my salvation merely possible, but to accomplish salvation on my behalf, the light of gospel truth set me free. After 20 years of spiritual depression, I now possessed good news (gospel). Consequently, I count that day in the Spring of 1996 as my conversion date.

What I just shared with you is what we call a conversion testimony. And what I want to tell you now is that my testimony is part of a much greater testimony, that is, the testimony of my salvation from God's perspective. And if you are in Christ, what I am about to tell you is God's testimony of you also. Let's open our Bibles to Paul's letter to the Ephesians 1:3-14.

<sup>3</sup> 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, <sup>4</sup> just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love <sup>5</sup> He predestined us to adoption as sons *and daughters* through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He favored us in the Beloved. <sup>7</sup> In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our wrongdoings, according to the riches of His grace <sup>8</sup> which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup> He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He set forth in Him, <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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, <sup>12</sup> to the end that we who were the first to hope in the Christ would be to the praise of His glory.

<sup>13</sup> 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, <sup>14</sup> who is a first installment of our inheritance, in regard to the redemption of *God's own possession*, to the praise of His glory.

What I want you to note is that verses 3-12 proclaim the prior works of God from eternity for which verses 13-14 are *the result*. It is all God's doing. Yet, the fact that we *contribute* nothing to our salvation does not mean to we *do* nothing. Verses 13-14 say plainly that we listened and we believed, but it is critical that you understand that even the ability to listen and believe is the result of a prior work of God — listening and believing does not originate within ourselves (see Ephesians 2:1-10). What's more, having listened and believed we were “sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.” Chosen, predestined, redeemed, sealed by the Spirit in Christ, with final glorification yet to come.

What I want for you to see is that the testimony of your salvation is really not yours at all; rather, it is the testimony of what God did “before the foundation of the world” and which He then brought about in time and space *so that* we listened and believed the word of truth, and were sealed by the promised Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> Our personal identity as followers of Christ therefore originates not at the moment of our conversion, but in the mind of the triune God in eternity past. Your true identity is not determined by family history, ethnicity, gender, economic or social standing, nor by issues of trauma, codependence and addiction, but by how God defined you from before the foundation of the world. And how did God define you? As his adopted sons (a reference to legal status as heirs not to gender) through Christ, holy and blameless before Him, “to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He graciously bestowed on us in the Beloved.” In other words, to be God's adopted sons means we share “in the image of his divine Son. Giving them not just Christ's riches and blessings but also his very nature (John 15:15; Romans 8:15).”<sup>2</sup>

That which I have just shared with you is pastoral, meaning this teaching is meant to edify and comfort you in you in the assurance that “He who has begun a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6). Therefore, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord” (I Corinthians 1:31; Jeremiah 9:23-24). **AMEN.**

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<sup>1</sup> See also David H. J. Gay, “Dead, Risen, Raised” discourse on Ephesians available on YouTube [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xEt9gMkCYh8>].

<sup>2</sup> See notes in *The MacArthur Study Bible*, at Ephesians 1:5 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), p. 1757.