

## A Life Driven by Purpose

### Ephesians 1:1-14

Kevin and I are going to be grandparents again any day now to our first grandson. Our youngest son, Mark, will be a daddy. He and Alisha, our grandson's mommy, have been busy these past few months preparing for the arrival of the little one. They have painted his room and purchased the furniture. They have picked out his name from among many choices. Alisha has packed her bag and Mark has planned the route to take to the hospital. They have participated in Lamaze classes and previewed the birthing room at the hospital. They have painstakingly and purposefully planned and prepared for the birth of their new son and for his future as well. It has brought them immense pleasure and he isn't even here yet. Mark and Alisha have been united in this Purpose. In fact it has been the driving force behind most of their thoughts lately. But getting ready for this little boy, as wonderful as that is, is not God's ultimate purpose for Mark and Alisha's lives, or for the life of their son for that matter.

I believe the Apostle Paul could relate to some of what Mark and Alisha are going through right now. You see, Paul birthed many churches as he traveled around from city to city proclaiming the Good News. Paul very purposefully preached and taught about God and his plan of salvation for all people, for all time through the blood of Jesus Christ his Son. It was the driving force behind all of Paul's thoughts. The reason it was the driving force behind Paul's thoughts is because Paul realized that it is only in God that we discover who we are, our significance, our purpose, and our destiny. Rick Warren in his book, "The Purpose Driven Life" says "*the greatest tragedy in life is not death, but life without purpose.*" Paul understood this.

Today as we take another look at the letter Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus, we are going to get a better understanding of why we can live a life driven by purpose.

Paul wrote many letters during his ministry. Many of the letters addressed specific problems, concerns, or issues that a particular church may have been experiencing. That is not the case with Ephesians. Ephesians is a letter of encouragement. A letter of encouragement to us individually and to all of us united as the body of Christ with Christ Jesus as our head. In fact many scholars agree that this letter may not have even been written for the church at Ephesus specifically. Rather it was written so it could be read at several churches to encourage them in their faith. It was what was referred to as a circulatory letter. Whether that was Paul's intention or not, the letter to the Ephesians is still being circulated and read in churches today to encourage each one of us individually and each of us together as the church, in our faith journeys.

Turn with me if you will to Ephesians chapter 1 and let's read a part of Paul's letter. Instead of putting the word Ephesus I am going to put Tipp City, because Paul's letter is written to encourage the church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century just as it was written to encourage the churches of the 1<sup>st</sup> century.

Read Ephesians 1:1-14 (NLT)

The **first** way we can live a life driven by purpose is by knowing:

God created us, planned for us, and chose us because it brought him **pleasure**.

Look at verse 4: "Long ago, even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us."

(NLT)

Paul looked back beyond history, into the origins of the universe. Right there at the beginning of time, he saw God skillfully and purposefully planning for you and me.

I want you to stop and let that reality sink into your brain a moment. Actually let it sink into the very depths of your being. I believe that when you fully and completely understand with your head and your heart that God loves you, created you, chose you even before he hung the first star in the heavens or molded the first mountain, even before you ever gave God a thought, it will change you forever.

God looked out through space and time and he saw you. How you would look, who your parents would be, what gifts and talents you would possess, how many hairs would be on your head, how your purpose in life would fit into his much larger cosmic purpose for all eternity. And it gave him pleasure. It made him smile!

*Psalm 139 tells us: "You (God) made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous....You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed." (NLT)*

Turn to your neighbor right now and tell them – I AM GOD'S MARVELOUS WORKMANSHIP!!!!

*Now look at verse 5 in Ephesians* – it tells us that God valued and loved us so much that even before he formed the earth, he had a plan, he knew that he would have to send his precious, perfect Son to redeem us, to cover our sins with his blood so we could stand before God holy and without fault, adopted into his family – this was his unchanging plan.

I completely believe, with all my heart and mind, that is exactly what God is doing right now with my new grandson. He has picked Mark and Alisha as his parents; Kevin and I as his grandparents. He has redeemed him through the blood of his Son, Jesus Christ. He has planned his purpose in life and in the body of the church. And this has brought God immense pleasure. And my grandson isn't even here yet.

Friends that alone is reason enough for me to fall to my knees and **praise and worship God**. Which just happens to be the **second** way we can live a life driven by purpose: By offering **praise** and worship to God – now and for all eternity?

We see the word praise four times in this short passage of Ephesians. In **verse 3** at the beginning of the section and **verse 6** at the end of the section that focuses on **the role of God the Father** in the process of pouring out spiritual blessings in our lives, we see that we are to PRAISE God. In **verse 12** at the end of the section focusing on **the role of God the Son** in that process, we see that we are to PRAISE our glorious God. In **verse 14** at the end of the section that focuses on **the role of God the Holy Spirit**, we see once again that we are to praise our glorious God.

A) Praise the Father who **selected** you; who chose you.

You are not an after thought you were His first thought!!!

B) Praise the Son who **saved** you.

In the Old Testament they offered sacrifices of animals to God. Paul is telling the church at Ephesus and at Tipp City that we now get to offer ourselves and our praise as a sacrifice to God. We offer it through Jesus the Son.

Hebrews 13:15 “With Jesus’ help, let us continually offer our sacrifice of praise to God by proclaiming the glory of his name.”(NLT)

C) Praise the Spirit who **sealed** you, the Spirit that is God’s guarantee.

A seal in biblical times carried several ideas. It showed authenticity. It shared authority. If you are “in Christ” you are sealed with the Spirit. You are God’s and His power is made available to you through the Holy Spirit. That is God’s seal or as our new bibles say, God’s guarantee.

Praise and worship includes what we are doing here today: singing, praying, reading God's word, proclaiming God's word. But it is so much more than just that. Worship is not just for church services.

The Psalms tell us to worship God continually, to Praise Him from sunrise to sunset. (Psalm 105:4 & 113:3)

When God created us, he created us with a desire to worship built in to us. We need to worship something or someone. God wants to be the object of that worship.

**Worship is not supposed to be a part of your life friends - it is your life.** God created us with a built-in desire to worship. And he wants to be the object of that worship.

A person who worships, praises God at work, at home, in all they do and say, wherever they go and whatever they do.

I especially like how the Message bible explains this in Romans 12:1: "Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life – and place it before God as an offering."

Praise God when you are working at your job. Praise God when you are cooking supper. Praise God when you are doing homework. Praise God when you are taking out the garbage. Praise God before you even get out of bed in the morning and when you lie down again at night to go to sleep. Praise the Father through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. Praise God!!!

And **lastly**, you can live a life driven by purpose: by **proclaiming** the Good News that God saves you.

Again listen to Ephesians verses 10-12 but this time from the Message Bible:

He set it all out before us in Christ, a long range plan in which everything would be brought together and summed up in him, everything in deepest heaven, and everything on planet earth. It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone.

God tells us here that his long range goal is to bring everything together under Christ – and God has a part for you and me to play in that great eternal plan.

First, if you are a Believer, then you are part of God's *inner circle*. This was good news to the first century church – God wasn't just for the Jews, God was for the Gentiles too. He was for men and for women, slaves and free men. They were to be united as one in Christ – a small preview of what eternity would look like.

This is good news for us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century also. The world may seem at times to be falling apart – but it will eventually be brought back together and unified under Christ. Until that time we, the church, are to be unified as one in Christ: men, women, black, white, Latino, Asian, young, old, rich, poor, traditional, contemporary – a small preview of what eternity will look like. As we pray in the Lord's prayer- *Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.*

Second, as a Believer and part of God's inner circle you are to carry that message, that Good News, to the world. The Apostle Paul was to proclaim the Good News. The Gentiles were to proclaim the Good News. We are to PROCLAIM the Good News. If you need more confirmation of that mission look at 2 Corinthians 5:18-19: (which happens to be another letter from Paul by the way)

“All this newness of life is from God, who brought us back to himself through what Christ did. And God has given us the task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. This is the wonderful message he has given us (*the church*) to tell others.”(NLT)

You were created for God's pleasure, to praise him and to proclaim his good news to all people. So now you have a responsibility to see that we as a church and as

individuals are living up to God's purpose for our lives and for our church. God's message to you today is that you have been chosen to be a part of his eternal plan. He has done this so that the earth may hear his voice through you, in your personal life and in your church. This was God's plan before the world ever began. This was God's plan in the first century. This is still God's plan in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is God's plan for my life. This is God's plan for your life. This is God's plan for my unborn grandson's life. And for as long as God wills it - it will be his plan – “**until that glorious day when all things in heaven and on earth will be brought together under the authority of Christ.**”

Friends let me close this morning with the words of the Apostle Paul ringing down through the centuries and speaking to each one of you today:

**THIS IS JUST ONE MORE REASON FOR US TO PRAISE OUR GLORIOUS GOD!**