

## I. Allies

- A. Have you ever put together a puzzle?
- B. Have you ever put together a puzzle without a box top or with missing pieces?
- C. One of my pastors, as I grew up, always had a puzzle on his table. He and his wife and kids were always working on puzzles.
- D. What they don't know is that every time I came over to their house, I stole a piece of the puzzle.
- E. And I never gave them back.
- F. That's my confession, and I'm sorry it's about 35 years too late.
- G. Ephesians is the name of a book. It is a letter. It was written by a man named Paul to a certain group of people, people who lived in Ephesus, a city in ancient Rome.
- H. Don't let the name scare you. The Ephesians were people. That's the first thing I want to get across today.
- I. We are investigating words written to real people: people with hopes and dreams, people with problems, people with questions, people with a history and with baggage.
- J. People just like you and me.
- K. And no matter how hard or easy these words seem to you, I want to assure you they are words about the deepest needs of your heart: your longings, your dreams, your desires, your problems, your fears, your brokenness, your guilt, and your shame.
- L. In other words, the words we're about to look at today are custom tailored for you, by God. Like a time capsule from a long time ago, God knew you would be here today. And He sent ahead this message.

## II. Scripture

- A. *11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, 12 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. 13 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory (Ephesians 1:11-14, NKJV).*
- B. What God is saying to you here is that He is mightily involved in your past, your present, and your future. And when you look at His involvement from a certain angle, every bit of it is good news—or, as verse 13 says, the gospel of your salvation. Gospel means good news—here is the good news, the uplifting, positive message that God sent ahead to you today.
- C. It has five parts, like five pieces of a puzzle.
- D. Here is the gospel of your salvation in five parts:

## III. The Gospel of Your Salvation

- A. A great prize: Inheritance
  1. Right out of the box, He says we have obtained an inheritance (v. 11). And again, in v. 14, the Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance.
  2. The first piece of the gospel puzzle is that God wants you to obtain an inheritance.
  3. When God looked around for one word to sum up all the good things He has in store for His children, He chose the word inheritance.
  4. Why?
  5. One reason might be this: an inheritance kicks in after the death of the owner. Jesus is the owner of all things. The whole cosmos belongs to Him. Last time, we saw the picture of Jesus like the sun, and the whole universe orbiting Him. He owns all the gold and silver, all the buildings and palaces, all the mountains and trees. He owns all the stars and planets and galaxies, all things.
  6. In His last will and testament, Jesus bequeathed His possessions to you. When He died, the will kicked in, and every person written into the will became an heir of the cosmos (Rom 4:13, Heb 9:17).
  7. Whatever you need, you have it if you belong to Christ. You have a package of astronomical blessings that will supply every need of every day from the first day till the ages of eternity.
  8. And it becomes YOURS because of the death of Jesus Christ. It's a gift that comes by way of inheritance.
  9. Another reason God chose this word, I believe, is this: an inheritance represents your parent's sacrifice for your future provision. Have you ever seen that bumper sticker, "I'm spending my kid's inheritance"? God didn't do that.
  10. He paid the price. He accepted the burden. He sacrificed. He yielded.
  11. Maybe your earthly father was the opposite. Maybe he spent every dime he got his hands on and died broke. Maybe he gave no thought of future care for you. I don't know.
  12. But you can never say that of your heavenly father. He laid up great treasure, a great wealth, a great provision—a great cost and sacrifice to Himself.
    - a) So here's my question for you: have you obtained this prize yet? Can you say I am an heir of God? I have obtained this inheritance?
    - b) If you can't say that, then this message is exactly for you today. Because when we're done putting together this puzzle called the gospel of your salvation, you have a choice to make.

- c) It's the most important choice of your life. And you can make it today—I want to show you how, and give you a chance to make the choice today.
13. This is the first piece of the gospel puzzle: it is a great prize.
- B. A great power: the counsel of His will
1. (*v. 11*) *being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,*
  2. This verse mentions predestination, and so many people have a false view of it. He has just talked about a great prize, and now He talks about a great power. Is He saying that this great prize is only for a select few, for the chosen ones?
  3. No, absolutely not.
  4. To understand this, let's go back in time. Let's put ourselves in the shoes of the people who first read these words.
  5. The Ephesian people lived in a highly pluralistic culture. They had many gods, many idols, many religions, and many beliefs. In almost all of these belief systems, they saw a whole host of spiritual beings coming at them. Some were like angels, some were like demons, and some were like gods.
  6. Even the stars had power over their lives, so they decorated the massive statue of the great goddess, Artemis of the Ephesians, with a necklace depicting the signs of the zodiac.
  7. These people were victims of forces beyond their control. And not only that, but those forces weren't simply mindless forces of nature—they were intelligent forces, thinking forces, forces with a personality. They were angels and spirits and demons.
  8. And along comes Jesus Christ. At first He sounded to them like just another one of many forces.
  9. Until they discover verse 11: *He works all things according to the counsel of His will.* This God knows what He wants. This God wants what He wants. This God accomplishes what He wants.
  10. Do not fear the other forces. Do not fear bad luck. Do not fear bad spirits. Do not fear the stars. Don't be superstitious. Don't be jittery.
  11. You have a Father who gets things done.
  12. And one of the things He gets done is predestination.
  13. Does that mean He picks and chooses who can get saved, and who can't?
  14. No.
  15. Let me illustrate what it means: Have you ever gone to a theme park with a roller coaster? How about Space Mountain at Disney Land? First, you get in a long line. That line winds you around and around, and it brings you to the roller coaster. Then they strap you in the little car, and the ride begins.
  16. Let me ask you, once you stood in line, did you need a map to figure out how to get to the roller coaster? No. It was all marked out ahead of time. It was a predetermined course.
  17. And once the ride began, did you have to steer? Did you have to figure out when to go left and right? Did you have to spend any mental power at all figuring out where to go?
  18. No.
  19. All of that was predetermined.
  20. You just hold on and go for the ride.
  21. Here is the good news: when you embrace Jesus as your Savior, His destiny becomes your destiny.
  22. You share Christ's destiny. Whatever will happen to Him in the future will also happen to you.
  - a) Predestination is not about who gets saved, it's about what happens to those who get saved.
  23. And anybody who wants to can get saved.
  24. The great news here is that God has the power to bring this ride called your life safely home. No spirit can stop Him. Not even the devil. No force can deter Him, not even the stars. Not even you.
  25. He works all things after the counsel of His will, and His will is that all who opt into the gospel will without doubt experience the glorious destiny of Christ.
  26. That's why I want to show you how to opt into the gospel today. Please be ready.
  27. A great prize: inheritance. A great power: the counsel of His will.
- C. A great invitation: to trust in Christ
1. This is the gospel's trigger.
    - a) *v. 12: that we who first trusted in Christ (literally, who placed our hope firmly in Christ)*
    - b) *v. 13: in Him, you trusted.*
    - c) *v. 13: having believed*
    - d) *v. 13: the word of truth*
    - e) *v. 13: the gospel of your salvation*
  2. He has piled up phrases for two sides of a coin.
    - a) On one side, something you have to hear.
    - b) On the other side, a choice you have to make.

3. Something you have to hear is all about Jesus. Nobody can be saved without hearing about Jesus—specifically about the death and resurrection of Jesus and what it all means.
  4. This doesn't mean you need a degree in Bible and theology. It means that you understand that Jesus died on the Cross to conquer evil, even the evil inside you. And by doing that, He made it legit for a holy God to love an unholy person like you.
  5. You don't need to master the details— just the broad outline, that Christ died for your sins. That's something you need to hear.
  6. Flip the coin over and there's a choice you have to make. That choice is indicated here with two words:
    - a) To hope (firmly)
    - b) To believe
  7. Same thing—let me illustrate. Here is one of the chairs we use in our auditorium. I would like to start by saying thank you to the generation before us who bought these chairs, because otherwise, we would do church standing up.
  8. We have hundreds and hundreds of these chairs in our church, and they're all the same.
  9. Now, I'm going to sit on this chair, and I want you to make a prediction: do you believe that this chair will hold me up? If you do, go ahead and clap your hands right now. If you don't—don't be a wise guy.
  10. Here we go.
  11. Now, a whole bunch of us believe THAT this chair can hold me up. Many hundreds believe THAT this chair can hold me up.
  12. Let me ask you another question.
  13. Right now, out of the many hundreds—how many of us actually believe IN the chair to hold me up?
  14. Exactly one. Me.
  15. When you came to church today, you made a choice. You entrusted the weight of your body to a particular chair, and you sat down in it.
  16. You believed that all the chairs could hold you up, but you trusted in one chair to do the job.
  17. Here is the piece of the puzzle you need to get: the great invitation.
  18. God invites you today, to get up out of any other chair you may sit in, and place all your weight in the one chair of Jesus Christ.
    - a) There is the chair of good works, and obedience. Get up out of that chair and quit counting on yourself to hold you up before God.
    - b) There is the chair of religion. God invites you out of that chair, and tells you to put all your weight on Christ.
    - c) Then the chair of decency and moral performance
    - d) Or the chair of religious ritual: baptism, confirmation, communion, last rites
    - e) Or the chair of "I never killed anybody"
    - f) Or the chair of God is so nice that I'm just automatically in
      - (1) **YOU'RE IN THE WRONG CHAIR AND GOD IS AGAINST YOU FOR IT.**
      - (2) Why? Because His son died for you and any other chair is kind of an insult.
  19. Christ died for your sins—that is the word of truth.
  20. Believing THAT it is true is not enough.
  21. You have to trust Him. You have to make Him your own. You have to bank on Christ.
  22. On that day, God becomes your ally.
  23. If God asked me why He should let me into heaven, I wouldn't say, because I'm a nice Italian boy—that would be sitting in the wrong chair.
  24. I would say, because Jesus died for me, and I'm banking on Him alone, and if He doesn't work, I got nothing!
  25. That is what it sounds like to sit in Christ's chair.
  26. And that is the great invitation God is extending to you today.
  27. Will you accept that invitation? It's your choice. It's your free will. It's your call. We'll get there soon.
  28. A great prize, a great power, a great invitation.
- D. A great promise: sealed with the Holy Spirit
1. *(v. 13, 14) having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.*
  2. How many of you brought your Bible today?
  3. Don't be proud.
  4. How many of you have your name in or on your Bible? We should stop and do that right now. We have a whole lot of lonely Bibles in our lost and found without a name.
  5. Why do you write your name on your Bible, or on your stuff?
  6. As a mark of ownership.

7. In the ancient world, they did the exact same thing with a seal. Each person had a unique seal that they would use to mark ownership on something in wax or clay. Or that they would use to guarantee their signature on a contract.
  8. When you sit down in the Jesus chair, God seals you. He embraces you as His child, and locks you in forever.
  9. Once you are saved, you are always saved.
  10. I know that scandalizes some people, but look at it this way: You didn't do anything good to get yourself saved; you just sat down on a good chair. The chair has all the goodness. Jesus has all the goodness. You didn't do anything good to get yourself saved, and you can't do anything good to keep yourself saved, and if you do anything bad, it can't make you unsaved, because it just doesn't depend on you.
  11. Not only that, for you to be unsaved, someone would have to break the seal.
  12. And what is the seal? It is nothing less than the personal presence of God Himself. You get God. The day you sit down on Christ, you get God. You are sealed in Him.
  13. You have an absolute guarantee of what?
    - a) That your sins are forgiven.
    - b) That your righteous standing is secure.
    - c) That your adoption papers are completed.
    - d) You have a new identity.
    - e) A new status.
    - f) A new name—child of God.
    - g) A new destiny—heaven.
    - h) A new reality—every day, a life with God on earth.
  14. You're saved by grace, and you're kept saved by grace. Where else can you find this? What religion offers this kind of security?
  15. God is inviting you today. You might feel Him. Let me ask you.
  16. What is keeping you from Jesus today?
    - a) More evidence? You have it right here.
    - b) More thinking about it? You've probably analyzed this thing to death.
    - c) More arguments? Really? Why? Isn't that just you being stubborn?
  17. How about today? How about today, you fulfill the last piece of the puzzle.
- E. A great purpose: the praise of His glory.
1. Three times, in one sentence—the praise of His glory (v. 14), the praise of his glory, (v. 12), and the praise of His glorious grace, (v. 6).
  2. What does it mean?
  3. It means that God Himself bears the entire burden.
    - a) The burden to clean you up.
    - b) The burden to put your life together.
    - c) The burden to make you acceptable to Him.
    - d) The burden to save you from yourself.
    - e) The burden to provide for you every day and forever.
    - f) The burden to bring you safely home.
  4. God bears the entire burden. So He gets all the praise. He gets all the glory.
  5. And you get zero.

#### IV. Invitation

- A. The problem with every other religion is that you don't get zero glory because you yourself have to bear at least a part of the burden.
- B. You have to make yourself worthy to God.
- C. But in Christianity it is all different.
- D. You come in your unworthiness, and find that Christ has all the worthiness you need.
- E. You come overburdened, and find that He lifts your burdens onto His shoulder.
- F. No more excuses.
- G. Are you ready?

#### V. Prayer

- A. **A: ADMIT** your need. Admit that you can't reach God on your own. Admit your brokenness, and your need of a Savior.
- B. **B: BELIEVE** that Jesus is your way to God. That He died for your sins. That the chair is real and true and the only chair that works right.
- C. **C: CHOOSE** to sit down in the chair, to trust in Christ, and receive Him as your Savior.