

God's Big Plan

Ephesians 1.4-14

Key Points:

- This passage is one of the most theologically profound in the Bible in relation to what it says about who we are in Christ, and the promises that God has made to us. When we count the promises in this passage, we find that there are many!
- Often when we think about being 'in Christ' (a phrase this passage uses a lot), sometimes we see it as a very individual thing. This passage emphasises that we are all part of a much bigger plan, which goes far into the past and future.
- One of the potential problems with this passage, is that the concepts it talks about are so big and so all-encompassing that we find it hard to grasp them. One of the best ways to try to do so is to break them down as much as possible, by reflecting on the different aspects of what it means, for example, to be redeemed, and looking at how we experience the fruit of this.
- Another way that we can seek to grasp these truths more easily is to declare them over our lives; have them where we can see them, and speak them out. This helps these profound truths to become more deeply rooted in us.
- We don't always understand how God's bigger plan fits together, but the more we seek him, the more his truths will make sense in our lives. We are called to do this both as individuals and as a community, trusting that God is good and that he will work all things out for his purposes.

Questions:

1. Go through this passage and pick out the promises God makes. Which resonate most strongly with you? Which do you find hardest to understand?
2. What are the implications of being adopted as God's children? What does it say about who we are, and God's feelings towards us? Do we always feel it?
3. How do you respond to the fact that God works everything out in accordance with his plans and purposes? How do you relate that to your own life, and the wider world?
4. Think of a time when it was difficult to see what God was doing at the time, but it became much clearer in hindsight. What happened? What did you learn?
5. How do you relate to the idea that Christians are called to 'be for the praise of his glory'. How does it (/could it/should it) shape the way we live?
6. Jane talked about rewriting part of Deuteronomy 6 to reflect our own patterns of life. The original is as follows - if you were to give it an update, what would it look like for you?

'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door-frames of your houses and on your gates.'

7. Choose a phrase or short passage from this text to reflect on in the coming week - either something you find particularly relevant or hard to understand. Share it with the group, and pray that we would all begin more strongly to grasp the truth of God's promises in this passage.