

Book	Ephesian – Study 3
Topic	God’s Wonderful Plan
Reference	Ephesians 1:9-14
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Speaker	Dr Peter Ng

- Knowledge of his grand plan for the universe
- Our inheritance
- Sealing with the holy spirit

Life is very confusing, so the important thing about life is trying to find out what life is all about. Sometimes our view of life is; my needs have to be met, how to get rid of my guilt feelings, how to make me happy. We often see things from our point of view. You see things from our point of view, it is kind of difficult to make sense of life.

1. KNOWLEDGE OF HIS GRAND PLAN:

*Ephesians 1:9-10 (ESV) making known to us the **mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.***

So this is the overall arching plan for which the blessing is that he tells you, what life is all about. We have got people all over the world, doing all sort of different things, some people build things up, some people tear things down, life is very confusing. If you can see the grand plan, then you are able to live your life in a way that actually make sense. The only way you can live that make sense is basically seeing life from God’s perspective.

Context is very-very important; *he make know to us the mystery of his will.* The word ‘mystery’ means unsolved puzzle. In Bible terms mystery comes from the Greek word, ‘*mysterion*’ which actually is the mother word of mystery and ‘*mysterion*’ in the Bible means something that was previously hidden and is now revealed. Now if you are to come from the western side of things and say mystery means something which is hidden and I can discover it, that’s why you read mystery novels, so that you could read and you could work out the meaning. In Greek, ‘*mysterion*’ mean something that is hidden that you can never work it out, God has to tell you. So here the plan to life is called the Greek *mysterion* and *mysterion* cannot be worked out, it has to be told to us, it has to be revealed to us. Christianity is a revealed religion. So therefore what we have is the word of God, the word of God tells us the meaning of life and make known to us the *mysterion* of his will.

The word ‘unite’ is basically to reunite. So basically God’s plan is at the fullness of time with Christ to reunite all the disparate confused parts of the world that has basically shattered because of sin. So we live in a world that’s basically falling apart, our environment is falling apart, our society is falling apart. In our world, 80 billionaires now control the same wealth as 3.5 billion people. Newsweek came out recently,

Last year, the world's billionaires made over \$462 billion combined—enough money to end extreme poverty around the globe seven times over

Rich people are moving apart and one day you are going to have a revolution like the French Revolution, that will come and then they will chop off your head for the 1% and this happens all the time. This happens in every civilization. There is not a single kingdom that has lasted more, Roman Kingdom was around 600 years, and everyone falls because of the sinful nature.

What the world was supposed to be originally and what it will be in the end:

Colossians 1:15-17 (ESV) He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

That's what creation was for, it was created through him and for him. Now what is the future?

Ephesians 1:9-10 (ESV) according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

So therefore one day, every single thing that has been torn apart will be brought under the lordship of Christ, things in heaven and things on earth. So the original plan is everything is built for the headship of Christ. You put Christ as the cornerstone, he is the cornerstone of spiritual system, social system, psychological system, economic system, biological system, physical system, he is the centerpiece. If you take the centerpiece out, then life doesn't make sense at all. So everything is in that one particular person at the time.

Jean Jacques Rousseau thought that man was good by nature, a "noble savage". He thought that democracy is good because every man is good, so you have all the man to come to rule because everyone is so good that no person is fit to be a slave. Problem with the Christian view of democracy is that Christian approach is that, we want to have democracy because man is evil and in democracy you limit the evil. We have humanist approach, man is good. Democracy allows all to participate

Again you got two systems, two approaches to the same system, but we actually have an obsession with kings. We all are somewhat obsessed with royalty, we like to watch Prince William and his wife and before that his parents. Every dress that Prince William's wife wears instantly will sell, the moment she wear whatever it is, everyone buys. Frank Farley, a professor, writes,

Even if a contemporary monarchy has seemingly little power, it may in fact have significant power, psychological suasion, and a grip on people's attention to and perception of what constitutes a free and egalitarian society, obscuring the so-important principle of equal opportunity for all

What he is actually saying is that even you got a contemporary monarch with very little power like Prince Harry got no power, he can still influence by psychological suasion and grips on people's attention and people are so focused on them, they forget the fact that we are all supposed to be equal. They actually obscure the so important principle of equal opportunity for all. So why should

they get all the money, why should they get all the adulation, why should they get all the privilege, we forget that because we are looking at this couple and we are enthralled.

Dr Nicole Joseph is a psychologist and she gives reasons for we are fascinated with royalty, because it is like a Cinderella story. All of us have read the Cinderella story and we want to be the prince, we want to be the princesses, so we have this desire to be included in something larger than ourselves. Wish fulfilment, may be it is a mirror of our own family, may be our family is like the royal family, the king / queen archetype in the back of our minds we are always looking for the kings or queens.

You are always looking to a singular person, whether it is royalty or politicians. In human history, it is always whether a country is good or bad or ugly it always gravitates around one person, because what we are saying psychologically, we have a king / queen archetype inside our distant memory and in our hearts. It happens because one day many years ago in the Garden of Eden we got one king, one God and at that time Eden was beautiful, life was good and then sin came in and the world fell apart then we got democracy and somehow we are moving back towards this subconscious desire in our hearts to be ruled by one good person.

So if God is just a father, he can only love you, he cannot control, but God is more than that, God is king and father. So he is the father figure we are looking at. He is the king that we are looking at and basically he is going to come and unite the world. Now God is going to be sovereign. We are talking about Father God, who is absolutely sovereign.

Daniel 4:34-35 At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation;35 all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"

Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful king of Babylon at that time. He was actually very proud and he was driven seven years into the wilderness, like a wildebeest and then when he came back to his senses he said these things, God is absolutely sovereign.

God's plan is the ultimate cause of everything,

*Exodus 21:12-14 (ESV) Whoever strikes a man so that he dies shall be put to death. 13 But if he did not lie in wait for him, but **God let him fall into his hand**, then I will appoint for you a place to which he may flee. 14 But if a man willfully attacks another to kill him by cunning, you shall take him from my altar, that he may die.*

Accidental death is not accidental, God let him fall into his hand, even accidental death God is in control.

Proverbs 16:33 (ESV) The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.

It tells us that everything is controlled by God.

Amos 3:6 (ESV) Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid? Does disaster come to a city, unless the Lord has done it?

It tells us that all the major or minor things, everything is within the control of God.

Matthew 10:29 (ESV) Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.

Isaiah 45:5-7 (ESV) I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me,⁶ that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other.⁷ I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the Lord, who does all these things.

This is the sovereignty of God, this is the power of the king, this is your king and your father. God weaves, because he is sovereign, evil into his plan

Psalms 76:10 (ESV) Surely the wrath of man shall praise you; the remnant of wrath you will put on like a belt.

So even the wrath of man, even its evil shall be made in such a way it actually basically glorifies God. A tapestry in the front looks beautiful, you look behind and it is made of threads that doesn't make any sense. That's what life is, God controls the black threads, the white threads, the yellow threads, at the back it looks confused but in the front in God's mind it has a plan. Now God's plan doesn't negate our responsibility. So when we talk about God's plan, it doesn't negate what we do. Assyria was going to oppress Judah at that time

*Isaiah 10:5-6 (ESV) Woe to, Assyria, the **rod of my anger**; the **staff in their hands is my fury!** ⁶ Against a godless nation I send him, and against the people of my wrath I command him, to take spoil and seize plunder, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.*

God is saying here that Assyria who goes to attack Judah is actually used by God. When the Assyrians are whacking them it is actually God who is whacking them.

*Isaiah 10:7-8 (ESV) But he does not so intend, and his heart does not so think; but it is in his **heart to destroy**, and to cut off nations not a few; ⁸ for he says: "**Are not my commanders all kings?**"*

As far as the Assyrian king is concerned, when he is attacking people it is because of his own greatness and he got different motives.

*Isaiah 10:10-11 (ESV) As **my hand** has reached to the kingdoms of the idols, whose carved images were greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria,¹¹ shall I not do to Jerusalem and her idols as I have done to Samaria and her images?"*

*Isaiah 10:12 (ESV) When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, **he will punish the speech of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the boastful look in his eyes?**"*

So he uses Assyria to attack Judah and Assyria attacks Judah because of their own pride then who does he punish, he punishes Assyria. The very people he raised up to punish Israel and when he is done doing that then he punishes Assyria, because the motive for which he does it is for evil motive. So this is a way we actually have a sovereign God who weaves good, evil into the plan of mankind. You got God purposes and man's actions going side by side.

God may allow a bad person, an evil regime to continue but we also have to be responsible and do things correctly and so far.

How does God's sovereignty works?

It works together with man's responsibility

Acts 27:21-26 Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul stood up among them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss. 22 Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. 23 For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, 24 and he said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.' 25 So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. 26 But we must run aground on some island."

So he is telling them, even though this storm is very bad we will be safe because I need to go to Caesar.

Acts 27:30-32 (ESV) And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, and had lowered the ship's boat into the sea under pretense of laying out anchors from the bow, 31 Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved." 32 Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship's boat and let it go.

So as things were getting bad, the soldiers were quietly lowering the life boats, so that they will jump there and they escape and everybody else die. Paul says, unless this man stay in the ship you cannot be saved. Now you have got a problem here, on one hand God's angel said, you surely be saved, you will go to Rome, on the other hand you say, if the soldiers escape in the lifeboat then you will die. So you got a problem here, you got God's prophecy which will surely come to pass and man's responsibility, what if they actually got into the lifeboat and the sailors ran away, they will all die.

How can the two work together, you got free will, that means there was a possibility. Paul won't warn you unless there is a possibility that soldiers will escape. He warns you because there is a possibility that the soldiers will run away and the people will die but if God is in control of good and bad, here you can see a classic passage, it is the most important passage in the bible in terms of the sovereignty of God's will and freewill. Man has free will, the soldiers had the free will as to whether they escape or they don't escape. God has his sovereign plan that Paul by hook or by crook he will make it to Rome, but how does God achieve his purpose. He achieves his purpose by man of his free will, not leaving the boat.

How does he approve it, by warning? So when they tell you, don't cut the boats, don't escape, when they listened to him then God's plan went on track.

The story of Ester we have got all this Jews who were going to be killed by this evil man called Haman and then Ester had only one choice, to go into the king's presence without any appointment and unless he reaches out his hand to you, you come without his permission then you will die and she was a bit hesitant and then the uncle came to her and he said, for this reason, you a Jew, actually became the queen of Persia. She had the whole wait of destiny on her heart, but if you refuse to do so God will then give this task to someone else. You see God's purposes will always come to pass, you make the choice, are given the choice to participate in his grand purpose. So if Ester said no, well God would have found another way. So all of us make free will decisions but God is behind it. So actually God works through your freewill, he works through your will.

How does God punish the people of Judah? By sending the Assyrians. So that's how free will and God sovereignty works at the same time.

Are you in control in life?

Life is very-very difficult, you can either go through life emotional wreck, we try to be cautious, we don't do that or this and we become emotional wrecks or we become cynical and approach life in an attitude of who cares.

Now the third way is to approach life believing that you have a father who is the king. If you have the father and you have got the king, you are confident. When the father is in control, all of us are partners. We are partners for change in this country, so therefore we need to do our part. No matter what the outcome is, good or calamity, God is in control and every single step of the way. So therefore we should actually be confident and trusting that we are now partners.

Whatever it is God's purposes will carry on. The reason why we are upset is that maybe we can't earn a living, maybe we don't get to shop at the best malls, maybe our ringgit will be devalued by half, but those are actually things of our comfort. We actually have to see things from God's perspective. That is the only perspective that is important in life.

So now we are going to have everything united in Christ and that process will go on, as it happened to the Chinese Christian, it will happen to us, it will be united in the sovereignty of God.

2. OUR INHERITANCE IN CHRIST:

*Ephesians 1:11-12 (ESV) In him we have obtained an **inheritance**, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.*

So we got inheritance. The inheritance can mean two things; we are God's inheritance or we receive a portion of his what God has. In the Old Testament it is usually we are God's inheritance

Deut 4:20 But the Lord has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people of his own inheritance, as you are this day

Deut 7:6 "For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth

This is Israel, so therefore Israel was of all the people in the world, God choose Israel and that one is his portion, it is like you inherited something, the people of Israel belong to him. The other way of looking at it is he is our inheritance and basically eternal life.

*1 Peter 1:3-5 (ESV) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to **an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.***

This is eternal life. Your eternal life is guarded by faith. He will give you the faith to carry on to the end.

Psalms 2:7 I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. 8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.

Which means the son of God, Jesus Christ, will be given the whole earth, all the nations your heritage. Now if you look at us

Romans 8:16-17 (ESV) The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

This means that we are co-heirs with Christ and Christ is given the nations as his heritage. It means we are going to inherit the earth, we are going to inherit all the nations that's a beautiful, wonderful, big scale thought, co-heirs with Christ.

What does co-heirs mean?

Ephesians 1:9-10 (ESV) making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

So therefore he brings the world to himself and you will be part of that. This is a big vision; our visions are very-very small. It puts our life in perspective. Our future vision is too small and so therefore we live defeated lives. This is what we should be looking at

1 Corinthians 3:21-23 (ESV) For all things are yours, 22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, 23 and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

He is saying, all events, everything belongs to you and you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God, that's a huge vision. So even bad things, death, life, illness, nothing can defeat you, they are all made for you.

Romans 5:2 (ESV) Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Which means we are going to share the glory of God.

Psalms 73:25-26 (ESV) Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. 26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Here, we are going to inherit God, we are going to be living with him in heaven in an unshielded glory. He will be our joy.

Matthew 13:43 (ESV) Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

That's our vision.

Romans 8:23 (ESV) And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies

1 Corinthians 15:43-44 (ESV) It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

All events, God himself, eternal life, world and nations, new bodies, this is what we need to focus on. This is what should drive us. It is like a man who gives a credit card to his son. Now his son is given a credit card here and he tells the son, son every day you got \$5000, one day when you reach 21 years old then you will get 5 billion dollars, but your credit card limit today is 5000. Some of you take the credit card and you spend as if you got 5 billion, some of you take the credit card you spend like you have 5 dollars, that's the issue. That is the problem with under or over realized eschatology, different churches. Some churches don't believe in the power of miracles and all that, so they think their credit card got 5 dollars, so they never attempt anything, they never do anything, their whole life is scared and that's not what the church should be. Another one is the card that think they have 5 billion dollars, so they think they own everything, that is what is called over realized and under realized eschatology is last days.

So you got a movement called the seven mountains. Some of the churches believe that there are seven mountains in the world; economy, government, family, religion, media, arts and education, so all of this we must conquer. So therefore it is basically in America because they have got Christian kind of government and so therefore they capture every area and try to create a Christian utopia, a Christian party.

Some believe they got miracles. Gloria Copeland says, “so you’re the weatherman. You get out there-or the weatherwoman, whichever it is, and you talk to that thing, and you tell it, “You’re not coming here. I command you to dissipate! And you get back up there in Jesus’ name!” Glory to God. That-I won’t charge you extra.”

She is taking to Tornado, that’s when you think your credit card has 5 billion, you cannot make a tornado go away. This is what over-realized eschatology looks like. Others have this idea of dominion theology that they believe they are going to create a perfect society and then only Christ will come. Others believe of liberation theology, basically using the gospel we can liberate the people over and form a utopian society for Christ to come. That’s not true.

James and John, sons of thunder. They came to Jesus and said,

Mark 10:37-39 (ESV) And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” 39 And they said to him, “We are able.

So you got this idea of glory, everybody thinks they got credit card which got 5 billion dollars. The natural tendency is for us to think about now. So before Jesus dies, and he is talking about his glory, the two comes and ask Jesus, you are talking about your glory, okay when you come in your glory we will be at your right and left. Then Jesus asked them, do you know what I mean by glory or not.

What does Jesus mean by glory?

It is the cross, that’s why Jesus said, you do not know what you are asking. That’s is what we are like. We want the glory now. Jesus’s glory was on the cross.

Romans 8:16-17 (ESV) he Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

So he told those two fellow, yeah, you will have my baptism, you will take my cup and they were martyred. That’s how you receive the glory. Jesus’s glory is the cross. Jeremy Treat, an adjunct professor of Biola University wrote,

The kingdom is the ultimate goal of the cross, and the cross is the means by which the kingdom comes

So don’t get fooled by all these people who think their credit card has 5 billion dollars, you have some parts of realization that God is with us, his power of the Holy Spirit lives inside us, there are miracles as well, but you cannot overdo it.

3. THE SEAL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:

*Ephesians 1:13-14 (ESV) In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and **believed in him**, were **sealed with the promised Holy Spirit**, 14 who is the **guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.***

There are three nuances to this seal

1. It is the seal with the Roman guards put onto the tomb and you put Herod seal there, you cannot break the seal. Another way is in Revelations 20,

Revelation 20:2-3 (ESV) And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, 3 and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him,

Seal means to seal in your faith and seal out unbelief and apostasy. That means God seals you, that means he closes up everything, so that your faith will remain intact. That's what the Holy Spirit does.

2. Second nuance is Abraham. His circumcision is called the sign and seal of the righteousness he had by faith. So the seal of circumcision is your seal, but it is a sign. It is a mark of authenticity. So basically if you are sealed it is a sign of authenticity.
3. *Rev 7:3 Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.*

So when God says, I am going to send the Holy Spirit as a seal, he is going to seal in your faith that you will not lose your faith. It is a sign of your authenticity and the seal of protection from outside evil. That's what the Holy Spirit will do when He comes.

Holy Spirit will be a Guarantee. A guarantee is a deposit.

Genesis 38:17-18 (ESV) He answered, "I will send you a young goat from the flock." And she said, "If you give me a pledge, until you send it—" 18 He said, "What pledge shall I give you?" She replied, "Your signet and your cord and your staff that is in your hand

Signet ring is his way which you can sign things in those days, you can sign your money away, so it was very valuable, you don't simply give people your signet ring. So when the Holy Spirit is given to us as a guarantee, it means it is a very valuable deposit in your hearts. So the Holy Spirit given to us is to seal our faith in, protect us from the evil one, sign of our authenticity and a guarantee that we will be in heaven one day.

APPLICATION:

You take all of this because you have got every spiritual blessing under heaven, you have got adoption, redemption, election, sealing of the Holy Spirit, predestination, inheritance, knowledge of his plan and from that onwards you have got all the rest here. It is like a cascading firework and that's why when Paul writes this long 14 verse passage, he is like blessed be God, blessed be God to the place of His glory. Paul is using this to pray. Ephesians needs to change us because it opens our eyes to who God is.

When you study Ephesians, the first 14 verses, it blows your mind and the more you meditate on it, the next time you go to prayer, O Lord thank you for adoption because I was adopted I got your spirit, I got security, I got access, I got love, I got inheritance, thank you for the sealing of the Holy Spirit, it goes on and on and on and as you pray it fills your heart and you really understand who God is.

So the depth of worship, it is what you will be having, confidence because if your God is so powerful and you are sealed with the Holy Spirit, you will have confidence, resilience in the face of opposition and certainty in how you live.

When you have that attitude in your life, you will be unbeatable. Jesus said, the gates of hell shall not prevail against you. You have the victory.