

Thanksgiving is one of my favorite holiday's b/c it is the least commercialized of all the holidays. Unlike, Christmas, Easter, etc., there's not much of a financial windfall for retailers. If it weren't for the tag along day of Black Friday, Thanksgiving would be the perfect holiday. **Why? B/c it is a day of gratitude!** And while it's not specifically a religious holiday, it can be spiritually uplifting if you let it – b/c a thankful heart opens the door for God's blessings in your life.

Billionaire, Sir John Templeton, was asked, "What is the secret of wealth?" He said, "*Gratitude. If you're not grateful, you're not rich – no matter how much you have. But if you're grateful, you're rich; no matter how little you have.*"

If today you're a follower of Christ – then you're rich! You are rich b/c of the amazing love and grace of God that has been so immeasurably lavished on you by God.

I Salvation was PLANNED by the Father

For God chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Christ, in accordance w/ his pleasure and will — to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Choice is one of the great mysteries of the Bible. For generations, scholars have debated *if man chooses God* or *if God chooses man*? YES! W/out reservation, the Bible says that God sovereignly provides salvation to those He calls to Himself; yet it also teaches that every man has a responsibility to respond to God by faith.

A The Father Chose JESUS as the Means

The Father's plan from the start was that no one would have their sins forgiven and their eternal destiny altered by any other means than the cross. **The cross is God's sole means of forgiveness and salvation** – and there is no Plan B.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me." John 14:6

I'm thankful that from the start, knowing Adam would sin and that all men would be condemned and separated from Him, God planned the Cross to rescue/restore us to Himself.

B The Father Chose HOLINESS as the Measure

Chosen people are always chosen "for" something. God has chosen that those who receive Him are to be holy and blameless in His sight.

holy – to be set apart – set apart from sin to God

At the Cross – God has made it possible for each of us to be set apart from sin to Him. This is known as **POSITIONAL Holiness. I am holy b/c of what God has done for me.**

He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of His Son w/ whom we have redemption thru His blood the forgiveness of sin. Co. 1:13f

At salvation, our sinful nature is crucified w/ Christ, and His righteousness was placed in our heavenly bank account. As a result, God lifts us out of sin and places us into His kingdom where we're given a new citizenship in Him.

C The Father Chose ADOPTION as the Method

When God chose us, He planned that upon being saved we'd become part of His family through spiritual adoption.

In a Roman adoption, the adopted person had all the rights of a legitimate son in his new family and completely lost all rights in his old family. In the eyes of the law he was a new person. So new was he even all debts and obligations connected w/ his previous family were abolished.

This is exactly what God has done for us. We belonged to the family of Adam – condemned to die b/c of sin. But God, through the cross of Christ, took us out of Adam's family and adopted us into His family; wiping out our past sins.

II Salvation was PURCHASED by the Son

In him we have redemption through his blood the forgiveness of sins, in accordance w/ the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us w/ all wisdom and understanding. v. 7

In Christ alone we're redeemed/forgiven. At the cross, Jesus purchased our forgiveness. **1 Cr. 6:19** says He bought w/ a price – that is, Christ purchased our lives by paying in full the required price – His blood.

In the Roman Empire, slavery was an accepted institution. Slaves were bought/sold like livestock. It's believed at the height of the empire there were 6 mil. slaves. Roman law made provision for a slave to be set free so long as the buyer paid the purchase price. This is the word Paul uses here – ***apolutrosis*** – to buy back for the purpose of setting free.

Spiritually speaking, we're all slaves to sin and prisoners of condemnation. **To be released, someone who is able, willing, and worthy had to pay the ransom price of death.**

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Mark 10:45

At the cross, Jesus purchased our redemption and bought us back from sin to set us free into His righteousness. **The result is our forgiveness.**

Remember Jesus' words in the upper room when He served the cup? *"Drink it, all of you, this is my blood poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.* Mt. 26:28

forgiveness (*aphiemi*) means to send away or cancel a debt. This picture is portrayed in the Jewish sacrificial system.

In the O.T., the Israelites celebrated the Day of Atonement where the high priest would take (2) unblemished goats for the atonement. The 1st goat was sacrificed and his blood was sprinkled over the altar as a covering for sin. Then they'd lay hands on the 2nd goat to symbolically transfer the sins of the people to that goat who was taken out into the wilderness so it could never find its way back – becoming their scapegoat.

I'm thankful on the cross, Jesus became our scapegoat. His blood was sacrificed to cover our sins and His death served to take away our sins as far as the east is from the west.

III Salvation is **PRESERVED** by the Spirit

You were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him w/ a seal, the promised H.S., who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession; to the praise of his glory.

Once a person receives God's offer of salvation, God gives His H.S. to seal the deal and guarantee the faith transaction.

The sealing of the H.S. is comparable to the seal of a king's signet ring. A king would dip his ring in wax to seal its contents as a promise of authenticity and authority.

God's seal serves as a deposit guaranteeing the security our salvation. Just as our salvation has nothing to do w/ our abilities or goodness, neither does the security of our faith depend on us. The Spirit is God's down payment on our lives guaranteeing our eternal hope.

Today, as we enter into this sacred moment of reflection and remembrance – let's do so in the understanding that the God who was rich in mercy has made us rich in His love.