*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him, in love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved, in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth, 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, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory, 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, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it,* ***to the praise of his glory****.*

*Ephesians 1:3-14*

\*I’m not sure there is a more beautiful, powerful, or longer sentence in the bible than Ephesians 1:3-14. In the original Greek the apostle Paul poses these 12 verses as one extravagant sentence. He shows us just what is going on in this God created, Christ redeemed, Spirit blessed world into which we live.

\*And it’s fitting when we think about the vastness, the enormousness of the world in which we dwell. There is no reducing what God himself has created, though try as we might to shrink it as we attempt to manage and control, though try as sin might to diminish it, as it seeks to destroy and disrupt, This is a world in which God formed, in Christ Re-formed, and in which we, by the Spirit, now live and glorify God in thought, word, and deed.

\*Our final sola that we are going to be looking at for this study is Soli Deo Gloria, to God alone is the Glory. When it comes to Glory we have to go to the very beginning, which as Maria Von Trapp would sing, is a very good place to start. Our beginning starts with God, in the beginning God said… God so loved the world, God did, God. God got it all going, God sent Jesus, God gives us our baptismal identity, it is always God. And I love that our sentence from the Apostle Paul shows us how God and Glory go hand in hand, See, we are always in the presence of God and His glory, God who from the beginning of time has displayed his glory, where in Christ we now receive that glory, and we share and bring that Glory to the World

And we begin to see a pattern emerge to help us live out Soli Deo Gloria. It starts with God; it’s revealed fully in Christ, then it’s given to us only to give back to God.

\*It must have been such a relief when the reformation leaders realized what was being offered at the heart of this sola. Can’t you see Luther struggling to try and earn the favor of God, trying to do enough to be considered worthy, to gain enough to which he could point to and say there, that is enough.

\*What a burden to set out to try and gather as much glory as you can, to constantly try to one up others, to prove to God or everyone else you know that you are worthy and that they should praise you. That kind of thinking, that kind of living, hasn’t ever worked. But it certainly hasn’t stopped us from trying.

\*In the days of Jesus, was the glory in God or was it in the keeping of the law? In the time of the reformation was the glory in God or was it in the basilicas? In our day, is the glory in God or is it in appearance, in success, in stuff? The poet prophet Isaiah said it best, “we all like sheep have gone astray each of us have turned to our own way.”

\*So how do we get back? How do we stop putting God on the margins of our lives or simply using God to suit our lives when it’s convenient or we need help? How do we reform the way of our thinking, repent and receive God’s word, His Spirit, to grow and be shaped in our lives in a way that is to the Glory of God. Peterson highlights 7 verbs, 7 get things done words, 7 intentional and personal ways that in the Apostle Paul’s sentence show how God works for and in and through us all to His Glory.

\*The first verb is God **blessed** “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.” I love this because it immediately reveals the nature of God. He is and He gives. God blesses as He himself is blessed. What God does, comes out of who God is, what we receive from God, is who God is. In Christ He gives himself and all that comes with it. God is who he is, we don’t figure him out, we don’t explain or define God, we simply Worship God who as he is. The word bless permeates our language, our songs, our experiences. The blessing that God is, he gives freely in Christ to us. Our response, Praise and Glory be to God alone.

\*Next is God **chose** “Just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love” we all know what it’s like to be left out, to be neglected, to be NOT chosen. Not chosen seems to carry the message that I have no worth, that I am not useful, that I’m good for nothing. He chose you. In the moments of life when you feel ignored, dismissed, of no account, or indistinguishable, he CHOSE you. This wasn’t some last minute thing, where there was no one else so he was stuck with you, In Christ before the foundation of the world, before he said let there be light, before you did or didn’t do anything, He chose you. Our response, Thank you and Glory be to God alone.

\*Three is God **destined** “He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace” Like chosen, this word carries with it ideas of intentionality, not random coincidence. God notices, identifies, chooses us and with the word destine declares our life to have purpose, a purpose that is in relation to him and his plan for our lives that are being reformed in Christ. He doesn’t leave us alone to our own choices and own devices in a hope that we can figure it out and get to where we need to be, rather it marks that we’re going to a specific destination and there are things that we do on the way, not alone, but with Him and he who began, who destined, will not only prepare the place for us, but will carry us there. Our response, trust, confidence and Glory be to God alone.

\*Four is God **bestowed** “… grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved” Bestow is the noun “grace” verbalized. In its verbal form it carries over the meaning of the noun “grace” but intensifies it. It’s like an eruption, not a light southern California rain, or a pouring over, but a drenching, it’s a word that is attempting to capture the largeness, the sheer vastness of the universe, where every landscape, every shift in the weather, every conversation, every person, everything is involved and receiving and reforming in God bestowing grace. Why? Because of what he has done, because of our glory? No. Rather because of his beloved, Christ. Because of Christ there is abundance. Get used to abundance because it comes with Christ. Our response, open your hands and Give glory to God alone.

\*Verb five is God **lavished** “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us.” This word in its various forms can be found 78 times in the New Testament, and Paul uses over half of them. What other word can describe the effects of redemption? What God started with, what God gave in Christ, what we now have, what we share with the world. We are forgiven, we are reformed, and we lavishly share with our words, service and resources. Our response, get busy and give glory to God alone.

\*Six, God **made known** “With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will.” We are not in the dark, not intended to be kept in a state of ignorance or as children who are to be seen and not heard. Rather we are in on what God does, on the way God does things and how he has brought us into that Story. The bible is story after story of God in relationship with people, people who were just like us, as he makes known to them his will. His will that none would be lost, that all would look to his son and be saved. Wisdom and insight aren’t just facts in a textbook but rather are lived out in relationship with Christ, being in relationship with the one who entered in, who became one of us and lovingly embraces us. He seeks you and reveals himself to you so that there would be no doubt. Our response Know and give glory to God alone.

\*Final verb were gonna look at is God **gathers up** “…to gather up all things in him [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth.” This is the summary verb to this God created, Christ redeemed, spirit blessed world in which we are living. Go back and take a look at the list. Did you catch it? each time whether by name or pronoun, Christ is named; Our God, blessed us in Christ, chose us in Christ, destined us through Christ, bestowed on us in Christ, in Christ we have redemption, the riches of Christ’s grace, Christ lavished on us, set forth in Christ, gathered up in Christ and what’s surprising is the matching pronouns in this section, US. No part of our lives is impersonal or general or abstract from God. But all of it has been reformed. God’s Glory, Revealed in Christ, Given to us and we share and give Glory to Him alone for what he has done. This Ephesian passage gathers us and all of heaven and earth into the all-encompassing work of Christ in which we become whole, healthy, complete men and women integral to the work of God, to the Glory of God alone.

\*Immersed in this sentence, in this life we are called to, we see Paul use a phrase 3 times, a phrase that the reformers certainly didn’t miss. “to the praise of his glory.” Praise is grateful celebration and Glory is the bright presence of God. This is our destiny, what we are made for: To give praise and Glory to God alone for what he has done for us in Christ Jesus.

\*All is a gift, God’s grace in Christ Jesus is everywhere, God in Christ is actively doing for and in us everything involved in this reformed life. And we simply receive, and give praise and Glory to Him alone. To him who is actively involved within and over everything. To God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who blesses, calls, destines, bestows, lavishes, makes known, and gathers us up all to his own Glory. Soli Deo Gloria.