

Ephesians 1:1-14

Week 1

3/21/21

Introduction

Tim. Pastor. Sup. **Ephesians 1.**

SERIES INTRO:

We are starting a new series today that we'll be in all the way to the end of June through the book of Ephesians. Garrison set us up well last week as we finished up our sermon series on the book of Acts by introducing us to this city and the first time Paul brings the gospel to Ephesus. Now, about 7 years later, Paul is under house arrest in Rome, and this is one of a couple of letters he writes back to the church in Ephesus to encourage them in the gospel.

RESOURCES:

Before we dive in I did want to let you know about a couple of resources we will have in conjunction with this series to help you really deep dive into this book of Ephesians:

1. **Handout**
2. **Bible reading Plan**
3. **Podcast**

There's so much big gospel truth in these 6 chapters and so we want to help you see all that God has for us and for you in this book and equip you the best we can. We'll get you the resources, you gotta put in the time with them, alright?

PASSAGE INTRO:

Ephesians 1. Here's my goal for us today:

Tuesday morning. To be honest, this passage is intimidating, there's a lot here. But last week as I began studying it and reading it, I was digging around in the Greek and commentaries and trying to understand this really theologically rich text in my head, when God instead did something with it in my heart. The Holy Spirit shook something within me. I was sharing with my CG guys that it just felt like this **mini personal revival moment**. Tuesday morning, in our basement, studying Ephesians 1 - and there was just a tangible presence of God, and I just broke down. As God showed me in a fresh way the reality of all that is true for us in the gospel of Jesus Christ. That we are chosen, that we are adopted, that we are redeemed and set free, that we are forgiven, that we have an inheritance.

And so, man, I've been locked and loaded on this one for 13 days now just praying that God would stir that in your hearts this evening as well. That He would make His presence known and that some of you would experience a mini personal gospel revival as we look at how deep and rich the love and grace of God is in this passage.

Intro + Verse 3

Ephesians 1:1-3

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 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,

We're about to enter into Paul's big summary of the gospel. In our English text verses 3-14 are broken up into multiple sentences, but in the original Greek it's actually one big run-on 202 word sentence. It reads like this **epic Jewish love poem** where Paul can't stop gushing about the gospel and about everything that is ours *In Christ Jesus*.

And vs 3 is the summary statement for the whole thing. This is the good news of the Gospel → **That we bless (praise/worship/follow/adore) God, because He has blessed (favored) us in Christ with every spiritual blessing.**

Paul says before we get into anything else in this letter to the church at Ephesus - before we talk about any of these practical things like forgiveness, sex, marriage, relationships, the church, any of that, I need you to get something → **YOU ARE SPIRITUALLY BLESSED IN CHRIST JESUS.**

Not a little bit. Not halfway. Not occasionally. You are blessed in Christ Jesus with **EVERY** spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Now, we're about to break down what those blessings are but here's what you have to understand about these blessings:

FIRST, The blessings are a free gift from God. You don't earn a blessing. You don't work for a blessing. You don't achieve a blessing. It's free!

SECOND, our gospel blessings are more rich and beautiful than you could ever imagine.

Diamond. The Puritans used to talk about the gospel as a diamond. If you hold a diamond up to the sun, depending on how you twist it and turn it it's going to shine and reflect in a whole host of different ways. It's one diamond, but reflecting in different ways depending on how you're looking at it.

The same is true of the gospel. It's one message, one truth - salvation by grace through faith in Christ. But there's so many aspects and dynamics and blessings that come with it. Sometimes I think we can get so locked in on one part of it - forgiveness of sins. True. Amen. BIG DEAL. But there's so many other parts of the gospel that are just as true, just as beautiful, just as meaningful for our lives.

So Paul is going to continue in this passage spelling out these spiritual blessings that are our ours in Christ Jesus. These different sides of the gospel diamond.

There's 8 specific ones Paul outlines in this passage. **It's going to feel like a lot, and that's because it is a lot.** I want you to feel overwhelmed, because when understood rightly, God's love for you in Christ is overwhelming. And I want you to see how great of news the gospel truly is.

Here is everything that is true about you if you are a Christian. If you are **In Christ**, these are all true about you:

Ephesians 4:3-4

3 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, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world,

Spiritual Blessings for all Christians:

1. You are chosen by the Father.

Before the foundation of the world....

God has always existed. I know, it's a mystery. But He has no beginning. He has no creator. He exists from eternity past to eternity future. He has always been, always is, and always will be. And Paul says that at some point, before Genesis 1, before the creation of the heavens and the earth, all of that, God did something. **God made up His mind and purposed His plan to bring together a people for Himself.**

This has been God's plan all along. To bring together a people for Himself. God throughout time has always had a chosen people that He declared was His.

- This was true in the Old Testament with the people of Israel, God establishing a covenant relationship with them that He would be their God and they would be His people (Exodus 6) and yet even then God's purposes and plans were bigger than one nation.
- Through the Israelites a Messiah, a Christ, would come and redeem, gather together a new chosen people for God, not based on ethnic identity but based on spiritual identity through faith in Christ.

This was God's plan - He declared it. He predestined it to happen.

And listen, this is good news because if God says something is going to happen, guess what? It's going to happen.

God has never been caught off guard. God has never been surprised. God has never had to call an emergency meeting.

So if God, before creation, predetermined - I'm bringing together a people for myself - He's going to accomplish that!

So when Paul says we're **chosen by God**, in vs 5 when he'll say we're **predestined for adoption**, he's not simply using theological terms to divide or contemplate or puff us up or argue over for fun. These are deep truths of God meant to bring comfort to our souls!

GOD CHOSE YOU! And if He chose you, you know what you can be certain of? **That YOU ARE HIS!** It's meant to bring comfort, hope, security, joy, humility - God knew you in your innermost being, He knew all your brokenness and sinfulness and in His sovereignty and in His kindness still wanted you as His child.

This isn't just Paul's theology. This is Jesus too, **John 15:16 - "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go bear fruit."** This is Peter, who calls the Church a "chosen people" (1 Pet 2:9).

Salvation starts as a work of God, which means it will end as a work of God. He starts it, He upholds it, He completes it. You can rest! Your soul can rest!

4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

2. We are holy and blameless before God.

Now this is important, notice the language of the text. It says - **"That we should be...holy and blameless."** God doesn't choose us **because** we are holy and blameless. He chooses us **to make us** holy and blameless. We don't clean ourselves up to come to God, we come to Him and He cleanses us by the blood of Christ.

Kickball. Some of us, we hear that God chose us, and we think of 4th grade playground kickball. God must have chosen me because he saw my wonderful kicking ability and my speed down the first base line. He saw my potential! Which means some of us are puffed up with pride - God chose me because of my potential. Others of us are crushed with our disabilities - God must really regret picking me, huh...

And God is saying → It has nothing to do with your potential or lack thereof, it has everything to do with my **power**. I didn't choose you because of who you were before or who you could be, **I chose you because I wanted you for my glory**. I'll make you holy and blameless.

Here's what God is doing - When you become a Christian, in one sense you are instantly holy and blameless, and in another sense, you are not. Here's what I mean:

- The moment you put your faith in Christ, trusting in Him as Savior and Lord, God declares you **positionally** holy and blameless. In that very moment, you get the righteousness of Christ. God now sees you as He sees Jesus - which means as you stand before God you are positionally holy and blameless before God.
- And then He begins the process of teaching you **practical** holiness, what the Bible calls sanctification. Which is learning to practically live out what is already positionally true about you - that you are holy and blameless before God.

So God says - here's the spiritual blessing - I chose you when you were not holy and blameless to make you positionally holy and blameless even while the Holy Spirit works on you being practically holy and blameless.

In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ,

3. We are adopted as sons.

You know how crazy this is? Because of your sin and rebellion you were an enemy of God without Jesus. You were the enemy of the creator of the universe. And while that was still true He chose and purposed not just to forgive you and make you holy and blameless, but also **to adopt you into His family**.

I know some of us grew up in the church, been around church for a while, so you might be tempted to just nod along to this one, I need you to see it → **Remember Acts 2?** Where Peter says we are all as sinners guilty for the death of Jesus. It was our sin that took Jesus to the cross. Our sin made Jesus have to die. We killed God's Son. Remember that?

I don't have a category for the type of love and grace that it would take to look at someone who murdered my daughter and now make them a part of my family? With all the rights and privileges and inheritance that comes with it. ARE YOU JOKING?

He makes us a part of his family. PERMANENTLY. This is not a screw up and you're out sort of scenario. He makes us sons of God. You're in the family. You are a son of God. [PAUSE]

And some of you might be thinking wait a minute - You mean son or daughter right? No I mean son. Here's why that's good news:

That specific use of the word "sons" is important here. In Paul's culture, only sons had the right to lay claim to an inheritance from their fathers. So when Paul writes to a church made up of men and women and says that they all are adopted as sons, he's actually subversively claiming that in God's kingdom, everyone who puts their faith in Christ is included. **In God's family, women and men are both heirs to everything on offer.**

5 (cont) according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

To the glory of God. For His praise. All of this - all of these blessings - are about God accomplishing His purposes for His glory and our good. It's all about him.

We're not even halfway on these blessings....are you seeing how beautiful the gospel is?

7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight

4. We are redeemed by the Son.

5. We are forgiven of our sins.

Let's talk about this idea of redemption. That word "redemption" simply means to "buy back, or buy out of". If you have ever had your car towed like I did more times that I would have like in college for parking illegally at student apartment complexes, you then go and "redeem" your car out of impound lot captivity. 9 times out of 10 when you read that word "redeem" in the Scriptures, it's a call back to the story of the Israelites being redeemed, or brought out of slavery in Egypt.

And so the implication here is that you and I are in need of some sort of redemption. Our sin has put us in a spot we don't want to be. We are in captivity.

Some of us are very aware of the captivity our sin has placed us in - the addictions we can't escape, the sinful habits we've learned to use to cope through life, the captivity of needing other people's approval. A whole host of things. We don't need some light behavior improvements or some new habits or routines, more self love and positivity, we need total redemption. We need someone to come and buy us out, to purchase our freedom.

And Paul says Jesus does that for us. How? The very next phrase → through **the forgiveness of our trespasses.**

For redemption to happen, forgiveness must happen. Whenever a wrong of any kind occurs, there is always a debt that must be paid.

Matheny's Car Accident. Growing up, my older brother was friends with a set of twins we'll call Mike and Joe. And Mike and Joe had the reputation of breaking things. You know that sort of person. It's just like - if it can be broken, and they're near it, it will break. They crashed our go kart, I think they broke our trampoline, I think they broke another friend's nose and another one's ankle playing sports at one point. That was just how it went. One day in particular we were coming back from the mall, because that's where you went as a teenager in the early 2000s. And Mike was following closely behind my brother. My brother stopped at a stop sign, Mike did not. Rear-ended him, wasn't pretty. Call our dad, he was known to get a little feisty back in the day, wasn't too happy. We get home and I still remember it vividly to this day, we still make fun of my dad for it - he comes outside and the only thing out of his mouth - "If your last name isn't Olson, go home!" I've never seen 17 year old guys move that quickly in my life.

Here's the thing. When Mike rear-ended my brother's car, there was a debt that was generated. Because of that debt, either (1) *He* has to pay for the repairs or (2) *my dad* has to pay for the repairs. Now, maybe you're thinking, "Option C is for my dad to say 'no big deal, don't worry about it. It's forgiven let's move on'." He could do that. But all that means is that he has absorbed the debt into Himself. It's not that there still isn't a debt, it's just that now the debt has been placed on him or on our family and he has chosen to forgive it.

True forgiveness always comes at a cost to the one forgiving. To forgive someone means you're absorbing the debt that another person created. So when the Bible says we have forgiveness of our trespasses through the blood of Jesus, it means we created a debt to God because of our sin, and that debt had to be paid. So forgiveness doesn't mean that God simply shrugged it off and said "don't worry about it, no big deal." Rather, that debt was willingly absorbed by Jesus on the cross on our behalf. It wasn't just a theoretical cost. It was a physical one. It required the shedding of blood. Jesus shed His blood to redeem us and forgive us.

You know how that story ends? My dad had Mike write a letter to him taking full responsibility for the accident, and then my dad paid for the repairs.

That's the gospel. We own our sin before the Lord - I'm guilty, I need a Redeemer. And Christ pays our debt.

9 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.

6. We are a part of God's redemptive plan for the whole world.

Jesus' death on the cross wasn't just about our own personal salvation. It wasn't just for us to be redeemed, but God's cosmic plan is also redemption of all created things. The redemption not only of souls, but His physical creation. God is not just making us new, He's making all things new.

If you're suffering from sin done to you, if you're broken over the barrage of evil in our world, if you're worn down from constant division - the hope for that being made right is also in the blood of Jesus!

God is putting us back together, but He's also putting the world back together. And we are now caught up in this larger act of redemption where God is righting all wrongs, recreating all that is undone, redeeming and restoring all that is broken.

11 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,

7. We are heirs to a forever kingdom.

Our inheritance is not only a new heart, a new self, being personally redeemed, but also we inherit new heavens and a new earth. A forever kingdom where we reign forever celebrating King Jesus. **Romans 8:17**, Paul calls us "co-heirs with Christ" of all that is His forever. This world is not our home! It's not our forever place.

Theologian John Stott says it this way - **"We are told that we shall see God and his Christ, and worship Him...we will be like Him...we will enjoy perfect fellowship with each other. For God's inheritance will not be a little private party for each individual but rather 'among the saints' as we join that 'great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.'"**

We have a great inheritance, far above and beyond anything we could ever imagine.

12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. 13 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.

8. We are sealed by the Holy Spirit.

We are **sealed** by the Spirit who is our guarantee. Verses 13-14 basically mean that everything we just said is true and will always be true and cannot be taken away from you.

To be sealed in Paul's time is the idea of being marked for identification.

Cattle Branding. Lindsay's family on her mom's side for the most part all live in the panhandle of Texas. Real farmland, real cowboys. It's crazy. And each family has what is known as a "brand", it's a symbol that represents that farm. This is the Holt Family Farm and this is the brand or symbol that goes with this farm. And what they'll do is they'll take this symbol and they will brand the cattle with that same symbol, which says to any other farmers - these cattle belong to this farm henceforth and forevermore. A major reason they do this is so that if the cattle get out/lost, you know who they belong to

and who to return them to. Even when they wander, their identity is stamped on them because who they belong to never changes.

That's what this seal of the Spirit is for the people God. It's God's mark on us - **these people are mine**. And it does not fade, it does not get replaced, it does not go away. If you are a Christian you have the Spirit as your seal, not a physical seal but a Spiritual marker that you henceforth and forever more are a child of God. You cannot lose your salvation, how do we know that? Because God chose you! You are His, forever!

Conclusion/Application - Competing Realities

That's the good news of the gospel! So how should this affect us now? Well we're going to spend a lot of the next 13 weeks in Ephesians fleshing this out, applying the truth of these gospel blessings into our relationships, our work, our marriages, our church, all of that, but let me give you one way I want this to get down into your heart today.

As followers of Jesus, we often live with competing realities.

- The Bible says we are **chosen** by God but we still live as **unwanted** and **unloved**.
- The Bible says we are **holy** and **blameless** before God, but we still live wrecked by **shame** and **guilt**.
- The Bible says we are **adopted** as children of God, but we still live as spiritual **orphans**.
- The Bible says we are **redeemed** and set free by the blood of Christ, but we still live in **bondage** to sin.
- The Bible says we are **forgiven**, but we still live as if we owe a **debt** for our sin that we have to repay.
- The Bible says we are **part** of God's big redemptive plan, but we still live **selfish**, self-seeking lives.
- The Bible says we are **heirs** to a forever kingdom, but we still live as if this world is our **forever home**.
- The Bible says we are **sealed** by the Holy Spirit and guaranteed an inheritance, but we still live as if the future is **uncertain** and God is **not in control**.

And so what we are invited into in this book, and in this series, is that this reality would be true about our lives and about our hearts and about our world → **The gospel changes everything.**

How do we live into that? What's our first step in that?

3 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,

To be in Christ and to live in Christ.

I don't know if you picked up on how many times Paul says it, but that's the crux of this whole passage, and really this whole book - **"IN CHRIST."** Paul says it 36 times in this letter alone, 9 times in this passage. Every spiritual blessing we have - adopted, blessed, chosen, redeemed, forgiven, united, heirs to a kingdom, sealed...all of it → **IN CHRIST.**

This is the heart of what it means to be a Christian - **YOU ARE UNITED TO JESUS CHRIST**. Christians are people who are in Christ. You, if you are a follower of Jesus, you are **IN CHRIST**. You have union with Him. Your life is wrapped up in His life. Your story is wrapped up in His story. His death is your death, His life is your life. You are in Him. United. One. It's this central truth of what it means to be a Christian.

And that changes everything.

This is how Tony Merida says it so well - **"Only by being 'in' Christ can one have access to 'every spiritual blessing'.** **If you are in Christ, then (as John MacArthur says) 'Christ's riches are your riches, His resources are your**

resources, His righteousness is your righteousness, His power is your power. His position is our position: Where He is, we are and what He has, we have.”

You are chosen, you are adopted, you are blessed, you are redeemed, you are forgiven, you have an inheritance, you are sealed! You are in Christ!

What a news worth celebrating!

PRAY.

TIME OF RESPONSE:

Communion.

- Believer - let's use this time to remember all the blessings that are ours because of the body and blood of Christ.
- Not a believer: All of these blessings are not yours unless you are in Christ - Would you trust in Him, put your faith in Him, turn from your sin, repent and trust in Jesus.

Prayer Team.

Worship.