

Reading: Ephesians 1:1-14

Theme: Praise God for Blessing us through His Son

INTRODUCTION:

I am very excited this morning as we are starting a new study on one of my favorite books in the bible, Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus. This is one of the letters Paul wrote when he was in prison and in this letter to this church, we see God's grand design of having everything united under Christ. As we go through this letter, we are going to see the riches that we have in Christ. We will go back in time before anything was created and see what God was planning when He made everything. This letter is divided into two sections, firstly chapter 1 – 3 we will see our **position** in Christ (what we are and have in Christ) and then chapter 4 – 6 we will see how we should be **living** based on who we are in Christ. Let us read the passage: **Ephesians 1:1-14**

Paul starts this letter by greeting the church and immediately burst into praising God for blessing us in Christ and from verse 4 Paul shows what these blessings are that God has blessed us with in Christ. What we see it is those who are in Christ who receive these blessings. These blessings are to those who are in Christ. It is those who have put their faith in Christ and are followers of Christ who will receive these blessings. Jesus is the agent through whom people will receive these blessings. So, no one outside of Christ will be a beneficiary of these blessings.

LESSON:

PRAISE GOD FOR CHOOSING US IN CHRIST

The blessing:

“4 **For he chose us in him** before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love⁵ he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

The first reason Paul praises God is because of election. This speaks of God choosing those who will come into relationship with Him. Do you see when God did this? It was before the creation of the world, before we had Genesis 1v1, God chose those who He will be part of His people. God's love relationship with His people was established before the world was created. Paul says God chose before the creation of the world and this shows that it had nothing to do with what we had done. To say that he chose us before the creation of the world indicates that God's choice was out of his own free decision and love. Because none of us existed then and had not done any good or evil God's choosing of His people did not depend on human desire or effort. And it is not that God looked into the future and saw who will be good and who will be bad and, on that ground, made His choice. It was His own decision not dependent on circumstances. It was all according to his pleasure and will as Paul say in verse 5. Brothers and sisters, your salvation did not begin with your choice to be a Christian. Your salvation began before the creation of this world when God chose you to be His through Christ. Isn't this amazing that before creation God chose you amongst many and put you and I in the book of life. Our names were written in the book of life from the foundation of the world and this was in accordance with God's will. Therefore, praise be to the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ for this blessing. When a football coach chooses a lineup, the selection process is based on player performance. Its not like that with God's kingdom, God designed in eternity past to set His love on you and me.

The goal:

“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world **to be holy and blameless in his sight.**”

The goal for which God chose us in Christ is that we should be holy and blameless. He has chosen us in order that we should be holy and blameless before Him. This is our position before God. We stand before God with no sin, spotless and blameless. When we stand before the judge the verdict is that we are not guilty. God designed in eternity past that we are to be holy and blameless before Him. You might be thinking well, that is not the case for your life. If you ask my wife, she will tell you that I am guilty of many sins. Brothers and sisters because we are in Christ, His Holiness, His perfection and sinlessness, is counted as ours. This is the amazing exchange; we who are sinful are declared blameless because of Christ. When God looks at us He sees Christ righteousness. That's our position before God and He designed this before the world was created.

Colossians 1:22 “But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation”

So then who can bring a charge against those whom God has elected? He has chosen us and blessed us in Christ in order that we are holy and blameless eternally before Him. Brother's and sisters God sees you in Christ. Because Christ is inherently pure you are declared to be pure and no man can bring a charge against God's elect, no man. That was designed before the foundation of the world.

Now I need to say this because I was wrestling on this with my wife, Paul will deal with this in the second section of this letter. The implication to this is that our practice ought to match our position. Since we have been declared to be holy and blameless, we have to strive to be holy and blameless in our walk as we wait for the final coming of Christ. Being now declared Holy and blameless doesn't mean now you and I should just enjoy living in sin. What we are on the inside should reflect on the outside. Paul will unpack this further for us.

“In love He predestined us for **adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ**, in accordance with his pleasure and will”

Here in verse 5 we see that before time began God chose to adopt us into His family, we can now call God Father. God determined before time began that we will be in a loving relationship with Him through Christ. He ordained beforehand that we will be his sons and daughters and enjoy all the rights of being His children. God predetermined that we will no longer be strangers and foreigners, but we will be fellow citizens and members of God's family through Christ. Isn't this amazing grace? It is indeed for God did this so His glorious grace is praised, it is to “*the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves*”. We do not receive this grace apart from Christ. Christ is the agent through whom we receive this grace to the praise of His glorious grace, it is so that we praise Him. It was God's intention that his choice of sons and daughters who will stand before Him holy and blameless may be to the praise of his glorious grace. Brothers and sisters let join Paul in praising God for this grace which He has freely given us in Christ where He chose us before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless and for adoption to sonship.

PRAISE GOD FOR REDEMPTION THROUGH CHRIST

Look with me from verse 7:

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace ⁸ that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, ⁹ he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.”

The blessing:

The second thing Paul praises God for is the redemption we have through Christ blood. Paul here celebrates our redemption through Christ blood which is according to God’s grace. The word redemption is a word that we commonly use when we speak about redeeming points as part of reward programs. You spend so much at the store and gets points in line with what you have spent and when you reach a certain target you can redeem those points for something. But what does redemption through his blood mean? When the bible speaks of redemption its speaking of an act of buying back or securing the release of someone from slavery by payment of a ransom. So in those times, for a slave to gain freedom a price has to be paid. This was a common practice in the roman empire in that period. People owned slaves and if you wanted someone to be released from slavery you would pay a price to the owner of that slave for that slave to be set free. So, Paul is celebrating that Christ gave himself to pay for our redemption. What does this mean? Why do we need to be redeemed and from what are we being redeemed from?

You see our biggest problem since what happened in Genesis 3 when Adam and Eve sinned all of humanity is in slavery to sin, sin has been our master and we were ruled by it. We were all living under this curse and every child born is born into sin. We were slaves to sin and the wages of sin is death. The bible says we have all sinned and the price is death, a total separation from God. No one is free sin, every single person born into this world except for Jesus Christ is a slave to sin and faces same consequence which is death. Death is the ultimate consequence to sin. Not just physical death but spiritually where we are eternally separated from God. Death is the price that needs to be paid in order to release humanity from slavery to sin. Someone must die.

Praise God that Christ has paid that price for us. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins. We now have freedom because Jesus Christ has paid the price. Our salvation came at a cost and that cost was the blood of Jesus. Through His death on the cross He paid the penalty of our sins. When He was at the cross crying “Elí, Elí, lemá sabachtháni?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Mathew 27:46, it was then when He paid the price for our sins. When we come to Jesus we are freed from sin. All those in Christ, those who have put their faith in Christ have this redemption and are no longer slaves to sin.

The result of this redemption is forgiveness of sins:

Isn’t this incredible, now our sins are wiped away and no longer to be counted against us. The sins you committed since you were born are put away from us as if we never did the things we did. Because the price of sin has been paid for, our sins are forgiven. The Israelites celebrated the day of atonement in their calendar. They would bring a goat in the temple and the high priest would take that goat and put the sins of the people on its head. He would call out loud the sins of the people and named the sins one

by one. Then he would send off that goat into the wilderness as a symbol that the sins of the people have been taken away and forgiven by God. That's what happened for us in Christ, our sins were taken away and not to be remembered anymore. As human being I might forgive my wife today if she's to offend me but I still remember those offences in fact at times I would bring those things up in our conversations. It is not so with God, with God as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our sins from us and not to be ever counted against us anymore.

This He did in accordance with the riches of His grace that He lavished on us. God gave us forgiveness according to His riches. Our sins cannot exhaust the forgiveness of God. Our sins can never exhaust the forgiveness of God which He lavished upon us. Paul wrote in Romans 5:20 "...where sin increased, grace abounded all the more". Brothers and sisters none of us can sin beyond God's grace to forgive. There is no limit to God's forgiveness for those in Christ. Perhaps you have made some terrible mistakes recently. You have made bad choices in your life and you feeling the weight of your sins and wondering if God can really forgive you. Brothers and sisters if you are trusting in Christ, here this word you have not and nor will exhaust God's grace to forgive for Christ blood is sufficient to win your redemption. So remember the death of Christ to redeem you, through which you have the forgiveness of sin. Each day we struggle with sin, the bible say if we claim to be without sin we lie but if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. Through Christ death God now accepts us, we're totally forgiven because that death was enough to pay for all of our sins. It is not the Israelites who every atonement holy day they have to get a goat to put their sins on, but Christ's death is enough to cover for our sins eternally. He doesn't need to come and die when you have reached your limit of sins. God has no limit when it comes to sins.

Paul also shows us this mystery of God's plan in verse 9. And God's plan is to have all things in heaven and on earth united under Christ. The grand plan is to bring all things to submit under the authority of Christ. One day every knee shall bow before Him. You see brothers and sisters this is where all creation are headed to be under Christ.

If you are in Christ praise God for choosing you before the creation of the world, praise Him for redeeming you through the death of Christ.

PRAISE GOD FOR OUR INHERITANCE IN CHRIST

Look with me from verse 11

"In him we were also chosen,[Or were made heirs] having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. ¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

The third thing Paul praises God for is the inheritance we have obtained in Christ. You will notice there is a movement in Paul's use of pronouns from verse 11 to 14. In verse 11 there is a group of people who are made heirs "In him **we** were also chosen,[Or were made heirs]", in verse 12 Paul explains who the **we** is and the **we** refers to those who were the first to put their hope in Christ. But now as you come to verse 13 we find another group which is also brought to share in this inheritance "And **you also** were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth". Now when you move to verse 14 the two groups together equally share in this inheritance "who is a deposit guaranteeing **our** inheritance".

So God has purposed that both Jews, who were the first to put their Hope in Christ, and gentiles share the inheritance in Christ.

The blessing:

Now what is this inheritance that Paul is referring to. This is a term that we are familiar with referring to the passing of wealth and possession to the next generation. In the bible Christ is the “heir of all things” all things in heaven and earth belong to Him. Christ is the one who will take possession of God’s estate, everything will come under his control. Praise God those who are in Christ now share in this inheritance. They are now fellow heirs with Christ.

The ground:

How do both Jews and gentiles now have rights to share in this inheritance? The ground on which we obtain this inheritance is being **in Christ**. We have seen throughout from verses 3 that Christ is at the centre of Gods plan for the church. Now it is In Christ that we obtain inheritance, there is no other way to obtain inheritance apart from Christ. We received full rights to this inheritance when we believed in Jesus Christ. But even amazing, it is God who chose who will receive this inheritance. “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will”. So it is God who decided beforehand in eternity past that we obtain the inheritance in Christ. It is not of our own merit; it is independent of human interference.

The assurance:

How sure can we be of this inheritance?

Look with me to verses 13b-14

“Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.”

God has put His Spirit in us who protects and preserves until we obtain our final inheritance. By giving us His Spirit, God was declaring us secure and no one can touch our lives. We now belong to him. The Spirit is a deposit or Gods pledge which guarantees our inheritance. We find this when we buying a house and bank ask us to deposit 10% or 20% of the value of the house as a sign of our committing to fulfil our obligation. The Holy Spirit is that deposit which guarantees our inheritance. No one can steal this from us, the devil cannot take this away from us, troubles and struggles of this life cannot take this from us. We have not yet received our full inheritance because we not yet in heaven, but we can be sure we will obtain it because **“we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.”**

CONCLUSION:

Brothers and sisters know that if you are trusting in Christ you are valuable to him. In Christ, you have so much wealth in the eternal blessings God has freely given you. We ought to rejoice and praise God for graciously blessing us in Christ. Before the world was created He chose you to be holy and blameless and adopted you into His family. Before the world was created God loved you and chose you to be His sons and daughters. That is who you are in Christ. Brothers and sisters God poured His grace on you that through Christ death your sins are forgiven, you now stand before God holy and blameless. Your sins are sent away and not to be remembered anymore. Praise that in Christ you are now a fellow heir with Christ and this inheritance is guaranteed for you till that day when Christ come.

Are you trusting in Christ for your life. You see it is not out of your good works that God blesses you. Its is not through your ancestors that God blesses you. But if today you committed your life to Christ as your Lord and savior God has blessed you since the foundation of the world. Don't loose heart when things of this life don't seem to be going your way. When things things seem to be confusing around us with the world pandemic remember God has a plan for us formed before the foundation of the world n Christ. So turn to Him through faith in Christ. Go on your knees and honor the one who has lavished His grace upon us.

This is all to the praise of His glory!

Discussion questions:

What is it that gives you your sense of self-worth or value? Read through the first chapter of Ephesians and write down all that you are and all that you've been given as a Christian. Next, take some time to prayerfully meditate on your list. Thank God for considering you valuable enough to give you such riches.

How does this passage help you think what God is doing even in the face of the world pandemic?