

Ephesians 1

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[0 : 00] I want to turn again tonight to Ephesians 1 and verse 3.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Now I began to reflect with you on this passage this morning. I've made some progress.

We looked at Paul's self-identification. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.

And we saw to the Advertees, to the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus. And we did just begin to reflect on the great oxology which begins for us here in verse 3.

[1 : 03] And we saw the glory of this name that God gives himself, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And we saw that this implied that God is happy to be known as Jesus' Father. Who are you? I am Jesus' Father.

But I want tonight to try to gather together some of the themes that Paul goes on to refer to in the remaining part of this section down to verse 14.

We saw that here Paul just seems to soar and a huge number of thoughts and concepts seem to pour into his mind.

And he passes briefly over each one of those before moving on to yet another equally glorious and equally majestic.

[2 : 06] And it is a passage of tremendous passion, of tremendous momentum, of great complexity and great profundity.

And there is a passage written for the people of God in what we saw might well be a circular letter of address to all the congregations of the Church of Christ and to a people among whom were slaves and children.

We are expected to cope with all this teaching that Paul almost avalanches them with in this magnificent section.

The doxology focuses on the fact that God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. And we might note the link between that again and the phrase in Christ.

And what it is saying to us is, this is what we have in Christ. It is what everyone who is in Christ enjoys. It is what belongs to you if you are in Christ.

[3 : 19] It is the meaning of being a Christian. And in the tremendous momentum of this avalanche, Paul brings before us four or five great blessings which together compose this every spiritual blessing.

Paul's analysis of the component parts of this great blessing that God has poured upon us.

And perhaps I may summarize or simply itemize those great emphases, first of all, before pausing over them as time allows.

We see, first of all, in verse 4 that God has chosen us. That is our first great privilege. God has chosen us.

And then we see again that God has adopted us. We see that in verse 5. We are said to be adopted as sons through Christ Jesus.

[4 : 28] So we are chosen and we are adopted. And then in verse 7, we have redemption through His blood. That's the third great element in this spiritual blessing.

And then in verse 9, we have this other amazing thing that God has led us into a secret. He has made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure.

God has told us something which He has kept private up to this very point. And then in verse 13, we have been sealed with the Spirit of God.

Now you may say, any one of those topics would be enough. But Paul simply lets us see all of them together.

We have been chosen. We have been adopted. We have been redeemed. We have been told God's secret. And we have been sealed by God.

[5 : 36] These children, those slaves, those ordinary, little deficient believers, they had shared in all of these things. And Paul is not holding anything back.

The profoundest concepts, nor to the mind of man, are here. And they are here not in some diluted form, but they are here in the most intense concentration.

All of them together. And each with its own succinct comment from the pen of the Apostle. And I want perhaps Lord Paul's momentum just to look at them in turn as far as time allows.

First of all, we are told that we have been chosen. For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight in love.

Now there are so many things Paul is saying to us here under this great doctrine of our election, of God's having chosen us. And he says, first of all, we have been chosen in Him.

[6 : 54] Chosen in Christ. Christ. And I just say one thing that I mentioned is, it's almost as Paul was saying, that in the mind of God, we and Christ were inseparable.

When God thought of Christ, then God thought of us. When God thought of Christ, He thought of you. Christ was God's select one.

Christ was God's precious one. And we are in Christ, and we are select, and we are elected, we are choice, in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Chosen to be in Christ, and chosen in Christ to share in all that belongs to Jesus. And so, whenever God thinks of Christ, and when does God not think of Christ, God thinks of us.

God thinks of you. Because we are inseparable. It's not simply a law of association. But it is in part that, that we are so closely identified in the mind of God, that when He thinks of Christ, He thinks of us.

[8 : 25] And He says to us too, that this happened before the foundation of the world. And Paul used that same idea in Romans 9.

When he speaks of Jacob and Esau, and they were chosen and separated by God, before they were born, before they had done any good or evil.

And Paul is saying this again, that this choice that God has made of us, owes nothing to our own actions, behavior, our own works, our own achievements, our own merits.

Because when God chose us, we hadn't done any of these things. We hadn't even been born. The world hadn't even been made when God chose us, and God selected us.

Instead, He's reminding us that we owe everything to God's own grace. And the praise of His choice, if something, someone must be praised for our spiritual privileges, it can't be ourselves, it must be God.

[9 : 50] Because He says, it's to the praise of His glory. But there's more here than simply this statement that it all happened before the finish of the world in terms of being done before we did anything.

There is this in it too, that it's always been a reality. It's always been part of the truth about God, that He has chosen us, that He has selected you, that He regards you as choice.

This has been there before time began. Just as God has always been triune.

And just as God has always had a Son, and always had a Holy Spirit, so God always had you before Him, always knew you, always loved you, always the God He was one of His choice ones, one of His select ones.

And I find that such an enthralling and such uninspiring thought. Because it wasn't necessary, yet it was eternal.

[11 : 20] It's the way God has always been, and yet not the way that God had to be. God always had a Son, it was part of His nature, part of His being.

that's divine Sonship, Therogic says, a necessity of the way that God is. God's choosing you was not a necessity of God's nature, and yet it was eternal, part, always, of what God was.

I'm not addressing tonight the slaves and children so much. I speak to people who have been long on this road, people who have well-developed intellects, and this is God's truth for you, yes, for children too.

God has chosen you children too. God chose those slaves. God has chosen you to be beyond you. This is part of the glory of what it is to be a Christian.

This is part of what God is. God has freely defined Himself as the one who loves you.

[12:42] It's part of His definition, part of His self-definition. To some extent, you young people, you can still define yourselves.

You have this freedom to define yourselves. God has defined Himself as the one who chose you and the one who loves you.

God's never been without knowing you, without loving you, regarding you as one of His own choice ones. So, God did this in eternity.

And, God did this in the sense that His choice of use is part of what He Himself has always been.

But, why did He choose you?

Did He choose you to make you feel arrogant and proud and feel secure no matter how you behaved?

[13:49] Did He choose you so you could go through life fatalistically saying, I'll be saved whatever I do and whatever I behave? No, Paul says He chose you to be holy and without blame.

That's why God chose you. He chose you to be a saint, to be set apart, to be a different kind of human being, renewed in the very depths of your own humanity.

I don't know, speaking now of the moral force and the constraint of His doctrine, I must be holy because I am chosen by God although God has its own great element of truth and its own great force.

But I'm speaking here on more than mere persuasion, persuasion, moral force. I'm telling you, you are caught up in the invincible determination of God to make you holy and without blame.

God has chosen you to be one of the saints and the purposes of this grace are not going to be frustrated and so God will see to it.

[15:18] God will carry this great process through to the very end. God alone knows what that process may involve as this mighty workman begins to conform us to the image of his own son.

I'm not sure whether you tremble or you rejoice as to remind ourselves that God will do all that's necessary. Whatever great knowledge or privileges are needed to make you Christ-like, God will send them.

Whatever pain, whatever justice men, whatever privation, suffering, God will send it. Because God's mind is made up, I am going to make that girl a saint.

I'm going to make that boy a saint. And nothing will divert that almighty river of the grace of God.

It will simply roll on and roll on until we are just what God intends us to be. We are to be holy and without blame.

[16:40] And I want to join into that, the language of that phrase, which in this version belongs to the next verse, in love. God will make you holy in love.

God will see to it that you are going to be a loving person, merged by a love which emulates the love of God himself and the love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This choice of God, this election of God, it's a mighty transforming force. It's going to make you holy, going to make you holy in love, and it's going to make you holy in love before him.

Because that's where we stand, and you know, this whole passage is full of the most marvelous geography, where we are as God's children.

I read it today, but some new emphasis in academia on the geography of space, and how important that is going to be.

[17:53] And so it is. As nations stay acclaimed not only to the Arctic and the Antarctic, but also want to start the empires up in space itself.

But see here, all this geography, in Ephesus, in Christ, in the heavenlies, and before God.

That's where we are to live our Christian lives. And these should be part of our own consciousness. Where will you spend tomorrow? In Aberdeen.

And where should you spend tomorrow? Before Him. And every single step, every single moment, is going to be there before Him, in Christ, in the heavenlies, and before Him.

And there we are predestined to be holy, and without blame, in love. So that's this first great privilege we have been chosen by God.

[18:55] You have been chosen by God. That's what Paul is saying to those saints at Ephesus. And then Paul, the first, secondly, here, to the fact of our adoption.

He adopted us, and it's a pity that we have the word sons, because it's a general word for adoption in a gender-free sense. We're adopted as God's sons, and as God's daughters.

And I wouldn't say too much in that except this. Remember what these people were. Paul tells us the truth about them in the second chapter.

There were aliens, and they were strangers, and they were children of darkness, and they were children of the night, they were children of wrath, and they were there in all the antagonism of the human heart against God.

The alien nation was miserable, and they were liable to all the consequences of divine anathema. But God made them his own children, brought them into his own family, made them his own sons and his own daughters.

[20 : 23] So where are we? I'm Aberdeen in Christ. Who are we? We are the sons and the daughters of God. How do you define yourself? Who are you?

I am a son of God. I am a daughter of God. That's who I am. Adopted. And this adoption refers, of course, to legal rights and legal status.

we have all the rights of a son or of a daughter as much as if we were natural born sons and daughters.

We have rights to God's provision, to God's protection, to God's education. We have a right to God's inheritance.

we are heirs of God. We are joined heirs of Christ. That's who you are. You are aliens and strangers and enemies.

[21 : 28] And now you are part of God's family circle. And you can go to God and you can say to God, Abba. And if you want yes for the moment, I'll let you say you can go to God and say, Daddy, Abba, Father, you are that close to God, we come with boldness to the throne of grace.

With that boldness given to us by God's spirit, we say Abba here before God. But we have again this whole reference also to Christ.

We are adopted through Christ. Christ is our son, child of God, and heir of God. we share that same relationship.

And you know, sometimes as we reflect on these things, they seem to be so incredible, and I can feel you almost say to me, this is going too far, that you are in the same relationship to God as Jesus.

And I ask you, well, what is Jesus' relationship to God? And you say, well, he's the son of God, he's the son of God. And what are you?

[22 : 43] I'm a daughter of God, I'm a son of God. It's the same relationship. And you say to me, yes, but he's begotten, and I'm adopted, absolutely true. And yet the rights and privileges may be the same, and I think they are the same.

And Paul tells the Roman church that we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. It's not at all for a moment that we get a bit, that he gets a huge, big bit, and we each get a small bit of inheritance, but each one of us gets the whole inheritance because God himself is the inheritance. He is the portion of his people, he is the heritage of his church. And God is all ours. I shall be God for you, he says.

And I think it's absolutely true that our inheritance is the same as that of Jesus Christ, God's only son. We are the church of the firstborn, and in this church of the Lord Jesus Christ, every single one of us has rights of primogeniture.

We have the rights of the firstborn. There is so much emphasis on that right of primogeniture now, but there is one example, you take for example the succession to the monarchy, that's the right of primogeniture in the main line.

[24 : 11] But here you see, we've all got the right to be kings. We're all going to reign with Christ. We're all going to rule the world along with our blessed and glorious Saviour.

because we have the same inheritance as the Lord himself through this heart of adoption through Christ. I'll ask you something else. Do you think God loves you as much as he loves his only begotten son?

And as we act that I know that the Lord stands at my shoulder. And I think he permitted to say the answer to that question is yes.

that the love with which you have loved your own son, your only begotten, is the love you have for us because we are chosen in him.

That is the way God loves us. He loves us in Christ. We are enveloped and enfolded in the love of Abba for his only begotten on each one of us.

[25 : 24] as protected by a minister too, by that love. We have been chosen and we have been adopted. And then do you see this?

We have been redeemed. We have redemption. The third great thing. In him. Again, that marvelous piece of geography in Christ.

In him, we have the redemption. redemption. Not that one day we will, but now we have it, as here and now. We have redemption. We have the forgiveness of sins.

We have been loose from our sins. Or to pick up another of the images, implicit in God's and Paul's word here, our sins have been dismissed.

They have been told to go, that they don't belong here. Neither in their gift or in their power, we have been separated, roost, and redeemed from our own sins.

[26 : 32] And we say, well, you must have paid a great price for such a deliverance. there must have been a huge ransom to be paid for such a freedom.

And you say, yes, there was. And then the man says, and how did you manage to pay it? This enormous ransom price, how did you manage to pay it?

And you say, oh, but I didn't pay it. It was paid for me. I was redeemed by the blood of Christ, by this one who loved me, loved us, loved his church, and gave himself to God, as an offering and a sacrifice for our sins.

And the whole cost has been borne, the whole price has been paid, the whole perfected, completed atonement has been made, every sin expiated, God propitiated, God satisfied, held, conquered, my soul redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, by the sacrifice of God's own Son on the cross of Calvary. God that's what the ego sees as its horse here, in whom we have redemption by his blood. And this in accordance he says, with the riches of God's grace, which that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

[28 : 22] And I want to say to Paul sometimes, Paul just leaves some of these words out. We don't need them all. We don't need the wisdom and understanding, not at this point there's too much being crammed into the sentence.

So let's stop with this. What is lavished on us, that will be enough Paul for the moment. We'll just leave it with this lavishness of God's grace. Well why is it lavish?

It's lavish because it's redeemed us from so many sins. From all our sins, the Lamb of God bears the sin of the world and so there is this lavish grace.

There is no condemnation. Not a single sin left uncovered by the blood of the Lamb. And that's another point of lavishness that God Himself spent so much, spent so lavishly on our redemption. Spent so liberally spent so freely. Spent, I will tell you the angels think, spent so absurdly.

[29 : 34] Does He know what He's doing? Lavishing the blood of His own Son on these silly human beings. This grace that God has lavished upon us.

That's what Paul is saying. In whom we have the redemption. And we have it through His blood. And we have it in this lavish, lavish measure. And then fourthly we have this amazing again that God has led us into a secret.

And we see that in verse 9. And He made known to us, He says, the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ.

God told us a secret. That's what the word mystery means in effect here. It's something that God has always known.

And God has always planned. But God had kept it to Himself. But now it is revealed. It's revealed to His church, revealed to us in Christ.

[30 : 45] He's made known to us the mystery of His will. And you know that again is so amazing to think again of the church of Ephesus or the church of Colossal Odenseia, with its illiterates, with its uneducated, with its children, and with slaves.

And of the great questions, they know more than the great philosophers. Because God has told them a secret.

secret. And that secret is that in the fullness of the times, God will bring all things in heaven and earth together under one head, even Christ.

And Paul is saying to us that history is pregnant with divine meaning. and the fullness of the times, it will give birth to that meaning.

And that meaning will be the summing up and the conciliation and subordination of all things in our Lord Jesus Christ.

[32 : 05] They lived and we live in a world full of tensions. you go back to the Garden of Eden and the fall of the first humans and all the alien nations that that fall brought in its way.

Alienation between humans and God, between human and human, between man and woman, and all the evils of patriarchy, between man and its environment.

and between each of us within ourselves, the shame of the divided self. And as if there is no coherence, and there is no order, there is simply stress, alienation, tension.

And it was signalized for Paul in the due, gentle divide, that great middle wall of partition. And behind it, beyond it, that even more sinister division between the powers of hell and the powers of heaven.

And Paul is saying to us, yes, there are all these tensions and all these alienations, and all this confusion, and all this stress, and all this waste, and all this absurdity, and all these anomalies, and all these irrationalities.

[33 : 42] But one day there will come the fullness of the times, and it will all be subjected to the dominion of Jesus, and all united under the headship of the Lord and Saviour.

And one day we shall be reconciled as a race completely to God. One day our environment shall no longer frustrate us.

One day our consciences will no longer accuse us. One day there will be no middle walls of partition within the church of God.

One day hell will pose no threat to God and pose no threat to his church because Christ will reign and every knee will bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord to the glory of God our Saviour. So this is called secret. I let you into a secret. God is saying in this tumultuous first century with so much anarchy, so many different cultures, so many competing religions, so much war, so much rumour of war, so much harm, so much corruption and so much filth.

[35 : 15] But God is saying I let you into a secret. One day Christ will be in order and everything be subject to the mind and dominion of the Saviour.

And so we see that in Christ we have been chosen. In Christ we have been adopted. In Christ we have been redeemed.

in Christ God has led us into a secret. And in Christ God has sealed us. We find that in verse 30. Having believed you are marked in Him with a seal. God has put a mark of authentication and of attestation on every single one of you chosen.

Every one of you adopted was every one of you redeemed was every one of you who knows God's secret. God has put a stamp on you.

[36 : 28] The stamp of His own Spirit. In fact, Paul uses here three great words about the Spirit. I'm not going to another separate sermon of the Spirit.

Just three points quickly. First we've been sealed. In home believing you were sealed. What is the mark of a Christian?

What is the attestative sign? It is the Holy Spirit. You have the Spirit. You are led by the Spirit.

You walk by the Spirit. You keep and step with the Spirit. You bear the fruit. The fruit of the Spirit.

You have the gifts of the Spirit. These are the things that set you apart as a Christian.

This is what Paul meant when he said, you have the life of God in your soul. Tell you again, you are not an ordinary person. You have to be extraordinarily humble, but you are not an ordinary person.

[37 : 35] God because you have this mark, you have this seal that your faith sees, you have this power, this presence in your life, you have this person who is with you, everywhere you go, this Holy Spirit, he is the mark of your being chosen, adopted, and redeemed.

And the second word Paul uses is promise. You have the Spirit of the promise. You ask me what must I do to get the Spirit and to have the seal, and I tell you, it's a promise.

How often do children say to their moms and dads, you promised. And they don't say, Dad, I paid, but they say, you promised.

And God promised. And that's why you have the Spirit. This is the unspeakable gift given to every single one of God's children.

You don't have it as something extra to earn it. You have it in Christ. This is all about what you have in Christ. Yes, I know that sometimes we don't live like those of the Spirit, but that doesn't undermine or eliminate this reality.

[39 : 10] If you are in Christ, then you have the Spirit, because God promised that in this particular geographical area, in Christ Jesus, and in the heavenlies, and before God, we would have this privilege, even though we lived in Ephesus or Aberdeen.

We have this promise, and as you embark on the week to come, with all its challenges in that secular world of commerce, or industry, or caring professions, or on the building site, or wherever, you are going into that week with God's promised spirit, I can't bury you, to be for you, all that you need.

So, he's a seal, and it's a promise, but also, Paul says, it's a pledge, and a guarantee, marvelous word used here, that used of its own Scottish equivalent, earls, or earlish, and earnest, and that was a part of the inheritance given in pledge, that the rest was going to follow, and that's what the Holy Spirit is, part of the inheritance given to us as a pledge by God himself, that the rest is going to follow.

That's where we stand tonight, until he says, the old version said, the redemption of a purchased possession, but the meaning is probably the same redemption of those who are God's possession. In other words, here, we have this marvelous ambivalence, at some levels, God is our inheritance, but also, we are God's inheritance.

[41 : 17] Isn't it marvelous that one day God's going to inherit us? And in the meantime, God has given us this pledge because for his inheritance, he is going to redeem us.

God has a right to us, and at the moment, although God has that right to us, yet we're in this world of sin and suffering and failing and frailty. But one day, because we are God's inheritance, he is going to take full possession of us.

He bought us on the cross of Calvary. He bought us soul and body, our bodies are still to rise. He bought us soul and body and environment, our environment is still to be taken possession of in the full sense by God.

There shall be a new heaven and a new earth. We haven't yet been raised from the dead. We haven't yet, those of us who tonight, been glorified in our spirits and our souls.

Our world is not yet the new Jerusalem. But a pledge has been given by God. I have given you my spirit and as sure as he did that, one day I will come and take you home to be with me.

[42 : 40] And one day I'll come and erase you from the dead. And one day I'll give you a new heaven and a new earth. And until that day comes, you have this pledge, the Holy Spirit, a new life and a new heart.

Blessed be God. And then there's no more to say. May God bless this word to us.

Let's join in prayer. O Lord, we ask you in grace to be near to us, to make us receptive to your truth and to make us faithful to your truth.

Go with us, we pray, into all the days and challenges and opportunities and tests and risks and pains and temptations of this week.

Be with us, young and old. Be with husbands and wives, with parents and children, with masters and with servants.

[43 : 53] grace. Enable each one of us, Lord, in the presence of your spirit, to live holy and blameless lives in love before you.

For our Savior's sake. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.