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God's Good News Story: The Church Alive & Growing

The Book of Ephesians

Alive in Christ: Discovering Our Identity and Purpose

Part 1: Chosen and Blessed—Our Position in Christ

Today we move further along our historical and chronological journey through the New Testament. However, our new Bible Book Study is closely tied to our previous two studies in Colossians and Philemon. It is also connected to the next book that we will start in January of this soon upcoming year, Philippians. So without further adieu, let me introduce you to the Book of Ephesians.

The letter to the Ephesians was written by the Apostle Paul during his first Roman imprisonment, around AD 60–62. Paul composed four letters now known as the Prison Epistles: Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, and Philippians. Most scholars agree that Colossians and Philemon were written first and entrusted to Tychicus and Onesimus, who, along with the letter to the Ephesians, traveled from Rome to Asia Minor. Their likely route took them first to Ephesus—the capital and main port of the region—where Tychicus delivered Paul's letter to the Ephesians. From there, Tychicus and Onesimus journeyed inland to Colossae, delivering Colossians and Philemon, and visited nearby Laodicea (@ 10 miles) for the exchange of letters.

A unique issue comes into play when you consider the most ancient/earliest Greek manuscripts of this book. Some scholars point out that the **earliest and most**

reliable Greek manuscripts—Codex Sinaiticus (c. 325–360 AD) and Codex Vaticanus (c. 325–350 AD)—do not include the words “in Ephesus.” They suggest that the letter may have originally been a circular letter, intended for several churches in the region, with the destination left blank to be filled in as needed. This would explain the general tone of the letter and the absence of personal greetings. Other Some scholars believe that the phrase “in Ephesus” was part of Paul's original letter. This view is supported by the majority of later Greek manuscripts, such as **Codex Alexandrinus (c. 400–440 AD)** and **Codex Bezae (c. 400–500 AD)**, both of which include “in Ephesus.” Early church tradition also supports this, with **Irenaeus (c. 180 AD)** explicitly referring to the letter as “to the Ephesians” in his work *Against Heresies* (Book 5, Chapter 2). Other early sources, like the **Muratorian Fragment** (170-200AD), also list Ephesians as addressed to Ephesus. In summary, some hold that “Ephesus” was always there, making the letter personal and direct, while others believe it was originally left open, making Ephesians a message for all the churches in Asia Minor. Most all modern Bible translations and Evangelical scholars would lean toward the designation “In Ephesus” to be authentic. Either way, this letter, as well as the other of Paul's letters, were circulated and read by the churches at large. This we join in the historical age-old experience as the Church in Broussard in reading, studying and growing from an interaction with these great and powerful Holy-Spirit inspired words. So, with that in mind let's read this letter as if we were another of the churches in this circulation.

THE DUCK WHO THOUGHT HE WAS A DOG

(Anders, NT Commentary. p. 90)

Science has shown us that some animals, in this case a duck, tend to imprint or attach themselves to whatever they see and experience the first thing they see after they hatch. Normally this works just fine because the first thing they usually see is Mama Duck. They attach themselves to her and begin thinking and acting like her. This is fine. They are like her. They are ducks. Occasionally this early attachment backfires, however, such as the duckling that hatched under the watchful eye of a collie dog. The first thing the baby duck saw was the collie, and a bond was forged. The duckling took one look at the collie and decided that it, too, was a collie. It followed the dog around, ran to it for protection, spent the hot part of the day under the porch with the collie, and slept with it at night. After the duckling grew up, it usually acted like a duck except for its spending the hot part of the day under the front porch. And when a car pulled into the driveway, the duck would explode from wherever it happened to be, quacking viciously and pecking at the tires. After all, that was what the “other” dog did. The duck had an identity problem. It didn’t see itself as a duck; it saw itself as a collie. Yet that couldn’t change the fact that it “was a duck.

Christians sometimes can experience a similar confusion in identity. We have been born and grown up in a world that is fallen and less than perfect. We learn to act and think the way the world does. However, as we see in the Bible, and particularly in the Letters of Paul, when we become a believer and are “born-again”, we must die and put behind us our old life, identity and practices that were from the world. We become ‘new creatures’ with a new mind and heart. We have a new IDENTITY a new purpose and plan that comes from our salvation and Christ dwelling in us.

Sadly, too many Christians find themselves in an ‘Identity Crisis’. They struggle with who they used to be and have a hard time reframing their identity in Christ.

In Ephesians 1, we are reminded of who we truly are in CHRIST. Paul breaks it down in a way that we can see just how God works to change us into His child. When we place our faith in God, through Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit enters into our hearts and brings salvation and brings about a ‘New Birth’. Paul in verses 1-14 reminds us of the specific blessings that are ours as Christians.

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Part 1: Chosen and Blessed—Our Position in Christ

Some material adapted from

- Warren Wiesbe ‘Bible Exposition Commentary. (Pp.10-14)
- Max Anders “Holman NT Commentary. (Pp. 90-105)

Ephesians 1

¹ *This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. I am writing to God's holy people in Ephesus, who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus.* ² *May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.* ³ *All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ.* ⁴ *Even before He made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes.* ⁵ *God decided in advance to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. This is what He wanted to do, and it gave Him great pleasure.* ⁶ *So we praise God for the glorious grace He has poured out on us who belong to His dear Son.* ⁷ *He is so rich in kindness and grace that He purchased our freedom with the blood of His Son and forgave our sins.* ⁸ *He has showered His kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.* ⁹ *God has now revealed to us His mysterious will regarding Christ—which is to fulfill His own good plan.* ¹⁰ *And this is the plan: At the right time He will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth.* ¹¹ *Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for He chose us in advance, and He makes everything work out according to His plan.* ¹² *God's purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God.*

¹³ *And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, He identified you as His own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom He promised long ago.* ¹⁴ *The Spirit is God's guarantee that He will give us the inheritance He promised and that He has purchased us to be His own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify Him.* New Living Translation

➤ Target Audience:

¹ *This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. I am writing to God's HOLY PEOPLE in Ephesus, who ARE FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS of Christ Jesus.*
Who is Paul writing to? Paul opens his letter by addressing “God’s holy people in Ephesus, who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus” (v. 1). This message is for believers—those who have trusted Christ and are learning to live out their new identity. Paul’s desire is that we would know the riches of God’s blessings, and that our lives would overflow with praise and glory to God.

➤ Expected Outcome:

Blessings To Believers, Praise & Glory To God.
² *May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you GRACE AND PEACE.* ³ *ALL PRAISE TO GOD, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ.*

➤ Sources of the Blessings:

God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

1. Spiritual Blessings in God the Father (Eph.1:3–6)

A. God Chose Us in Christ (v. 4)

"Even before He made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes."

Before the foundation of the world, God chose us in Christ. This isn't about our merit or effort—it's about God's loving initiative. He saw us, knew us, and wanted us to be His. Our identity as chosen people is rooted in His eternal love and purpose.

Illustration: Like a parent who lovingly selects a child for adoption, God set His heart on us before we ever knew Him.

B. God Adopted Us as His Children (v. 5)

"God decided in advance to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. This is what He wanted to do, and it gave Him great pleasure."

God didn't just choose us; He adopted us as His children. We are brought into His family, given a new name and a new inheritance. Adoption is a deliberate act of love and grace.

We are not spiritual orphans; we are sons and daughters of the King.

Illustration: Adoption means being given all the rights and privileges of a true child. In Christ, we are fully accepted and embraced by the Father.

C. God Accepted Us in the Beloved (v. 6)

"So we praise God for the glorious grace He has poured out on us who belong to His dear Son."

Because of His grace, we are accepted in the Beloved—Jesus Christ. We are no longer outsiders or strangers, but welcomed and cherished by God. Our acceptance is not based on our performance, but on Christ's finished work.

Illustration: Like being welcomed into a family gathering, we are given a seat at God's table, fully loved and included.

Summary Statement: God the Father has chosen, adopted, and accepted us—not because of anything we have done, but because of His great love and grace. Our response is to praise Him for these spiritual blessings and to live as His holy and beloved children.

2. Spiritual Blessings in Jesus Christ, the Son (7–12)

A. Christ Redeems Us

(v. 7a) *“He is so rich in kindness and grace that He purchased our freedom with the blood of His Son...”*

Redemption means to be set free by the payment of a price. In Christ, we are no longer slaves to sin or fear. Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross paid the full price for our freedom—nothing else is needed.

Illustration: Imagine a prisoner set free because someone else paid their debt in full. That’s what Christ has done for us.

B. Christ Forgives Us

(v. 7b) *“...and forgave our sins.”*

Forgiveness is not partial or temporary—it is complete and permanent. In Christ, every sin—past, present, and future—is washed away by His grace. We no longer carry the guilt or shame of our failures.

Illustration: Like a slate wiped clean, our record before God is spotless because of Jesus

C. Christ Reveals God’s Will to Us

(vv. 8–10) *“He has showered His kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding. God has now revealed to us His mysterious will regarding Christ—which is to fulfill His own good plan. And this is the plan: At the right time He will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth.”*

God’s plan was once a mystery, but now, in Christ, it’s made clear: God is uniting all things—broken people, divided nations, the whole creation—under Jesus. We are not left in the dark; we are invited into God’s grand story.

Illustration: It’s like being given the inside scoop on a great restoration project—God is making all things new in Christ, and we are part of it.

D. Christ Makes Us Heirs

(vv. 11–12) *“Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God...God chose us in advance, and He makes everything work out according to His plan. God’s purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God.”*

In Christ, we are not just forgiven—we are given a future. We have an inheritance: eternal life, a place in God’s family, and a role in His unfolding plan. Our lives now have purpose and direction, all for God’s glory.

Illustration: Like being written into a will, we are guaranteed a share in God’s eternal blessings.

3. Spiritual Blessings in the Holy Spirit

(Ephesians 1:13–14)

A. The Spirit Seals Us as God’s Own

Paul says in vs. 13..., “*An when you believed in Christ, He identified you as His own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom He promised long ago.*”

The moment we trust in Christ, God marks us with the Holy Spirit. This “seal” is like an official stamp of ownership and authenticity—God’s way of saying, “You belong to Me.”

Illustration: In the ancient world, a seal was used to show something was genuine and protected by the authority of the owner. The Holy Spirit is God’s mark on your life.

B. The Spirit Guarantees Our Inheritance

(v. 14a) Paul continues, “*The Spirit is God’s guarantee that He will give us the inheritance He promised...*”

The word “guarantee” (or “down payment”) means the Holy Spirit is the first installment of all God has promised. It’s a pledge that everything God has said—eternal life, resurrection, glory—will be fulfilled.

Illustration: Like earnest money on a house, the Spirit is God’s promise that the full inheritance is coming.

C. The Spirit Confirms We Are God’s Purchased People (v. 14b)

Paul adds, “...*and that He has purchased us to be His own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify Him.*”

The Spirit reminds us that we have been bought at a price—the blood of Christ. We are not our own; we are God’s treasured possession, set apart for His glory. All of this is “so we would praise and glorify Him.” The Spirit’s work in us is not just for our assurance, but for God’s honor—our lives become a testimony to His grace and faithfulness

Illustration: Just as a receipt proves a purchase, the Spirit is the living proof that we belong to God.

So, as we look back over these blessings from God the Father—

We see that before the world began, He chose us in Christ.

He didn't stop there; He adopted us, bringing us into His family, giving us a new name and a new inheritance.

And He didn't just bring us in—He accepted us, fully and freely, in the Beloved. Chosen. Adopted.

Accepted. Not because of anything we've done, but because of everything He is—gracious, loving, and faithful.

Key Take Away:

What is the purpose of all this?

Why has God poured out such extravagant grace?

Paul tells us in vs. 14b

“He did this so we would praise and glorify Him.”

All these blessings—every spiritual gift, every act of love—are meant to shape us into holy people, faithful followers of Christ Jesus.

They are given not so we can boast in ourselves, but so our lives would become a living song of praise to the One who called us, claimed us, and cherishes us forever.

Gold Among Gravel

Maybe today, you feel like you're just a lump of gravel—rough around the edges, weighed down by the dirt and debris of your past.

Maybe you look at your life and see more clay and iron than anything precious. You wonder, “Why would God want me? I'm just a mess of mistakes, regrets, and things I wish I could change.”

But listen—God sees what you cannot.

Where you see gravel, God sees gold.

Where you see a pile of rocks, God sees a treasure waiting to be revealed.

Imagine a miner, sifting through the dust and the darkness, searching for something precious. The world might pass you by, but God stops, stoops down, and picks you up. He knows there's gold in you—gold He placed there Himself.

You might say, “But I'm still stuck in old habits. I still think and act like the person I used to be. I'm not shiny, I'm not pure.”

But God isn't finished with you yet.

He's the Master Refiner. He takes you as you are—clay, iron, gravel and all—and He begins His work. He chips away what doesn't belong. He washes, He shapes, He purifies.

And slowly, surely, the gold begins to shine through. You are not defined by the gravel that surrounds you. You are defined by the gold God sees within you.

He loves you as you are, but He loves you too much to leave you there.

So don't lose heart if you're still “quacking like a duck,” still learning to walk in your new identity. Trust the Refiner.

Trust the One who sees your worth, who guarantees your transformation, who is committed to making you into something beautiful—something that reflects His glory.

Because in God's hands, gravel becomes gold.

And your life, refined by His grace, will shine for His praise.

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Call to Respond:

1. Christians – its time to claim your blessing in Christ and live in godly and faithful manner and bring praise to God in al you think, say and do.
2. Non- believers – No matter what you might think of yourself, God loves you and wants to refine you into something beautiful in Christ.
Will you come?