



# Who am I in **CHRIST?**

EPHESIANS 1: 3-14

# Introduction

In this series, we are looking at five topics mentioned briefly in the passage. Our sermons and studies, however, will look beyond to other parts of the Scripture to help us understand these topics better.

- I am blessed
- I am chosen
- I am forgiven
- I am heir to God's Kingdom
- I am secure

## Why?

Ephesians 1:3-14 provides us with a dramatic understanding of who we are in Christ. The Gospel can transform our lives into a new creation with new spiritual nature as the Holy Spirit dwells in us. When we are in Christ and He is in us, we live in fellowship with God. We are obedient to His will to serve Him. This is something we can never do ourselves.

## Context

Paul wrote this letter to the church in Ephesus<sup>1</sup>, having spent three years there (Acts 19-20:1, 17-31). After his initial greeting, he began the letter with these 12 verses (which were one complex sentence in the original Greek). This passage was an incredible benediction to bless the saints in Ephesus. Paul could not help himself; the words flew freely out of his mouth.

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesus was an important trading port and capital of the Roman province of Asia. It had a long history of worshipping the goddess Diana (or Artemis). See Stott, John; Message of Ephesians: God's New Society; Bible Speaks Today, 1984; page 23.

## **The message**

According to Paul, God the Father has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. He has forgiven us through the work of Jesus on the cross. He has also adopted us as sons and daughters in His family. What greater security can we have than being God's adopted children?

To express this, Paul used the term "in Christ" (or "in Him" or "in the Beloved") 10 times in the passage. We were all part of the fallen humanity in Adam, but now we are part of the redeemed humanity in Christ. Our identity is bound up with His identity.

## **In practice**

We hope and pray that you will take these truths to heart and become what you have been called to be in Christ - that everyday you will enjoy living the life of faith in Christ and walking in righteousness with every spiritual blessing God has lavished on you.

These 12 verses are Paul's chorus of praise and worship to the Triune God. Why not memorise and use them in your regular prayer time? You can also pray using these verses as a group to end each study.

May you prayerfully meditate on each of these blessings. Thank Jesus for them and walk in them, so that others will be impacted and want to know Jesus for themselves. Thank you Lord for all that you have given us in Christ!

## **Recommended commentaries on Ephesians**

Baugh, S. M; Ephesians: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary, 2016

Stott, John; Message of Ephesians: God's New Society; Bible Speaks Today, 1984

# I am blessed

*<sup>3</sup> 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,*

## Context

This verse summarises the remainder of the passage, which is an elaborate sentence of praise and worship to God by Paul. It is all-encompassing - that every possible blessing we could ever need has already been given to us in Christ.

Paul praised God for these spiritual blessings and described where they come from. They are not earthly treasures that many strive for, but everlasting heavenly blessings.

When you think of God the Father, does your mouth just open with unstoppable words of praise, thankfulness and joy? Do they just well up to the surface in your daily life? It is not about saying "Praise the Lord" all the time. Rather, this is a heartfelt cry of joy and satisfaction in Christ. May this be our daily experience.

## Observation

1. How is God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit seen in this verse?
2. What does "to be in Christ"<sup>2</sup> mean? What is the significance of being blessed in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 3:26-28)?

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<sup>2</sup> The term "in Christ" (or "in Him" or "in the Beloved") is used 10 times in Ephesians 1: 3-14.

## Meaning

3. What is this verse saying about the kind of blessings God has given us? Where do they come from (Ephesians 1:20, 2:6, 3:10, 6:12 and Colossians 3:1-2)?

4. Dad: "When my children were small, they would love to give me a gift on my birthday or at Christmas. Where did the money for the gift come from? From me. I not only received their chosen gift, but I also felt the wonderful love, joy and smile of my children."

How does this story express the sentiment of this verse?

## Application

5. If we are in Christ<sup>3</sup>, there is no spiritual blessing we need that we have not received. How should we respond to these blessings we have been given (Hebrews 13:15-16)?

6. What is stopping you from living this way?

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<sup>3</sup> From Stott, John; Message of Ephesians: God's New Society; Bible Speaks Today, 1984; page 35.

# I am chosen

*<sup>4</sup> even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love <sup>5</sup> he **predestined** us<sup>[b]</sup> for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.*

## Context

Paul was outlining the content of “every spiritual blessing” (verse 3).

1. What are the key themes in these verses?

## Observation

Paul also highlighted that we are chosen to be part of God’s kingdom, just as many individuals in the Bible were chosen to carry out His will.

2. Who are some examples of people chosen by God (Exodus 3:1-2, Luke 1:26-33, Genesis 12:1-3)? How does God decide who He chooses?

## Meaning

Under Roman law, a person who had been adopted would gain all the rights of a legitimate son in his new family and completely lose all the rights in his old family. As a new person, all debts and obligations connected to the old family would also be abolished.

3. Paul mentioned “for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ”. How does this impact our standing in the world and in God’s kingdom (John 1:12-13, Galatians 4:1-7, 2 Corinthians 5:17)?
  
4. What does “to be holy and blameless” mean? How is this achieved (Psalm 15:2-3, Philippians 2:14-16)?

### **Application**

*“The covenant of life is not preached equally to all, and among those to whom it is preached, does not always meet with the same reception. This diversity displays the unsearchable depth of the divine judgment, and is without doubt subordinate to God’s purpose of eternal election.”<sup>4</sup> - John Calvin*

Predestination versus free will is one of the biggest debates in Christian theology. Its basic idea is that all who believe in Christ do not choose to believe, but are predestined to be conformed in His image (Romans 8:29).

5. How does being predestined for adoption comfort and encourage you as a Christian?
  
6. Having been adopted into God’s family and made holy and blameless through Christ’s death on the cross, how should we live differently (Romans 8:5-8, Ephesians 5:1-14)?

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<sup>4</sup> From Calvin, John; Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book 3, Chapter 22.



# I am forgiven

*<sup>7</sup>In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,<sup>8</sup> which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup>making known<sup>[c]</sup> to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ <sup>10</sup>as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.*

## Context

1. These verses show God's incredible demonstrations of love towards us. What does this say about God's plan for our salvation?

## Observation

Action verbs express a physical or mental action that the subject of the sentence is doing or has done. According to verse 7, Jesus has **redeemed** us through his blood.

2. What other action verbs can be formed from these verses?

## Meaning

The Greek word for "redemption" in verse 7 means "buying back a slave or captive, making him free by payment of a ransom".



Jesus did not redeem us by His sinless life or moral example, but only by His death in our place<sup>5</sup>.

3. Why do we need to be ransomed and bought back by the blood of Jesus (Romans 3:23-25)? How does this payment work (Hebrews 9:22)?
4. We were redeemed according to the riches of God's grace. What is grace? Why do we need it? How do we receive it (Ephesians 2:8-9)?

### **Application**

Forgiving someone who has sinned against us can be difficult. Yet, Jesus asked God to forgive those crucifying Him "for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:33-34).

5. What are the implications if we do not forgive those who have sinned against us (Matthew 6:14-15, 18:21-35)?
6. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is part of a plan to unite all things in Him (verse 10). We have been forgiven and redeemed. As members of the body of Christ, how should we treat those who have sinned against us to achieve this unity?

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<sup>5</sup> Redemption implies that a price has been paid for the freedom that is purchased. There are a number of Greek words used for redemption in the New Testament, being "agorazo" (purchase) in Revelations 5: 9, "exagorazo" (buy back) in Galatians 3: 13 and "lutroo" (set free by paying a ransom) in Titus 2: 14. The Greek word used in Ephesians 1: 7 is "apolutrosis".

# I am heir to God's Kingdom

*<sup>11</sup> 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, <sup>12</sup> so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.*

## Context

The Ephesian letter was a correspondence between Jewish and Gentile believers who had been united in Christ. Paul was referring to the Jewish believers ("we who were the first to hope in Christ" - verse 12), the Ephesian Gentiles ("you also" - verse 13) and their unity (the pronoun "our" - verse 14). He also emphasised unity in Ephesians 2.

The overarching theme of Ephesians 1 is our identity and status as newborn Christians. Verses 11-14 explain God's sovereignty and purpose in adopting us as His children.

## Observation

1. Is our inheritance currently just a promise? Do we already share in it now (verse 14, Proverbs 3:19-26)?

## Meaning

2. What is the meaning of sharing in our inheritance now? What evidence can we see in our lives (1 John 4:13)?

3. How do God's predestination and our free will work together to receive this inheritance (Romans 8:29-30, 10:9-10, Deuteronomy 30:19 and Philippians 2:13)?

### **Application**

4. What comfort do you receive knowing that God works all things according to the counsel of His will?
  
5. What things should you change in your life that it might be to the praise of His glory?

# I am secure

*<sup>13</sup> 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, <sup>14</sup> who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*

## Context

Through this passage, Paul also encouraged persecuted churches to keep their focus on God's inheritance. There is security in the salvation from the Lord (Romans 8:28) that can never fail.

## Observation

During Paul's days, seals were used in at least four ways:

- to prove that a letter of guarantee was genuinely written by the rightful person (e.g. where kings sealed their letters with a signet ring - 1 Kings 21:8, Esther 8:8)
- to indicate ownership and direction of travelling goods or merchandise (2 Corinthians 1:22)
- to show authenticity and approval (John 6:27).
- to protect against undesirable people (e.g. a warning - Matthew 27:66)

1. What does "sealed with the promised Holy Spirit" mean (verse 13)?

## **Meaning**

2. How does the Holy Spirit guarantee our inheritance (verse 14, Romans 8:16)?
3. According to Jesus, how can someone acquire an inheritance from God (Matthew 19:16-22, Luke 10:25-37)?
4. When and how would we acquire possession of our inheritance?

## **Application**

Paul finished this section with simple yet beautiful words “to the praise of his glory”. The greatest inheritance - God’s glory - awaits us. It can never be stolen or cancelled.

5. How can we align our life goals to the praise of His glory (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)?
6. Who can you share this message of security with? How can you do it in an understandable and relatable way (1 Peter 4:15)?

# Thank you

We do hope you have enjoyed discovering even more about God. It is always wonderful learning from the many gems in God's word. Be encouraged, continue growing in your faith and become all that God has made you to be in Jesus Christ.

Our hope and prayer is that you will continue to bask in all the riches that God has given you. Enjoy and live them out daily.