

Chosen by God for his glory

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[0 : 00] Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ. It's to God's holy people. It says in Ephesus, I think the commentators will tell you that some of the early manuscripts are not completely clear whether Ephesus is in all of them.

But it at least went to Ephesus. It might have been circulated to some other people as well. But to God's holy people, the faithful in Christ. And it is primarily to the Gentiles. That will actually come up in our passage in a minute.

When was it written? Around 60 AD. It's quite likely that it's at the same sort of time as Colossians because it certainly mentions Tychicus at the end.

Very likely around that date. Where was Paul? Most likely in prison in Rome. If you skim ahead to 3.13, there is at least a strong hint of his current sufferings.

And we know that Paul did spend a good bit of time in prison. That's where he was most likely to be. Why was it written? To encourage the Gentile believers.

[1 : 08] That was one thing. But to show the Jews and the Gentiles who, from their roots, were rather different people and didn't necessarily like each other. But to show that they could be one in Christ.

And later in the book, to remind them of God's moral law. Which either these Gentiles didn't know very well or they were just a bit lax in following it. And it's worth chipping in, although it's not on the slide, that Ephesus was, there was this massive temple of Diana or Artemis.

And almost like a cult-like practices, dominant in the town. So it may be more relevant to what's coming in other passages. But this was a people who, although they might have just come to Christ, they were very afraid of other powers.

And they thought, if they did this, very afraid of other things. And how important that they were able to see how great God and Jesus was in that context.

And then a brief understanding of how it splits up. 1, verse 3 through to 2, verse 10 is about new life in Christ. These are very broad divisions.

[2 : 20] Then the next section is about God's new community. And it does talk about Jews and Gentiles. You'll see at the end of chapter 2, there's a lot more detail on Jew and Gentile being reconciled through Christ.

The new standards that God expects in chapter 4, verse 1 onwards. And some of the end of this, you know very well.

Various relationships and how they are affected. And most of you will know about the armor of God, won't you, in Ephesians 6. It's the fact that we are in a battle. We wish we weren't.

We wish it wasn't like that. But we are. And we need to be aware. And be on our guard. So that's just a rough idea where, what the book is about.

Now, what I want to do today, I'm focusing on chapter 1, verses 11 through to 14. And I've given you some slightly cryptic titles there.

[3 : 19] But I hope they'll come clear as I go through. Whose we are? How did we become so? And why did we become so? So first, whose we are?

And who is the we? And you notice in verse 11, it starts, In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with his will.

Goes on a bit. But then verse 13, And you also. So he's talking to the Gentiles. But Paul himself was a Jew. And this is very much, it started with us.

In fact, I missed out the bit. In order that we, verse 12, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also. All right? So that is, the we is important, because it means one thing early on.

But it's being broadened out in this lovely way to include the Gentiles. Now, most of us don't have Jewish roots. This is how we got our gospel. This is how we got our faith.

[4 : 26] And it was just wonderful that although for many, many years this was to the people of Israel, the Jewish people, the gospel was advancing and it started to go to very, very different people.

So the words that used to be used for one nation of Israel, they're now reapplied to an international people who have Christ in common. Now, Ben reminded us how many times, and it's even worth a glimpse, isn't it, in him, or in those first few verses, not just in what we're looking at today, but looking verse three onwards, just picking a few of them, chose us in him before the creation of the world to the praise of his glory, which he's freely given us.

And in him we have redemption that he lavished on us with all he made known to the mystery of his will to be put in effect. In verse 11, in him we were chosen. There are so many things that are in Christ or in him and it's because of that that we have this wonderful standing in Christ.

So then, that's the we. It is exciting to see how it broadens to include the Gentiles and we're glad of that. But it's a lovely theme, isn't it, that people who are so not alone united in Christ.

And we're familiar in this church with people from so many different cultures, but united in Christ. So let's get into verse 11. And there is a tricky bit to start with on how some of this is translated.

[5 : 58] Do you remember Ben told you that actually these first, from verse three, I think right through to 14, this was all one big long sentence. And it came out in such a burst of enthusiasm.

I don't, I think normally people writing this down would put punctuation. I think it didn't have any much of that. So for the translators, it just gives them a few extra problems on what it means.

Because this says in the NIV, in him we were also chosen.

But just to confuse you, if you look in the New American Standard, which is usually very literal, it actually says we've obtained an inheritance. So we're just getting a little bit of what this means.

The original word is a Greek one. Not that I'm a scholar, but I'll tell you what I found out. But this word could mean either to give or to receive an inheritance.

So you have to just switch on your brains and think, well, which is it? Whose inheritance? Is it ours, a gift that we have received, which is really what the NASB says, we have obtained an inheritance?

[7 : 03] Or is it God's because he has taken us to be his own? Now, later on in our passage, we are definitely talking about our inheritance. But I think the latter of these is a bit more supported by other places in the Bible.

It's more natural translation. That's a scholar's comment. Not that I am one of those. But you know some of these Old Testament passages. For the Lord's portion is his people.

Jacob is allotted inheritance. That's in Deuteronomy. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. People he chose for his inheritance. Isn't it lovely to think how God, I mean, you know some of these verses, but just to bring it to mind, that God, though he's so great, he's thinking about us, this faulty people that we are, and he's working in us, changing us, and he's looking forward to an inheritance that is us, the church.

And then the second one, under the same subject of whose we are, this is a little bit, well no, actually it's a similar problem with the translation because there's not so much punctuation.

Until the redemption of those who are God's possession, that's actually jumping forward to verse 14. But again, it's not completely clear whether it is this ours until we acquire possession of our inheritance or is it God's, that we are his possession.

[8 : 34] And again, the latter has more support in the Bible. There's one in Deuteronomy, the Lord has declared that you're his people, his treasured possession.

And you know that one in the New Testament, you are a chosen people, God's special possession, that you may declare his praises. You know that verse, I'm sure. So, not completely dogmatic because there is a little difficulty in translating it, but it does seem likely that this is, in this early part of verse 11 and in that part of verse 14, this is God talking about us as his.

So just think for a minute, us as his. Does that mean anything to you? Does that encourage you? Such great love for us. It makes me just pause to ask the question, how do I respond?

How do we respond? Such great love. I mean, for one thing, we might come up, well, we will come at this later. There's a sense of being safe because we're his.

So if anyone tries to take us, you know, we've got someone pretty strong who's saying, that's mine, he's mine, she's mine. Just a couple of quotes from songs that I like.

[9 : 56] Sometimes I listen to these in the car. I can't resist getting a bit of casting crowns in somewhere. But the question, just in this one, who am I? Who am I that the Lord of all the earth would care to know my name, would care to feel my hurt?

And then it goes on through lots of other lines. But at the end of the crucial bit, it says, and you've told me who I am, I am yours. And I thought, when I first went through this, I thought, that's not quite answering the question because if you're looking at it very literally.

But actually, if you unpack it a bit more, it is exactly right. I am yours. You can go back into what we just touched on, that I'm your son, your daughter. I am yours.

Just, I only put that on because it just reminds me to be humbled. Who am I that the Lord of all the earth would care to know my name and to declare that I am here.

And another song which I've been playing endlessly to myself when I drove to and from London. This actually isn't Casting Crowns, you'll be pleased to hear. This is actually by Fat Fish and Lou Fellingham.

[11 : 04] But I just, it's just a way of drawing my heart into praise. I was in your eyes before this, this is really talking about predestination in rather personal language. I was in your eyes before you had ever given light.

You designed my life, planning every day. I was your delight. And through each battle I face, there sounds an anthem of grace. Come on my boy, come on my girl.

I hear your voice now cheering out for me. The Father's calling lifts my eyes to see your pleasure over me. So just to bring something home to the heart here, we are God's inheritance, his people, his possession, and just to get a glimpse really of his pleasure over us.

I've got to hit the wrong button here. What have I done? Escape? Yeah. How's that? That's all right. Okay, so that was the who's we are, gods. Now the next question is how did we become God's people?

In my introduction it said how did we become so? How did we become God's people now that we've established that that's exactly who we are? And of course what this verse is telling us in verse 11 is that it's by the will of God having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.

[12 : 33] but actually verse 5 going back to what Ben was dealing with it's all through this passage he predestined us for adoption in accordance with his pleasure and will.

Verse 9 he made known to us the mystery of his will according to and verse 11 he works out everything in conformity to his will.

so this is just reminding us and it's reinforcing what Ben was talking about that unless God wills to make us alive and direct us we're going nowhere.

But I hasten to add that although God has to start it there are things for us to do and it is in these verses you hear the message where's that in verse 13 you believed also in 13 and then it talks about being marked with a seal the promised Holy Spirit and that's something we receive.

So in many ways to our perception we remember hearing a message we remember believing we remember receiving something but before it all it's spelled out here that this is the will of God this is God's pleasure that we can be drawn to him.

[14 : 00] So now let's just look ahead there at the Holy Spirit and I'll just reread the last few verses there. It says you were included in Christ when you heard the message of the truth gospel of your salvation when you 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.

So think for a minute about there are three things said about the Holy Spirit here. The first is a seal that we are marked in him with a seal.

Now this is language we're not ever so familiar with but you probably can imagine people with cattle branding them with a mark and it's something that talks about ownership. I've put up a verse there in 2 Corinthians that!

also! talks about setting his seal of ownership on us. If nothing else in this other realms where there are evil powers at work and we are vulnerable and prone to attack what a wonderful thought that God has set his seal on us.

This isn't a visible one like you might brand on some cattle. It's an inward one. But a seal of ownership that says to the world that I belong to God.

[15:27] That's what being holy is all about being set apart for God. So the Holy Spirit is a seal of ownership. He's also come as prominent. Many Old Testament passages talk about this but we come across in Acts 2.

You remember that lovely sermon that Paul preached and how many thousand people came to him. But somewhere towards the end of that you remember there was speaking in other languages and tongues and some of the people were saying these people are drunk too much wine and Peter stands up he says no these people are not drunk this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel in these last days God says I will pour out my spirit on all people so this is the spirit who was promised and Ezekiel tells us I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees so the spirit is given as a seal he is given as promised but also as a guarantee and the word the Greek word araban in ancient transactions it signifies like a down payment in modern Greek I believe this is used for an engagement ring now that's a different I mean there are things to think about how these are!

an engagement ring is a betrothal it's a commitment between a couple we are going to get married but it actually hasn't started until they are living together but of course there is another kind of thing where you put down a down payment and actually you are getting part of what is to come and that is really what this one is that God gives us his spirit a guarantee and it's not just guaranteeing but it's actually just the fact that his presence is in us he's changing us we have a taste and when we meet together and praise him we have a taste of what heaven will be like we still have to face all the challenges of daily life but we have a taste now but a guarantee this is certain our future absolutely certain guaranteed because of the Holy Spirit so all this is the how!

by the will of God and he gives us his spirit as a seal as a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance! So just since we are the deposit guarantees and inheritance we need to just reflect on that earlier on we were thinking about us being God's inheritance but now we are talking about our inheritance and I just thought I'd remind you in 1 Peter you think about things you might dream of inheriting in this world someone's big mansion someone's super yacht I don't know what you might like but even the big yacht you might do you might then go out and crash it into something bad and lose your inheritance and that kind of thing it might last a while but it can spoil it can fade but this is an inheritance Peter reminds us in 1 Peter 1 it's an inheritance that can never perish spoil or fade and that's us being taken to be with

God forever I haven't looked up the verses what is it no eye has seen no ear has heard what God has prepared for those who love him there are all kinds of verses that just remind us how God has rich things in store for his people and I will look up just to read a bit more of this in Revelation 21 because this is talking about our future inheritance and I just want to read verses 3 to 5 and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying look God's dwelling place is now among the people and he will dwell with them they will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God he will wipe every tear from their eyes there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed he who was seated on the throne said I am making everything new and then he said write this down for these words are trustworthy and true

[19:57] God coming to dwell with us without the need for mediation the unmediated presence of God that's what our future is and no sin no sadness no battles no none of those things which make us sad so that's the how talking about the spirit and actually a little focus on what that inheritance is and then my third heading I gave you the cryptic one why did God make us his people you might have to think about that why did God make us his people but really the phrase has come through several times in what we've been looking at to the praise of his glory you notice that you look back in in what Ben was dealing with in

Ephesians one who can shout out the first time they see that in Ephesians one whilst I just go back and find my Ephesians one!

verse 6 to the praise of his glorious grace yes so let me I sparked a thought but I just want to give seeing where my slide was going I just want to give you so this is about giving glory and praise to God now what about some Old Testament background that would make us think in this direction and I just pulled this verse from Ezekiel let me just read this one out this is to do with God and the nations this is at a time when God's people were in exile and in humiliation in disgrace but God is taking action to give them back their land to drive out people who were in their land he's going to restore them so therefore say to the house of Israel thus says the Lord God it is not for your sake O house name which you have profaned among the nations to which you came and

I will vindicate the holiness of my great name which has been profaned among the nations and which you have profaned among them and the nations will know that I am the Lord declares the Lord God when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes so this just establishes and you will know it from the stories you know in the Old Testament how God the honour of God's name among the nations was a very important theme and God wanted to gain glory for himself he deserves it all but that's there in the Old Testament but notice there is a similar theme in Ephesians 1 we touched on verse 5 chosen to be holy and blameless and adopted to the praise of his glorious grace so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be for the praise of his glory and in verse 14 having talked about the Holy Spirit a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the full redemption again to the praise of his glory so

God's eternal purpose is that we glorify his name so that the rulers and this is interesting to touch on if you turn over to 3 verse 10 because this is an unusual thing in Ephesians three times actually it talks about heavenly places in Ephesians one is that we're blessed in the heavenly realms another one is that Christ is seated at the right hand of God but 3 verse 10 and this gives you a little bit more of an idea what's the purpose of us praising God and being the church and changing 3 verse 10 his intent was that now through the church the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms according to his eternal purpose so through the church through its life through him changing us to be more like him through our praise the church is on display in the area where the spirits the evil spirits work where the devil is at work and the church is a powerful thing we might feel very weak very ineffective we might think all those things but when the devil sees changed people who are loving

[24 : 46] God and living in his way this is the church on display and the devil is fearful of this isn't that a lovely thought but we don't get too many glimpses in the Bible into those heavenly!

realms what's going on in the spirit world between God and the devil but I just wanted to also draw attention to one that there is in Job chapter one if you don't know this just find Job it's just before Psalms I think Job chapter one and there's this almost like a wager and a discussion you're allowed to overhear the discussion between God and the devil and God says you see that man Job down there that righteous and blameless man upright have you considered him and the devil says to him does Job fear God for nothing and then he goes on to say he's got a hedge around him everything is good for him he's blessed well why wouldn't he and so it goes on you could almost sum it up by saying the devil is taunting God saying God no one will serve you simply because you're good and wonderful you have to bribe them so then you know the story of

Job that God says okay I want you to spare his life but you can take he gives the devil a limited freedom to take all kinds of things from him and we know the story of how Job has a very difficult passage through life a lot of hardship but the question that is coming from this is if God can recreate a people dead in their trespasses and sins who will freely love him and glorify his name for no other reason than that he's truly worthy!

So that's what God is doing he doesn't deal with enemies in the final thing God will deal with the devil once and for all but along the way he's not forcing any of us to worship him he's inviting us and when people of their own free will are praising him the devil hates it of our own free will we're actually praising God the devil hates it so let me just sum up and then we'll sing one more song and then a little bit of open prayer before I hand over to Phil but summing up we are God's inheritance! God's possession! We have a glorious future! This is all by his will though we heard and believed the message! We're given the Holy Spirit!

[27 : 40] What a precious thing that is deep in us gives us assurance doesn't it? Marked with a seal set out and marked as gods and a guarantee that he will bring us into that eternal life with him that we might be for the praise of his glory glory is a weightiness about glory God's glory is a weightiness for the praise of his glory now the challenge is just a couple of things to say here one and I hope I've encouraged you to do it just to bask in this devoted love of God for us bask in it think about it let it overcome you it's a good thing but the other thing we talked about the second two items I had it was about how we are and why and we talked about it being God's will and the fact that we're going to be to the praise of his glory but of course in our culture this is all about our will everything is about my choices what

I do what I want to do! and everyone out there if you look a typical glimpse on the world we want the glory whether you're looking in an office environment or something else we want to be seen as significant we seek the praise of others that's a natural thing in humankind but this is so opposed to

that this is saying your will isn't at the center God's will is he's the one who called you even though you!
may our own puffing up but to live for the praise of his glory so let's make war in the heavenly realms with our praise that's where I want to leave that thank you so