

Ephesians 1: 1 - 14 // The Miracle of Belonging

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[0:00] This morning we're going to be starting a series in Ephesians, going through chapter by chapter and verse by verse. Ephesians has been and remains one of my favorite books, one of my favorite things to read.

It's Practical Christianity 101, and it's good for us whether we've been a Christian for two minutes, two decades, or whatever it's been. This is all gold. Whether you're married or unmarried, we're all taught to love.

And the thing that I struggled with this week was looking at the idea of adoption. I'm going to get into that in a little bit. In the natural course of processing this entire passage, I had to remember moments in my Christian walk where I asked myself, am I hungry for more?

Am I still hungry for God? Or have I reached a place where I'm good? I'm okay? Have I reached a comfortable zone where I felt like I didn't need to learn anything more, I just need to put it into practice?

There's some truth to that. But there should always be a hunger in our hearts. I shared it on Christmas Eve, just how on the road to Emmaus, the two disciples are walking and Jesus comes up behind them and asks them some very trolling questions of, you know, what's been going on?

[1:24] You know, I'm paraphrasing. What things in Jerusalem have been happening? Of course, they answer like, who are you and where have you been? You would not know what's been going on. And Jesus leads them in this, the greatest Bible study we could ever read from the beginning to the very end of the prophecies about the Christ child, about the Messiah coming.

They invite him in to come into their house and he breaks bread. They share communion together and then he's gone. He disappears off to his next place. And they talked between the two of them and they said, were not our hearts burning within us when he revealed the scriptures to us?

And that was my prayer. And I said that on Christmas Eve, that my prayer for 2026 for this church is that our hearts would burn within us. When we read the Bible, when God speaks so clearly through his word to us, that we would have that longing and a hunger for more of him.

And I believe that's where we pick up with Ephesians chapter one. Because we have in here very evidently the work of the father, the work of the son and the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and our lives around us.

So I'll start with verses one to three. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God to the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus, grace to you and peace from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[2:56] 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. When we bless God, we're recognizing his goodness.

We're recognizing his goodness. We're recognizing his character, his faithfulness. When we worship together, when we sing these songs and we lift them up from our hearts, hopefully not just at the top of our heads.

We're blessing God. The word blessed literally means, oh, how happy. God. So I like to think, and this is just for my international version, so ignore this all you want.

I like to think that it puts a smile on God's face when his children turn to him and say, bless you. We love you. We worship you. Look at what you have done.

Look at what you have done. I can't help but think it might bring a smile to God's face when we praise him in worship. This blessing is ours.

[3:59] God's blessing and his resources are there for us. If you're like me, there's going to be a few things we talk about this morning that are going to challenge your sense of self.

Because if you're like me, you've got a list of problems that you have in your mind. You know? You're too this. Boy, you really are a lot sometimes in a group.

You know? Like, whatever it is. Whatever is your thing, sometimes there are just things we go. And so to hear that the Lord loves us, he has provision for us, he has adopted us, and he's chosen us, those can be challenging things for those negative voices that pop in our minds.

Verse 3 again said, 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.

The kind of blessings we have are spiritual. They're not necessarily material. You might be materially blessed. We are materially blessed in the sense that we have a beautiful church.

[5:05] We really do. I remember when I went in March, when we first walked in these doors, and Jamie was showing us around, like, it took my breath away at first. It really did. I was like, wow.

You know, I'm used to, like, little box community centers or things like that. You know, it's like, or church in a box, where if you're church planting, which I did a couple of times in Canada, you know, it's basically whatever you can fit in the back of your car and your kids can carry it.

And you haul it in. And you do church. Usually in a community center or a library or something, right? Just wherever you can rent space. I walked in here, and I was like, whew, wow. You know, there was worship put into this.

At least that's how I felt. But material blessings only go so far. A new creation in Jesus is better than any material thing we can accumulate.

A new creation in our hearts is better than anything our wallet may have. To feed on the word of God is better than the best food we will ever find out there.

[6:09] And I know we all talk a big game about this cheesecake in Oklahoma City, and I'm sure it's amazing. And I cannot wait to try it. Okay? I happen to really like cheesecake.

But the point I'm trying to make is that the word of God is so much more flavorful, so much more tasty. Your heart should burn within you as we read it.

It should bring about change. You know what Sean quoted here earlier? I actually called the Phil 4-8 Challenge. The Philippians 4-8. Whatever, you know, whatever's true, whatever's lovely, whatever's commendable.

Think of these things. Should I watch this movie? Is it praiseworthy? Is it commendable? Is it good? Right?

Should I watch this TV series? Is it good? Is it commendable? Is it praiseworthy? Right? Think on these things. Should I think this about this person? Is it good? Is it commendable?

[7:04] Is it praiseworthy? You see, the Phil 4-8 Challenge, and we didn't coordinate. That was, thank you. It's something that I've said to many youth groups before and to many adults before.

We have to have filters in our life. Ephesians 1 is a filter for our relationship with God, I believe. Because to have God as our portion in life, it means everything.

It means more than what we have in our driveway. If we have a driveway, it means more to have God as our portion. Our hearts should burn from within.

You are born again to receive every spiritual blessing in God. And I'll say something here as bold as I can.

I am willing to bet myself and everybody else in this room has more blessing to receive than they are aware of in Christ. I believe there is more in Christ for both you and me, for all of us together, for this church.

[8:13] And that should make us hungry. Lord, what else you got? Whew. Your heart should burn within you when you consider that there's more blessing than you have ever received in your life.

Yet to come. C.S. Lewis has a quote. I'm paraphrasing it. There are far greater things ahead than any that has come before. May we have that attitude towards our life in Christ.

There are far greater things ahead than anything we've experienced before. Because God's blessings are limitless for his children. When you hear that, does it give you confidence?

Or is there this nagging part of your soul, that thing inside of us, that heart of hearts, that just says, I'm hungry, Lord. I haven't experienced all that yet.

I'm hungry. Good. Good. Seek him in his word, in that hunger. And please don't just do it here on Sundays.

[9:20] I like the Bible in a Year program. That is good. But here's the next challenge I'm giving out to everybody that's done that, and those of you that haven't. Do the John challenge. I've done this with youth groups too.

Read through the book of John, a chapter a day, and make notes. Okay? Now, some of you may say, well, the beginning of John is pretty elementary. Yeah, sure.

Okay, if you want to look at it that way. It's the gospel of Christ, which I don't think is very elementary. Because we should either be sharing it, or it should be coming into our hearts, and making hearts burn within us.

So, John challenge. There you go. Chapter a day, make notes. We can talk after that. God wants more for you. More riches in Jesus.

More that we have not yet experienced. This gives us hunger. It should. We want more of him. And we've been given more than we've received.

[10:16] Verse 4. Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him, in love. He chose you.

Now, we are sharing in Bible study. I wasn't actually planning on bringing this up, but it is kind of a funny little stat. This is not getting spiritual, okay?

There's a 1 in 400 trillion chance that you were born. 1 in 400 trillion chance that you were born.

Work back with me and think about this for a second.

Think about your parents meeting. Okay? Think of the odds of them meeting. Think of the odds of them having a conversation.

Think of the odds of them getting married after that conversation. Think of their parents meeting, having a conversation, getting married. You see where I'm going with this?

[11:16] You go back far enough, and it is nothing short of an absolute miracle that you are sitting here today in this church, in this country, in this county, in this town. That is a miracle.

You are a miracle. And you may not be thinking that of yourself today, but God thinks that of you.

You're a miracle. He has a plan for you. A very clear and understandable plan that nobody else can tell you but him.

So when I say there's more, there is. Because until we start accepting, and this isn't out of pride, but until we start accepting the miracle that you are, right, we're not going to be listening for anything else.

You're a miracle. Each of you. You may not feel like it, but you've got something very important in this world to do that only your voice, only your hands and feet can do.

Nobody else. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Salvation begins with God and not with us.

[12:23] And it's a privilege that carries a lot of responsibility. Do we respond to God against our own will? No. No, I don't believe that at all. We respond because God's grace makes us willing to respond.

We will never be able to solve this mystery between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. It is a mystery. It really is.

I'm not a Calvinist. I'll say that flat out right now. I'm sorry if that disappoints some, but I don't care. I mean, it's, it's one of those things where we can get lost in the woods so easily arguing over theology that we forget the fact that Jesus told us to go and make disciples of all nations, preaching and teaching and baptizing in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

That's what we should be on about. Doing that. I have a quote here by Philip Schaff, which has been one of my favorite over the years when it comes to this whole predestination thing.

Okay? If Calvinism emphasized divine sovereignty and free grace, Arminianism emphasized human responsibility, the one restricts saving grace to the elect, the other extends it to all men on the condition of faith.

[13:39] Both are right in what they assert. Both are wrong in what they deny. If one important truth is pressed to the exclusion of another truth of equal importance, it becomes an error and loses its hold on the conscience.

The Bible gives us a theology which is more human than Calvinism and more divine than Arminianism and more Christian than either of them. God has a purpose and plan for you.

You were chosen. You can make the choice to continue to process with him what that means. Right here, right now. Does your heart burn within you?

Or are you in a place where you're thinking, no, I'm good. I pray that you'll get over that. I pray that I will get over that. I pray that we as a church will continue pressing in.

That we will continue seeing people come to Jesus. That using this baptismal as a regular occasion. That our fellowship hall would be filled with people from this church and people from

outside of this church.

[14:48] I want to see people come to Jesus, not for any other reason, but because he's amazing. And he alone saves. We can't save them. But our doors can be open.

We can do that. And here's the kicker. What if you're the one to deliver that message? What if there's something that God has given you?

I don't care how old you are. I don't care how young you are. What if God has given you that message to share? In that dinner, in that day, in that moment. Let's run to him.

Let's not be complacent. When we live in the light of God's electing love, he gives us the assurance that his plan is filled with love and a future.

You're chosen. You have a future. You have a future. It's not cut off. It's not dictated by your past. You have a future in him. So why did God choose you?

[15:45] I have no idea. I'm still working that out with the guy in the mirror. Why did God choose you? Ask yourself that question. Ask him that question. Lord, if that is true, a one in 400 trillion chance, why did you choose me?

What have you got for me to do, Lord? I'll say this. It's not to complain about the color of the carpet in the church. Okay?

You're not here for that. You have a greater destiny. You have something more eternally important than whether we sit in pews or chairs. You have something great.

You know, I've gotten to know a fair few of you now. It's a fly I'm getting to know intimately as well. The word love keeps coming to mind.

I love that guy. I love that girl. I love that woman. I love, you know, it keeps coming to mind. Because everyone here is just so dang exceptional. I'm not trying to puff anybody up.

[16:52] But it's true. It would seem a real waste for us to argue over silly things. Let's press on towards the goal of Christ. Let's press on to the goal of discipleship.

Of reaching this town and this county. Man, it's going to be such a beautiful future. I agree wholeheartedly. 2026 is going to be a ride. And I really wish I wasn't saying that out loud.

But it'll be interesting. But, you know, part of that is going to be us realizing more and more who we are in Christ. Through the good. Through the bad. He will unite.

Verse 5. He predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ. According to the purpose of his will. God wanted to choose you.

He wanted to choose you. He was thinking, Crawford, I want you there. This time. In this place. For such time as this.

[17:51] I want you there. We should be holy and without blame and love. We're not just chosen for our salvation. We're chosen for our holiness. And I truly believe that that is a lifelong process.

We're not perfected this side of heaven. But it's a lifelong process of trying to be more like Jesus. In our actions. In our reactions. We have no time for gossip.

We have no time for bitterness. We have no time for any of that. Because Jesus wasn't about any of that. No. We've got to be more like him. And that's a process. And it's a lifelong goal.

Any interpretation of God's divine election. That diminishes that pursuit of being more like Jesus. Is an error. In my opinion.

Imagine a Christian living in the flesh. They're just completely sideways. Right? And they say, isn't it great to be chosen? I mean, part of me will be like, can you show me how that's working out?

[18:51] For you and your life. And you say you're chosen. And I, you know, I want to hear. I'm going to act curious. I mean, show me. You're bitter. You're gossipy. You hate everybody.

You know, you go through this. Like, show me how you're becoming more like Christ. Help me see that part of you. Where is the evidence in your life?

We should be working towards him. And before him. In love. Not like, you know, I did a Bible in your program. I'm amazing.

You know, and hey, good for you. I'm not diminishing. That was a good idea. That was put forward. You guys stood up to the challenge. That's a good thing. Right? Don't let it be a source of pride.

Be a source of where the heart burned within you. And now you just got to tell people what you learned. Right? Share it with everybody. Let us be sick of you talking about it. Because what you learned through it.

[19:46] Not just that you did it. Okay? Please. Because there's gold in the word. The Lord chose us to be in Christ. And he chose you to be adopted as sons and daughters.

You have a destiny in the Lord. And God's unfolding plan. It includes our salvation. But there's also so much more. And you know what I'm trying to wrap my mind around right now?

As the reality is that the adoption didn't have to happen. God did not have to adopt you and me in order for the plan of salvation to happen. He wanted to.

He wanted to adopt you and I as sons and daughters. He didn't have to. Paul's writing this from a Roman point of view. In and under Roman law.

When you adopted someone. You took on the nature and the character of that new family. Anything else that came before you was gone. Including debt.

[20:45] If you were adopted by a family. Your debt was cancelled. Okay? Do you see where we're going with this? God didn't have to adopt us.

He chose to. He cancelled our debt. Paid for it on the cross. With his blood. Okay? So. You and I. We're sons and daughters of the king. And even in our worst. Most challenging moments. Let us remember that reality. You're a son and a daughter of the king. And you have an inheritance.

In Jesus Christ. He wants to be close with you. He wants to share with you. Because God has more blessings for you.

Than we have yet experienced. There's more for you. So look around in the attic of your heart. And just say there's got to be more than this.

[21:44] There is. In Jesus there is. There's more. God has more blessing. And when we read this. It gives us in part.

An answer to one of the greatest mysteries. As far as I'm concerned. Why would God go ahead with creation. When we knew that we would mess up. And Adam and Eve would sin.

Everything from the flood. To all of the wars across the earth. Why? Why did he still do it? One answer. Is that God had a different plan.

For the garden of Eden. He had a different plan. For you and me. Choice entered in. Sin came in. And he had already had a plan.

For salvation. Through Jesus. He said to the woman. You'll be saved through childbearing. And I've said it before. It's not. That women should be. Bearing babies to be saved.

[22:41] It's that the Messiah would come. Through birth. Promises. After promises. That God gave us. Despite God's plan.

We chose rebellion. Verse 6. To the praise of his glorious grace. With which he has blessed us. In the beloved. You are highly favored.

You are highly favored. By the beloved. Who is Jesus. You have a purpose here. And if we grasp this. It'll change our lives. If we grasp the idea.

That we didn't have to be adopted. That God chose to adopt us. That he loves us. And has a plan for us. It should change our lives completely. You are accepted.

Not by works. Not by commitment. You are accepted. By the grace in Jesus. And we are all born. [23:40] With a desire. To be accepted. I know. I know. I know. That some people are just like. I don't need anybody. I'm fine. You know. I don't need anybody's acceptance. That's okay. I've said that often.

To the dark and myself sometimes. Until you realize. It's not true. We have a desire. To be accepted. We shouldn't seek. Anybody's approval. Please.

Don't. Okay. I don't. But. You have a heart. That wants to be accepted. And God accepts. You and me. For who we are.

Right now. He has a plan for us. And a plan to move us on. From where we are right now. But it's going to take you. To say. Yeah. Yes Lord.

It's going to take us. To do that as a church as well. The world can turn its back on you. But you have a friend in Jesus. You always will. We always will. And we swing from different positions sometimes.

[24:40] Please love me. Please accept me. To I don't care. I'm on my own. I can stand on my own. We go back and forth sometimes. We go through a hard time. Won't somebody see this hard time I'm going through?

Jesus is the answer for all of that. And we can reach out to him. And find that acceptance. Find that purpose. Find that clear goal. Find the dawn of a new day in him.

Verses 7 to 8. And in him we have redemption through his blood. The forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace. Which he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight.

Redemption. In the ancient. One of the ancient languages was the true. It means to liberate on the receipt of a ransom. Paid in full. The price was Jesus' blood.

Your freedom was purchased by someone else. Your freedom was purchased by Christ. So when you couple this reality. That you're adopted sons and daughters.

[25 : 41] That you are a miracle for sitting here. And Jesus has paid for your freedom with his blood. God. Shouldn't that change the way that we live our lives?

Shouldn't that change the way that we look at one another? No longer it's like. Oh I hate that guy. You know. Now it's. They're chosen. They're a miracle for being able to sit here.

They're a miracle. In God. Wow. Let's pray for them. See. The headset just turns. Right. It really turns. And so it should.

He redeems us by his death in our place. And the thing. It wasn't even through his love. It wasn't through his power. It wasn't even through Jesus' teaching.

That we're saved. It was his blood. It was his death. On the cross. That saved us. Yeah. You're here for a purpose.

[26 : 46] Do you know how wonderful it is to have your sins forgiven? To be adopted and have your debts canceled? To have all of that behind you? Do you know that here today? Do you know how wonderful it is to be forgiven?

Truly forgiven? I said a prayer. I sit out here quite often actually. And I watch the sunrise. And I pray for the church. If you're on Instagram you'll see my shoes. I don't know why that happened.

It just happened the first time. And I've continued anyways. Anyways. And I'll post a passage that the Lord had moved me to read during that prayer. Okay. And the thing is. Is that his mercy is new every morning.

He has a plan and a purpose. And I keep thinking about this for this church. He has a plan and a purpose for this church. I've had the blessing of going through the history of this church.

Because. Man I have. I have read so many documents on immigration. This church history. Bylaws from the 60s.

[27 : 45] And you name it. Like. It's been a really good learning process. I'll put it that way. But one of the things I love about the history of the church. Is to show this. A history of faithfulness. The history of people showing up.

The history of people being there for one another. In the good times and in the bad. In the light and in the dark. Just this history that keeps on going. So when I'm out there and I'm praying. I've got that history in mind.

Okay. But God looks at you. And also looks at your future. Who you could become in him. The plans that he has.

I don't. Like I said. I don't care if you're two or 200. It doesn't matter. All right. The Lord will use whomever. Raises their hand and says. Here am I. Send me. Okay.

Be that person today. Verses 9 to 12. I will be closing soon. Making known to us the mystery of his will. According to his purpose.

[28 : 42] Which he set forth in Christ. As a plan for the fullness of time. To unite all things in Christ. Things in heaven. And things on earth in him. 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. So that we who were the first to hope in Christ. Might be to the praise of his glory.

God's calling us to think about his great plan. And our part in it. And a mystery in the New Testament. Is something that. Well. It's something that. God knows.

That we couldn't find out. On our own. That we need to have it revealed to us. We talked about that in this Tuesday study. When going through Revelation. It's the same thing. Talking about a mystery there.

So I could tell you. And this is true. I'm not making it up. I was born. In Lionsgate Hospital. In North Vancouver. On the fourth floor.

[29 : 41] In room 432. There's no way you would know that. Asking me that level of detail. Is a little weird. Right? Like if I walked up to you and said. So what room were you born in? When you were born.

What hospital was it? That's a weird way to start a conversation. So I'm not expecting people to do that. But you wouldn't have known. Unless I told you. But it wasn't a mystery. It was a mystery to

you.

And God will reveal. His mystery to you. The mystery of the ages. The mystery of history. The mystery of your life. When he sees fit. And I'll tell you.

From my own personal experience. It always has started. With me saying. Yes. I'll go anywhere. I'll do anything. Whatever you want.

Lord. Here's the kicker. The answer to that question. Or those set of questions for you. May be to start praying for the person.

[30:39] Two or three pews. Away from you. It may be to start loving. This community. In a new way. Not that it's been bad before. But maybe something. New.

That God is calling you to do. Something risky. Something that you haven't thought of before. Something that might have you lay down your sense of self.

I don't know. That's between you and him. Verses 13-14. 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. Who is the guarantee of our inheritance.

Until we acquire possession of it. To the praise of his glory. God's sovereign choice. Does not exclude our responsibility.

[31:34] And I'm going to read this again. And show why I think this. In him you also. When you heard the word of truth. The gospel of your salvation. And believed in him.

You have a choice to believe in him. And the Holy Spirit comes upon you. Some people believe it's the same moment. Some people believe it's after. You know what? None of that matters. What matters is that you have a choice.

To believe in him. Okay? You have a choice to follow him. You have a choice to say. Here am I. Send me. Do I have to trust him?

If he saved me. He saved me. Right? If I'm elect. Won't it just work out? That's not the attitude the Bible takes. Our trust in God.

Is very important. After we've heard this word of truth. Essential in God's work. Is the sealing of the Holy Spirit.

[32:37] His presence in our lives. Acts like a seal that shows ownership. So if it's been a while. If you've been challenged by any of this. As I have. To accept that you were chosen.

You're a miracle sitting here. An absolute miracle. If that's hard to hear. Then you know what? Maybe it's time you ask for a refreshing.

With his Holy Spirit. That's perfect. And I'm going to close in prayer with that. Just simply that. If there's any of us here. That have recognized. There's got to be more than this.

That there are more blessings in Christ. Than I've ever experienced. And I don't know how to get to them. Let's pray for a time of refreshing. With his Holy Spirit. That he might show us more.

The Jesus way. As we sang before. Thank you.