

Ephesians 1:1-14

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[0 : 00] 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.

! Can you pray with me? Lord, we need You.

Every hour, we need You. Thank You that You have given us Your word so that we can treasure it up, Your thoughts in our hearts.

Thank You, Lord, that You are with us. Thank You, Lord, that You have spoken to us. So, Father, I pray that in these next moments, the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer.

Amen. Amen. The book of Ephesians is, it's got a lot of lofty doctrine in it.

[1 : 15] It has many incredible truths in it. But, it's not just a theoretical tome from which we distill spiritual lessons.

It's kind of the difference between a resume and the interview. Or, um, your, uh, online profile and the first date, um, if I could put it in those kinds of terms.

Um, there's a relational quality to it that is really unsurpassed anywhere else in Scripture. It's, it's so, it's so enriching to our lives.

It, it's about, not abstract theology, it's about God's real action in our lives.

Both past, today, and in all the days to come. And, it's actually hard to imagine a more personal note where we come face to face with God more than this.

[2 : 16] Uh, where we see ourselves wrapped up into God's life more than this. It, this letter, Paul drowns us in personal language over and over again.

He says, you and we. And, he always connects it to God and God's life. And, in fact, he says, you and God or we and God. About once every two verses, on average, throughout this, throughout this book.

And, and so, uh, one writer once actually said, this letter crams God and us into every square inch. And, I think the goal is that every square inch, not just of this letter, but of our lives, would be crammed full of God.

And, that's Paul's goal, as he begins in verses 1 and 2. Saying, 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. Sometimes we skip over the introduction to a letter. You know, we say, okay, from Paul to the Ephesian Christians, let's get on with business, right?

[3 : 25] Um, but there's actually a lot of richness in this introduction that I don't want us to skip over, because we would lose something if we, if we did. First, Paul introduces himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus.

Paul's here not to promote Paul, but to promote Jesus. That's kind of refreshing, I feel, in an age where everyone's out for number one.

Uh, we see our political leaders, our business leaders, uh, family leaders, military leaders. We see everybody out for themselves, to make themselves look good, to expand their influence, to, um, to advance their career.

Everybody's out for number one, and really, Paul is actually still out for number one. It's just, he recognizes who number one really, truly is. And it's not himself, it's the one from whom, and to whom, and for whom we exist.

Paul further introduces himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus, and then he says this, by the will of God. Not only is he a messenger of God, uh, not, he's, he's a messenger for Jesus, not himself, but

the actual message, these words, are not his own words, they're not his personal musings, this isn't his journal, these are God's words.

[4 : 46] For us. When we hear, you know, they are the very words of God, that kind of sets a somber mood for us.

We, we take, we sit up straight and we think, well, okay, what does he, what does he have for us? We're expecting almost, sometimes we see, when we hear the very words of God, we're expecting almost a review.

But, this message, the message that he still wants us to take seriously as the very words of God, it's not an angry tirade, it's a blessing.

He tells us in verse 2, this is the message, grace and peace from God. The message, where, where Paul wants to advance the cause of Jesus, not his own, the message where Paul speaks on behalf of God, not himself, it's a message about God's blessing to us.

And he wants us to take it seriously. That's not what I typically think of when I think of, thus saith the Lord kind of language. But that's exactly the kind of God we serve.

[5 : 54] We have a God who is radically for us. We have a God who made peace between us when we lived in opposition to him. We have a God who, as we'll see today, has blessed us, is blessing us, and will continue to bless us with the most outrageous blessing in all of the universe.

And it's probably not what you're expecting. But we're getting ahead of ourselves. First, the grace and the peace.

What are they, and how do we respond to them? How do we take that message seriously? Paul helps us respond appropriately, starting in verse 3. 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, 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 predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the beloved.

God's grace and peace is wrapped up in this. And our response is actually also wrapped up in this.

[7 : 15] The way to take God's grace and his peace seriously is worship. Paul immediately follows the grace and peace in verse 2 with, blessed be God, in verse 3.

And closes this particular section with, to the praise of his glorious grace, in verse 6. Now, as we look at verses 3 to 6, it focuses a lot on God's grace.

And there's probably, there might be, something you're getting hung up on. Much ink has been spilled, and many electrons have been shot through the interwebs, about the word predestined in verse 5.

And again in verse 11. I'm going to say three quick things about it. First, it's a weird word. It's not something you hear at a coffee shop, or see, you know, on the tabloids at the checkout counter. It's not something we use very frequently. And it roughly means to decide upon beforehand, or to predetermine. So that's kind of, in a nutshell, what it means, number one.

[8 : 21] Number two, words only tell us something in a sentence. They don't stand alone as monoliths that can communicate meaning to us.

Words have meaning within their context. And so, if we're trying to understand why the word is here, then we need to look at the rest of the context. Within the sentence, the main point of the sentence, in fact, the main point of the section, is God's glory, the praising of God's glory.

Again, as we've said, it begins in verse 3 with, blessed be God, and ends in verse 6 with, to the praise of His glorious grace. Paul is here to worship. And everything he says here is there to spur us on towards worship.

If we make something else the main point, if we get bogged down in a particular word, and we forget to worship, we've missed the main point.

We're thinking about something other than what God wants us to be thinking about. And that thing that He wants us to be thinking about is how much we love God. God's glory, then, must frame our understanding of the word.

[9 : 33] If it doesn't lead us towards worship, we miss His whole point. So, how does this word, in context, cause us to glorify God? And it's found in its purpose.

What did God choose us for? In the end, that's the thing that brings glory to Him. And that's the thing that we need to be shepherding our minds towards, to glorify Him.

That's the third thing to remember. God's plan is for the praise of His glory by means of our adoption. It says, He predestined us for adoption as sons.

And that's Paul's point. God is glorified because He made us family. Why is Paul making a big deal about adoption?

Why is that his pinnacle of the gospel blessing? It's because God doesn't rescue us from hell and death and just leave us here on our own.

[10:35] He doesn't forgive our sins until we walk away from us. He doesn't just make us holy and then leave us be. No. We aren't rescued and then put in some holding pattern until we reach heaven.

Instead, He rescues us, pulls us in, and embraces us. He made rebels, sons. He took enemies, made us family.

He took us and lavishes love on us. We have complete access to Him. He will never leave us or forsake us. Why? He's our Father and we are His children.

That is why Paul focuses on adoption as the highest privilege of adoption. and that is what needs to make our hearts sing God's glory. I hope that makes you say, blessed be God, with Paul in verse 3. I hope it leads you to the praise of His glorious grace in verse 6. How did God do this?

[11:44] How did He accomplish this? How did He make us His children? It's in and through, those specific words, in and through Jesus Christ.

God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing, verse 3. He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, verse 4. He adopted us as sons through Jesus Christ, verse 5.

He blessed us in the Beloved, verse 6. In Him we have redemption, verse 7. And we are united in Him, verse 10. Paul is really concerned to use this language of in Christ.

It's not some mystical union. He's talking, we're not having a seance after, you know, after worship this morning. It's not, neither is it something that he wants you and me to accomplish for ourselves.

We don't, at the end of our Christian life, arrive at union with Christ. The Christian life begins with it. We aren't seeking Him out, reaching up to heaven to somehow connect ourselves to Him.

[12:58] We can't connect ourselves to God any more than an ant can reach the moon. In fact, the text is quite clear that He is the one who has already sought us out.

He reached down from heaven to unite Himself to us. And when we say in Christ or through Christ or united to Christ, we aren't saying that we're somehow melding ourselves and losing our identities in Him.

We're not getting absorbed into His consciousness like some of the Eastern religions might say. It means that Jesus, God the Son, has drawn near to us and associated Himself and His life with us so closely that we share life and lot with Him and inheritance, verse 14, with Him.

Ephesians chapter 5, which we'll get to in a few months, we're going to see that Christ's relationship with His people, how we're in Him, is like a marriage. Just like a husband and a wife are bound together.

We're responsible for each other's debts and responsibilities. We share each other's successes and fortunes. Jesus has bound Himself in that same way to His bride, the church.

[14:09] He's taken your sin and my sin, our rebellion and all of its consequences on Himself. And we have His blessings and His inheritance poured out on us.

You see, in these wedding vows, we have His for better, for richer, and in health because He took our our for worse, for poorer, and in sickness.

That's the picture God paints for us to describe what it means to be united to Christ. What does that mean in the everyday?

If Jesus has united Himself so that we're adopted into God's family, what does that mean for school and for work tomorrow morning? It means we have a kind of security the world does not, cannot know.

You are secure in His love, one writer said, because He's not just your king, He's not just your boss, He's your father. A king might use you or banish you, a boss might treat you like a number or fire you, but a father is in it for the long haul and He is investing.

[15:33] So if you're here today and your life feels out of control, it might be crazy, it might be unraveling, you might not feel much like praising God in the midst of that, but this passage gives us hope that when life is a confusing mess, we hear that God, the God who owns history, who owns the universe, is excited to raise us to new life in His family.

So if your life is crazy, if it is unraveling, if it's out of control, your life still belongs to your Father and He is in control. And what is so important is that this passage doesn't just tell us that He's in control of life.

It also tells us that He's in it here and now with us. We are blessed in Christ. We are His children through Christ.

We are blessed in the Beloved. We are united to Him in Christ. God's not just in control of the life that looks like a mess. He's here with you in it.

And despite what you see, it doesn't look like a mess to Him. He's a grand plan from before the foundation of the world for His glory and for your blessing. If life today is an earthquake, hold fast to the unshakable God who is in the rubble with you who has made you His own who is steering you to glory.

[17:22] Paul continues in verse 7 saying, 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 making known to us the mystery of His will according to His purpose which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in Him things in Heaven and things on Earth.

Again, back in verse 2 Paul introduced to us the idea of God's grace and God's peace. He's focused quite a bit on God's grace the adoption that we have in Christ in the previous verses and now he's transitioning slightly and peace is coming more into view.

What kind of peace is He talking about? That's so important. Sometimes we use terms and we don't clearly define them in the mean of talking right past each other and we think we're talking about the same thing but we're really not.

What kind of peace is Paul talking about here? The peace that we get from God isn't just some sort of inner tranquility. It's not primarily psychological.

He doesn't promise us a calm life. Now, granted God does renew our minds day to day so that we can put the events of our daily life in an eternal perspective and that gives us a measure of peace that inner tranquility so that we can understand how things fit together and it gives us an eternal perspective.

[19:03] So, even in the midst of the raging waves of life's turmoil we can hold on to the sure foundation of God's promises that the hope of heaven will not disappoint us. But that's not what Paul has in view here.

That's not the peace that he's talking about here. It's more than that. It's more than saying, hey, in light of eternity's problems, in light of eternity today's problems aren't that big.

That's not what he's getting at. The peace God has given us is a relational peace. It's peace in our relationship with God. Verse 7 explains that in him we have redemption and forgiveness.

These are terms of a relationship. They're not terms of Zen. And that gets to the heart of the mystery.

Paul uses the word mystery here. He says that mystery was once hidden but now it's known. And what is that mystery? It actually has to do with this peace.

[20:06] See, from the very beginning, God has been very hard for us to understand. On the one hand, he's incredibly merciful.

But on the other, he's incredibly just. Here's how that gets confusing. In Exodus chapter 34, God formally introduces himself to Moses.

The Lord descended in a cloud and stood with Moses there and proclaimed the name of the Lord.

The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

Keeping steadfast love for thousands. And here, listen to this, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. But, who will by no means clear the guilty.

The question then is, who is this God? He can't, at one time, say, I will forgive iniquity and transgression and sin, and at the same moment say, I will by no means clear the guilty.

[21:15] That's a contradiction. And that's how he introduces himself to us. Paul tells us that we have peace with God, but there seems to be a war going on within God's own desires himself.

How can we have peace with a God like that? Whose inner desires are in conflict. So, the mystery of the whole Bible that Paul is saying here comes down to, who is this God?

And that's the mystery, Paul says, Jesus has answered for us. One writer put it this way, Ephesians tears the doors off mysteries. The love of Christ beyond knowing, known.

The unfathomable riches of Christ, fathomed. The love and justice of our God, seemingly irreconcilable, made one.

verse 7 begins with the language we're getting familiar with now. In him, we have redemption.

We've already begun exploring how that works.

[22 : 26] When Jesus united himself to us, the things that are true of him are now true of us because he has wedded himself to us. And so, in 2 Corinthians 5, 21, Paul can say, for our sake, God made Jesus to be sin, who knew no sin.

so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. I love this quote from Charles Spurgeon because it gets at the very heart of how our adoption brings us peace with God.

He says this, when a man is adopted into a family and comes into the household of his new father, he has nothing to do with the old family he has left behind.

He is released from subjection to those whom he has left. And so, the moment I am taken out of the family of Satan, the prince of this world, has nothing to do with me as my father.

And he is no more my father. I am not a son of Satan. I am not a child of wrath. When God adopts us, we have a new family name.

[23 : 36] we have a new identity in him. We are children he delights to shower with love and mercy. When Christ connects himself to us, we are adopted into his family as beloved children.

And justice is no longer owed us because Jesus paid that price for those who are found in him. This is the mystery of all the ages that Paul says is now revealed in Jesus Christ.

We have peace with God because he has united us to his son and made us to be his children of blessing. So we who were once at war with God, even if we blinded ourselves to the fact that we were at war with him, we are now forgiven and reconciled, brought in as family.

We see that he lavishes the riches of his grace on us. You don't do that to your animal. You do that to a child you love. There is relational peace between us and God the Father.

Paul continues in verse 11 saying, 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.

[25 : 07] 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, whom is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Remember at the beginning, I said, God has blessed us, and continues to bless us, and will continue to bless us with the most outrageous blessing in all the universe.

And I said, we kind of got ahead of ourselves. Remember how I said, it's not probably the blessing you think it is? Here we come to that blessing.

When we think of the blessings of the gospel, we think of escaping hell, we think of getting to heaven, if we really have our thinking caps on, we think of enjoying present fellowship with God's people.

These are all good and great things that God saves us into, but they are not ultimate things. Here, in these verses, we see how God blesses us truly beyond imagination.

[26 : 23] Everything up to this point leads to this. Here is the crowning achievement. When Christ draws alongside us, makes us His, when Christ unites us to Himself, when God makes us His own, when He makes peace with us, we share an inheritance with Jesus.

inheritance. What is that inheritance? What does Jesus have that is of ultimate worth? What is the great blessing?

Is it streets paved with gold in the New Jerusalem? Is it the universe He holds in His hands? inheritance? I mean, everything that exists is for His Word.

It includes you and me. He has all wisdom, all knowledge. He has everything. What is it that He considers most valuable?

What is that inheritance? Paul says it here, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. The true blessing beyond all belief isn't a ticket out of hell.

[27 : 41] It's not access to heaven. It's not escape from death. It's God Himself. Is that what you're excited for?

the God who spins the galaxies? The God who holds the atoms together? The God who has adopted you? Made you His child?

If you have been raised to new life in Christ, your present reality is lived with Him. Jesus has wrapped our lives into His own and given us a guarantee that there is more to come.

That changes are here and are now. See, this adoption, this inheritance, this life lived in unity with Christ means we approach every day differently.

We don't serve God out of fear. God we talked a lot about obedience last week. We don't serve Him out of fear. He's a loving Father. We don't serve God out of guilt.

[28 : 52] He's already pardoned us and made peace with us. We don't serve God out of duty. we are his children not his employees rather we serve God because it brings joy to magnify the one who left heaven sought us out united himself to us, made peace between us adopted us into his family and given himself to us so that we know he's taking us home and so as we walk through the book of Ephesians we're going to see Paul charge us with different acts of obedience and we need to recognize that these acts of service to our Lord aren't to earn something he's already given us the greatest thing and it's his Holy Spirit in our lives and among us I hope what you're seeing is that

Ephesians isn't a book of four principles for a healthy marriage or three steps for resolving conflict or two ideas for killing sin no, it's a book about one God it's about it's not about plans or steps or doctrines or ideas it's about a God who pursued you and me at the cost of his own life so that he can wrap his arms around you and me and call us his children will you pray with me?

Father, I thank you that you've given us every spiritual blessing in yourself I pray that as we see that visibly represented in the Lord's Supper this morning that you would guide the eyes of our hearts away from ourselves and towards Jesus that you would guide our affections away from this world and towards Jesus that you would continue to shepherd us towards he who gave everything to unite himself to us and to give us access to you Lord, we ask these things so that we might be in our heads in our hearts and in our hands to the praise of your glorious grace we pray these things in Christ's name Amen We're going to bow one more time and speak to the Lord as a church together Heavenly Father you're so good to give us the blessings you've given us all of which we're undeserving of as we've just read and as Brother Dave has just spoken we're blessed by you we're blessed by your pursuit of us in relationship we're blessed by your persistence you are Jehovah Jireh our provider you're a father that is unmatched whose love and desire for his children is beyond anything on earth that we could see or experience God, you've made us your children because you are good not because of anything you've done to deserve your heavenly blessings

Lord, we humbly confess and admit that our pursuit of you is often lacking and that our desire to be in relationship with you as our father falls short we miss the personal aspects of your love and relationship and we can paint you as a far off deity that we can just pay lip service to Lord that you desire so much more and we fall short in realizing that we fall short in pursuing you as you want us to until we confess those transgressions and sins and shortcomings Lord we don't stop there and neither do you Lord because you offer us grace and forgiveness and after we confess those things we humbly and gratefully accept that you've washed us clean washed us white

[34 : 12] Lord we're thankful for our salvation which you've given to us with one small request Lord and that's that we be devoted to you can we ever stop thanking you Lord as we as we sang earlier in the song your blessings if we had a pen and were to write on the sky a parchment we could never fill it Lord you deserve all of our thanks such a good loving God thank you for your gift of Christ who is in us and not just around us Lord he doesn't just surround us and give input like a wise counselor he is in our lives he is in our hearts and because of him we're able to gather on this

Sunday morning our very first time together as a church because our common bond of Christ for that we are forever thankful Lord grow us as a church let our hearts be soft let our ears hear let our minds and our wisdom be humbled may we pursue unity first in our own lives and second as a church together may we as a church realize together we are in you and you are in us together you have blessed us together we will grow together we will reach out to our local communities we pray for our local brothers and sisters in churches in southeast of Connecticut we pray for the gospel messages that are going out today we pray for ears who have never heard these words we pray that you bring your kingdom to this section of

Connecticut to our state we pray that we encourage each other in our pursuit of co-workers friends and family who don't know you let our hearts be burdened to reach those who don't know the truth lord grant us a pure and rightly motivated humility and unity together at Shoreline Community Bible

Church and let all these things be done to bring you glory that you deserve thank you lord for the blessings you've given us blessed be the god and father of our lord jesus christ and it's in his name we pray amen when the hour came he reclined at the table and the apostles with him and he said to them i have earnestly desired to eat this passover with you before i suffer for i tell you i will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of god he took a cup and when he had given thanks he said take this and divide it among yourselves for i tell you that from now on i will not drink from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of god part he took the bread and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them saying this is my body which is given for you do this in remembrance remembrance of me and likewise the cup after they had eaten saying this cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my body i think sometimes when we come to the lord's table we are distracted inwards and by that i mean i think often times we make it mostly a time of confession and a time of repentance and that is absolutely appropriate i'm not trying to steer us away from those things but what i am trying to steer us towards today hopefully is the direction that christ steers us when he says it he says do this not in remembrance of your sins not in confession of your sins not in anything like that nothing a reference towards us he says do it remembrance of me so today as we prepare to come before the table let us remember him who he is what he has done what he is doing and what he will do in this same section he is anticipating a future reality he says i tell you that from now on i will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of god comes we have a future hope in christ in the lord's table and so matt's gonna strum a few chords for us we're gonna reflect and as you feel ready we're gonna head to the back heater corner what you're gonna do is you're gonna tear a piece from the bread and you're gonna dip it in a cup and take it don't take it back your seat just take it right there and we'll have a few moments of meditation and reflection as we do this and then we'll sing the last song together and we'll

Thank you.

Thank you.

[41 : 51] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[44 : 21] Thank you.

Thank you. Come to me. Come to me. All you will hear me.

I will give you mercy. Say it again. Come to me. Come to me. Come to me. All you will hear me.

You will hear me. And I will hear you.

You will hear me. You will hear me. Take my yoke. Take my yoke upon you. And learn from me. For I am desce Injentful, humble and hard.

Take my all good from you and learn from me. You will honor and destroy your soul.

[45 : 45] You will honor and destroy your soul. Sing it again, come to me. Come to me.

All you will hear me burn and destroy your soul. I will give you God. Come to me.

All you will hear me burn and destroy your soul. Take my all good from you and learn from me.

For I am gentle, humble and hard. Take my all good from you and learn from me.

You will honor and destroy your soul. You will honor and destroy your soul.

[46 : 46] Expecting you for to sing the sound of us. We sing hallelujah. We sing hallelujah.

We sing hallelujah. The land was overcome. We sing hallelujah. We sing hallelujah.

We sing hallelujah. The land was overcome. We sing hallelujah. We sing hallelujah.

We sing hallelujah. The land was overcome. Our life in and with Christ continues forever.

Next week, in the second half of Ephesians chapter 1, Paul is going to pray for us, and we will see just how far, just how deep and rich this life with him is.

[47 : 57] The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

A peace he made with you by making you his children. In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen.