

# Ephesians 1:1-14

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Preacher: None

[0:00] It's great to be with you today. I'm back in Ealing. I don't know if you remember, back in 2017 I did a placement for three weeks here, so some of you might recognise me. You're wondering, I recognise his face. Is that the guy from 2017? I can confirm I am that guy.

Please do tend to be to Ephesians. Ephesians chapter 1, page 976. We're going to be looking at passages that we just read earlier in a few chunks, and so today we're going to be looking at verses 3 to 6.

Let me read that out again.

Let me pray for God's help. Lord God, we thank you for your word. We thank you that you have spoken to us, and that Christ has come in the flesh, and we can hear of him this morning.

We ask for your help by your spirit. Open our ears, open our hearts today. Turn to know Christ better. And in his name we pray. Amen.

[1:38] My favourite thing to do on a snow day when school was cancelled was to watch the behind the scenes of the Lord of the Rings movies with my mum.

And me and my mum would watch hours of behind the scenes footage of how they made the film and all the unseen stuff, all that went into making it happen.

And it was pretty amazing to see all the thousands of artists and technicians and producers and all the makeup and lights, set design, how they do orcs and stuff like that.

And all the direction and purpose and effort that went into it. It was just amazing. You had all these huge decisions going on behind the scenes. And there was so much detail and intention and purpose that went into every single shot.

All this stuff that we would have seen until me and my mum were shown it and we watched the behind the scenes. All this to just get one beautiful image on the screen. And it just makes you think after watching it, wow, this film is even more impressive than when I watched it.

[2:52] Well, you can think of the letter to the Ephesians as a behind the scenes. But not to a film. It's a behind the scenes to the church. In this book, Paul pulls back the curtain of reality to show us what's really going on behind the scenes of the church.

All the direction and purpose and inner workings of it all. So we see spiritual realities and spiritual warfare in the church. The inner workings of salvation and sin.

What God has done with Jews and Gentiles. The divine work in Paul's ministry. What's really going on behind marriage. What's going on in heaven. God's grand design behind it all.

All this is the behind the scenes of the church. And here in Ephesians 1, Paul is pulling back the curtains to show something quite spectacular.

Paul is pulling back the curtain to give us a glimpse into eternity. And to answer the question, why?

[4:00] Why the church? Now, the church is a bit of a funny thing, if you think about it. You have preaching and singing and elders and water, bread, wine, lots of people.

It's strange on the surface. I'm not saying anything about Eden. Eden's a great church. But the church itself, it's a bit funny. And Paul is pulling back the curtain to reveal what's really going on behind the scenes of all of this.

Why all of this exists in the first place. Why did God create the church? Why did he gather a people like us today?

Why does he save some people? Why does he save any people? Today we'll ask the question, why did God save you, Christian?

Paul is pulling back the curtain to reveal God's sovereign master plan from eternity past. The plan to form the church. The plan to redeem a people.

[5:02] The plan to save you. Paul is showing us why God did all of this. The passage is here to answer, why did God save the church? Why did God save you?

But before Paul directly answers this question, he begins with a praise and blessing to God. So look at 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.

Paul bursts into praise for God. And this is so appropriate because you can't peek behind the curtain into eternity without praising God.

In fact, this whole passage is one big praise. In fact, in the original language, it's actually just one big sentence. This passage needs organs and quiet, blaring as you read it.

I was thinking of playing a bit of music as I preached through the sounds of my voice. Probably a bit too edgy. But that's the vibe going on here. We're opening the curtain onto praiseworthy things.

[6:11] And the first glimpse behind the curtain into why we're saved is actually a glimpse in what it means to be saved. It's a glimpse into heaven to show what it means to be saved right now.

But Paul doesn't use the word saved. He says, if you notice, that we're blessed. And as we open the curtain, this is the first thing to see. You are blessed. You are blessed.

Look again at 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.

This is what it means to be a Christian. What it means to be saved by God. We're blessed in Christ. And what does he bless us with? With every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

Now the word blessed is perhaps a bit of a mishandled word nowadays. You might have seen it on Twitter or Instagram. The hashtag blessed. I don't know if you've seen that before.

[7:11] You know, pumpkin spice latte. Hashtag blessed. And we see the word blessed in the Bible. God blesses Israel. David blesses God.

Solomon blesses the people. There is blessing throughout the Bible. But to put it simply, when God blesses us, it means he confers benefits to us.

A fancy way of saying God gives good things to his people when he blesses them. So in one sense, hashtag blessed, it's kind of right. Because everything good in this world is from God.

Even Starbucks. But that misses the force behind what blessing is. When God blesses, he blesses his covenant people. His special, especially chosen people for himself that he's adopted and loved and saved.

And he blesses them with good things to do with redemption in particular. In other words, to be blessed by God is to receive his grace.

[8:13] Do you remember the words of that famous hymn? Come thou fount of every blessing, shew my heart to sing thy grace. Blessing and grace go together.

So you hear blessing, think grace in your head. And that's why Paul says, we're blessed with every spiritual blessing. And when you see the word spiritual, here's a tip.

It usually means it's something to do with the Holy Spirit. So we're blessed with every Holy Spirit blessing. And so all that the Holy Spirit does, we're blessed with that.

That means faith. That means new life. Justification. Sanctification. The guarantee of eternal life. The power to fight sin. The grace to forgive. The forgiveness of sins.

All the wonders and blessings of salvation. And so it's no wonder where this blessing lies. Look at verse 3 again. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us.

[9:11] Where? In Christ. Our blessing lies in Christ. In fact, our blessing is Christ. And that's why Paul also says, we've been blessed in the heavenly places.

Christ right now is at the right hand of the Father. In heaven. And so all our blessings are in him. In heaven. That doesn't mean that all the blessing we have is up in heaven.

And that there's no way of getting it. You know, it's up there but we can't just get it. That would be useless if that was the case. We wouldn't be blessed. No. But we, Christian, we are in Christ right now.

We're blessed in him. So as Christians, we have that blessing right now. If you are a Christian, God has specially blessed you.

And you are a little bit blessed. God hasn't given you a few good things in Christ. He has blessed you with every spiritual blessing. So do you realise what that means?

[10:17] If you are in need of God's grace and the work of the Spirit in your life to help you with your marriage. If you are struggling and you feel like your marriage is just being held together by strength.

You are blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ. And he is able to give you the patience, the love, the forgiveness, the humility that you need for your marriage.

If you think that the Christian walk is just too hard. That sin is just too strong a force to battle. That the life requires of you, it's just too much. And you think, this is too great a task for me.

God has blessed you with every spiritual blessing. To equip you and strengthen you in your weakness. And God hasn't given you some blessing. He doesn't lead you halfway in the Christian life.

And tells you, just make the rest on your own. No, God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. You are blessed more than you could even think or ask.

[11:22] And it's at this point, Paul begins to open the curtain even more. It's at this point, we need to ask why. Why has God blessed us in this unimaginable way?

Why the church? Why did he save you? And the next thing we need to see behind the curtain is, God chose us. And this is the second thing to see. You are chosen.

You are chosen. Look at verse 4 with me. So God blessed us in Christ, verse 4. Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world.

Why are you here today? Because God chose you. And look, when he chose you? Before the foundation of the world. So, wind the clock back through history.

As far back as you can go. Rewind time. As far back as time will go. Before the mountains were made. Before the oceans were filled. Before God said, let there be light.

[12:24] Before even time began. In eternity past. God had a plan. A plan to save sinners. And he knew exactly who he was to redeem.

And not because they had done anything to make them worthy. No, no, no. They didn't even exist yet. It was God's choice and his alone. His choice to save us.

And verse 5 adds more detail to God's choosing. Verse 5 with me. In love, he predestined us for adoption to himself. As sons through Jesus Christ.

According to the purpose of his will. He predestined us. Now, predestined just means God writes the end of our story. Before our stories even begin.

And that ending that he's written for us. If you are a Christian here today. That ending is a happily ever after. Of being adopted as God's sons and daughters.

[13:23] God chose us. And predestined us to be his sons. His church. His redeemed people. So, think of it this way. If we could somehow put on paper God's eternal decrees.

His plan for an eternity past. If we could somehow get that on paper. Which would be impossible. But God's mind is infinite. We couldn't even begin to get on paper. But if we could. You could find on that paper somewhere.

A list of every single Christian. That he has chosen to save in Christ. And brothers and sisters. If you are in Christ. Your name is there. It's always been there.

God has known you. And chosen you for all eternity. Now, you may think. But I remember choosing Jesus. I remember the prayer I prayed.

And I remember the moment when I decided to follow him. And that's true. That really is true. Don't ever forget that. But we need to realise. We only chose him.

[14:30] Because he chose us first. We love him. Because he loved us first. And this is important to remember. Because this means. Every bit of our salvation.

Is from God. But was there anything. He did to kind of persuade God. And twist his arm a bit. To save us.

Did he maybe look into the future. And see something worthy in me. And then save me. Well look to the end of verse 5. It is all.

It is all. According to the purpose. Of his will. To put it simply. God chose us. Because he chose to choose us.

Paul's emphasis here is. It is nothing to do with you. This was all God's. The emphasis here is God's utter. Amazing grace.

[15:28] And it wasn't because of anything in us. That he chose us. We have nothing to add. Nothing to give God. God saved you. Because he decided to save you.

We didn't deserve it. We didn't ask for it. We didn't earn it. No. It is all his grace. So let's be clear here. God saved us. Now.

Some people. Making. This is a bad quality of God. God. As if. He is somehow. A reckless God. Just randomly. Peeping people. To save.

Maybe that is how you feel about it. Maybe this is something you have been wrestling with. The God. Choosing us. And predestating us. It is not a bad quality.

This is. Jaw dropping. Amazing. Grace. Because. If he didn't choose us. If he didn't do this. Do you know what the other option is.

[16:29] No one is saved. No church. No salvation. If he doesn't choose us. We're lost forever.

In our sin. But. Blessed be the God. Who chose us. And predestined us. Your salvation.

The church. It's not a last minute. Back up plan. For God. Christian. You were chosen. Before the foundation. Of the world. And the church.

Is God's master plan. From before the dawn of time. And why? Because in his grace. He decided. To save you. You. You.

Are. Chosen. And you're chosen. With a purpose. And this is their third thing to see. God. Chose you. To be. Holy. And blameless.

[17:24] God. Chose you. To be. Holy. And blameless. Look back. Verse four. With me. He chose us. In him. Before the foundation. Of the world.

That we should be. Holy. And blameless. Before him. Christian. This is your purpose in life. This is why God chose you. From all eternity. He wants you.

To be holy. And blameless. I have a vague memory. Of when I was a child. I was about five or six. And I was digging.

In the garden. In the soil. In the flower bed. Just down the side of the house. I was just digging. In the dirt. With my little trowel. And I was digging up stones. And I would find a stone.

I guess I thought it was. A treasure. Or something like that. I dug up stone. And then I would take it. To the tap. At the back of the house. And rinse it off. And polish it off. Get all the dirt off. Turn the tap off.

[18:17] And I'd bring the stone back. To the brick wall. And I guess I'll just. Place on the brick wall. I've got my stones. You know. I think I was a weird kid. But yeah. What I was doing. That. In a vague way.

It's a reflection. Of what God. Has done with us. That God looked. From eternity. And saw us in the dirt. As worthless sinners.

And he knew. They're going to hate me. They're going to break my law. They're going to reject me. They'll be festering. In the dirt of their own sin.

And they're going to crucify my son. And he knew that. But in his grace. And his mercy. He looked on you Christian.

And he said. But I choose her. And I choose him. I'm going to take them. Out of the dirt.

[19:16] Out of their sin. And not just dust them off. Under the tap. I'm going to transform them. To be holy. And blameless. This is why God saved us.

This is your purpose. To be purified. In your heart. And your life. And to live a life. Pleasing to God. Now. This will not happen perfectly.

Until Christ returns. And gets rid of all the sin. In the world. But his purpose for you. Has already begun. In part. You.

Are already being sanctified. And so. This is our underlying purpose in life. It's our holiness. So. So you may have many plans in life. Plans for when you're older. Plans for after school. Goals in life. Hopes for your family. Hopes for your children. Hopes for your career.

[20:12] And that may be really great. But this. Is your purpose. That underlies. All those other purposes. This is why you're here today.

This is why God has saved you. To be holy. And blameless. Our sanctification. Our fight with sin. Our strive to lead holier lives.

It can so often seem like. Like the unglorious part. Of the Christian life. Can't it? It can feel embarrassing. Or shameful. But actually. If you're a fight with sin.

It's a really good thing. Now. Let's be clear here. The sin isn't a good thing. That's bad of course. That's why we fight it. But the very fight itself.

That's a part of your purpose. That is God polishing off the dirt. More than that. That is God changing the stone. Into the diamonds. It's why he chose you.

[21:12] But there's one more thing to see. Behind the curtain. Another purpose. And another reason why God saved you. And it's the final thing to see today. That God chose you. To praise his grace.

God chose you to praise his grace. So let's read from verse 5 again with me. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself 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. Here.

Paul takes us deep behind the curtain. He's taking us behind the scenes. And here. We get to glimpse at the director's grand plan. Why the church?

Why did God redeem our people? Why did God choose you? And save you? And sanctify you? Verse 6. So that we would exist.

[22:11] To the praise of his glorious grace. He chose us. He chose us. He chose us. So that we would praise him. For his saving grace.

That is why the church exists. That is why you were predestined. That is why you were saved. That is what all of this is about. This is what the whole plan of redemption was for.

So God would be praised. But did you notice? Paul doesn't say we're chosen for the praise of his glory.

He doesn't say that the church exists to the praise of God's glory in general. Which is true. Please don't get me wrong there. That is absolutely true. It can be more true. God does all things for his glory.

But Paul is more specific than that here. The church exists and you were saved to the praise of his glorious grace. Grace is the thing being praised here.

[23:12] Grace is what we were saved to marvel at. And he's even more specific. Look how verse 6 ends. To the praise of his glorious grace.

The grace we're to praise is found in the beloved. That's Jesus Christ.

The grace we're to praise is the saving grace of Christ. The grace of Christ crucified, buried and raised. We're saved to praise Jesus Christ.

Human history. Adam. Abraham. Israel. The church. Your salvation. Human history. It all happened so that we would praise God for one thing in particular.

Jesus Christ. It all happened so that we would praise Jesus for saving us. So we would marvel at the cross and just think, what a saviour.

[24:15] So we would cry out, hallelujah, Jesus loves me. So we would praise Jesus because he's defeated death and reigns victorious. So we would confess, Jesus, I am a lost sinner without you.

So we would sing to God of how he has saved us in Jesus Christ. This is God's grand plan of redemption. This is God's grand plan of redemption. This is the reason for your existence, Christian.

And this is exactly how our story will end. This is our destination that we were predestined for.

Praising Jesus. Jesus. When Jesus returns and all history reaches its purpose and its climax, what will we be doing?

We'll be praising Jesus Christ. What is sung around the throne of Revelation? Worthy is the lamb's slave. What do the multitudes cry out at the end of time?

Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the lamb. It's the cross of Christ, the suffering saviour, the blood of Jesus, the one who became sin for us, the saviour of the world.

[25:33] We were saved so we would praise God for him. To the praise of his glorious grace. So can you see why gathering together on a Sunday like this is so important?

Can you see why worshipping our God together as his redeemed church should be the number one thing in our lives? Because that's why we're saved.

Or can you see why celebrating the Lord's Supper is so important? In the Lord's Supper we're proclaiming, Jesus I'm lifeless without your body and blood shed for me.

So why did God choose us? Why did he even begin the work of redemption? Or why did God create a church? Why did God save you? Why did God save anyone?

So we would praise him for his glorious grace in Jesus Christ. This is what lies behind the curtain. This is what lies behind the scenes of the church.

[26:42] It is your ultimate purpose in life. And the whole reason for the church, it is all to praise Jesus. Let me pray.