

Citizens & Saints
Why We Worship • Message 1
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Prayer Points for Prayer Time:

- Thank God for choosing you, loving you and calling you His own.
- Pray that God would open your eyes to see the fullness of all you have in Christ.
- Ask God to help you reach those who are searching for identity, purpose and belonging.

Worship Psalm:

Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying."

John 11:25 (NLT)

Scripture Reading:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the 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.

Ephesians 1:3-14 (NIV)

A. Introduction

(Ephesians 1:3)

There is a gap between what we think something is going to be and what it actually is... there is a gap sometimes between expectations and reality...

A child is born- those are sweet moments... there's also a lot of blood, a lot of screaming, a lot of smells.

Marriage- A friend of mine called me after a month of marriage and said, *You never told me it would be this hard...* I said, *I warned you.. no one gets divorced on their honeymoon.*

Africa- Years ago, I went, and I had this expectation of beautiful views, amazing people and wild animals... but when we got there, we stayed at a compound, and it was walled in... we were on lock down to be safe...

But me and another guy befriended some of the guards and said, *Can you secretly take us around and show us the real Africa?*

They said yes... we get in this vehicle and there is like this bench seat... it's the driver, I'm in the middle, and another soldier was beside me. They put their AK-47s on the dashboard, and it had one of those vibes that made you think, *This was the last we ever saw of them...*

But they took us all over Africa. We tasted great food. We went to spots where wild animals were surrounding us... the kind that aren't trying to kill you. We saw some amazing views.

The reason I say this is because, for some people, there is a gap between what they thought faith was going to be and what it actually is...

A lot of people read the Bible and go, *What's wrong? Why don't I have this?* Or maybe you had a season when you were on fire, and now you just feel dry. Or the truth is, for a lot of people, it's not bad, it's not thrilling... it's just good or okay.

Listen, today I want to help close that gap... and that's why we are taking a look at the book of Ephesians.

If you said you weren't a Christian, the first book I would tell you to read is the book of John... to explore who Jesus is and what He is like. The most important question you can answer is, *Who do you say He is?*

The next book I would invite you into is the book of Ephesians... it is a whole world of what life in Christ is like. A journey of what God has invited us into. And that's why we're going through the whole book.

The book of Ephesians has been called a masterpiece, the queen of all the epistles. Martin Lloyd-Jones, one of the great preachers, preached 262 sermons on the book of Ephesians. We aren't going to get quite that many in...

Paul wants you to be thrilled in your faith- that's why he starts off like this...

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Ephesians 1:3 (NIV)

Did you notice the word **praise**? Do you ever think about why we do so much singing at church and why people often sing to celebrate?

People don't get their oil changed and sing songs about it. People don't pay their taxes and do a little ditty. You know where people do sing? When they're drinking a lot at a bar—which I know none of you have ever done—when it's someone's birthday, or when a team wins a big sporting match.

People often sing when they have something to celebrate.

Why so much singing in church? Because Paul wants us to know there is a lot to celebrate... to be thrilled about... and yet, sometimes we don't feel it because there is a gap between what we read in the Bible and what we experience.

In verses 3-14 that we read, it is all one giant sentence. It's like Paul is so excited and overjoyed that he just can't stop talking about God's goodness.

Have you ever seen a kid excited on Christmas morning? ... they don't stop talking. That's the picture of Paul here in Ephesians 1... there is no break... he just keeps speaking about all the blessings and that we are chosen by God.

It's almost comical because you're thinking, *Your grammar teacher would have flunked you, Paul...* but his heart is so overflowing with love.

But when you see what God has done, you become overjoyed by the gift that you have been given.

Why is Paul so fired up? Why is He worth singing about?

Remember it said: He has given us every spiritual blessing.

Blessed us with every spiritual blessing. When you first read that, it may not sound that exciting because it seems like an invisible gift. It's like someone saying, *Hey, I bought you a present... but you can't see it.*

But God wants us to experience these blessings as a reality.

So, what are they?

B. The Blessings We Have in Jesus

1. Chosen.

(Ephesians 1:4a)

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

Ephesians 1:4a (NIV)

Think about when you were chosen for a job—when you got the offer letter, when you were told, *We want you here.*

And yet, a lot of people know what it's like when someone says, *We're going in a different direction, or We're letting you go.*

A lot of people know what it's like to have a boyfriend or girlfriend say, *I choose you*, or to hear the words, *I do*. But a lot of people have also heard someone say, *It's not you, it's me.*

How many of you have broken up with someone through a text message or a letter? Ushers, escort them out.

Many of us know what it's like to have friends choose us, and then to have friends betray us.

Man, it's great to be chosen on this earth. But one of the first things that creates a thrilling faith is when you wake up to the fact that the King of Kings and Lord of Lords has chosen you.

You have been picked by God.

2. Adopted.

(Ephesians 1:4b-6)

... In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Ephesians 1:4b-6 (NIV)

Notice the word *predestined*. Some people use this word in college just to talk about terms like being a Calvinist or Arminian... meaning, do we choose God, or does He choose us?

Don't get caught up in dry theology.

Paul is so moved. He's saying, *What's your destiny? You are predestined to be part of the family of God.*

He has freely adopted us and made us part of His family.

In fact, in the first four books of the New Testament, God is referred to as Father 165 times... isn't that amazing?

But He's not just a generic Father.... He is your Father... and he didn't do it out of obligation...

Notice the words *pleasure* and *will*... at Chick-fil-a, after you order, they will often say, *My_____?*

Like when you go to Chick-fil-a, they will always say, *My pleasure*... and you wonder sometimes, *Is it really your pleasure?*... Its 100 degrees outside and the guy ahead of me was really rude... well, it's God's pleasure to love and serve you.

One of the things I say to my kids all the time is, *If I could pick one little boy or one little blonde-haired girl to be mine...*

Could you imagine if I was like, *If I could line up all the boys and girls, you'd be in my top 10... or, I guess I'd have to choose you...*

Here's the point: God isn't obligated to love you and make you His child.

Notice it says it is His pleasure.

Not like, *OK, I guess I'll save you... I told you guys...*

When Paul sees this, and when you see this, it begins to change how you view the gift that you have received.

3. Redeemed.

(Ephesians 1:7-8)

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding ...

Ephesians 1:7-8 (NIV)

What I find is that there are almost two extremes.

Those who don't feel like they have that much to be forgiven for... they just tend to minimize their mistakes...

They don't feel that bad, so the good news of the gospel doesn't feel that good.

Yet some of us maximize our mistakes and we don't feel like we can be loved or forgiven.

For some of you, the greatest weight you carry is your guilt... shame is like a heavy blanket that rests on you every day...

But here is Paul... a man who murdered someone... and he's barely taking a breath because he's praising God for redemption.

Moses — killed a man.

David — committed adultery and arranged a man's death.

Peter — denied Jesus.

Jonah — ran away from God's command.

Abraham — struggled with lying.

Rahab — was a prostitute.

Jacob — deceived his father and brother.

Samson — struggled with purity.

Solomon — turned to idol worship later in life.

Noah — struggled with drunkenness.

Paul's going, *I don't care who you are... you are redeemed.*

Redemption is about the situation we got pulled out of... adoption is about the family we got pulled into.

4. Know God's will.

(Ephesians 1:9-10. C/R: Romans 12:2)

Now, I saw this and thought it was too good not to show...

(show picture: understanding women/ understanding men)

Now, one of the top things I hear as a pastor is, *How do I know God's will?*

Well, think about this... Paul says one of the spiritual blessings is that we can... we can know God's will.

He made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

Ephesians 1:9-10 (NIV)

He goes on to talk about this in verses 11-12 as well...

In the Old Testament, people didn't have the knowledge of God or intimacy with Him... God's voice was more rare... but now, as followers of Jesus, we can know His voice...

And some of you go, *Why is it so hard to hear God?...*

Because every room you walk in, there are three wills that are speaking to you...

One of the greatest ways to increase God's voice in your life is to study His Word and live under His Word.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:2 (NIV)

The word *conform* in Greek is the word for mold... think if you are pouring concrete, you first create a mold that is shaped... so to know God's will, we first need the word of God to be our mold... meaning you can't step outside of God's word and hear His voice...

5. Spirit.

(Ephesians 1:13)

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit ...

Ephesians 1:13 (NIV)

2 things a seal did:

1.) Mark of ownership.

People would put their brand or their stamp to show who it belonged to. What is one of the first words kids learn? Mine. This is God's way of saying you are His. You don't belong to sin, death, shame, or darkness...

2.) Verification of authenticity.

Show a young person who hasn't seen it before... actual money... back in the day, this is how you paid for stuff... no Apple Pay or Venmo... but when you pay with an actual bill people will often check to make sure it's not counterfeit.

"But in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don't, the Advocate won't come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you."

John 16:7 (NLT)

When Jesus is getting ready to go to heaven, He says, *It is better that He goes*. How could He mean that?

Because here's what He's saying: the Spirit inside of you is better than having Jesus beside you.

Think about it. You get in your car. You go to work. You go home. You're awake at night.

Through the highs and the lows, the Spirit is with you.

A young kid at church once said, *Is Jesus with you all the time?* I said, *Yeah*. He said, *Even in the bathroom?*

I said, *Yeah*. He went, *Oh...*

But don't let this slip past you: He will never leave you or forsake you. In the good times and the bad, He's there.

6. Inheritance.

(Ephesians 1:14)

Who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 1:14 (NIV)

Arrabōn — a deposit, pledge, more is coming later.

Think of an engagement ring. It shows commitment, but you aren't married yet. In the same way, God has shown His commitment to us by giving us His Spirit. He has promised us eternity with Him, but we aren't there yet.

Charles Spurgeon was once visiting a woman who was living in a rundown house, and she had no money. While he was visiting her, he noticed a framed document hanging on the wall. It was a paper given to her by a wealthy man she had cared for before he died.

As he looked closer, he actually found that it was the man's signed will, leaving his estate and all of his money to her... She was living in poverty, unaware that she had an inheritance...

You have been promised peace, love, grace, wisdom, eternal life, joy, victory, strength, guidance, power, mercy, forgiveness, righteousness, truth, fellowship with God, and spiritual discernment.

And that's why Paul is so excited. He doesn't even take a breath. But then he ends by saying, *And one day you will receive your eternal inheritance.*

God has given you all of this now but just imagine the glory and the inheritance that awaits you in heaven.

Scarcity... this woman had an inheritance and never claimed it.

In the same way, you can have these blessings right in front of you and never really claim them.

Show List:

Chosen

Adopted — You're a joy to God. It is His pleasure to know you and call you His own.

Redeemed — You really are forgiven.

Know God's will — You can hear Him speak. Get in His Word. Spend time in prayer.

Spirit

Inheritance