

Series: Every Spiritual Blessing // Ephesians 1:3-14

Passage: Ephesians 1:3-4

Big Idea: We have been blessed by God by being chosen by God to be holy and blameless

Aim: For people to

- a) give praise to God for his grace in Choosing some
- b) commit themselves to live as a chosen person

Structure:

- Praise Be to God (3a)
- Who Has blessed us (3b)
- In Choosing us (4a)
- To Live as His (4b)
- Well, Advent and Christmas is over so now we head into our summer series.
- We usually try to do something a little bit lighter and easier throughout this time as a lot of people are away,
- But this year, we are going to be looking at Ephesians 1:3-14 which isn't exactly light and easy but it's not going to be a hard slog either.
- Hopefully, it's going to be super encouraging as we launch into the new year.
- These opening verses of Paul's letter to the Ephesians picks up some really cool set of beliefs or doctrines that Paul will expand on throughout this book and ideas that are central to our faith.
- So before we get to the passage, there are 3 things that I find cool (because I'm nerdy like that) and that will help put this passage into context:
  - 1, Ephesians is a book written by Paul when he was in jail (for preaching the Christian message and causing an uproar among the people).
    - Not a jail with TV and nice food and stuff.
    - But imagine Paul dictating this because his hands and feet are in stocks.
  - 2, as we go through this passage together, notice the number of times Paul mentions, "In Christ" or "in him" or "in the beloved"
    - When phrases are repeated like this, it tells us to take notice of it!
    - It's important and we will see why soon
  - 3, this whole section from Verses 3-12 is one massive, long sentence in the original greek
    - It's as if Paul is just so excited and is writing these really cool things and just can't bring himself to stop!
    - So I feel like I want us all to try and say it in one breath! But I won't..
- And Over these next few weeks, we will see what Get's Paul excited;
- Specifically how we as Christians are spiritually blessed in every way by God by being
  - Chosen

- Adopted
- Redeemed
- Informed, and
- Sealed by him
- And we will explore these beliefs and how they impact the way we live our lives here and now.
  
- So let's ask God for help before we have this passage read to us...
  
- Now, this is a photo of me when our family first arrived in Noosa at the end of 2009.
- You may not be able to tell, but back when I was in school, I wasn't the most athletic child.
- So one of my least favourite subjects was physical education.
  - Being more of a fan of Music....Running around and getting all hot and sweaty was not exactly my forte
  - But one of the parts of PE was playing some kind of sport that involved two teams.
- This would usually be done by there being two selected captains who then began to choose from their classmates standing in front of them one at a time.
  - First, the really sporty people would be picked
  - Then, the captains mates
  - And Then, often, just me.
    - Not even chosen
    - I'd just be the one who goes to the the team of the captain who was next to select
  - Fortunately, there hasn't been any mental scarring from those times
  - BUT; we all like to feel 'wanted' don't we?
    - We all like to feel valued or validated
    - We all want like to be 'chosen'
- And here's the great news that we are going to explore today.
- That we as christians have been Chosen by God
  - Not by a human person, but God
- Here is where we are headed:
  - Praise Be to God (3a)
  - Who Has blessed us (3b)
  - In Choosing us (4a)
  - To Live as His (4b)

- Remember the context of Paul being in Prison?
    - Well, even though he's in the stocks, Paul writes:
      - "Praise be to the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ"
  - This is where Paul begins this big, long sentence. With Praise to God.
  - Why? What reason does Paul have to praise God?
  - Well because, Because everything begins with God!
    - All creation begins with God
    - Jesus our saviour is sent and comes from God
    - And Everything that we will see in the next weeks comes from God
      - The blessings that we receive are incredible!
  - But it all begins with God who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
    - **He** is the one who is to be truly **praised**
    - **He** is the one who we should be **living for**
  - Praise Be to God
  - Who Has blessed us -> *we're going to slow down here!*
- 
- Now this magnificent, creator God who is to be praised and blessed, has blessed us... his creations!
    - So, V3
    - "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ."
      - Now I've changed the word order there slightly to be closer to the greek at that point, because it flows better
  - So God who is blessed or praised, has blessed us!
    - Now we don't really use this word, "Bless" or "Blessed" in everyday language unless someone sneezes.
      - And even then, I'm not too sure that we know what we're really saying.
    - However, here, it means that God has given us some kind of benefit or favour or gift.
  - And what benefit have we received from God?
    - Well, every single spiritual blessing.
      - Now in the OT; before Jesus, God promised blessings to his people (who he chose), the Israelites.
      - These blessings were usually material, like land, wealth, children, good harvest and so on.
    - However, **we** now receive blessings that are **spiritual**;
      - this isn't to say that we won't receive any physical blessings EVER but that isn't what Paul is talking about here

- And these spiritual blessings include amazing things such as
  - the gift of the Holy Spirit,
  - a knowledge of God and forgiveness of our sins..
- But also these things that we are going see in the next weeks!
  - Our chosenness
  - Our adoption
  - Our redemption
  - And Our assurance of salvation!
- These are all spiritual blessings which occur in the spiritual realm.
  - Blessings which occur in ways that we can't necessarily touch or feel.
- They will have physical implications in how we live our lives in response to these blessings, BUT these aren't physical blessings.
  - *You can't touch or feel the emotion of the love of a spouse or a close friend*
  - *BUT the knowledge of and reception of the benefits of that love, has some physical affect on the way you would live in relation to that person*
- Likewise we can't feel or touch these spiritual blessings from God,
  - But This doesn't mean they don't affect the way we live our physical lives here on earth.
- Because these blessings are real and amazing gifts of God.
- **And** because these are gifts of God, this means that:
  - **He** is the instigator of all these things
  - **He** is the one who gives these gifts
  - **We** do nothing to earn these gifts.
- And **we receive** them only because of Christ.
  - Those who are "In Christ" or who are on Jesus team, or have come to live with Jesus as Lord, will receive these spiritual blessings.
  - Because of our relationship with Christ, and our union with him.
  - And we'll pick this up later again.
- So Because of these things,
  - Praise Be to God (3a)
  - Who Has blessed us (3b)
  - In Choosing us (4a)
    - *Now unlike me in my not-so-glorious PE days, we have been chosen by God to be his.*
- And we aren't chosen because we are lovely, or good people.

- But we are only chosen because of God's love and goodness in choosing us
  - So, from V4, "For he chose us in him [in Christ] before the creation of the world"
- Now this idea of God choosing people or a people is not new here in Ephesians.
- God has been doing it all throughout the OT
- In fact, this same greek word for 'choose' was used in the Greek Old Testament for God choosing individual people AND Israel
- So, just like God has chosen us,
  - God Chose Abraham
  - God Chose Moses
  - God Chose David and
  - God chose the nation of Israel, not because they were great and not because of anything that these people had done, but because God is gracious.
    - Deuteronomy 7 :7 It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and **chose** you, for you were the fewest of all peoples,
- So, God chooses individuals and people all together, throughout the whole Bible; for his glory alone
- And here, Paul writes that God has chosen US
  - Yes, those who have faith in Jesus Christ have been chosen by God, for himself.
- And he chooses us as his people and as individuals "In Christ".
- It is only because of the work of Jesus through his life, death and resurrection can we be chosen.
  - Because Christ is the link between us and God
  - Without Him, there can be no choosing or salvation.
- So Paul Continues,
- And I want you to read aloud with me the beginning of v4
  - "For he chose us, in him, **before the creation of the world**"
- Before we were born,
- before Jesus was born,
- before the foundations of the world were laid,
- **God. Chose. You.**
- Now I'm going to repeat that sentence because to me, this is mind-blowing and I always need a couple of minutes to digest it.
- Before the foundations of the world were laid, **God. Chose. You.**

- So, because God has chosen us before we existed, this has some implications
- This means, that **we have done absolutely nothing**, to earn God's favour Because, it was before we existed that God **chose us**
  - Before we had any chance to try and 'win' God over, **he chose us**
  - We do absolutely **nothing** to earn our salvation because **we were chosen** for salvation before we were born
  - It is only because of God
    - in his **graciousness**,
    - in his **love**,
    - in his **kindness**,
    - And in his **sovereignty**, that he has chosen us to be his people.
      - *Now, if you're an English teacher, please turn off your grammar brain because this next part isn't going to be pretty*
- This also means that once we have been chosen, we can't become 'un-chosen'
  - Because God is faithful to his word, since we are chosen and know of our 'chooseness', we never will and never can be 'un-chosen'
  - If we were able to 'loose' our 'chooseness' then that would put some part of our chooseness in our hands!
    - And since we are human-beings and stuff up constantly, then we would loose our chooseness if we could!
  - But since we can't loose our chooseness this means,
    - We don't have to **fear** loosing our chooseness
    - We don't have to **panic** or dwell on our sin
    - We don't have to **dwell** on the things on this earth because we have been chosen for greater things than this
- Because...God has chosen us...
  - Has secured us.
  - And he will never take that away from us.
- And because God has Chosen us by his grace,
  - We **give thanks** to God
  - we **worship** God,
  - We **rest** in his assurance
  - We **devote** our lives to him
- Because he is a loving and gracious God, who chooses sinful people like you and me to be in relationship with him.

- Now this belief or doctrine of some being chosen and others not, isn't always popular in and out of church circles.
- It is difficult thing for us to wrap our heads around and we will never fully be able to understand God's mind...because he's God and we are not!
- And this will probably raise a number of questions if this is your first time hearing about this!
- One of the questions that people may have is
  - "Didn't I choose God when I first became a Christian"?
  - Well the answer is, yes you did! And I thank God for that!
  - However, you could only come to God because he first chose you to be his.
  - When we turn to Christ, and initially repent and make a choice to follow him, it is only because God has chosen us first.
    - If we make that choice **only** by ourselves, without God, then that would make the act of us choosing a part of our salvation.
  - BUT we add nothing to our salvation.
  - It's only by God's grace.
- Another question that people ask is:
  - "Am I Chosen?" "How do I know I'm Chosen?"
  - If you have come to a place of real grief about your sin,
  - And if you have come to put your faith and trust in Jesus, knowing that he has dealt with your sin,
    - if you long to live for God,
  - Then you are chosen by God
    - Because you can't do these things without the Holy Spirit which is given by God
  - And nothing can take this away
- Another Question people ask is:
- "If I'm chosen, then why do I bother not trying to sin if I can't loose it??"
  - And I'm glad they asked, because this is a great segue into our last point
    - Praise Be to God
    - Who Has blessed us
    - In Choosing us
    - To Live as His
  - *Now my Christmas Day here in Noosa was pretty normal. Presents, church, lunch and family time*
  - *However, if i was **chosen** to play in the Boxing Day Test, my Christmas Day would look pretty different. Train, family, train, lunch and some family all in Melbourne.*

- *The players have been chosen for a purpose and it makes a difference in how they live.*
- Our chosenness by God doesn't mean that we can go and do whatever we want
- RATHER, our chosenness means that we should go and do whatever God wants!
  - So V4,
  - "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world [why? **in order**] to be holy and blameless in his sight."
- That is the reason for our election by God
  - That when Jesus comes back and we stand before the throne of God...
    - we will not be condemned because we will be holy and blameless
    - We will be pure, and without spot
  - So we won't face the judgement of God on that day
- BUT ALSO, this process of becoming holy happens and occurs in the here and now.
  - So, since we have been chosen by God, we should live as chosen people
    - We live the way he wants us to live
    - We live with him as king over our lives
    - We ask God to **help** us live as chosen people
    - And, we constantly turn back to God and repent of not living with him as Lord over our lives
  - Because we have been chosen for something so much better than what this world has to offer.
- So:
  - Praise Be to God
  - Who Has blessed us
  - In Choosing us
  - To Live as His
- We begin with praising God because everything begins with him
- We praise him because he has given us each and every spiritual blessing that we have received.
  - Every single one comes from the hand of God, as a free gift from God
- Including him choosing us before anything was created
  - We do nothing to earn our choosing
  - AND We can never lose our chosenness
    - He chose us before we even knew about him
    - Yes, we respond to his calling but that is all we do

- And we are chosen to live as his
  - We will be completely without blemish and clean before God when he comes again
  - BUT until that day, we live as chosen people
    - People who praise God
    - People who live with him as king
- Because we have been chosen by him before the foundations of the earth