

## Who Are You?

### Ephesians 1

3 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.

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

5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will--

6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace

8 that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

9 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,

10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment--to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

11 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,

12 in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

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

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

### **Prayer**

Last night I asked a few of you, "What makes New Covenant Baptist Church special to you?" And you gave some great answers. You have a church that loves one another. Your church is a real family where you can feel at home. Your church is full of people who long for the truth of God's Word. You are faithful to the Lord, to His Holy Word and to one another. I commend you for these things. I can see that God has truly been at work here.

It is important to know who you are, because who you are determines what you do. Who are you?

An old Native American legend tells about a brave who found an eagle's egg and put it into the nest of a turkey. The eaglet hatched with the brood of turkeys and grew up with them. All his life, the changeling eagle, thinking he was a turkey, did what the turkeys did. He scratched in the dirt for seeds and insects to eat. He clucked and gobbled. And at times he flew, but only in a brief thrashing of wings

and flurry of feathers no more than a few feet off the ground. After all, that's how turkeys are supposed to fly. Time went by and the changeling eagle grew very old. One day, he saw a magnificent bird far above him in the cloudless sky. Hanging with graceful majesty on the powerful wind currents, it soared with scarcely a beat of its strong golden wings. **"What a beautiful bird!"** said the changeling eagle to his neighbor. **"What is it?"** **"That's an eagle -- the chief of birds,"** the neighbor gobbled. **"But don't give it a second thought. You could never be like him."** So the changeling eagle never gave it another thought. And he lived and died thinking he was a turkey.

Let me ask you a question. Do you know who you are?

And you might be thinking, "What do you mean preacher? Of course I know who I am—go ahead ask me my name!" But stop for a moment. I'm not just asking what people call you or what family you were born into. Neither am I asking what your occupation is or what your hobbies are. I am asking, "Who are YOU?" What is your identity?

Like the eagle in that story, there are a lot of people in this world suffering from an "Identity Crisis." And the sad fact is that this disorder afflicts not only those outside the church, but it afflicts some Christians as well. Some believers in Jesus are really confused as to who they are in Christ. And when you get enough of these confused believers together, you have a church with an identity crisis.

One of the problems with the many churches today is that we have become so molded by the world that we really don't know who we are in Christ. We see ourselves as turkeys while God sees us as eagles! We have been conditioned to think, talk and act like turkeys. We have an identity crisis. And the problem with that is when we don't know who we are, we don't know what to do.

Ephesians is a wonderful book because in it the Spirit of God shows us our true identity so that we can get out of the turkey coop and soar... like eagles. I love what the prophet Isaiah says, **"But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles."** (Isaiah 40:31).

The letter of Paul to the Ephesians is divided into two sections. Chapters 1-3 are doctrinal. Paul tells us who we are. Chapters 4-6 are practical. Paul teaches us how to live. Now before we dive into this scripture, here is the major truth I want you to get a hold of today: ***Being precedes doing.*** Or as Pastor Ronnie Floyd puts it, **"Who you are is more important than what you do."**

Paul does teach us how to live, what to do, later in this letter. But before he gets there he needs us to understand who we are in Christ, because who you are is more important than what you do. The reason why it's more important is that what we do depends on who we are. How can I ever soar like an eagle if I still think I am a turkey?

Who are you?

We are going to see from Ephesians 1:3-14 who we are in Christ. I don't have time to cover this scripture in detail this morning, so I am going to hit three highlights of the text. Here I learn that in Jesus Christ, I am chosen lovingly, redeemed graciously, and secure eternally.

## 1. We are Chosen Lovingly. (Eph. 1:3-6)

Paul plainly says that God "**chose us**." This verse and others like it have sparked theological debates for centuries. Most of us have difficulty reconciling the fact that God "**chose us**" because in order to be saved, we also choose Him. Let's quickly look at both truths.

The Bible clearly teaches that man must make a choice to be saved. Jesus and others called for people to repent and trust in the Lord. Romans 10:13 says, "**For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.**" We are commanded in Mk.16:15 "**to preach the gospel to every creature.**" Evangelism is all about helping men choose Christ.

At the same time, the Bible clearly teaches that God chooses us first. Jesus said in John 6:44, "**No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.**"

The Bible teaches that God has sovereignly chosen those who would be saved *and* it teaches that people must choose God in order to be saved. This is a great mystery that we accept by faith. It's like this: when I share the good news of Jesus Christ with someone and invite them to make that choice to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, I invite them to come through the door of faith. Paul describes how we come through the door of salvation down in verse 13, "**In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.**" (Eph 1:13 NKJV) So Paul is clear that people put their trust in Jesus Christ after hearing and believing the truth of the gospel.

That is how they enter the door of salvation. And as they look at it from their point of view the door has a sign above it that says, in the words of Revelation 22:17 "**Whosoever will, may come.**"

And so they make that choice. They come to Jesus and trust in Him to save them. And as they step through that door into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, they can look back, and on the other side above the door is a sign that reads, "**Chosen . . . before the foundation of the world.**"

A young boy went to Sunday School for the first time, and returning home, his mother asked him, "Did you find God?"

The boy answered, "No, but he found me."

We don't find God, He finds us. We do not save ourselves. We cannot. We were dead. Look down to chapter 2 verse 1. Paul says, "**As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,**" (Eph 2:1 NIV). Now as a preacher, I have done quite a few funerals. I have looked at quite a few dead bodies. I have never seen one that could bring itself back to life. You see without Jesus we are not just in need of a makeover—we need LIFE. And that is what Jesus gives, life. Look at Ephesians 2:4, "**But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),**" {Eph. 2:4-5 NKJV}. That's why God takes the initiative. That's why Jesus came to "**seek and to save that which was lost.**" That's why God must choose us, because dead people can't make themselves alive.

And that makes me ask, why would God choose me? It is simple because of His love. He chose you lovingly. Both Ephesians 1:4 and 2:4 tell us it was love. Notice the end of verse 4 the words are, **“in love.”** This ties into verse 5. God loves us so much that He not only lovingly chose us, but **“in love”** He chose us to be in His family. His plan is that all who are in Christ are adopted as His children. We are accepted completely into His forever family. What more loving act could God do for us?

Who are you? You are chosen lovingly to be accepted completely in to God's family. You are a child of God, born again by His Spirit, adopted into His forever family.

What if we in the church really started living like we were children of our heavenly Father?

Our Heavenly Father is rich beyond measure. Our Father is more powerful than you can imagine. Our Father has all wisdom and all knowledge. Our Father is glorious! And as His child, God has blessed you. Verse 3 says He has **“blessed us in the heavenlies with every spiritual blessing in Christ.”**

Psalms 84 says, **“No good thing will He withhold From those who walk uprightly.”** (Psa 84:11 NKJV)

In verse 11 and verse 14 it says that because we are children of God we have obtained an inheritance.

I love the old song by Dallas Holm called “Bloodline.” Listen to the words of this song,

This coat I have around me's not the finest,  
But it keeps me from the wind.  
I look into my pocket there's no silver,  
But I've got some golden friends.  
And I have a promise that one day,  
Things are bound to change.  
When I walk across that river,  
To a home in a land where Jesus reigns.  
Things we hold so precious now,  
Will suddenly one day fade away.  
When we look into the sky and hear the calling,  
On that resurrection day.  
When the least shall have the most and  
Those with the most shall find it's they that have the least.  
When He calls us to be seated at His table,  
For that royal wedding feast.  
I'm an heir to someone who will give me everything.  
I've been born in the bloodline of the King.

Who am I? I am chosen lovingly to be in God's family.

## **2. We are Redeemed Graciously. (Eph. 1:7-12).**

**“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace...”** (Verse 7).

Look at that word "**redemption**." This word goes back to the time when there was slavery. In Paul's day, the Roman Empire had some 6 million slaves. There were slave markets everywhere. If a person wanted to free a slave, maybe a relative or a friend, he had to be willing to pay a ransom price, to redeem that slave or buy the slave's freedom.

In a sense, all human beings were slaves. We were all slaves to sin. Jesus said in John 8:34, "**Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.**" Romans 7:14 says we were all "**sold under sin.**"

If we are to be set free from sin's slavery, someone has to pay the price. What is the price? Is it following the Ten Commandments? Is it trying to be a good person? Is it going to church or being baptized? No. Here is the price: Death. Rom.6:23 says the "**wages [value, price] of sin is death.**" Sin is a terrible master, it demands a terrible price for freedom.

But praise God! Someone has paid that death penalty for us. Jesus did it on the cross. Verse 7 says that our "**redemption**" is "**through His blood**," His death.

The only person who could pay that price is Jesus. Every other human is tainted with sin. Ephesians 2:3 says, "**All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.**" (Eph 2:3 NIV)

But Jesus was sinless. And because Jesus is fully God and fully man, only He could redeem us. Only Jesus could buy us from sin's slave market and set us free.

Redemption means that God has forgiven our sins. How much has God forgiven us? Look at 1:7 again. We are forgiven "**according to the riches of His grace that He lavished on us...**"

In the 1930's, millionaire John D. Rockefeller used to dress up in a suit and a top hat and have his picture taken giving some poor boy a dime. To a child, a dime was a lot of money in those days. It was more than most boys could earn in a day. But even so, the most that could be said of Rockefeller is that he was giving OUT of the abundance of his riches.

However, if he had gone to one of those boys and purchased for him a mansion in the country or given him a million dollar trust fund then it could be said that he was giving ACCORDING TO his riches.

God could have saved us OUT of the riches of His grace. But He didn't. He did something better. Our salvation was "ACCORDING TO the riches of His grace."

Max Anders says it this way: "God forgives every one of our sins. Period. Past, present, future. All. Not a few, but all. Not some, but all. Not most, but all. All. When God created the world, your sins were in the future. He created the world anyway. When Jesus died on the cross, all your sins were in the future. Jesus died for you anyway. When you were in the womb, all your sins were in the future. God gave you life anyway. There is nothing you have ever done or can ever do that will surprise an omniscient God. And there is nothing you have ever done or can ever do that will earn your acceptance with God. That acceptance comes only through Christ. There is nothing we can do to enhance it, there is

nothing we can do to detract from it, because it depends on Christ, not on us" (Anders, pp.36-37).

Who are you? You are redeemed. You are set free. You are forgiven.

### 3. We Are Secure Eternally (Eph. 1:13-14)

Kathy and I had been married for 14 years before we had the opportunity to buy a house. We were tired of paying rent and wanted to purchase our own home. Several times before we had tried to buy a house but it did not work out. We had looked at house after house. Finally, we found just what we were looking for. The location was close to the church. And by a miracle of God we qualified for home loan. We were ecstatic! We would soon be homeowners! Everything was great. Then came time to sign the contract. Along with the contract, we had to sign a check. That check represented our earnest money, money we had worked hard to save. Signing that check meant we were serious. It meant that buying that house had moved from the subjective state to the objective state. It became real.

Many of you have had that same "sign on the dotted line" experience. At some point, the rubber must hit the road. So far in this scripture God has promised believers so many blessings. We are chosen lovingly to be adopted into God's family, we are redeemed graciously with our sins forgiven, and we are fitted perfectly into God's plan for this world to bring all things together in Christ. Along with these, the Bible describes hundreds of other promises and blessings from God. How do we know they are true? It all seems so subjective. How do we know God is earnest?

The truth is, we need to know. If God really means all this, then there are astounding ramifications. We need to know for sure. We need more than just academic, intellectual understanding. We need experiential truth based in reality, not just something in our head, but something in our hearts as well.

Here's the good news. We can know for sure. We can know that God's promises are true because He too has signed on the dotted line. We know His promises are true because He has given us His Holy Spirit as "**the guarantee of our inheritance.**" God has given us the down payment. And that down payment guarantees God will give us the rest.

When we believe verse 13 says we are "**sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.**" The presence of the living God comes to dwell right here in my heart when I trust Jesus to save me. He is God's earnest money for our inheritance. He is the guarantee of our salvation. You can be sure!

Fanny Crosby said it well in the old hymn,

"Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine, oh what a foretaste of glory divine  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of His Spirit, Washed in His blood  
This is my story, this is my song, Praising my Savior all the day long!"

Who am I? I am sure of all of God's promises. I am sealed with the Holy Spirit. I am secure eternally. And so like Fanny Crosby, I am praising my Savior all the day long. Three times in this short passage it says we are to be for the "**praise of His glory.**"

Everything I am and everything I do is for the praise of the glory of God through Jesus my Savior. I am chosen lovingly to be in God's family—to the praise of His glory! I am redeemed graciously, forgiven freely and fitted into God's plan perfectly—to the praise of His glory! I am sealed by His Spirit so I am secure eternally—to the praise of His glory!

Don't you see that it is true? Who you are is more important than what you do. Don't you see how it would change the way we live and the way we do church if we really started soaring like the eagles God has made us to be rather than just scratching around in the dust like a bunch of turkeys? You see a church is not just something that we attend. It is who we are, the family of God, loved and forgiven, free and secure.

So because of who God is and who He has made us to be, we cannot think small as a church. God and His plans for us are bigger than we can imagine. Look at Ephesians 3:20. After Paul so wonderfully describes who we are in Christ He gives praise to God saying, **"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us."**

Did you see it? God is able to do more than we could ask or imagine. And He does it by His power, through US!

What could you imagine God could do through us? I could imagine that God could use this church to reach your lost family members and friends-- but if I could imagine that, God is able to do more. I could imagine that He could use this church to share the good news of Jesus with every family in this valley—God is able to do more. I could imagine this church sending out missionaries all around the world—God is able to do more! I could imagine God using this church to begin a revival that sweeps our nation—God is able to do more through His power that is at work within us. God can turn turkeys into eagles.

Remember Isaiah 40:31 says, **"But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles."** I'm going to give you an opportunity to wait on the Lord this morning. If you are here this morning and you know that you have never trusted in Jesus to give you new life--This is your opportunity to let God save you. God is calling you. He is choosing you. Will you choose Him this morning? Quit scratching around in the turkey coop of your sin and let Jesus transform you so that you soar like an eagle. That's who God made you to be.