

Text: Ephesians 1:3-14

Meaning: Paul shared the blessings we have in Christ.

Big Idea: We are blessed in Christ

Objective: I want the hearers to understand their identity in Christ and respond with lives of worship

Theme: Blessings

EXCLUSIVITY OF CHRIST

Co-Exist Bumper Sticker ILLUSTRATION

Two truths to the Co-exist bumper sticker:

1. WE DO CO-EXIST

We are all humans living on this earth together, all created in God's image in search of meaning and purpose in this life.

2. WE SHOULD CO-EXIST

One big idea behind the bumper sticker is that we should live in peaceful relations with one another. This should always be the case, although it has been elusive to us ever since the fall of mankind.

However, there is also a **FALLACY** to this bumper sticker.

The fallacy is **THAT SOME TRUTH GREATER THAN ANY ONE RELIGION EXISTS**. It is a promotion of **SECULAR HUMANISM**, which says truth is in the eye of the beholder. In other words there is no one religion that holds the truth, they all hold some semblance of the truth and we all are basically going in the same direction.

However, this is not the case. The question is which religion is true.

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

JESUS is the only WAY TO GOD!

JESUS is the only source of TRUTH ABOUT GOD!

It's only through JESUS that we receive the LIFE OF GOD!

Jesus declared Himself exclusively to be God and that there is no other.

In Ephesians 1 Paul talks about the exclusivity of Christ, and specifically all the incredible blessings we receive when we submit to Christ as King over our life and begin a relationship with Him.

READ EPHESIANS 1:3-14

The key phrase here is the phrase "in Him"

In this passage Paul says God the Father has blessed us with EVERY SPIRITUAL BLESSING in the heavenly places in Christ! He goes on to articulate in great detail what some of those incredible blessings are:

By the way, this gets at the heart of our identity in Christ. So, this passage does an amazing job of answering the question: WHO AM I IN CHRIST?

In our culture we are in an all out identity war! We argue about gender identity, sexual identity, racial identity, political identity, geographical identity....you name it and we argue about it in this culture!

The good news is that in Christ the dividing wall of hostility has been broken down and He has brought us together in Christ! Now, we don't measure people or judge people based on the world's identifiers. We see the world either as in Christ or not yet in Christ.

For those of us in Christ there are some incredible blessings:

1. WE ARE CHOSEN

Paul writes here and says the God the Father CHOSE US IN CHRIST before the foundation of the world. He goes on to say that He PREDESTINED us to ADOPTION as SONS.

Predestination

PREDESTINATION – GREEK WORD PROORISAS

Root word – Horizo – where we get our word Horizon

Literally carries the idea of setting a boundary. So, What Paul is saying here is the God put the boundaries around salvation before the foundation of the world. What was that boundary? Was it specific people that were chosen out for salvation or was it broader than that?

Keep in mind that Paul is writing here to Gentile believers in Ephesus, in fact, the church at Ephesus was considered to leading gentile megachurch in New Testament days. Paul himself pastored this congregation for 2 years making it his longest stint at any one church. Paul speaks in the PLURAL here to this group of Gentiles are and tells them they were just as much the rightful chosen ones as the Jewish Christians were.

The point He is driving home in this discussion about predestination is that THE GENTILE BELIEVERS WERE CHOSEN FOR SALVATION FROM THE VERY BEGINNING JUST LIKE THE JEWS WERE. As Paul says here in verse 10 God has now UNITED ALL THINGS TOGETHER IN CHRIST.

Ephesians 3:6

This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Romans chapters 9-11 go into this in great detail, how God chose out the people of Israel to be His light in the world, but they denied Jesus, so there is a partial hardening now among the Jews so that the fullness of the church age will come in.

In essence what Paul is doing in Ephesians chapter 1 is WIDENING THE NET OF SALVATION. He's BROADENING THE REACH OF THE GOSPEL NOT LIMITING IT!

What He is saying is that the gospel is for JEWS AND GENTILES, for anyone who will SUBMIT TO CHRIST AND RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT. It's for ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH!

BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD, AND BEFORE THE FALL OF MANKIND – GOD ALREADY HAD A PLAN FOR THE REDEMPTION OF SINNERS! In His perfect omniscience He knew we would fall away so He made a way.

SO DOES GOD CHOOSE US OR DO WE CHOOSE GOD?
THE ANSWER TO BOTH IS YES!

Adoption

In ancient Rome, adoption had a powerful meaning. When a child was born biologically, the parents had the option of disowning the child for a variety of reasons. The relationship, therefore, was not necessarily desired by the parent, nor permanent.

Not so, however, if a child was adopted. In Rome, adopting a child meant that child was freely chosen by the parents, desired by the parents. It also meant that child would be a permanent part of the family; parents couldn't disown a child they adopted.

An adopted child received a new identity. Any prior commitments, responsibilities and debts were erased. New rights and responsibilities were taken on. Also, in ancient Rome, the concept of inheritance was part of life, not something that began at death. Being adopted made someone an heir to their father, joint-sharers in all his possessions and fully united to him.

PLAYGROUND ILLUSTRATION

When I think about choosing I think about the playground at school growing up. Whenever we wanted to play basketball or football at recess two team captains would go through the group and pick teams. They picked based on their own preference. Some people believe this is what God did before the world began. That He chose who would be on His team based solely by His own preferential grace and left all the others to die in their sin.

Church, I don't see this type of Jesus when I read the Scripture. I see a John 3:16 Jesus who said,

FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONE AND ONLY SON THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE.

I believe a better way to view predestination is to view Jesus as the ultimate team captain standing on the playground saying, "Anyone and everyone can be on my team – ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS FOLLOW ME!"

Adrian Rogers – we don't know who the elect are so I say we NOMINATE THEM ALL!

2. WE ARE REDEEMED

Secondly, Paul says here we are REDEEMED.

Redeemed – GREEK means to set a captive free. It paints the picture of a slave who was under the ownership and control of one master who was purchased by another then released from his slavery.

It also carries the idea of one who was living under the oppressive rule of a dictatorial Kingdom, but then was liberated by another conquering Kingdom.

Scripture says that we are born in sin, prisoners to our own shame and to the devil himself. But through the blood of His cross, Christ defeated sin and when we turn to Him He rescues us and frees us from the tyranny of the devil. I am transferred from the Kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God's beloved son, and one day the very presence of sin will be removed from this world and God's children will enjoy forever our eternal liberation in Christ.

No matter what is going on around me – I AM LIBERATED NOW! I AM A CHILD OF THE KING AND A CITIZEN OF HEAVEN – AND I CAN ENJOY THE FREEDOM OF GOD'S KINGDOM NOW IN MY HEART AND TOGETHER WITH GOD'S CHURCH EVEN AS THE WORLD PINES AWAY IN SIN

Forgiveness

Our redemption in Christ also includes FORGIVENESS of our trespasses. This means the guilt we incurred has been TAKEN AWAY. LIFE IS DIVIDED INTO THREE TENSES – PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE. In Christ our PAST is FORGIVEN. In that Kingdom analogy our traitorous crimes of sin have been done away with! So, LEAVE THE PAST IN THE PAST. DON'T LET THE PAST AFFECT YOUR PRESENT AND THEREBY RUIN YOUR FUTURE!

We may be the PRODUCTS of our past, but we don't have to be PRISONERS TO IT! Because of the grace of Christ and His shed blood today CAN BE DIFFERENT and TOMORROW CAN BE SECURE!

Riches of His Grace

And all this is according to the RICHES OF HIS GRACE which He LAVISHED UPON US. The Word lavished speaks of ABUNDANCE in the original language, and it's in the AORIST tense – which means it all happened at salvation. I don't do anything to earn it. I'm not expected to keep it. He has lavished all this upon us in Christ and because of Christ.

September 13, 2004 – ORPAH WINFREY 276 CAR GIVEAWAY

On September 13, 2004 Oprah came on her talk show and gave away a new Pontiac G6 to every member of the studio audience. I can still see her yelling, "You get a car, and you get a car, and you get a car!" as she ran around the front of the room.

Beloved, our God has given us a extravagant gift, and it's infinitely better than a new car – IT'S CALLED GRACE!

Today in Christ, "You get grace! And You get grace! And You get grace!" and there's no strings attached – all the people in the studio audience has to pay almost \$9,000 in gift tax – we don't pay a dime for GRACE! What a gift!

HOW CAN YOU NOT WORSHIP A GOD THIS AWESOME?! HOW CAN YOU NOT GIVE TO HIS CHURCH, SERVE IN HIS KINGDOM, AND INVITE OTHERS TO TRUST HIM AS LORD?!

Redeemed how I love to proclaim it
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb
Redeemed by His infinite mercy
His Child and forever I am
Redeemed and so happy in Jesus
No language my rapture can tell
I know that the light of His Presence
With me doth continually dwell!

Redeemed, redeemed, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb
Redeemed, redeemed His child and forever I am

3. WE ARE ENLIGHTENED

In verses 9 and 10 Paul uses the words WILL, PURPOSE, and PLAN and He says that God has made known to us HIS WILL, PURPOSE, and PLAN. Keep in mind the key phrase in this passage – "IN HIM". So, in Christ He has made known to us the mystery of His will.

Generality

God's will in generality is that all would be saved. Scripture tells us that it is not God's desire that any should perish but that all would come to repentance. In 1 Timothy 2 Paul says outright that it's God's desire that all men would be saved.

Specifically

God also has a specific plan and purpose for each person's life.

Ephesians 2:10

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

As Paul says here – knowing God's specific will can be a mystery at times to us. Should I take this job? Should we move to that new house? Should I marry this person? Should I start this business? Should I launch this new ministry?

Again, keep in mind the key phrase in Ephesians 1 which is, "IN CHRIST." It was said to me as I was being discipled for ministry that if you want to know God's will – KNOW JESUS. God's will is always JESUS. God's will, purpose, and plan for my life is in Christ, so as I spend time with Jesus in prayer, in the Word, and in attentive worship He makes known to me HIS WILL.

4. WE ARE SECURE

In verses 11-14 Paul finishes by addressing the incredible unshakable security we have in Christ. Eternal security is the result of our salvation.

Inheritance – I've been written into the God's will – He has a place for me in His Kingdom and a job to do.

Holy Spirit – Paul writes here and says when they trusted in Christ they were sealed with the Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of their inheritance.

Sealed – means it's a done deal. Our salvation was sealed, closed, locked away in the annals of God's Kingdom record forever.

Guarantee – the Word in the GREEK means a down payment. So, the indwelling Holy Spirit is God's deposit in our soul that proves we are His. SO, THE PROOF OF OUR SALVATION IS NOT OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE GOSPEL, IT'S THE INDWELLING PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT! IT'S THE TRANSFORMATIVE DIFFERENCE CHRIST HAS MADE IN MY HEART THROUGH HIS SPIRIT!

The question in salvation is not DO YOU KNOW THE GOSPEL but HAVE YOU BEEN CHANGED BY THE GOSPEL? Does in Spirit of God LIVE IN YOUR HEART?

HOW DID THEY ENTER INTO THIS RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST?
They HEARD and BELIEVED!

HEARD – active voice

BELIEVED – active voice

HUMILITY – SUBMISSION – AND RECEPTION

They heard the gospel with OPEN HUMBLE HEARTS. They SUBMITTED TO CHRIST AS KING. And they RECEIVED THE HOLY SPIRIT BY INVITING HIM TO LEAD THEIR LIVES.