



OPTIONAL: Read through Ephesians together (20-25 mins, if read confidently and at decent pace).

*We rarely hear Scripture read in this extended way (how it was intended for original audiences) – giving us a deeper sense of the feel, flavour and sweep of the whole (compared with only ever hearing small chunks). If time constraints are too tight – don't worry! But perhaps suggest people try to read (or listen) beforehand? [The Bible App](#) (NIVUK) has David Suchet's recording for free.*

As you read/listen, consider:

- What strikes you about this letter as a whole?
- What are key or **repeated ideas**?
- What do you think is the **main point and pastoral purpose(s)**?
- Any **surprises** or repeated things we wouldn't expect?

*There probably won't be time to discuss this in depth, but **you may wish to give people a couple of minutes straight after to jot down reflections** (on bits of paper / a shared online spreadsheet / the 'chat' function of Zoom) – which you could collect/save and return to as weeks go on. The purpose isn't to tie up every loose end or get bogged down in every detail but to listen attentively and humbly together to this majestic part of God's word – helping us get a sense of overall context before reading smaller bits.*

Intro video (Eph 1:3-14) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zfPJq0cOfUs>

## Discussion Questions

1. In day to day life, what kinds of things do we thank God for?
2. Read v3: how do you feel about the claim that God has blessed us (Christians) with “every spiritual blessing in Christ”? How might you describe what that means to an interested friend? [If unsure, don't worry we'll see more in the verses to come!]
3. Looking at these verses what do we see in our salvation about the work of
  - a. God the Father (v4-6)?
  - b. God the Son (v7-10)?
  - c. God the Holy Spirit (v11-14)?
4. How do these verses emphasise the sovereign will and purpose of God? How and why might that challenge our natural instincts?
5. According to the passage what is the intended outcome of this cosmic salvation plan? (V6,12,14) Why would this gospel story lead to “the praise of his glorious grace”?
6. How does this passage lead you to want to praise our Triune God? For example, what difference could it make if this amazing gospel story shaped
  - a. The way we think about ourselves and our **identity**?
  - b. Our attitude towards the **church** (cf. v10)?
  - c. Our confidence towards the **future** (v14)?
7. How practically can we encourage one another in these ways in the days and weeks ahead?

## NOTES

### General INTRODUCTION

Video (2 mins, to send to groups in advance) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CjKD2spQAKw>

One commentator writes: “The main theme of Ephesians is easy to summarise with the phrase ‘unity in the inaugurated new creation.’ In other words: in and through and under the ascended Lord Jesus Christ – God has created a new world and a new humanity (aka the church). We see at the outset this is rooted in God’s eternal purpose, accomplished by Christ’s redemptive work and sealed and guaranteed to believers by the Holy Spirit. This full and free salvation by the Trinity must be received by faith alone – and therefore is all to the praise of his glorious grace. But real faith is living faith – which works itself out in love. So Paul calls his hearers to “thoughts, words and deeds” that concretely accomplish the “unity in the Spirit in the bond of peace” (4:3)<sup>1</sup>

In Ephesians we see how unity, reconciliation and peace (with God and one another) can be known and seen even in the heavenly realms. God’s eternal plan – was hidden but is now revealed – “to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ!” (1:10), displayed now in the church (3:10).

In very brief outline:

Eph 1-3	You are one in Christ
Eph 4-6	So live as one in Christ

### Ephesians 1:3-14 Praise God for every spiritual blessing in Christ!

- Chosen for adoption by the Father (4-6a)
- Redeemed for unity by the Son (6b-10)
- Sealed for inheritance by the Spirit (11-14)

This remarkable section begins similar to a trad. Jewish blessing (v3), filling it out with profound Trinitarian theology. Paul shows us in 3D why believers can praise (bless) our Lord who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ. We see the loving, choosing adoption of the Father; the redeeming and reconciling death of the Son; and the sealing and guaranteeing down-payment of the Spirit. All caused by the eternal plan and will of God (v5,9,11) – and so all ultimately leading to to the praise of his glorious grace (v6, 12,14).

**FOR US:** How amazing it is to be in Christ: beloved children of God, redeemed and forgiven in Jesus, with an inheritance guaranteed by the Spirit – truly this is every spiritual (i.e. of the Spirit and new creation) blessing we could ever wish for. What an identity we have as Christians! This really is who we now are. What hope and confidence as we look at our past, present and future! “The obvious result of Paul’s lavish paean of praise to our Triune God is that we should join him in praise as well ... While there is repetition here, this is not mere restatement of bare phrases, but the unfolding of a rich tapestry of praise”

#### Teaching suggestions:

- **Pursue honest engagement with God’s word & each other** – not just ‘getting through the questions’ or even ‘getting the right answer’. How can we set the tone for this? Maybe remind people at start?
- **Don’t fail to ‘see the wood for the trees’.** The details are marvellous and stunning but not simply to be analysed as isolated ideas; it’s all an eruption of praise to our God for his glorious grace.
- **Aim for transformation not merely information:** it’s no use just ‘knowing more stuff’ (not even glorious doctrines); what we need is heart and life response to this Triune God for all he has done.
- **Acknowledge the challenge of predestination but don’t get de-railed** by it. God’s sovereignty in these verses is challenging, threatening modern notions of freedom, but don’t miss it’s a) rooted in love, b) reveals grace and c) is meant to lead to praise. A complex pastoral and theological issue to work through for some – Christians may disagree on some details – but best not to get bogged down here for this study. Suggest follow up after – if helpful, pastors always willing to listen and discuss further.

## HINTS FOR DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. This is a chance to be honest about our own 'praise life' and where our minds and hearts turn even to thank God. Not looking for 'right' or 'wrong' answer; just interesting to compare/contrast with v3-14!
2. Does it sound exaggerated? ("Every"?!) Maybe a bit weak/lame? ("Spiritual", somehow less real?) 'Spiritual' here likely pertains to the (Holy) Spirit, i.e. they are uniquely blessings of the Spirit and therefore the new creation. No less 'real'; just located in Christ in the high-heavenly realms. When considering our understanding of 'every spiritual blessing' we're not looking for right/wrong, but setting us up to hear how Paul explains this in v4-14 (which may grow/correct our thinking).
3. **a) The Father** chose believers to be adopted – through Christ - into his family. When? Before the foundation of the world (way before we could do anything to deserve it). For what? To be holy & blameless. What cause? His pleasure and will. What goal/result? The praise of his glorious grace!  
**b) The Son** achieved redemption (Exodus-like freedom purchased) through his blood (sacrificial death). Achieving what? Forgiveness of sins. By what standard? Sheer grace, lavished. In fact, this reveals the 'mystery' of the universe (=something once hidden now revealed), the fulfilment of all ages of history. What could possibly be this big?! God's plan to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. And believers are those who have been brought into this Christ and this plan.  
**c) The Spirit** marks and seals every believer – as a deposit guaranteeing the full-payment to come. What is that? The inheritance, the full and future and final blessings of the Spirit/new creation for all who belong to God in Christ. NB the 'we first' and 'you also' (v12-13) likely refers to Jews (like Paul) and Gentiles (like Ephesians) – the relationship between these will be developed later, esp 2:11ff.  
*NB The three persons of the Trinity always act inseparably towards the world. They aren't 3 separate agents doing 3 separate things – but Scripture may focus the accent distinctively on one or other person variously (but this is never to deny the undivided and indivisible Triune God: the Lord is One!).*
4. It's hard to read these verses and NOT be struck by the absolute sovereignty of God. 3 times the events of this great, cosmic salvation are tied to God's pleasure and will (v5, 9, 11). NB It is in this context of v11 (God's total sovereignty in all things) that the specifics of his choosing, predestining love of God is described. See note above re. predestination.
5. Again, 3-fold repetition is telling: it's to the praise of his glorious grace (see v6,12,14). For each of the great blessings: of adoption by the Father, redemption and inclusion in the Son and sealing by the Spirit – this is the punchline we are supposed to take away. The purpose and intended result is the praise of the glory of the Triune Saviour. Why so? Because the whole cosmic plan – from eternity past to eternity future – is the enacted outcome of sheer grace. Quite rightly, the giver gets the glory.
6. Seeing these amazing blessings piled up high, one after another, really gives fuel to the blessing of v3. What more reasons could we possibly want? If all this is true how could we not praise him?!
  - a. **Identity:** One of the real treasures here is the way it shows us (in higher, deeper, forever ways) who we really are as Christians. Our identity is adopted by Father, redeemed by Son, sealed by Spirit – guaranteeing our future. How does this compare with other ways we usually see ourselves?
  - b. **Church:** If the entire goal and purpose of all things (in heaven and earth) is to be brought under Christ – how amazing is the church (that redeemed community ALREADY and gladly brought under Christ) It's easy to think of church as minor or inconsequential. Eph 1:10 and 3:10 set us straight. And the rest of Ephesians will demonstrate and commend the unity of the church.
  - c. **Future.** Our inheritance could not be more secure. The Holy Spirit himself is the down-payment and guarantee of what's to come. If you're a Christian- no matter your past or present, your future is incredibly bright. In fact, it literally couldn't be brighter!
7. This is where the rubber hits the road. E.g How we talk to one another or remind one another in everyday life about identity/church/future? How we pray for and about one another? How will we actually encourage and help one another to praise our Lord in light of this passage? There's so much treasure in these verses; but can we each at least take one concrete/specific thing away?