

# Truth for Today

*The Bible teaching radio programme*

For reply: Email: [truthfortoday@aol.com](mailto:truthfortoday@aol.com)

**Broadcast Date:** 13 February 2011

**No.** T0664

**Speaker:** Mr. Jonathan Hughes

## Ephesians - it's all about Christ: Chosen in Him - Ephesians 1:1-14

I don't think I am the most patient of shoppers. Trips tend to be interspersed heavily with "Just get it" or "Whichever you like". I much prefer the times when we go specifically to get something that we have previously researched; chosen what we are going to get and so we can go, pay and depart. Ah! Now that is my kind of retail therapy!

Today we start our study of the first half of the book of Ephesians by considering the subject of being chosen in Christ. Ephesians is all about Christians enjoying in reality the tremendous blessings that we have, given to us by God the Father, in Christ. In that respect it is the spiritual equivalent to the book of Joshua in the Old Testament, where the nation of Israel was told to go in to the land and possess their earthly inheritance.

Occasionally, you hear about rather eccentric individuals who have died leaving vast fortunes, often to rather bizarre causes. Yet in their life they lived very modestly. This was the danger that caused the apostle Paul to write. Too often, as Christians, we live as though we are spiritually paupers, when in reality we are richer than we could ever imagine. Paul had first visited Ephesus, briefly in AD 53, but it was not until his third missionary journey two years later that he spent about two years there. It was probably about AD 62 that Paul, now a prisoner in Rome, wrote to his spiritual children. It is thought that Tychicus delivered the letter to Ephesus, which was then probably also read in other local churches, at the same time as he returned with Onesimus to give Philemon his letter, and also deliver the letter to Colossae.

So let us now read together Ephesians 1:1-14. "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus: grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth - in Him. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. 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, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory." (Ephesians 1:1-14.)

In these few tremendous verses we have the work of the whole of the Godhead:

- Father (Ephesians 1:3-6),
- Son (Ephesians 1:7-12), and
- Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14).

Having said that, in the original Greek language this section is one long sentence and the three Persons are One working in total unison, so the divisions we make are only to try to help us appreciate more fully the wonderful ways of God.

I remember when we first made a will, and then sat the children down to let them know what we had done. Their reactions were quite different and amusing. How many model sets could I buy with that much? Just how long do I have to wait and how much are we going to get? Nothing is going to happen to you, is it? There are elements of all three in these verses.

We start, as we always should, with God - how glory should be given to Him, for He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. What an infinite supply of richness is ours now, for the tense indicates a single completed action in the past. He blessed us, so that these blessing are for us now to enjoy. There is not a single thing that is good for us that God

has not already thought about and set aside for us. By far the majority of these are for our present enjoyment, rather than something to look forward to only when we get to Heaven. It would be a useful thing after this broadcast to make a list of the things mentioned in this chapter that God has marked out for us, and then to live in the richness of this knowledge. Our children may well be disappointed in their earthly inheritance from us, but we shall never be disappointed in our heavenly inheritance!

That inheritance comes to us because we have been chosen in Him. Perhaps you never had the experience of when, for example, teams were being chosen at school and the shame of neither of the team captains choosing you until the very end! I find it utterly amazing, then, that in Ephesians 1:4, we find that we have been chosen from before the foundation of the world. Before my parents decided to marry and have children, before England became a nation, before Adam and Eve were made, before even the creational acts of God in Genesis 1, God chose me. He knew me for who I am now and still He chose me for blessing. He chose me, not as an afterthought, but as part of His eternal plan for all things. He chose me to be forever linked to the Son of His love, inseparable from the blessings that are His by right, but mine by grace. There can be no more secure position in life than to know that we are chosen in Him. In an uncertain world that is forever changing, our being chosen is an eternal constant, but not one that tires or becomes out of date, but one that remains vibrant and real, and should become increasingly precious to us each day. And it is *"in Christ"* that we are chosen. Because I am *"in England"* I speak English, I talk about the weather, eat fish and chips and don't mind queuing. I am bound to the laws of the land and find my security in the British armed forces. Because I am in Christ, the whole of my life takes its character from Him. He is the One who is able to keep me eternally and in return, it ought to be that my life is influenced by His nature.

The writer to the Hebrews, in Hebrews 2:10, speaks about "bringing many sons to glory". God has chosen us so that He would have many sons. Now I know that the idea of God's choosing has caused much intellectual difficulty - people have even gone to war over the issue. That only highlights the finiteness and foolishness of the human mind. Scripture is quite clear that we are all individually responsible to God, who does not want any to perish and would have all men to be saved, see John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9 and Acts 17:30. None will be eternally lost but by their own definite choice to be such. But the Bible also clearly shows that those who do choose to believe were also the ones whom God chose before we came into being. It is not logical to say that in making a choice, I automatically reject others. For example, when I wrote my will I chose certain beneficiaries. That does not mean I actively didn't chose someone in Timbuktu - I don't even know them there, so it can't be said that I rejected them! However, God clearly does know all mankind through all time. Nor does my performing an action, necessarily remove another's free choice. For example, I know my son would like a football top for Christmas. But I don't need to take him to the shop to let him choose - I know it can only be a Liverpool top - no self respecting young man would wear any other! Technically, he hasn't made a choice but it is the choice he would have made. We need just to let the point where free will and His choosing meet remain in the perfect will of God, accepting both wholeheartedly - for they are both clearly taught in the Bible.

As those whom God has chosen, it is inevitable that we should be adopted as sons, which is the idea behind predestination. We are not viewed here as little children in the family, but as fully paid up members of the family of God, with full rights and responsibilities. My children will have to wait until they are a certain age, should I die, before they can inherit. Not so with God - we are of age as sons! And it is according to His good pleasure and to the praise of the glory of His grace. This is something that God delights to do. As we consider the ways of God - though we may not, indeed ought not, to be able to fully understand them - it ought to produce a response of praise from each of our hearts. We have a wonderful God, whose ways are past finding out! And if there could be any doubt about all that He has planned, we finish this section with the assurance that we are "accepted in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:6). We said at the beginning that this letter was being taken to Ephesus, along with the letter to Philemon, with the runaway slave Onesimus. Paul asked Philemon to accept his slave back as he would accept Paul himself (Philemon 10-14). Onesimus was to be accepted in the Apostle. Now there may have been some doubt in Onesimus' mind as to whether Philemon really loved Paul that much. However, there can be no doubt whatsoever as to the love that God the Father has for His well beloved Son. It is this love that is the assurance for our acceptance by God - we can never find ourselves beyond the love of God for us.

Next we should look at the work of the Son in these verses. It is *"in Him"* that we have redemption through His blood. The cost of all that we have been considering this morning is brought before us. Everything we have, as believers in the Lord Jesus, we have because of the unmerited favour of God expressed in the death of the His Son. What I leave my children, in one sense will cost me nothing, in that I can't take my money with me, and my possessions are things that I have used and no longer require. By contrast, our inheritance cost Jesus His life. Before we could be adopted as sons, before we could be accepted in the Beloved, before we could receive the forgiveness of sins and all the many other blessings that are a part of our inheritance, He had to die. There could be no other way. God's righteousness demanded no less, nor no more. Having been set free, by redemption, we are not left to aimlessly try to please God. For His grace abounds towards us in a wise and prudent manner revealing to us the full will of God. It is a remarkable thing that to none of the great men and women of the Old Testament could God fully reveal His plans and purposes. However, to you and me, who have been redeemed by His blood, God has chosen to reveal all that we need to know.

Ephesians 1:11 can be understood in two ways. Undoubtedly we have obtained an inheritance in Him. However, it can also be understood that we are His inheritance. The result of the whole will of God is that one day His well beloved Son will receive the universal acclaim of a united body of people who have been made right for His presence. Please do take time just to consider this a little later. It ought to be something that thrills our hearts and makes them well up in praise that a day has been ordained when He will be rightfully honoured throughout all of creation. The One who was despised and rejected, whose name it was hoped would soon perish, will one day be the centre of all of God's plans for creation.

We must now turn to the work of the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 1:13-14 we have the summary of the entire Gospel process as far as we are concerned. We have considered God's actions from eternity past, the Lord Jesus' actions in history past, but now we move to the present and find God's Spirit still working for our good.

Salvation comes to individuals as they trust in the Saviour. They hear about Him in the word of Truth. We ought never to lose sight of the fact that it is the word - spoken or lived out - that has real power to change lives. It is on believing that we are sealed with the Holy Spirit. This sealing is still a part of God's work - we have no part in it. It has a twofold aspect.

Firstly, it speaks about a completed transaction. Nobody would seal an envelope with the letter only half written. In terms of our eternal salvation, God is saying that His work in us is complete and so we are sealed. There is no more that we can do, or need to do, to be saved. The work of Jesus on the cross was satisfactory to God, and we have come into the good of that. We cannot be more saved than the moment when we trust in Him. But neither can we be less saved. God has sealed us, and none can break that seal, for God would not and man cannot. No less a person than the Holy Spirit acts as that seal. There can be no greater security in life than knowing that God Himself acts as the seal upon our salvation.

Secondly, sealing speaks about authenticity of ownership. Once the hot wax was dripped over the join in a document, the monarch would stamp his personal insignia from his ring into the wax to make his mark. The ring and hence the mark were unique. The indwelling Holy Spirit is the cast iron proof that we belong to Him. What marks me out as a real Christian is not my words or my works but His indwelling Spirit.

It is this same Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our future inheritance. Again this guarantee has a double aspect.

Firstly, it has the idea of a down payment or deposit. It is what shows that the buyer is in earnest about making the purchase. By the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit, God is showing us that He is absolutely sure that He will one day bring each one of us to the point where we can share in all the fullness that He has purposed for those who believe on Him! There can be no doubting if when we find ourselves in His presence, He will suddenly change His mind and decide not to share His glories with us. The fact that we shall be like Him is not some uncertain aspiration but an absolute certainty, for we shall see Him as He is.

But the idea of a guarantee also suggests an engagement ring. Certainly today, in modern Greece, the same word is used for an engagement ring. This thought complements the picture used in Ephesians 5. We are espoused to Christ and the Holy Spirit is the promise of that relationship. This thought ought to thrill our hearts. The closeness of the relationship we have with Him is spoken of in terms of the closest and most loving of human relationships. It ought also to challenge us as to our faithfulness to Him. In terms of our love for Him, are we truly undivided in our affections? This was the failing that would all too soon affect the church at Ephesus, in that they left their first love. (Revelation 2:4) We do need to keep a close watch on ourselves that the love that we had for Him as we first realised what He had done for us does not grow cold, crowded out by the cares of living or the attractions that this world has to offer.

All this comes with a fixed purpose in mind - it is "until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Ephesians 1:14). Redemption has always the thought of being set free, along with the price that is paid. It covers our past - the once and for ever price that was paid by Christ on the cross. Peter speaks about the cost in comparison to silver and gold as being of infinitely greater worth (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Redemption also covers our present - the Holy Spirit is in operation within our lives to form the character of Jesus within us (2 Corinthians 4:11). And redemption has a future aspect - when we are found in His presence and become like Him. We shall be fully free then to be the people of God, no longer compromised by the sinful nature that is at work within us. God will have a people who will be for the praise of His glory. Three times in this section these words - "to the praise of His glory" - occur (Ephesians 1:6, 12 and 14). The whole purpose of God is that His glory should receive the praise it rightly deserves. Every aspect of His glory that we can begin to imagine deserves the very highest praise. There is nothing about God that does not merit particular praise. If I was to act in this way, to look for praise for all I had done and for all I was, it would be the utmost pomposity. It also would not bear examination. There are far too many "warts and all" that would very quickly become apparent. But for God to expect praise from the whole of

creation, and to actively work to secure that, is entirely reasonable. The absolute perfection of God deserves the unanimous praise of the whole of His creation and, because of the work of Christ on the cross, and through the work of the Holy Spirit, He will one day receive that praise. What a time and experience that will be! But the wonder of it is that even now, in the world that rejected His Son, we have the opportunity, with the help of the indwelling Holy Spirit, to take up that praise to Him. As we meet together, particularly to remember the Lord Jesus in His death, but also in our own private meditations, we have the privilege of bringing our praise to Him. As we consider all that He has done, outlined in this beginning section of the book of Ephesians, may it lead to a rich source of praise to Him, for His name's sake!

---

**Please Note:**

We encourage you to use this transcript for your personal or group Bible studies. This material should not, however, be used in any publications without the express permission from Truth for Today, whose contact details can be found on page 1. Large Print copies of this document are also available upon request.