

# RTM

reaching/teaching/ministering curriculum

May 10, 2009  
God's Adopted Children  
Ephesians 1:1-14



## MINISTERING HELPS

### Group Prayer

Include a time of prayer for mothers. Include prayers for the mothers of your group members, as well as, for any mothers that may be in attendance.

### Stay Active Together

CELEBRATE RECOVERY NEEDS OUR HELP - CR is growing, having between 20-30 people each week. This ministry exists to help folks break away from destructive habits, hurts and hang-ups that are keeping them from being all God wants them to be. Each meeting begins with supper served at 6:30 PM. We have been paying for this meal each week and are looking to see if your BFG would be interested in providing a meal ONCE A MONTH. It could be casseroles and home cooking or it could be a donation of \$60 that would purchase a meal from CHICK-FIL-A. For more info on this contact me ASAP.

## REACHING HELPS

Who is out there on your "outreach radar?" Each group member should have 3-5 people they are praying for who either don't know the Lord or are not connected to a church.

List the first names of as many of these as possible and include a time of prayer for them. Pray also for class members to be bold as they seek to talk to these folks about their next steps with God.

## TEACHING HELPS

We continue our sermon series called LIVING AT THE SPEED OF LIFE.

Just over a year ago, Jimmy and Shonda Smith completed the adoption of Katherine. Katherine's adoption means that she is now completely a member of the Smith family.

Today we will be looking at spiritual adoption and the blessings that our adoption into God's family brings. There are lots of differences from the busy system of this world; that we have been adopted from; that we will be blessed in, if we adjust and surrender to our Heavenly Father.

# God's Adopted Children

## Ephesians 1:1-14

Gerald Penix shares the following story about the day his child was legally adopted...

*I remember standing in front of the judge on our day of adoption. He pointed his finger and asked of me, "Is anyone coercing you to adopt this little boy?" After we had assured him that we were doing so out of love for our sin, he made this statement. "From today on, he is your son. He may disappoint you, even grieve you but he is your son. Everything you own one day will be his and he will bear your name." Then he looked to the clerk and gave this command. "So order a change in this child's birth certificate and may it reflect that these are the parents of this child."*

*It was then that I realized that my Heavenly Father loved me so much that, without coercion, He loved me and gave His all to me. On that day, He changed my name and I gladly bear His name and His image.<sup>1</sup>*

Paul describes this adoption process in Ephesians chapter 1 and the 5 blessings that come with spiritual adoption.

Paul wrote this letter to the churches in Asia Minor while under Roman imprisonment probably around 60 a.d. The letter went to the church at Ephesus first, but because many early Greek manuscripts do not contain *at Ephesus* it is probable that this letter was to be circled among the churches in Asia minor including Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, and Sardis, as well as Ephesus.

The purpose of the letter is to guard against heresy, to explain redemption, emphasize unity of the gospel, and as a call live worthy of the calling in Christ. The letter is rich in Trinitarian doctrine, which is doctrine about God, Christ, and the Spirit. Ephesians intertwines the three persons of the trinity to give a unique view of 1 in 3. It is also rich in practical theology; because; God is, I must then act or be like him.

Paul uses the introduction in Ephesians to explain his dual calling, the recipients dual position, and his dual prayer for God's blessing upon them. Paul's calling has two motivators. First, as an apostle he has been called by Christ Himself to preach Christ to the gentles. This calling, as mentioned early, is unique to Paul. It allows the recipients of this letter to understand that as gentiles, this letter is to them from their Christ given apostle. This calling also speaks of the authority in which Paul had in writing this letter. Second, Paul was called by the will of God. Not only was it enough for Paul to be hand chosen by Christ, but he lets the readers know that God's will also included him. Now, this makes sense because the Father and Son do not contradict

### Teaching Plan

#### Introduction...

- ▶ Ask your class to discuss the following questions...
  - Do you know someone who has been part of the adoption of a child? Who was it and briefly share how the child and family came together.
  - What would you think are the biggest blessings that happen through the adoption of a child?
  - What would you think are the biggest challenges in the adoption of a child?
- ▶ How is God adopting us into His family similar to a child being adopted into an earthly family?
- ▶ Today we will look at some of the benefits that come to us as adopted children of God.
- ▶ Have someone read today's focal passage... Ephesians 1:1-14

<sup>1</sup> <http://net.bible.org/illustration.php?topic=26>

themselves. However, it is of importance to note because Paul is letting the recipients know that Paul was apart of God's plan in Christ Jesus.

The second aspect of Paul's introduction is the recognition of the recipients dual position. This position is first as a saint. God had proclaimed them righteous and holy through their faith in Christ shed blood on the cross for the removal of their sin, and their humbling to the Christ's Lordship. This position as saint is true of every New Testament, born again, believer. Sainthood is not obtained through what you or I do on this earth but obtained through what Christ has already done on this earth. The second position of these believers is they are "faithful in Christ Jesus." Paul's words here tell us the character of these believers. They are faithful to Christ and in their faith of Christ. Their position was not limited to sainthood but extended beyond to their living out the faith in Christ they had.

The third aspect in Paul's introduction is the request for dual blessing. First, Paul asked for grace on behalf of the recipients. What is Grace? Sunday school definition, "unmerited favor," but what does that mean. Grace is receiving something that you not only don't deserve but should not be allowed to do in the first place. Grace is giving your 16 year old the keys to your car with a full tank and 50 bucks to spend after they have crashed their own vehicle. Grace just doesn't make sense, at least from a human perspective. It is overlooking a disgusting fault so that God can be glorified and good might come. Grace was Paul's plea for the saints in Asia Minor. Second, Paul asked for peace for the recipients. When I was growing up a local church gave their youth t-shirts. On the back of them it said, "N-O peace, N-O Jesus, K-N-O-W peace, K-N-O-W Jesus." This is the peace of God, that I know him through a relationship with his son.

Paul explains five spiritual blessings every adopted child receives at salvation.

## 1. We are CHOSEN by God – v. 4

*<sup>4</sup>For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.*

The first spiritual blessing of adoption is that God chose his children. There are several key grammatical nuances that are important. First, *chose* is in the past tense as a completed action. God "has chosen," it already has taken place. The selection process is no longer taking place because in this passage Paul is speaking to regenerates, i.e. after salvation. Also, Paul added that the selection process took place before creation. He therefore instills a double meaning in a corporal sense, that is the body of Christ, and personal sense, that is individual redemption. He clarifies this a bit more as the adoption blessings proceed. Second, *in him*, is where the selection process took place. This is a statement of relationship. It encompasses the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Trinity brought us into relationship with God. He is the one responsible.

The reason for this blessing is so that each child can

### 1. Benefit #1 is we have been CHOSEN by God (v. 4)

- ▶ After the introduction, Paul starts listing the benefits of being adopted by God in verse 4.
- ▶ How are we adopted? What do we have to do to be adopted? What did God have to do so that we could be adopted? (Share the plan of salvation here, making sure everyone knows this doesn't automatically happen for people, Adoption happens as we respond in faith and trust to the Holy Spirit's making us aware that Jesus died on the cross to take away our sins and we desire to be saved.)
- ▶ What does it mean that we were chosen? Does God want some to be saved and some not to be saved? Connect them to the following verse...

*<sup>3</sup>This is good, and pleases God our Savior,  
<sup>4</sup>who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.  
1 Timothy 2:3-4 (NIV)*

- ▶ What does it say that God is choosing us to become? (holy and blameless) Is that possible? Connect them to the following verse...

*<sup>21</sup>This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions. <sup>22</sup>Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault.  
Colossians 1:21-22 (NLT)*

stand holy and blameless in His sight. This is perfection, not in the sense that his children are perfect, but in the sense that through the child's relationship with Christ, God views them perfect. This is a difficult distinction. This is a statement of how God views his children through adoption, not necessarily how they are, yet it is reality. Because of Christ taking upon him the sin of the world, God can view those imperfections as no more. The cross took those and allowed God to view his chosen children without fault.

There is confidence and assurance from the fact that God chose his child in adoption. He, the almighty, reached out to men, mortal and frail. There is hope. God desires a perfect relationship and provided the answer through Christ.

**PREDESTINATION...** The first chapter of Ephesians is first and foremost about Jesus Christ. Christ contains, expresses, and effects God's purpose. When people hear the gospel message and believe that message ([vv. 13,15](#)), they live on earth under the leadership of Jesus Christ as Head of the body.

Such believers are sealed by the Spirit ([v. 13](#)); therefore, the power of God working in us can enlarge us, open our eyes, increase our faith, and enable us to believe. Does God do this without our own willing and cooperation, or are we free participants in what God is doing through the believing community under the headship of Christ and in the power of the Spirit? It seems to me that the believers addressed are welcomed to faith and encouraged to believe and enlarge their lives in Christ's church. The specific references in [verses 5](#) and [11](#) fit in this context if we do not draw them out of place and ask first what it means that we were predestined before the foundation of the world according to God's will. Jesus Christ is first and foremost God's chosen. He is the agent of God's redemptive plan from eternity. Jesus Christ embodies the way, the will, and the good pleasure of God. By Jesus we know the Father; in Him God's will is effected in history. We are included as we are included in Jesus. We are included, predestined, and elected as we believe in Him by the power of the Spirit. God, working His way through us, determines us. Apparently, part of God's determination is that the Ephesians and ourselves should be participants in our limited human way with God in doing God's will. God's will is that people should have a will to exercise toward God. The painful personal experience reflected in [Romans 7](#) and the sinful corporate experiences of human divisions spoken of in the remainder of Ephesians lead us to believe that we can also exercise our wills in refusing to believe in God and in disobeying God. Predestination never eliminates human will.

—Holman Bible Dictionary

## 2. We were predestined as his adopted children – v. 5-6

*In love <sup>5</sup>he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—<sup>6</sup>to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.*

The second spiritual blessing of adoption is that God predestined his children. The word predestined simply means predetermined. Becoming a child of God is not probable, it is predestined. Probable means likely, predestined means certain. Many find significant hardship

**"Predestined"** means marked out beforehand. This is another way of saying that salvation is God's work and not our own doing. In his infinite love, God has adopted us as his own children. Through Jesus' sacrifice, he has brought us into his family and made us heirs along with Jesus ([Romans 8:17](#)). In Roman law, adopted children had the same rights and privileges as biological children, even if they had been slaves. Paul uses this term to show how strong our relationship to God is. Have you entered into this loving relationship with God? —Life Application Bible Notes

in Paul's words and the debate between free will and election will long outlive this lesson. However, one thing is certain, as an adopted child of God, one can be 100% certain that he was not only chosen but also predestined.

Predestination is centered in the love of God. "For God so loved the world ..." "We love him because he first loved us..." The scripture is full of words about the love that God shows men. In that love is concept of predestination. Paul also reveals that this love brings with it the familial relationship of adoption through Jesus Christ. Paul closely connects Jesus to adoption. The reason Jesus is so paramount to adoption is because it is through his suffering that relationship to God exists. We are his sons through Christ.

It is God's pleasure, will, and glory that he adopt his children. Pleasure simply means joy. God takes great joy when individuals accept Him and enter into a relationship with him. *Will* conveys sovereignty as has been discussed in the previous paragraphs. Glory deals with honor. The reason God adopts men to be his children, is because it brings him honor and glory. Men must understand they are nothing without Christ and the Father. They must proclaim him Lord and Savior, then redemption and adoption are offered. God receives glory through the adoption of his predestined children.

Praise is essential in each of these blessings. It is an acknowledgement of God's work and personal hand. Praise is God glory as it lifts his name above mens. Praise is always done in an audience more than one.

### **3. We are redeemed as adopted children – v.7-8**

*<sup>7</sup>In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace <sup>8</sup>that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.*

The third spiritual blessing of adoption is redemption. Redeeming deals with purchasing. A quick look through Sunday's paper and you will find most coupons contain the word redeem. In order to use the coupon, it must be present at the time of purchase. Christ's death and resurrection is that redemption God offered as atonement for sin. READ Romans 3:25 & Heb. 9:22. As a spiritual blessing, redemption deals with how God enabled His relationship. Paul makes it

### **2. Benefit #2 is our adoption was predestined (v. 5-6)**

- ▶ Why do people argue and debate about the word "predestined?"
- ▶ If PREDESTINED means "predetermined" or "marked out before hand." Shouldn't the emphasis be on the "way" (through Jesus Christ) someone is adopted, not on the one adopted? Discuss...
- ▶ Can a God that knows all the choices we will make still be true to letting us make those choices?
- ▶ For those who are adopted, it says that it brings pleasure to God. What does it say to you that God is happy that you are in His family? Do you think about that much, or do you think more that God is disappointed in you? Which should you dwell on?
- ▶ What does GRACE have to do with adoption? How did God freely give us his grace?

### **3. Benefit #3 is we are redeemed (v. 7-8)**

- ▶ What were we purchased from?

*<sup>13</sup>Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."*

*Galatians 3:13 (NIV)*

- ▶ What were we purchased with?

*<sup>18</sup>For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers,*

*<sup>19</sup>but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

*1 Peter 1:18-19 (NIV)*

- ▶ When the Bible says that all this grace was LAVISHED upon us, what thoughts and feeling come to mind?

clear that the blood of Christ is the redeeming price of adoption. Galatians 4:1-7 and Titus 2:13-14 tell us more about how redemption and adoption work together.

Paul further reveals that this redemption is a pardon. It is for the purpose of freedom. A complete abolishment of sin through Christ, founded upon His (God's) abounding grace. Redemption and forgiveness go hand in hand in the New Testament, Col 1:14. Paul links this abounding grace to God's wisdom and understanding. This grace is a priceless gift. Eph 2:8-9

#### 4. We know purpose through Christ – v. 9-12

*<sup>9</sup>And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>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, <sup>12</sup>in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory*

#### 4. Benefit #4 is we know the mystery of salvation (v. 9-12)

Prior to Christ, people lived by faith in what was to be revealed. (Genesis 15:6) Through Jesus we now understand the mystery of exactly how God would...

- forgive sin
- bring Jew and Gentile under one head

Jesus is the answer to the mystery of how God would save the world. We were chosen to not only know the mystery but offered the opportunity to participate in it.

The fourth spiritual blessing of adoption is the revelation of the God's will. This Revelation is Jesus Christ, the head of the church. Paul refers to this *mystery* seven different times throughout this epistle.<sup>2</sup> The reason it is a mystery is Old Testament saints understood little about Christ. They had revelation of the Messiah but no where near the connection Paul was making about Christ as the head of the church and redeemer of souls. No longer is there a mystery around redemption.

*God began to reveal his great mystery at the death and resurrection of Christ. "In him," refers back to Christ ("in union with Christ"). Another part of that mystery made itself clear as the early church (made up mostly of converted Jews) understood that this plan was also available to Gentiles (see [Acts 10:34-35](#)).*

*Up until [1:11](#), Paul was speaking to Jews and Gentiles alike. In [2:11](#), Paul made a distinction between the backgrounds of the Jewish believers and Gentile believers. In [verses 11-14](#), however, he identified the two separate groups with the pronouns he used. The wording in these verses includes both the first person (we, our) and the second person (you). The word "we" refers specifically to Jewish believers (Paul being one of them). While it is true that believing Jews and Gentiles alike will receive God's blessings, the Jews were called first ([Romans 1:16](#)); they were chosen. Christ will be the Head of all things ([1:10](#)), including a body of believers made up of Jews ("we") and Gentiles ("you," [1:13](#)).*

*In the Old Testament, the word "chosen" refers to the nation of Israel as God's portion or inheritance:*

- *"But as for you, the LORD took you and brought you . . . out of Egypt, to be the people of his inheritance, as you now are." ([Deuteronomy 4:20](#) NIV)*
- *"But they are your people, your inheritance that you brought out by your great power and your outstretched arm." ([Deuteronomy 9:29](#) NIV)*
- *"The LORD will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land and will again choose Jerusalem." ([Zechariah 2:12](#) NIV)*

<sup>2</sup> 1:9; 3:3,4,6; 5:32; 6:19

*The Jews were predestined according to [God's] plan that would ultimately be accomplished in Jesus Christ (born into the nation of Israel) and finalized at the end of time. God chose the Jews to be the people through whom the rest of the world could find salvation. But this did not mean that the entire Jewish nation would be saved; only those who receive Jesus Christ as their Messiah and Savior will receive God's blessings (see [Romans 9–11](#)). When God offered salvation to the Gentiles, he did not exclude the Jews. God's kingdom will include all Jews and Gentiles who have accepted the offer of salvation. Both Jews and Gentiles will also make up the group that does not believe and so receives God's punishment. The inclusion of Jewish believers in salvation was the plan of God who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will. In the same way that God predestined Israel to be the elect nation, he predestined the spiritual Israelites, the believers in Christ, to be an eternal gift to himself. As a refrain carried through from [1:5](#) and [1:9](#), Paul repeated that everything is under God's sovereign control. The words reinforce the certainty of these events. Because God controls everything, he will carry out his plan according to his purpose and will, bringing it to completion in his time.*<sup>3</sup>

Christ is the unifier through which men become children of God. A new economy or era of expectation from God is now placed on men and it revolves Christ's ministry and work on earth. Through Christ, men enter into a relationship with God. That relationship brings with it an eternal inheritance as a predestined child that is praise God for his work in their life. The writer of Hebrews seeks to explain this in chapter 9:11-15. This new revelation, like predestination, is for the sole purpose of God's glory.

## 5. We are sealed and guaranteed by the Holy Spirit – v. 13-14

*<sup>13</sup>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, <sup>14</sup>who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.*

The last spiritual blessing of adoption is sealing. This is God's promise, once adopted always adopted. It reconfirms the promise that God will never leave nor forsake his children. This seal is through the person of the Holy Spirit. Once again it signifies the Trinity in salvation. Sealing occurs at the moment of belief/conversion/salvation, and is marked by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Every child of God is sealed permanently. Paul said this blessing was the guarantee of adoption until death. It answers the question, "what guarantee do I have that God will remember me?" The Holy Spirit is God's deposit on conversation. It is literally God's earnest payment until eternity is realized.

This seal represents God's authority that no one but he can break, and he will not. During Paul's writing a dignitary would often write a decree on a scroll and

### 5. Benefit #5 is we are sealed and guaranteed by the Holy Spirit (v. 13-14)

- ▶ If you send a check in the mail to pay a bill, what is the meaning of you sealing the envelope?
- ▶ How is our salvation like that? (We are sealed when we are saved in the envelope of salvation to be opened by God as a participant in the eternal Kingdom of God)
- ▶ Who is our seal? How does He help us as we wait for our inheritance? (see below)

**The Abiding Presence** [John 14:16](#)

**The Teacher/Reminder** [John 14:26](#)

**The Testifier** [John 15:26](#)

**The Convicter** [John 16:7-8](#)

**The Guide** [John 16:13](#)

**The Glorifier of Jesus** [John 16:14](#)

**The Discloser of Jesus** [John 16:15](#)

**The Source of Power** [Acts 1:8](#)

**The Witness to Sonship** [Romans 8:16](#)

**The Helper in Prayer** [Romans 8:26](#)

**The Inviter** [Revelation 22:17](#)

—Thompson Chain - Outline Study Series

<sup>3</sup> —Life Application Bible Commentary

send it to be read in public. Once penned, he would seal the letter with wax and imprint a signet ring in the warm wax. No one was allowed to open the decree except the one to whom it was addressed. Breaking the seal, would lead to prison, torture, or death. It was a way in which the dignitary and recipient could be certain that no one had unknowingly read the document. God places a seal on his adopted children to ensure that no one steal the inheritance of heaven and its rewards from his child. Once again, Paul adds that the purpose of sealing is for the praise and glory of God.

### **Applications...**

Just as it would be sad if an adopted child was to forget the wonderful benefits of their earthly parents who adopted them, much more would it be sad if we took for granted the adoption that is ours by God through Jesus Christ.

End class with a season of praise to God, allowing class members to lift up adoration and thanks to God for...

- ▶ being chosen
- ▶ the way of salvation
- ▶ His pleasure over us
- ▶ the Holy Spirit's presence and sealing
- ▶ how much he lavished on us