

Privileged!

Ephesians 1:1-14

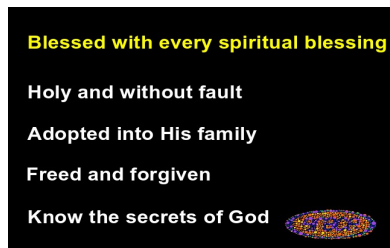
As many of you know we took Michael for his 18th birthday present to Dublin. The actual gift was a flight on a plane and Ryanair seemed a good option. If you've been on a budget airline before you'll know that you are not guaranteed a seat and the only way to get a window seat or sit together is to either get there early so you're first in the queue or by buying one of their privilege tickets which entitles you to be one of the first 50 or so on the plane. Of course, it's not much of a privilege as you've paid for the pleasure! You can get privilege cards for many things these days – here's one to get you into the Hyatt Hotel Casino in Manila. As you can see, I'm well traveled – around the internet!

Of course the best privilege cards are ones where you get privileges because of your status rather than having to buy them. If you work for a big store, you may get staff discount for example. Rhiannon worked for London Transport many years ago and when I married her I also got many of her privileges. In fact when she was promoted, I got to go on all LT services free and a quarter first class British Rail by virtue of being married to her.

Why do I tell you this? Because as God's people, God has privileged us. We didn't buy that privilege through going to church or earn it by good works. It's a privilege God has given us because He adopted us into His family in Christ because out of His love and His mercy He has shown us favour.

See how much the Father has loved us! His love is so great that we are called God's children - and so, in fact, we are. 1 John 3:1

Here's the list we had then.



God has privileged us. He has made us part of His family. So just as I got privileges because Rhiannon accepted me as her husband, we get the privileges that come from being a child of God.

This first chapter of Ephesians tells us a lot more about what it means to have this privilege. There are three core facts we find about our relationship with God. Paul presents them in terms of Father, Son and Spirit. This is a Trinitarian chapter, because it gives a very clear picture of the Trinity – God as three Persons.

Chosen by the Father
Redeemed by the Son
Sealed by the Spirit

● Chosen by the Father

We explored this last week. The very fact that God has taken undeserving people like you and me and changed brought us into His family is amazing. We are under His fatherhood. We're special. We have importance even though we were lost.

It's not just that we have the blessings because God is outrageously gracious that He is prepared to forgive even the worst person on earth if they repent. We have all these blessings and all the forgiveness because we are IN CHRIST. Look again at v5 .

Because of his love 5 God had already decided that through Jesus Christ he would make us his children--this was his pleasure and purpose.

The grounds of our privilege are not just because of His love God is outrageously gracious, but on the grounds that God has satisfied His own requirements to accept people who are sinners and should only attract His eternal wrath. And how has He done that – through Jesus Christ. So the Father chose us because of the Son – Jesus Christ.

● Redeemed by the Son

We are IN CHRIST. IN CHRIST. If I wanted to I could go through the NT to see how much this is used.. It is used over 80 times in the NT and most refer to what we are in Christ. One of the questions I was asked at my induction yesterday was this:

Do you believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and do you confess Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord?

We believe that God is Trinity. This is a very Trinitarian passage because it speaks of the blessings of the Father, wrought by the Son and mediated by the Holy Spirit, and all three Persons appear in this chapter, each with His own own function but fulfilling the same role of Godhead that had been worked out from eternity. From that point of view, this is a profound chapter of Scripture.

Last week we found that the Father had chosen us and has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

This week we are going to see how we are blessed in the Son and see how the Spirit works in our lives now. So what have we obtained through being in Christ?

In Jesus we have redemption. I don't know if you've ever used a pawnbrokers. For most of you, probably not. But if you need money you can pawn something of value. If you ever want it back, you must redeem it – buy it back. That's exactly what the word redemption means. It means buying something back that you once owned but placed it into the hands of others.

Story of the boat.

How can God buy back something He made? Who did He buy it back from?

First of all, there is the sense of loss. Men and women went their own way and separated themselves from God. We were made but we had a mind of our own and we wandered away and got lost rather than the boat blowing away and being lost.

But there is another idea that comes across strongly in the Bible – that in sinning against God, we sold ourselves to the slavery of sin and the domain of satan. The most common word for slave used in the NT is *doulos* - a bond servant. We often think of slaves as being pressed people – captured and forced into service. In Roman society, many were but the majority actually sold themselves into slavery or were born into it – they were bonded – bond servants. In return for a period of service or maybe lifetime service, they became the property of the master – themselves and their family fed and housed by the master in return for their obedience to the master. The only way they could be released from the bonding is if someone paid them out of it – usually by someone else who would take them into their ownership.

Virtually the last thing that Jesus said from the cross was, "It is finished." Jesus would have said this in Hebrew or Aramaic but John's gospel (where that text is found) was originally written in Greek. The Greek word used in John's gospel to express what Jesus had said was "tetelestai". The interesting thing about this word is that although it does mean finished or completed it was also a word used colloquially

in the market place of that time, in connection with receipts, to mean the debt has been paid in full. When Jesus died on the cross, the debt for our sin was paid by Jesus in full.

Finished - the deal is done, Jesus bought our forgiveness through shedding His blood. The blood shows the nature of the transaction. The shedding of blood meant that one life had been exchanged for others so that God is able to forgive the sins of those who would realise their sin and turn to Him for forgiveness. All the righteous requirements of God's law were met on Calvary. Hallelujah!~ We're redeemed. " and why - by God's grace which He lavished upon us. It is the bottom line - we are redeemed in Christ.

We are included in Christ through faith when we accept Jesus.

● Sealed by the Spirit

13 And you also became God's people when you heard the true message, the Good News that brought you salvation. You believed in Christ, and God put his stamp of ownership on you by giving you the Holy Spirit he had promised. 14 The Spirit is the guarantee that we shall receive what God has promised his people, and this assures us that God will give complete freedom to those who are his. Let us praise his glory!

The nature of a seal - marked ownership. The seal is a visible sign of ownership. Ownership changed. But what an ownership – made part of God's family! The Spirit is the seal of that ownership. We know people become Christians - changed life. Different. Sometimes it is spectacular, sometimes it is less spectacular. Your desires change, your attitudes change. You want to spend time with other believers, you want to spend time with God.

The Holy Spirit is a deposit which guarantees the promise. He is the downpayment of what is to come. We've just paid some money for a company to redo the bathroom in our house in Swaffham. We didn't pay all – just a deposit. When the bathroom is finished, we'll pay the rest. The deposit says we're serious and we will pay in full at the appropriate time. We know that God's promises are true, because as we see the Holy Spirit at work in our lives or in the lives of others. And he reveals some of what heaven is like here and now. We'll get the lot when we get there! The problem is that so often we don't take advantage of just what the Holy Spirit freely brings.

The Holy Spirit imparts wisdom (verse 17) *I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.* We also know from John 16 that it is the Spirit that imparts wisdom and revelation - He allows us to understand the truth. If you understand anything of the truths of God this morning, then it is because the Holy Spirit has revealed it to you. So you are able to testify this with Paul this morning *I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.*

Why do I know what God is promising here is true – because I see evidence of it in my own life and in the eyes of others. It's the work of the Spirit that gives the Christian faith the WOW factor. The grace of God is an astounding thing. The fact that God has gone to such measure to redeem us should be enough in itself to drive us all out of these doors this morning and tell people of Jesus because it's amazing. Everybody can come into relationship with God if they are prepared to turn to Him. Isn't that amazing?

But even better, the Holy Spirit shows by evidence in our lives and amongst His people that everything God says in Ephesians 1 is true. This isn't head knowledge. God is working in the lives of people NOW – changing lost situations, transforming broken relationships, healing sick bodies, bringing hope out of hopelessness by the power of the Spirit. And that should give our faith a WOW factor. It should make us want to tell everybody how good God is. And for them to see that WOW in us.

Does it? Or has it been a long time since God did anything in our lives and we've become disconnected from the reality of our faith? If we don't think that the Christian faith is more amazing than anything we've ever seen or done; then we'll never convince others. And it's easy to become cynical. Some of the worse religious cynicism, hypocrisy, dishonesty and lack of integrity I have ever seen has been in Christians. Yet our faith should be something that so makes a difference in us because we have the Spirit that people are drawn to us like moths to a flame.

And the difference between churches that are growing and leading to people to Christ and ones that are not, is usually the WOW factor.

Is God so wonderful, so amazing, so powerful that you will change your life and lifestyle to make sure you had the time to worship, to pray, to serve, to share Christ with others. The difference is usually the Holy Spirit. We can let Him be who He is and let Him communicate who we are in Christ and bring a bit of heaven to earth – or we can quench Him.

Challenge.

Have we allowed our faith to become cold – other things taken over our lives and we've forgotten how amazing God is?

Have we become cynical about our faith, about what God can do, about how the Spirit works, about Christians and church?

Have we just quenched the Spirit and now our faith is just a routine of church once or twice a week and God isn't part of our life and lifestyle.

It happens to us all. Let's pray that the Spirit will restore to us that WOW factor this morning. Ask Him to fill you anew. That He might restore that joy and amazement about what God has done in your life. That He will light us up afresh that people will be attracted by our faith and want to know Christ.

Prayer

*Preached by Mark Reid
Maidstone Road Baptist Church 9/12/07
© Mark Reid 2007
Scriptural Quotes TEV*