



It's interesting that the book of Ephesians intentionally starts with a reminder of who we are instead of instructions on what we should do. This is interesting because we love to do things and love it when our doing aligns with striving for greatness.

The Giants are striving for another championship and we're all cheering them on.

The 49ers are striving for a new stadium that will be better than Candlestick. That won't be difficult! The new stadium will be bigger, nicer and cleaner.

Our schools are constantly striving for better test scores.

As individuals, we strive for improvements too. Improving our marriage with a conference; improving our physical fitness with a gym membership; gaining a new career skill with a conference.

We live in a doing and striving world. Yet Ephesians is slamming on the brakes, purposely ignoring all of this and giving us this message: Before you do anything, remember who you are.

As we watch this short clip from the movie *The Lion King*, consider how Simba has become lost and confused in life because he has forgotten who he is. In this scene his dead father visits him and reminds Simba of who he is.

(The Lion King movie clip shown)

The message of Ephesians 1:3-14 is similar as God reminds and affirms us of our identity. Last week we saw in Ephesians 1:3-10 that we have a new identity that's been given to us. When we surrendered our lives to Jesus Christ, God took our old identity away and gave us a New Identity.

He **chose** me: "for he chose us in him before the creation of the world" (v. 4)

He **adopted** me: "he predestined us for adoption to sonship" (v. 5)

He **redeemed** me: "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (v. 7)

He **revealed** his mystery to me: "he made known to us the mystery" (v. 9)

These are four of the six characteristics of our New Identity we see in Ephesians 1. Today we're going to learn the remaining two. But before we get to those, it's important to remember that this New Identity was God's free gift to us.

Ephesians 1:7 says this New Identity was given to us according to "*the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us.*" All of the action is on God's part. God gives. We receive. And God is an extravagant giver.

I envision that as the Apostle Paul was receiving these words from God to write this letter, the interaction would have looked something like this:

God: "Tell them they are chosen."

Paul: "Oh, that's a good one."

God: "And tell them they are adopted like a son, with full rights of inheritance."

Paul: "Oh yea, that's a really good one."

God: "Tell them that in Christ they are redeemed by the blood of Jesus."

Paul: "Yes!"

And it just keeps going. It's like the faucet is turned up full blast and the children of God are getting soaked in the blessing of their New Identity.

He doesn't want us to rush off to do and strive yet. He wants us to understand it; to soak in it; to fully receive it. In our verses today, he adds two new descriptions to our New Identity and then reminds us how this New Identity is attained.

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, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:11–14).

The fifth description of our New Identity we read in these verses is: he made us his inheritance. Verse 11 reads, "*In him we were also chosen ...*" The Greek word used here is *Kleroo*, which means "to give or receive an inheritance," meaning that the verse's full meaning is, "In him we were also chosen as his inheritance ..."

Also notice the pronoun shift to “we” in verse 11. In verses 3–10 the all-inclusive “us” has been used. This means that Paul is addressing fellow Jewish Christians in verses 11 and 12. The idea of the Jewish people being God’s inheritance was not a new idea to them. Since the time of Moses God has been telling them this.

“But as for you, the LORD took you and brought you out of the iron-smelting furnace, out of Egypt, to be the people of his inheritance, as you now are” (Deuteronomy 4:20).

“He who is the Portion of Jacob is not like these, for he is the Maker of all things, including the people of his inheritance—the LORD Almighty is his name” (Jeremiah 51:19).

Now God includes the Gentile Christians as his inheritance too. Look at verses 13 and 14. These verses are written to Gentile Christians because we see the pronoun shift to “you” in verse 13. Then in verse 14 it reads, *“...a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession...”* Verse 11 uses the word “inheritance” to mean the “inheritance of God.”

As the word is repeated here, the question Biblical scholars and your pastors have been asking this week is: Is the inheritance in verse 14 **our** inheritance or **God’s** inheritance? The way the NIV reads would lead you to believe it is ours because it reads “... our inheritance.” However, it seems most probable that since at the end of the verse it says we are “God’s possession” that the inheritance is referring to God’s inheritance as well. The Greek language can easily be translated “... a deposit guaranteeing the inheritance **of us** until the redemption of those who are God’s possession ...” This is the translation many scholars and your pastors prefer. Meaning that in verse 11 and verse 14, the fifth description of our New Identity is given: We were chosen as his inheritance, both Jewish and Gentile Christians.

That’s some heavy intellectual Biblical analysis. I may have lost some of you along the way. If I did, tune back in with me and let’s give our minds the ability to process this information; to wrap our minds around this idea. God chose, with no outside influence, to make us his inheritance. What does this mean?

in · her · it · ance

noun

1. something that is or may be inherited; property passing at the owner’s death to the heir or those entitled to succeed; legacy.

God has chosen at the end of the earth to make his people the possession he inherits. It’s like a lawyer opening the last will and testament document and reading, “And God has left to Himself the following possessions, ... (names)”. At the end of it all, God

has planned that he wants us to be the thing he gets. And he is excited about it!

There is one more characteristic of our New Identity: He sealed us with the Spirit. This is the sixth and final one.

When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, (1:13b).

A seal indicates ownership. It was a mark or a brand placed on slaves or animals. If you have a seal on you, you are owned by someone. Because we are God’s possession, God owns us and we bear that by the seal of the Holy Spirit. The seals people were familiar with were placed on the skin but God is describing an internal seal: the seal of the Holy Spirit placed on our hearts. Some of you might be thinking that it’s strange or maybe objectionable to be owned. You might say, “I do what I want, when I want. No one owns me.” As Americans, we celebrate the value of freedom.

A seal provides protection. In Ezekiel 9:4 God gives these instructions to his angels: *“Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over the detestable things that are done in it.”*

The Lord instructed this mark or seal to be placed on the foreheads of the people who were still believers in him during a very dark and rebellious time of Israel’s history. After the seals were placed on the foreheads, the Spirit of God moved through the city of Jerusalem and killed everyone without a mark. Men, women, children, it didn’t matter the age. No seal equaled death.

The Holy Spirit is placed as a seal on the heart of every Christian as protection from God’s wrath, just like that. This sealing happens the moment you believe in him—not something that happens at baptism or at some secondary prayer experience. When you surrender your life to Jesus Christ, your heart is sealed with the Spirit.

Let’s look at these six characteristics of our New Identity:

- » He **Chose** me
- » He **Adopted** me
- » He **Redeemed** me
- » He **Revealed** His mystery to me
- » He made us **His inheritance**
- » He **Sealed** us with the Spirit

God thoroughly covers our New Identity because he wants to shape us. People who don’t know their identity are characterized by a life-long pursuit to find themselves. God is saying, “I found you, stop looking. This is who you are.”

To reveal how important our identity is, do this experiment with me. Think how you’d react to the following situations:

Your boss gives you a warning that you'd better improve or termination is coming.

You learn that a friend is spreading false accusations about you.

Nothing you ever do is good enough to warrant the praise of your parent.

You give in to that temptation—again.

People were counting on you to make the right decision and you made the wrong one.

I've been in every one of these situations and I bet you have too. The natural response, the response the Bible calls fleshly because we're grasping to find our identity, is:

» insecurity

» anger

» doubt

» fear

» self-hate

» shame

God is belaboring the point of our New Identity here because he wants us to be shaped by it. He wants us to lavish in it. He wants this truth to be woven into our very souls. He wants every decision, every motive, every word in our lives to be the result of our New Identity.

How familiar are you with these truths of your New Identity? The more familiar you are with them, the better success you'll have in acting according to them.

People have different kinds of reactions to this. Some think, "I'm not worthy of this amazing New Identity." Some think, "I am completely worthy of this amazing New Identity." And to both God gives the message—this New Identity is God's Gift and God's Plan.

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,... (1:13).

The New Identity is God's Gracious Gift. Eleven times in verses 3–14 Paul tells us that all of this is "in Christ" or "in him." You

hear the message of truth (the Gospel). You believe the Gospel. Salvation was God's plan from the very beginning.

"We were predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purposes of his will" (v. 11)

The "plan" is that we "might be for the praise of his glory" (v. 12)

The plan is repeated "to the praise of his glory" (v. 14)

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8–9).

Let's look at this picture again. Imagine that you are sitting under this fountain:

» God has chosen to turn on the faucet of his blessings because it was his plan.

» God has chosen to sit you under its flow.

» The droplets of water that are rushing over you are God saying: I have chosen you. I have adopted you and made you a special part of my family.

» This adoption was not free. In fact, in order to redeem you I had to pay for you. It cost me the blood and death of my Son, Jesus Christ.

» I did this because I love you.

» I've revealed mysteries to you relating to my Word.

» I've made you my special inheritance at the end of time.

» And just so nothing can hinder my plan, I've placed the Holy Spirit on your heart. Nothing can hinder my plan. This will take place. Count on it. Soak in it. Lavish in it. The old has gone and the new has come.

» Don't rush out to do anything. The natural response is for you to praise me and glorify me.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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