

“Who We are in Christ”

Ephesians 1:4-7/Ephesians 2:1-7

Introduction

The LA Times once ran a story about an elderly couple who were found dead in their apartment. When an autopsy was done, it was found that they died of malnutrition and starvation. (I know this sounds like a very sad story. A poor couple, no money, too proud to ask for help) – It is a sad story until you find out the reason it made the papers is the investigators found they had 40,000 dollars in cash in paper bags in their closet. – now the story is sad for a different reason.

- they had all the money they needed, but lived as if they had none
 - So too – so many Christians so much in Christ, so much wealth to give us the ability to walk with the Lord– not is some different future – but things we have right now
- Yet so many live like spiritual paupers

Many Christians are dying of spiritual malnutrition

- not because they lack the resources
 - but simply because they are not plugged into the riches they have in Christ
 - Because they have not understood what these riches mean to their lives
- And Paul’s heart for the church in Ephesus, and my heart for you
 - Is that we would realize this blessing, and apply them to our lives that we might walk with God

And so Paul excited about these blessings, writes the mother of all run on sentences

- 264 words, 12 verses – His Grammar teacher would have been going nuts
 - but Paul can’t help it – we are so blessed!!!

In these verses we see who we are in Christ – starting with..

Who are we in Christ?

#1 – We are chosen

- The first blessing we are given to consider is this truth that we are chosen by God
 - It is called the doctrine of election by theologians – and it basically means God picked you

Now this idea that God choose you causes some problems with problem people

- some see this idea that God choose you and then they assume that that means we have no responsibility in the process
 - that your salvation was predetermined, and you are either in or you are not – it is not your choice, just a luck of the draw
- now others think that through and it so seems too contradictory of what they know about God and His love for all men - that they go to the other extreme
 - no it wasn’t God choice alone, it was my choice alone – God knew I would choose Him so He choose me – it is really all about me – I’m a good choice
- And the church has been fighting and dividing over this for centuries

But listen to me closely – the very fact that there is a argument is evidence the Bible hints at both

- because neither side is pulling theology out of the air
 - it comes from the Bible
- There are passages like this one in Ephesians chapter 1, and Romans chapter 9 – that teaches clearly salvation begins with the Lord, not you, that on your own you don’t have the ability to seek the Lord (Romans chapter 3 states)

But at the same time you have many passages that seem to say you have some responsibility to choose the Lord

- Take the most famous verse in all the Bible, John 3:16 – where we are told – **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life”– John 3:16**

- Your future is not predetermined – it is open to whosoever

Another place is Romans 10:13 – Where Paul writes “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” – Romans 10:13 - there is part of this that is up to you to respond – and whosoever wants to, can

So who is right???

- does God make the decision and you have no part in the matter
 - or is it up to you to choose??
- Friends the Bible teaches both
 - How can that be – that is not possible, every other truth in the Bible I totally understand, so there has to be an answer to this one
- Really every other truth
 - What about the Hypostatic Union – Jesus was both fully God and fully man at the same time – how can you be both 100 of one thing and 100 of another – I don’t know but the Bible teaches it

Or what about the Trinity

- Three yet one
 - Yeah that is not easy to understand with our little puny brains

I have heard the whole process described this way – It seems to make more sense when you look at salvation through the eyes of the Trinity

- To God the Father – He choose you in eternity past
 - And to Him at that moment you were saved
- To God the Son – You were saved when He paid for your sin upon the cross
 - But to God the Holy Spirit – you are not saved until you respond to His work in your life, until you respond to God’s choice, and Christ’s work
 - And I like this picture

But I believe both sides are right on

- that God choose me and at the same time in His sovereignty, He sovereignly allows me to be responsible for the decision
 - well it doesn’t compute!!!!
- Well, you see to me if God was small enough for me to totally understand I don’t know if He would be big enough for me to worship
 - And there is part of this I just don’t get at times, but I believe it because it is in the Word

And instead of fighting over it, dividing because of it - I believe we just need believe it

- When we come to Ephesians 1 I am in awe that God choose me
 - And when I come to John 3 – I realize I better respond to that choice
- In Ephesians 1 I am overwhelmed with the fact God picked me, me and you individually, not because He had to and because you earned it
 - But Because He simply wanted you

And when I study John and Romans, I realize hey, I better go with that choice

- and I am challenged to choose life, to choose the Lord, to submit my life to Him

Don’t fight, don’t divide, just be amazed at what the Lord has done for you, and what you should do in response

- Do you need to respond to the Lord – absolutely

But tonight – would you just enjoy the fact God choose you??

- He says here before the foundation of the world
 - It wasn't because of you
 - It wasn't because you earned it
- It was because God wanted to – He wanted you

Why not just rejoice that God choose you

- that God actually wanted you
 - that reality blows me away

That the Lord specifically asked for to be on His team

- Do you remember in elementary school when they picked teams for dodge ball, or kick ball or some kind of ball
 - What a traumatic stressful situations for kids - That for me was a high pressure situation
- And I experienced both sides
 - In elementary school if the sport we were playing was based on size, I was picked first – now that might be a stretch of your imagination – but you have to understand I was 5 foot 8 in sixth grade – 5 8 how tall are you now – 5 8 or shrinking
 - You see my dad was 6 three, and I was well on my way, I came down with Juvenile Diabetes, type one and I stopped growing
- Now that is bad now, but 4th – 8th grade, I was big, and I would be picked first – it was awesome

But when it came to baseball and softball

- Well, I also learned to be proficient in golf at that early age, and the golf swing is way different than the baseball swing – you dip down, weight transfers differently, and so I couldn't hit a baseball or a softball to save my life – swing batter, batter and a miss every time, always low, always. So when it was softball games – I would be sitting there with the guys with the pocket protectors
- And just embarrassing – hey what about Duff, no, he has never actually hit the ball, take the girl with one arm – she is great with that one arm
 - Seriously, a hit to young guys pride

But those others times, some of you have experiences this and maybe you haven't but when it was games I could play – I loved being picked first

- the kids were saying
 - we want you – we think you are valuable to what we are doing
 - we think you can do it – we choose you

And guys we need to understand this is what God has done for us

- He has said – I want you
 - you are valuable to Me
 - I want to use you in what I am doing

And we need to see this – so we can understand this

- and not just understand this, and not just feel good because of it
 - so we can submit to it and let the wealth that we have been picked by God grow us into what we need to be

You see you were picked for no other reason, than God truly wanted you

- but you were picked for a purpose – It's right there in the text – so you would be holy and without blame before Him in love
 - you were picked for no reason, God just loved you
 - but you were picked for a reason – so God could make you Holy

That is God's purpose

- now how is this wealth to you

- because if God wants you to be Holy
- And you want you to be Holy
- Guess what is going to happen – you are going to be Holy – it is going to happen
- You just need to submit to the process
 - That there are certain things in this life God tells you to get away from – not to be a kill joy, not to ruin your fun
 - But because He understands those things will short circuit the process
- There are things to get away from and there are things to get plugged into
 - To abandon yourself to
 - Not because God will love you more if you consistently read and spend time in prayer and worship and Bible study
 - But in that environment you will grow
- And sin will loose its grip
 - How do you know?
 - Because God said that is what He wants to do

But I feel like some of us, being picked on His team which is a good team to be on, seem to spend a lot of time playing for the enemy

I mean how dumb would it be if you were chosen on those elementary school teams and then started scoring for the other – some really big kid would beat you up

- and yet that is what we do
 - God has chosen us to be with Him, to live for Him, so He can work in us
 - And yet we may say we know this intellectually, but we don't submit to it practically, and we live for the world, for the enemy

And I bring this up to challenge you

- submit to God's choice – let Him work in you
 - get into His word
 - spend time every day in prayer
 - See if you don't grow and have victory
- God has chosen you

#2 – We are adopted

- Guys listen, not only does God want you on the team, He wants you in the family!!!!
 - This is a huge thing!!!!

You see it is one thing to be on the team

- it is another thing to be in the family

Seriously, most of you know, you are at work, with the team, with customers, with people you care about

- but even with them, there are times you want to close the office door and send them away
 - but then your son runs in, or you hear your daughter coming down the hallway
 - I don't know about you – but they are always welcome in my office
- If we are having a counseling session and they come in, some of you have experienced this, I will send them as soon as possible, but I am not bummed if they are there
 - They are my kids, they are my family
 - They have access like no one else – family just does
- And think about that a second when it comes to what God just told you
 - He just told you, not only did I pick you to be on the team
 - But then I adopted you, so you would be part of the family

Listen, if you don't get it yet, to be adopted by God, or by anyone has serious ramifications

- we don't understand how amazing this is because we don't understand what it meant to be adopted in Roman days

Adoption to a Roman mind was how you would come into your inheritance, the way you became legitimate

- Fathers would adopt the sons they wanted to be their heir, and sometimes, oftentimes it would not be the actually son
 - Of all the original ten Caesars – not one passed the Empire on to their real sons, but their adopted sons
 - You see to be adopted was to be chosen to be blessed – it was to be given special access

And in those times a child wouldn't even be the heir until he was adopted, until that time he was no different than a slave living in the household

That is Paul's point in Galatians 4:1-7

"Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, 2 but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. 3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. 4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

- And God says – I have adopted you!!!!
 - You are now a son, a daughter
 - You can now say "Abba Father"

Abba Father

- those most intimate of Jewish phrases for their dads

It means papa, daddy

- oh my little Aleah, my son Jonathan, my precious Haley – they don't call me pastor Jason, well Jonathan does, he sits in my chair and says, I'm pastor Jason

But when he is talking to me, my name is Daddy

- I like you guys a lot, I care about you deeply
 - But they are my kids, I am their Abba, their Daddy
 - I would do just about anything for you
- But they have my ear and my heart
 - And instead of being mad because why don't you feel that way about me
 - Would just realize the implications – God does feel that way about you
- You have the creator of the Universe's ear
 - You have His heart
 - You are on His mind
 - He is your Abba, your papa, your Daddy
 - You are in the family

Why do we walk around like Spiritual Paupers?

- I don't know if I can have victory
- I don't know if I can be effective
- I don't know how things are going to work out
 - Do you really believe God has adopted you as a son or a daughter?
 - Because you can't with that attitude

Do you know you are a child of the most High God

- better question
 - are you living like it
 - does your prayer life reflect it
 - Do you spend time with him, like He's a family member you actually want to be around
- Or are you moping around life
 - Never going to have victory

Hey, I know you don't deserve it, neither do I

- but you are a child of the King, so stop acting like you have nothing
 - like no one is on your side
 - You are on the team – He has chosen you
 - You are in the family – He has adopted you

#3 – We are accepted

- Not only are you on the team in that He choose you
 - Not only are you in the family – because He has adopted you –

But get this, you are not the black sheep of the family either, because He has made you acceptable

- You see I think we realize we are on the team
 - But I am just someone on the bench
- And maybe you even realize I am in the family
 - But you see yourself as that guy, that guy at Christmas, who you are related to somehow, but from the minute he walks in to the minute he leaves you are repulsed by the idea with everything that is in you
 - He is family, because He has to be family
- And some of you picture God seeing you this way
 - **Oh its you, I thought it was one of the kids I love, but no – It's black sheep Billy, how long is this going to be, you are not praying for long, are you**

Guys that is not it with you and the Lord

- now maybe that is what you deserve
 - but that is not how it is
 - He has made you acceptable
- Now I know that is hard for some of you to realize
 - You have let Him down too many times
 - You have gone your own way too often
 - But precious ones – you are accepted by Him

But how – I mean, I am a sinner, I do so many things wrong – how is it that God has accepted me

- Well, one more blessing

#4 – We are redeemed

“In Him we have redemption through His blood”

- To really understand what a blessing that is, we need to understand what the word “redeem” means and where it comes from

The word “redeem” means to “set free by paying a price”

- the Romans had 6 million slaves in their population
 - they were bought and sold like furniture
 - yet they were some people who would buy slaves with the sole purpose of setting them free
- There were certain legal processes that had to be followed in order to complete this
 - And the word for the process, the legal term “lutron” is the base for the word in English Redemption

The word “redeem” comes from this process certain people would go through in order to pay a price for the purpose of setting a slave free.

- Well, Paul takes this word and uses it to describe what God the Son – Jesus Christ has done for us
 - He has bought you and me – to set us free!

And this verse also tells us what He bought us with

- Jesus paid our price with His own blood
 - You see, God had declared that sin must be punished
 - And all over the Old and New Testament that truth is repeated over and over again
 - The punishment was the shedding of blood

In fact Hebrews 9:22 says, “Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.” – Hebrews 9:22

In the Old Testament every Jewish man was to offer sacrifices for his family - Something innocent had to die

- But we are told that the blood of bulls and goats could only cover sin, it covered them for a time so God could still deal with the sinful people
 - But in the New Testament we learn of the coming of the Messiah
 - And He was killed on the cross for every single one of us
 - But there was a purpose to that death

Jesus was fulfilling the requirement that must have been paid for my sin and for your sin

- He was being that sacrifice for us
 - His was the blood that must be spilled to take sin away
 - And so Jesus did it, He paid for you and me

But I want you to understand, I want you to see the implications of the word redeem

- He does not just redeem us for no reason at all – that is not what that word means
 - He has redeemed us to set us free
- Not free to do what ever you want – because if you haven’t figured it out yet – the freedom of your flesh, is the greatest bondage you will ever be under
 - He died not to set you free to do whatever

But Jesus died to free you from so many things

- you are free from the Law and guilt
 - you don’t have to work you way to heaven, always trying but never knowing if you have pleased God
- You have – because of your relationship to Jesus
 - Just enjoy it
 - You are free from the slavery of sin, control of the enemy

We see this whole process illustrated in the first few verses of Ephesians chapter 2 – let’s look at that and we will be done tonight

Ephesians 2:1-7 – The Illustration of Chosen & Redeemed

The Illustration of Our Past – Eph. 2:1-3

- What Paul is doing here is painting a really black background of where you were
 - It is so bleak the translators added the words “You he made alive” to make you feel better through the tuff reality of our past before we get to the good news
 - But you can just cross those out and it makes more sense – “You were dead!!!!”
 - Pretty bleak past

But the reason Paul is speaking this way is so you would understand how amazing it is what God has done – and how far we have really come by the Grace of God

- It is like a when you buy a wedding ring, so often they set it on this really black background in order to make the jewel stand out – black bleak background

Our past was bleak – How bleak - you were dead!!!!

- Doesn't get worse than that!!!
- Paul does not say – you were misguided, you were a victim of circumstance or your upbringing
 - no – He states it just as it is – you were dead!

And Paul lists the reasons for this – there are 2

- We were dead because of our trespasses and your sins

A Trespass – is willful act of disobedience

- and all of us have experienced this
 - you knew what to do, you knew what was right, and you did the opposite
 - It has happened since you were the smallest of child

Years ago I was teaching at our fellowship in McKinney and my youngest daughter was going up the stairs at the people's home and so we said to her Aleah, don't go up there, come back down. She looked at me, she looked up the stairs – and she kept walking – I thought you sinner – but in reality – no – your transgressor – and I know where she got it – from me!!!

- How many times - You and I start to walk down the wrong path, the Lord says, "Jason" – and I look up, and so many times to my shame, I do it anyway
 - That is a trespass – and that separates us from God
 - But that is the only reason for separation

Sin – simply means missing the mark

- the English word comes from an old game of archery where you would try to hit a target with an arrow, and if you missed you were called a sinner, and you owed everybody a coke or something – it was missing the mark
 - and the thing is – you can be trying to hit the mark and still miss
- The mark biblically is perfection
 - And you and I, though we try
 - And you may be better at hitting the mark than me – we all still miss
- Romans says **"all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God."** – **Romans 3:23**

And that was where we were

- dead – separated from God
 - Walking along in this world – sinners, transgressors
 - That word 'walk' there is interesting – it literally means to "meander"

You know the difference

- if not all you need to do is watch Christy and me in a shopping mall
 - I walk – with purpose and direction
 - She – meanders

Paul says that is what your life was like before you knew the Lord

- you may have thought you knew where you are headed but you didn't
 - you are being taken this way and then the next
 - meandering along
- Thinking all the while you were in control, but that is not what the word of God says

We were in rebellion, and because of that, Paul calls our past condition "children of wrath"

- That was where we were at, that was our condition
 - We were ready for judgment from God

- We were a great big mess
- We were dead
- But understanding how bleak the past was, helps us to appreciate the present...
 - What is our present...

The Illustration of Our Past – Eph. 2:1-3

The Illustration of Our Present – Eph. 2:4-5

Our present is summed up by one little but very powerful phrase – “But God”

- I think my favorite things about life is the But Gods
 - When all is lost, when all seems to be in despair, but God then comes in, brings order out of chaos – beauty for ashes

It has always been this way

- In fact Genesis 1 – God created the heavens and the earth
 - Verse 2- But the earth was without form and void

But then verse 3 - the world was without form and void and then (the but God) the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the water

- the world was without form and void and all seemed to be lost and then the Lord was inserted into the equation

That I what has happened in our lives God created man to know Him and walk with Him – He created us to walk in purity and relationship

- and yet because of our sin, because of our transgression – our lives became without form and void – all seems lost, all seems given over to the evil one – bleakness
 - But God!!! – But God – But God
 - God enters the mess
 - And makes us alive
 - It’s all over the Scripture – Joseph, Moses, Job, Daniel – but God, but God, but God
 - God enters the mess and makes beauty from ashes

Remember precious believers - Jesus did not come to make bad men good, He didn’t come to make good men better – He came to make dead men alive

- the key is not reformation – it’s regeneration
 - we think if we could just reform Washington
 - if we could just legislate righteous – oh the world would be a magical place –
- The key is not reformation - it is regeneration
 - And that is what God has done - He enters the mess, He enters that which is without form and void – and he brings order out of chaos – beauty from ashes
- That is our present, that is our reality
 - But God – But God – But God

But God crashed into our darkness

- Because He loves us,
 - What are you up against?
 - I don’t know what to do – but I do know whose hands you are in – and they love more than you will ever know
- I don’t know how, I don’t know when – But I know Him and it will work out in your life!!!
 - And it is going to work out!!!
 - How can I be so sure...
 - Well I just don’t see our present condition – I see...

The Illustration of Our Past – Eph. 2:1-3

The Illustration of Our Present – Eph. 2:4-5

The Illustration of Our Future – Eph. 2:6-7

- we will one day be with Him
 - Some Christians who are still alive when Jesus comes for His church will be caught up – I Cor 15, I Thess 4
 - Those who are not alive – will be raised up
 - And we will all be with Him

The language, the tense in the Greek, and you can see it in the English makes this sound like it has already happened

- and you need to understand that is the point

As God is doing the work in our lives, our future is more than a maybe – it is certain reality

- So much so – God speaks of it, as if it had already happened
 - You have heard it said, ‘we don’t fight for victory, but from victory”
 - We make it – you will be there with Him one day
- It is your future - It is your destiny – that is who you are IN Christ – chosen and redeemed – for a purpose, for Him – Trust Him and let Him work!!!!