

Welcome to our podcast

Going to continue our study of Ephesians today

Looking at Ephesians 1.3-14

You might want to pause this podcast now and read the passage for yourself

(pause)

Sermon

It's exciting and more than a little bit daunting to start reading through Ephesians

And try to understand it and apply it to our lives.

It's exciting

And more than a little bit daunting to be reading the Bible at all.

Reading the Bible is such an important part of what we do as Christians

(pause)

Some of us may struggle in reading the Bible.

Not really knowing where to start.

Feeling overwhelmed with all that's in it.

Concerned about not really knowing enough.

(pause)

The starting point is finding

And using a modern translation of the Bible that
you like.

That you find easy to read

And understandable.

The Good News is what we are using here in
church.

My approach in reading the Bible is to do it as a
study exercise,

like you used to do in English while at school.

I find it helps me the most to have a notebook
or paper of some kind

to write things down as I read the passage.

This may be thoughts as to what the passage
means,

questions about it

or even prayers that I am making in response to
what I read.

As you read and write and ask questions
the Spirit will speak and help you to
understand.

Questions to keep in mind as you read –

What does this mean?

How do I apply this in my own life as a disciple?

What are you saying to me God.

Or you might ask questions of God.

Saying I disagree with this,

I don't like this.

I really struggle with this.

(pause)

The bible,

The word,

Is the place where we meet with our living

And loving heavenly Father.

The bible,

The word,

Is the place where Jesus speaks to us,

Comes close to us.

The bible,

The word,

Is what the Spirit uses to teach us

And help us to understand what it is to be a disciple of Jesus.

(pause)

When I did this kind of exercise with my children when they were young we would begin by lighting a candle,

listening to some Christian music

and having a short prayer or time of silence.

(pause)

And we would end with a time of prayer.

That often meant writing prayers in a prayer diary.

A booklet that we had made for prayers.

It's also good to read and pray in the same place each day if that's possible.

For some it's also good to do it at the same time each day but that's not always possible.

We read and study the bible as this is the place in which we encounter the living Word.

Jesus.

This is the place where we come close to God and through which God speaks to us by means of His Spirit.

(pause)

It is through reading the bible that we encounter God

and come to know His will for us in our daily lives.

That is why we pray asking God for us to open our minds

and teach us all things through His Spirit as Jesus promised would take place.

(pause)

Let's though begin to tackle this passage from Ephesians 1.3-14

In these verses Paul talks of God the Father and all that the Father has done for us.

He talks of Jesus his son and all that God has done for us through him.

And the Holy Spirit.

The stamp of ownership that God has put on us

(pause)

The trinity is so important in our faith

And to our understanding of our faith.

God the Father,

God the Son,

God the Holy Spirit.

(pause)

One thing we don't get as we read this passage in English is that v 3-14 is one long, complete sentence.

Paul started on a thought and has just kept going till he got to the end of that thought,

11 verses later for us.

He starts off by giving thanks to God

And ends up by praising God's glory.

(pause)

And in between the idea of thanks and praise to God repeats itself.

God is praised in these verses for having chosen and adopted the church as God's own people.

Verse 4 states that "God chose us" to be holy and without fault,

and verse 5 adds, "that through Jesus Christ he would make us his children."

Paul pours out praise to God for having chosen us.

(pause)

Paul starts by giving thanks to God for Jesus.

Encourages us to give thanks to God for Jesus.

Thanks to God,

Creator,

Ruler of all.

Thanks to God who is also Father of Jesus.

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And Father of us all,

As he has made us his children through Jesus.

‘God had already decided that through Jesus Christ he would make us his children –

this was his pleasure and purpose.’

(pause)

Jesus means so much to us.

He’s our Saviour

And our Lord.

(pause)

Because of him our sins are forgiven.

‘For by the blood of Christ we are set free,
that is, our sins are forgiven.’

We are cleansed, Made whole.

(pause)

And so we thank God,

Jesus’ Father,

Who sent Jesus his son to die for us.

‘Let us give thanks to the God

and Father

of our Lord Jesus Christ!’

(pause)

We have been blessed by God because of our
relationship with Jesus

We have been blessed by God through our union with Christ Jesus.

Our union with Christ comes first though.

(pause)

It's because of our union with Jesus that we have been blessed.

We are blessed in having a union with Jesus.

We are blessed in knowing Jesus.

Spiritually blessed,

Not necessarily materially blessed.

(pause)

Some Christians make that mistake.

They think to be blessed by God means to be materially blessed.

But they think that if you are not materially blessed then you have not been blessed by God.

That you don't have a relationship with Jesus.

If have a relationship with Jesus then you'll also have all the material blessings that you need and want.

And we all know that that is rubbish.

(pause)

Even before the world was made,

Before anything was in existence,

God had chosen us to be his through our union with Christ.

Even before the world was made

God had planned everything out.

That we would be His people because of Jesus,

'Because of his love God had already decided that through Jesus Christ he would make us his children'

(pause)

Even before the world was made,

God knew what was going to happen.

Knew that his perfect creation would be damaged.

Knew that people would turn away from him.

And he'd all ready planned how he would deal with that.

'For by the blood of Christ we are set free'

(pause)

He'd planned that Jesus would come and die.

He'd planned that through Jesus death people would be set free,

Would be forgiven their sins

And so would be able to come back to Him.

(pause)

Because of His love,

Because of his love for His creation,

God had all ready decided that through Jesus
He would make us His children.

‘Because of his love

God had already decided that through Jesus
Christ he would make us his children –

this was his pleasure and purpose.’

(pause)

You can’t get to God except through Jesus,

The key to everything is Jesus.

He through whom the world was made in the
first place.

(pause)

Need to read Collosians 1.16 on to get this
idea.

'For through him God created everything in heaven and on earth,

the seen and the unseen things, including spiritual powers,

lords,

rulers,

and authorities.

God created the whole universe through him and for him.'

(pause)

Jesus is the key to everything.

The central figure between us and God.

It's through Jesus that we have been blessed and made God's children.

If it wasn't for Jesus we wouldn't have that relationship with God now.

'Let us praise God for his glorious grace,
for the free gift he gave us in his dear Son!'

(pause)

So we need to praise God for the free gift that
he has given us.

Give thanks to God for his gift to us.

Jesus.

Give thanks to God for making us His children
through Jesus,

Through his blood being shed,

Through his death on a cross.

(pause)

That is the gift that He gave us in His Son.

To be His daughters and sons.

By Jesus death we are set free.

Because Jesus died our sins are forgiven.

‘For by the blood of Christ we are set free, that is, our sins are forgiven.’

(pause)

If Jesus hadn’t died our sins would not be forgiven.

If Jesus hadn’t died we wouldn’t have the relationship with God that we do have.

(pause)

How great is the grace of God.

How great is the love of God.

That he forgives us so much.

That he sets us free from the bondage of our sins.

Sets us free by the death of His beloved Son,
Jesus.

‘For by the blood of Christ we are set free’

(pause)

And why are we set free by the blood of Christ.

To what purpose,

To what end.

‘so that we would be holy and without fault before him.’

As it says in v4,

In the last part of that verse.

(pause)

Holy has the idea of being set apart.

Something is kept holy,

Used for holy purposes.

Not for everyday use.

(pause)

It has the idea of being different,

Got to keep that idea in our minds.

Being different.

We are a holy people,

We are God's chosen people.

We are different,

Set apart.

We need to work hard to keep that idea of
distinction in our minds

And in how we live our lives.

(pause)

'so that we would be holy

and without fault before him.'

This is also sacrificial language.

Being without fault.

The animals used in sacrifice needed to be inspected first.

If they had any blemish they were rejected.

They were considered unfit to be used in an offering to God.

(pause)

Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice.

He was without fault.

Worthy of being used as a sacrifice.

(pause)

We are called to be living sacrifices Paul says in Romans 12.

‘Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God,

dedicated to his service

and pleasing to him.’ **Romans 12.1**

We are able to come before God as holy

Without fault,

Because of our union with Jesus.

Because of Jesus sacrifice for us.

(pause)

We are offerings to God

Our whole lives are an offering to God.

We must be perfect,

We must be holy,

We must be without fault

As we come before Him to worship Him.

As we come before Him to praise Him.

(pause)

And we are perfect,

We've been made perfect by our union with Christ.

By his death on a cross.

By His blood being shed.

'For by the blood of Christ we are set free,
that is, our sins are forgiven.'

(pause)

We've come back full circle again.

And see that Christ is central to everything

And our union with him is of the utmost importance.

The deep,

Personal relationship that we have with Him.

(pause)

'God did what he had purposed,'

God did what he wanted to do.

It was His choice.

His will that we might be redeemed through Jesus.

That we be redeemed through Jesus blood being shed.

‘For by the blood of Christ we are set free’

(pause)

Could He have done it any other way.

Yes if it had been His will.

But He had chosen to do it this way before He’d even made the world.

He could have chosen another way

But He didn’t. He chose this way.

He chose Jesus to be the one through whom creation will be brought back together.

Need to read more of Colossians 1 to get a sense of this.

Colossians 1.20.

‘Through the Son, then,

God decided to bring the whole universe back to himself.

God made peace through his Son's blood on the cross

and so brought back to himself all things,

both on earth and in heaven.’

(pause)

This is a theme that Paul comes to again and again.

The redemption of the universe

Of all of creation,

Not just of us sinful people.

(pause)

Romans 8. 19-23

All of creation waits with eager longing for God to reveal his children.

For creation was condemned to lose its purpose,

not of its own will,

but because God willed it to be so.

Yet there was the hope that creation itself would one day be set free from its slavery to decay

and would share the glorious freedom of the children of God.

For we know that up to the present time all of creation groans with pain, like the pain of childbirth.

But it is not just creation alone which groans;

we who have the Spirit as the first of God's gifts also groan within ourselves

as we wait for God to make us his children and set our whole being free.

(pause)

This is the secret plan that God has made known to us?

‘that creation itself would one day be set free from its slavery to decay’

This is the secret plan that God has made known to us?

That all of creation is going to be redeemed,

Brought back to the perfect state that it was first created to be,

‘to bring all creation together,

everything in heaven and on earth,

with Christ as head.’

Jesus is central to everything

And should be central to us. **(pause)**

God has a plan.

And He does things according to His plan.

Not just on a whim.

A plan that was formulated before the world was even made.

Before this plan was even needed.

God had it ready.

(pause)

And that plan had Jesus at the centre of it.

That plan had Jesus as the key

And we,

Gods chosen ones,

Play a key part in His plan too.

As His chosen people.

(pause)

'Let us, then,

who were the first to hope in Christ,

praise God's glory!

(pause)

We became God's people when we heard the true message.

The Good News that brought us salvation.

(pause)

At some time in our lives we came to believe the true message.

We came to believe in the gospel.

And so we became part of God's people.

Part of the Church,

Part of Christ's body.

(pause)

And in doing so we came to be owned by God.

As slaves are owned by their masters.

‘You believed in Christ,

and God put his stamp of ownership on you’

(pause)

And that stamp of ownership is His Spirit.

‘by giving you the Holy Spirit he had promised.’

The Holy Spirit in us shows other people that we belong to God.

That we are owned by God.

(pause)

But the Holy Spirit is also a guarantee that we will receive God’s promises.

‘The Spirit is the guarantee that we shall receive what God has promised his people,’

It’s like a down payment.

The first part of all of God's promises to us.

(pause)

The Holy Spirit is a guarantee that we will someday enter into the full possession of the blessedness of God.

Having the Spirit assures us that God will give us complete freedom.

Will have us beside Him in heaven.

All those who are His.

His sons and daughters.

Those who became His people after hearing the message.

Those who were then blessed with the Spirit.

(pause)

'Let us praise his glory!'

Amen.

'Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!'

Let us pray

Father we have so much to give thanks for.

We forget sometimes to be grateful

We live our lives with no thought to your goodness to us.

Not remembering to give thanks.

(pause)

We thank you Father that you chose us to be yours,

Even before the world was made.

You chose us to be your disciples.

You chose us to be holy.

You chose us to be your witnesses to the whole world.

So that all who see us and know us will see the
light of Christ shining out from us

And so come to believe.

(pause)

We thank you Father that we are set free,

That our sins are forgiven.

(pause)

We thank you Father for the gift that you gave
us,

Your own dear Son.

(pause)

We thank you Father that you chose us to be
your people,

In union with Jesus,

To do your will,

To fulfill your purpose.

To complete your plan.

(pause)

We thank you Father that you put your stamp of ownership on us by giving us the Holy Spirit as you had promised.

Your Holy Spirit which leads us into all truth.

Your Holy Spirit which enables us to live as your disciples.

Your Holy Spirit which

(pause)

Help us always to give thanks Father

And to share all your blessings with those around us.

(pause)

We pray for people who have lost their faith:

Hold them in the cradle of your love.

(pause)

For those who are searching for you:

Make yourself obvious so that they can find you.

(pause)

For those who don't believe they are good enough to follow you:

Show them how much you love them

And how you accept them as they are.

(pause)

And we pray for ourselves,

that we may be your true disciples,

and messengers of your love.

as we go out into the world, to work for you,

make us good news to those we meet,

(pause - ?expand the prayer here)

In Jesus name we pray, **Amen.**

Benediction

Go into your week with your ears open
to the sound of God's voice calling your name.

Go into your week with your eyes open
to see the face of Jesus in unexpected places.

Go into your week with your heart open
to receive the Spirit of God,

the Spirit of Peace.