

Blessed in Christ (Eph 1:1-14)

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Preacher: William HC

[0:00] So Ephesians 1, verse 1 to 14. I'll be reading in NLT. So, this letter is from Paul.

Chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. I'm writing to God's holy people in Ephesus who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

All praise to God, the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. Even before He made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes.

God decided in advance to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. This is what He wanted to do and it gave Him great pleasure. So we praise God for the glorious grace He has poured out on us who belong to His dear Son.

He is so rich in kindness and grace that He purchased our freedom with the blood of His Son and forgave our sins. He has showed His kindness on us along with all wisdom and understanding.

[1:12] God has now revealed to us His mysterious will regarding Christ, which is to fulfill His own good plan. And this is the plan.

At the right time, He will bring everything together under the authority of Christ, everything in heaven and on earth. Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for He chose us in advance and He makes everything work according to His plan.

God's purpose was that we Jews who were first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God. And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the good news that God saves us, or saves you.

And when you believe in Christ, He identified you as His own by giving you the Holy Spirit whom He promised long ago. The Spirit is God's guarantee that He will give us the inheritance He promised and that He has purchased us to be His own people.

He did this so we would praise and glorify Him. As Fran mentioned, we're going into a new series, not just us actually, English service.

[2:17] Because the other two services have already started. So we're one week behind, but we're all traveling through the same book this year as we go deeper into His love, part one of this year.

So it might be a new experience for you to go through a whole book of the Bible together as a church. Let me just preface before we dive right in. Let me give you three reasons I think it's worth going through whole books of the Bible during sermon time.

One reason is this. It's what God's people have done before. For example, there was a bit of a revival when God's people came back from exile in Babylon. And Nehemiah 8 records that Ezra read the law of Moses to all the people that were gathered.

And then the priest gave the sense and they explained it carefully. So we're just joining in really.

Second good reason I think of going through books of the Bible, it helps us to allow God to set the agenda for a lot of the things that He wants us to hear about.

If it was up to me, I would love to tell you every week about this topic or that topic. I've got all kinds of things I'd love to share with you. But really, it's not about me. It's about what God wants to teach us.

[3:26] And if we're going through God's Word and letting that set the agenda, then it's less driven by who's preaching. But where are we in God's Word? And what does God have to teach us?

So whether it's me, whether it's Pastor Albert, or some other person, we are listening and sitting under God's Word together. And obviously, when you go through a whole book, you can't skip the hard bits. So we will go through all kinds of passages, all kinds of topics, and we'll go through it

together.

And I think finally, yeah, I think we'll see Jesus more clearly. We all love watching our favorite TVBs or Netflix series. Who could stand just watching one episode and leaving it at that, right?

Sometimes you have to see the whole series to get the full picture. And that's what it's like going through a book of the Bible. So I hope you'll be excited. I hope this will be a benefit for us and we will all be transformed into the likeness of Christ through it.

Let me pray. Father, open our eyes now to see wonders from your Word. Help us to go deeper into your love and help us to see that in Christ, we are blessed by a Father who adopts us, a Son who has redeemed us, and a Spirit who has assured us of our salvation in Christ.

[4 : 42] I pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. A lot of banquets, a lot of Chinese New Year's dinners this past week, right? Okay. I wonder how many dishes you had out on your plate.

Someone just, when you had your big main event New Year's dinner, who had like nine dishes? Yep. Okay. Who had 10 dishes? Who had 11 or 12?

I don't know. Okay. All right. Okay. That was next level, it sounds like. Okay. All right. We can all remember some of these massive, beautiful banquets. Okay. Maybe it wasn't Chinese New Year's. Maybe it was a wedding that you went to where just dish after dish came out.

And it wasn't just that it was one good meat, you know, plate of food. It was that there was one after the other after the other and it just piled up in such goodness and kindness and grace.

Right. The book of Ephesians, I want to submit to you, is like that. Okay. Paul talks in big terms. All right. I wonder if you heard that reading that Fran just read. So many big ideas.

[5 : 42] Right. Just overflowing with grace and love and kindness. Okay. The book of Ephesians is like a Chinese New Year's banquet laid out for us. Okay. Passage after passage just rich with something for us to savor.

And one thing, one reason I think so many people over the years have loved this book is how rich it is. Yet how short it is and yet how practical it is.

Okay. It's only six chapters long. It's rich with so many good thoughts and truths about God and it's very practical as well. This is the letter, of course, we've been memorizing.

By grace you have been saved through faith. Okay. Famous verse. It's right in here. This is where we also hear some of the richest instructions on how to live as one community in Christ.

And over the next few weeks and months we're going to hear about identity, about unity, about maturity. We're going to hear about work and sex and relationships. All kinds of different topics.

[6 : 40] All in just six chapters. And most of all we'll be challenged to go deeper into his love. This is a short letter God has given us but it's more like an all-you-can-eat buffet for the Christian life.

There's something in here I think for everyone. Whether you've been a Christian all your life or whether you're still learning about what the Christian faith is about. So in our first passage we're going to look at how we are blessed in Christ.

So follow along in your Bibles. We're going to dive right in. This is God's Word. Verse 1. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God to the saints in Ephesus the faithful in Christ Jesus grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Often when you start a sermon series you might hear some facts and figures and maps of who's where and where did they go. This is possibly written in 62 AD.

I could throw you that fact. Written by the missionary Paul writing to Christians in the fifth largest city in the world at the time. That was what Ephesus would like. So cosmopolitan, full of life, all kinds of things happening there.

[7 : 50] One of the big cities. But actually I think more important than that is just to focus on what Paul says about himself. Have a look at that start again. Imagine writing a letter and you're one of the premier sent missionaries of Jesus Christ and all you say is what's there?

Right? Notice there's no long introduction of Paul's credentials. His name actually literally means small. There's no humble bragging of titles he's won or MVPs he's earned, stuff he's written and shared.

Just Paul. Paul. Who is he? He's an apostle. The word apostle means just someone who's sent. Sent one. Of Christ Jesus. Who's he writing to? He's writing to saints.

Saints, ignore what Catholics or Ancans tell you. They're not just special people that we put on a pedestal every year and we celebrate their Valentine's Day for example. He's a saint. Not just special people.

Everyone in Christ Jesus is a saint. Everyone who is set apart and faithful in him is a saint. So Paul's just writing to Christians and then he greets them with grace and peace from the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[9 : 02] Paul is sent by Jesus to the saints in Jesus and he greets them in Jesus. It's simple. What is unusual though in this letter is what he does next.

what he does next. Paul actually breaks into a long, long sentence where he just praises God or blesses God. We heard from the NLT and the NIV actually all English translations have to do something here because in the original language from verse 3 to verse 14 it is all one sentence. One sentence. Imagine that. So all our translations they kind of have to break up what Paul's saying because imagine saying all that in one breath without taking a breath.

That's what Paul's doing there. If you've ever had a meal where someone's prayed and said give thanks for the meal but then that person just goes on and on and on and on.

That's what Paul is doing right here, right now. That's Paul. And we could either respond weirdo or we could say wow! What has got him praising God for so long?

[10 : 12] For 3 to 14 verses. And that's what we're going to find out. That's what I want us to look at today. Why is he praising God? I'm going to break it up into three things today.

The reason why I do that is because one thing that's worth looking at when you read your Bibles is things that repeat over and over again. And there's a key phrase that pops up three times and it's the praise of his glory.

I wonder if you notice that in verse 6 it says to the praise of his glorious grace. And then further on down there in verse 12 he then says in order that we who are the first to hope in Christ might be for the praise of his glory.

And then one more time verse 14 when he talks about the Holy Spirit ends it with to the praise of his glory. So Paul is thinking in threes here. And so even though Paul is just basically going giving a big long blah about how he loves and praises God he's actually got a bit of logic to it.

So we see at least three reasons I think in our passage Paul praises our triune God so I want to share those three reasons. So firstly in him we are blessed with the Father's adoption from verses 3 to 6.

[11 : 21] And then secondly in him we're lavished with the Son's redemption verses 7 to 12. And then finally in verses 13 to 14 we see in him we are sealed with the Spirit's assurance.

So Ephesians 1 1 to 14 gives us three reasons to praise God. He adopts us he forgives us he assures us. Alright let's dive in let's take a look. Verse 3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ for he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight and in love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ in accordance to his pleasure and will to the praise of his glorious grace which he has freely given us in the one he loves.

Take a breath. I think it's fascinating right? The first image that Paul reaches for when he thinks of God the Father is adoption.

Adoption. Sometimes I think on Facebook like have you guys ever mucked around and adopted your friends and then added them into your family? Is that right? So like you know Rachel is like my auntie on Facebook or I don't know someone else suddenly becomes someone's dad or mum. Look, we can muck around like that right? But in all seriousness we're not going to write them into our bank accounts add them to our insurance policies leave them anything in our will maybe we might.

[12 : 48] That's what God does here. Who would do something as crazy as that? To adopt us. A father who loves his children verse 4 says before the world began.

That's who. That's who. But who has been adopted? In verse 3 Paul talks about he says praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and then verse 4 he says for he chose us.

Us. Who's the us? Here I think Paul's including himself in the mix. You see Paul was a Jew, right? He was a Jewish man. He was born Saul of Tarsus.

He was a descendant from God's people Israel and he was a fairly smart guy according to the book of Acts. He trained as a religious teacher. He lived and breathed the instructions and promises found in the Old Testament.

And yet here he just wants to praise the Father for every spiritual blessing in Christ. In Christ. Right? And remember Christ isn't just a surname like Ko or Tan.

[13:53] It's a title. Right? It's a title. Behind the idea of the word Christ is the idea of a Messiah. Messiah is a Jewish word that means God's promised king. In fact anytime it says Christ in this whole section you could probably read it as Messiah.

It's the same word in Hebrew. There's a kind of Jewishness to Paul's speech here. And yet Paul is saying to us to him and his Jewish background believers that are reading this letter it's not our family line that may God choose us.

Right? He doesn't say that. It's not our culture that may God love us and prearrange for us to be adopted into his family. What does it say? For he chose us in him in Christ.

In Christ. In the same way as many of those Jewish believers would have known about the stories of the Bible. A story like Abraham willingly offering his beloved son. Right?

Isaac. God has freely given us grace in the one he loves. He's offered his beloved. That's true love. And that's a scandal of being adopted isn't it? You don't get to choose your dad.

[15:00] If you've known or met someone who's been adopted or fostered, they don't get to choose who their parents were or are looking after them. Paul says it this way, it was God's gracious choice that we are included.

And he does it through Jesus Christ. I know some of us when we read this, especially this section of Ephesians, raise some pretty tricky questions.

Some of us really get concerned. how did God choose? Why does he choose some people to be adopted as his children but not others? It's a kind of question that Christians can get into big arguments over as well, right?

But it can also be personally really hard. We think of friends and family who don't know Jesus and then sometimes in our darker modes we go, oh God, did you choose them? Are you going to choose them? There's often three concerns I think behind questions around what we call predestination.

Three concerns. One, it's unfair, right? God chooses some people and not others. So unfair. That's one concern. Second, a truth like this, predestination, election, whatever you call it, doesn't that leave us as robots?

[16:13] We don't get to have a choice in the matter? Thirdly, another concern, a God who chooses some and not others. I don't know if I can trust that God. I don't know.

So those are the three concerns just in a nutshell that people have when they come to something like this. So Paul will address I think the first one, whether it's unfair or not, in chapter two.

In chapter two it starts like this, but you were dead in your sins and trespasses, all of you. So the short answer is no one deserves to be chosen by God. So we'll jump into that in a few weeks.

And I think verse four of this passage, if you read it again, it's going to push back on that second concern, are we going to all be robots if predestination is real?

Because Paul doesn't think so. He says he chose us in him before the creation of the world to what? To be holy and blameless. That takes work. That takes free will.

[17:11] You see, Paul has no problem to say that God chooses us and then says, now act like it. When you're adopted into the family, you take an active effort into being part of the family, taking on the family responsibilities.

And so we'll hear a lot about that in the second half of the letter where Paul gets very specific. He talks about work and money, he talks about sex, he talks about family relationships. He is fully convinced that you are not a robot when God chooses you.

You live out and work out your salvation as well. But what about that third objection? God who chooses some and not others, I'm not sure if I can trust him. I think verse 5 and 6 here helps us out. Have a look at that, right? What is it chock full of? It's chock full of love. It's chock full of words like gracious, and it's chock full of the idea of a father who has, in his good pleasure and will, freely offered us his love.

You see this? This is not a God who is fickle and mean. We cannot divorce the idea of God's choosing with God who is a father to us.

[18:23] When you do that, you're going to do mischief to the Bible, to the gospel. He is the heart of a father. You can even play it this way, right?

When did your dad start loving you? For those of you who have dads, right? Usually it's before you were born. They started thinking about you. They started to prepare a nursery for you, right? I know if I think about my children, it was when I got the ultrasound, then I realized, wow, this is real. I'm starting to love this person, right? Before they were born. God the Father loves us like that. And remember too, God chooses and predestines.

Look, he chose, for example, Israel, not because they were the biggest and brightest people, but because of his good pleasure. So God did not elect you because you were excellent.

It's in love, it says, that he predestined us. It's in accordance with his pleasure and will. It's grace that is freely given. That's how we want to phrase this idea.

[19 : 26] For Paul, the idea of being chosen by God does not move him to debate or suspicion or anger. It moves him to praise. It moves him to praise.

It's no longer about the right genes, right, or the right job or the right relatives, whether you're included in Christ. What matters most is that through Jesus the Messiah, you and I have been adopted by the Father of the universe.

And that is worth going on and on and on about. In him we are blessed with the Father's adoption. That's the first thing I think we see in this passage, to the praise of his glorious grace.

Let's have a look at the next couple of verses. I think from verses 7-12, Paul brings up another great reason to praise God. Because in him we are lavished with the Son's redemption.

We are in him lavished with the Son's redemption. Let me read verse 7-8 again. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God's grace, that he lavished on us, that he lavished on us.

[20 : 38] The sentence keeps going, the praise and blessing keeps pouring out, right? But Paul is slightly shifting his focus when he thinks about God from the Father, and what he does, now to the Son, and what he does.

In verse 7, he starts expanding on what God's beloved Son offers, and he uses the word redemption, and forgiveness, and the riches of God's grace.

one of my favorite films when I was growing up, it was called The Rock, and in it, some guys are trying to break out of a maximum security prison, tough luck, it's on an island, and so once you break out, you gotta swim to safety as well.

It seems pretty hopeless, doesn't it? It seems pretty hopeless. The word redemption here, for those who are reading the letter to the Ephesians, it would have reminded them of the hopelessness that kind of hopelessness that the Israelites felt when they were slaves in Egypt.

Some of you might know the story in the book of Exodus, how God's people were slaves that needed a jail break, and likewise, there was a time when Paul's readers, and us too, were not redeemed.

[21 : 48] They and us, we needed bailing out, we needed God to engineer a jail break. Maybe some of you here can remember a time in your life where you were hopeless, hopeless.

You were in a hopeless state spiritually. But praise God, says Paul, that we have redemption through his blood. Verse 7.

Just as for the Israelites, a lamb's blood was needed to rescue Israel from God's judgment. Jesus is now that lamb who was slain so we can have our sins forgiven.

It's the ultimate rescue, isn't it? And Paul describes this rescue, this redemption that Jesus achieves as literally, the word here says the riches of his grace, literally the wealth of his grace.

And where it says he lavished it, literally, in the original it reads, literally, he literally poured it out over us. Okay? Just like a good salad dressing or something rich and glorious that you put on food that you enjoy.

[22 : 50] That's the kind of picture that's coming to mind, right? So think of the best feast or banquet you've ever eaten. Jesus' rescue is better. Think of the fattest red packet you've gotten.

Jesus is lavish and generous and better than that. The best bouquet of roses, well, same thing. Jesus, his redemption is better and more lavish.

What's striking, I think, about Paul's praise, you know, even though we're at this point only, we already see how big a view he has of Jesus, don't we? Right? He's not just a poor man hanging on the cross, dying for our sins.

Look at verse 9. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure which he purposed in Christ, right, and then keep going, to bring all things in heaven and on earth

together under one head, even Christ.

So what was once a bit of a mystery, especially to God's people, is now made clear in Christ. God has put forward an amazing plan and it includes Jesus not just dying on the cross, but being raised up and exalted and victorious.

[24 : 01] This is the King of kings and Lord of lords. And here, Paul says that God's plan was to bring everything in heaven and on earth together under Christ.

This is mind-blowing stuff. God is not just interested in making little people believe Jesus and then just dotting them up and down the country. His ultimate plan, when the times reach their fulfillment, is for everything to come under the rule of Christ.

That's good news, isn't it? So when Paul says you and I were chosen in verse 11, right, it's part of this cosmic plan in verse 10 for everything to be summed up under Jesus the Messiah.

When Paul says we were lavished with forgiveness, and grace through Jesus, it's all part of an amazing plan from a God who has bigger plans than just your life or my life. We've got to think bigger, friends.

Ultimately, God's plan is that everything will bend to praise the Lord. Every man or woman, boy or girl, who hopes in Jesus joins heaven and earth in praising and glorifying God.

[25 : 12] I wonder if you've ever imagined church life like that. That's the choir you want to be a part of, friends. So maybe you're struggling right now. You've walked in here and you feel like you're just one voice, very weak, can't even sing much today.

Or maybe you are in a tough situation and you're even struggling to lift your head up. Paul certainly was, right? We'll learn later in this letter that he's actually in prison as he writes this letter.

And yet he is so captivated by the Lord Jesus, his Messiah, his promised king that all he can do is pour out praise. The Father adopts us.

The Son redeems us. But Paul does not stop there, does he? Right? Because in 13 and 14, those last two verses of our section, he says this, in him we are sealed with the Spirit's assurance.

In him we are sealed with the Spirit's assurance. I start our third point, I think, at verse 13 because actually this is the point in this letter where Paul actually switches pronouns.

[26 : 17] Right? Before he was talking about us and us and us, did you notice verse 13? And you were also included in Christ when you heard the word of truth. So it seems like up till now, right, Paul's been addressing fellow Jews who heard the good news of Jesus first.

That's why he used we. And then now he addresses you. So it seems like at least the people reading this letter, there were kind of at least two groups, right? Jewish background believers and then people who weren't Jewish background.

So non-Jews or Gentiles. And he says people like these are also included in the Messiah. How? Verse 13 tells us, right?

They heard the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation, and they believed in it. And they believed in it. But maybe if I was a Gentile Christian, okay, reading this letter, maybe I'm having a bit of doubt, right?

I feel like, you know, I've just joined this church, I'm just meeting all these Christians, but I mean, I didn't grow up in Sunday school. I can't trace my family line to Abraham and Isaac.

[27 : 26] You know, I'm just, I just walked in off the street and I'm starting to believe it. But I don't feel like I belong. Early in my Christian life, I remember going to like, getting invited to a Christian party.

And at a Christian party, you know, they play Christian board games. So at this, this particular board game was Bible trivia. And I just felt like such a noob.

Okay? I just sat there and listened and they just could rattle off all the answers. Everyone else on the table could rattle off these answers. You know, who was David? Who was Goliath? Who was Josiah in Kings 2? Blah, blah, blah, blah. I'm like, oh, okay.

Felt a little bit lame. I remember second guessing, right? Oh, maybe I've just got all the dumb questions. Okay? Maybe I'm a second class citizen in God's kingdom.

But remember this. Paul says this. If you have heard and believed the good news that Jesus died for sinners and you placed your hope in that Jesus, you are not a second class citizen.

[28 : 27] Okay? If you are late to the party, if this is only your first month at ES or whatever, you are most definitely not a second class citizen. In Christ, we are actually sealed with the Spirit's assurance.

All of us, including those who are late to the party. Right? That's why verse 13 continues to say this. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal. The promised Holy Spirit.

Just like you know your uni degree is legit because it has a seal in it from your university. Okay?

Right? Don't accept substitutes. Make sure you get the one with the seal.

You know your salvation is real because of the Holy Spirit. He promises to dwell in every believer.

He promises to live in the heart of everyone who believes in Jesus.

And look, there's lots of debate too about the Holy Spirit, who he is, how active he is today, how to pray to him. A good starting point, if we want to learn more about the Spirit, is to listen to what the Spirit tells us.

[29 : 28] Okay? The Spirit inspired these words. We're going to listen to him. Okay? As we read the Bible, we're going to hear in this letter as well what we need to know about the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit wants you to know this.

He is first and foremost a guarantor. He satisfies that if you hope in Jesus genuinely, you are truly a child of God. Right?

Verse 14. Look at that. He is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession to the praise of his glory.

So friends, be assured you do not need a Bible college degree or a particular spiritual experience or to have the right friend circles or to attend church for X amount of years to be included in God's family.

You don't. When you turn and hope in Christ, like these Gentiles did, as your Lord and Saviour, the Holy Spirit stamps on you, child of God, on your heart. Just like he has on Paul's, on the Jewish Ephesians, the Gentile Ephesians, and on every one of you here who believes in the Lord Jesus.

[30 : 29] He's like a down payment that you put down as you wait for our Father to complete his rescue plan through Jesus. So maybe you're here and you're not sure you're a Christian.

You've wondered, maybe I just need to be good enough or have strong enough faith. Maybe I need to do something different that will make me right with God. Paul says none of that brings assurance.

The best assurance comes from the Holy Spirit living in you. And he can offer that bulletproof assurance. How? When you turn from your sin and you trust in Jesus Christ as your King.

All right? Then you are sealed with the Spirit's assurance. Guaranteed. Guaranteed. And if you'd like to learn more about that or you're not sure, talk to the person who brought you here. Or come talk to me afterwards.

I'd love to introduce you to Jesus and make sure that you are sealed with the Spirit. Just for the last couple of minutes, I think Paul has laid out some amazing reasons, right?

[31 : 27] To praise him. We've heard that. Right? In Christ we have a Father who adopts, a Son who redeems, a Spirit who assures. I think with all this in mind, I think let's, let me suggest I think three different ways.

I'm going with Paul. Three things. That Paul's praise points I think should shape the way we praise. Really we're just continuing on from what Isaac was helping us to think through, right?

How do we praise differently in light of what God has done? And from this passage, I want to share three points. Firstly, I think point one is this. Our praise should be informed.

Some of us live our lives, I think, like people who go to a restaurant and we just order the same thing each time without looking at the menu. We just ask for the same favourite dish perhaps. But that is not how Paul praises God, right?

I mentioned at the start how this whole section is just one sentence. Very much like a stream of consciousness. And yet, it is rich with deep and different truths about who God is.

[32 : 24] God is love. God is creator. He blesses. He predestines. He adopts. He redeems. He forgives. He's gracious. He is wise. All of that in just a couple of words.

Hard to keep up writing our dictionaries. But for Paul, this knowledge leads him to worship. So friends, when you and I think about how we want to praise God more, there's no mindless repetition here.

There's no subjective feelings. I think God is like this, therefore. Paul is specific and thoughtful about why God is worthy of praise. And so should we. Right? Did you even notice that he mentions Father, Son, and Spirit, the Blessed Trinity, as he prays?

Right? He's precise, though, with his persons. Paul doesn't just ramble on and say, Spirit, thank you for adopting me, and gets it confused. Or, Father, thanks for dying on the cross. Oh, whoops. You

know, he's very precise.

He's very precise. There is passion in Paul's prayer, and there's truth. That's where we want to be. The two go together. So let our praise be informed here at PCBC English.

[33 : 26] Right? We sing worship songs that are deep and rich in truth. Let's do that more. Let's inform our praise by borrowing a book, even, from the library. I know it's scary, but we can do it.

Or listen to a podcast. Or talks that stretch you about who God is and what he's like. And if you're not sure where to start, come talk to me. I'd love to recommend you a book that maybe would be interesting to you.

But most importantly, though, God has revealed himself through his word, the scriptures. Okay? So bring your Bibles to church. Listen hard into him. Let your praise be informed.

It is possible to read the Bible and not know and praise God any better. Right? But it is impossible to know and praise God any better without reading your Bible.

Okay? So I'll leave it there. Our praise should be informed. I think second thing that we can reflect on this is that our praise should be inclusive. Our praise should be inclusive. If some of us don't look at a menu and just order whatever, the same thing each time.

[34 : 28] Others, they always just eat with the same group of people. Right? I remember growing up, we had like a little group and every Sunday night we'd just eat with the same people and just go to the same restaurant.

They knew our name, us by name, that sort of thing. Think about the Ephesian church, though, for a moment, reading this letter. We've learned that there are at least two different groups. Right? Those who are Jewish background, those with a Gentile background, the we and the you.

Even as Paul praises God for fulfilling his plan to us when he says it, the Jewish people, he praises God for the Gentiles as well. For him there's no us versus them.

It's inclusive. And now it's our turn too. When we gather as a church family, when we praise him, we come from different backgrounds. One author puts it this way, all are saved alike, but not all were the same before being in Christ.

So it's great, right? It's great how comfortable teenagers and uni-age people and young adults and working adults are, right, when we come to English service. People comment all the time, I feel so relaxed here.

[35 : 33] I feel like I belong here. That's great. But keep in mind too, others in our church family, others in the community that we'd love to see come to Christ. Many people who speak English that maybe are raising families or are older in their ages.

Let's see how we can include them too. Praise should be inclusive. Our praise should be inclusive. I'm thankful that we can worship in English. I'd be stuck on a limb if we were not speaking in English.

But remember those from other cultures. Maybe English isn't their strongest language. Remember them as we praise God together. Remember people who we may never see, right? Remember them as we praise.

Our praise should be inclusive and think about all the nations because God's plan, right, is so inclusive to unite all things in heaven and earth in Christ. And then finally, I think final point that we can learn for our praises.

Our praise should be centred on Jesus Christ. Our praise should be Christ-centred. I want you to do this. Try this this evening when you can, right? Go back to Ephesians or have a read of it again and underline each time you see the phrase in Christ or in Jesus or in him when it refers to Jesus.

[36 : 44] You will see that it happens over and over and over again for Paul. At least 15 times. On the one hand, Paul's praises have been God-centred.

And yet as he praises, he is relentlessly Christ-centred. And that's not a paradox, okay? That is where God's plans are headed, to unite all things in heaven and earth under Christ, right?

Once, there's a bit of a mystery, God's salvation plan. But this side of the cross, all the glory from our praises should go to Christ. Not to the preacher. Not to the worship team.

Not to the emcee. Not to you and me or whoever that you think needs the glory. This is a challenge, friends, to make the gospel, the death and resurrection of Jesus the main thing that we praise at PCBC.

Nothing else. Not our ethnicity, our friend groups or life stages. Certainly not us as individuals.

Christ Jesus should be the centre of our worship, of our preaching, at our events, in our groups and

activities.

[37 : 51] Friends, Paul's praises reminds us that we are called to be a gospel-centred community. Centred on Christ. So let's honour him. Let's honour Jesus as Paul does. Let's exalt him as our brothers and sisters across the world and across centuries have done.

They've made it all in Christ. You see, friends, when we magnify Jesus and give him all the glory, we are doing what the Spirit wants us to do. When we magnify Jesus, we're praising the one that the Father loves and is pleased with.

So friends, let's be that church. A church that fixes our eyes on Jesus Christ, right? And then we'll have the Spirit blowing in our sails. And we'll have the Father's blessings. How good is that?

Only in Christ and with Christ as our captain are we truly blessed with every spiritual blessing. Shall we pray? Amen. Amen. Amen. Father, we thank you.

We thank you that in your son, Jesus, we have everything we need. Help us to remember this and to press into knowing you deeper and your love deeper.

[39 : 05] Father, I thank you and I pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.