

## “God’s View of the Church”

### Ephesians 1:1-14

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#### *Introduction:*

1. Today we begin a new twelve-part series on the church from the letter to the Ephesians. I think this is important at this stage of our church’s spiritual growth. Except for some special messages connected with the holidays, this will take us to about the end of February 2000.
2. A healthy, growing church is always reforming itself in conformity with the Scriptures. This is due to the unique blend of people that the Holy Spirit brings together in a local assembly. As these people and their lives change, they must always be applying God’s unchanging word to their changing way of life. But to do this, a church must be familiar with what the Bible says about the church. We could look at a number of unconnected passages to do this, but I am generally hesitant to pursue a topical series of messages. It allows the minister too much of a “pick and choose” approach. Therefore, we will look at one whole letter that is devoted to this subject. Knowing the letter to the Ephesians is a crucial part of grasping basic ideas and practices of the church. It does not tell us **all** we need to know, but what it tells us is **basic** to a Biblical view of the church.
3. The church is the assembly of saints that is made up of all who are in Christ. We must always look at this assembly as “in Christ” or “in Him” (one of the key ideas in Ephesians).

#### *Exposition:* Three primary parts of God’s view of the church...

- I. The church is a planned community.
  - A. God in grace planned my entry into the assembly of saints.
    1. God chose us (1:3-4). There is only one subject and one main verb in the Greek sentence (1:3-14). This subject and verb is “he chose”. God is the subject and his action was to choose.

*Illustration:* Push a pen through a piece of paper. Say, “The pen penetrated the paper.” This is a similar sentence to “God chose us”. Then ask, “Did the pen penetrate the paper, or did the paper penetrate the pen?” Then ask, “According to this verse, who chose whom?”

2. God chose us in Christ (1:4; cf. 1:6). The Holy God could not choose to richly bless sinners apart from his Son and what his Son would do through his work of redemption.

3. God chose us before the creation of the world (1:4). Therefore, our own works, repentance, faith or anything else did not cause God to choose us.

*Comment:* Since we are limited by our own experience, this may be hard to understand. It may seem to us like we came to God, but the Bible teaches that God came to us (1Jn 4:19).

*Illustration:* Push pen through sheet of paper. Ask, “Which was there first, the pen or the hole?” Then ask, “Which caused the other—the pen or the hole?”

4. God chose us to be holy and blameless before him (1:4). God’s design is to save sinners from their sins (Mt 1:21).

5. God chose us to bring praise to himself (1:6). The Biblical doctrine of election should always produce worship and joy!

*Apply:* Every follower of Christ should praise God for election.

B. God in grace providentially watches over me.

1. Having chosen us, God did not let chance determine the outcome. No, in love he predestined us (1:5).

2. Predestination covers all the parts of God’s plan (1:11-12). Otherwise, one small event might cause the whole to miscarry. In a mysterious way, God allows free agents to make their choices freely, but he also works at the same time to carry out his choices. The chief example is the crucifixion of Christ (Ac 2:23).

*Illustration:* From the backside, a tapestry looks like a mess of threads, but from the front it forms a beautiful picture. So, world history may look like a mess, but the end will be for the praise of God’s glory.

II. The church is a provided-for community.

A. God has blessed us with **redemption** (1:7).

1. To redeem means to set free by the payment of the ransom price. Christ paid the ransom price, his blood, to secure our redemption. Christ has set us free from the power and penalty of sin and death.

2. This means that we have our sins forgiven. God will not give us what our sins deserve—eternal punishment. Instead, he lavishes the riches of his grace on us.

*Apply:* Here is good news believer! You are rich in forgiveness!

B. God has blessed us with **sealing** (1:13).

1. As will become clear later in the letter. The church has enemies opposed to her. This might make us question our security. “Will my salvation last?”

2. God wants his people to know that they are secure. So he puts a seal or deposit on us that guarantees our full redemption and inheritance. This seal is the promised Holy Spirit.

*Apply:* Here is good news believer! God the Holy Spirit lives in you and protects you.

C. God has blessed us with **adoption** (1:5).

1. It is certainly good to know that our sins are forgiven and that the Holy Spirit lives within. But God has done more for us. He takes us into his family, but more than just a place in his family. He gives us the position of adult sons. Since we are sons, we have liberty in Christ and the freedom to serve God as priests.

2. Since we are adult sons, the Holy Spirit also gives us assurance that God is our Father. Some of the highest and richest experiences of the Christian life come when the Holy Spirit makes our sonship known and leads us into God’s presence with freedom and confidence!

*Apply:* Here is good news believer! God the Holy Spirit wants you to know the joy of sonship.

D. God has blessed us with **knowledge** (1:9-10).

1. At this point, we might feel overwhelmed with blessings, but God has more. Since we are his adult sons, he wanted us to know his plan in Christ, his unique Son. He wants us to know that all his good pleasure will be accomplished in Jesus Christ.

2. God tells us that he has a timetable and a destined end for all things. His goal is that all things will submit to the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Apply:* Here is good news believer! God’s plan is a plan of victory in Christ. When everything seems dark and confused and you feel frustrated or unable to cope, remember that all will work for the glory of your Redeemer!

III. The church is a purposeful community.

A. The church has a basic objective (1:6,12,14).

1. God has ordered that we be for the praise of his glory—his worth, value and infinite significance. The unchanging goal of every follower of Christ is to demonstrate the majesty, love and preciousness of God. Remember that all this is made known in Christ (1 Pt 2:7).

*Song:* “There’s a name above all others, wonderful to hear, bringing hope and cheer. It’s the precious name of Jesus, evermore the same, what a lovely name!”

2. Any church that loses sight of this goal becomes perverted and twisted. It becomes a place where the creature is served, instead of the Creator, who is blessed forever.

*Apply:* One of the deadliest dangers in our day is the desire to be contemporary, relevant or seeker sensitive. Another very deadly danger is to be traditional and unwilling to change. A local assembly of believers is what it should be when it has a **passion to glorify God**.

B. The church has a number of ways to carry out this basic objective.

1. It carries it out by praise and worship (1:3).
2. It carries it out by godly living (1:4).
3. It carries it out by evangelism (1:13).

*Action Step:* How does **everything** we do as a gathering of believers **promote** our **basic objective**? What are ways that we can carry out our basic objective in this area with the unique blend of people and spiritual gifts provided to us for that purpose? Do you want to carry out this basic objective? Are you willing to make changes to do it?