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# EPHESIANS

## 1:1-14 STANDING ON WHAT JESUS HAS DONE

In 2017, the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of one of the key moments of the Reformation, *Playmobil* – this is one of the reasons I love Germany so much – *Playmobil* produced a model of Martin Luther. When we were in Germany in 2018 in Nuremberg, I found a stack of them in a shop and brought one home with me. And there he stands, on my desk.

If there is one passage in the Bible that supports Martin Luther's idea that Christianity is all about God, and all about what Jesus has done, then it is this one. This has to be what we stand on. We stand on it as individuals, and as a church. If we are holy, it is because God has made us that way. If we are faithful, it is because Jesus is the faithful one, and we belong to him.

This must lead us, like Paul, into worship. Reading Ephesians 1 is like being stood—that word again—on top of a mountain. Just look at how we are described in the box on the right.

And written in the heavens, written over all of them, writ large, is this word, this name, which comes back again and again in this passage. This word which appears probably 50% more in Ephesians than in any of Paul's letters of comparable size, this name... CHRIST. The amazing name of Christ.

As I look again at that extraordinary list of words, the one that strikes me most is *chosen*. Maybe it's because all of us who are over a certain age know what it is like *not* to be chosen. I think back to the school playground, and the football teams, the teachers picking two captains and then the captains getting to pick their own teams. We're not all the one who gets picked first. We don't always feel chosen. But here, God shouts the opposite. He says that our being chosen is not an



We are chosen... blessed... loved... predestined... adopted... redeemed... forgiven... we have received grace.

accident, or a decision of the moment. Before even the creation of the world, long before 2 plates of the earth's surface bumped into each other and started to make any mountains at all, God had chosen *you*. He knew there was going to be you, and he had chosen you. He has chosen us, Paul says later on, we were *predestined*. He knew there was going to be us, and he had chosen us. So actually every experience of not being the 'chosen one' that has ever happened to us, long since then, is in the shadow of this pretty much eternal, and certainly utterly ancient truth, that God has chosen us.

I don't know why God has chosen me. I know why he hasn't chosen me. I know he hasn't chosen me because of what I do when faced with a right or wrong decision, because I don't always choose the right one. I know he hasn't chosen me because I always remember to read my bible and pray, or I take every opportunity to talk to someone about Jesus, or I care faultlessly for other people, or never spend my money on silly things, or constantly remember the poor, because I don't.

But he chose us. And he chose us, Paul says, according to his plan. Choosing you was no accident. It was God's plan. He chose us in accordance with his pleasure and will. That means that God chose us because he wanted to – he wanted you – and it was his pleasure. He delighted in choosing you. It's as if to say that every time you sing or pray anything like "Thank you God for choosing, forgiving, saving, loving me etc" he looks at you and he is saying, "My pleasure." This bit is really important, and we can see that, because Paul comes back to it a second time. He is so glad that he has chosen *you*.

It is according to his grace. That's why it is never about what we have done, or who is first in the football team. And we need his grace. We need it so much, not just in us being forgiven and saved in the first place, but in living for Jesus every day. And if we have a concern for quantity – is it enough for me? – then just look at how God's grace is described. It is rich (end v7); it is lavish (beginning v8). He has forgiven us according to the lavish riches of his grace, and he has chosen us. If you remember one thing from Ephesians 1, let it be that God has chosen you. Forget what someone else might say about you, what you might think about yourself, what you might even believe God says about you. Don't stand for it. Don't stand on it. Stand on something else. Stand on this: that God has chosen you, that it was his plan, always, because he wanted to, and that it was... it is still... his pleasure.

*Do you believe that God has chosen you? How does it affect the way you think about yourself, and how you live life?*

*What comfort can you take from knowing that being chosen is not about anything that we have done, but how amazing God is?*

*Spend some time in worship 'looking at the view', and admiring what God has done.*