

The background of the entire slide is a collage of various images related to church life, including people in prayer, a person reading, a person at a desk, and a person in a wheelchair. The text is overlaid on this collage.

TEACHING E-BOOK

WE ARE

EPHESIANS & THE CHURCH

WE ARE

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Produced by City on a Hill

INTRODUCTION

What would it be like to lose your identity?

Michelle Brown was 29 when she graduated from university. She had just landed a great job in an international banking firm, and was looking for a place to set up and begin her career.

But walking into an office one day to fill out a simple rental form, she was unaware that her personal information had just fallen into the wrong hands.

Within months, Michelle's life was clouded by the reality that someone had taken on her identity and was using her name, address, and driver's license to spend her money and take over her life.

As a result bills, credit card payments, and debt collectors were coming in a constant stream while her life was spiraling out of control. Her identity no longer belonged to her. Someone had stolen it and was remaking her into someone she was not.

Michelle's true story is something we hope will never happen to us.

Yet for Christians today, it already has.

The church has lost its identity. It no longer holds the significance, meaning, or purpose it was made for.

To some it is nothing more than a bluestone building or an out-dated institution. Then there are those who see the church as a political party or business venture. And of course others see it as a quaint country club for good people to sit around and eat scones with jam while the real world passes them by.

These are just a few of the images that circulate in our postmodern world. Yet all of them fall short of our true identity.

Who are we really?

In an ever-changing world, this question is tremendously important because identity impacts not only how we see ourselves but also how we live in the world.

In our new and exciting teaching series we will unpack the book of *Ephesians* and discover the biblical, beautiful, dynamic, and purposeful image for who 'WE ARE'.

We are Sons and Daughters. We are His Workmanship. We are the Body of Christ. We are the Bride. We are Soldiers for Christ.

This is a valuable series for those exploring Jesus for the first time and wondering what true Christianity is all about. It is equally important for believers who want to be in step with God's purpose in our world. And it is central for those who call City on a Hill home.

We are in a season of growth, vision, planting, and mission. This series will reveal who we are, what we are doing, and how God is using us to change the world.

For Jesus' fame+

Guy Mason

Movement Pastor, City on a Hill

— THE WORLD OF EPHESIANS —

The Apostle Paul

The author of Ephesians is the Apostle Paul, the most prolific writer of the New Testament and a man of rare gifts, humility, and zeal.

Paul was first known as ‘Saul of Tarsus’ and he grew up as a strict Jew. He became a Pharisee, taught the Jewish faith, and rose to its defence against an upstart sect that claimed Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. He watched approvingly as Stephen became the first Christian martyr (Acts 8:1) and set about persecuting the early church, intent on destroying it once and for all.

However, on one of his persecuting missions he encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). With his eyes blinded and his hard heart broken, Saul came to saving faith in Jesus Christ and became known as Paul the Apostle. He would become the leading missionary of the early church, bravely travelling vast distances to plant churches all around the Mediterranean.

He did not consider himself a great orator, but he possessed a sharp legal mind and a fierce loyalty to Jesus, who inspired him to work with determination and immense courage despite

continual persecution. His writing is clear, methodical, and insightful; it is also suffused with passion and a heart-warming commitment to those under his care.

Paul spent close to three years in Ephesus, making it a base for his ministry in Asia Minor. The book of Acts describes Paul’s work in the city itself in some detail; we are told that the Gentiles received the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:2-7) and many ‘extraordinary’ miracles (Acts 19:11) were performed, including the healing of diseases and the exorcism of evil spirits. Paul also spent considerable time in the synagogue ‘reasoning and persuading’ the Jews about the kingdom of God (Acts 18:9). Paul’s fame grew with the Jews and the Gentiles alike and we are told that ‘fear fell upon them all’ as ‘the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily’ (Acts 19:17, 20). Many came to faith in Jesus, but others resisted. Sensing their profits would be jeopardized the idol-smiths of the city sparked a riot, which apparently prompted Paul to leave the city. Paul would return one more time, and his stirring farewell to the elders of the church are among the most touching words in the New Testament.

The City of Ephesus

Ephesus was located on the west coast of modern Turkey – less than 1000 kilometres from the Gallipoli peninsula. It was first settled around 1000 BC by the Greeks, and passed through the hands of numerous empires thereafter. By the time of the New Testament and Paul's letter to the Ephesians, it was the capital of the Roman province of Asia Minor, enjoying a multitude of benefits, including the construction of an aqueduct, a stadium, and an impressive harbour. It is thought that as many as 200,000 people lived in the city – making it one of the largest cities in the world; archaeological remains carry inscriptions celebrating Ephesus as the 'first and great metropolis of Asia'.

Dominating the landscape – and the life of the city – was the great Temple of Artemis. An enormous edifice held up by more than 127 gigantic columns each the height of around two football goalposts. The temple was four times the size of the Parthenon in Athens and was considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

The temple was built in honour of Diana, or 'Artemis', the goddess of virginity and childbearing. With such a portfolio the nature of Diana-worship can be imagined – prostitution and sexual practices were believed to increase fertility and pleasure. The Ephesians were fiercely loyal to Artemis; when Paul confronted their idolatry, the city went into uproar, the silversmiths fearful not just that their trade would be compromised, but that Artemis would be 'counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence' (Acts 19:27).

The devoted worship of Artemis points to an intense spirituality amongst the citizens of Ephesus, confirmed with the reports of magic and exorcisms in the city (Acts 19). This was a city bewitched by power and intrigued by the supernatural – perhaps hinting at Paul's intentions when he elevates Christ as the pre-eminent being, 'far above all rule and authority and power and dominion' (Eph. 1:21).

The Ephesian Church

It would appear Christianity came to Ephesus through the Apostle Paul, who made a brief visit around 20 years after Jesus' resurrection. After he departed, a Jewish man named Apollos emerged. Well-versed in the Hebrew Scriptures and 'fervent in spirit' (Acts 18:25), he taught 'boldly' in the synagogues. Later coached by Priscilla and Aquila – a married couple described by Paul as his 'fellow workers in Christ Jesus' (Rom. 16:3) – Apollos would become an influential teacher throughout the region.

Paul's next visit to Ephesus was an extended one – a two-and-a-half year stay which saw him preach powerfully in the synagogues and the public square, confronting the idolatry of the city and working miracles in God's strength. This sparked a riot (Acts 19) and seems to have necessitated Paul's evacuation. He would return once more, however, and it is thought that some of his letters were written from Ephesus.

Having spent so long in the city, Paul had a good knowledge of the church and a deep investment in their future – so his emotive farewell speech (recounted in Acts 20) makes for interesting reading. Paul tells them to 'be alert' and 'pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock' because there are 'fierce wolves' who will seek to come in and destroy them, while others will

emerge from within, teaching false doctrine and drawing the flock away. It is a sobering message – reaffirmed in Paul's letters to Timothy as he prepares him for ministry in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3-7).

It would appear that Timothy executed this task well. Ephesus is counted among the seven churches of Asia addressed in Revelation 1-3, where they are commended for their works, toil, and patient endurance, and for the way they tested and rejected those who claimed to be apostles but whose teaching was false (Rev. 3:2-7). They are rebuked for the loss of their 'first love', suggesting they may have become conceited in their theological accuracy, or had lost the connection of head and heart.

They are called to repentance – and it appears they responded, for they remained prominent in the centuries to come. Writing to the church in the second century, Bishop Ignatius of Antioch describes them as 'deservedly most happy', and the city would host one of the major church councils two centuries later, where the influential Nicene Creed was reaffirmed against the heresy of Nestorius. The church of Ephesus remained guardians of truth and doctrinal accuracy, and their endurance suggests the truth reached and reshaped their hearts – a fitting summary of the purpose of Paul's letter to the church all those years ago.



— MAP OF ASIA MINOR —



FIVE KEY IMAGES

We Are Sons & Daughters

'In love, he predestined us for adoption as sons though Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.' – **Ephesians 1:5-6**

Paul opens his letter to the Ephesian church with a beautiful picture of our adoption into the family of God. Before the foundations of the world God elected those He would bring into His household as sons and daughters so that they could enjoy the fullness of His Fatherhood.

Our adoption is an act of complete grace. We were not born as part of God's family but as 'sons of disobedience' and 'children of wrath' (Eph. 2:2-3). Our lives were characterised by sin and rebellion against God, and we deserved the full measure of His judgement and rejection.

But in His great love the Lord chose to redeem us. Through Christ, He gave 'all who did receive him, those who believed in his name the right to become children of God' (John 1:12). Jesus Christ is the Beloved, the true and legitimate Son, who gave His perfect life so that we could be 'born again' (John 3:3) and adopted as sons and daughters into His family.

Adoption is a very moving image of God's love and generosity, but it also has a legal significance. By adopting us as sons and daughters we have been granted the same rights and privileges as His son Jesus. As

a result, we can now call God our 'Abba, Father' (Rom. 8:15) and can approach Him with confidence, knowing that He delights in us and will receive us with open arms. Indeed, He has brought us into an intimate relationship where we are made one with Him (John 17:21) and can enjoy His knowledge, wisdom, provision, love, and joy through His Spirit.

Equally, we are given a new name. We belong to God and as followers of Jesus Christ we are now called 'Christians'.

Our new position makes us heirs and co-heirs with Christ to a 'glorious inheritance' (Eph. 1:18), which is unlike any earthly inheritance. It cannot be counted in dollars or measured in property. Rather, it is the promise and hope of eternal life with our Creator. When the Son returns He will bring us into His kingdom to dwell and live with Him forever.

Along with these privileges we are also given responsibilities and obligations. Paul instructs that we are to be 'imitators of God, as beloved children' (Eph. 5:1-2). How do we do this? By following the example of God's son, Jesus. Like Him we are to walk in love, to give our lives to God as a living sacrifice, and to honour the Father in everything that we do.

And though the picture of adoption is only a shadow today of what it will be, we can start enjoying the gift of sonship and wait in eager expectation for its fullness on the day of Christ (Rom. 8:19).



We Are His Workmanship

‘For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.’ – Ephesians 2:10

Have you ever watched a painter at work?

The piece he is creating was conceived long before he sat at his easel. For days, months, perhaps years, he reflected and imagined it a thousand times. One day, he meticulously mixed his colours and carefully selected his materials, knowing which combinations would work best for this particular piece. Then, he put himself to work, advancing with energy, courage, assurance, dedication, and love.

Now as you watch him he pauses, steps back, and admires the work in progress, but immediately comes up close to add a new stroke or touch up an unfinished section. As the painting takes shape, he smiles. He knows it so well, and this unique piece is the object of his approval and his love.

In the book of Ephesians Paul uses the picture of a ‘work of art’ or ‘masterpiece’ (*‘workmanship’*; in Greek *‘poiema’*) to teach the church about God’s work in their lives.

God has been at work in us for longer than we can remember. The Psalmist tells us that He lovingly created us and knitted us in our mother’s womb. Everything that we were and that we would become

was before him and held no mystery (Psalm 139). Man and woman are the masterwork of God in creation. Yet in the text of Ephesians, Paul uses the word ‘workmanship’ to describe another work of God.

Indeed, despite its beauty every masterwork God conceives is ruined by the reality of sin and cut off from His presence. But because of His great mercy, God provided a way for us to be made new and to become a new work of art approved by him. When we put our faith in Jesus Christ He strips away the spoiled paint, starts afresh, and paints the beauty of His Son onto our canvas. This is the work of justification.

However, because sin and brokenness continue to affect our lives, God remains at work in our lives to help us live out the freedom we already have in Jesus. By His Holy Spirit He sanctifies us, which means He shapes us, moulds us, changes us, guides us, and enables us to grow in holiness.

And while the image of the masterpiece speaks of God’s work in our lives, it also reminds us of our dependence upon Him. We cannot be made new and live as holy people on our own. God is the one who sustains us, keeps us, and goes before us. Paul points out that God is the one who prepares our good works in advance so that we can practice them (Eph. 2:10). This encourages our dependency and our humility before God. Indeed, the only way for us to grow in holiness is to let God work us like clay. He is the expert potter who knows how to perfect us, and we can trust that He will do it.



We are the Body of Christ

‘Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.’ – Ephesians 4:15-16

In his letter to the Ephesians Paul introduces the image of the human body to illustrate the beauty of unity and diversity in the church. Every Christian has been made one with Christ, and has been brought into one family. This family is united around one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God. Yet we are all diverse in person, character, background, and giftedness.

So how does the church work as a body of diverse but united people?

First, it is important to note that this image was particularly relevant for the Ephesian church. Former Jews and gentiles were coming together for the first time to share in the same belief. Paul reminds them that their cultural differences should not become a source of conflict, religious pride, or division in the church. All Christians have received the same grace and the same redemption in Jesus Christ and His good news is for all people.

Furthermore, the image of the body of Christ means that Christians are bonded and dependent upon each other. They are not called to live their faith on their own, disregarding the lives and needs of others. To be a part of the body of Christ means that we are part of a Christian community and we are called to practice the love of Christ towards one another. The church is a place where we show and experience generosity, forgiveness, care, love, grace, patience, and kindness.

In practical, terms the church is like a human body – organised and structured. God has equipped each person with gifts, talents, and abilities so that they can serve the church. Ephesians 4 lists the gifts that are present and necessary to the work of ministry: apostleship, prophecy, evangelism, shepherding, and teaching. All of these gifts come from God and are given not for personal gain, but to encourage, disciple, and build up the body of Christ.

Yet Paul is quick to point out that these gifts are meaningless if they don't fall under submission to the headship of Christ. Just as everything that happens in the human body depends on the head (the mind), so everything that happens in the church must depend on Christ. It is under His guidance and direction that the church functions at its best; it is healthy, built up, and equipped to fulfil its chief purpose, which is to glorify God.



We are the Bride

‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.’ – Ephesians 5:31-32

The Genesis narrative tells us that God created man and woman and brought them together in a unique and lifelong union: marriage. This is a covenant between one man and one woman by which they promise to love and remain faithful to each other for the rest of their lives.

Because this union is so significant and life defining, God used the picture of marriage to speak about His relationship with His people. In the same way that a man chooses a bride, the Lord chose a people for Himself. In the same way that a man signs his name on the marriage contract, so the Lord covenanted with His people, not just for life but for eternity. In the same way that a man pursues and loves his wife, so the Lord also pursues and loves His bride.

Yet God’s people were unfaithful. Time and time again they ran to other lovers, other gods to find satisfaction, fulfilment, and love. Despite their rebellion the Lord declared that one day His people would call Him ‘husband’ and He would betroth His people to Himself forever, in righteousness and justice, in love, compassion, and faithfulness (Hosea 2:19-20).

That promise was fulfilled with the coming of the Messiah. Jesus often referred to Himself as the bridegroom (Mark 2:18-20, for example) because He had come to claim a precious bride back for Himself. In fulfilment of God’s promise, Jesus paid the necessary price and made the necessary sacrifice so that the bride could become pure and spotless before God, and be brought back to Him forever.

In Ephesians Paul applies the image of the bride to the whole church. As Christians we are in a marvellous and mysterious covenant relationship with God. We can enjoy the full measure of His love and affection, we can experience trust and reliance, we can know care and provision, and we can know that we await a very special day – the wedding day.

This will be a day of celebration, of feasting, and of perfect union with God. And on that day it will be said,

‘Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure.’ – Revelation 9:7-8

We are Soldiers for Christ

‘Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.’ –
Ephesians 6:10-11

In the final chapter of his letter Paul leaves the Christian with a call to fight. This isn't a physical battle against a visible foe, but a spiritual battle against the enemy of our souls and the spiritual forces of evil. The apostle saw the Christian life and his labour for the church as a war campaign for which he needed to be equipped and trained with spiritual weapons.

First, the Christian must put on the 'belt of truth'. From the very beginning in Genesis our enemy Satan has been a liar and 'father of lies' (John 8:44). He has sought to deceive us, to lead away from the truth and to believe lies about our God, our identity, our world, and our purpose. Paul encourages us to protect ourselves with the truth of Jesus who said 'I am the way, the truth and the life' (John 14:6) so that we will not fall for the lies of the devil.

We are also to wear the 'breastplate of righteousness', which has been bought by the blood of Christ so that we can stand blameless before God, and fit our feet with the gospel of peace. In other words, we are to take hold of the gospel and live in it every day of our lives. It is our only protection against eternal separation from God.

Then we must take up the most important piece of defensive armour – the shield of faith. Faith is a gift of God that the enemy seeks to destroy by sowing doubt in our heart and mind. The serpent's first question to Eve in the garden was an invitation to doubt. He asked 'Did God really say 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'' (Gen. 3:1), and in so doing he pushed her to question God's words, to doubt His goodness, and to be unsure about His commands. Faith secures us in the truth that God has revealed to us.

Finally Paul tells us to put on the helmet of salvation and to take the sword of the Spirit so that we can persevere in the freedom we have in Christ.

Every piece of this armour is a gift from God. To fight the good fight we must continually rely on the Lord and on His strength to keep us until the final victory. We can be courageous and confident in this battle, for Jesus promises that He has already overcome the world.

— DOCTRINE IN EPHESIANS —

The Doctrine of Predestination

There are few doctrines in the Bible that have been as controversial as the doctrine of predestination. Some have called it 'a doctrine of the devil' while others have described it as a doctrine 'full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ' (Article of the Anglican Church).

What is clear is that predestination is a major theological theme of the book of Ephesians.

But what is predestination?

The answer is found in the very first verses of Ephesians where we are told that, before the foundation of the world, God acted. Before time existed or the world had begun, God formed a purpose in His mind, a purpose that decided that God would choose to save us through Christ.

This would appear on first reading to be very good news. The fact that it is God who has chosen us provides rock solid assurance for every believer – for if God has chosen us then who can possibly prevent His good purposes working to completion in our lives. However, predestination has sometimes received

bad press because it seems to override human free will, and reduce the need for Holy living and evangelism. It also seems to imply that if God elects some for salvation and adoption, then He necessarily does not choose others, which raises questions of His justice. We will examine each of these in turn.

First, though, it is important to note that predestination is a matter of divine revelation and not human speculation. Predestination was not invented by John Calvin, Augustine, or even the Apostle Paul. It is a thoroughly Biblical truth with a long pedigree in scripture, and as a result every Christian must take it seriously. The Old Testament story of God centres on the fact that God freely chose one people, the nation of Israel, out of all the nations of the world to be a people set apart for him; People that He predestined in love to be His unique possession. Predestination is not a fantasy of over-active theological minds that would be better served to leave these matters rest in peace. Predestination is a difficult doctrine to understand, but it is something that God Himself clearly reveals to us, for 'although we cannot conceive either by argument or reason how God has elected us before the creation of the world, yet we know it by His declaring it to us' (*Ephesians*, John Stott, p38).

Does predestination trample human free will?

Predestination undoubtedly affirms the sovereignty of God in salvation. He chose us – we did not choose him. As Calvin notes, ‘the very time of His election shows it to be free; for what could we have deserved, or in what did our merit consist before the world was made’ (Calvin’s commentaries cited in R. Kent Hughes, p23). However, for many this seems to minimise human responsibility and does not accord with their own experience of conversion. When we give our testimonies we (rightly) stress that we freely chose Christ. That when at the moment we were confronted with the truth of the gospel we were each presented with a free choice: to follow or not to follow? This is true in our experience and it is a fact that scripture clearly affirms (Matt. 23:37, John 7:17, Rom. 7:18, 1 Cor. 9:17, 1 Pet. 5:2).

The notion that God would somehow choose people to believe in Him against their will is never stated in scripture. Rather, as Spurgeon puts it, ‘A man is not saved against his will, but he is made willing by the operation of the Holy Ghost. A mighty grace which he does not wish to resist enters into the man, disarms him, makes a new creature of him, and he is saved (Sermons, Vol. 10, p309). So in the mystery of His predestining will, our free choice of Him is only made possible because He in eternity past has already chosen us. You can ‘decide to follow Jesus’ because He has already decided for you.

There is paradox here and for some this explanation will always be insufficient, but the relation between God’s sovereign choice and human action is a mystery which scripture never dispels. Divine election and human free will are both unashamedly affirmed. ‘The fact is’, as Spurgeon put it, ‘there is a predestination, and the doctrines of election and effectual grace are true, nor may we deny them; but yet the Lord deals with men as responsible beings, and bids them “strive to enter in at the strait gate,” and to “lay hold on eternal life.” Such exhortations are evidently intended for free agents, and indicate that our salvation requires energetic action’ (*Through the Eyes of C.H. Spurgeon*, S. McCaskall).

Does it reduce the need for holy living?

It is true that the fact God has predestined me to be His is a doctrine of great assurance and comfort. Presuming, however, that predestination allows me to live as I please turns the purposes of God’s election on its head. Ephesians states that we are elected by love, chosen before the foundation of the world. Why? ‘That we may be holy and blameless in His sight’ (Eph. 1:4). The purpose of God’s election is to call out a Holy People with a holy calling, set apart and dead to sin. For a person to understand this truth – that they have been chosen for adoption into the family of God, because of nothing that they did or could have done – is the essence of the gospel. It changes our identity from

trying to earn God's favour and sets us free to live passionate, energetic, and Holy Lives as we are changed from one degree of glory to another. To such a person, election is indeed exceedingly sweet, for they know that even in failures and setbacks God's predestination is not hindered because it rests in His choice and not our own performance. On the other hand we should never delude ourselves that we are elect if we do not long to live Holy lives before him. To anyone that would seek to twist this doctrine into an excuse to sin, the Thirty Nine Articles carefully point out that predestination is a means 'whereby the devil doth thrust them either into desperation or into wretchedness of most unclean living no less perilous than desperation.'

Does it take away the necessity of evangelism?

It is possible to say that 'because it is God who chooses we need not worry about telling people the gospel and pleading with them to repent and believe the good news and so be saved; it is after all God's work'. But Christians are called to be obedient to the commands of God, and His commands in this area are very clear: we must preach His gospel of salvation to a lost world. Only God can elect a person to salvation, but He has ordained means by which He effects that and the primary means is the word of the gospel spoken by His servants. So it is both our God-given duty to evangelise and our God-given comfort as we do so to be assured

that God has already elected some to believe. What matters is not our hard work, our eloquence, our methods, or anything else we might do, but God's sovereign grace in salvation. It was this passion that fired and freed the evangelism of men like George Whitefield to, on one hand glory in predestination, and on the other, to go into the fields and the byways to proclaim the word of God in great boldness and confidence.

What of those who are not predestined to salvation?

This is a painful question for many who see a callous God coldly and arbitrarily predestining some to salvation and some to damnation. This is not the doctrine of predestination in Ephesians. Ephesians insists that the predestination of God is all of love: 'In love, He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ' (Eph. 1:5). The reasons for God's choosing were only in Himself. We cannot know the mind behind this choosing, but we who are so quick to demand our human freedom as creatures should allow God some freedom as our creator! What we do know is that God's choosing is not like a roulette wheel of blind impersonal fate, but was as verse 5 says 'according to His will'. Marcus Barth notes, 'far from any idea of arbitrariness it has warm and personal connotations. When God's good pleasure is mentioned, His willingness and joy in doing good are indicated'. God's sovereign choice is in fact 'warm and smiling - far from

the dispassionate stereotype so often thought of' (*Ephesians*, Hughes, p23).

We cannot know the answer to this question of why, and as John Stott wisely remarked, we should be wary of those that seek to 'systematise it too precisely or rigidly'. We know that God is good and just and upright and worthy. We also know that He elects some to salvation. In any case there is no grounds for pride. The election of God is made on the grounds of His sovereign kindness and is based on nothing we have done or will do, but is all of love. This is a far cry from some who seek to abuse predestination as grounds for their own pride and selfishness. Such people, said Spurgeon, 'love the doctrine of election but there is one doctrine they love better, and that is, the doctrine of exclusion. They love to think they are shut in, but they feel quite as much delight that others are shut out.'

Predestination tells us that before the world existed God acted. This is the doctrine which is richly taught in *Ephesians*, and it is good news because when God acted in eternity past He acted in love, that we might obtain 'an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of His glory' (Eph. 1:11-12).

The Doctrine of Salvation by Grace

Perhaps the most important question that a person can ever ask was found on the lips of a jailer in Philippi two thousand years ago. The question is this: 'what must I do to be saved?' (Acts 16:31)

This is a question that our culture will usually answer in two ways. First, "your question is misplaced – you do not need to be saved at all. Live as you choose – all is well". Or second, "to be saved you must make yourself a good person". These are common answers, but both are the enemy of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In fact, as the church father Tertullian is said to have remarked, 'just as Jesus was crucified between two thieves so the gospel is ever crucified between these two errors'. On one hand there is irreligion (you can do whatever you like) and on the other religion (you must make yourself a good person to be accepted by God).

Dead people save no one, not even themselves

To the person who would say that no salvation is required, Ephesians bluntly says 'you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked' (Eph. 2:1). We look around at those who are not Christians and they seem very much alive and often happy and carefree, but God sees the heart and it is spiritually dead. More than that they are (and we were) in bondage to the Devil 'following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of

disobedience' (Eph. 2:2). Because of this we were all, as verse 3 asserts, 'by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.' God is just and our sin will not go unpunished. We need salvation. Without it we will all one day receive our just-deserts.

But the truths of the first verses of Ephesians 2 stand equally in the path of the religious who say that we can save ourselves by being good, or at least by seeking God's salvation of our own free will. These verses describe what is sometimes called 'total depravity'. This does not indicate that we are as bad as we could be, but that every part of our being and our actions are corrupted by sin, and more than that – that we are spiritually dead; that so grave is our condition that nothing, not even our best deeds, can produce one thing that God can receive as being to His honour and glory.

The implications of these verses for religious and irreligious alike are very clear – dead people have no contributions whatsoever to make to anything, least of all their salvation. 'Humanity is caught in a bondage which 'implies that it is a psychological, moral and spiritual impossibility for the natural man to receive the things of the spirit, to love God or to do what is well pleasing to him, or to believe in Christ for the salvation of his soul' (Murray, J., New Bible Dictionary). So said Spurgeon: 'When we shall see the dead rise from the grave by their own power, then may we expect to see ungodly sinners of their own free will turning to Christ' (*Through the Eyes of C.H. Spurgeon*, S. McCaskall).

How then can we be saved?

The answer comes in Ephesians 2:4 – ‘But God’. We can be saved because of what has been called the great adversative. We were dead, hopeless, and helpless, ‘but God being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved’ (Eph. 2:4). Grace simply means the unmerited favour of God. God saves us not because of anything we have done or not done, but because of His grace and kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. This kindness comes as a free gift, it is ‘not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast’ (Eph. 2:9). He calls us and enables us to see and believe.

The fact that our salvation is all of grace never minimises the need for good works and holy living. Indeed good works must flow from this gift of free grace, not as grounds or means of salvation, but as its consequence and evidence (*Ephesians*, John Stott, p84-5). For, as Ephesians 2:10 reminds us, we are ‘created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them’.

Here is why the gospel is indeed good news. We are saved not by working hard, or being good, or smart, or pure. We are saved by grace. We were dead. But Jesus dies in our place for our sins

on the cross and is resurrected in power for our life. His gift to all who would come is free grace. Not irreligion or religion, which crush and deaden and darken those who lie in their coffins, but a free gift which brings light and life and hope and joy and peace and raises us up alive with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

So what is the answer to that jailer’s question so long ago? The answer was given in the book of Acts by the same apostle of Jesus who wrote the book of Ephesians: ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household’ (Acts 16:32). For it is by grace you are saved through faith.

— READING PLAN —

Week 1 – Ephesians 1:1-14

Week 2 – Ephesians 1:15-23

Week 3 – Ephesians 2:1-10

Week 4 – Ephesians 2:11-22

Week 5 – Ephesians 3:1-13

Week 6 – Ephesians 3:14-21

Week 7 – Ephesians 4:1-16

Week 8 – Ephesians 4:17-32

Week 9 – Ephesians 5:1-10

Week 10 – Ephesians 5:11-17

Week 11 – Ephesians 5:18-21

Week 12 – Ephesians 5:22-24

Week 13 – Ephesians 5:25-33

Week 14 – Ephesians 6:1-3

Week 15 – Ephesians 6:4

Week 16 – Ephesians 6:5-8

Week 17 – Ephesians 6:9

Week 18 – Ephesians 6:10-24

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— SONG LIST —

This song bank library is full of new and inspiring music from all over the world and is a first step to informing City on a Hill of what songs will be played throughout 'We Are – Ephesians & the Church'

Our desire is for you to become familiar with these songs because:

- 1) the lyrical content is in line with the major themes presented in the book of Ephesians;*
- 2) listening to these songs will reinforce areas of sermon alignment and help you to recall the key themes;*
- 3) listening to these songs will help create a culture focused on worshipping God through song throughout the week; and*
- 4) you can come prepared for our Sunday services so that we can joyfully gather together as we worship God.*

We encourage you to click on and listen to the following songs.

We are Sons & Daughters

By His Grace by The Dispatch
Captured by The Digital Age
Grace Alone by The Modern Post
Oh God by Citizens
How Deep the Father's Love by The Dispatch

We are His Workmanship

Hold Me Together by Loud Harp
King Of Heaven by Hillsong
All Glory Be To Christ by Kings Kaleidoscope
Beautiful Things by Gungor
We Are Hungry by Jesus Culture

We are the Body of Christ

All Over The Earth by Leeland
Living For Your Glory by Tim Hughes
At Your Name by Phil Wickham
All Your People Sing by A Jesus Church
No Turning Back by Passion
Spirit Come by Trever Hoehne
Build Your Kingdom Here by Rend Collective

We are the Bride

In Awe by Seeker & Servant
It's You by Loud Harp
White As Snow by The Modern Post
Love Shines by Austin Stone
Sweet Surrender by Luke Parker
You Bled by Rend Collective
Forever The Same by Jeff Schneeweis
Oceans by Hillsong
Just As I Am by The Modern Post
Beautiful by Phil Whickam

We are Soldiers for Christ

Alive by All Sons And Daughters
Break Every Chain by The Digital Age
Anchor by Hillsong
God Undefeatable by Austin Stone
All the Poor and Powerless by The Digital Age
Your Great Name by Natalie Grant
Suffering Servant by Dustin Kensrue
Rock of Ages by Dustin Kensrue

Other Songs

Come Thou Fount by Kings Kaleideidoscope
A Mighty Fortress by HeartSong
In The Shadow of the Glorious Cross by Sojourn Music
Hallelujah What A Saviour by Ascend The Hill
Jesus Paid It All by Kenosis
Be Thou My Vision by Ascend The Hill
I Surrender All by Citizens
In Christ Alone by Kings Kaleidoscope
Nothing But The Blood by Citizens
Praise The Lord by Edge Kingsland
Great Is Our God by Young Oceans
How Deep The Father's Love by The Dispatch
Great Are You Lord by All Sons And Daughters
How Great Thou Art by The Digital Age
Solid Rock by Page CXVI
Before The Throne Of God Above by Sojourn Music
Holy is the Lord by Chris Tomlin
Oh How I Need You by All Sons And Daughters

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I would like to thank the contributors to the ‘We Are – Ephesians & the Church’ e-book, for their research and prayerful study of the letter to the Ephesians. It is my hope that this e-book will encourage, challenge and bless us as we begin our teaching series.

In Christ,

Sarah Frewen-Lord

Research Coordinator, City on a Hill Melbourne

— ABOUT US —

City on a Hill began at the end of 2007 with a small team and a big vision to see Melbourne renewed with the great news of Jesus. Since then, God has gathered men and women of all ages with a passion to know Jesus and make Him known.

As a community we meet every Sunday for our services in:

Melbourne – 9am, 10.30am and 6pm (Hoyts Melbourne Central);
West – 10.30am (Hoyts Highpoint); and
Geelong – 10.30am (Simonds Stadium).

At these services we hear relevant and practical messages from the Bible about God, life and the world we live in. We pray, we sing, we hang out, and then through the week we commit ourselves to being people of light and love in our city.

To find out more about what God is doing in and through this community and how you can partner with us visit ***cityonahill.com.au***

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