

Ephesians 1:1-6

What's Your Identity

Image Church // Ephesians 1: God's Calling on Our Lives

Intro

Image Family, I hope you're doing well!

Before we jump in, let me just say that last week was incredible. It was Vision Sunday, where we laid out where we believe that God's leading us as a church... If you missed it, make sure to take some time to watch it and look at the vision document that we gave all of you last week...

- *I don't know about you, but I'm fired up about where we're headed and excited about what God's going to do this year!*
- **BTW:** Podcast giveaway going on this week, so go listen to our most recent episode (*The Dangers of Progressive and Fundamentalist Christianity*)!

Alright, if you have your Bibles, grab them and turn to Ephesians 1...

This morning we're kicking off a new series this morning where we're going to walk through **Ephesians 1**, and we're going to be looking at **who God's called you to be...**

- I told you last week, this year is the year of **transformation**, and what we want is a transformed perspective of who God is, what He's extended to us, and ultimately, how that shapes how we live!

Real quick, a little context on the book of **Ephesians**... It's a letter from Paul to the church in Ephesus...

- Ephesus was a large and impressive city that was one of the leading trade hubs for the Roman empire...

- And it was the epicenter of worship for the Greek and Roman Gods...
 - In fact, it was the home to the largest temple of the ancient world that was dedicated to Artemis, which is considered as one of the 7 wonders of the world...
- In addition to that, it was a place where sexual immorality and idolatry were actual industries there...
- It was also home to some of the most prestigious scholars of that day...

Ephesus was an interesting and impressive place, but it was a difficult place for Christians...

Paul planted the church in Ephesus on one of his missionary journeys... Then it would end up being pastored by Timothy...

Paul writes this letter to a church that's navigating a very difficult context in hopes that they would be grounded so that they can be transformed by the gospel... **PAUSE**

Build the tension:

We've all heard the word **identity** before... It's what shapes our sense of who we are...

- It's usually the lens that we use to view ourselves or measure ourselves... It's where we find value and worth...
- It's what helps us feel seen...
- It's how we define or present ourselves to others...

Your identity could be in your:

- Job
- Your success- money, accomplishments...
- Your status in society- possessions and popularity (*approval*)...
- Being a parent
- Being good or religious...
- It could be your pain or past...

Here's the thing, though, **what happens when the thing that your identity is shaped around gets hit?**

- Or maybe it's when you get called out, questioned, or exposed... When you fail or fall short... When we aren't seen or valued like you want to be...
- Or worse, when you lose the thing that's shaped you...
 - Maybe it was because of negligence, or maybe it was because of circumstance...

It's crushing when the thing that your identity around gets hit...

- It makes us question yourself, makes you not feel good enough, it makes you feel like you don't have any value...
- It makes you defensive, it makes you feel down... *Sometimes a cycle of both...*

You don't know what to do, you don't know where to turn... You feel stuck wondering how you find your way back...

Example: I saw this with a lot of the guys that I played with... Some of the best in the country... Careers don't go in the direction they spiraled...

But what if there was another way... **What if there was a way to find your identity in something that can never get hit?**

What if your identity isn't something that you work for, but something that's actually given to you and can never be taken away and you never have to fear losing it??

That's where we're heading this morning...

Ephesians 1:1-6

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will:

You remember Paul's story, right?

- He used to be called **Saul**... Came from a religious bloodline and was part of the Religious elite, a Pharisee followed the law to a "T"... (*Phil. 3:4-6*)

- His religious zeal had blinded him to who Jesus was... He was so caught up in religious practices with the rest of the Pharisees that he missed Jesus... So he stood opposed to the person and work of Jesus...
- And made it his aim to hunt down followers of Jesus...
- Stephen, in **Acts 6**, who was a Christ follower, was stoned, and his clothes were laid at the feet of **Saul**...

Then everything changed on the road to Damascus... We see this in **Acts 9**...

- Saul had been breathing threats and murder against the followers of Jesus...
- And he was on his way to Damascus to continue his hunt for Christ-followers...
- And as he's approaching Damascus, Saul encounters Jesus...
 - Goes blind...
 - Jesus tells one of His followers named Ananias to go to Saul and lay hands on him so that he might regain his sight...
 - Ananias is afraid of Paul...

Jesus says this: **Acts 9:15:** *Go, for this man is **my chosen instrument** to take my name to Gentiles, kings, and Israelites.*

Ananias goes to Saul and shares the message Jesus told him to share, and the bible says that *at once, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he got up and was baptized...*

- Saul saw and understood that Jesus was who He said He was... That He was Savior and Lord...
- He would go from persecutor to pastor, from opposing Jesus to one of the greatest advocates for Jesus, from works to grace

Here's what Paul says happened to him in **Galatians 2:20** **I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. [Reference]**

*What Paul experienced was a new **identity** not in what he did, but in who He was made to be....

My prayer is that this is what's going to happen to some of you...

- That you would encounter Jesus for who He is...
- That you would move past religion and religious practices to the person of Jesus and surrender to Him as Lord of your life...
- And that you would be **baptized** as a marker of your faith in the person and work of Jesus!

Now, before we move on, let me ask you this because it's going to set up where we're going... **How did all of this happen to Paul?** It's right there in the text... **By God's will...**

- It is the work of Jesus and the power of Jesus that brings **transformation** in and through Paul...

Paul left to himself, would have continued a life that was counter and opposed to Jesus... But Jesus stepped in and radically reoriented and repurposed Paul's life...

- Taking a man who was so far gone and opposed to Jesus and making him the greatest advocate of Jesus...
- This was God's plan and God's purpose that happens through His power...

That the same thing can happen to you!

Let's keep reading... Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will: To the faithful saints in Christ Jesus at Ephesus. ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

There's an important thing to see here... The line **In Christ Jesus:**

Paul's going to point to this reality **5 times** in our **6 verses**...

- Christ is the key, He's the **heng** on which our salvation hangs...
- Christ is how we receive grace from God and peace with God...

Illustration: Door, door frame, connected and held up by the heng...

- The same is true with us...

Then Paul breaks into praise in verse 3:

³ Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ.

We see the **Trinity at work** here...

The God of the Bible is a Triune God... God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit... **1 God 3 Persons coexisting for all of eternity in perfect harmony together as the Godhead...**

- Confusing to understand, it should be, you're not God...

The beauty of the Trinity is put on display through the gospel...

- The Father wills it...
- The Son, *Jesus*, fulfills it...
- The Holy Spirit applies it...
 - It's how we're able to be **in Christ**...
 - And how we're able to receive every spiritual blessing that comes from being in Christ...

The question is, **what are the spiritual blessings that we receive?**

Paul's going to flesh that out for us in the next couple verses...Verse 4:

⁴ For he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in love before him.

Paul says that God chose us... We didn't choose Him, He chose us...

- The thing we need to see here is that **salvation belongs to the Lord**...
- There's nothing that we contribute to our salvation...
 - *God chose us **before** we could ever attempt to contribute anything...* Wrap your head around that!
- You contribute nothing. God contributes everything...
 - God doesn't choose you based on your works, religion, skillset, ability, or future potential... *Joke*

Verse 4: He chooses you because of His love!

We see an **example** of this in the **OT** when God says why He chose Israel as His chosen people as a means by which to reveal Himself to the world that would culminate in Christ coming through Israel...

- **Deuteronomy 7:7–8** The Lord had his heart set on you and **chose** you, not because you were more numerous than all peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. ⁸ But because the Lord loved you. *Reference*

But listen, don't make the mistake of hearing this and thinking that he chose you because you were lovable or because God saw the good in you...

Paul says in **Eph. 2** that by nature we are *children under wrath*... And in **Romans 5:10**, Paul says we were *enemies of God*...

- The love that we experience **isn't** because we're **lovable**... It's not because there's **good** that God wanted to bring out in us. It isn't because we've earned it...

We experience love from God because **GOD IS LOVE**... It's at the core of His nature...

- And He makes His love seen and known by choosing to love us...

Illustration: Think about it like this... The sun doesn't shine on you because you deserve it, worked for it, or loved it...

- It shines on you because of what it is...
- You experience the rays of light that direct you to the source...

In the same way, you experience the love of God as a result of who He is, and that love is designed to direct you to Him!

It's so hard to get our heads around... We don't love this way... And it's why we feel like we have to earn God's love when the reality is that we can't!

- He **chose** to give it to us when we didn't deserve it, this is what's so captivating about the love of God!

So, [God] chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in love before him.

The question is how in the world can he make us holy and blameless because the truth is we're anything but that!

Paul's going to show us how... Verse 5:

⁵ He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace that he lavished on us in the Beloved One.

*What Paul shows us is that God chose you before the foundations of the world for a purpose... To be **adopted** as sons and daughters...*

ADOPTION: Gospel

I want you to see the beauty in this... Before the foundations of the world, God chose you to be adopted...

- From eternity past, before time began, God knew you, God set His heart on you, He loved you, and He cherished you... He chose to set His love on you...
- *Knowing what you would do...*

****Your adoption is for the praise of God's grace that's been lavished on us through Christ...***

- God doesn't say work your way to me, He says I want to lavish you with my grace..

****So often, we feel like God is this distant being that doesn't really know us or what we're going through...***

- And what we see here is the opposite. We see an intentional and personal God who sees us, knows us, and chooses us...
- You are His possession... (*Titus 2:14*)
 - God cares about His possessions...

Here's what I want you to see and where all of this comes together...
It's through your adoption that God gives you a **new identity**... You are no longer a sinner, you're now a son or daughter of God... You are part of God's family...

- You are no longer defined by what you do but by what's been done for you!

And here's why all of this text is so important, because God chose you, no one and nothing can change that, not even you...

- The identity that God's given you doesn't change based on you- it's been set by God...
- Nothing can impact it, and nothing can shake it...

When life hits, when things happen, when people criticize you, when you fail at your job, when you get passed over for the promotion...

- When you end up less successful than you want to be, when you aren't as popular as you want to be, and when you don't have the status you hoped for...
- When you kids don't act right...
- When you sin, when you go off the rails spiritually...

None of that impacts who you are... Because you are not what you do, you are not what you've done, and you are not what's been done to you...

- You are who God's made you to be... A son or daughter...

You don't have to cling to your pain, or walk in the guilt of your past...

- Those things don't define you... Jesus does!

And this is so freeing...

- You no longer have to look for validation and value in the things of this world or the people in this world...
 - You have been validated and given value by the God of this world...

You can live with **confidence**... You can walk in **faith** and not **fear**... Fixing your eyes on Jesus who's completed the work necessary to save you...

For those of you that are in Christ... We've looked at this morning what that means... You have been given a **new identity** that's been *determined, established, and purchased by God*...

- Walk in that...

For some of you this morning, you're not in Christ...

- You're not experiencing the beauty of what we walked through this morning...
- What I want you to understand is that you have the chance to experience the new identity we talked about today...
 - You've been looking in the wrong places...

The Bible shows us that you experience this new identity that comes from God by surrendering to the finished work of Jesus!

- **Romans 10:9** *If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

Some of you need to experience the power of God this morning, you need to surrender... *For some of you, God's drawing you to himself this morning... No accident you're here... Respond!*

Rev. 3:20 *Jesus stands at the door and knocks...*

2 Peter 3:9 *The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance!*

Would you surrender this morning, would you experience the **new identity offered through Christ alone by grace alone**...

The Bible itself ends with, Whosoever will may come. (Rev 22:17)...

- Will you to receive or reject Jesus?!?

Conclusion [VAMP]

Call to respond... Believe and be baptized!

Challenge: Read *Ephesians 1:1-6* every day all week... Allow it to be ingrained into your heart and mind... Meditate on what it says and the implications that it has on your life...

You have been Chosen by God...

You have been purchased through the blood of Christ...

You have a new identity...

Outtakes:

John 10:27–30 *My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one.*

Challenge to non-Believers:

This is the part of this discussion where a certain amount of mystery sets in, because Scripture never presents a lack of God's choosing as the reason why someone didn't come. Not once! It's always on us.

- Matthew 23: 37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem... How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!"

And I realize there is mystery there, but here is what is revealed:

- If you're a Christian, it's because God chose you. If you're not, it's because you have chosen to reject God, and *the Lord is not willing that you should perish, but that you should come to repentance.*
- Are you chosen? In one sense, you have the power to decide that.
- If you choose to repent and believe in Jesus, you're chosen. The choice is yours. ¹

¹ JD Greear, *Chosen*. Ephesians 1:1-14, Love Incuroptible.