

WEEK 1

“Chosen Before You Knew It”

Ephesians 1:1–14

Before You Were You

Ephesians 1:3-5 (NIV)

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. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will — to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Think about the earliest memory you have of yourself. Maybe you're four years old, standing in a backyard. Maybe you're seven, riding a bike for the first time. Wherever that memory lands, here's what Paul wants you to know: God was already thinking about you long before that moment. Not just before your earliest memory. Before the world existed.

That's not a small statement. Paul writes it almost in passing — "he chose us in him before the creation of the world" — as though it's simply the starting point of the story, the first thing to establish before anything else can make sense. And it is. Because if God's choice of you came first, before your birth, before your faith, before any single thing you did or didn't do, then that choice can't be undone by anything that comes after it either.

We spend a lot of our lives trying to become someone worth choosing. Worth loving. Worth keeping around. We perform for our parents, our friends, our coworkers, even for God. There is a quiet voice in most of us that whispers: you have to earn this. You have to prove you're worth it.

Paul's opening is a direct answer to that voice. Before there was a world to perform in, before there was anyone watching, before there was even a "you" to succeed or fail — God chose you. Not because of what he saw you becoming. Because of who he already is.

That's not a sentiment. It's a foundation. Everything Paul is going to say about how you live, what you're called to, and where you're sent is built on this one bedrock reality: the choice came first. The love came first. Grace came first.

You didn't find your way to God. He found his way to you. Before you were you.

Personal Response

- Sit quietly for a moment before you write anything. Then ask yourself honestly: do I actually live like I'm someone God chose before the world began? Or do I live like I'm still trying to earn that?
- What would change about today — one specific thing — if you carried this truth with you into it?
- Talk to God honestly. Tell him where you still feel like you're auditioning. Ask him to let the reality of his choice become more real to you than the performance.

Every. Single. One.

Ephesians 1:3 (NIV)

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.

Paul doesn't say God has blessed us with many spiritual blessings. He doesn't say God has blessed us with the blessings we've earned, or the blessings appropriate to our level of spiritual maturity, or even most of the available spiritual blessings. He says every. Every spiritual blessing in Christ.

That word is worth sitting with. Every means there is no blessing Paul is going to describe later in this letter that you are still waiting to receive. Chosen? Already yours. Adopted? Already yours. Redeemed? Sealed by the Spirit? Already. All of it. Before you woke up this morning. Before you had your quiet time or skipped it. Before the good day or the bad one.

Most of us relate to God from a posture of deficit. We feel like we're behind. Like we owe him something. Like the account is overdrawn and we need to make it right before we can really approach him. So we try harder. Show up more. Pray longer. Serve more often. And underneath all of it is the quiet belief that God is withholding something we haven't yet earned. Paul says that posture doesn't match reality. In Christ, you are not behind. You are not in deficit. You are not waiting for God to warm up to you based on your performance this week. You have been "blessed . . . with every spiritual blessing in Christ."

Now here's the thing that makes this harder than it sounds: Paul wrote this from prison. Chained to a Roman soldier. Awaiting trial. If anyone had reason to feel like God was withholding something, it was the man writing these words. And yet he opens with an explosion of praise — not because his circumstances were good, but because he knew something about his standing that his circumstances couldn't touch.

That's the kind of grounded Paul is talking about. Not the feeling that everything is fine. The settled conviction that you already have everything you need in Christ — regardless of what everything around you looks like today.

Personal Response

- Write down the areas of your life where you feel most spiritually behind or in deficit. Then read verse 3 again slowly over that list.
- What would it look like to approach God today from abundance rather than deficit? What might change about how you pray?
- Ask God to help you believe — not just know — that every spiritual blessing in Christ is already yours. Tell him honestly where the gap between knowing and believing actually is.

Signed, Sealed, Delivered

Ephesians 1:13-14 (NIV)

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of his glory.

In the ancient world, a seal meant something. When a king sent a letter, he pressed his signet ring into warm wax and that mark said: this is mine. Authorized. Protected. Don't tamper with it. The seal wasn't decorative. It was a legal declaration of ownership and protection.

Paul says that when you stepped over the line of faith, God pressed his seal into your life. Not wax — his Spirit. The Holy Spirit living in you is God's legal declaration: this one is mine. Authorized. Protected. Don't tamper with it.

But Paul goes further. He doesn't just call the Spirit a seal. He calls him a "deposit guaranteeing our inheritance." In first-century commerce, a deposit wasn't just a good faith gesture. It was a legally binding commitment. When someone put down a deposit, they were obligated to complete the transaction. The deposit was the beginning of a promise that had to be kept.

So when Paul says the Holy Spirit is a deposit, he's saying this: God has already put something down on your future. He is legally, cosmically committed to finishing what he started in you. The Spirit in your life right now isn't just a comfort or a warm feeling. He is God's binding promise that your story doesn't end here.

A lot of us live with a low-grade anxiety about the future. Will I make it? Will I drift? Will I fall away? Paul's answer is that the question isn't primarily about your grip on God. It's about his grip on you. And the evidence of that grip is the Spirit he has placed inside you as a down payment on everything that's coming.

You are sealed. You are a deposit-holder. Your inheritance is guaranteed — not by your consistency, but by his commitment. That's not a reason to be careless. It's a reason to stop being afraid.

Personal Response

- Where in your life do you carry anxiety about your standing with God or your spiritual future? Bring it here honestly.
- What does it mean to you personally that the Spirit isn't a feeling but a guarantee? How does that land differently?
- Sit quietly for a few minutes and simply acknowledge the Spirit's presence. Thank God for the deposit he's already made on your future. Ask him to make that reality more solid than your fears.