

Happy Mother's Day! I am grateful for that video from our MOPS and MomsNext ministries that serve preschool moms and moms of elementary kids. Let me tell you something, Copperfield Church. We are blessed with some of the most amazing moms I have ever met. I sometimes have the privilege of hanging out around our young moms, in MOPS, in the halls of our preschool, in the pickup line for our kids ministry. I am so inspired by the strength of a generation of moms who have navigated a pandemic, become instant homeschoolers, brought children into a world where no visitors were allowed, brought those Covid babies to church for the first time and bravely left them crying. The stay-at-homeness of the pandemic was their world, and you moms bravely walked back in and let your hearts be broken with their cries because you knew they needed to be here, and you were sure you did. Our moms are strong women.

One of the reasons motherhood requires such strength is because the stakes are so very high. We are sent home from the hospital with a tiny little living breathing human with an actual soul and we are tasked with taking them from infancy into functioning adulthood and leading them to love and follow Jesus in 18 short years. In those years, it often feels like the weight of it all falls on our shoulders and that one misstep could threaten their future success and maybe their eternal destiny. Every decision in this social media saturated world from breastfeeding versus bottle feeding to public school versus Christian school versus homeschool to what age should we let them date and what time should their curfew be is questioned and analyzed and can feel like it impacts everything.

When my oldest was four, I taught preschool choir at our church. Preschool and choir are two words that truly don't belong next to each other in a sentence, but I wanted my child to know how to sing and praise Jesus so it seemed like a good idea at the time. One Sunday afternoon, she and I were on our way to preschool choir and we needed popcorn. I can't remember why, but when you put preschoolers in a choir, snacks are essential. So we stopped at the grocery store and I did my best to manage expectations. I told Becky that we could only buy popcorn because we were on our way to preschool choir and we didn't have time to look at other things. We grabbed our popcorn and while we were in the line to check out, she asked me if she could have gum. I reminded her gently that we were only there to buy popcorn. We checked out and got in the car to head to preschool choir. As we drove away, she said, "Mom, do you want a piece of gum?" I said, "Where did you get gum?" She said, "In my pocket."

Let me tell you, In that moment, I realized that my four year old was a shoplifter. All the dreams I had dreamed for her life flashed before my eyes and they now ended in prison. I questioned every parenting decision I had ever made and most of my life choices. I was clearly a failure, because being a mom was who I was and I was the mom who was raising a career criminal.

The Lord calmed my heart that day and on many, many days after. And friends, I've learned some things as He's so graciously walked alongside me. In spite of me, the story of my precious daughter's life did not end in a penitentiary. She is living free and following Jesus, praise Him.

Here's my Mother's Day gift to you – whether you're a mother or not. I want to tell you that motherhood is an incredible privilege and an awesome responsibility, but it is not your ultimate identity. Listen, that is too heavy a burden for any of us to bear and it is impossible for our kids to bear. I love that the MOPS video we just watched says, "we moms have big purpose." That is true. And we want to celebrate the incredible ways that moms live out that purpose with love and grace. What I believe the Lord wants to give us this morning from His Word is the gift of seeing who we really are in Christ.

Read Ephesians 1:3-14

³Praise be

to the God and Father

of our Lord Jesus Christ

who has blessed us in the heavenly realm

with every spiritual blessing

in Christ

⁴For

He chose us in Him

before the creation of the world

to be holy and

blameless in His sight

In love

⁵He predestined us to be adopted

as His sons

through Jesus Christ

in accordance with His pleasure

and will

⁶to the praise of His glorious grace

which He has freely given us

in the One He loves
⁷In Him we have redemption through His blood,
the forgiveness of sins
in accordance with the riches of God's grace
⁸that He lavished on us
with all wisdom and understanding

⁹And He made known to us the mystery of His will
according to His good pleasure
which He purposed in Christ
¹⁰to be put into effect when the times have reached their fulfillment
to bring all things in heaven and on earth together
under one head
even Christ

¹¹In Him we were also chosen
having been predestined
according to the plan of Him who works out everything
in conformity with the
purpose of His will

¹²in order that
we, who were the first to hope in Christ
might be for the praise of His glory

¹³And you also were included in Him
when you heard the word of truth,
the gospel of your salvation
Having believed,
you were marked in him with a seal,
the promised Holy Spirit,
¹⁴who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance
until the redemption of those who are God's
possession –
to the praise of His glory

I want to jump back to verse 2, just before the passage we just read, where Paul writes, “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” To you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. These are gift words. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it seems as if those gifts and the One who gives them captures Paul’s heart as he writes with such joy and awe that he launches into verses 3-14, which in the original Greek is one 202-word sentence. And let me tell you, scholars have tried to outline it, make it fit some literary form, but commentary after commentary admitted defeat. This outburst of praise defies any attempt to make it fit a formula. I love that God inspired from Paul’s heart the kind of run-on sentence of praise that would refuse to fit a mold.

Despite the way the thoughts of praise tumble out and over each other, there are rich things that we can learn from this outburst of praise. In these words, Paul is celebrating who we are in Christ.

³Praise be

to the God and Father

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who has blessed us in the heavenly realm

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There is no spiritual blessing that we have not been blessed with. Paul is about to elaborate on some of them, but sit in the truth that EVERY spiritual blessing is ours. Spiritual blessings aren’t blessings that exist in the spiritual realm that are out there somewhere unreachable in reality. Spiritual blessings refer to blessings that pertain to life in the Spirit. Forever but also here and now. Our generous God has held back nothing in blessing us in Christ. That is true for every one of us. You are not a spiritual stepchild. You are not less blessed than the person whose walk with Christ you admire most. That means that moms, as you raise your children, every spiritual blessing is available to you. That is true for dads, too, but today is not your day. On the best days and the hardest days, when every single thing and every single child goes the way you don’t want it to go, every single blessing is yours in Christ.

Paul teaches us that every spiritual blessing is ours In Christ – Paul uses some form of this expression over and over throughout this litany of praise. Every blessing is ours by virtue of being in Christ. We receive every

spiritual blessing through our relationship with Christ. When we receive Christ, we are “in Him.” We are in communion with Him. In John 15:5, Jesus says, “I am the vine and you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” Jesus describes being in Him by the metaphor of vine and branch. He is the vine, and in Him, we receive every spiritual blessing. They flow to us in a continuous stream, just as the life of the vine flows to its branches.

⁴For

He chose us in Him

before the creation of the world

to be holy and

blameless in His sight

We are chosen

Before the creation of the world

Before “in the beginning” God had made an intentional decision to choose us. The earth was not yet formed, and God in His grace chose you. It was before you were born, before you chose Him. He chose you.

We call this the doctrine of election. Books have been written and scholars have spent lifetimes trying to understand God’s election and how we can freely respond to the gospel if God has already chosen. You will not get the answer to that question this morning from How can our free will to receive His gift of salvation and His choosing of us be both true? I do not pretend today to understand the depth of God’s thoughts. I choose to believe He is bigger than I can understand and that there is glorious mystery beyond our comprehension. But what He has revealed to us is true. We are chosen.

You are chosen in Christ, and you cannot be unchosen. God’s choice is for eternity. Look at the next verse (5). You were predestined to be adopted as His child. We are His children. Some of you can uniquely relate to the idea of being an adopted child, because you are an adopted child, or maybe you’re an adoptive parent. There is a lot of theology behind the concept of adoption. I want us to see here that adoption is God’s choice and it brings us into His family with full rights as children.

Don often says that we have one and a half adopted children. Our first daughter is biological to me, and her dad died when she was two. After I married Don, he adopted her. Our second child was adopted by both of us.. Both were chosen as our children in adoption and both of them are fully and completely our daughters. As an adoptive dad, Don chose both of these girls. And they are as legally

and truly his children as if they were born to him. In fact, in both of the adoption processes, we were reminded over and over that the law obligated us to care for these children, and we could not legally give them back. We could not legally unchoose them.

No human law can obligate God, but He chooses to obligate Himself to us when He adopts us as His children in Christ.

You “mom” as a chosen child of the loving God of the universe. There is not a chosenness scale, because we are chosen in Christ. It is God’s grace that chooses us, and His grace does not exist on a scale. You ARE chosen. You parent from a place of chosenness. You also do your job from a place of chosenness. You grocery shop as one chosen in Christ. You read your Bible, you read a children’s book to your kids, and you read the news as one chosen in Christ. You take your morning jog, drink your coffee, and make decisions that could alter the trajectory of your family as one chosen in Christ.

We live in a cancel culture world, and every one of us at some point will feel unchosen. A friend group you thought you were completely a part of leaves you out. You see on social media that a play date happened and you weren’t invited. A work meeting took place and you were left out. Some of you may have chosen to love someone who unchose you. You may be the parent of an adult child who has decided to unchoose you, and this day may be less than a celebration. You may be the child of a parent who has unchosen you, and this day brings pain.

But we who are in Christ are chosen and what God has chosen, He will not unchoose. You are in Christ. You are among the chosen.

You can celebrate chosenness. It is who you are in Christ.

Paul writes that we are chosen in Christ to be holy and blameless in God’s sight. When we believed in Christ, his holiness and blamelessness are attributed to us purely by grace. God looks on us and sees the holiness and blamelessness of Christ. But there is a pursuit of holiness that begins when we believe and lasts a lifetime. Romans 8:29 says that God’s ultimate goal for you for this lifetime is to conform us to the image of Christ. We call this process sanctification. It is a lifelong process, and God will faithfully make us more like Christ.

Listen, we can resist sanctification (and you are looking at someone who has done that more times than I wish) and it will not affect our chosenness. But it will affect our satisfaction in Christ. We are chosen for big purposes. Those big purposes happen within us before they are worked out through us. So holiness is our God-designed purpose, and as we live it out, He does what only He can do through us. Holiness is the pursuit of a lifetime of walking with Jesus.

That means if you're a mom (or a dad) that we will be working this out in front of our kids. And sometimes our kids will see the unholy side of the pursuit of holiness. And the enemy will tell us, like He did me when my four-year old took the gum, that we have permanently blown it. And that the stakes are so high that our kids will never know Christ the way we want them to, will never have the relationship with Him or with us that we hope for. But we have EVERY spiritual blessing. We are chosen before the creation of the world. We are adopted as His children with every right of sonship. God is not giving up on His children and He's not giving up on yours. His blessings are inexhaustible.

And Paul isn't finished yet. We have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Redemption means that something (or someone) has come to belong not to the original owner, but to another, and in redemption the one who is captive to the new owner is freed and returned to the original owner. That is our story. The Word tells us that in our sin, we had become captives. But God is a redeemer, and in redeeming us, He sets us free to belong freely to Him. We are released. And in Christ we are forgiven for the sins that led to our captivity. Hallelujah.

This is good news for us, but let me tell you, this is good news for our children. Whatever generational sin you have inherited, you do not have to carry it forward. You are redeemed. You don't have to pass it on to your children. We have every spiritual blessing. We are redeemed. There has been a lot of rightly deserved theological outcry against what is referred to as "name it and claim it" theology which teaches that anything we want, we can say we have it and claim it in the name of Jesus. This is false teaching. God never promised to do anything I asked Him praise His name. But here's what I want you to hear today. Whenever God promises us a gift in Scripture, He wants us to claim it. And we are redeemed. You can claim that. Yes, we're going to sin. But we don't have to stay stuck in sin. We are redeemed, bought back from the captivity of sin. We have power in the Spirit over sin. I think we too often give up too soon, because God often doesn't take away the desire for a sin that is a pattern in our lives. We are redeemed, but we have to press into our redemption to live free lives. The author of Hebrews in Hebrews 12:1 tells us to "throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles." The New English translation reads, "we must get rid of every weight and the sin that clings so closely." That sin may be so engrained in you that it feels as close as your own skin. But we are

redeemed. That sin may cling to us, but we are free to get rid of it. Do you know how grateful I am for this promise? I cannot claim that I did not pass any sin on to my children. God and they know so differently. But by the grace of God they have seen the sins that clung so closely have less and less a hold on me. Do not believe that you can't overcome. You have redemption.

There are more spiritual blessings, and we don't have time to look at all of them. So we're going to jump to verses 13-14, where Paul writes,

¹³And you also were included in Him when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of His glory.

A seal in the ancient world was affixed to something valuable to do two things: prove ownership and prove authenticity. A very important document would be sealed so that when it was received, it was obvious that the seal was unbroken and therefore the document was authentic. The same could be done of property that was being sent somewhere. The seal was made by the author or owner of the document or property. Paul uses the seal as a metaphor for our receiving the Holy Spirit. Despite the joyfully rambling way Paul has presented the blessings of the believer in Christ, he's come in a way full circle. He began by talking about spiritual blessings, blessings pertaining to life in the Spirit. Here he finishes his very long sentence with the blessing of the Spirit Himself.

The Spirit is both a seal and a deposit. A down payment. The presence of the Spirit and the power of the Spirit in our lives allows us to fully live in the blessings we've talked about. His presence gives us a small taste of what it will be like to live fully in the presence of God one day.

As a seal, He is the guarantee that we will arrive where we are going fully intact. I can think of no better reason to celebrate this Mother's Day. Being further along in this journey than those of you in the parenting years, I can look back and see times when I truly thought I would not get through in one piece. I never lost faith in God, but I would be lying if I didn't tell you that there were times when I wondered if what He was doing would be my undoing. And in my 45 plus years of walking with Him, I can tell you that what almost tore me apart He always, always worked to keep me together. Here's what I can promise you this Mother's Day. He is able to keep you and me intact, authentic, in Him until we fully live before Him completely

redeemed. Until then, let us live as the possessors of every spiritual blessing. This is who we are. All other identities, no matter how weighty or important, even the identity of motherhood, are secondary to our ultimate identity in Christ. Chosen, adopted, redeemed, forgiven, sealed with the Spirit, receivers of every spiritual blessing. It is who we are. Would you pray with me.