



THE WORD FOR TODAY

Ephesians 1, verses 3-14

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ..”

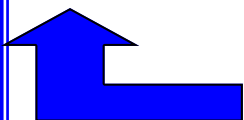
Paul was writing to the folk who made up the church in Ephesus (in modern-day Turkey) to encourage them to hold on to their faith in Jesus. He hoped the letter would be passed on to other churches once it had been read in Ephesus. He begins by reminding them what blessings they have received from God through Jesus. As he describes these blessings his joy just pours out in a flood of words. In the original language this whole passage was all one sentence! Can you imagine the scribe writing down Paul’s words trying to keep up with what he was saying?



Where was Paul when all this joy came flooding out? In prison in Rome.

Joy might seem hard to find at times, but read this passage and think what God has done and continues to do for us in Jesus. It’s bound to fill you with joy!

Follow the words of this passage round the church, beginning on the north wall of this little building. We are using the New International Version of the Bible, which you can find on the internet under Bible Gateway, and the whole “Word for Today” is on the church website, which is www.libertonkirk.net You can also find meditations on other Bible passages in previous “Words for Today” which can be accessed through the website.



Turn immediately left to find the first verses of the Bible passage on the bench.

“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.”

1



We are special in God’s sight. He chose us to receive every blessing he pours out. He also chose us to be different from the norm—to be more like him. He made us in his image.

Yet we all know that since Adam and Eve human beings are inclined to stray from what God wants us to be—it’s an ongoing challenge not to just fit into the ways of the world around us!

Lord, thank you for the blessings which you shower on me every day. You have chosen me to be different to the world around me— help me to live up to that calling.

(No. 2 is on the bench facing us at the corner of the church building)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“ In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons 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.”

2



How wonderful it is to know that God’s grace is available to all who believe. He rescues us and brings us into his family, no matter how undeserving we might be. In John’s Gospel it says *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* (John 3:16)

What amazing grace that is, to give his treasured only Son so that we might have life in his family for ever!

*Lord, your grace extends to the most undeserving.
We bless you for the gift of your Son Jesus.
Thank you for the joy of being adopted into your family.*

(Turn round the side of the church to find No. 3)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.”

3

There are two words to note here: “*the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us*”. These describe the extent of God’s blessings on us. There is no holding back with God as far as we are concerned. He sacrificed his Son so that our sins could be forgiven, but also he opens our eyes to understand what a plan he has for the world and so gives us a vision of the future. Such an amazingly generous God!



***Lord, thank you for your lavish generosity to us.
We treasure the forgiveness bought by Jesus’ death on the cross
and we thank you that we can know and be part of your plan.
Help us to show generosity to others in our daily lives.***

(No. 4 is further along this side of the church)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have

4

reached their fulfilment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.”

Whatever mess the world is in right now, we know that one day God’s Kingdom will come and Jesus Christ will reign supreme. What a wonderful prospect. Jesus hoped that we would work towards that Kingdom in our lives—it should come first. *“But seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness”* he said (*Matthew 6:33*). What does that mean in practice? Helping the needy, fighting for justice and peace in the world, looking after the planet. Every little thing helps, and can give a glimpse of what the Kingdom will be like.



Lord, we look forward to the day when all countries and peoples will know Jesus as Lord.

Help us to work towards that Kingdom in everything we do.

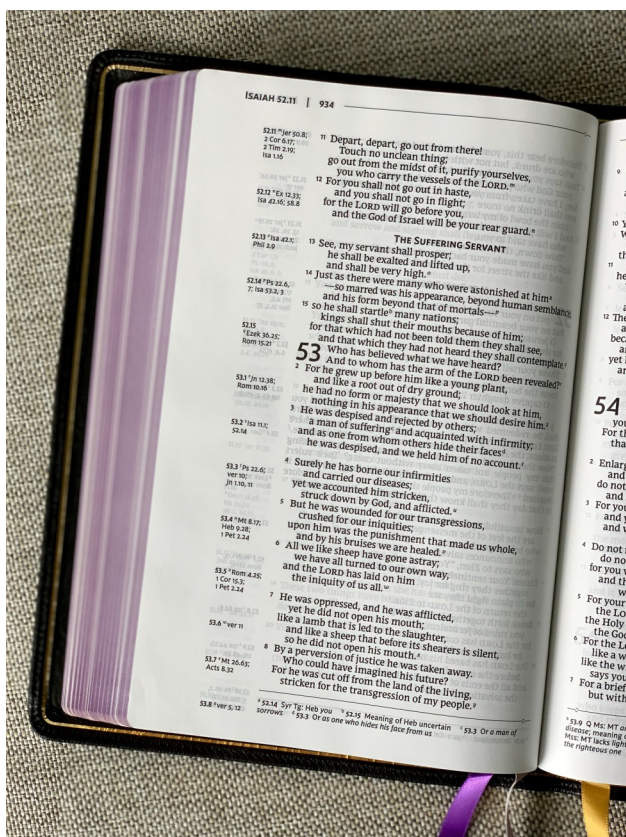
(Walk along the back of the church and turn left to find No. 5)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“In 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, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.”

5



Throughout the whole of the Jewish Scriptures (our Old Testament) runs the promise of God's Anointed One, the Messiah, coming to save his people. Paul was a Jew very well versed in the Scriptures. It is therefore hardly surprising that he believed that the Jews, with this hope and expectation of the Messiah, had a special chance to be part of God's plan.

He saw his own ministry as a great privilege, and the way he could give glory back to God.

Lord, we thank you for Paul and the others who played such a part in the growth of the Christian Church. Help us to treasure your word in the Bible and to read it every day.

(Walk towards the front of the church, past the cairn, and turn left—No. 6 is on the first bench.)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

***“And you also were included in Christ
when you heard the word of truth,
the gospel of your salvation.”***

6



Paul is quick to say that the good news of Jesus our Saviour is not confined to the Jews. Anyone who hears it and believes can find forgiveness for their sins and be welcomed into God's family. There is a door always open.

The challenge for us is to make sure everybody has a chance to hear *“the word of truth, the gospel”*, in other words the good news of Jesus. If they don't hear it, how can they believe?

***Lord, thank you for welcoming all into your family
who know Jesus as their Saviour.
Help us to find ways of introducing others to Jesus and his love.***

(Walk to the centre of the front of the church to find No. 7 on the central bench.)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“Having 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.”

7



Packages were often sealed with the personal seal of the owner or sender and an unbroken seal showed that the goods were intact. What a thought—the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives is in effect marking us out as belonging to God! And we receive this gift from God when we believe!

The Holy Spirit makes a difference to my daily life, I know. It’s as if Jesus was right there with a hand on my shoulder, whispering words of encouragement, helping me to make the right decisions and choose the right words, giving me strength to cope with difficulties.

***Lord, I feel truly blessed that you mark me out as yours
with the gift of the Holy Spirit.
I pray you will continue to guide me by the Spirit as I go through life.***

If anything you have read has prompted questions you would like to discuss, please contact John Young on 664 3067 or jyoung@churchofscotland.org.uk



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