

**Life Group Notes**

**Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2024**

**Speaker:** Andy McCullough

**Title:** Ephesians: In the Beloved (Part 1)

**Passage:** Ephesians 1:1-3

**1. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,**

- Paul wrote the letter
- An apostle is someone sent by God, with authority, for a purpose.
- By the will of God. This letter will speak quite a bit about the purpose of God, the design of God, the desire of God. God has a plan for all creation throughout all history. Within that he has a plan, a design, for all creatures... including Paul and including us.

**2. To the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus:**

- A saint is not a special person who did very special things long ago – like St Anthony or St Patrick. We *were* sinners, now we are *saints*.
- In Christ; 10 times in this sentence. 39 in total in Eph. Our mystical union with Christ involves us in the eternal Father -Son bond of love.
- In Christ/in Ephesus. We live in two realities, we are in Christ and in Reading.

**3. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

- Grace and peace are major themes in Ephesians, through to the final verse! Grace is a Greek greeting. Peace is Roman – Ceasar Augustus felt that his great achievement was to unite the world under one Empire, thus bringing peace. Jesus, not Ceasar Augustus, has brought real grace and peace.
- Father. This is radical because the Jews understood God as father, but for Paul to include Gentiles in this idea was very unpopular.

**4. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,**

- Blessing– to speak good things. We speak good things of God because he had spoken good things over our lives!
- Spiritual means dynamic, changing, alive.
- “in the heavenly places” is a phrase unique to Ephesians, although 5 times (also 1.20, 2.6, 3.10, 6.12). Identity can be changeable: I’m a son, a brother, a husband, a father, an employee, a British citizen. But, as a believer in Christ, there is one aspect of your identity which is fixed, certain, unchanging. You are blessed, in the heavenly realms, in Christ.

**Questions for discussion and application:**

1. How do you understand the “in Christ” idea? Discuss.
2. How do you feel about the idea that God has a big plan for everything including you?
3. What does it mean to you to be blessed?
4. “We bless God because he has blessed us.” Discuss – how does this work out?
5. What does it mean for you to be “in Christ” and “in Reading”? Pray for one another about the “in Reading” reality this week.