**Blessed to be a blessing. July 11 2021 Ephesians 1:3:14**

During the week I was watching a news show and saw the story of a woman called Jen Shaw and her café in the Toowoomba area. From personal experience, she knew what it was like to face huge challenges in adolescence. She determined to make a difference for other young people. She had employed 60 kids at her café since 2016 to give them a chance, they needed no experience, they were not forced to come and work regularly, she gave them time and space when that was needed. She said she did this because “that’s what a family does”.

The young people began to see their own potential and to believe in themselves. The community got behind them and strongly supports her venture. She said, “it only takes one adult to show up for a kid when they are having a tough time, wanting them to know that they are loved and believed in and that they can do absolutely anything they want to in life.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

A strong healthy family can give this message, so can others. This is the message that God would give to us. God loves us and God believes in us. God’s commitment and confidence in us is unwavering.

Throughout life there are incidents which can damage our confidence, there are things we may hesitate to acknowledge which may diminish our self esteem. Sometimes people are racked by a sense of guilt, inadequacy and low self esteem. There are also seasons when we may feel very secure and confident. The message of this passage today encourages us to see all that God has done for us and to be thankful. It encourages us to recognise that God has blessed us so that we may be a blessing to others.
**Valued by God**

It reminds us that we are valued by God. We are “Chosen in Christ before the world was made”.[[2]](#footnote-2) It reminds us of God’s love for us even before our births. As the psalmist stated,

**“**For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

Yet this passage in Ephesians is saying that even before the world was created God had chosen that people would have this special relationship with God. God’s choice had nothing to do with anything which humanity possessed, God chose humanity before humanity even existed. The divine initiative was of first importance. Some years ago my previous congregation had this statement on its notice board, “When God saw you it was love at first sight”. One of our neighbours who didn’t attend a church commented that he really appreciated this sign.

The passage also speaks of us being adopted as God’s children. “ **5**He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, **6**to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

This process of adoption is likewise at the initiative of God. Adoption was often chosen in the Greco-Roman world, to insure that the heir was an excellent choice. In this context however, the recipients worthiness is not considered, God adopts us into his family despite our unworthiness.

**Rich in God’s blessings**

The passage also reminds us that we are blessed by God. God “has

blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places”.[[5]](#footnote-5) The extravagance of God’s blessings towards us is emphasised. All that God has for us is available to us. It is a fullness of blessing from God, the phrase points to the completeness, and wholeness of God’s blessing. There is completeness in the gift of Jesus for us, nothing more is required. We are able to know and relate to God in God’s fullness because of the death and resurrection of Jesus. It reminds us that as Christians we live in this world but we also share in “the unseen world of spiritual realities”.[[6]](#footnote-6)

**Transformed by God’s grace**

We see that the key to unlocking the riches of God towards all humanity was the death and resurrection of Jesus. “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us.” [[7]](#footnote-7) We are the recipients of God’s lavish grace. We do not need to live under a cloud of guilt and fear, God has dealt with our sin. We can know forgiveness and restoration with God. We can experience the transforming power of God’s Spirit, we can stand holy and blameless in love before God, because of what Jesus has done, and because of the ongoing transformative work of God’s Spirit within and amongst us.

**Embraced by God’s Spirit**

In our daily living we can have an awareness of God because of the work of God’s Spirit. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit. “In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; thisis the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God’s own people, to the praise of his glory.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

Tom Wright has said, “The Spirit is to the Christian and the church what the cloud and fire were in the wilderness: the powerful, personal presence of the Living God, holy and not to be taken lightly, leading and guiding the often muddled and rebellious people to their inheritance.”[[9]](#footnote-9) In the midst of all that life may bring it is encouraging to know that God’s Spirit will always be with us.

**Enabled to live for God**

So this passage has emphasised the wealth of ways in which God has and does daily bless us. It also points us to the challenge to allow God’s blessings to motivate us to be a blessing to others, to live for God’s glory. “We live our lives in the presence of God, and that has to be a continuing stimulus for us to be the best that we can be.”[[10]](#footnote-10)

God has a purpose for us and all humanity. God’s purposes for this world have not become irrelevant. God’s kingdom here on earth as in heaven remains our focus and our inheritance. “In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory.”[[11]](#footnote-11) We often find it difficult to see evidences of the activity of God’s kingdom in our world, “**[**[f]or now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully”.[[12]](#footnote-12) However God is still active in our world.

Having a good sense of who we are as children of God corrects our perspective when we feel overwhelmed or distracted by the circumstances of life.

So as we enter into a new week it may be good to apply our thinking to the implications of this passage.

What difference does it make to know that we are so valued and blessed by God?

As God’s transforming work transforms our love, can we identify ways in which we would like God to transform the quality and extent of our love?

Tom Wright describes the Spirit’s presence with us as the “personal presence of the Living God, holy and not to be taken lightly, leading and guiding the often muddled and rebellious people to their inheritance.”[[13]](#footnote-13) What might we do to resist “taking the Spirit lightly”?

This passage has encouraged us to realise some of the extent of God’s goodness towards us. This recognition of how we have been blessed provides a launching place for us to be a blessing to others. In what ways might you share the blessings you have experienced with someone who may not be feeling loved and affirmed.

1. Jen Shaw, Toowoomba, interviewed on the Project July 8 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Eph 1:4a [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Psalm 139:13-16a [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Eph 1:5-6 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Eph1:3 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Quoted of John Stott in Leon Morris, *Expository Reflections on the letter to the Ephesians,*(Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994) 15 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Eph 1:7-8 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Eph 1:13-14 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. N. T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters,* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004) 12-13 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Morris, *Expository Reflections on the letter to the Epesians,* 17 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Eph 1:11-12 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. 1 Cor 13:12 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters,* 12-13 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)