

Ephesians 1:3-14

A CHRISTIAN'S TRUE IDENTITY: Ephesians 1:3-14: July 15, 2018

Introduction:

Proving one's identity is a regular thing these days, especially with overseas travel or negotiating with Telstra or our health insurance company, Centrelink or any number of institutions. We have to remember 'pass words' and lots of numbers and codes.

What is the Christian's true identity? How does God see us? We find the answer in the opening words of Paul's Letter to the Christians in Ephesus in Turkey. There he tells us four things about Christians:

1. Christians are chosen by God. (Verses 4-5 and 11-12)

Do you remember being chosen to be on a team at school? Usually, two students stood out the front of the class and selected team members one at a time until all of the class was divided into two teams.

Before the creation of the world, God chose us who believe in Jesus, to be His children, or as verse 14 says, to be *God's possession*. What extraordinary love, grace and mercy. We didn't wake up one morning and decide to become a Christian. God chose us and God helped us respond in repentance and faith.

The purpose of God's choosing is that we might live in such a way that He is honoured. We know how He wants us to live by praying, spending time reading the Bible, regularly hearing the Bible taught as we meet with God's people for church and in small groups during the week. Reading reliable Christian books is helpful too. It is one thing to know how God wants us to live but it is another thing to actually do it. Christians are called to a life of obedience to God's Word.

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2. Christians are included in Christ. (Verse 13)

Isn't it great when we are included by friends when they're sending out invitations to a party?

God tells us that as Christians, we have been *included in Christ*. We belong to Christ. We have our true identity as Christ-ians, not as Aussies or followers of some sporting team. We don't get our identity by being a parent or Grandparent, husband or wife or by the job we have or the car we drive or the sort of house we live in. Being Christian defines who we are. Being a friend of God is the most important thing we can possibly consider.

God also tells us when a person becomes a Christian: not at Baptism or Confirmation but when we *heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation*. (Verse 13) It's through hearing God's good news about Jesus and responding to that news that we are saved and *included in Christ*.

3. Christians are sealed with the Holy Spirit. (Verses 13-14)

Sporting clubs and Companies often have a specially made seal which is stamped on official documents to denote their authenticity. The Diocesan office has one!

Christians have God's ownership marked in them by the Holy Spirit whom God has given us. God comes and lives within individual Christians as well as amongst groups of Christians. We belong to God. This means that we will want to live in such a way that will make God happy.

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This *sealing* with the Holy Spirit is also a deposit, a down-payment, while we wait for Jesus to come back. At that time we will receive our full inheritance in Heaven. (Verse 14) We can't be *sealed* unless we've *believed* in Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. Although we may be very nice people and live good moral lives, if we don't believe then we don't belong to God and are not Christians.

4. Christians are given amazing gifts by God. (verse 7)

Isn't it great to give and even receive gifts on Birthdays, at Christmas and at other times!

When we become Christians, God gives us amazing gifts. Those mentioned here are:

- *Redemption through His blood.* This means that the Christian has been redeemed or bought back from Satan's grip, through Jesus' death on the cross.
- *The forgiveness of sins.* God wipes our record of rebellion against Him clean because of His grace; His undeserved favour.

These gifts are of eternal value compared with other gifts we give and receive which have a limited shelf-life.

Maybe on some occasion you've given a gift to someone reluctantly, out of a sense of duty. But note God's motivation in His giving:

- God gives generously (verse 3)
- God gives freely (verse 6)
- God gives lavishly (verse 8)

Wow! What an amazing God we have, from whom we deserve nothing!

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Conclusion:

Being a Christian is the greatest thing on earth and the only way of being in Heaven! Let's remember these four things about our true identity as Christians:

- Christians are chosen by God.
- Christians are included in Christ.
- Christians are sealed with the Holy Spirit.
- Christians are given amazing gifts by God.

May God help us all to know our true identity and to live this week to His praise and glory!