

## Title: “Growing Into Who You Are”

Chris Ryan

Eph 1:3-14

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**Service Readings:** Amos 7:7-15; Eph 1:3-14; Mark 6:14-29

*We are chosen by God. We are redeemed by God. We are sealed by God. And we cannot change this. And so, we stand with the only choice we can make. Do we grow into who we are, or do we not?*

### Message:

A human embryo. Invisible to the naked eye. So miniscule it requires a microscope to even see it. But when we gaze upon it, we gaze not just on a bunch of living cells (as some people like to claim). We gaze instead upon a human. One that is unrecognizable as such, but one that is every much a body and soul as any walking the earth! This tiny miracle may not have yet developed hands that can serve him, or feet that can guide him. He may not have a heart that can love God or a brain that can know him, but none of that matters for within the womb of his mother, there lies a human – he just needs to grow into what he already is.

Some of his growth will happen exclusive of his own actions and desires. He'll develop limbs and organs, he'll increase in size. He'll learn how to breath and how to eat. He can fight against learning these things but it will do little good – he is a human, after all and this is what humans do.

Some of his growth will happen because of influence outside his own. He will learn how to walk, how to talk, and how to use his limbs and his hands. He can fight against learning these, too but he won't because he'll have learned them before he realized he had that option. And so he will learn to walk and to talk – he is human, after all and this is what humans do.

Some of his growth will happen only with his full cooperation. Only if he wants to, will he learn mathematics and art. Only if he cooperates will he learn manners and how to live within his earthly community. What he learns, and how much he learns is really up to him – he is human, after all and this is what humans get to do.

Now, I present all this to you for a simple reason. Not because there is something new but because the obviousness of what I said can be applied to the message from St. Paul as he wrote to the church in Ephesus. We read just a portion of a letter that in many ways can be set against the illustration of a human embryo. For the entire message of Paul to these people is plain. “People of Ephesus, you have been created by God, chosen by God, redeemed by Jesus and given new life *in* him! This is *who* you are. This is *what* you are. And so live in this reality. And here are some suggestions.” That is his message.

This morning we read just the first few verses of this letter, and in my message I'd like to further focus our attention on just the first sentence of that passage. For within these words is a message of endless truth and enormous implications to our identity. And if we can understand *that*, if we can

understand *who we are*, then the rest of his letter, and even all of Scripture, begins to make so much more sense.

So, let's begin. Verse three and four:

<sup>3</sup> 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, <sup>4</sup> even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

Paul reminds us that we are nothing less than a people chosen by the creator of the universe. Augustine once stated this: "It was not from the time that we were reconciled unto Him by the blood of His Son that He began to love us; but He did so before the foundation of the world." You see, before God spoke "Let there be light" he already had you in mind. God had a purpose before he set out to create anything, and that purpose included you. You were chosen to be set aside and made holy. And you were made holy by the sacrificial blood of Jesus on the cross. From the very beginning, God had a plan and it was a plan to choose you, to redeem you, and to adopt you into sonship with him. And he sealed this with the Holy Spirit, to be a guarantee of all that he promises to us. *This was God's purpose and he fulfilled it in Christ. And through him every spiritual blessing can be found.*

We are chosen by God. We are redeemed by God. We are sealed by God. Paul writes:

In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, <sup>8</sup> which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup> making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ <sup>10</sup> as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

<sup>11</sup> In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, <sup>12</sup> so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup> In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup> who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

This is who we are. We are God's children! We have *everything* we could ever need, *and more*. The blessings that he has so richly bestowed upon us are greater than we can every imagine. All this cannot be changed. And so, we stand with the only choice we *can* make. Do we *grow into* who we are, or do we not? An embryo cannot change who he is, he is human, after all, but he *can* determine how *much* he will grow into that reality. We are presented with a similar decision.

With the cooperation of the Holy Spirit we have the ability to grow into this reality. We have the opportunity to grow into people who are holy and blameless before God. We have an opportunity to live a Christian life, a life dedicated to the worship of God and the service of others. We have the opportunity to show the world what it means to be fully grown into the reality of who we are. Praise be go God!

Please pray with me.

<sup>3</sup>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, <sup>4</sup>even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.”

Amen.