

EPHESIANS PT. 1

In Him

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, June 15, 2025
PASSAGES	Ephesians 1; Romans 8; 1 Peter 1; 2 Timothy 1; Colossians 1
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:09:42 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Read the first thirteen verses of Ephesians and one phrase keeps surfacing: *in him*. Every good thing Paul names — the blessing, the choosing, the adoption, the redemption, the inheritance, the Spirit — is located inside a person. Which means the decisive question is not whether you admire Jesus or like the people who follow him, but whether you are in him yourself.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Paul says the blessings are “in Christ” seven times before he reaches verse nine. It is not incidental phrasing; it is the argument.
- ◆ The predestination debate has three main camps, and all three agree on the thing that matters: life is in Jesus, by grace through faith, and nobody gets to brag.
- ◆ Matt could not find a single verse about predestination that is not also “in Christ” — the choosing is never abstracted from the person.
- ◆ What is true of us is first true of Jesus. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world; we are foreknown because we are in him.
- ◆ God does not start what he will not finish. He told us to count the cost before building; he would not ask of us a prudence he does not practice.
- ◆ Jesus is not a cosmic soup kitchen handing out blessing to whoever happens to be standing nearby. The table is inside.

- ◆ Shouldering a burden together turns out to be a joy rather than an imposition — which is why Matt told the congregation plainly that the church's financial margin is gone.

► 1:09:42

Father's Day, a hot sanctuary with one working air conditioner in the family room, and a senior pastor who arrived late and forgot his microphone batteries. Before any of Ephesians, Matt spent twenty minutes on two things he clearly did not enjoy raising: a war overseas and the church's bank balance. Both turned out to belong to the message.

Before the text: praying for Iran, and telling the truth about money

► 1:10:15

Earlier in the service Sandy and Miriam — Miriam was born in Iran — had prayed over the Israel-Iran conflict from [Isaiah 62:6–7](#), giving God no rest until he makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth. Matt picked it up: “What if our brothers and sisters in Iran were free? I understand that God uses oppressive situations to grow the church, and I certainly trust his ideas of what's right better than my own. But I do long for them to be free.” He noted that on essentially every border in the world there are believers on both sides, and prayed for the Iranian church — the one most of the world does not know exists. “It'd be cool if the world looked away and then looked back and was like, wait, what? There's a thriving church in Iran.”

► 1:11:53

Then the finances. Two congregational meetings had shown a healthy margin; the margin is now gone — two low-giving months, a down payment on the small playground that had become a safety problem, and two air conditioners. Matt was careful to say he does not know who gives what and does not want to.

His instinct is to shield the congregation from burden, and he made the biblical case against himself: Paul in [2 Corinthians 11:9](#) refused to burden the Corinthians because the brothers from Macedonia supplied his need. But then the college story. He had befriended a man living under a bridge near his apartment, asked him what would actually help, and started bringing it — and kept the whole thing to himself so as not to impose. He later apologized to his college ministry for excluding them. “This has been a glory and a joy even though it's a burden. I love it, and I kept it from you.” Sharing the load made it lighter and made a friendship between two communities.

He also recalled a year and a half of Friday mornings interceding in the back of a mosque, where the treasurer, Mustafa, stood in the one exit with the giving bucket and made eye contact with everyone leaving. Matt laughed at the method and respected the conviction behind it: “He believes in his cause.

He's not embarrassed at all about it." His own practice is ten percent, set up monthly and forgotten; anything else — meals, cornbread — does not count toward it. The ask was simple: if you belong here and you can give, give, so that the same handful of families are not carrying the church alone.

Why Ephesians

► 1:22:22

Matt admitted this one with some embarrassment: Ephesians is a book he has had to read and reread because it does not sink in. "I feel like there's so much that I'm leaving on the page that I'm not getting from Paul." So he has spent the year in it more than any other book, and somewhere in the rereading came the sense that the congregation should go through it together.

Verse one: two motifs, immediately

► 1:23:24

"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

EPHESIANS 1:1-2 ↗

Two things to underline in the first sentence, Matt said: *by the will of God*, and *in Christ Jesus*. Paul mentions his imprisonment in chapters three and four, so this is very likely written from jail, and what he chooses to encourage the Ephesians with is their identity in Christ, the identity of Christ himself, and the purpose of the church.

Seven times before verse nine

► 1:24:36

"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, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved."

EPHESIANS 1:3-6 ↗

Matt worked it as a series of questions. Where is the blessing coming from? In Christ — not adjacent to him, not indirectly related. In what circumstance did God choose us? In him. For what reason did he predestine us for adoption? In love. How has he blessed us? In the Beloved. By verse nine the phrase has landed seven times, and the plan for the fullness of time is “to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth” (Ephesians 1:7–10). Redemption is in him. The lavish riches are in him. The uniting of everything is in him.

Well, we already talked about money

► 1:26:56

“Well, we already talked about money, so let’s talk about predestination. It’s going to make it just a full Sunday.” He laid out three readings honestly. Some hold that God, from time immemorial, surveyed everyone who would ever live and chose — this one, not that one. Others hold that the called-out group is precisely those who would freely believe. A third says God’s choice lands on one person: *Jesus* — and if you find yourself in him, you are chosen, because he is the chosen one.

Matt’s move was not to arbitrate but to insist that the biblical statements are all true at once. Whoever hears his word and believes has eternal life. Whoever believes shall not perish. And he chose us before the foundation of the world. “It’s all true at the same time.”

He did tip his hat to the third camp for one reason: “I can’t find any verses about predestination that aren’t in Jesus.” And all three camps agree where it counts. To the first camp’s temptation — *what’s so special about me that he chose me?* — the answer is nothing. To the second camp’s — *well, I believed* — believing is not a work; it is receiving a gift. Nobody in any of the three gets to brag, and all three preach the same sentence: come to Christ so that you may have life.

God does not start what he will not finish

► 1:31:02

Verses seven through nine keep pressing the same point from the other side: it is *his* grace, *his* wisdom, *his* will, *his* purpose. “This is his circus. This is his plan.” Which is why Matt reached for the parable about the king who does not march out without counting his troops and the builder who does not lay a foundation for a tower he cannot top out (Luke 14:28–32). Jesus calls that ridiculous. God would not require of us a prudence he declines to practice himself. He started this. He will finish it.

► 1:31:53

“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... 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, who is the guarantee of our inheritance.”

EPHESIANS 1:11-14 ↗

Not only redemption — the inheritance too, and the Spirit, since the one who baptizes in the Spirit and fire is Jesus. We are sojourners here, and what we are looking toward is held for us in him.

What is true of us is first true of him

▶ 1:33:02

Matt then ran the same test through three more passages. [Romans 8:28–30](#): those God foreknew he predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son — the destination is a person, and the glorifying of the bride is part of the plan. But then he asked the question underneath it: who, first of all, is the one God foreknew?

“You were ransomed... with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God.”

1 PETER 1:18-21 ↗

“A lot of the things that are true of us are true primarily of Jesus, who is the absolute starting point and foundation for our identity. We’re righteous because he’s righteous. We’re children of God because he’s the eternally begotten Son of the Father. We belong because we’re in him.” [2 Timothy 1:8–10](#) says the same: saved and called not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the ages began. And [Colossians 1:15–18](#) supplies the reason the phrase carries so much weight — all things were created through him and for him, in him all things hold together, so that in everything he might be preeminent.

In him, not next to him

▶ 1:40:15

Here the message landed, and Matt said he would fumble it and we could clean it up in our minds. The thing he did not want anyone to conclude is that Jesus is so generous the blessing spills out onto

whoever happens to be standing near him. “The cornucopia of rich blessings, the table that’s spread before you, the cup that’s overflowing, the bread of eternal life, the living waters — it’s not like next to Jesus for just whoever. Jesus isn’t a cosmic soup kitchen.”

“So if you’re Christian adjacent — just dive in. The rich blessing is in him, not next to him.”

He got specific about what adjacency looks like: being a cousin to Jesus, having God as your grandpa, belonging to a family that is Christian and counting yourself an honorary member. Or liking the church for the church — the people are kind, the hot dogs are great, the lemonade stand is a delight, there is pickleball. “Their cornbread’s not good, but their soup’s good.” None of that is the thing.

And to the objection that it is unfair for Jesus to be the only way to God, he gave the Christian answer rather than a softer one: Jesus is God the Son who took on flesh. Of course God is the only way to God. There is no honorary category for people who are good at certain things.

The closing charge was small and direct. Go home and reread Ephesians 1. “Once you see it, you can’t unsee it.” If you are near him, commit to being in him — today is the day of salvation. And then a play on the verb he keeps coming back to: abide in him. “Please don’t abide *near* him.”

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [Isaiah 62:6–7](#)
- [2 Corinthians 11:9](#)
- [Ephesians 1:1–2](#)
- [Ephesians 1:3–6](#)
- [Ephesians 1:7–10](#)
- [John 5:24](#)
- [John 3:16](#)
- [Luke 14:28–32](#)
- [Ephesians 1:11–14](#)
- [Romans 8:28–30](#)
- [1 Peter 1:18–21](#)
- [2 Timothy 1:8–10](#)
- [Colossians 1:15–18](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Matt kept a burden to himself in college so as not to impose, and later apologized for it. Where are you carrying something alone that the body would actually count as a joy to share?
2. Of the three readings of predestination, which one were you handed, and what did it do to how you think about God's choice of you?
3. Read Ephesians 1 straight through and count the "in him" phrases. Which of those blessings is hardest for you to believe is actually yours?
4. Where in your life are you Christian-adjacent — near the people, near the practices, but not actually abiding in Christ?
5. "Abide in him, not near him." What would move you from near to in this week — and who could you tell about it?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3HNTx0tw0&t=4182s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.