

## *New Life in the Beloved*

Ephesians 1:7-12\*

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Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, continues to expand on the “spiritual blessings” which he introduced in verse 3. In this section the work of God the Son is described. In these verses there is vast encouragement and hope for Christians today.

In Christ we have redemption and forgiveness (7-8a)

In Christ we have knowledge of His will (8b-10)

In Christ we have an inheritance (11-12)

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*Jesus Christ is the source of every spiritual blessing (v.3) and in Him we have redemption, forgiveness, knowledge and an inheritance. Are you claiming your spiritual blessings? Are you thankful for your spiritual blessings?*

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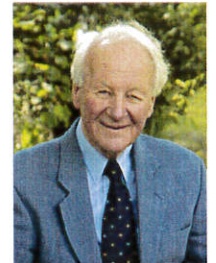
\* These notes are prayerfully provided to aid, not replace, your personal study of God's Word.

<sup>1</sup> Tit. 2:14.

Those of us who call ourselves ‘evangelical’ Christians are claiming by this epithet to be gospel people, who hold fast the authentic Christian evangel. It is a bold claim, and sometimes resented. In order to sustain it, we need constantly to return to the Scriptures in which alone the normative statement of the gospel is to be found. Measured by this standard, it has to be admitted that many of our formulations of the good news are defective. One of our chief evangelical blind spots has been to overlook the central importance of the church. We tend to proclaim individual salvation without moving on to the saved community. We emphasize that Christ died for us ‘to redeem us from all iniquity’ rather than ‘to purify for himself a people of his own’.<sup>1</sup> We think of ourselves more as ‘Christians’ than as ‘churchmen’, and our message is more good news of a new life than of a new society.

Nobody can emerge from a careful reading of Paul's letter to the Ephesians with a privatized gospel. For Ephesians is the gospel of the church. It sets forth God's eternal purpose to create through Jesus Christ a new society which stands out in bright relief against the sombre background of the old world. For God's new society is characterized by life in place of death, by unity and reconciliation in place of division and alienation, by the wholesome standards of righteousness in place of the corruption of wickedness, by love and peace in place of hatred and strife, and by unremitting conflict with evil in place of a flabby compromise with it.

This vision of a renewed human community has stirred me deeply. At the same time, the realities of lovelessness and sin in so many contemporary churches are enough to make one weep, for they dishonour Christ, contradict the nature of the church, and deprive the Christian witness of integrity. Yet increasing numbers of church members are seeking the church's radical renewal. For the sake of the glory of God and the evangelization of the world, nothing is more important than that the church should be, and should be seen to be, God's new society. Towards the fulfilment of this vision Ephesians gives us a strong and steady stimulus.<sup>1</sup>



— John R.W. Stott, 1921-2011

<sup>1</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 9–10.