

## SERMON

**Chosen, Redeemed & Sealed by God** (Ephesians 1:1-14)

Who can remember these people? They are Colonel John "Hannibal" Smith, Sergeant Bosco "B.A." Baracus, Lieutenant Templeton "Faceman" Peck and Captain H.M. "Howlin' Mad" Murdock. Otherwise known as the A-Team

Murdock, played by Dwight Schultz, was The A-Team's pilot, he was able to fly anything no matter how many engines it had or how many holes was in it! Murdock's nickname came about because of him being in a mental hospital, hence Howling Mad.

Lieutenant Templeton "Faceman" Peck, played by Dirk Benedict, was the A-Team's charming conman and he was a master of his trade. He would be able to get anything anywhere at anytime the most ultimate conman ever to appear on TV. Face, as he was usually known, would much more prefer to con someone than get into a fight!

Then there was Sergeant Bosco "B.A." Baracus; Mr T. He was able to fix anything and make the ultimate fighting machine just from scraps. His pride possession was his black and red Van, an amazing luxury van carrying all The A-Team's weapons and getting them out of the trickiest of situations bursting through any roadblock!

And finally Colonel John "Hannibal" Smith, aka George Peppard. He was the leader of The A-Team, he was the one they all turned to when they needed to get out of the trickiest of situations. Hannibal always had a plan and was well known for the catchphrase "I Love It When A Plan Comes Together".

I love it when a plan comes together. And this evening in the reading we have a plan coming together, a plan to make sure that we are chosen, redeemed and sealed. But all this is by God in Christ. There's one little phrase which leapt out at me when I read this passage. It is the phrase 'in him'. It is found some four times in these verses and if you include the phrase 'in Christ' the total is some eight times. We shall look at a few this evening:

- Verse 3 We have every spiritual blessing because of Jesus. We can do nothing ourselves – this was all in the plan of God, the plan which can together. It is God who is blessing us because of Jesus, because Jesus came to earth, lived and died and rose again. When God the Father looks at you he does not see you as you rally are but through the blood of Jesus, he sees Jesus not you. One of the problems that teachers have is when they teach a long line of the same family. In the first school I taught, the deputy head mistress had been there from the year dot and was teaching the children, if not grandchildren of some of her first pupils. It meant she knew the families and their history, but at times it meant she also tarred each member of the family with the same brush.

We are tarred with the brush of Christ and so Father gives us every spiritual blessing, his love, his fellowship because of Christ and more which Paul goes on to tell us.

- Verse 4 We were chosen in Christ before creation happened. Some Christians get worried about being chosen, about this doctrine called 'Election'. We have just had an election and on Thursday many people tramped through this building as they voted for local government people. Local Councillors were chosen by us, on their merit or on their election manifesto or because of national politics, to serve us for the next few years. And this can be the problem with the doctrine of Election, of being chosen in Christ; we are locked in to a popularity system. However our being chosen by God is nothing to do with ourselves. It is not like in the playground when teams were being picked and we all knew the one who would be picked last!

Our being chosen is not of our merit, because we are chosen in Christ. But why isn't everyone chosen? What about freewill to choose to follow Jesus? This is one of those mysteries about how the sovereignty of God, the fact that he chooses and my freewill work together. Jesus said

**“All that the Father gives me will come to me (the sovereignty of God), and whoever comes to me I will never drive away (the freewill of human beings).”** (John 6:37 NIV)

However I am pleased that it is nothing to do with me and all to do with God. However I am elected to be holy and blameless, to live, to try to live a holy and blameless life, but with Father seeing Jesus when he sees me, I know that I am blameless and holy in his sight.

Let us not get too bogged down with this doctrine of Election because as a professor said

**Try to explain election and you may lose your mind. But try to explain it away and you may lose your soul**

Far better to live with the maxim of D L Moody, American evangelist of the nineteenth century ran evangelistic campaigns in both the United States and Great Britain, he used to pray

**Lord, save the elect – and then elect some more!**

So we were chosen in Christ before the creation happened! That is how long the plan was in place. God remained totally focussed all that time.

- Verse 7 In Christ we also have redemption, we have been purchased by the blood of Christ. This was the plan. Paul writes to the Church of God at Corinth

**“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,”** (1 Corinthians 15:3-4 NIV)

The plan was always there, right from Genesis, all through the Bible, God remained totally focussed. Jesus came so that we could have forgiveness, verse 7

**“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace”** (Ephesians 1:7 NIV)

Again notice the forgiveness is due to God's grace, not a reward for good behaviour on my part. Forgiveness, such a big part of what God does for us, of what we want from him, of what we want from others, but at times it seems, something that we are not always so ready to forgive when asked for by someone else. We only have to remember that story of the unforgiving servant told by Jesus when he said

**"The kingdom of God is like a king who decided to square accounts with his servants. As he got under way, one servant was brought before him who had run up a debt of a hundred thousand pounds. He couldn't pay up, so the king ordered the man, along with his wife, children, and goods, to be auctioned off at the slave market.**

**"The poor wretch threw himself at the king's feet and begged, 'Give me a chance and I'll pay it all back.' Touched by his plea, the king let him off, erasing the debt.**

**"The servant was no sooner out of the room when he came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him ten pounds. He seized him by the throat and demanded, 'Pay up. Now!'**

**"The poor wretch threw himself down and begged, 'Give me a chance and I'll pay it all back.' But he wouldn't do it. He had him arrested and put in jail until the debt was paid.** (Matthew 18:23-34 MSG)

We all tut at the first servant, but how many times have we not really forgiven someone for what they have done to us, and at times even without giving them a hearing.

Forgiveness was always part of God's plan, the one that he was totally focussed on, the plan which remained the total focus of the years.

- Verse 13 We were marked in Christ when we believed with a seal. A seal means authenticity. Today we have looked at the Trust Deed of Ashurst Drive Baptist Church and voted on it. The Trust Deed gives us some authenticity with the Charity Commissioners. The Trust Deed protects the building to be used for its proper purpose.

We too have that seal of the Holy Spirit upon us. Again that was always part of the plan. When Jesus was talking to his disciples about the fact that he was to die, rise again and then depart back to heaven, he said

**"But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you."**  
(John 16:7 NIV)

Jesus had to leave to enable the Spirit, the Counsellor to come. This was always the plan, this was because the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are all fully focussed on our Election by Father, Redemption through the Son and Sealing with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus gave us a mission before he left the earth, he said

**"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."** (Matthew 28:19-20 NIV)

Today we have looked at the Trust Deeds, we shall be going on to look at the Constitution, but hopefully this will not detract, make us lose our focus on making disciples. Hopefully it will help us be totally focussed on making disciples as we discuss perhaps

⇒ What is membership?

- ⇒ What is the makeup of the leadership?
- ⇒ What is our Mission?
- ⇒ Where are we here as a church?

But in all of this let us remain focussed just as God was on the plan, the plan that came together in Christ. God was totally focussed on us, so we too should be totally focussed on making disciples, of living a totally focussed life, one of wanting to see the kingdom of God grow by my efforts, not those of others, but by my efforts. At the Special Church Members' meeting we voted on the fact that in the Trust Deeds are the Declaration of Principle of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and one of those principles which we also stated in this service this evening is

**That it is the duty of every disciple to bear personal witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to take part in the evangelisation of the world.**

Hopefully this will be our focus.