

Ephesians 1:1-14

Intro: Paul is currently imprisoned in Rome (**Acts 28:30-31**) where he wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. He mentions himself as a prisoner at least three times in this epistle (**3:1; 4:1; 6:20**).

--He knew these Ephesian believers very well. He stopped briefly at Ephesus after Corinth—left Priscilla and Aquila there promising to return. They, in turn, helped Apollos who had arrived in the meantime (**Acts 18:18-26**). Paul eventually returned and remained at Ephesus teaching daily for two years (**Acts 19:9-10**). He could confidently claim: ***For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).***

--It is to this well-taught group of believers that we find some of the highest and richest truths in the New Testament.

--This letter also seems to be intended as a circular letter to be read at the surrounding churches as well. This is most evident in the impersonal style with phrases such as (**1:15; 3:2+4; 4:21**) and the total lack of personal greetings, addresses, or interactions which would be natural for a group of believers Paul had been with the longest.

Verses 1-2:

--Paul introduces himself as ***an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God***. The authority he ministered in always went back to God—not man (**Gal. 1:1**).

--This was written ***to the saints who are in Ephesus*** not just to the church or churches in Ephesus. The Greek word for ***saints (agios)*** has the idea of cleansing and consecration. You could say he was writing to cleansed and set apart ones.

--And ***faithful*** refers to being *in the faith* more than necessarily constant in works—though they go together.

--***in Christ Jesus*** is in contrast to where they used to be—*in Adam*.

1 Corinthians 15:22: *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.*

--Grace and peace are extended from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ through the administration of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 3:

--Now Paul introduces the exalted theme of this inspired epistle: *The spiritual blessings that come down to us from God the Father through Jesus Christ.*

--This long sentence of declaration has three basic “movements” focusing on the Father, Son, and Spirit and each ending with praise in verses **6, 12, 14**.

--***Blessed*** has the idea of *praise*. Paul is praising God the Father (**Jn. 20:17**). Paul is going to declare in adoration more truths than anyone can take in at once!

--The nation of Israel was promised earthly land and material riches but the church is promised spiritual blessings from heavenly realms.

--Spiritual blessings are the types of things that we could never ask anyone else for: election, adoption, holiness, predestination, acceptance, love, inheritance, the Holy Spirit, a clean conscience, forgiveness, grace, peace, new heavens and earth, etc.

--We receive these blessings because we are part of the family of God, citizens of heaven, and co-heirs of Christ who is seated in heaven on our behalf—He is the Son of Man and Son of God.

--A resurrected and glorified man secures all our blessings. If someone could take the crown from His head then we could lose our blessings. We have no hope of access or connection to these riches apart from Christ.

*Mackintosh (Occasional Papers): *“All that God purposed concerning the Church was actualized in Christ when He was raised from the dead, and set at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, and the Holy Ghost was sent down to actualize it in reference to all the members, as it had already been in reference to the Head, to make that true of them which was already true of Him.”**

Verse 4:

--God the Father has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world! We were chosen *out* of the world *in* Christ.

John 15:19: *If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*

--This was His plan before the very beginning of creation and time. All of history is His good design playing out in time. The inescapable realization of His will. The proper response to God’s choosing of us is adoration (as Paul is doing) and not explanation (as Paul is not doing).

--(Interestingly the verb form of the word **chose** (*eklegomai*) is never translated **elect** as the noun form of the Greek (*elektos*). The verb seems to be used in the Bible for things or people placed in God’s purposes or will—either for better or worse as Judas was (**Jn. 6:70+13:18**). While the noun is often translated *elect* and is always used in the Bible for those saved (**Rom. 8:33**). I am not sure how far this distinction can be pressed but it is evident.)

--We are not chosen *because* we are **holy and without blame** but **that we should be holy and without blame**. We were chosen to *be* something (holy/blameless) not just to *go* somewhere (heaven/hell). God is conforming us partially now and fully later.

--Of course, that is the only way any can be **before Him in love!** Not just in ritualistic obedience or ceremonial holiness but relational love and mutual likeness. To be like God, is the very best thing that God can give us, it is also the only option of what He has to offer!

Lewis (The Problem of Pain): “George Macdonald, in a passage I cannot now find, represents God as saying to men, ‘You must be strong with my strength and blessed with my blessedness, for I have no other to give you.’ That is the conclusion of the whole matter. God gives what He has, not what He has not: He gives the happiness that there is, not the happiness that is not. To be God—to be like God and share His goodness in creaturely response—to be miserable—these are the only three alternatives. If we will not learn to eat the only food that the universe grows—the only food that any possible universe ever can grow—then we must starve eternally.”

Verse 5:

--To be **predestined** is to be marked out beforehand for something. Here, Paul praises God for predestining us for two things: **adoption (5)** and **inheritance (11)**.

--There is a question that comes before our predestination! Which is: *Why did the perfect God decide to make anything at all?!*

--The Scriptures only give us one answer: **the good pleasure of His will!** (See also 9)

Revelation 4:11: You are worthy O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.

--The Greek for **good pleasure** is used throughout the NT with the idea of goodwill or good desire or delight: (Mt. 11:26; Lk. 2:14; 10:21; Rom. 10:1; Phil. 1:15; 2:13; 2 Thess. 1:11).

--God made everything—including all that He chose and predestined and purposed—because He delighted to do so. *You change a diaper or do the dishes because you *have to* but you drink a milkshake or eat a cheesesteak because you *want to*.*

--Paul is not working out modern systematic theology for Calvinists and Arminians. This is declaration and not explanation. These are heavenly truths—divine revelation. Modern systematic theology is the uninspired logical deductions of men. One is perfect and true and the other is fallible and partial.

Verse 6:

--These divine truths should inspire us to praise Him—particularly His grace which is seen in His desire to freely impart the best things and highest spiritual blessings.

--**He**—and not we ourselves—**made us accepted in the Beloved!** The Greek word for **accepted** (*charitoo*) is only used in Lk. 1:28 in speaking of Mary as **highly favored**. One commentator translated it: *He has freely made us well thought of*.

--This is how God sees **us**—individually and as the Church—and that is important to remember personally and publicly. If we get off of the high ground of God’s thoughts we will quickly become discouraged as we look around at the people and institutions we see. It will be impossible to serve the church if we are not walking in agreement with God’s thoughts about the Church.

Verse 7-8:

--(7) *In Him*—we are not self redeemed! Our redemption comes back again to this remarkable Person through whom God the Father has poured out the best blessings of heaven!

--*We have redemption through His blood*. Redemption supposes captivity and slavery and therefore demands that a ransom price be paid (**Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22**). That price was the very blood of God.

Acts 20:28: to shepherd the church of God which He has purchased with His own blood.

--It is in this redemption that we find *the forgiveness of sins*. My sins are forgiven *because* they are paid for by the blood of Christ. That is also why no one else can forgive sins and salvation is in Christ alone. **No such thing as cheap grace!**

--*According to the riches of His grace*. . . Jesus deals with our sin in proportion to what He has. Forgiveness and grace proportioned to His riches—God's various types of grace-wealth assets.

Bill Gates Christmas gift story

--(8) He makes these grace-riches *abound toward us* not *because* we are sinners but *because* He is who He is.

Romans 5:20: But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.

--Yet His grace is not license as Paul is always quick to clarify. He applies the riches of His grace and love toward us *in all wisdom and prudence*. Certainly, this will relate to His ultimate plan and purpose for all the ages but it is true personally as well since I am a part of that.

--Many give love and grace to others in a way that harms them instead of benefits them. God never does so. He gives the right things in the right ways.

Verses 9-10:

--(9) God has made known to us *the mystery of His will*. A *mystery* in the Bible is something that was secret for a time or is beyond the reach of our powers to comprehend without divine revelation. Paul uses the word six times in this epistle—the most of any of his writings and the most in any NT book.

--God has graciously included us in the divine purpose and will directing the universe.

John 15:15: No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

--(10) What has God revealed to us about the *His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself?*

--That He is the One who directs the *dispensation* (the Greek word was commonly used for household administration) of all *times*. How will He administrate all of creation and time?

--What He has revealed is that God the Father will tie up all the ostensible loose ends of His plan for heaven and earth in Christ Jesus (**Acts 3:21; Col. 1:19-20**).

--All things have been made by Him and for Him.

1 Corinthians 15:24+28: Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. . . Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

--God's plan was, and is, and will be to save the world through Christ. The Scriptures describe this in a number of different ways.

Govett (On Ephesians): "1. As Son of Man He restores Adam's lost dominion; yea, all things shall be set beneath His feet. 2. He is the son of Abraham, and He shall be the Head of Abraham's twofold seed; as the sands of the sea, and as the stars of the heaven. 3. As Son of David, and chief of Judah's tribe, He shall reassemble the scattered tribes, and show Himself the Shepherd and King of Israel. The Lord shall give Him rule over all the nations of the earth. . . 4. As the firstborn of the Risen, and Head of the Church, He shall assemble to Himself the children of the resurrection, "the heirs of God."

--Many other types and pictures could be listed. Jesus is the One who will gather all things. Pray that His kingdom comes and His will is done on earth as it is in heaven!

Verses 11-12:

--**(11) In Him!** In this remarkable One that is the center of all time and the mystery of God's good pleasure ***we have obtained an inheritance!*** And not only that, we have been ***predestined*** as a part of this grand and mysterious plan that has been revealed.

--And, we don't have to worry about a Plan B because it is ***the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.*** His plan has never, can never, and will never go wrong and you and I are caught up in the inexorable flow.

--All things will come into conformity with His will and it is His will for us to be a predestined part, to share in His inheritance, to be highly favored in Him, and to stand before God in love, holy, blameless; while praising the abounding riches of His grace.

--**(12)** We are a part of this gospel dispensation and the first hoppers/trusters in Christ as revealed as the center of God's eternal plan of the ages. I believe Paul is referring to how we trust in Him now as the Savior of the world while the plan is still unfinished.

****Isaiah 25:9: And it will be said in that day: "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.****

--All of which will cause thanksgiving and praise in glory to Him.

Verses 13-14:

--Now Paul takes them back to the beginning of their personal reality and experience of God's good pleasure and purpose. The moment they heard ***the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation*** and ***believed!***

--People who live in lies need to hear the truth! They may resist, but you never know.

Romans 10:14: *And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?*

--Their initial personal experience involved ***the Holy Spirit of promise (Mt. 3:11; Lk. 24:49; Jn. 7:37-39; Acts 1:4+9).***

--The Spirit ***sealed*** then as a type of ***guarantee*** until the full realization of God's purpose and plan.

--For something to be sealed in that day gave: 1) Authentication. 2) Ownership. 3) Security.

--The Holy Spirit has stamped the image of God on us. An impression has been made.

****John 6:27: Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.****

--The guarantee was a downpayment or pledge. First, of like kind, to the whole yet to come.

Hodge (Ephesians): "Those influences of the Spirit which believers now enjoy are both a foretaste of future blessedness, the same in kind though immeasurably less in degree, and a pledge of the certain enjoyment of that blessedness, just as the firstfruits were a part of the harvest and a guarantee of its ingathering."

--So we are to see the life and work of the Holy Spirit in us as the beginning of the spiritual blessings and inheritance we have coming.

****4:30: And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.****

--Why? ***To the praise of His glory!***