

The Epistle to the Ephesians

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BLESSED BEYOND MEASURE

Ephesians 1:3-14

INTRODUCTION

In Ephesians 1:1, Paul addressed the saints at Ephesus as being "the faithful in Christ Jesus." This phrase, "in Christ Jesus," is found many times in Ephesians. If phrases relating to Christ, such as "in him" and "in whom," were added, the number of occurrences would exceed 100.

In Christ is where every Christian dwells from the moment he believes and is saved. In Christ is where God sees and accepts us (Ephesians 1:6). In Christ is where we share all that Christ is and will ever be. In Ephesians 1:3 we encountered the phrase "blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places." The phrase, "in heavenly places," is better rendered as, "in the heavenlies." "In the heavenlies" is that sphere of Christian experience in which we are blessed with "all spiritual blessings" because we are in Christ.

In this lesson, we are going to observe and explain seven of these great spiritual blessings and realize how wonderful it is to be in Christ. This lesson actually extends from Ephesians 1:3 through Ephesians 1:14. If you look closely, you will see that the entire passage is one sentence. Without doubt, it is the longest, most profound, and most glorious sentence in all literature. It is also the most difficult to explain and fully comprehend.

IMPORTANCE OF THIS LESSON

- Nothing is more important to a Christian than to understand what he is and what he has in Christ.
- It is important to grasp what God has done for you, is doing for you and will yet do for you through His marvelous grace.
- In this lesson, we shall see that every believer has been chosen, predestinated, accepted, redeemed, enlightened, enriched and sealed.

THE LESSON

I. Ephesians 1:4 – "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love"

After you repent of your sins and receive Christ you are startled, perhaps shocked, to learn that God knew you and chose you before the world was formed. Of course, this raises questions that theologians have been debating for many years. I will try to answer some of these questions and make the concept of being chosen in Christ before the world was formed as simple as possible.

A. Here are some of the questions surrounding this problem:

1. Q: Does God choose or elect some to be saved and all the rest of mankind to be lost?
A: There is no verse in the Bible indicating that God elects anyone to spend eternity in hell.
2. Q: Does God love every human being?
A: YES! Read 1 John 2:2, 4:10, and John 3:16-17.
3. Q: Did Christ die for the entire human race?
A: YES! Read 1 John 2:2 and 2 Corinthians 5:14.
4. Q: Does God desire that all men be saved?
A: YES! Read 1 Timothy 2:4 and Isaiah 45:22.
5. Q: Does everybody have the ability and the responsibility to repent, turn from sin and receive Christ?
A: YES! Read Ezekiel 18:21-23; John 7:37-38; Matthew 11:28; and Revelation 22:17; Acts 17:30.
6. Q: Can sinners resist the Holy Spirit and reject the grace and call of God?
A: YES! Read Acts 7:51; John 5:40; and Luke 13:34.

So if all people are able to reject or receive the Gospel of Christ and the pleadings of the Holy Spirit, what does Paul mean when he writes, "he (God) hath chosen us in him (Christ) before the foundation of the world..." (Ephesians 1:4)? The answer, I think, lies in a word that is often overlooked or regarded with little import. It is the word "foreknowledge." Paul wrote in Romans 8:29, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate...." In 1 Peter 1:2, Peter wrote, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God..." We must keep in mind that the God we serve, the God of the Bible, is omniscient. This means He has unlimited wisdom and knowledge. He knows and has known from all eternity all things including the knowledge of all who would receive or reject Christ. In other words, God did not have to wait until you received Christ before He claimed and welcomed you as one of His own. He knew you before you were born, and knew before the world was formed that you would heed the call of the Holy Spirit and receive Christ.

With God there are no surprises. He knows the end from the beginning. So, if God knew you as His child before the world was formed, it was no problem for God to choose you as one of the elect. Remember this: God never made a robot. Adam and Eve had the power to choose. Cain and Abel had the power to choose. Every human being today has the power to choose. This can be readily shown in both the Old and New Testaments.

As I understand it, before the world was formed, God chose all that He foreknew would choose Christ. God's foreknowledge removes pride, clarifies the problem, and provides an answer. The following two statements are from great men of God and ministers of the WORD. Some theologians may consider these views too simplistic, but consider the sources: Dr. H.A. Ironside, a greatly beloved Bible expositor, was one of the best known Bible teachers in America in the first half of the 20th century. D.L. Moody was one of the greatest evangelists of the 19th century and founded the Moody Bible Institute.

♦ *"The fact that God knows all of mankind does not eliminate personal responsibility. Only after a person repents, turns to Christ, and receives Him as Lord and Savior does 'chosen in Christ' become a reality."* – H.A. Ironside

♦ *"The 'whosoever wills' are the elect and the 'whosoever won'ts' are the non-elect."* – D. L. Moody

B. "That we should be holy and without blame before him in love"

Here we see God's wonderful purpose in choosing us. His purpose is that some day you and I would stand before Him in glory, beloved, holy and without blame. What a remarkable, glorious, and undeserved prospect!

But how? We all know that we are unworthy sinners saved entirely by His grace. So how are we going to stand before a holy God as holy, and without blame? Here is the answer:

1. By the sacrifice of Christ and the cleansing of His Word (Ephesians 5:25-27).
2. Through the imputed righteousness of Christ (Romans 3:22-25).
3. Through Christ's advocacy. "If any man sin, we have an advocate" (1 John 2:1-2). As the propitiation for our sins, Christ became our mercy seat, sprinkled by His own blood, and thus satisfying all the claims of a Holy God against us. (If you have a Scofield Reference Bible, read the footnote under Romans 3:25.)
4. By the constant cleansing of the blood of Christ (1 John 1:7).

II. Ephesians 1:5 – "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."

A. Predestinate simply means "to determine beforehand," or to pre-determine.

B. Predestination is broader and more inclusive than election, as it includes God's predetermination for the ungodly (Acts 4:27-28).

C. Predestination relates entirely to future events.

1. We are "predestinated UNTO the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself" (Ephesians 1:5).
2. "Whom he foreknew he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son" (Romans 8:29). This is another glorious prospect!

D. "Unto the adoption...." – What does this mean? In the Greek language, to adopt means "to place a son." You may be asking, "Are we not already children of God by faith in Christ"? Yes we are. Read Galatians 3:26. This is what you must realize and remember:

We are children of God in two ways:

1. Through regeneration – "new birth," by which we receive a new nature. This is called "positional sonship" (John 1:12-13, 3:3-6).
2. Through adoption – a divine, legal transaction by which God officially guarantees our full rights and benefits as a son of God and a joint heir with Christ (Romans 8:15-17).

III. Ephesians 1:6 – "To the praise and glory of the grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

- A. Wonder of Wonders! You and I, by faith in Christ have been approved, accepted, received, and welcomed by God. What a blessing!
- B. Our acceptance is not because of what we are, but where we are as believers. We are "in the beloved." In other words, God does not see us any longer in our filthy rags of sin (Isaiah 64:6). He sees us clothed with Christ and His righteousness. Because of where we are, God says, "Welcome Home" (Romans 3:21-22).

IV. Ephesians 1:7 – "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace"

- ◆ *Never overlook the "in whoms" – they all refer to Christ.*
- ◆ *"Through his blood" – the price Christ paid for our redemption (1 Corinthians 6:20, 7:23).*
- A. The basic meaning of redemption is to buy back or deliver and set free by paying a price.
- B. Before our salvation, God sees us and all of humanity as:
 1. sold under sin and enslaved by it (Romans 6:17, 20, 7:14).
 2. under the Law of Moses and cursed by it (Galatians 3:10,23).
 3. blinded and controlled by Satan (2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2).
- C. Through Christ's redeeming power and the shedding of His precious blood, we are:
 1. set free from the guilt and slavery of sin (2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 6:6; 1 John 1:7).
 2. set free from the law and its curse (Galatians 3:13; Romans 10:4).
 3. delivered from Satan's kingdom, power, and control (Hebrews 2:14; Acts 26:18; Colossians 1:13).
- D. Through the sacrificial shedding of the blood, Christ paid for our deliverance (1 Peter 1:18-19).
- E. "the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace"
 1. How wonderful! The forgiveness of all our sins is included in our redemption (Colossians 1:14).
 2. Grace is God's free and unmerited favor. It is the overflow of His love for us. Our complete redemption and total forgiveness are according to the riches of His immeasurable grace.

V. ENLIGHTENED

- A **Ephesians 1:8 – "Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence"**

"Wherein" – refers to God's abundant grace (2 Corinthians 9:8). In this verse the word "prudence" means the same as the word "intelligence."

 1. God holds back nothing. We are enlightened because God abundantly shares with us, through Christ, His wisdom and intelligence (1 Corinthians 1:30; Colossians 2:3,10).
 2. The lowliest saint, having received Christ and having been indwelt by the Holy Spirit, has more wisdom regarding spiritual things than any Ph.D. in a leading university who repudiates Christ.

B. Ephesians 1:9 – "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself."

1. *the mystery of his will* – What is a mystery? We must never think of a mystery in the Scriptures as something foreboding, fearful, or secretive. A mystery simply is a hidden truth, not revealed to Old Testament prophets, revealed and clarified in the New Testament. The word "mystery" occurs in Ephesians six times, and there are eleven mysteries mentioned in the New Testament. (These are listed in Matthew 13, Note 2 of the Scofield Reference Bible.)
2. *his will* – According to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself, God is about to enlighten us concerning His plans for our future with Him.

C. Ephesians 1:10 "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him"

1. What is a dispensation? It is sometimes translated as "stewardship" or "order." The original English usage was "economy."
2. Since Adam and Eve, the world has passed through various dispensations or economies. Immediately before our present dispensation of grace was the dispensation of law. The dispensation of law ended with a shout when Christ cried on the cross, "IT IS FINISHED." We are presently under grace (Romans 6:14). This age of grace will terminate when Christ returns in glory and power and sets up His kingdom on earth (Matthew 25:31). According to our text that will be the time when the "dispensation of the fullness of times" will be established. This is when every knee will bow, of things in heaven and things in earth; when every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:10-11). This is when Christ will reconcile all things unto Himself, whether they are things in Heaven or things on earth (Colossians 1:20). What a time that will be! All the TIMES through which the world has passed will be consummated and fulfilled. Jews and Gentiles will be one "in Christ." All the saints in Heaven and on earth will be gathered together.

"Jesus shall reign where 'ere the sun
Does his successive journeys run,
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore
'Til moons shall wax and wane no more."

Think and rejoice in how enlightened we are. The humblest saint knows exactly God's purpose and will regarding this world. He has made known to us the mystery of His will.

VI. ENRICHED

A. Ephesians 1:11 – "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will"

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance – Think of it. It is difficult to grasp such an amazing fact. You and I, as poor unworthy sinners, are destined to receive a bountiful and glorious inheritance. We were begotten to "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4). "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ..." (Romans 8:17).

Many pages could be filled describing the riches we are to inherit. I will just give a few examples:

1. We will inherit a new body (Philippians 3:21).
2. We will inherit Christ's likeness (1 John 3:2).
3. We will share Christ's glory (Romans 8:17-18).

There are many more, but these should certainly be sufficient for anyone.

B. Ephesians 1:12 "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ."

1. Predestinated as discussed in Ephesians 1:5, actually means to decide or determine in advance or ahead of time.
2. Here we see that God, according to His own purpose and will, has determined that all who have trusted Christ will be to the praise of His glory. Oh how rich we are! We are daily blessed by the "riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7), but shall yet enjoy the exceeding riches of His grace in the ages to come (Ephesians 2:7).

VII. SEALED

Ephesians 1:13-14 "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

We now arrive at the seventh spiritual blessing we enjoy, because we are in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).

- A. After you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and placed your trust in Christ, something wonderful happened. You were sealed with the Holy Spirit. The moment we trust Christ, the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts crying, "Abba Father" (Galatians 4:6), and bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16).
- B. The Spirit Himself is actually the seal. He did not seal us with anything or anyone else. He is the seal and thus becomes the "earnest of our inheritance" (Ephesians 1:14). The earnest is the down payment, the assurance, and the guarantee of our inheritance until Christ comes to complete our redemption "to the praise of his glory."

A seal can be a number of things:

- 1. It speaks of identification. "The Lord knoweth them that are his..." (2 Timothy 2:19).
- 2. It speaks of preservation. "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" Ephesians 4:30. The Holy Spirit is responsible for our survival and arrival.
- 3. It speaks of ownership. Jesus said, "I...know my sheep, and am known of mine" (John 10:14 and 2 Timothy 2:19).

Ephesians
Exam—Lesson 3

Name _____

Address _____

Multiple Choice – Circle the letter in front of the correct answer. Only one answer is correct unless otherwise stated.

1. An important phrase that occurs many times in the book of Ephesians is: (Value 2 points)
 - a. "Walk with Him."
 - b. "In Christ."
 - c. "In the heavenlies."

2. The phrase "in the heavenly places" refers to: (Value 2 points)
 - a. the time when we will be in heaven with the Lord.
 - b. the promises of God to the believer.
 - c. that sphere of Christian experience in which we are all blessed with all spiritual blessings because we are in Christ.

3. Two reasons why the study of Ephesians is of such importance are: (Circle two) (Value 6 points)
 - a. It helps the believer to understand what he is and what he has in Christ.
 - b. It helps us to be more spiritual.
 - c. It helps us to know what God has done, is doing and will do for the believer.
 - d. It helps us to know how wonderful it is to be "in Christ."

(Circle the letter in front of the correct reference for questions 4-7. You may use your Bible)

4. Does God love all mankind? (Value 2 points)
 - a. John 7:37-38
 - b. Isaiah 45:22
 - c. John 3:16-17

5. Did Christ die for all mankind? (Value 2 points)
 - a. 2 Corinthians 5:14
 - b. 1 Timothy 2:4
 - c. Isaiah 45:22

6. Does God want all people to be saved? (Value 2 points)
 - a. Revelation 22:17
 - b. 1 Timothy 2:4
 - c. Ezekiel 18:2-3

7. Does everyone have the ability and responsibility to receive Christ? (Value 2 points)
 - a. Acts 7:51
 - b. Matthew 11:28
 - c. Luke 13:34

8. The attribute of God that answers the problem and provides an answer to the phrase, "Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world" is: (Value 2 points)
 - a. the omnipotence of God.
 - b. the omnipresence of God.
 - c. the omniscience of God.

9. God's purpose in choosing us is that: (Value 2 points)
 - a. we should stand before Him as holy and without blame.
 - b. Satan should never be able to condemn us.
 - c. we might walk in the way of righteousness.

10. The meaning of "predestination" is: (Value 2 points)
 - a. that we are adopted into the family of God.
 - b. to determine something beforehand.
 - c. the same as being born again.

11. Predestination always looks: (Value 2 points)
 - a. to the past.
 - b. to the present.
 - c. to the future.

12. The difference between election and predestination is: (Value 2 points)
 - a. predestination is wider and more inclusive than election.
 - b. election is wider and more inclusive than predestination.
 - c. election includes the idea of adoption.

13. The meaning of adoption is: (Value 2 points)
 - a. to be chosen for salvation by God.
 - b. to be placed as a son in God's family.
 - c. to be redeemed by God.

14. We are acceptable to God because of: (Value 2 points)
 - a. where we are in Christ.
 - b. what we are.
 - c. what we have done for God.

15. The meaning of redemption is: (Value 2 points)
 - a. to take someone into your family.
 - b. to choose someone for salvation.
 - c. to buy back by paying a price.

16. The price Christ paid to redeem sinners was: (Value 2 points)
 - a. His prayer for every sinner.
 - b. His shed blood for every sinner.
 - c. His return to heaven to prepare a place for every sinner.

17. The forgiveness of sins is according to: (Value 2 points)
 - a. the shedding of His blood.
 - b. the power of Christ.
 - c. the riches of His grace.

18. God has blessed the believer with wisdom and intelligence. What in particular did God make known to the believer? (Value 2 points)
- God's purpose and will.
 - God's grace and love.
 - God righteousness and justice.
19. The meaning of the word "mystery" is: (Value 2 points)
- dispensation.
 - a secret God is keeping from the believer.
 - a hidden truth, not revealed in the Old Testament but revealed in the New Testament.
20. The dispensation of the fullness of times will be established: (Value 2 points)
- when Christ comes back for His CHURCH.
 - when the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven.
 - when Christ returns in power and glory to set up His Kingdom on earth.
21. The seal in Ephesians 1:13 is: (Value 2 points)
- our salvation.
 - the Holy Spirit Himself.
 - Jesus Christ Himself.
22. The "earnest of our inheritance" is: (Value 2 points)
- God the Father.
 - The Holy Spirit.
 - Jesus Christ.
23. A seal can be used in several ways. (Value 9 points)
(Put the letter in front of the reference in the correct blank before the word. You may use your Bible.)
- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| a. 2 Timothy 2:19 | ___ Ownership |
| b. Ephesians 4:30 | ___ Identification |
| c. John 10:14 | ___ Preservation |
24. The lesson presents three reasons why the sinner needs to be redeemed. (Value 9 points)
Match each reason to a reference by placing the letter before the reason in the blank space before each reference. (You may use your Bible.)
- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| a. Sinners are blind and controlled by Satan. | ___ Romans 6:17,20 |
| b. Sinners are under the curse of the law of Moses. | ___ 2 Corinthians 4:4 |
| c. Sinners are slaves of sin. | ___ Galatians 3:10 |
25. Name two provisions God has made so that we can stand before Him in glory. Fill in the blanks.
(Value 6 points)
- _____
 - _____

26. State the believer's seven spiritual blessings mentioned in Ephesians 1:1-14. (Value 28 points)

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____
- f. _____
- g. _____

Decision Time

At the beginning of this lesson I wrote: "Nothing is more important to a Christian than to understand what he is and what he has in Christ."

I am wondering if you can say for sure that you are a Christian. When you stand before God and God asks you the reason why He should allow you into heaven, can you say, "I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior and all my sins were forgiven."

If you cannot say this, I want to give you an opportunity right now to accept Christ as your Savior.

You can say something like this to God, (this is no magical formula it is only a suggested wording) "Dear Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner and you died for my sins on the cross. You rose from the dead and are living in heaven right now. I am sorry for my sins and ask you to forgive them. With your help I will turn away from my sin. Today I invite you to become Lord of my life."

Signed _____ Date _____