

Ephesians Chapter 1

In the Greek (verses 3-14), comprise one sentence and encompass the past, present, and future of God's eternal purpose for the church. It is Paul's outline of God's master plan for salvation. In (3-6a), we are shown the past aspect, election; (in 6b-11), we are shown the present aspect, redemption; and (in 12-14), we are shown the future aspect, inheritance. Within God's master plan of salvation is every believer who has or will ever trust in God and be saved. As it is sometimes expressed, history is simply the outworking of "His story," which has already been planned and prewritten in eternity.

This passage can also be divided into three sections, each of which focuses on a different Person of the Trinity. (Verses 3-6a), center on the Father; (verses 6b-12), center on the Son; and (verses 13-14), centers on the Holy Spirit.

1:1 "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:"

We immediately see a declaration that this letter is from Paul. He explains that his authority to be an apostle is from Jesus Christ. This is written to the church at Ephesus. Paul explains that he is an apostle of Christ. Paul did not choose to be an apostle, God called Paul to this office.

"Apostle", the word means "messenger" and served as an official title for Paul and the 12 disciples which includes Matthias (Acts 1:26), who were eyewitnesses of the resurrected Jesus and were chosen by God to lay the foundation for the church by preaching, teaching and writing Scripture, accompanied by miracles (2 Cor. 12:12).

"Saints ... faithful" designates those who God has set apart from sin to Himself, made holy through their faith in Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:2 "Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and [from] the Lord Jesus Christ."

Just as grace was the key word in Galatians, it is prominent in all of Paul's letters. He does want the blessings and favor of God to fall upon these people.

True peace, just like true grace, comes from the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. From them came the authority with which Paul spoke (verse 1), as well as the blessings of grace and peace to all believers. The conjunction "and" indicates equivalence; that is, the Lord Jesus Christ is equally divine with the Father.

Ephesians 1:3 "Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly [places] in Christ:"

Blessed here means "worthy of praise." When God blesses man, He confers benefits upon him. When man blesses God, as Paul does here, he attributes praise to Him "Who hath blessed us" (or,

“because He has blessed us”): The apostle then, praises God because He has bestowed all “spiritual blessings” on His people.

Where are these blessings located? “In heavenly places, that is, in heaven. As the Christian’s citizenship (Phil. 3:20), high priest (Heb. 4:14), hope (Col. 1:5), and inheritance (1 Pet. 1:4), are all “in heaven.” As his treasure (Matt. 6:20-21), and affection (Col. 3:1-2), are to be “in heaven,” so also the Christian’s blessings are “in heaven.” These spiritual benefits were granted to the believer and are retained in heaven for him, being progressively dispersed to him on earth in accord with his need and Christian growth.

When we bless God, we speak good of Him. When God blesses us, He communicates good to us. We bless Him with words; He blesses us with deeds. All we can do is to speak well of Him because in ourselves we have nothing good to give, and in Himself He lacks no goodness.

But when He blesses us, the situation is reversed. He cannot bless us for our goodness, because we have none. Rather, He blesses us with goodness. Our heavenly Father lavishes us with every goodness, every good gift, every blessing. That is His nature, and that is our need.

“In Christ”, or “by Christ,” that is, the Father has conferred these blessings on the church, but He did not act alone; He hath blessed us in Christ. This verse therefore, makes six points:

1. Who is the Blessed One? God.
2. What has God done? He has blessed us.
3. With what? With every spiritual blessing.
4. When? In eternity past.
5. Where are these blessings? In heaven.
6. How did God do this? By Christ.

In this verse, we see the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Our way to the Father is through Jesus Christ, our High Priest. The spiritual blessings for the believer are applied through the Holy Spirit.

Our heavenly Father blesses us with every spiritual blessing. Many Christians continually ask God for what He has already given. They pray for Him to give them more love, although they should know that “the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Romans 5:5). They pray for peace, although Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you” (John 14:27).

They pray for happiness and joy, although Jesus said, “these things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full” (John 15:11). They ask God for strength, although His Word tells them that they “can do all things through Him who strengthens them” (Philippians 4:13).

God’s divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence (2 Peter 1:3). It is not that

God will give us but that He has already given us “everything pertaining to life and godliness.” He has blessed us already with every spiritual blessing. We are complete in Him.

Perhaps in this third verse here, Paul wants us to see the unity of the Father, Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Christians are in Jesus, and Jesus is in the Christian. He is seated in heavenly places, and we are sitting with Him in heavenly places.

Notice the involvement of them all in the blessings for the believer. Take a look also, the word "all" in the spiritual blessings.

Ephesians 2:6 "And hath raised [us] up together, and made [us] sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:"

John 14:20 "At that day ye shall know that I [am] in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you."

Every human effort at self-improvement or self-satisfaction, no matter what its religious covering may be, is subject to the law of diminishing returns, such as works righteousness that seeks praise and commendation. Genuine and lasting satisfaction is never achieved and increased achievement only brings increased desire.

The only way a person can achieve a true sense of self-worth, meaning and significance is to have a right relationship to his Creator. A person without Christ has no spiritual value, no standing before God, no purpose or meaning in the world. He is like “chaff which the wind drives away” (Psalm 1:4).

As James 1:17 puts it: “Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of Lights”.

Those who are Christians are members of God’s dominion, unlike the “sons of this age” (Luke 16:8), are able to understand the supernatural things of God. Things which the “natural man does not accept” and “cannot understand, because they are spiritually appraised” (1 Cor. 2:14).

The key to living as a heavenly citizen while living in an unheavenly situation is walking by the Spirit. “Walk by the Spirit,” Paul says, “and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). When we walk in His power He produces His fruit in us: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control” (Gal. 5:22-23). We receive our heavenly blessing by living in the power of God’s Holy Spirit, because we are in Christ.

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:"

Verses 4 to 6b reveals the past part of God’s eternal plan in forming the church, the body of Jesus Christ. His plan is shown in seven elements:

1. The method, election;
2. The object, the elect;

3. The time, eternity past;
4. The purpose, holiness;
5. The motive, love;
6. The result, Sonship;
7. And the God, glory.

The bible speaks of three different kinds of election. One is God's theocratic election of Israel. That election has no bearing on personal salvation. The second is vocational. Such as the Lord called out the tribe of Levi to be His priests, but they were not guaranteed salvation. Or Jesus when He called the twelve men to be apostles but only eleven of them to salvation.

The third kind of election is Salvation; the kind of which Paul is speaking in our present text. Jesus said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (John 6:44). The Greek word in this, "Helkuo" (draws), carries the idea of an irresistible force and was used in ancient Greek literature of a desperately hungry man being drawn to food or of demonic forces being drawn to animals when they were not able to possess men.

From all eternity, before the foundation of the world and therefore completely apart from any merit or deserving that any person could have, God chose us in Him, "in Christ" (verse 3). By God's sovereign election, those who are saved were placed in eternal union with Christ before creation even took place.

Although man's will is not free in the sense that many people suppose, he does have a will, a will that Scripture clearly recognizes. Apart from God, man's will is captive to sin. But he is nevertheless able to choose God because God has made that choice possible. Jesus said that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16), and that "everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die" (John 11:26).

God's sovereign election and man's exercise of responsibility in choosing Jesus Christ seem opposite and irreconcilable truths, and from our limited human perspective they are opposite and irreconcilable. That is why so many earnest, well-meaning Christians throughout the history of the church has floundered trying to reconcile them.

Since the problem cannot be resolved by our finite minds, the result is always to compromise one truth in favor of the other or to weaken both by trying to take a position somewhere between them. We should let the antimony remain, believing both truths completely and leaving the harmonizing of them to God.

I believe that (verse 4), is explaining that God (who knows everything for all time), prepared a plan for the fall of man before He made man. Many call this predestination but I prefer to call it foreknowledge. It is really the omniscient of God. "Omniscient" means knowing all things. It is one of the descriptions of God alone, no human has this attribute.

We do know that the desire of God was to fellowship with us. It is His desire for all to be saved. He even provided a Way for that to be possible in His Son Jesus. Mankind is not holy within itself. We are righteous in Jesus Christ.

He has clothed us in His righteousness. The righteousness that Jesus has clothed us in makes us acceptable in the sight of the Father. We are chosen of God.

1 Peter 2:9 "But ye [are] a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:"

You do not read anywhere that God has chosen anyone to be lost. His desire is that all would be saved. We of our own free will, accept the salvation He offered us, or reject it.

Paul said "For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory" (2 Tim. 1:9).

Acts 13:48 "And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed".

It is not that God's sovereign election, or predestination, eliminates man's choice in faith. Divine sovereignty and human response are integral and inseparable parts of salvation, though exactly how they operate together only the infinite mind of God knows.

Nor is it, as many believe and teach, that God simply looks into the future to see which people are going to believe and then elects them to salvation. Taken out of context (Romans 8:29), is often used to support that view. But (verse 28), makes it clear that those who God foresees and predestines to salvation are those whom He has already "called according to His purpose." Any teaching that diminishes the sovereign, electing love of God by giving more credit to men also diminishes God's glory, thus striking a blow at the very purpose of salvation.

Romans 8:28-29 "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."

Because we are chosen in Him we are holy and blameless before Him. It is Christ's eternal and foreordained plan to "present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing. But that she should be holy and blameless" (Eph. 5:27).

Obviously, Paul is talking about our position and not our practice. We know that in our living we are far from the holy standard and far from being blameless. Yet "in Him," Paul said (in Col. 2:10) "we have been made complete". All that God is, we become in Jesus Christ. That is why salvation is secure. We have Christ's perfect righteousness.

Our practice can and does fall short, but our position can never fall short, because it is exactly the same holy and blameless position before God that Christ has. We are as secure as our Savior,

because we are in Him, waiting for the full redemption and glorious holiness that awaits us in His presence.

And because God declares us and leads us to be holy and blameless, we should strive to live lives now that reflect the holiness and blamelessness that are our destiny.

The last two words of (verse 4) “in love” may well belong to (verse 5); the link between verb forms in these two verses is expressed in this rendering: “He chose us ... in that He lovingly predestined us.” So the divine choice of verse 4 is further defined by the divine predestination of (verse 5).

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

God elects those who are saved because of His love. In “love” He predestined us to adoption as sons. Just as He chose Israel to be His special people only because of His love (Deut. 7:8), so He also chose the church, the family of the redeemed.

Predestinated means “marked out in advance,” (determined or appointed beforehand). Prior to creation God appointed those who would believe unto (or for), the adoption of children. That is, He appointed them to be His sons.

This divine appointment was “according to” (because of), the good pleasure of His will; it was due not to anything good in ourselves, but due solely to His kindness. These verses stress the divine sovereignty in salvation. (Verses 12 and 13), which mention our trust and belief in Christ emphasize the human responsibility in the process.

His plan from the beginning was to make us His adopted children. We see from the beginning, the plan to save the very elect. God did not choose who the very elect would be, He just knew ahead of time those who would choose to follow Him. The plan all along, was for Jesus Christ to be our Savior.

John 1:12 "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, [even] to them that believe on his name:"

Romans 8:14-17 "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:" "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with [him], that we may be also glorified together."

God chose and preordained the Body before the foundation of the world in order that no human being could boast or take glory for himself, but that all the glory might be His. Salvation is not partly of God and partly of man, but entirely of God. To guarantee that, every provision and every detail of salvation was accomplished before any human being was ever born or before a planet was formed on which he could be born.

The ultimate reason for everything that exists is the glory of His grace. That is why, as God's children, Christians should do everything they do, even such mundane things as eating and drinking, to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31).

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

Jesus Christ is our Redeemer from sin, the Beloved (the word indicates the One who is in the state of being loved by God), who Himself paid the price for our release from sin and death. Because we now belong to Christ, by faith made one with Him and placed in His Body, we are now acceptable to God. Because we are now in the Beloved, we too are "beloved of God" (Romans 1:7).

The reason God predestined us to be His sons, (verse 5), is expressed in the words "to the praise of the glory of his grace", that is in order to magnify the splendor of His goodness to us.

"Wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved" may also read, "which (grace), He has bestowed on us by the Beloved." Through Christ we are the recipients of God's unmerited favor.

We must admit that it is to His praise, and not ours. Salvation through grace is none of our doing, it is His. "Grace", as we have said before, is unmerited favor. Even the fact that we are acceptable to the Father is because we have taken on the righteousness of Christ. Our righteousness is as filthy rags.

It is His righteousness that puts us in right standing with the Father. The Beloved here, is Jesus Christ. It is only in Him, that we are acceptable.

Jeremiah 23:6 "In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this [is] his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

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

Until a person realizes his need for redemption, he sees no need for a Redeemer. Until he recognizes that he is hopelessly enslaved to sin, he will not seek release from it. But when he does, he will be freed from the curse of sin, placed in Christ's Body, and blessed with His every spiritual blessing.

Redemption referred to the release of a slave or captive upon receipt of ransom. But the following words, the forgiveness of sins, show "redemption" is used here in a moral sense. The primary result of redemption for the believer is forgiveness. Christians are therefore released from their enslavement to sin and the resulting divine wrath.

Redemption is effected for us through his blood, that is, by Christ's atonement secured by His death on the cross.

On the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament when the blood was carried into the Holy of Holies for the sins of the people, the sins were covered over with the blood. This did not do away with the sin, it only covered it up. It did not clear the conscience of the sinner.

In the case of the Lord Jesus Christ, His blood does away with the sin. It blots the sin out. It leaves us free of sin. Jesus' precious blood clears our conscience. He not only takes away our sin, but He gives us His righteousness in return.

We do absolutely nothing, except repent of our sins and have faith in Jesus as our Redeemer. He redeemed us from the curse of the law.

Colossians 1:14 "In whom we have redemption through his blood, [even] the forgiveness of sins:"

While we were yet in sin, Jesus shed His blood to save us from sin, self, and the devil.

Shedding of blood is a metonym for death, which is the penalty and the price of sin. Christ's own death, by the shedding of His blood, was the substitute for our death. That which we deserved and could not save ourselves from, the beloved Savior, though He did not deserve it, took upon Himself. He made payment for what otherwise would have condemned us to death and hell.

When Jesus comes into our lives as Savior and Lord, He says to us what He said to the woman caught in the act of adultery, "And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." (John 8:11). "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death" (Romans 8:1-2).

Because we continue to sin, we need the continued forgiveness of cleansing; but we do not need the continued forgiveness of redemption. This does not mean we will no longer sin, or that when we do, our sins have no harmful effect. They have a profound effect on our growth, joy, peace, usefulness, and ability to have intimate and rich communion with the Father. Thus, the believer is called on to ask for forgiveness daily so that he may enjoy not just the general forgiveness of redemption, but the specific forgiveness of daily cleansing, which brings fellowship and usefulness to their maximum.

Because God accepts every believer as He accepts His own Son, every believer ought to accept himself in the same way. We do not accept ourselves for what we are in ourselves any more than God accepts us for that reason. We accept ourselves as forgiven and as righteous because that is what God Himself declares us to be. To think otherwise is not a sign of humility but of arrogance, because to think otherwise is to put our own judgment above God's Word and to belittle the redemption price paid for us by His own beloved Son. A Christian who denigrates himself and doubts full forgiveness denies the work of God and denigrates a child of God. If we matter to God, we certainly ought to matter to ourselves.

"According to the riches of His grace": We need never worry that our sin will outstrip God's gracious forgiveness. "Where sin increased," Paul assures us, "grace abounded all the more"

(Romans 5:20). Our heavenly Father does not simply give us subsistence forgiveness that will barely cover our sins if we are careful not to overdo. We cannot sin beyond God's grace, because as wicked and extensive as our sins might be or become, they will never approach the greatness of His grace. His forgiveness is infinite, and He lavishes it without measure upon those who trust in His Son. We therefore not only can enjoy future glory with God but present fellowship with Him as well.

Ephesians 1:8 "Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;"

This verse could be rendered, "He lavished upon us this grace which consists in all sorts of wisdom and prudence (or, insight). The word wisdom refers to a knowledge of the true nature of things; prudence has to do with the practical application of this wisdom leading to the right course of action. But the specific "wisdom and prudence" Paul has in view here, concerns a future aspect of God's will as delineated (in verses 9 and 10).

God not only forgives us, but also gives us all the necessary equipment to understand Him and to walk through the world day by day in a way that reflects His will and is pleasing to Him. He generously gives us the wherewithal both to understand His Word and to know how to obey it.

When God takes away sin, He does not leave us in a spiritual, moral, and mental vacuum where we must then work things out for ourselves. He lavishes wisdom and insight on us according to the riches of His grace just as He lavishes forgiveness on us according to those riches.

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

This verse more precisely identifies that "wisdom and prudence" (verse 8), God lavished on us. This "wisdom and prudence" has to do with God's making known unto us the mystery of his will.

"Mystery" here refers to a divine truth that is incapable of being discovered by human ingenuity and that, until recently, has been kept secret. Why did God disclose this mystery to us? It was according to (because of), his good pleasure which he hath purposed (planned), in himself.

The mystery is how a just God of law could ever justify a sinner, such as you and me. He revealed to us the plan. It is up to us to act upon it. The word "according" here, tells us a lot. With man's reasoning, there would have been no reason for God to give His Son on the cross that we might live.

He did it not because it was the logical thing by our reasoning to do it, but because it brought Him pleasure for us to be saved. Notice also, that this was not someone else's plan, it was His plan. It was not on advice from others, but was His plan from the foundation of the world. All of this is true, because God willed it.

Why has God done so much for us? Why has He blessed us with every spiritual blessing? Chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world? Made us holy and blameless?

Predestined us to adoption as His children? Redeemed us through His blood, and lavishly given us forgiveness, wisdom and insight according to the infinite riches of His grace?

Ephesians 1:10 "That in the dispensation of the fullness 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:"

God redeems men in order that He might gather everything to Himself. The time of that gathering will be the millennial kingdom, which will be an administration suitable to the fullness of the times. When the completion of history comes, the kingdom arrives, eternity begins again, and the new heaven and new earth are established, there will be a summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth. Jesus Christ is the goal of history, which finds its resolution in Him. The paradise lost in Adam is restored in Christ.

This verse refers back to God's "good pleasure", (verse 9).

Then (verse 10), is made plainer by the paraphrase, "for the purpose of executing it (i.e. God's good pleasure), in the fullness of times and His good pleasure is to head up all things in Christ, things in heaven, and things on earth."

In the near future, when the time is ripe, God will put His good purpose into effect and carry it out. And His "good pleasure" or intention is the restoration of original universal unity, when all things are brought back into harmony with Himself and under the headship of Christ.

We are all one in Christ, whether we be Jew or Greek, whether we be male or female.

Galatians 3:28 "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

In man's scheme of things, this would be an impossibility. In God's plan, it is not only possible, but will happen.

Acts 17:28 "For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring."

1 John 4:9 "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him."

We Christians are His church; we are His bride and we are His building.

He is the head of the church; we are the body. He is the chief Cornerstone, and we are the lively stones which are held together by Him. We are also, His inheritance. He is Creator God; we belong to Him. We are His creation.

Read the first chapter of John to know that not anything was made without Him. The heavens are His and the earth, as well. At the name of Jesus all will bow.

Philippians 2:10-11 "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of [things] in heaven, and [things] in earth, and [things] under the earth;" "And [that] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

The summing up of "All things in Christ": He designed His great plan in the ages past; He now sovereignly works it out according to His divine will; and in the fullness of the times He will complete and perfect it in His Son, in whom it will forever operate in righteous harmony and glorious newness along with all things in the heavens and things upon the earth.

Ephesians Chapter 1 Questions

1. What is the book of Ephesians?
2. About when was it written?
3. Who does the author believe the penman to be?
4. What is this letter a call to do?
5. What was Paul's special thrust in this letter?
6. Describe Ephesus.
7. The _____ was thought of as one of the wonders of the world at that time.
8. What false worship was going on here?
9. Where, in Revelation, is the church at Ephesus mentioned?
10. What were some problems Paul had here?
11. What description does Paul give of himself in verse 1?
12. Who chose for Paul to be an apostle?
13. What does the word "saints" mean in verse 1?
14. Where does true peace come from?
15. What is our way to the Father?
16. What unity does Paul want us to see in verse 3?
17. When had He chosen us?
18. When did God make a plan for fallen man?
19. Do you believe this to be predestination or foreknowledge?
20. What does omniscient mean?
21. How are we righteous?
22. Verse 5 says, He predestinated us to what?
23. The 8th Chapter of Romans tells us who are the sons of God?

24. What special name can the children of God call the Father?
25. Who are the Christians, joint heirs with?
26. Who is the Beloved in verse 6?
27. What is "grace"?
28. We have redemption through His _____.
29. How did the blood of the animal shed in the Old Testament vary from the blood of Jesus in the New Testament?
30. What is "wisdom", in verse 8, speaking of?
31. What does "prudence" mean in verse 8?
32. What is the mystery in verse 9?
33. When will Christ gather together all things in Him?