

## Ephesians 1:3–14 and Our Blessings in Christ

### Prayer

### Introductory Questions

- What are examples of God’s blessings that *can be taken from us in this life*?
- For all who are Christians, what are examples of God’s blessings that *can never be taken from us*?
- Why is it so important to consider both categories?

### Introduction

Ephesians 1:3–14 is an extended word of praise (or blessing) to God the Father because of the many ways he has blessed his people. No one can take away these blessings from Christians, and each blessing highlights God’s supreme worth and immeasurable grace. The following points clarify the meaning and structure of the passage:

- God’s blessings stretch *from* him choosing us before the foundation of the world in verse 4 *to* our eternal inheritance in verse 14. We learn that we have been predestined (vv. 4–5, 11), adopted (v. 5), redeemed (vv. 7, 14), forgiven (v. 7), granted an inheritance (vv. 11, 14), saved (v. 13), and sealed with the Holy Spirit (vv. 13–14).
- Our union with Christ is the “place” we receive God’s blessings. Ten times we read that God blessed us “*in Christ*,” “*in him*,” or “*in the Beloved One*.” Depending on the context, these expressions can mean that God blesses us *in union with Christ*, *in the realm of Christ*, and/or *through Christ* (among other things). God’s blessings for us are always tied to Christ.
- God’s eternal purpose is the basis for these blessings (vv. 4–5, 9, 11).
- Praise to God is the purpose and goal of these blessings (vv. 6, 12, 14) (Moo, *A Theology of Paul and His Letters*, 271).
- Four key verbs explain why Christians should praise God: “he chose us” (v. 4), “we have redemption” (v. 7), “we have also received an inheritance” (v. 11), and “you also were sealed” (with the Holy Spirit) (v. 13)—which shapes the outline below (Merkle, *ESV/BECC, Vol. 11: Ephesians–Philemon*, 30–31).

We organize Ephesians 1:3–14 into four sections: (1) Christians praise God because he chose them (vv. 3–6), (2) Christians praise God because he redeemed them (vv. 7–10), (3) Christians praise God because he gave them an inheritance (vv. 11–12), and (4) Christians praise God because he sealed them with the Holy Spirit (vv. 13–14). We conclude this lesson by summarizing many of the blessings that we have in and through Christ.

## 1. Christians praise God because he chose them.

3 Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace that he lavished on us in the Beloved One. (Eph. 1:3–6)

Ephesians 1:3–14 is an extended word of praise (or blessing) to “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 3). Verse 3 introduces readers to all that follows in verses 4–14. “*Blessed* is” God for he “has *blessed* us with *every spiritual blessing* in the heavens in Christ” (v. 3). What are these blessings for us? Why is God worthy of our eternal praise and thanksgiving?

For all who are Christians, God chose us “before the foundation of the world” (v. 4). In other words, God set his affection on us and selected us for a relationship with himself before he created the world, so God choosing us is completely an act of his grace (vv. 6–7). We were chosen “in him” (in Christ), for God made his choice in and through Jesus (v. 4). The purpose of God choosing us is that we would be holy (morally pure) and blameless before Jesus at his return, and we strive for holiness until we are with him (v. 4). In love, God predestined us to be adopted into his family (vv. 4–5). He did this “through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will”—which again emphasizes his eternal choice (v. 5). God’s decision to adopt us had a clear purpose: that we would praise his glorious grace (v. 6; cf. vv. 12, 14). God lavished this grace on us in his Son, the Beloved One (v. 6; cf. 2:7).

- Explain the truths that Christians are *chosen* and *predestined*.
- What truths in this passage stimulate your praise, thanksgiving, and joy?

## 2. Christians praise God because he redeemed them.

7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace 8 that he richly poured out on us with all wisdom and understanding. 9 He made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he purposed in Christ 10 as a plan for the right time—to bring everything together in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth in him. (Eph. 1:7–10)

“In him,” which probably refers to our union with Christ, “we have *redemption* through his blood” (v. 7). Prior to becoming Christians, we were enslaved to sin and unable to pay our debt to God (Col. 2:14). But Jesus’s death on the cross *redeemed* us (paid the debt and set us free), resulting in our forgiveness (Rom. 3:24). This was in accordance with “the riches of his grace,” which “he richly poured out on us with all wisdom and understanding” (vv. 7–8). He revealed “the mystery of his will” (something hidden but now revealed) that he planned in Christ (v. 9). The mystery is that God will bring *everything* under the lordship of Christ (v. 10).

- Explain the spiritual concepts of *slavery* and *redemption*.
- What truths in this passage stimulate your praise, thanksgiving, and joy?

### 3. Christians praise God because he gave them an inheritance.

11 In him we have also received an inheritance [or we were claimed by God *as his inheritance*], because we were predestined according to the plan of the one who works out everything in agreement with the purpose of his will, 12 so that we who had already put our hope in Christ might bring praise to his glory. (Eph. 1:11–12)

The first part of verse 11 could be interpreted in one of two ways. “In him” (Christ), either (1) we have been claimed by God *as his inheritance* or (2) we have received *an inheritance from God* (which is more likely given this passage’s emphasis on *the believer’s blessings*). Either way, it is grounded in the fact that God the Father has predestined us for a relationship with himself (vv. 5, 11). Predestination is according to *his* plan, “the one who works out everything in agreement with the purpose of his will” (v. 11). Why? So that those who already put their hope in Christ (Jewish Christians) would bring praise to God’s glory (v. 12). “God’s glory is the revelation and manifestation of who he is: his essence, power, majesty, purity, and holiness” (ibid., 35). We praise God as the inheritance-granting, predestining, all-glorious God.

- What is the nature of a Christian’s inheritance (both now and in the future)?
- What truths in this passage stimulate your praise, thanksgiving, and joy?

### 4. Christians praise God because he sealed them with the Holy Spirit.

13 In him you also were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and when you believed. 14 The Holy Spirit is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of the possession, to the praise of his glory. (Eph. 1:13–14)

“In him” (Christ), the gentile believers (note the “you also”) were sealed by God with the promised Holy Spirit (v. 13). In other words, God *stamped* them with the Spirit: (1) to mark ownership and protection (Rev. 7:3) and/or (2) to certify their salvation as authentic (John 3:33). God sealed them when they heard “the word of truth” (which is the gospel of their salvation through Christ) and they trusted in Jesus (v. 13). The Holy Spirit is the “down payment” or “partial payment” for our inheritance. This partial payment awaits “the redemption of the possession”—which either means that we await *the possession of our future*

*inheritance* (including our final release from sin’s power at death) or *God will later take us as his prized possession* (v. 14; cf. Mal. 3:17; 1 Pet. 2:9) (Baugh, *Ephesians*, 96–101). We read again that God performed these actions (in Christ and by the Spirit) “to the praise of his glory” (v. 14).

- What ministries does the Holy Spirit accomplish in the lives of Christians?
- What truths in this passage stimulate your praise, thanksgiving, and joy?

### Sound Doctrine: Our Blessings in Christ

What follows is a partial list of God’s blessings for us that are eternally safe and secure—for all who are Christians:

1. **God chose us.** As opposed to rejecting us, God set his affection on us and selected us for a relationship with himself before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4–5; Col. 3:12).
2. **God regenerated us.** As opposed to leaving us in the state of being dead in our sins, God brought us to life and raised us up with Christ (John 3:3–8; Eph. 2:1–6; Titus 3:5).
3. **God justified us.** As opposed to declaring us unrighteous, God declared us righteous—crediting our sin to Jesus’s account and his righteousness to our account (Rom. 3:21–26).
4. **God set us apart.** As opposed to allowing us to remain enmeshed with *the world* (humanity in rebellion against God) and therefore subject to God’s condemnation, he set us apart for himself and for his purposes (1 Cor. 6:11; Col. 1:13; 1 Pet. 1:2).
5. **God adopted us.** As opposed to allowing us to remain in the family of the evil one, God brought us into his family, granting us all the rights and privileges of sons and daughters (John 8:44; Rom. 8:14–17; Eph. 1:5).
6. **God redeemed us.** As opposed to allowing us to remain in bondage to sin and with a debt to God we could not pay, God sent Jesus to pay the price for our sins and set us free from the powers of sin and death (Rom. 8:2; Eph. 1:7; Titus 2:14).
7. **God will glorify us.** As opposed to allowing us to live apart from him forever, God will bring us into the presence of his glory. He will grant us transformed, glorified bodies, and we will live with him with forever (Rom. 8:18, 21, 30).

- What questions or comments do you have about this lesson?
- What is one thing that you can do in response to this lesson?

### Prayer