

## Ephesians 1:1-14

**Who wrote Ephesians?** Paul **Where was he when he wrote it?** Prison **Which other epistles did Paul write during this period of imprisonment?** Philippians, Colossians, Philemon. Paul used his prison time effectively; no wallowing in self-pity.

**How did Paul describe himself (v. 1)?** *"An apostle of Christ Jesus."* **What is an apostle?** One sent out as a representative of Jesus Christ; today's equivalent might be a missionary. **How did he become an apostle?** Through God's will or decision. It was not his own choosing or plan. As a result, he had God's authority behind him.

**How did Paul describe the original recipients of his letter (v. 1)?** As *"saints"* (Gr. *hagiois*, holy ones), people set apart by God for His use. *"The faithful in Christ Jesus"* further defines the "saints" and could be rendered "the believers in Christ Jesus." In Christ, all believers are saints, even though in themselves they are not always saintly.

**The expression "in Christ" and its variations occur nine times in vv. 1-14. What does it mean to be "in Christ?"** It refers to a spiritual union; a positional relationship whereby the Lord Jesus surrounds and embraces the believer in His own life and spiritually separates him at the same time from all outside and hostile influences.<sup>1</sup>

**For what does Paul praise God (v. 3)?** *"Every spiritual blessing in Christ."* Note what kind of blessings these are -- spiritual. This is a New Testament concept. In the Old Testament, God's blessings were often material in nature -- flocks and herds, wealth, kids, land, etc. These blessings are higher, better and more secure than earthly blessings. They are eternal blessings not limited to God's worldly blessings of this life.

All spiritual blessings are *in Christ*. It was He who obtained them for us through His finished work at Calvary. Now they are available through Him. Everything that God has for the believer is in the Lord Jesus. In order to receive the blessings, we must be united to Christ by faith. The moment a person is *in Christ*, he becomes the possessor of them all.<sup>2</sup>

When a person is converted, God no longer looks upon him as a condemned child of Adam. Rather He sees him as being in Christ, and He accepts him on that basis, clothed in all the acceptability of Christ Himself. And he will enjoy God's favor and acceptance as long as Christ does, namely, forever.

**Where do these blessings originate (v. 3)?** They come from the heavenly realms -- a place where we already are. Whereas physically we are on the earth, spiritually we are already with Christ in the heavens (2:6).

**When do we receive these blessings?** The believer is blessed at conversion, i.e. the moment we place our faith and trust in Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. It is important to point out that these blessings are for both Jewish and Gentile believers. First century Jews, as the Chosen People, lived with a strong sense of being blessed, called, and predestined. Paul showed that these things are now given to Christians, be they Jew or Gentile.

**What is the spiritual blessing of v. 4?** He chose us to be in Him, i.e. He chose us for salvation. Salvation is God's doing, not man's (Ephesians 2:8-9). This is the doctrine of divine election. Election is an act of God before creation in which He chooses some people to be saved, not on account of any foreseen merit in them, but only because of His sovereign good pleasure (Acts 13:48; Romans 8:28-30; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:9). Election lets God be God. He is sovereign, i.e. He can do as He pleases, though He never pleases to do anything unjust.

But there is another side to the story. The same Bible that teaches sovereign election also teaches human responsibility. No one can use the doctrine of election as an excuse for not being saved. God makes a bona fide offer of salvation to all people everywhere (John 3:16; 3:36; 5:24; Romans 10:9, 13). Anyone can be saved by repenting of his/her sins and believing in Jesus Christ. Therefore, if a person is lost, it is because he chooses to be lost, not because God desires it.<sup>3</sup>

**When did He choose us?** Before the creation of the world. **For what purpose?** To be holy and blameless in His sight. **Holy means?** "Set apart" for His purposes. **Blameless means?** Without blemish or fault. God sees us through Christ-colored glasses.

**What is the spiritual blessing of v. 5?** He predestined us to be adopted as his sons. God chose us by marking us out beforehand. Predestination is the means by which God chose us (Romans 8:30). Predestination looks more at the "how" than at the "who" of election. Election emphasizes the people and predestination the means (v. 11; Acts 4:27-28; Romans 8:29-30).<sup>4</sup> Although not technically correct, for the sake of discussion, we can almost consider these two terms, election and predestination, to be interchangeable.

**Why did God choose/adopt us? What was His motive (vv. 5-6)?** Simply because it was His good pleasure and in accordance with His will (v. 5). And, *"to the praise of his glorious grace,"* i.e. to bring glory to Himself (v. 6). The object and the result of all God's gracious dealings with us is His own glory.

**What is the spiritual blessing of v. 7? Redemption accompanied by the forgiveness of sins. What is meant by redemption?** Redemption means release from slavery (to sin) (Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:15). It involves buying back and setting free by paying a ransom price. Our sin incurred a debt we could not pay. With the death of Christ on the Cross, His blood paid the ransom price which completely satisfied God's justice (Romans 3:22-25). Our sins are forgiven and we are freed from the bondage and guilt of sin and introduced into a life of liberty.

**What is the spiritual blessing of vv. 9-10? He has made known to us the mystery of his will and purpose. Which is what?** To unite all things under the headship (authority and rule) of Christ molding them together into a new organism -- the church. This church is a central theme of Ephesians; a totally new concept.

**When will this mystery be put into effect (v. 10)?** *"When the times will have reached their fulfillment."* This refers to the Millennium, the end times when Christ will return to the earth to reign over all things in heaven and earth for 1000 years.

**What will this final era of human history look like (v. 10)?** Christ will be established as head over all things in heaven and earth; all people will be under His rule and Christ will be the object of universal worship as King of kings and Lord of lords. Everyone and everything will acknowledge and respond to His authority. Paul is not talking about universal salvation here but universal dominion.

**What is the spiritual blessing of v. 11? Paul essentially repeats his chosen/predestined blessing from vv. 4-5. What was God's purpose behind His choosing (v. 12)?** *"In order that we..... might be for the praise of his glory."* In other words, in order that we might bring glory to God. We are trophies of His grace.

**What is the good-news message of v. 13 to the Gentile Ephesians?** Having placed their faith in Christ, they are now included, along with the Jewish believers, in God's family. God's sovereign choice works, but it does not exclude human cooperation. These who were sovereignly chosen were also the ones who trusted, heard the word of truth, and believed.

**What was the evidence of this new relationship (v. 13)? They were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit A seal is a mark of??** Ownership, authenticity. Cattle branding is an example of external seals. God's seal is internal. He puts his Spirit in his people to mark them as belonging to Him.

**What is the function of the seal (v. 14)?** It is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance. It is similar to a pledge or down payment assuring us that the remainder of our inheritance awaits us in heaven (1 Peter 1:3-5) -- similar to the pledge of an engagement ring.

**What "redemption" is Paul referring to (v. 14)?** This is the believer's ultimate, final release from the presence of sin when we die and go to heaven and receive our promised inheritance (Romans 8:23b; Philippians 3:20-21).

Note: For the third time in this chapter (v. 14), Paul reminds us that the intended goal and inevitable result of all God's actions are that He might be glorified.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Ephesians, 2019 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 13

<sup>2</sup> MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (p. 1907). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p.1910

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Ephesians, 2019 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 23