

FPFWC Christian Development



We Are God's Artwork

November 2022

Fall Quarter

November 5, 2022

Lesson #1 –God Picked You!

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Ephesians 1:1-14

ICE BREAKER –

1. When you think of inheritance what comes to mind?
2. What causes a believer to not claim their Spiritual Inheritance?

Key Verse – “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”— Ephesians 1:3

LESSON BACKGROUND

The book of Ephesians is one of what we often call Paul’s prison letters. As in Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, Paul presented himself as “the prisoner” (Ephesians 3:1; compare 2 Timothy 1:8). It is reasonable to conclude that he wrote this letter while he was a prisoner in Rome (see Acts 22–28) in about AD 63.

Paul’s letter to the Ephesians has many of the features of his other letters. But unlike the others, Ephesians does not clearly address a problem or issues that arose in a particular church. Rather, it reads as a general reminder and instruction in the nature of the gospel and the Christian life. This is one reason some believe it was a circular letter that was sent to the city of Ephesus (in present-day Turkey) to be read and then shared in the surrounding region (see Ephesians 1:1b, below; see lesson 11 for more information about Ephesus).

Ephesians includes challenging language and ideas. Our scripture text mentions many concepts that long have been debated. But when we remember the challenges that Christians of both Jewish and Gentile backgrounds faced, we can reframe those difficult concepts.

LESSON COMMENTARY

I. Greeting (1:1–2)

Paul identifies himself as the letter’s sender and furthermore as one sent (apostle) by Jesus Christ. He writes to the faithful saints (one group) in Ephesus, giving a wish for grace and peace (cf. Rm 1:7; Php 1:2).

II. The Praise for God’s Purposes (1:3–23)

At the outset of the epistle, Paul presents the great wealth that God gives to His people as followers of Jesus the Messiah (1:3–14) and then responds to his

own statement with a prayer (1:15–23) that his readers would comprehend **the riches of their glorious inheritance** in Christ (1:18).

A. Blessings in Christ (1:3–14)

These verses of praise recount all that God has done for His people in Christ. God is to be blessed (praised) for the blessings He has given (cf. Ps 103). Some themes include:

God's Sovereignty. God, before the world began (v. 4), predestined and elected His own (vv. 4–5, 11). He chooses to reveal His plans (v. 9); He works all things according to His will (v. 11).

The Trinity. The blessings of this section have to do with God's Spirit (v. 3; cf. 1Co 12:1, 7)—and believers are sealed with the Spirit Himself (v. 13). God the Father gives every blessing, and He gives them in the Son. Thus the phrase in Christ (v. 3) or in Him (v. 4) appears 11 times in the paragraph. The Father, Son, and Spirit always work in harmony.

Manifold Grace. Christians are blessed with every spiritual blessing (v. 3). Paul's catalog includes election, adoption, blamelessness, forgiveness, knowledge of God's will, salvation, and the Spirit—all gracious gifts (v. 7).

1:3–6. The section starts with a call to praise God (v. 3a) and immediately gives a broad reason: believers have received every spiritual blessing that belongs to the spiritual world (heavenly places, v. 3b; see 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:18). Then v. 4 mentions specific blessings, starting with election. Election is an astonishing blessing, for it has to do with God's loving choice of certain individuals to be His own. It is not dependent on human faith or deeds (Rm 9:10–13), since election happens **before the foundation of the world** (cf. Jn 17:24; 1Pt 1:20; Rv 13:8).

Election has as its goal blamelessness (v. 4b), which is not a human responsibility that flows from election. Rather, blamelessness is God's certain work. From eternity God chose us to be blameless and in history actually makes us so by the death of Christ (5:27; Col 2:22; Jd 24).

A further blessing is predestination: that action of God in which He decides from eternity what will happen (Rm 8:29–30; 1Co 2:7; Ac 4:28). Saying **He predestined us** (v. 5) is nearly the same as saying He chose us. From eternity, predestination's goal was that we would be adopted as sons (Rm 8:29; Gl 3:26) when we believe (cf. 1Jn 3:1).

Furthermore, all these blessings are freely bestowed **grace** (v. 6; cf. vv. 7b–8a). They all come in and through Christ (vv. 3, 5, 6). And it is God's will that His bestowal of grace should lead to worship (**praise, glory**).

1:7–10. Predestination is from eternity, but these verses treat blessings that happen in time. First, **redemption** and **redeem** have to do with liberation from bondage or danger (e.g., Israel from Egypt, Ex 15:13; David from oppression, Ps 119:134). All people, however, need **redemption** from sin, for it enslaves us (Jn 8:34; Rm 6:6, 17) and makes us liable to wrath (2:3; Rm 1:18). This kind of **redemption** comes only through Jesus Christ. The NT commonly uses **blood** to refer to Christ's death (see Ac 20:28; Rm 3:25; Col 1:20).

The second blessing is **forgiveness** of sins. Elsewhere in the NT forgiveness is seen as the content of salvation (4:32; Ac 2:38; 10:43; Rm 4:7–8). Forgiveness, received by God’s grace, means no longer having to pay for one’s own sins.

The third blessing is knowledge of His will. **Mystery** refers to some aspect of God’s plan that was previously hidden but that has now been made known. In NT the word appears most in Ephesians (3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19; cf. Rm 11:25; 1Co 1:26–27). His will pertains to His plan (**administration**) for all history (**the fullness of the times**, v. 10a). He makes Jesus Messiah the focus of all history and the One in and through whom God restores harmony to all creation.

1:11–12. There is a strong connection between **we** in v. 11 and **we** in v. 12. In v. 12 **we** is defined as those who **were the first to hope in Christ**, meaning Jewish believers. The Gospels and Acts show that Jewish Christians were the first to believe the gospel and receive the Spirit (cf. Ac 13:46). The phrase **we have obtained an inheritance** (v. 11; NASB) translates one word. Because of the word’s OT background and because it is passive, it is better translated “we were made His inheritance” (HCSB). That is, believing Israel has begun to fulfill its OT role and has received the spiritual blessing of being claimed as God’s portion or inheritance (Ex 15:17; Dt 9:29).

God’s goal in choosing Israel as His inheritance was for them to glorify Him. This purpose was hinted at in the OT (Is 43:7; 44:23) but because of disobedience was never fully accomplished. Now this purpose has been fulfilled in the gospel because He is sovereign—that is, He **works all things** according to **the counsel of His will** (v. 11).

1:13–14. But God’s inheritance is not limited to Israel. Here **you also** refers to Gentiles, the primary audience of the letter (2:11; 3:1). Because they heard and believed (cf. Rm 10:14), they also have received the blessing of the Holy Spirit. Concerning the Spirit, first, He seals. In the ancient world a seal both protected and announced ownership (cf. Ezk 9:4–6). Thus, God’s own are fully secure and will most certainly receive eternal life (the **inheritance**). Second, He is the Spirit **of promise** because the OT promised He would be given (Ezk 36:25–27; Jl 2:28–29). Third, the Spirit is called a **pledge** (cf. 2Co 1:22; 5:5). He is a good faith deposit that guarantees future completion, that is, the redemption of God’s possession (Mal 3:17; 1Pt 2:9). Finally, just as with Jews, so also Gentiles are **to the praise of His glory**.

LESSON NUGGET – The wealth (“every spiritual blessing”) is “in the heavenly places in Christ.” The Christian operates in two spheres: the human and the divine, the earthly and the heavenly, the visible and the invisible. Physically, he is on the earth in a human body, but spiritually he is seated with Christ in the heavenly sphere—and it is this heavenly sphere that provides the power and direction for our earthly walk.

Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, Wiersbe Study Bible and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary