# Ephesians 1

Ephesians 1:3-14

## Introduction

These verses are an outpouring of lavish praise to God for all that he has done for us through Jesus the Messiah. It is as if Paul cannot get his words out quickly enough and so packs his sentence (in the Greek it is one sentence) full of phrases to express what is in his heart. He starts by blessing or praising God: ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ’. In doing so he reminds us that all that comes to us (all that is to follow in the subsequent verses) does so only through Jesus. He summarises what is to come in the phrase ‘who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms’.

Effectively, in this verse (v.3), Paul is telling us that all that Heaven has to offer in terms of blessing has been made available to us. It comes to us because the father has poured it out, and it is made available to us because of what Jesus achieved on the cross and in the resurrection.

In the course of these few verses he tells us that in Christ Jesus God has:

* Blessed us in the Messiah (v.3)
* Chosen us in him (v.4)
* Foreordained us through him for adoption as sons(v.5)
* Poured grace on us in him (v.6)
* Given us redemption in him (v.7)
* Set out his plan in him (v.9)
* Stated his intention to sum up everything in him (v.11)
* Given us a hope in him (v.12)
* Sealed us with his Spirit as the guarantee of what is to come (v.13-14)

These verses actually fall into three discrete sections, although one flows into another. V. 4-6 remind us that God’s people (those who are in Christ Jesus) are chosen by grace. V. 7-10 reminds us of the work of the cross and what it will ultimately achieve. V.11-14 speaks about our destiny as a result of all of this. We will look at these three sections in a little more detail.

Just before we do so, however, I need to say that when you read Paul you have to do so with an ear listening for echoes of the Old Testament. Paul never says anything without drawing on the great narrative of the people of Israel and how that narrative is continuing through all that Jesus has done, as we shall see. We also need to not Paul’s emphasis on grace here. Everything comes to us through God’s grace – his undeserved favour.

## V. 4-6

The key themes in these verses are God’s foreordained choice and our adoption through the grace that was poured out upon us through Christ Jesus. In order to understand what Paul is saying here, we need to go back to Abraham and to God’s choice of him and the people of Israel.

In Genesis 12:1-5, when he was 75 years of Age, Abraham received a revelation from God telling him to go from his home to a new place as a result of which God would bless him and make him a great nation. Abraham went in faith and, although he did not see all of the promise fulfilled in his lifetime, his obedience was the guarantee of the promise being fulfilled.

Why did God choose Abraham? We have no idea. God could have chosen anyone to fulfil his purposes, but he didn’t; he chose this man who was flawed (he lied about his wife twice, slept with a servant girl, and fell out with his nephew). He might not have been the choice of you and I through whom God would ultimately bring salvation to the world, but he was God’s choice.

We can ask the same question of ourselves: why did God choose me? Why did God choose you? We could have a whole discussion here concerning predestination. All I would say at this point is that somewhere, God’s foreknowledge and your freewill have kissed which has resulted in you coming to faith. Therefore, in some way, God looked ahead through the mists of time before anything was created (and of course God is outside of time, so he already knew what would happen) and saw you and said I will choose him, I will choose her. And you were chosen to be holy (clean and set apart for service) and blameless (without guilt) in Christ Jesus.

We may not understand God’s choice – why this person is saved and that person isn’t. All we can do is thanks God that we have come into the wonderful experience of salvation and seek to make the message of salvation known to all that we come across.

You were also chosen to be adopted as a child of the living God. The Greek word *huiothesia* here is very strong. It draws on the Roman notion of adoption in which the adopted one became, in the eyes of the law, a new creature. He was born again into a new family and received all the rights and privileges of a natural child. In the same way, in coming to faith, our status has completely changed. We were disinherited and outside of the family of God because of rebellion and sin, but through Christ Jesus, God has restored us to full membership of his family and given us all that goes with that including an inheritance, and he was pleased to do it!

God did not begrudgingly let us slip back into the family whilst reminding us of our sin and our undeserving nature. He poured out his grace upon us. Everything we have in the new birth is a gift from God. He doesn’t dribble it out, he pours it out lavishly.

Once more, there is an echo back to Abraham and Israel here. Paul uses the same Greek word regarding Israel in Romans 9:4. Thus, Paul is also affirming that we have come under the promises given to Abraham as part of the reconstituted nation of Israel – reconstituted in Christ. This is a theme he will come back to in chapter 2.

## V.7-10

The key word in the next section is the word ‘redemption’. Here again we have a reference back to the Old Testament narrative, but we have moved on from God’s choice of Abraham to God’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt. The word’ redemption’ has a very specific meaning in the Bible with reference to the freeing of a slave and the picture is of Israel being freed from slavery. Immediately Paul reminds us that our redemption is through the blood price being paid and this is a reference back to the Passover which heralded the release of Israel from bondage.

These events were the launch of the nation of Israel from slavery into receiving the inheritance promised to Abraham – the Promised Land. Paul uses this same language to identify what has happened and is happening to us.

We have been set free from slavery to sin through the blood of the cross. The slate has been wiped clean and we are no long servants of our old masters, sin and death. This has all come about by God’s grace and results in us coming into our inheritance just as Israel came into theirs.

There is a difference however. Israel’s inheritance was a small patch of land in the Middle East which is still being fought over today. Our inheritance is much bigger than that, and Paul tells us that up until his time nobody had grasped what God really had in his mind when he called Abraham. It wasn’t just about a small patch of land, but about bringing all things back under his rule (v.10). This was the purpose of Christ coming to earth. It wasn’t about rescuing a small group of people and whipping them off to heaven. It was about bringing the kingdom rule of heaven to earth.

Our individual salvation is part of that great plan, and as we submit our lives to him and make choices to live under his rule, so the kingdom of God comes to earth; and this is all in preparation for the time to come ‘when times reach their fulfilment’ when Jesus will return to earth to rule and all things will come under his authority and be ‘summed up in him’ and we will rule with him.

Sometimes I think we are far too egocentric when we think about what Jesus has done on the cross. We express it in terms of my sin and my redemption. Of course that is true, but we fail to see that it isn’t just about me; it is about him! It is his plans that are being worked out through our salvation and we are not saved just so we can feel good, or so that we can have a relationship with the Father, or even so that we can avoid hell, true though all of those things might be. We are saved for purpose – to bring the kingdom of heaven to earth and to prepare the world for its rightful ruler. That is the task we have to complete, and we need to get on with it and stop just thinking about ourselves and our needs being fulfilled.

## V.11-14

In this last section, Paul; reiterates what he has already said and then brings it back to where we are right now. He starts by saying that his choosing of us is part of the plan of God who is working out his plan on the earth.

Before the creation of the world, God had a plan for how things would work out and you were part of that plan. You have a part to play in that plan. That is why he says in Ephesians 2:10 that we are ‘created in Christ Jesus for good works that God has prepared in advance for us to do’. God has a list of tasks for you to complete. He has a destiny that only you can fulfil. As you get onto God’s agenda for your life, so you contribute to the great plan for the universes that God had in his mind before anything was made. Thus, your choices and your actions have cosmic significance beyond anything you will ever understand in this life. That is why it is so important that we do not just live for ourselves or to accumulate material stuff, or even just for our children. We have a contribution to make to God’s plan of the ages!

Then he says that it doesn’t matter if you came to faith as one of the Apostles in the 1st Century, or if you’ve come to faith in the 21st Century, you are included in Christ, that is, in the newly constituted family of God through whom God is working out his purposes in the earth.

So how do we know that all this is happening and going to happen? Because we have ‘the Holy spirit who is the deposit guaranteeing our inheritance’ (v.13-14) until such time as we receive our full redemption.

What does that mean? It means that one day it will not just our spirits and our souls that will be redeemed, but our bodies too when we will receive our resurrection body and thereby triumph over bondage to sin and death. The guarantee that that will happen is that, right now, we have the Holy Spirit who is transforming us and preparing us for eternity.

Once more, there is a reference here back to the Exodus story. It was the presence of God in the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud which was with the people and which guided them to their inheritance, the Promised Land. In the same way, the Spirit is with us, individually and collectively. It is his presence with us that is the guarantee that we will come into our inheritance, both the redemption of our bodies and the redemption of the world.

Whilst we have not yet come into the fullness of our inheritance yet – we still struggle daily both with the failings of our mortal bodies and with living in a fallen and corrupt world – the Spirit’s presence with us is the guarantee that it will not always be thus and that we will come into that which God has promised us and which he is working in this world to achieve.

And all this is ultimately ‘to the praise of his glory!

## Conclusion

God has blessed us in every way by his grace. He has chosen us, saved us and is taking us forward into our destiny. Each one of us has a part to play in his plan and we know that that plan will be successfully completed because the Holy Spirit is with us as a guarantee.

It is time to start living in the good of all that God has done, is doing and will do for us and for this world.