

The Blessings of God Eph 1:1-14

Ephesus was the most important city of Asia Minor (Turkey today). Paul writes from Rome around AD60 to Ephesus as a new church (congregation)

It was probably an encyclical letter (meant for other congregations as well).

It was written to “the saints” which he then describes as “the faithful in Christ Jesus”.

Paul’s greeting, “Grace and peace.” also describes the state in which Christians find themselves. As recipients of God’s favour and blessings and at peace with God (rather than just living a peaceful life).

This he makes clear is from God and Jesus, not from ourselves, and the implication is that Paul wants his readers to know MORE of that grace and peace.

What he goes on to write, is a description of those blessings... (v3ff)

We are blessed, says Paul, **in the heavenly realms.**

These are spiritual blessings

They will find their fulfilment when we get to heaven.

But it’s quite obvious that we have them, in part, even now.

They are *every spiritual blessing* in Christ.

This moves Paul on to expand further.

What do we learn?

1. We were *chosen in Christ before the creation of the world.*

aside from all the questions about when the world was created or of predestination, this makes you and I very special in God’s sight –

He had you and I in mind from many thousands, maybe millions of years ago!!

It should also fill us with confidence and a great feeling of security!

If we are chosen by God (and chosen in Christ his Son), who could ever prevail against us?

Especially since we read a verse later that we were chosen *in love* to be *adopted as his sons and daughters.*

This is not some selection to fight in an army.

It’s not just chosen out to win first prize of a house on the Gold Coast.

This is God actually making us into Sons and Daughters...

not as an afterthought

not as a plan he just dreamed up

not as a whim, where God said, “Hmm, I have a bit more space.

I’ll choose a few more people.

God knew about us, and chose us in love, in Christ, before the world was created!

and if that doesn’t make you feel very special today, then nothing will!

But God did not just have plans to embrace us into the family.

He also wants a change to take place...

“to be holy and blameless in his sight.”

Holy means to be set aside for God.

But it also has to do with right behaviour.

It means acting consistently in accordance with the purposes for which

God has chosen us and set us aside.

When articles of the Temple were set aside as holy, the idea is that that would be the *only* purpose for which it was used. (When Belshazzar, king of Babylon, used the captured chalices from the Temple for his own banquet, he was desecrating holy things – and he literally saw the writing on the wall – “Your days are numbered!”)

You and I have been chosen to be holy, (and Wholly) for God’s purposes.

Far from being an excuse to do what we like (because we are already chosen) we are to do just the opposite – we are to act in holiness according to God’s purposes.

Which are?...

“to the praise of his glorious grace.” (v6)

Because we were chosen before the foundation of the world it is quite plain that we did nothing to deserve our salvation (we weren’t even born).

Paul emphasizes in his opening remarks that it is God’s grace, God’s love, God’s will, God’s purpose and God’s choice.

His plan of undeserved, unearned goodness and blessing to us, is surely worthy of praise.

+BI In *The Whisper Test*, Mary Ann Bird writes: I grew up knowing I was different, and I hated it. I was born with a cleft palate, and when I started school, my classmates made it clear to me how I looked to others: a little girl with a misshapen lip, crooked nose, lopsided teeth, and garbled speech.

When schoolmates asked, "What happened to your lip?" I'd tell them I'd fallen and cut it on a piece of glass. Somehow it seemed more acceptable to have suffered an accident than to have been born

different. I was convinced that no one outside my family could love me.

There was, however, a teacher in the second grade whom we all adored--Mrs. Leonard by name. She was short, round, happy--a sparkling lady. Annually we had a hearing test. ... Mrs. Leonard gave the test to everyone in the class, and finally it was my turn. I knew from past years that as we stood against the door and covered one ear, the teacher sitting at her desk would whisper something, and we would have to repeat it back--things like "The sky is blue" or "Do you have new shoes?"

I waited there for those words that God must have put into her mouth, those seven words that changed my life. Mrs. Leonard said, in her whisper, "I wish you were my little girl." God says to every person deformed by sin, "I wish you were my son" or "I wish you were my daughter."

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Paul says that God’s grace is *lavished upon us* (v8)

I don’t know what you think when you think of lavished. It always conjures up for me a picture of a big cake bulging with cream in the middle and on the top.

God’s grace to us is extravagant, over the top, excessive, and wonderful!! to us who did not deserve it or work for it.

and we flourish under God, for the praise of that abundant, lavish grace shown towards us.

But Paul is not content to leave it there. He wants to explain further how this grace is manifest...
(Here are the blessings of Grace)

v 7 In Christ we have redemption through his blood the forgiveness of sins

+BI A house is burning and inside is an expensive Stradivarius violin. Knowing that the violin is in the burning house, a music lover rushes in to save it, at great peril to himself. That is redemption.

But the violin is damaged by the heat of the fire and has to be taken to a master craftsman in order for it to be restored. That also is redemption.

Then a great violinist takes the violin, tunes it, draws the bow over it and makes it sing. That too is redemption.

The total redemption of the violin includes its complete rescue, complete repair, and complete use of its potential. G. A. Frantz

so God does with us.

in verse 8 Paul says God's grace is lavished on us
with all wisdom and understanding

Understanding of what?

Understanding of God's will and purpose in Christ for the fulfilment of the world.

In other words, God has revealed to us where all this is heading and what is the meaning of life.

So...

What *is* the meaning of life?

v10 ¹⁰*as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.(NRSV)*

or as the NIV puts it better...

to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

God, in adopting us as sons and daughters, has also shown us his will for us and for the world. He has not left us floundering in the dark, but he has shared these great truths about his wisdom with us.

We now know that whatever this world may hold for us. Whatever problems or tragedies that we may face, God is working things out in conformity with his purpose.

That purpose will not be thwarted, and one day every knee will bow to Jesus, everything will come together under his headship.

In the meantime we are to live under his headship now, as examples of God's grace at work in the world.

How do we know that God has chosen us?

How will other people know?

¹³In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit;

We know because we have the very mark of God's Spirit upon us.

We are born, by the Spirit into his family

Therefore we take on his character.

¹⁴*this is the pledge of our inheritance*

NIV – *the deposit*

The guarantee that the best is still to come

Can people tell that you are God's chosen?

Do you thank God for how blessed you are?

Are you allowing the Spirit to fill you?

Are you living for God's praise and glory?