Rejoice

God chose to provide the blessings of salvation through Jesus’ sacrifice.

Ephesians 1:3-14

People who have a goal for their lives and follow a clear plan for accomplishing that goal fascinate most of us. Everything they do appears to be tied to that goal. We admire their determination and focus. At the same time, we forget that God has a goal or purpose for His creation and He is focused on that goal. God does not work randomly but is moving His creation to fulfill His purposes. Paul explained that believers are the benefactors of God’s purposes, as He chose to bring us salvation through His Son.

How would you describe the purpose of creation? How do you see history moving to accomplish that purpose?
Paul knew there was nothing accidental about his life and experience with God. Called to be an apostle by Christ, he knew that this calling on his life was the will of God (v. 1) and not just a random occurrence of being in the right place at the right time. The word *apostle* means “messenger,” someone through whom God sends His message. The teaching of the New Testament is an apostolic message. Paul, along with the other apostles, was the human instrument through which God’s Word has come to us. All of this was the will of God for us.

Typically, Paul wrote to a church because there was some situation in need of being addressed. It was sometimes a problem or an issue brought to his attention. Ephesians is different. Paul moves quickly from a personal greeting to a sweeping treatise on the eternal purposes of God in salvation. One way of looking at it is as a discussion of the grand scheme of things, but more specifically the divine things of salvation. Before the apostle dives into the nitty gritty issues of church life and function, he will take the Ephesians back to the foundation of the world.

This great message is directed to faithful saints (v. 1). Paul used the word *saint* differently than we often do. He was not just addressing people who are usually moral (although Paul will call for ethical behavior in light of God’s wonderful call to salvation), nor did he envision a person who bears up admirably under crushing burdens in life. A saint is simply a believer in Christ, set apart for salvation and service.

This faith was being lived out in Ephesus. It was a major city, perhaps the fourth or fifth largest city in the world at that time. There was great opposition to the gospel there (Acts 19:1-41). It was a port city, which meant diverse influences from all over the world came to Ephesus and vied for the minds of the populace. Nevertheless, it was in Ephesus where Paul had proclaimed the gospel of grace and peace (v. 2). In this great letter, we discover where grace and peace can be found.

*As you read Ephesians 1:3-14, notice each occurrence of the phrase “in Christ.” What is the significance of being “in Christ”?*
KEY THEMES IN EPSHESANS

- Our position and new nature in Christ (1:3-12; 2:1-10)
- The unity of all believers (2:11–3:12)
- The practice of faith (4:1–6:20)

EXPLORE THE TEXT

CHosen (Eph. 1:3-6)

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 in love before him. 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.

VERSE 3

Without a doubt, Paul’s focus was on praising God, and he expressed it by describing God as blessed. Yet in the very next breath, he reminded us that we are blessed. People are blessed by Him, and they in turn praise Him for those blessings. The same idea of giving God praise for what He has done is mentioned again in verses 6,12, and 14. Thus, praise for God serves as bookends for the entire passage, with everything mentioned in between as its grounds.

BIBLE SKILL: Reflect on a repeated word or phrase.

Three times in Ephesians 1:3-14 Paul pointed to the praise of God’s glory (Eph. 1:6,12,14). Review each instance, looking for similarities and differences in how the phrase is used. What does this phrase reveal about the purpose of our salvation? How does knowing that purpose change our perspective on salvation? How does your salvation give you a means to rejoice over God’s gracious glory?
There is a two-fold description of the location of the blessings of salvation. First, they are located in the heavens. It is difficult to justify how some so-called Christian teachers promote a form of spiritual devotion that guarantees material and earthly blessings to the devotee. Secondly, these blessings are found in Christ—in a faith relationship with Him. While there is a common grace experienced by all people (Acts 14:15-17), God’s blessings of redemption and forgiveness are only found in Christ.

VERSES 4-6
For what reason do we offer our praise to God? Primarily it is because He has taken the initiative in our salvation. He came to us in the person of Jesus Christ. Through Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross, God made us holy and blameless before Him. All of this flowed from His love for us. Unlike human love, the logic of God’s love goes like this: I love you because I chose to love you.

A statement you will never hear God say is, “Hmmm, I didn’t see that coming!”

There was and is nothing random about God’s redemption of His children by faith. This decision of God to save us goes back to eternity past, before the creation of the world. The fall of man in Genesis 3 did not catch God off-guard. A statement you will never hear God say is, “Hmmm, I didn’t see that coming!”

In addition to being chosen, we were also predestined to be adopted into a relationship with God through Christ. It is possible that Paul himself coined the word he used for predestination. If so, then it reminds us that the source of this teaching is divine revelation, not human reason.

Paul used adoption as an illustration of how we came into God’s family. Adoption is an intentional act and the status of an adopted child is a permanent one. God desired this relationship. This was His good pleasure.

The logical response to all of this, in Paul’s mind, was praise. All that God has done, by His own choice and will, showcased His glorious grace. We are reminded that God’s provision of salvation was not based on our merit or goodness. Paul was writing to men and women of Ephesus, a city filled with wickedness and immorality. God’s love is gracious, lavished on those whose personal worthiness falls terribly short. Along with humbling us,
this thought should call forth glorious praise to the One whose grace saved us.

_How should God's choosing us impact our view of life? How should His choice to offer salvation impact our attitude toward God? In what way should you live differently because of it?_

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**KEY DOCTRINE: God's Purpose in Grace**

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end (2 Thess. 2:13-14).

**REDEEMED (EPH. 1:7-12)**

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. 11 In him we have also received an 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.

**VERSES 7-8**

To redeem means to pay a price to secure the release of someone or something. It expresses the idea of paying what is required in order to liberate from enslavement or bondage. Prior to coming to Christ, we were enslaved to sin. Release from sin’s grip could come only through the _forgiveness_ of our sins.

The price paid to secure our redemption was both costly and extravagant. The _blood_ of Jesus—His sacrifice on the cross—paid
the price for our freedom. This forgiveness is not earned but freely given. The vastness of our forgiveness is seen in the fact that it was in accordance with the riches of his grace. The blessing poured out on needy sinners is lavish indeed.

How are redemption and forgiveness related? How does the truth that Jesus is the only way to gain redemption serve as motivation to share the gospel with others?

The price paid to secure our redemption was both costly and extravagant.

VERSES 9-10
The benefits and blessings of salvation would be unknown to us if God had not revealed them. He gives us the truth of His Word and grants us the enlightenment to understand it. This was part of His purpose and plan. The mystery that Paul wrote about points to a truth once unknown that subsequently was brought to light. God’s plan for our salvation was revealed over time, coming to light at the right time. The essence of God’s plan is to unite everything in Christ, to bring every part of creation under the lordship of Jesus. Paul used a word for bring everything together that was somewhat uncommon in the Greek language. It carries three ideas: (1) to restore something to its original purpose, (2) to unify, and (3) to put all things under their proper head and master. Of course, Jesus does all these things.

VERSES 11-12
The Old Testament was not far from Paul’s mind as he wrote to the Ephesians. He set forth how those who believe in Christ have received an inheritance. Literally, the verb Paul used can be translated “chosen by lot.” This paints the picture of the tribes of Israel being assigned their lands by lot. (See Num. 26:52-55.) In the Hebrew vocabulary, an inheritance was anything that was given and generally means “to take possession.” Paul emphasized that salvation came through divine initiative. In the New Testament, the idea of an inheritance was much more than a temporal possession; it is equated with heaven itself.

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How does the inheritance of a possession or land compare to the inheritance promised to believers?

SEALLED (EPH. 1:13-14)

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.

VERSE 13

The city of Ephesus was filled with a variety of religious beliefs and competing truth claims. Our times are no different. What authenticates the true child of God? It is the Holy Spirit who provides the evidence that one is truly a believer in Jesus, both inwardly in the sense of assurance but also in a changed life lived before onlookers.

Believers are marked by the Holy Spirit.

The word sealed originally referred to a seal placed on a document—typically by a signet ring or stamp into a soft materials such as wax or clay—as a way to prove authenticity. It was a mark of ownership as well. Believers are marked by the Holy Spirit. His presence is both an inward and outward sign of true profession of faith. Jesus promised His disciples that He would not leave them alone but would send another One like Himself. (See John 14:16-17.) The gift of the Holy Spirit came to the Ephesians when they heard the gospel, the word of truth, and when they responded in faith. The grammar of this verse indicates that the hearing and believing preceded the sealing.

Another function of a seal was to ensure that the item sealed, such as a letter, was delivered intact and unopened. Believers are sealed in the sense that no power of evil will thwart their ultimate arrival into the eternal realms of glory. Throughout our lives as Christians we fall into sin and we grieve the Spirit who lives in us. However, the Holy Spirit ensures that our salvation is secure and someday we will arrive home safely to be with Christ forever.
How does the sealing of the Holy Spirit give a believer confidence to fulfill God’s purposes?

VERSE 14

In verse 13 Paul referred to the Holy Spirit as a seal. Now he called Him the down payment of our inheritance. This was a term related to business or commerce. It could be translated “down payment,” “deposit,” or “earnest money.” This was the initial payment to make sure that the full payment would be made at a later date. The term down payment demonstrates that though the Spirit is given at conversion, His complete work of transformation in us is not completed until later. (See 2 Cor. 5:5.) We receive the Spirit at salvation and He begins to work in us to make us like Christ. The receiving of the Spirit is the down payment guaranteeing that God will finish what He started in us.

The Holy Spirit confirms within us that we are in fact possessors of God’s eternal inheritance in two ways. First, God’s Word is the result of the inspiration of the Spirit. As we read Scripture, the reality of heaven becomes more vivid to us. Secondly, the Spirit floods our hearts with a deep sense of God’s love for us (Rom. 5:5) as well as providing our hearts with an internal witness that we belong to God (Rom. 8:16).

As we read through verses 3-14—one long majestic sentence in the original language—we see the involvement of the Trinity in our salvation. God blessed us by choosing us to be recipients of His loving salvation. It was through Jesus Christ that we were adopted into God’s family. And finally, the Holy Spirit seals us and secures our salvation and ultimate possession of the inheritance given to us by God. From beginning to end, God’s work of salvation brings glory to Himself.

How does the gospel of grace build assurance into the life of the believer?
Why does a works-based salvation lead to uncertainty?
IN MY CONTEXT

- Since God the Father chose believers to be His children as an act of grace there is no room for spiritual pride or boasting.
- Jesus redeems all believers through His death and resurrection, giving them forgiveness, spiritual understanding, and an eternal inheritance.
- The Holy Spirit guarantees the salvation of all believers, marking them with confidence as God’s children.

Ask God to examine your life for spiritual pride. What actions do you need to take to counter any feelings of entitlement or pride when it comes to your salvation?

As a group, read aloud Ephesians 1:7, giving emphasis to the personal pronouns in the verse. Discuss how the emphasis on the personal pronouns impacts the way you understand the passage. Hold one another accountable for memorizing this verse this week.

List ways to offer praise this week to God for His salvation. Include both private and public means of offering praise including service to others. What action will you take this week as an act of praise for God choosing to provide Jesus for our salvation?

Prayer Needs