

The Book of Ephesians

Lesson 1: Every Spiritual Blessing in Christ -- Ephesians 1:1-14

Picture a man in a rented room in Rome, a soldier chained to his wrist, the daylight narrow through a high window. By every outward measure Paul has lost. He is a prisoner. His movements are watched. His future is in the hands of an emperor who cares nothing for him. And yet when he takes up his pen to write to the Christians in Ephesus, the first thing that pours out of him is not complaint but praise. He cannot help himself. Before he gives a single instruction, before he addresses a single problem, he lifts his eyes and begins to sing.

What he sings about is not his circumstances but his God. In one long, breathless sentence in the original language, Paul stacks blessing upon blessing like a man emptying his pockets of treasure onto a table, amazed at how much is there. Chosen. Adopted. Redeemed. Forgiven. Sealed. He is not inventing new gifts; he is naming what is already true of every person who belongs to Jesus. And he wants the Ephesians, ordinary people with ordinary worries, to see that they are richer than they ever imagined.

Notice where all of this wealth is kept. Again and again Paul says the same two words: in Christ. In Him we were chosen. In Him we have redemption. In Him we were sealed. Every spiritual blessing has a single address, and the address is a Person. You do not gather these blessings by being impressive or by climbing high enough to reach them. You receive them the moment you are joined to Jesus, the way a branch receives the life of the vine the instant it is grafted in.

So this opening passage is an invitation to stop and count. Most of us are far more fluent in naming what is wrong with our lives than in naming what God has already done. Paul wants to retrain our eyes. He wants us to read this list slowly, to let it sink past our heads and into our hearts, until we too cannot help but say, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Christian life begins not with what we must do for God, but with wonder at what God has already done for us in His Son.

Group Discussion: Paul begins the entire letter with a flood of praise rather than a list of instructions. Why do you think it matters where a study of the Christian life starts, and what changes in us when we begin with what God has done instead of what we must do?

Personal Reflection: When you take an honest inventory of your inner life this week, are you more practiced at naming your worries or at naming your blessings in Christ? What is one blessing in this passage you have been overlooking?

Read Ephesians 1:1-14

Study Questions

1. Paul says God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (v. 3). What does it mean that these blessings are spiritual and located in Christ rather than earned by us, and why does Paul anchor every single blessing in the phrase in Him?
2. Paul could not stop praising God even from a prison cell. What occupies the space in your heart that praise is meant to fill, and what would it look like for you to begin this week, as Paul did, by blessing God before naming your needs?
3. In verse 4 Paul says God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him. What was God's stated purpose in choosing a people, and what does the phrase in Him reveal about how a person comes to be among the chosen?
4. God's purpose in choosing you was that you would be holy and blameless before Him in love. Where in your daily life is God pressing you toward holiness right now, and how does knowing that this is His ancient purpose for you change the way you respond?
5. Verses 5 and 6 say God predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, to the praise of His glorious grace. What does it mean to be adopted into God's family, and why does Paul say this is all to the praise of His grace rather than to the credit of the ones adopted?
6. An adopted child can still live with the fearful heart of an orphan, working to earn a place that has already been given. Where do you still strive to earn what God has freely made yours, and what would it look like to rest in your adoption?
7. In verse 7 Paul says in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace. What does the language of redemption and blood tell us about the cost and the nature of our forgiveness?
8. Forgiveness is one of the blessings Paul names, yet many believers still carry guilt for sins God has already washed away. What sin or failure are you still holding against yourself that the blood of Christ has already covered, and what would it mean to receive that forgiveness as truly yours?
9. Paul says God predestined us according to the purpose of His will (v. 11) and that He has made known the mystery of His will to unite all things in Christ (vv. 9 and 10). Yet in verse 13 he says, in Him you also, when you heard the word of truth and believed in Him, were sealed. How do these verses together shape what God's choosing and predestining actually mean, and how does this differ from saying that God unconditionally picks certain individuals for salvation while passing over the rest?
10. Verses 13 and 14 say that when you believed, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance. Looking back across this whole passage, name one specific way the Lord is using these truths to form you, and what difference the seal of the Spirit makes in how you will live this week.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Romans 8:28–30, God’s foreknowledge and His purpose to conform a people to the image of His Son; 1 Peter 1:1–2, chosen according to the foreknowledge of God and entered through obedience; 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14, chosen for salvation through belief in the truth, to which God called them by the gospel; John 1:12, to all who received Him He gave the right to become children of God; Acts 2:38–39, the promise of the Spirit received through faith, repentance, and baptism.