

Ephesians 1:1-14 ~ Scripture

Translation by William Tyndale (1537) with updated English spelling:

Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God.

To the saints at Ephesus, and to them which believe on Jesus Christ.

Grace be with you and peace from God our father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed be God the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which hath blessed us with all manner of spiritual blessings in heavenly things by Christ, according as he had chosen us in him through love, before the foundation of the world was laid, that we should be saints, and without blame in his sight.. And ordained us before unto himself that we should be chosen to be heirs through Jesus Christ, according to the pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

By whom we have redemption through his blood, that is to say the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace, which grace he shed on us abundantly in all wisdom and prudence. And hath opened unto us the mystery of his will according to his pleasure, and purposed the same in himself to have it declared when the time were full come, that all things, both the things which are in heaven, and also the things which are in earth, should be gathered together, even in Christ: that is to say, in him in whom we are made heirs, and were thereto predestinate according to the purpose of him which worketh all things after the purpose of his own will: that we should be unto the praise of his glory, which before hoped in Christ.

In whom also ye (after that ye heard the word of truth, I mean the Gospel of your salvation, wherein ye believed) were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, to redeem the purchased possession unto the laud of his glory.

New International Version (1984)

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:

² Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸ that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. ⁹ And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

¹¹ In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. ¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 1:1-14 ~ Discussion Questions

Note: I included the earliest “modern” English translation by William Tyndale from 1525-1537 to show that over the next 450 years very few changes were made to the Bible of any real substance. We now have the Dead Sea Scrolls and some other ancient sources not available to Tyndale but fundamentally, the Bible has remained largely unchanged. Actually, more changes have been made in the last 10 years in the name of gender neutrality and political correctness than have been made in the last 2,000 years. Is a good thing or not? You decide.

1. Who wrote the book titled “Ephesians?”
2. The first 12 apostles were called by Jesus. How was Paul made an Apostle? (1:1, Acts 9:1-19)
3. To who was the letter addressed? Are you a saint? (1:1)
4. Verse 3 says Jesus has blessed us (faithful followers) in the heavenly realms with *every* spiritual blessing in Christ. Do you feel that you are blessed now? What are those blessings?
Verse 4 _____ Verse 5 _____
Verse 6 _____ Verse 7 _____
Verse 8 _____ Verse 9 _____
Verse 11 _____
5. In everyday language, how would you describe these blessings to a non-believer?
6. What are your thoughts on predestination in verses 4, 5 and 11? (Matthew 11:27, John 6:44, Romans 8:28-30, 1 Corinthians 1:24-31, Matthew 23:37, 2 Peter 3:9)
7. Verses 13-14 describe the Biblical path to salvation. Let’s unpack those verses. (Romans 3:20, 3:27, 4:1-5, 11:6, Galatians 2:16, Ephesians 1:13-14, 2:4-5, 2:8-9, 2 Tim 1:8-9, Titus 3:4-5)
 - A) You are included in Christ when?
 - B) What exactly is the Gospel?
 - C) How strong do you think the guarantee of your inheritance from Holy Spirit is?
 - D) Do you feel there must be other ways to salvation? (I’m a good person. I work hard.)
8. Do you see the Trinity in these verses? How do you picture the persons of the Trinity at work in your life?
9. Verse 13 starts, “You also were included...” or “In who ye also...” What does this mean?

Ephesians 1:1-14 ~ Leader's Guide

Note: I included the earliest “modern” English translation by William Tyndale from 1525-1537 to show that over the next 450 years very few changes were made to the Bible of any real substance. We now have the Dead Sea Scrolls and some other ancient sources not available to Tyndale but fundamentally, the Bible has remained largely unchanged. Actually, more changes have been made in the last 10 years in the name of gender neutrality and political correctness than have been made in the last 2,000 years. Is a good thing or not? You decide.

1. Who wrote the letter to the Ephesians?

Sounds like a simple question, right? The answer is Paul, of course. Well, maybe yes and maybe no. Biblical scholars and commentators have been debating this question for the last 200+ years. The main reasons for the debate are some key difference in this writing and Paul's other letters, specifically: 1) Paul's excessive boasting of his role as an apostle, which sounds more like an eulogy written by an ardent admirer. 2) The theological perspective seems to have moved from a local church, to which Paul usually writes, to a larger, universal church. 3) The talk of grace and faith, which Paul always contrasts to “works of the law” mentions only “works” (2:9) in this letter. 4) There is no mention of Christ coming again. 5) Much of the letter (13 verses) is identical to Colossians, which would happen only if both letters were written at the same time (they weren't) or if one were copied from the other. 6) The style of this letter is marked by repetitions and redundancies not at all typical of Paul. So...

Traditional and early commentators mention the inconsistencies but brush them away and attribute the letter to Paul without further question. Matthew Henry, Robert Jamieson, and Henry Southwell fall into this camp as do the writers of the NIV and NLT Study Bibles, to mention just a few. On the other hand, most British scholars at Oxford and Cambridge, noted Jewish scholars such as Amy Jill Levine, and many contemporary commentators feel that the letter—or more correctly—a meditative tract was written by a disciple of Paul shortly after his death, presumably to celebrate Paul's faith and apostolic achievement using Colossians in part as a kind of template. This was done in Paul's name as an honor, not with the intention to deceive or plagiarize his writings.

I mentioned this debate of authorship to my wife and, cutting right to the chase, her question was, “Does it matter?” To which is answer is, “not really.” The book is part of the accepted Bible canon and although it has some ideas that strike us as not strictly Pauline, there is nothing in it that one could point to and say it is not the inspired word of God.

2. The first 12 apostles were called by Jesus. How was Paul made an Apostle? (1:1, Acts 9:1-19)

According to 1:1, Paul became an apostle by the “will of God.” Paul not only stresses his authority under God, but also prepares the reader for the strong emphasis he will make later in this chapter and book on God's sovereign plan and purpose. Paul's conversion from one who persecuted Christ followers to a spokesman for Christ is described in Acts 9:1-19, a story that one could only interpret as being the “will of God.” Paul uses this same phrase in his letters to Corinthians and Colossians.

3. To who was the letter addressed? Are you a saint?

This question points to another problem with the authorship and form of the letter. The second sentence in 1:1 reads, “To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:” However, the earliest manuscripts do not include the words, “in Ephesus” and second-century sources do not record the letter as being sent to Ephesus. There is no doubt that Paul visited Ephesus (Acts 18 and 19) but even the NIV Study Bible concedes that the letter may have been intended as a circular letter to several churches, including the one at Ephesus.

The letter is addressed to “the saints,” which the writer means those people who God has called to be his own, i.e., all Christians. According to the NIV Study Bible, the basic idea of this word in Greek is “holiness.” All Christians are saints in that they are positionally “set apart” (being in the right or advantageous place) to God and are experientially (by one’s experience) being made increasingly “holy” by the Holy Spirit.

Some modern Bible translations do not use the word “saints” but instead say “God’s holy people.”

4. Verse 3 says Jesus has blessed us (faithful followers) in the heavenly realms with *every* spiritual blessing in Christ. Do you feel that you are blessed now? What are those blessings?

Verse 4	<u>Chose us</u>	Verse 5	<u>Adopted us</u>
Verse 6	<u>Gave us his grace</u>	Verse 7	<u>Redemption (forgive our sins)</u>
Verse 8	<u>Wisdom and understanding</u>	Verse 9	<u>Revealed his plan</u>
Verse 11	<u>Chosen to receive an inheritance from God</u>		

Paul asserts that through our union with the exalted Christ, Christians have already been made beneficiaries of every spiritual blessing that belongs to and comes from the heavenly realm. According to later verses (2:5-6), those who have been made alive with Christ share in Christ’s exaltation and enthronement in heaven.

5. In everyday language, how would you describe these blessings to a non-believer?

6. What are your thoughts on predestination in verses 4, 5 and 11? (Matthew 11:27, John 6:44, Romans 8:28-30, 1 Corinthians 1:24-31, Matthew 23:37, 2 Peter 3:9)

Divine election is a constant theme in Paul’s letters. In this chapter it is emphasized in the following ways: 1) “he chose us,” 2) “he predestined us,” 3) “we were also chosen,” 4) “having been predestined before the creation of the world.” However, there are three quite different schools of thought on predestination as described in vv 4, 5 and 11.

1) Calvinism or Reformed Theology. This belief system claims that God in His sovereignty determines who becomes saved by grace and that there is no human will involved because the depraved nature of man makes him unfit and unable to choose. As a result a person cannot lose his salvation.

Reformed theologians teach that sin so affects human nature that they are unable even to exercise faith in Christ by their own will. While people are said to retain free will, in that they willfully sin, they are unable to *not* sin because of the corruption of their nature due to original sin. To remedy this, Reformed Christians believe that God predestined some people to be saved. This choice by God to save some is held to be unconditional and not based on any characteristic

or action on the part of the person chosen.

Matthew 11:27 – All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

John 6:44 – No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.

Romans 8:28-30 – And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

1 Corinthians 1:24-31 – but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. ²⁶ Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. ²⁸ He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no one may boast before him. ³⁰ It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. ³¹ Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.

2) Arminianism. This theology was begun in the 1590's by Jacobus Arminius. In a 1610 declaration called the Remonstrance, his followers determined that each person has a choice whether to accept or reject Christ. They also said a person could lose his salvation.

Matthew 23:37 – O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, *but you* were not willing.

2 Peter 3:9 – The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone *to come* to repentance.

3) Harmonizing reason and faith. In the late 1200's, a group of theologians explained predestination as God knowing everything (sovereignty) and therefore predestining to salvation those whom He knew would choose or accept Christ.

7. Verses 13-14 describe the Biblical path to salvation. Let's unpack those verses. (Romans 3:20, 3:27, 4:1-5, 11:6, Galatians 2:16, Ephesians 1:13-14, 2:4-5, 2:8-9, 2 Tim 1:8-9, Titus 3:4-5)

A) You are included in Christ when?

B) What exactly is the Gospel?

C) How strong do you think the guarantee of your inheritance from Holy Spirit is?

D) Do you feel that there must be other ways because I am a good person, I work hard?

Romans 3:20 – Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law;

rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

Romans 3:27 – Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. 28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

Romans 4:1-5 – What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? ² If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. ³ What does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” ⁴ Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. ⁵ However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Romans 11:6 – And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

Galatians 2:16 – know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

Ephesians 1:13-14 – And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 2:4-5 – But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

Ephesians 2:8-9 – For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

2 Timothy 1:8-9 – So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, ⁹ who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,

Titus 3:4-5 – But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,

8. Do you see the Trinity in these verses? How do you picture the persons of the Trinity at work in your life?

In his detailed commentary of 1769, Robert Jamieson notes: “In Verses 3-6 The Father in his eternal love has chosen us to holiness, ordained us to sonship, bestowed grace on us in the Beloved. Verses 7-12 In the Son we have redemption according the riches of his grace, knowledge of the mysteries of his will, inheritance under Him, the one Head. Verses 13,14.

Through the Spirit we are sealed by hearing the word of salvation, by receiving the earnest [the deposit which guarantees] of our inheritance, to the redemption of the purchased possession.”

9. Verse 13 starts, “You also were included...” or “In who ye also...” What does this mean?

Again, Jamieson explains that “ye also” means, “ye Ephesians and all others, Jews and Gentiles, to whose hearts the glad tidings have come.” Ephesus was an important city in western Asia Minor (now Turkey) located on the most direct sea and land route to the eastern provinces of the Roman empire. It was an emporium with few equals anywhere in the world. Certainly no city in Asia was more famous or more populous. It ranked with Rome, Corinth, Antioch, and Alexandria among the foremost urban cities of the empire. As a result of its location and position, its population would have been largely Gentile with only a small number of Jews. Thus, this is a major extension of the promise of God’s salvation and blessing for *all people*, not just the Jews.