
The Glory of Christ Centered Grace

Ephesians 1:1-14

Today we write emails and texts. I wonder if the art of writing letters will be lost. It used to be that people wrote long letters to one another. No phones. No email. No messaging. We have a treasure trove of personal history growing up in Africa of the correspondence between my mother and her family. The New Testament is largely comprised of correspondence, of letters written by the Apostles to churches and to individuals.

As a letter, our book opens with the standard form of greeting. It incorporates Paul's normal way of addressing himself to the congregation. We can see three elements in this salutation:

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Identification: Personal and ministry. Apostolic office held by the will and word of God.

Addressee: the believers (saints) at Ephesus and the faithful in all the church. This may have been intended to be a cyclical letter that was to start at Ephesus.

Benediction: From God the Father and our Sovereign Messiah Jesus, enabling grace and calming peace. If you could wish for anything for other believers what would it be?

Just some notes about approach and method in this text. There is a way (and it is common) that takes each phrase and sometimes words and expands on them. This text is a treasure chest of truth and it is tempting to open each item and explore it for all its worth. I am much more interested in seeing how Paul has put this together and how the river of truth and logic of this book flows from the spring of this text.

The Holy Spirit's intentionality and truth is carried along in a text through words, sentences and paragraphs that are connected together through grammar and logic. There really is no mystery to this. Someone who has a good grasp of English grammar and logic can comprehend the ideas in a text. Spiritual understanding of the truth perceived by the mind is the work of the Holy Spirit. But it is neither immediate nor subjective. Beloved, the Spirit will help you believe and obey what you are learning.

So I want to spend a little time unpacking this text by showing you how it is constructed. Here is how this text is framed.

In Him (Christ) - verse 4, 7, 9, 10, 13. This gives us some indicators of thought breaks. It also means that this whole text is centered in Christ.

Active voice subject/verbs - who blessed (v.3), He choose (v.4), He predestined (v.5), He bestowed (v.6). Here is clearly what God is doing. He is active and initiating the work.

We have - Verses 7, 9, 11. Here is what we have as a result of God's work.

We do - Verse 13; what God's work accomplishes for us.

Praise... glory... grace... - Verses 6, 12, 14. Here is the opposite bracket of the in Him.

What God Did**(v.3-6)**

From in Him (v.3) to the praise of the glory of His grace (v.6). God honoring praise focuses on the person and work of God. We see both of these here. Our praise of God recognizes the Trinity, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ so there is a Father who is God...

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

Here are the **blessings from God, the Father...**

He has blessed us

All the good that God has purposed for us rests in Christ in heaven. This is a way of saying that every spiritual blessing we will receive comes from Jesus seated in heaven as the resurrected Lord whose redemptive work is completed. The flow of spiritual good to us comes to us from heaven and Christ.

He has chosen us

These blessings come to those who have been chosen by God. We were chosen in Christ before the world was created. I note several things about this elective work:

It is God who chooses - make no mistake: God is the subject of the verb choose and we are the objects.

It is personal - God choose us. It is not general, national, or service related. It is an election of individuals.

It is eternal - before the foundation of the world.

It is final - it is not going on now. It is a completed act of God that is moving forward in redemptive history.

It is purposeful - God has chosen the individuals whom He will make holy and blameless. God has an objective as well as objects of His electing love.

Please understand: if you reject the truth of election as it is set forth in Ephesians, you may be cutting the ground out from under your enjoying the blessings that come through these truths.

He has predestined us

The word *predestined* simply means that God is working in redemptive history to accomplish His eternal purpose and plan. It means that God will accomplish what he has purposed. This is not just theory, but a reality being lived out in each passing moment of time.

So, in love for us, God has destined that each of those chosen will reach the full standing as sons (adoption).

What God has done is motivated by the pleasure (kind intention) He takes in the praising and prizing of the bright glory of His grace. Freely giving this grace magnifies the worth of Christ by displaying God's great love for His Son.

What We Have

(v.7-12)

From *in Him* (v.7) to *the praise of the glory of His grace* (v.12), God honoring praise focuses on the person and work of Jesus Christ the Son.

⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

¹¹ In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

Here are the blessings in **Jesus Christ, the beloved Son...**

Redemption

(v.7-8a)

Grace lavished upon us provides a trespass forgiving and blood bought redemption. The emphasis is on the lavishness of God's grace that actually deals with our sin. Notice the language does not speak of potentiality but reality. It is not that we might or may have redemption; rather, we do have. It is an emphatic statement of our present possession because of the lavishness of God's grace.

Revelation

(v.8b-10)

God has shown us what has been hidden in the past about His will. The will of God that is now being revealed is what it pleased Him to purpose to accomplish in Christ. God has disclosed to us that it pleases Him to make Christ the center of all His purposes. This truth is not just theory, but it is "wisdom and insight."

The Old Covenant was shaped by the cross; The New Covenant is shaped by the crown In both, the way each age is administered is framed and determined by God's purpose in Jesus.

The present ordering of the household (the church) is shaped by the future; that is, the purpose of God in the fullness of time to make Christ the supreme sum and substance all life. Here is the satisfying supremacy of Christ. And that which God will do in that time shapes the realities and practical living of today.

Inheritance

(v.11-12)

God is working in time and history to carry out his purpose to give to His people a share in Christ's inheritance. The idea of an inheritance for the saints fills the New Covenant. Consider:

Ephesians 5:5 (ESV) — 5 For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Colossians 1:12 (ESV) — 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

Colossians 3:24 (ESV) — 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

1 Peter 1:3–4 (ESV) — 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4** to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,

Once again Paul is teaching that God is working out His will so that His ordained end will be reached. What an amazing thing this is: God will make sure that Jesus will be praised in those who have hoped in Him, especially those who were the first to hope in Him (early Jewish Christian.)

What Comes from It

(v.13-14)

From *in Him* (v.13) to the *praise of His glory* (v.14), God honoring praise focuses on work of the Holy Spirit in and for us.

¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Here are the blessings by **the Holy Spirit...**

We have believed

It is necessary to hear the true words of the gospel. There is an objective message that is believed by those in whom the Holy Spirit dwells.

We were sealed

The Holy Spirit seals us, placing on us God's mark of ownership. He is placed in us as the down payment guaranteeing that we will receive the inheritance God has purposed, promised and predestined us for. This sealing and guaranteeing work has the actual buying back of those who belonged to God.

Reflect and Respond

Truth clearly understand is foundational for holiness.

It is clear that the Scriptures that God chose people to be saved. Those that God chose to be saved will believe, become holy, receive their inheritance so that Jesus Christ is magnified and the glory of His grace praised.

We will join with God the Father to magnify the satisfying supremacy of Jesus Christ.