

EPHESIANS 1:1-14



By His Grace and for His Glory

I. Identification and Salutation

A. Paul wrote this letter as an “apostle of Christ Jesus.”

He was given the call to demonstrate that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah and that by His life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension He has brought salvation to all who will trust Him (Acts 9:20–22). When Paul points to his apostleship as “by the will of God,” he refers to the particularity of God’s setting him aside for this ministry to the whole church throughout the ages (see Eph. 3:2–25).

B. Verse 2 is an exclusively Christian greeting.

This greeting is also a theologically rich summary of God’s initiative for the salvation of sinners. “Grace and peace” are elements of Paul’s opening words in every letter. To Timothy, Paul adds “mercy”—“grace, mercy, and peace.” Grace, while operative in each person of the Trinity, is peculiarly related to the Father in this letter as the foundation of election. Peace is effected by the

reconciling work of the Son. Without the determination of electing grace flowing from the infinite excellence of the Father, Christ Jesus would not have come. Without the obedience unto death on the part of Christ Jesus, the electing grace of God could not have become effectual. We find the explanation of this reconciling work expanded in Ephesians 2:11–18.

C. Paul wrote this to the church at Ephesus.

Even so, he probably also intended it to be a circular letter for other churches.

1. This appears to be the case with other Pauline correspondence as he fulfilled his role as an apostle of the new covenant (Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27; 2 Thess. 3:17). Second Peter 3:15–16 assumes that Paul's letters circulate to all the churches and should be considered Scripture, deserving careful attention, properly interpreted in a way consistent with other Scripture but received as an expansive revelation of God's work of redemption and His eternal purpose.
2. Peter's revealed instructions include the affirmation of the certainty of God's purpose toward His elect and indicates that we can interpret the Lord's present delay in bringing history to consummation as a determination to bring salvation to all His elect (2 Peter 1:3–11; 3:12–15). We are to "count the patience of our Lord as salvation" (2 Peter 3:15). Until the last of the elect has come to salvation by divine grace, God will not bring this present order to end, as described in 2 Peter 3:13. Paul has given a more expanded discussion of this, as Peter acknowledges.

3. When they consider Paul's writings, therefore, they are to read and embrace them with care and reverence and find in them a means to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). Peter's closing apostrophe of praise, "To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity," echoes Paul's continued refrain in Ephesians 1: "to the praise of his glory."



Sylvia's Comments: Paul expresses his complete dependence on God. He has been sent by Christ to preach the gospel and care for the church, because it is God's will. He specifically addresses the letter to the faithful saints in the Ephesian church. His expressions of goodwill are common in many of his letters, but they are an important introduction that affirms his love and submission to the Father and Son. He points out that grace and peace come from both God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Next he refers to the Father's praiseworthiness and honor. "Blessed" is used by Old and New Testament writers to tell us how they feel about God, the reverence they show to Him, and His unchangeable glorious and worthy nature.

The second "blessed" points out that those who are in Christ are now entitled to every spiritual blessing available from God. In verse 3, our blessings are traced back to "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Spiritual blessings and treasures come to humanity by the Father through Christ alone. In Christ we have everything; out of Christ we have nothing.

True happiness is ours. We are favored by the Father through Christ.

II. The Father's Role

We first come face-to-face with Paul's description of the Father's role in salvation. He is called the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." This refers to both aspects of nature in the person of Christ. In Jesus's humanity, the first person of the Trinity is the God of Jesus. Jesus obeyed His will, prayed to Him, and worshipped Him. In His eternal essential unity with God and in His eternal personhood, Jesus, the Lord Christ, is the eternally generated Son of God. We now are given a breathtaking perspective on the covenantal relations of the three persons of the Trinity in the plan of redemption.

A. First, we see the activities of the Father.

1. He has blessed us. This is an accomplished fact, a definitive point of action in the past—that is, before time itself came into being. It is an arrangement eternally present in the purpose of God as a natural outflow of His knowledge of Himself and of His knowability by other rational and sentient beings. This is probably behind the reference to the "eternal covenant" of Hebrews 13:20 and the persons given by the Father to the Son as mentioned in John 17:2, 6, 9–10, 20–22 ("since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him"—John 17:2).
2. The blessing is not imprecise or insecure but definite and certain.
 - We have "every spiritual blessing." All that needs to be present in bearers of the divine image for heavenly life is guaranteed by the sovereign

decree of the Father. All that needs to be repaired and imputed for fallen humanity abounds richly in the details of God the Father's decree.

- These blessings are “in the heavenly places”; that is, those things that qualify the elect for living before the self-existent, uncreated, immutable, immense, almighty, all-knowing God are even now and from eternity secured in heaven, bear all the marks of the heavenly realm, are fully conformed to life in the divine presence, and constitute the inheritance that is “imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:4).
 - Another point of the glory and security of these blessings is that they are located “in Christ.” They are in Him as part of the eternal covenant of redemption and so are procured in eternity, for the blessings reside in the “Beloved” (Eph. 1:6). They arise in history as a reward to the Son for His work of perfect obedience in which He became the “source of eternal salvation to all who obey him” (Heb. 5:8–9).
3. He chose us. Election of individuals to all the blessings of salvation is peculiarly the work of the Father. Again, this is a decisive action prior to creation (before the throwing down of the world). As it is with every spiritual blessing, this blessing of being chosen is “in him” (Christ).
 4. He predestinated us to adoption (Eph. 1:5, 11). Adoption is both legal and transformative. We are not slaves now, but sons, and thus heirs (Gal. 4:7).

The result of adoption, however, in this case, is that the adopted ones actually take on a resemblance to the family into which they are adopted. Paul makes reference to this in Romans 8:29 when he points to predestination as making us like Christ: “Predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.” Also, in Galatians 4:6, we see that adoption results in the presence of the Holy Spirit, the “Spirit of his Son,” transforming our affections so that like Christ we cry, “Abba! Father!”

5. He has “blessed us,” or “graced us,” in “the Beloved” (Eph. 1:6). Paul has a parallel idea in Colossians 1:12–13, where he affirms that the Father has taken us out of the kingdom of darkness and “transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.” We certainly should understand from this at least two things: (1) Every grace we have comes to us only through Jesus Christ, and (2) these graces are given because the Father loves the Son and glorifies Him in the redemption of sinners.
6. The Father forgives us “according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7). Eternity will unfold the “immeasurable riches of his grace” (Eph. 2:7).
7. Revelation—He made known to us “the mystery of his will” (Eph. 1:9). Revelation is the action of God in which He discloses what could not be discerned apart from His purposeful unveiling; otherwise it would remain a mystery and impossible to know. The purpose of the unveiling, however, is not just advancement in knowledge, but is the grasping in both mind and heart the redemptive action of God

on behalf of those who are chosen in Christ “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4). For a more detailed statement of Paul’s stewardship of the content of this revelation, see Ephesians 3:3–5.



Sylvia’s Comments: He has blessed us—just as He chose us. We eagerly accept His blessings because they are so much more than we could ever hope for. But we balk at His choosing us, even predestining us by His, and only His, prerogative. We have nothing to say about it. These verses couldn’t be any clearer. Before creation began in His infinite mind, thoughts, will, creative fashionings—call it what you may—we already existed, and our life course was determined. Our blessings began then, stored in heaven in Christ, ready to explode at our adoption. And what is the greatest blessing? It’s His glorious grace—that we could be holy and blameless and be completely accepted “before him.”

I can’t wrap my mind around these verses in a way that I can explain them, or explain how they make me feel. For believers, there was never a doubt of their being restored to fellowship with the Father. Future Christians were guaranteed His grace because He planned it that way. Though we were born with hearts that set up our own idols, God loved us and revealed our need for Him. We were naturally born, making self our own authority. But in His love, He adopted us, putting us under His authority, favoring us with food from His table, words of love and teaching from His Word, righteousness (the best clothing of all), and a never-ending purpose—to enjoy and praise Him forever.

We are actually His children through Jesus Christ! Jesus is our brother! How did that happen? Because God “chose us. . . . In love he predestined us for adoption . . . through Jesus Christ,