

Chosen!

Lesson for November 6, 2022

Unit III: God's Artwork

Scriptural Background: Revelation 2:1-7; Acts 19; Ephesians 1:1-14

Printed Text: Ephesians 1:1-14

Key verse: 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. (Ephesians 1:3, NIV)

Word Study

Hook

Rudyard Kipling once wrote about families, "all of us are we--and everyone else is they." A family shares things like dreams, hopes, possessions, memories, smiles, frowns, and gladness...A family is a clan held together with the glue of love and the cement of mutual respect. A family is shelter from the storm, a friendly port when the waves of life become too wild. No person is ever alone who is a member of a family.

Today's lesson shows how we are "selected" by the Father to be a part of His family and all of the glorious benefits that accompany such membership.

Key Terms

1. **Adoption** (verse 5) – adoption, as a son into the divine family; sonship
2. **Apostle** (verse 1) – the word means "messenger" and served as an official title for Paul and the 12 disciples which includes Matthias (Acts 1:26), who were eyewitnesses of the resurrected Jesus and were chosen by God to lay the foundation for the church by preaching, teaching, and writing Scripture, accompanied by miracles (2 Corinthians 12:12).
3. **Blessing(s)** (verse 3) – praise(s); adulation; gift(s)
4. **Chose** (verse 4) – selected; "pick(ed) out for myself"; elected
5. **Faithful** (verse 1) – reliable; trustworthy; believing; fullness of faith
6. **Love** (verse 4) – goodwill; benevolence; esteem
7. **Peace** (verse 2) – quietness; rest; peace of mind; wholeness
8. **Saints** (verse 1) – designates those who God has set apart from sin to Himself, made holy through their faith in Jesus Christ.

Lesson Background

The book of Ephesians is a letter addressed to the church in the city of Ephesus, capital of the Roman province of Asia (Asia Minor, modern Turkey). It was written by Paul the Apostle while in prison in Rome. It is likely that the gospel was first brought to Ephesus by Priscilla and Aquila, an exceptionally gifted couple (Acts 18:26), who were left there by Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:18-19). Located at the mouth of the Cayster River, on the east side

of the Aegean Sea, the city of Ephesus was perhaps best known for its magnificent temple of Artemis, or Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was also an important political, educational, and commercial center, ranking with Alexandria in Egypt, and Antioch of Pisidia, in southern Asia Minor.

The fledgling church begun by Priscilla and Aquila was later firmly established by Paul on his third missionary journey (Acts 19) and was pastored by him for some three years. After Paul left, Timothy pastored the congregation for perhaps a year and a half, primarily to counter the false teaching of a few influential men (such as Hymenaeus and Alexander), who were probably elders in the congregation there (1 Timothy 1:3, 20). Because of those men, the church at Ephesus was plagued by “myths and endless genealogies” (1 Timothy 1:4), and by such severe and unscriptural ideas as the forbidding of marriage and abstaining from certain foods (1 Timothy 4:3). Although those false teachers did not rightly understand Scripture, they promoted their ungodly interpretations with confidence (1 Timothy 1:7), which produced in the church harmful “speculation rather than ... the administration of God which is by faith” (1 Timothy 1:4). Thirty years or so later, Christ gave to the Apostle John a letter for this church indicating its people had left their first love for Him. (Revelation 2:1-7).

A twin theme runs through the letter. First, believers compose the body of Christ. Second, they both, Jewish and Gentile Christians, share the same intimacy in God’s family. Both stand before Him on the same common ground of grace. Jesus has made the Jewish and Gentile believers into “one new man” (2:15). Two key words in the book of Ephesians are the words "know" and "walk." "That I may know Him in the power of His resurrection..." and "Walk worthy" (4:1), "Walk different"(4:17), walk in love (5:2), walk as children of the light (5:8), walk circumspectly (5:15). The first section of the book may be summarized as "Teaching announced." And the second as "Teaching applied."

The passage in today’s lesson can also be divided into three sections, each of which focuses on a different Person of the Trinity. (Verses 3-6a), center on the Father; (verses 6b-12), center on the Son; and (verses 13-14), centers on the Holy Spirit.

Lesson In Depth

I. Chosen: Selected by the Father (Ephesians 1:1-6)

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ: The opening of the letter is brief, without the more detailed greetings from Paul often found in his other letters.

To the saints who are in Ephesus: In a few ancient manuscripts there is a blank space instead of the words in Ephesus. Based partly on this, some believe that this letter was actually a circular letter written not to any one congregation but meant to be passed on to many different congregations in different cities. Nevertheless, if there is a blank space in a manuscript where others read *in Ephesus*, it is certainly because we are to put *our city* in that blank space.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father: This greeting is typical of Paul. The apostle knew the essential place of grace and peace from God in the life of the believer, and He knew that receiving God's grace comes *before* a walk in peace with Him. Just as grace was the key word in Galatians, it is prominent in all of Paul's letters. He does want the blessings and favor of God to fall upon these people.

Here in the first few verses Paul gives greetings and salutations to his readers and reminds them of his calling and how his life was being directed by God. Through the testimony of Paul, we can learn that God has a perfect will for the life of every born-again believer. It is our goal as Christians to get right in the center of God's plan and purpose for our lives.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: Blessed here means "worthy of praise." When God blesses man, He confers benefits upon him. When man blesses God, as Paul does here, he attributes praise to Him "Who hath blessed us" (or "because He has blessed us"). The apostle then, praises God because He has bestowed all "spiritual blessings" on His people.

Where are these blessings located? "In heavenly places, that is, in heaven. As the Christian's citizenship (Philippians 3:20), high priest (Hebrews 4:14), hope (Colossians 1:5), and inheritance (1 Peter 1:4), are all "in heaven." As his treasure (Matthew 6:20-21), and affection (Colossians 3:1-2), are to be "in heaven," so also the Christian's blessings are "in heaven." These spiritual benefits were granted to the believer and are retained in heaven for him, being progressively dispersed to him on earth in accord with his need and Christian growth.

When we bless God, we speak good of Him. When God blesses us, He communicates good to us. We bless Him with words; He blesses us with deeds. All we can do is to speak well of Him because in ourselves we have nothing good to give, and in Himself He lacks no goodness. But when He blesses us, the situation is reversed. He cannot bless us for our goodness because we have none. Rather, He blesses *us* with goodness. Our heavenly Father lavishes us with every goodness, every good gift, every blessing. That is His nature, and that is our need.

Paul called for a blessing upon the Father (in the sense of recognizing His glory and honor and goodness), because the Father has *already* blessed the believer with every spiritual blessing (who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing).

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world: Believers are chosen by God, and they are chosen before they *have done* anything or *have been* anything for God. The great light of this truth casts some shadows; namely, in trying to reconcile human responsibility with divine sovereignty. Yet the purpose of light is not to cast shadows but to guide our steps. The light of God's selection gives us assurance to the permanence of His plan and His love towards us.

The reasons for God's choosing are not impulsive, nor are they random. Though they are past our finding out, we know that they are altogether wise and good, but the reasons are all in Him, not in us. His choosing is *according to the good pleasure of His will* (Ephesians 1:5).

We are chosen **in Him**. “For if we are chosen in Christ, it is outside ourselves. It is not from the sight of our deserving, but because our heavenly Father has grafted us, through the blessing of adoption, into the Body of Christ. In short, the name of Christ excludes all merit, and everything which men have of themselves.” (Calvin)

That we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: We are chosen not only for salvation, but also for *holiness*. Any understanding of God’s sovereign choosing that diminishes our personal responsibility for personal holiness and sanctification falls far short of the whole counsel of God.

We cannot forget the words **in love**. Holiness and blamelessness are nothing without love. “But as *love* is the *fulfilling of the law*, and *love* the *fountain* whence their salvation flowed, therefore *love* must fill their hearts towards God and each other.” (Clarke)

Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself: Predestined means “marked out in advance,” (determined or appointed beforehand). Prior to creation God appointed those who would believe unto (or for), the adoption of children. That is, He appointed them to be His sons. This divine appointment was “according to” (because of), the good pleasure of His will; it was due not to anything good in ourselves, but due solely to His kindness. These verses stress the divine sovereignty in salvation.

This is the Father’s destiny for His chosen – that they would enjoy **adoption as sons**. In Roman law, “When the adoption was complete it was complete indeed. The person who had been adopted had all the rights of a legitimate son in his new family and completely lost all rights in his old family. In the eyes of the law, he was a new person. So new was he that even all debts and obligations connected with his previous family were abolished as if they had never existed.” (Barclay) God’s unfolding plan for us not only includes salvation and personal transformation, but also a warm, confident relationship with the Father.

To the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved: The relational aspect is emphasized again as Paul describes the status of **accepted** (*charito*, “highly favored” or “full of grace” as in Luke 1:28) that is granted to every believer because of God’s grace.

Jesus Christ is our Redeemer from sin, the Beloved (the word indicates the One who is in the state of being loved by God), who Himself paid the price for our release from sin and death. Because we now belong to Christ, by faith made one with Him and placed in His Body, we are now acceptable to God. Because we are now in the Beloved, we too are “beloved of God” (Romans 1:7).

It is His righteousness that puts us in right standing with the Father. Jesus was completely accepted by the Father. All His character, all His words, all His work was acceptable to God the Father. And now we are **accepted in the Beloved**.

II. Chosen: Redeemed by the Son (Ephesians 1:7-12)

In whom we have redemption through his blood: The **whom** is the *Beloved* of Ephesians 1:6. **In whom** we have redemption and nowhere else. There is no possible redemption outside of Jesus and His redeeming **blood**.

Redemption always implies a price being paid for the freedom that is purchased. It uses the ancient Greek word *lootruo*, which means, “to liberate on the receipt of a ransom.” Here the price is **His blood**, showing that the blessing from the Father and the Son comes not only from a divine decree, but it also comes according to His righteousness and holiness. He cannot bless in opposition to His righteousness and holiness.

Jesus does not redeem us by His sinless life or His moral example, but only by His death in our place – by **His blood**.

According to the riches of His grace: The redemption and forgiveness given to us comes according to the measure of the **riches of His grace**. It is not a “small” redemption or forgiveness won by Jesus on the cross. It is immense.

We need never worry that our sin will outstrip God’s gracious forgiveness. “Where sin increased,” Paul assures us, “grace abounded all the more” (Romans 5:20). Our heavenly Father does not simply give us subsistence forgiveness that will barely cover our sins if we are careful not to overdo. We cannot sin beyond God’s grace, because as wicked and extensive as our sins might be or become, they will never approach the greatness of His grace. His forgiveness is infinite, and He lavishes it without measure upon those who trust in His Son. We therefore not only can enjoy future glory with God but present fellowship with Him as well.

Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence: This verse could be rendered, “He lavished upon us this grace which consists in all sorts of wisdom and prudence (or, insight). The word wisdom refers to a knowledge of the true nature of things; prudence has to do with the practical application of this wisdom leading to the right course of action. But the specific “wisdom and prudence” Paul has in view here, concerns a future aspect of God’s will as delineated in verses 9 and 10.

Many think it is unwise of God to lavish such redemption and forgiveness on guilty sinners. But it was **in all wisdom and prudence** that He gave this to us. This “wisdom and prudence” has to do with God’s making known unto us the mystery of his will.

Having made known unto us the mystery of his will: “Mystery” here refers to a divine truth that is incapable of being discovered by human cleverness. Why did God disclose this mystery to us? It was according to (because of), His good pleasure which He hath purposed (planned), in himself.

The mystery is how a just God of law could ever justify a sinner, such as you and me. He revealed to us the plan. It is up to us to act upon it. The word “according” here, tells us a lot. With man’s reasoning, there would have been no reason for God to give His Son on the cross that we might live. He did it not because it was the logical thing by our reasoning to do it, but

because it brought Him pleasure for us to be saved. Notice also, that this was not someone else's plan, it was His plan. It was not on advice from others but was His plan from the foundation of the world. All of this is true because God willed it.

Why has God done so much for us? Why has He blessed us with every spiritual blessing? Chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world? Made us holy and blameless? Predestined us to adoption as His children? Redeemed us through His blood, and lavishly given us forgiveness, wisdom and insight according to the infinite riches of His grace? Paul answers in the following verses.

That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ: God redeems men in order that He might gather everything to Himself. The time of that gathering will be the millennial kingdom, which will be an administration suitable to the fullness of the times. When the completion of history comes, the kingdom arrives, eternity begins again, and the new heaven and new earth are established, there will be a summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth. Jesus Christ is the goal of history, which finds its resolution in Him. The paradise lost in Adam is restored in Christ.

Then (verse 10), is made plainer by the paraphrase, "for the purpose of executing it (i.e. God's good pleasure), in the fullness of times and His good pleasure is to head up all things in Christ, things in heaven, and things on earth."

In the near future, when the time is ripe, God will put His good purpose into effect and carry it out. And His "good pleasure" or intention is the restoration of original universal unity, when all things are brought back into harmony with Himself and under the headship of Christ.

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance: In whom (this is speaking about Christ), also we have obtained an inheritance may be read, "by whom we were also made an inheritance." That is, believers are God's treasure. Why would Paul regard this as a blessing? As God's treasure, Christians are the apple of His eye, the special objects of His love. He is then determined to care and provide for His people who are His heritage.

This translates a single compound word in the Greek (*eklerothemen*). When something in the future was so certain that it could not possibly fail to happen. The Greeks would often speak of it as if it had already occurred (as here, where Paul uses a similar Greek tense (aorist active indicative). To speak of God's having "seated us with Him in the heavenly places" (verse 6), although the apostle and those to whom he wrote had not yet entered into that glorious experience. Their dwelling eternally with the Lord was just as certain as if they were already in heaven.

Having predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will: We see three aspects of God's plan working together. It begins with His **purpose**, then the **counsel of His will**, and finally results in His **work**. God made His plan carefully according to an eternal purpose, taking **counsel** within the Godhead, and then He works with all wisdom.

Being predestinated: Before the earth was formed, God sovereignly determined that every elect sinner, however vile, useless, and deserving of death, by trusting in Christ would be made righteous.

According to the purpose: Because we are identified with Christ, our lives should be identified with His life (1 John 2:6). We are to love as He loved, help as He helped, care as He cared, share as He shared, and sacrifice our own interest and welfare for the sake of others just as He did. Like our Lord, we are in the world to lose our lives for others.

As Paul makes clear in (verse 3), our inheritance includes “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” In Jesus Christ, believers inherit every promise God has ever made. God bestows sunshine, rain, and many other good things on all men, the righteous and unrighteous alike (Matthew 5:45). But His spiritual blessings are bestowed only on those who are in Him. Apart from Jesus Christ, the only ultimate and eternal thing a person can receive from God is condemnation.

Our inheritance is in Jesus. We are heirs of the Father because we are sons of the Father. We are sons of the Father, because we have received Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.

We have obtained an inheritance. Christ is the source of the believer’s divine inheritance, which is so certain that it is spoken of as if it has already been received (1 Corinthians 3:22-23; 2 Peter 1:3-4).

Who worketh all things: The word translated “works” is the same one from which “energy,” “energetic,” and “energize” are derived. When God created the world, He gave it sufficient energy to begin immediately to operate as He had planned. It was not simply ready to function but was created functioning. As God works out His plan according to “the counsel of His will,” He energizes every believer with the power necessary for his spiritual completion (Philippians 1:6; 2:13).

God works out what He plans. He energizes every believer with all the power necessary for his spiritual completion. It is not sufficient to think that God only makes the plan. He also makes it work out.

That we should be to the praise of his glory: The purpose of being made God’s “inheritance” and having been “predestinated” (verse 11), is that we should be to the praise of His glory, that is, that we should glorify God. God’s purpose in all this is so that those who have trusted Christ will exist **to the praise of His glory**. The goal of God’s ultimate plan is to glorify Him. God’s glory is the supreme purpose of redemption.

Who first trusted in Christ: This speaks of Jewish believers. The words *you also* in Ephesians 1:13 speak of Gentile believers. God’s great plan has a place for both Jew and Gentile, and it brings them both together in Jesus.

III. Chosen: Secured by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14)

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth: Here we see the believer's divine inheritance in Jesus Christ from our own human perspective. Throughout Scripture there is tension between God's sovereignty and man's will, a tension that, in his limited and imperfect knowledge, man is incapable of fully reconciling.

As with all the other antinomies and paradoxes in God's Word, our responsibility is to believe both sides of them without reservation, just as they are revealed. We know the truths are in perfect accord in God's mind, and that knowledge should satisfy us.

Someone has pictured the divine and human sides of salvation in their way: When you look toward heaven you see a sign that read, "Whosoever will may come," and after you enter heaven you look back to that same sign and read on the other side, "Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world."

Whatever God's reasons for designing such humanly irreconcilable truths, we should thank and praise Him for them. For the very reason that they are completely true which seeming to be contradictory, we are humbled in His presence as we stand in awe of that which to us is incomprehensible. To the trusting believer such truths are but further evidence that Scripture is God's doing, and not man's.

Heard the word of truth ... ye believed: God's sovereign choice works, but it does not exclude human cooperation. These ones who were so sovereignly chosen were also the ones who **trusted, heard the word of truth, and believed.** The God revealed Gospel of Jesus Christ must be heard (Romans 10:17), and believed (John 1:12), to bring salvation. The victory for all mankind in this is that now, all who believe will be saved. Salvation was not available to whosoever will, until the cross. The gospel (good news), of salvation is that all who believe in the Lord Jesus will be saved. It seems that there are two statements "after ye believed" and "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise".

Ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise: The sealing does not come *before* we believe, and those who demand some assurance from God before they will believe treat God as if His word could not be trusted. As one means of guaranteeing His promises to those who have received Jesus Christ, God has sealed them in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise. Every believer is given the very Holy Spirit of God the moment he trusts in Christ. "You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you," Paul declares (Romans 8:9a). Conversely, he goes on to say, "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him" (verse 9b). Incredibly, the body of every true Christian is actually "a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in him" (1 Corinthians 6:19).

When a person becomes a Christian, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in his life. Life in Jesus Christ is different because the Spirit of God is now within. He is there to empower us, equip us for ministry, and function through the gifts He has given us. The Holy Spirit is our Helper and Advocate. He protects and encourages us. He also guarantees our inheritance in Jesus Christ. "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children,

heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:16-17). The Spirit of God is our securing force, our guarantee.

When the Holy Spirit seals believers, He marks them as God’s divine possessions, who from that moment on entirely and eternally belong to Him. The Spirit’s seal declares the transaction of salvation as divinely official and final.

Lesson Summary

In the first chapter of Ephesians, the Apostle Paul reminded the Church of the glory and promises of God and what that means to all believers. God the Father is the focus in 1:3–6, Christ the Son in 1:6–12, and the Holy Spirit 1:13–14. The three Persons of the Trinity are all involved in our salvation. Paul continues:

He chose us to be holy, separated to God, and blameless, without blemish. 1:4

He destined us to be His children. 1:5

In Him we have redemption and forgiveness. 1:7 (Redemption is being bought back from slavery. Forgiveness is the remission of sin.)

He made known to us His plan to unite all things in Christ. 1:9–10

We are appointed to live for His glory. 1:12

We are sealed by the Holy Spirit as the guarantor of our inheritance. 1:13