

## A. He Revealed the Mystery of His Will (vv. 9-10)

*<sup>9</sup> He made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, <sup>10</sup> to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.*

We often use the “mystery” to describe something that is extremely difficult to figure out, but given extraordinary observational powers and deductive reasoning, the pieces begin to fall together. In Scripture mystery refers to aspects of God’s plan that were once hidden but now revealed.

1. What is the mystery God has made known to us?
2. What does it mean for all things to be brought to unity in Christ?
3. What are the dimensions of the unity we will one day experience?
4. When will this take place?
5. How are things being united in Christ now?
6. What does it mean for us to be brought into unity with Christ?

## B. He Sealed Us With His Spirit (vv. 11-14)

*<sup>11</sup> 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, <sup>12</sup> in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup> 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, <sup>14</sup> who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.*

The “we” in verses 11 and 12 seem to be describing Paul and his Jewish brothers and sisters who “were the first to put their hope in Christ.” The “you” in verses 13 and 14 seem to describe the majority of Paul’s readers who were Gentiles, and “were also included in Christ.”

The word “chosen” in verse 11 is an extremely rare word that might better be translated “claimed as God’s own possession (NET Bible),” which is in keeping with the way Israel is described throughout the Old Testament (see Deuteronomy 32:8-9 and Psalm 33:12). Notice how Paul describes his Gentile brothers and sisters in exactly the same way, “those who are God’s possession.”

1. What role does the Holy Spirit play in insuring us that we belong to the family of God and have rich inheritance in him?
2. In what way is the Spirit a foretaste of (or deposit guaranteeing) what we will day experience for all of eternity?

SUNDAY, JANUARY 21, 2024

# ALIVE IN CHRIST

## A STUDY OF EPHESIANS

EVERY SPIRITUAL BLESSING | EPHESIANS 1:3-14

One of my friends in college received an unusual Christmas gift from his grandmother. She gave him a pair of Isotoner gloves. He was more than little disappointed. The gloves were not particularly stylish and living in Texas he had very little need for winter gloves anyway. He threw them in the back of his sock drawer and all but forgot about them.

A little more than a year later we were hit by a severe winter storm. His car wouldn’t start so he popped open the hood and began to play with the battery cables. As he played with the cables, his fingers went numb and he remembered the gloves. He went back into his apartment, shuffled through his sock drawer, found the gloves, took them out of the package, and started to put them on. As he tried to jam his fingers into the gloves he realized that there were rolls of paper stuffed in the fingers. He took them off to discover that his grandmother had placed a twenty-dollar bill in every finger of each glove.

As a poor college student the \$200.00 made him feel incredibly rich. Turns out his grandmother, in spite of her poor taste in gloves, knew exactly what her grandson needed.

Paul writes his letter to the Ephesians in the same spirit. He wants us to know that our Father knows how to give good gifts to his children and we are incredibly rich in him.

Nowhere is this more evident than in his opening doxology. He reminds us that God has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ,” and then he begins to recount the many blessings we have received from him.

## THE GOD WHO HAS BLESSED US (v. 3)

<sup>3</sup> *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.*

Paul opens his letter to the Ephesians with an effusive outpouring of praise for the God “who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.” In the original language this entire section is a single sentence. It feels more like spontaneous praise than a theological treatise, but Paul’s praise is always rich in theology. Verse three serves as a fitting introduction to the prayer that follows.

1. How does Paul describe the blessings we have received from God?
2. What do you think Paul has in mind when he tells us we have been blessed with “every blessing?”
3. When Paul uses the word “spiritual” he is not referring to some ethereal or other worldly quality, he is referring to something that comes to us by the Spirit. Paul is highlighting the fact that every good gift we receive comes to us from the Father through the Son by the Spirit. The entire Godhead is immanently involved in “blessing us with every blessing.”

How does it impact your understanding of the limitless blessing we have received from God to know that the Father, Son and Spirit are all equally and deeply vested in securing these blessings for us and making them a reality in our daily experience?

## THE BLESSINGS WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM HIM (vv. 4-14)

### A. He Chose Us Before the Creation of the World (v. 4)

<sup>4</sup> *For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight in love.*

The doctrine of Election is an important theme throughout scripture and is vital to Paul’s understanding of the grace we have received in Christ. While it is meant to be a source of comfort and encouragement for those who are in Christ, it is often a source of consternation.

1. According to Paul, when did God choose us?
2. What does this add to your understanding of the doctrine of election?
3. According to Paul, why did God choose us?
4. What does this add to your understanding the doctrine of election?
5. What do you think it means to be holy and blameless in his sight?
6. Why do you think the doctrine of election is a cause for consternation for so many?
7. Why should it be a source of encouragement and comfort instead?

8. What does it say about your understanding of the doctrine of election and the character of God if the doctrine of election causes more consternation than comfort or encouragement?

### B. We Were Adopted into His Family (vv. 4-6)

<sup>5</sup> *He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—<sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.*

1. To “choose before the creation of the world” and to “predestine” are complementary ideas. He not only chose us in Christ, he determined our ultimate destiny. How does Paul describe our ultimate destiny in Christ?
2. In the Old Testament, God adopted Israel as his son and vowed to treat David’s heirs as his own sons. In the Roman world an adopted child received all the rights and benefits of a natural born son or daughter.
  - a. In this particular instance, who is the natural born son?
  - b. How does Paul describe him in these verses?
  - c. What are some of the rights and privileges we inherit “through Jesus Christ”?
3. In Romans, Paul tells us that we were predestined “to be conformed into the image of his Son (8:29).” What does this idea add to our understanding of God’s purpose in adopting us as his son’s and daughters?

### C. We Were Redeemed Through His Blood (vv. 7-8)

<sup>7</sup> *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace <sup>8</sup> that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.*

1. In the ancient world “redemption” describes the price paid to release someone from slavery. Why is redemption an apt description of what God has done for us in Christ?
2. According to Paul, what was the price of our redemption?
3. What does this tell us about the depth of the love that God has demonstrated toward us in Christ?
4. In the Old Testament the concepts of “wisdom and understanding” are often paired with God’s role in creation. “By wisdom the Lord laid the earth’s foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place” (Proverbs 3:19 see also Jeremiah 10:12).

How are God’s wisdom and understanding on even greater display in the grace he lavished on us in Christ?