

Blessings in Christ

Ephesians 1:1-14



Letter to the Ephesians

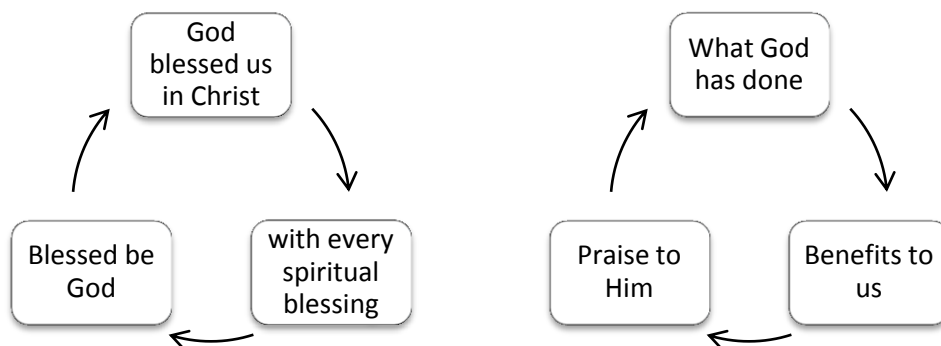
- ❑ Author: The apostle Paul (1:1; 3:1).
- ❑ Recipients: Believers in Ephesus (1:1) and surrounding region;¹ mostly Gentile (non-Jewish)
- ❑ Time & Place of Writing: Probably AD 61-62 when Paul was in prison in Rome.²
- ❑ Purpose of Letter: “Paul wants to ‘ground, shape and challenge’ his readers in their faith. In other words, the main purpose of this letter is ‘identity formation’.”³

Greeting

- ❑ Read Ephesians 1:1-2. Paul begins his letter in the customary way by mentioning his own name; then mentioning the recipients; and then offering a Christian greeting.

What God Has Done

- ❑ Read Ephesians 1:3-14. Verse 3 could be the topic sentence of the passage.
 - 📖 “Blessed⁴ be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (*Ephesians 1:3, ESV*)



1. Based on this passage, what has God done? (List the verbs associated with God.)⁵ Consider each of God's actions listed in this passage. Why has he done these things?

¹ Paul first went to Ephesus at end of his second missionary journey (autumn, AD 52) and ministered a short time before leaving for Jerusalem (Acts 18:18-21). He returned on his third missionary journey and stayed 2½ years, leaving in the spring of AD 56 (Acts 19:1-20:1).

² This imprisonment is recorded in Acts 28. Ephesians was likely written about the same time as Colossians and Philemon, with Philippians written a little later.

³ Peter O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 55.

⁴ “blessed” (*eulogētos*) – translated “praise[d]” in the NIV. In the Bible, *eulogētos* is applied only to God, who is the Source of blessing; while *eulogēmenos* (“blessed”) is applied to people, who receive God's blessing.

⁵ We see what God has done by looking at his actions (indicated by verbs) and the results of his actions. Verbs include “blessed, chose, predestined, freely given (*echaritōsen*), lavished [the riches of his grace], made known, purposed, bring all things...together (*anakephalaiōsis*) (future action), sealed (*espragisthēte*).” The results of God's actions indicate that he provided “[sanctification], adoption [into his family], redemption, forgiveness, inheritance.”

- ❑ God has done these things “in accordance with his pleasure and will” (1:5, cf. 1:9). He has done these things “according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will” (1:11). God did not save and bless us because we did something to earn his blessing! God freely chose to save and bless us according to his grace.⁶
 2. How is God’s plan accomplished, and how are the benefits realized? Answer in two words.⁷ What (or whom) is central to God’s plan and purpose?
- ❑ The high point of the passage is verse 10, which speaks of the future consummation (completion) of God’s plan for his creation – the “bringing together” (summing up or uniting) of all things in Christ. “Christ is the one *in whom* God chooses to sum up the cosmos, the one in whom he restores harmony to the universe.”⁸

Benefits to Us

- ❑ Because of God’s gracious actions, there are great benefits for “us.”
 3. Who are “us” in this passage?⁹ How do we become part of “us”? (1:13)
 4. Based on this passage, what blessings (or benefits) do believers receive as a result of God’s grace?¹⁰ Consider each one, and explain how it makes a difference in your life.



Praise to Him

- ❑ Considering what God has done, and the benefits to us, what is the only appropriate response? What is the logical result of the gracious actions of the God of glory?
 - 📖 “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...” (1:3)
 - 📖 “...for the praise of his glory” (1:12, 14; cf. 1:6)

Reflection/Application

- Do you want to be blessed? God is the source of true blessing, and every spiritual blessing is “in Christ.” Do you need to receive Christ as Lord and Savior, and become part of “us”?
- Review what God has done, and the benefits to us. Consider each of God’s actions and each benefit listed in this passage. Seek to understand and appreciate each one. Ask questions for greater understanding. Reflect on God and his blessings, and spend time praising Him.

⁶ These verses support the biblical doctrine of “election,” which may be defined as “God’s choosing of a people or individual persons for salvation and/or service.” Furthermore, God’s choice is not based on human merit, but on his free, sovereign love. This may lead to questions about divine determination, human free will, human responsibility, etc. For Jay’s thoughts on this subject, see “Divine Sovereignty & Human Responsibility” on the ICF website.

⁷ Look for the words “in Christ,” “in him” or “in the Beloved (One he loves);” which occur at least 8 times.

⁸ O’Brien, 112.

⁹ Actually, the meaning of “us” (or “we”) changes in verse 11. “We” in verses 11-12 most likely refers to Jewish believers, while “you also” (v. 13) refers to Gentile believers. Both Jewish and Gentile believers are the “us” of verses 3-10 and 14. Later Paul will address the unity of Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ (2:11-22).

¹⁰ Benefits include: chosen to be holy and blameless; adopted as God’s children; redeemed (set free through Christ’s sacrificial death); forgiven; lavished with God’s grace, along with wisdom and understanding; given knowledge of “the mystery” (the gospel); sealed with the Holy Spirit, the deposit guaranteeing our inheritance in God’s kingdom.