

Ephesians Ch1v1-14: The Eternal Purpose of God

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v1-2: Opening greetings

Paul's apostleship "**by** (through) **the will of God**", i.e. apostolic authority for the revelation of divine truth, and specifically the mystery of Christ & the Church, "**the mystery of His** (God's) **will**" (v9).

In ch2v20, this truth of the mystery is "**built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets**".

Paul writes to "**the saints** (holy / sanctified ones) **which are at** (in) **Ephesus**", i.e. doctrinal & positional, what God has made believers by the new birth.

In ch5v3, we are exhorted to a walk "**as becometh saints**", i.e. practical responsibility.

Also "**to the faithful in Christ Jesus**", encompassing all the Church, beyond just those at Ephesus.

Ephesians was likely a circular letter, distributed to many local churches (see Col 4v16).

To be "**in Christ Jesus**" is a secure place of exalted blessing, eternally united to Christ, vitally linked with Him, our position spiritually before God is indistinguishable from that of Christ Himself.

v2: Divine Persons are equally the source of needed "**grace**" and "**peace**" (see also ch6v23-24).

v3-14: The blessings of God's salvation

One unbroken sentence declares the all-encompassing **eternal purpose of God**, which is centred in Christ, and the saints of God are brought into that divine purpose through being linked with Him.

The Purpose of God Embraces All Persons of the Godhead

God the Father is involved in the **commencement of the blessing**, according to His will.

Christ the Son is at the **centre of the blessing**, based upon His redemptive sacrifice.

The Holy Spirit is the **confidence of the blessing**, the "**Holy Spirit of promise**" (v13), "**the earnest**" (v14).

i) The will of God the Father (v3-12, particularly vs 5,9,11)

Three aspects of His will; "**the good pleasure of His will**" (v5), "**the mystery of His will**" (v9), and "**the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will**" (v11).

1. His Will (v5,9,11):

A general direction that God the Father is moving toward, which He has purposed & desired after.

To have a people before Him in heaven as sons "**to Himself**" (v5), with conformity to His own Son, and eternally suited to His own character, "**holy and without blame before Him in love**" (v4).

They will comprise the Church, with Christ as the Head, and the Church as His body, with all things to be headed up in Christ (v10) and shared with that Church (v11).

2. His Good Pleasure (v5,9):

We read of "**the good pleasure of His will**" (v5); "**His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself**" (v9).

The more God considered His will, the more He delighted in it, the more it filled His heart with delight and pleasure, such that it became His heart's desire. God the Father is delighting in what He is doing.

God's good pleasure must be centred in His own beloved Son; '**in Thee is My good pleasure**' (Mark 1v11).

"**For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure**" (Phil 2v13).

3. His Mystery (v9):

We read of "**the mystery of His will**" (v9); truth that God the Father had kept secret in His own heart, until He now reveals it to the apostle Paul, who will make it known to the Church (ch3v3-5,9; Col 1v25-27). God did not reveal this to men like Abraham, or Moses, or David; He now desires to make it known to the saints of God, the sons of God by faith in Jesus Christ, who will be in harmony with the Father's feelings.

4. His Purpose (v9,11):

"**His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself**" (v9); "**according to the purpose of Him**" (v11).

The accomplishment of God's will became His specific objective, His aim & object, it became His purpose. God does not have many purposes; He has a singular purpose (see Rom 8v28, 9v11, 2nd Tim 1v9, Heb 6v17). That purpose is connected with His own Son, to see all things headed up in Christ & His Church (v10-11), to see His Son vindicated & glorified, and the saints of God sharing that glory with Christ.

5. His Counsel (v11):

This is "**the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will**" (v11).

There was divine consultation in the Godhead, a divine plan was put into operation to achieve His purpose, to bring His will, His good pleasure, and His purpose to fruition.

Prov 15v22 "**Without counsel purposes are disappointed**"; the divine purpose will not end in disappointment.

The cross of Christ, and His sacrifice there at Calvary, answered to that great obstacle of man's sin.

The divine working process is in effect in this day of grace, in calling out of this world a people to comprise the Church, as the body of Christ, vitally linked with Christ the risen & glorified Head in heaven.

6. His Grace (v6,7):

We marvel that we have been brought into the good of divine purpose; it is all of His grace, what God has made us in Christ His Son. It is all "**To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved**" (v6), and has blessed us in harmony with "**the riches of His grace**" (v7).

7. His Glory (v6,12,14):

God is working from Himself and primarily for Himself, for the pleasure of His own heart, and ultimately for His own glory; v6 "**To the praise of the glory of His grace**" (the Father's glory), v12 "**That we should be to the praise of His glory**" (Christ the Son), and v14 "**unto the praise of His glory**" (the Holy Spirit of God).

This is truth that is intended to bring all of God's people presently to praise, worship & adore Him.

ii) The work of Christ the Son of God (v7)

Central to all this truth, pivotal to all divine purpose, is the redemptive work of Christ, "**His blood**".

When the Lord cried from the cross "**Finished**", He had in view the accomplishment of all divine purpose.

iii) The witness of the Holy Spirit of God (v13-14)

The Spirit is the seal of our salvation; upon believing "**sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise**" (v13).

The Spirit "**is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession**" (v14), and so the indwelling Holy Spirit of God is the pledge of our future glorious inheritance that we will share with Christ, and the confidence of all our blessing in Christ.

The Purpose of God Embraces All Portions of Time & Eternity

In relation to eternity past, the sovereign electing choice of God was made "**before the foundation of the world**" (v4), when God sovereignly set His purpose upon us.

As to the future, we are taken on to "**the fulness of the times**" (v10), i.e. the coming millennial kingdom reign of Christ, "**that (age) which is to come**" (v21), when He will be displayed as "**Far above all**".

In the eternal day of God, we shall be eternally "**holy and without blame before Him in love**" (v4).

In ch2v7 "**That in the ages (plural) to come (the coming ages) He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through (in) Christ Jesus**".

We in the Church are the objects of that surpassing wealth of God's grace, and God is going to display that rich grace & kindness toward us to all eternity.

In ch3v21 "**Unto Him (God) be glory in the church by (in) Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end (unto all generations of the age of ages, JND). Amen**".

Glory will be eternally brought to God in the Church, and in Christ Jesus.

As the bride of Christ, the Church will be eternally for the heart of Christ, and will be the means by which God's grace & God's glory is going to be eternally displayed.

In ch1v7 the cross, and redemptive work of Christ the Son, stands at the centre of eternity past and future. Calvary is the great dividing point of this world's history, the sacrifice to which all previous sacrifices & offerings looked forward to, and which all future sacrifices in the millennium will commemorate.

Heb 9v26 "**but now once in the end of the world (consummation of the ages) hath He (the Lord Jesus) appeared (i.e. at Calvary) to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself**".

The fulfilment of the purpose of God from eternity past required the cross of Christ, and the cross of Christ is the foundation for the future ultimate eternal consummation of all the purpose of God.

The Purpose of God Embraces All Parties of Humanity

In this passage we have the Jew spoken of, note the pronoun "**we**" in v12, as Paul identifies himself with the Jew "**who first trusted (forehoped, Newberry) in Christ**" (v12).

The salvation of God was to the Jew first, but it has also in the divine plan embraced the Gentile, the "**ye**" of v13, "**In whom ye also trusted ...**".

Peter in Acts 15v9, speaking at the council in Jerusalem, spoke of God putting "**no difference between us (the Jew) and them (the Gentile)**" in the matter of His salvation. Paul corroborates that "**no difference**" here in Ephesians 1 with regard to divine purpose; "**In whom ye (believing Gentiles) also ... after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation**" (v13). See also ch2v14-15.

The "**we (Jews)**" of v12, and the "**ye (Gentiles)**" of v13, are both included in the "**us**" of v3, "**who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings**", and all parties of humanity, both Jews & Gentiles, are brought together in the Church, and are equally the recipients of this divine blessing in Christ.

v3: The Spiritual Wealth of Every Christian

(1) **The source** of our blessings; “*the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*”.

Blessings based upon that relationship that the Lord Jesus announced first in resurrection to Mary Magdalene, “*I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God*” (John 20v17).

God withheld no blessing from His own dear Son. As a Man on earth, the Lord Jesus was blessed by His God, in relation to God’s power, might, majesty & holiness. As the Son, He was blessed by His Father, in terms of a filial relationship, and all the feelings, affections & love between the Father and the Son.

The same “*God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*” loves us the same as He loves His own Son (see John 17v23), He likewise withholds no blessings from us, and makes known to us the secret’s of His heart.

(2) **The wealth** of our blessings; “*all (every, JND) spiritual blessing*”.

A rich fullness & completeness of blessing, for we are blessed by God according to the fullness of His appreciation of His own Son.

This is the spiritual possession of every saint of God, from the moment of salvation; no 2nd or 3rd blessings.

We received all our blessings when we were saved; our appreciation of them progresses with time.

Positional blessings in Christ are not progressive in the life of a believer; they are divine accomplishments in every believer, and will never be revoked (see LS Chafer’s book entitled ‘Salvation’).

(3) **The character** of our blessings; they are “*spiritual*”.

In OT times, there was physical & material blessing on earth; a faithful man like Abraham was blessed with great wealth & possessions.

Our present blessings are entirely spiritual, independent of material circumstances; a spiritual inheritance to be enjoyed by faith in our souls & spirits.

(4) **The location** of our blessings; “*in heavenly places*”.

Israel’s blessings always connected with the earth; the Church’s blessings are “*in the heavenlies* (JND)”.

Spiritually we are to be dwelling in those heavenly places, with Christ & angelic beings (ch1v20, ch2v6, ch3v10), the place also linked with our spiritual warfare in ch6v12.

Our blessings belong to another world altogether; only in the measure that we are heavenly minded (Col 3v1-2) will we be in the full good of the possession of them.

(5) **The security** of our blessings; they are “*in Christ*”.

Israel’s blessings under the law were conditional; they could be forfeited, given to others.

Israel under the New Covenant will be blessed under Messiah, but not in Messiah.

In the Church, we are blessed unconditionally “in Christ” through our union with Him.

We have nothing outside of Christ, but we have everything securely & eternally in Him.

Israel will yet be blessed by the One seated upon the throne of David.

Our blessings are secure in Him who is seated upon the throne of heaven, set at God’s right hand “*far above all principality and power and might and dominion*” (v21).

v4-14: Our Spiritual Blessings in Christ Enumerated

1. **Chosen** – objects of divine choice – the truth of election, *“According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world”* (v4).
2. **Predestinated** to the position of sons – the truth of sonship, *“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children (position of sons) by Jesus Christ to Himself”* (v5).
3. **Accepted** – highly favoured of God – the truth of acceptance, *“accepted in the Beloved”* (v6).
4. **Redeemed** from the bondage of sin – enjoying the forgiveness of sins, *“In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace”* (v7).
5. **Enlightened** regarding divine purpose – *“Wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of His will”* (vs8-9).
6. **Predestinated** to an inheritance – sharing future millennial glory with Christ, *“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated ...”* (vs10-11).
7. **Sealed** with the Holy Spirit of promise – the divine pledge of future glory, *“in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise”* (vs13-14).

1. Objects of Divine Choice – The Truth of Election (v4)

“According as He hath chosen us in Him (Christ) before the foundation of the world”.

A blessing from the sovereign God of our Lord Jesus Christ.

NT Scripture teaches 2 great parallel truths - divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

This is God acting in sovereignty, exercising His independent right as God to choose individual persons.

We must not make God’s choice of me contingent upon my choice to believe in His Son.

That would mean that God is not independently sovereign, and so He would cease to be God.

There is no good thing in any of us that would give God some cause to choose any of us.

1st Peter 1v2 *“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God”*, i.e. in harmony with divine foreknowledge of us as persons, but not elect on the basis of what He knew about us.

Roman 8v29 *“For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate”*, i.e. the individual persons whom He foreknew, and upon whom He set His purpose, those *“vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory”* (Rom 9v23).

Ephesians 1v4 is the divine perspective, giving us some understanding of why God made His choice.

1. The **objects** of God’s choice - *“According as He hath chosen us in Him”*, i.e. individual believers (as in v5-9).
2. The **sphere** of God’s choice - *“in Him (Christ)”*; God was choosing out a people with Christ before Him, that would be for Christ, that would be eternally united to His Son.
3. The **time** of God’s choice - *“before the foundation of the world”*, in contrast to *“the kingdom prepared for you (Israel) from the foundation of the world”* (Matt 25v34).

God’s choice was connected with His eternal purpose for the Church, linked with the Lord Jesus as the Lamb *“foreordained before the foundation of the world”* (1st Peter 1v20), and with His eternally beloved Son before Him, *“for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world”* (John 17v24).

4. The **purpose** of God’s choice - *“that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love”*. To have a people before Him, eternally suited to His own holy nature & character, and eternally the love of His heart.

2. Predestinated to the Position of Sons – The Truth of Sonship (v5)

“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children (position of sons, Newberry) by (through) Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will”

A blessing from the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we are made spiritually sons to the Father.

Election in v4 is to do with individual persons; predestination in v5 is with respect to the position or place marked out for those persons, and that is the place of sonship, a place of privilege & responsibility.

The Father’s good pleasure & heart’s desire is that He wants sons ***“to Himself”***, all like His own dear Son.

Israel nationally knew of election, and of sonship, ***“Israel is My son, even My firstborn”*** (Exodus 4v22).

But the truths of election and predestination pertain to us in the Church as individual believers; ***“ye are all the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus”*** (Gal 3v26).

To be marked out to this position of sonship is linked with receiving the indwelling Spirit of God’s Son, bringing us unto the good of that blessed sonship relationship with the Father (see Gal 4v4-6, Rom 8v15).

As sons of God, we are able to speak to the Father as the Lord Jesus did, with that intimate heart cry ***“Abba, Father”***, and to do so with all the feelings of a son to the Father.

Sonship in its fullness of blessing will mean ultimate perfect physical & moral conformity to the image of God’s Son; ***“Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son”*** (Rom 8v29). We are presently ***“waiting for the sonship, to wit, the redemption of our body”*** (Rom 8v23).

Linked intimately with the future blessing of sonship is heirship; ***“and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ”*** (Gal 4v7).

Sonship is the basis for all the future glory that God has purposed for us, as linked eternally with His Son.

Our Saviour is the Fileleader, who has gone on before, and He is the One who as the Captain of our salvation is ***“bringing many sons unto glory”*** (Heb 2v10).

The present practical challenge and responsibility of sonship is to be morally like God’s Son even now.

We are to move upon this scene in all the dignity & privilege as sons of God, and with the responsibility to represent God the Father in this world, and to be for His pleasure & delight.

The spirit of sonship ought to give us feelings for what delights the Father, and to have the same desires, devotion, and commitment to completing the Father’s work, as God’s own beloved Son had.

Here in Ephesians 1, it is the divine perspective that is emphasised; the Father desires to have many sons eternally ***“to Himself”*** (v5), bearing the image of His own Son, and with all the affections, desires and feelings of His own Son.

This is all the expression of His good pleasure; ***“according to the good pleasure of His will”***.

The good pleasure and delight that the Father found in His own Son, according to His purpose He is going to perpetuate that pleasure and delight to all eternity in the saints of God, those that He has predestinated to the position of sons.

The full expression of God’s good pleasure, the ultimate outworking of His heart’s desire, is to have many sons ***“to Himself”***, all bringing to Him the same good pleasure that He found in His own beloved Son.

3. Highly Favoured of God – The Truth of Acceptance (v6)

“To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved”.

Same word in Lk 1v28, *“Hail, thou that art highly favoured”* i.e. *‘thou hast been graciously accepted’*.

The fullness of God’s grace & favour is bestowed upon us, in Christ who is the *“Beloved”* One of His Father. We are graciously accepted before God in all the acceptability of the One who is beloved of His Father. The blessings bestowed on us are compatible with the measure of the Father’s love for the Son.

This is *“To the praise of the glory of His grace”*, i.e. God is lifting us up to the level of His glory, and the level of His own beloved Son.

Our acceptance before God is only in Christ, and based upon all He means to God, as the beloved Son.

Christ as the burnt offering; *“it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him”* (Lev 1v4).

4. Redeemed from the Bondage of Sin – Enjoying the Forgiveness of Sins (v7)

In the *“beloved”* One, *“we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins”*; present blessings of salvation based wholly upon the work of Christ at Calvary, and His precious shed blood.

It is an eternal redemption based upon the value to God of the precious blood of His own Beloved Son (see 1st Pet 1v18-19, Heb 9v12).

Redemption means being loosed, set free from the bondage of my sin and my guilt.

The Lord Jesus paid the price for our redemption at Calvary when He shed His own precious blood.

The truth of purchase means a change of ownership; I belong to Christ (see 1st Cor 6v19-20).

Redemption means ultimately a change of state; *“the redemption of the purchased possession”* (v14).

Presently *“we have redemption”*, as a present possession, in relation to soul and spirit.

For our bodies, the change of state is yet future; they are purchased, but not yet redeemed (see Rom 8v23).

With redemption, we enjoy as a present possession the certain knowledge of judicial *“forgiveness of sins”*.

Forgiveness is in the Beloved One; *“even as God for Christ’s sake (in Christ) hath forgiven you”* (ch4v32).

When God forgave me, He was not looking upon me; He was gazing upon Christ and His precious blood.

The Church under grace knows an unqualified, unconditional, plenary forgiveness.

God meets the sinner in their need, and *“according to the riches of His grace”*.

5. Enlightened Regarding Divine Purpose – Knowing *“the mystery of His will”* (vs8-9)

It is of God’s rich grace, and it is *“His good pleasure”*, that we should have enlightenment and intelligence regarding the purpose of God, and revelation of *“the mystery”* that He had kept secret in His heart (ch3v5).

It has always been the character of God to reveal His purpose and His truth to His people (see Gen 18v17).

“I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you” (John 15v15).

God does not desire to hide from us the great purpose which He has for us, and in us, and the apostle Paul is in harmony with that divine purpose for all the saints of God (see ch1v17-18; ch3v3-4,9).

God’s purpose in making these truths known to us is that we may be occupied with them, enjoy them, and that the reality of our blessings might increase in our souls, to turn our hearts away from this world, and in simple dependency towards Him alone.

6. Predestinated to an Inheritance – Sharing Future Millennial Glory with Christ (vs10-11)

“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated ...”

Those marked out beforehand by God to the place of sons (v5), are also marked out to receive an inheritance (v11); the link between sonship and heirship; we are heirs to an inheritance because we are sons.

In v10, the future divine purpose for Christ, connected with *“the dispensation of the fulness of times”*.

The culmination of all the ages of time will be the future administration of the coming millennial age under the stewardship of Christ, when God will *“gather together (head up, JND) in one all things in (the) Christ (Christ & the Church), both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in Him”*.

All things in heaven & on earth will be gloriously reunited under the universal Headship of Christ, He will be preeminent, all manifestly subject to Him, taking character from Him, and His glory filling all things.

In v11, we in the Church, in union with Christ, have a share and inheritance in His future millennial glory.

This is the inheritance which we have *“obtained”* (allotted to us), and to which we have been *“predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will”*.

This is all God’s plan of salvation, what He has purposed, and He will make it all happen.

“When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe ... in that day” (2nd Thess 1v10); when we shall be *“to the praise of His glory”* (v12).

In v11-12, Paul is identifying himself with believing Jews of this day of grace who *“first trusted (forehoped) in Christ”* (v12), those who have pre-empted the time when all Israel will trust in Him.

In v13, *“In whom ye* (i.e. converted Gentiles) *also ...”* (*“trusted”* is in italics) have obtained an inheritance. Gentiles are brought into blessing *“after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation”*.

7. Sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise – The Divine Pledge of Future Glory (vs13-14)

In v13, *“having believed (JND), ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise”*, i.e. at salvation.

God seals the individual who believes in Christ; God sent His Son into the world to secure our salvation, and He has sent the Spirit into our hearts as the inward seal of our salvation (see also 2nd Cor 1v21-22).

The seal of the Spirit within the believer is the evidence and proof of a work of God in the soul.

It is the inward seal of divine ownership, that we belong to God; 2nd Tim 2v19 *“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His”*.

The seal in Scripture speaks of a purpose which is unalterable (see Dan 6v17, Esther 8v8, Matt 27v65-66).

When I believed *“the word of truth”*, God sealed me with His Spirit, the purpose of God in my salvation became unalterable, a purpose that cannot be changed, that no man can reverse, it is eternally sure.

Eph 4v30 *“grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption”*.

The seal of the Spirit ensures preservation & certain deliverance, until taken home to heaven (see Rev 7v3).

The *“Holy Spirit of promise”* (v13) is *“the earnest of our inheritance”* (v14), the pledge of future glory.

This we have *“until the redemption of the purchased possession”* (v14), when the whole world that He purchased at Calvary will come under the Headship of Christ, all truly *“unto the praise of His glory”* (v14).