

Chapter 1

I. Prescript, 1:1–2

***Ephesians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,
To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus:***

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ.... “Apostle is literally “messenger” and has the meaning of a representative, with the **commission and authority to act in the name and on behalf of the one who has sent him**; he is not simply one who delivers a message and nothing else.”¹

Paul “establishes his credentials at the outset, and in so doing draws attention to **the official character of his writing**.”² Paul has apostolic authority given him by Jesus Christ, and in that role, he now proceeds to instruct the Ephesians in the things of God.

by the will of God.... Paul uses this phrase to make the point that he was not a self-appointed apostle but was one because it was *the will of God* that he be so. “He had not appointed himself to this position; God chose him.”³ So, **to ignore Paul, was to ignore God**.

In saying this, Paul is either an egomaniac and should be ignored, or is what he says he is, one sent by God and should be carefully listened to.

To the saints⁴.... “The word “saints” ... does not imply inherent goodness but rather separateness, that is, people set aside to serve God”⁵ “The readers, then, are described in the light of their relationship to God, not primarily, of course, in terms of their actual moral condition, but as his holy people in continuity with the OT designation of Israel (cf. LXX Exod 19:6).”⁶

“And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.” (Exodus 19:6, NKJV)

So, Paul is using the word “holy” [saints] in Ephesians as Moses used it in Exodus, an indicator of a people set apart for God.

Although it is common for some religions to designate just a few special people as saints, in fact in the New Testament, all believers are called saints (holy ones) as are the believers here in Ephesus.

¹ Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians* (UBS Handbook Series; New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 3.

² Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 83.

³ Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 84.

⁴ *saints* ἅγιος “Holy, set apart, sanctified, consecrated, saint.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

⁵ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 27.

LXX Septuagint

⁶ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 5–6.

In the Roman Catholic Church, there are the five steps to sainthood.

“First, the person’s local bishop investigates their life by gathering information from witnesses of their life and any writings they may have written. If the bishop finds them to be worthy of being a saint, then he submits the information that he gathered to the Vatican’s Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Second, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints can choose to reject the application or accept it and begin their own investigation of the person’s life. If the application is accepted, the person may be called *Servant of God*.

Third, if the Congregation for the Causes of Saints approves of the candidate, they can choose to declare that the person lived a heroically virtuous life. This isn’t a declaration that the person is in heaven, but that they pursued holiness while here on earth. If this is indeed found to be the case, the person may be called *Venerable*.

Fourth, to be recognized as someone in heaven requires that a miracle has taken place through the intercession of that person. The miracle is usually a healing. The healing has to be instantaneous, permanent, and complete while also being scientifically unexplainable. Miracles have to be first verified as scientifically unexplainable by a group of independent doctors, then the person is approved by a panel of theologians, and then the final approval lies with the pope. If this is the case, a person is declared a *blessed*.

Fifth, a second miracle is needed in order to declare someone a *saint*. The confirmation of a second miracle goes through the same scrutiny as the first.”⁷

And so, a Saint is born. Of course, none of this is found in the Bible; it’s all made up.

But what does the Bible say one must do to become a saint? In becoming a Christian, one is set apart by God, that is, one becomes a saint. In the Bible all Believers are called saints—whether you have performed miracles or not! “The identification of the readers as ‘saints’ (lit. ‘holy ones’) is Paul’s regular description of Christians (cf. 1 Cor. 1:1, 2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Rom. 1:1; Phil. 1:1).”⁸

But back to our text, Paul was writing to all believers in Asia Minor, and as an inspired author of new revelation from God, to us as well.

Date of Writing

Ephesians was probably written around AD 60-62 while in prison in Rome.

“For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—”
(Ephesians 3:1, NKJV)

“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,” (Ephesians 4:1, NKJV)

⁷ <https://focusoncampus.org/content/how-does-someone-become-a-saint-a-5-step-process>

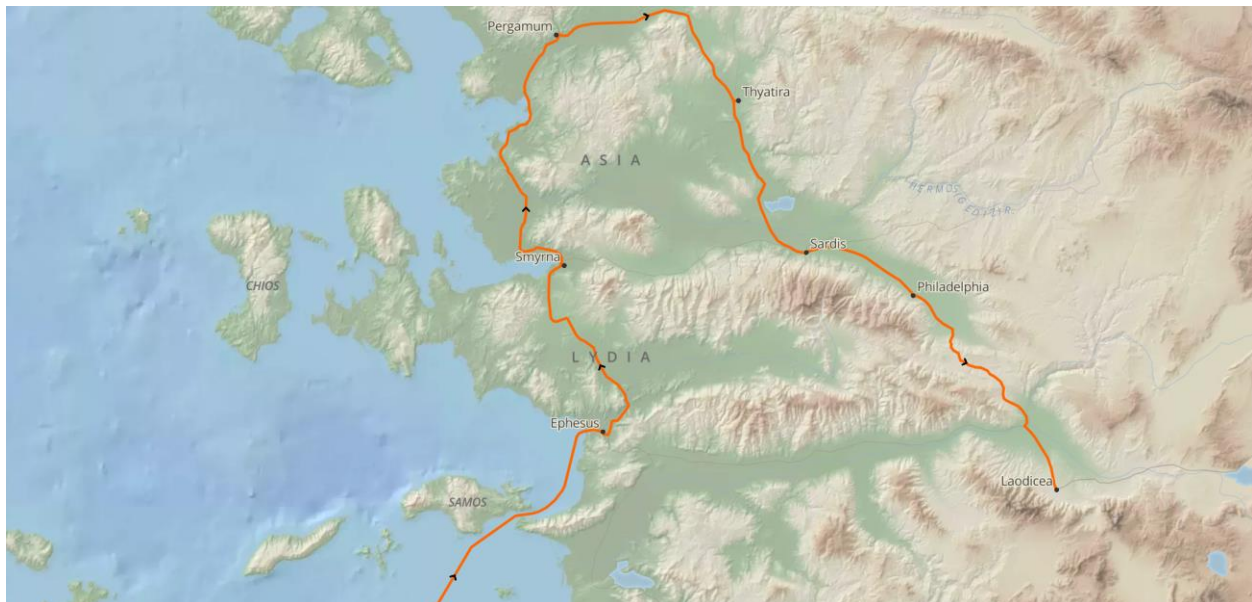
⁸ Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 87.

“for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” (Ephesians 6:20, NKJV)

During this period, it is thought that Paul wrote four “prison epistles,” Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. Paul was released by AD 62 but arrested soon again and in AD 64 he was martyred by Nero.

The advanced nature of Paul’s theology also suggest that this letter was written late in his life.

who are in Ephesus.... “The vast majority of the [Ephesian] manuscripts read ... (‘to the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus’).”⁹ However, some manuscripts have no church name at all. This suggest that this letter may have been a circular letter to various churches in the area—as was the Book of Revelation for instance, (“*John, to the seven churches which are in Asia...*” Revelation 1:4, NKJV). So, like the Book of Revelation, this letter may also have been sent to a variety of churches in Asia Minor with the church at Ephesus being the first to receive it. They then would have passed on a copy to the next church in the circuit. If so, then both John and Paul, both pastors at Ephesus, sent cyclical letters to Ephesus.



This is a map of the churches the *Book of Revelation*. Although not necessarily the same churches, this letter to the Ephesians also appears to be sent to several churches in Asia Minor, starting with Ephesus, the first place the boat would land in that area.

“This is consistent with the internal evidence of the letter ... little in the contents suggests that it was written to a church where Paul has ministered for the best part of three years. There is no mention of ‘individuals or groups among the people addressed; there are no allusions to features or problems in the local situation’.”¹⁰

“Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.” (Acts 20:31, NKJV)

⁹ Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999).

¹⁰ Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 85.

Since we are aware that Paul ministered in Ephesus for three years, we would here expect greetings to old friends. There are none. Why? Probably because this letter was not limited to the Ephesian church but to a collection of churches in Asia Minor, most or all of which Paul never visited and did not know. Therefore, although addressing problems and greeting friends was common to Paul's letter writing, here Paul is not addressing a crowd that he knew very well at all. So, as indicated, the great majority of those that would eventually read this letter in the area of Asia were not known to Paul but were converts in areas that Paul personally had not labored. But because no other apostle had labored there either, Paul was now taking them under his theological wings and instructing them in the teachings of the Christian faith.

Therefore, "We conclude that Ephesians was a general epistle sent to mainly Gentile believers in southwestern Asia Minor, and that it was linked with Ephesus at an early stage, perhaps because of its being a strategic church or because it was one of the several cities to which the letter was sent."¹¹ Indeed, being located on the coast, it was almost certainly the first church and the most important church that would have received the letter. The Ephesians would have made a copy for themselves and sent it on to other churches in Asia Minor. This copying and forwarding of this letter would have given the letter an extensive audience, most of which never met Paul, or he them.

Also, this letter to Ephesus may be the same letter that Paul calls *the epistle from Laodicea*.

"Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea."
(Colossians 4:16, NKJV)

"Since Paul himself directed the Colossians both to see that his letter to them be read 'in the church of the Laodiceans' and that they themselves 'read also the letter from Laodicea', some have thought that this so-called 'letter from Laodicea' was in fact our 'Ephesians', and that he was instructing the churches to exchange the two letters which they had received from him."¹² One point is important here—Tychicus was the bearer of both letters.

Compare these comments by Paul in both letters.

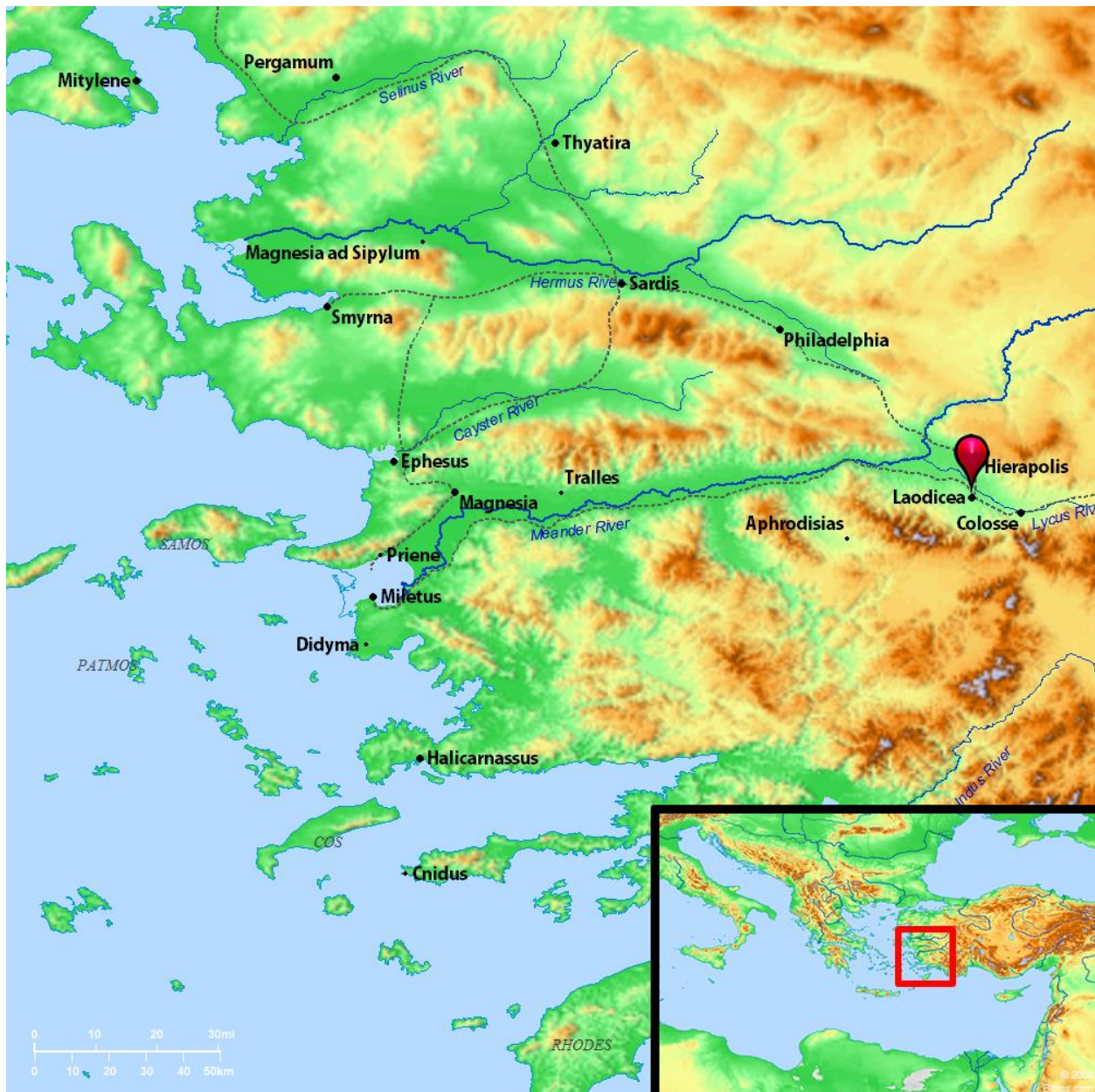
"But that you also may know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you; whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and that he may comfort your hearts." (Ephesians 6:21–22, NKJV)

"Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts," (Colossians 4:7–8, NKJV)

¹¹ Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 86–87.

¹² John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 23–24.

These verses show that Tychicus was the bearer of both letters and that the letter we call Ephesians may in fact be the letter to *Laodicea*, a church Paul had no prior relationship with, and that this letter first passed through Ephesus on its way to this city.



to the faithful¹³.... Or, possibly, *full of faith*. “The second description of the addressees, *faithful in Christ Jesus*, points not so much to their being trustworthy or reliable as to their being ‘believers’ (cf. 2 Cor. 6:15, where the word stands in contrast to ‘unbelievers’; 1 Tim. 4:10, 12; 5:16; 6:2; Tit. 1:6).”¹⁴ It was sent to those *full of faith*, or those *trusting* Christ Jesus, not to just a few of the “faithful.”

in Christ Jesus.... Or, in union with Christ Jesus. The saints addressed in this letter are both “in” Ephesus and “in” Christ Jesus. We also possess this ability to be in one place physically and in another spiritually. They possessed Him and He possessed

¹³ faithful πιστός “pertaining to trusting—‘one who trusts in, trusting.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 376.

¹⁴ Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 87.

them. "...to be a Christian is in essence to be 'in Christ', one with him and with his people."¹⁵

Ephesians 1:2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace¹⁶ **to you and peace**¹⁷.... This greeting consists of two parts, **grace**, a word common to the Greek world and **peace**, a word more common to the Jewish world. These churches would have been populated by Gentiles and Jews.

"**Grace** speaks of God's favor in providing salvation for sinners through Christ's sacrificial death.... **Peace** was used as a common greeting in the Semitic world *shalom* ... denoting the idea of "well-being" **grace** expresses the motivation behind God's gracious work, and **peace**, the effect of God's work."¹⁸

from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The source of these good wishes is both **God the Father** and **Jesus Christ**. There are three words used here to describe Jesus. "'**Jesus**' is his personal name, and the designation "**Lord**" indicates his status as master and his identity with Yahweh.... His designation "**Christ**" is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew word *messiah*; it denotes that he is the promised, anointed one who would bring salvation."¹⁹

The proximity of these two names is expressed in John 10 this way:

"*I and My Father are one.*" (John 10:30, NKJV)

from.... "Since only one preposition (**from**) to denote the source of grace and peace, from both the Father and the Son, it strongly implies that the Father and Son are equal and thus Jesus Christ is divine."²⁰

and.... The use of the word **and** between God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ is significant. The Old Testament would never mention God **and** another like this. That

¹⁵ John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 23.

¹⁶ *Grace* χάρις "Grace, particularly that which causes joy, pleasure, gratification, favor, acceptance, for a kindness granted or desired, a benefit, thanks, gratitude. A favor done without expectation of return; the absolutely free expression of the loving kindness of God to men finding its only motive in the bounty and benevolence of the Giver; unearned and unmerited favor. *Cháris* stands in direct antithesis to ... works, the two being mutually exclusive. God's grace affects man's sinfulness and not only forgives the repentant sinner, but brings joy and thankfulness to him. It changes the individual to a new creature...." Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

¹⁷ *peace* εἰρήνη "Metaphorically peace of mind, tranquility, arising from reconciliation with God and a sense of a divine favor...." Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

¹⁸ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.* (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 29.

¹⁹ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.* (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 30.

²⁰ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.* (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 29.

would imply that this other was in some way on the same level or equal with God. And that is exactly what it does imply in our phrase here for Jesus is equal with the Father.

II. The New Humanity a Divine Creation, 1:3–3:21

A. Introductory Eulogy: Praise for God’s Blessings in Christ, 1:3–14

This introductory eulogy is divided up into three parts as evidenced by the phrase “to the praise of His glory” found as a summary after each section. These are the grammatical markers that alert us to the division of the material. I might add that in the Greek text, verses 3-14 are one sentence. So, this repetitive phrase (to the praise of His glory) is a great help to us that allows us to see how Paul’s thought develops.

1. The Sovereignty of the Father-Past 1:3-6
2. The Administration of the Son-Present 1:7-12
3. The Faithfulness of the Spirit-Future 1:13-14

“God the Father is the one who saves (verses 3, 4, 5); Jesus Christ is the one through whom he saves (verses 3, 4, 5, 6, 7); the Holy Spirit is the effective proof that the salvation is accomplished (verse 13) and the guarantee that it will be brought to its consummation (verse 14).”²¹

1. The Sovereignty of the Father – Past Election 1:3-6

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

This section, 1:3-6, begins with Paul recounting **the Father’s work in eternity past**, the work of **election**.

Blessed²² be.... This word is used three times in this one phrase. “The term “blessed” ... is rather vague in English.”²³ It is less so in Greek where the word is made up of two different words, “good” and “word.” **To bless someone is to speak well of or to say good words to or about them, very much like a eulogy.** Indeed, our English word “eulogy” is simply a transliteration²⁴ of this Greek word—*bless*. It is something of a prayer that good things will happen to someone or a statement that they were themselves good in this life. **Our “good words” (blessings) spoken to God represent our acclaim, approval, admiration, tribute—praise to God.**

the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.... Or, “*praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Indeed, in this verse the NIV and the HCSB bibles translate this word “blessed” as “praise.” And that is what a eulogy is—a praise.

²¹ Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians* (UBS Handbook Series; New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 7.

²² Blessed *εὐλογέω* “to ask God to bestow divine favor on, with the implication that the verbal act itself constitutes a significant benefit....” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic*, 441.

²³ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 29.

²⁴ Transliterate means to exchange the sounds of the letters of one language into the letters of another language that make those same sounds. It does not mean translate.

who has blessed us.... Or, *who blesses us.* "...the Greek verb "to bless" is essentially timeless and need not be translated by the past tense of the verb; it can be taken to mean "who blesses"...."²⁵

God's blessings of us take on a new dimension than our blessings of him. It does so because of his power and willingness to do us good; the blessing reflects this intent. "In OT usage, to be blessed by God meant to receive *benefits* from God such as possessions, prosperity, or power."²⁶

The reason we bless God (speak well of Him) is because God speaks well of us by showering us with benefits. So, we respond in praise or blessings to God. **We bless him because he first blessed us.**

with every spiritual blessing.... Or, *every kind of spiritual blessing.* The idea of receiving *benefits* in blessings continues to be the main point in the New Testament as it was in the Old. In this passage "The nature of the enrichment or benefit is "spiritual." The word **every** makes it clear that there are no spiritual blessings missing, we are the recipients of all of them."²⁷

What are the **spiritual blessings** or *benefits* that we receive from God? **Spiritual** benefits (blessings) are benefits that come from the *Spirit of God.* Such as? Some of our spiritual blessings or benefits are explained in the verses that follow and include "election (1:4), adoption (1:5), grace (1:6), redemption (1:7), forgiveness (1:7), insight (1:8), knowledge of God's secret plan (1:9), and the sealing of the Holy Spirit (1:13)."²⁸ All these will be unpacked in the ensuing verses. They are **examples** of the *spiritual benefits* that come to us from God.

Blessings are not new, the saints of the Old Testament were also the recipients of God's blessings as we see in Deuteronomy 28:1-14, the majority of which were material. The focus of Ephesians, however, is the heavenly or spiritual blessings of God. This does not replace God's material blessings, it adds to it.

in the heavenly²⁹ places.... Or "*the heavenlies.*" The Greek phrase is found in Ephesians five times (1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). The word "places" is added by the translator for clarity. "the term is not an exact synonym for "heaven," thought of as the place removed from the world, where God lives; it has a broader reference. It is the spiritual world, the timeless, supra-material realm where those spiritual events referred to take place."³⁰

²⁵ Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians* (UBS Handbook Series; New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 10.

²⁶ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.* (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 29.

²⁷ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.* (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 29.

²⁸ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.* (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 41.

²⁹ *heavenly* ἐπουράνιος "Heavenly, celestial, what pertains to or is in heaven." Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

³⁰ Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians* (UBS Handbook Series; New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 10–11.

The source of God's blessings is God who inhabits the heavenly realms. The ultimate destination of God's children is also heaven. So, God's blessings in both their origin and destination are heaven. But, "These gracious gifts are not simply future benefits but are a present reality for us, since they have already been won for us by God's saving action in Christ."³¹ We are **now** blessed, and we **will be** blessed.

in Christ.... The blessings of God are for those who are "*in Christ*." To be "*in Christ*" is to be in the place of blessing; to be out of Christ is to be in the place of judgment. But, **how does one become "*in Christ*?"**

Ephesians 1:4 just as He [God] chose us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,

This verse, 4, and the next, 5, **explain and illustrate verse 3—"*who has blessed us*."** What follows is how the Father blesses us.

just as.... "The initial adverb "even" [just as] introduces the long and detailed description of the way in which God blessed us. verse 4 makes specific the truth that is stated in general terms in verse 3."³²

He chose³³ ***us....*** Or, *He chose us for himself*. "The Greek middle voice of the verb "to choose" allows the translation "God chose us for himself."³⁴ **The first spiritual blessing mentioned** is God's **choice or election** of **us**. To choose is to select some from among many options. **It is "He" or God that does the choosing. It is the "us" that are chosen.** The "**us**" represents not only Paul's immediate audience, the members of the churches of Asia Minor, but all Christians as well. Choosing a people is not a new idea found only in Paul. It is prominent in the Old Testament as well.

*"For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has **chosen you** to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth."* (Deuteronomy 7:6, NKJV)

*"For you are a holy people to the Lord your God, and **the Lord has chosen you to be a people for Himself**, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth."* (Deuteronomy 14:2, NKJV)

God's **choosing** determines who are "*in Christ*." However, human nature does not suggest this order or even like it; we prefer to think that "we chose him." So, Paul's comment flies in the face of our desire to be the chooser. The flesh, taking all the credit it can, insists that we chose God, that we are the prime actor and God is the reactor. That is a common belief in Christian circles today. Man seeks to give himself as much credit and glory as possible. Paul, asserting that all credit go to God, insists that He is the one who does the choosing, that he is the prime actor and we are the reactor. This

³¹ Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 97.

³² Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians* (UBS Handbook Series; New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 11.

³³ *chose* ἐκλέγομαι "To choose, select, choose for oneself ... giving favor to the chosen subject, keeping in view a relationship to be established between the one choosing and the object chosen. It involves preference and selection from among many choices." Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

³⁴ Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians* (UBS Handbook Series; New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 11.

type of theology is called Arminianism.³⁵ The theology of the Reformed Churches, is often called Calvinism or simply Reformed Theology.³⁶

In Acts, Luke expresses this election using a different word—*appointed*.

“Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed³⁷ to eternal life believed.” (Acts 13:48, NKJV)

Notice that Luke did not say that as many as chose God, believed. But in fact, it was those that had been chosen or appointed by God that believed. God’s choosing came first, belief came second.

in Him.... Salvation does not exist outside of “Him” or Jesus. Outside of Jesus, there is no salvation.

“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12, NKJV)

So, to the question “You don’t believe that (Jews, Muslims, Buddhist, Agnostics, Baptist or Presbyterians) _____ go to hell, do you? If Christ’s name, “Christian,” is not on that line, the answer is, yes, I do. “...***no other name under heaven....***”

before the foundation of the world.... “The great theme of divine election is the first to be introduced as Paul’s mind reaches back before creation, *before time began*, into eternity in which only God himself existed.”³⁸

*“who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus **before time began**,” (2 Timothy 1:9, NKJV)*

“To say that election in Christ took place before the foundation of the world is to underline that it was provoked not by historical contingency or human merit, but solely by God’s sovereign grace.”³⁹

³⁵ Arminianism. The five points of the Remonstrance asserted that: (1) election (and condemnation on the day of judgment) was conditioned by the rational faith or nonfaith of man; (2) the Atonement, while qualitatively adequate for all men, was efficacious only for the man of faith; (3) unaided by the Holy Spirit, no person is able to respond to God’s will; (4) grace is not irresistible; and (5) believers are able to resist sin but are not beyond the possibility of falling from grace. The crux of Remonstrant Arminianism lay in the assertion that human dignity requires an unimpaired freedom of the will.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Arminianism>

³⁶ Calvinism is known by an acronym: T.U.L.I.P.; (1) Total Depravity (also known as Total Inability and Original Sin); (2) Unconditional Election; (3) Limited Atonement (also known as Particular Atonement); (4) Irresistible Grace; (5) Perseverance of the Saints. <https://www.calvinistcorner.com/tulip.htm>

³⁷ *appointed* *ῥάσω* “to assign someone to a particular task, function, or role—to appoint, to designate, to assign, to give a task to.” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 482.

³⁸ Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 98.

³⁹ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 23.

As a side note, we see that, “God’s election of believers *in Christ* before creation presupposes Christ’s pre-existence (cf. Col. 1:15–16).”⁴⁰ In other words, Jesus was not a created being but was always part of the divine Godhead.

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.” (Colossians 1:15–16, NKJV)

that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.... Election carries with it the responsibility of holiness. “Israel’s election was not for her own self-indulgence but for the blessing of the nations: it was a privilege but also a summons to service.”⁴¹ It is for us as well.

that.... Focusing on the word **that**, some insists that this election is not for salvation but for sanctification—“**that we should be holy and without blame.**” In this view, the word **that** explains the purpose of our election, our election was to sanctification not to salvation. There are problems with this view. The biggest one is that the word **that** is not in the Greek text. It simply reads, “**He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, we should be holy and without blame before Him.**” First there is election to salvation and that is followed by sanctification.

So, it turns out in the thinking of some, that we are actually the ones who chose God; His election is not for the *lost*, but for the *saved*, for the sanctification of those that elect Him. He is not the author of salvation, but he is the author of sanctification. Man is sovereign in salvation, but God is sovereign in sanctification. All this is foreign to the text—but you should know that people actually say things like this. But, verse 5 clears this up; it will go on and explain that the nature of the election is “*to adoption as sons.*” This phrase refers to salvation, although we don’t want to put much distance between salvation and sanctification for the purpose of our adoption is to be *obedient* sons.

holy⁴².... **without blame**⁴³.... **Holy** is same word as found in verse 1, that we are saints [holy], which is our positional standing before God. But in verse 4, we go beyond positional holiness to actual or experiential holiness, **without blame**. The terms in verse 4 refer to “ethical holiness and freedom from moral blemish.”⁴⁴ “If ἅγιος [holy] in 1:1 denoted primarily status, here in 1:4 it indicates the moral condition that belongs to such a status.”⁴⁵ We are not saved to benefit ourselves by avoiding hell and nothing else, although that seems to be the attitude of many Christians. Avoiding hell is

⁴⁰ Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999).

⁴¹ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 23.

⁴² *holy ἅγιος* “Its fundamental idea is separation, consecration, devotion to the service of Deity, sharing in God’s purity and abstaining from earth’s defilement.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

⁴³ *without blame* “Spotless, without blemish. In Class. Gr., used as a technical word to designate the absence of something amiss in a sacrifice or something which would render it unworthy to be offered....” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

⁴⁴ Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 101.

⁴⁵ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (vol. 42; Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 24.

certainly a benefit of our salvation, **but holy and blameless are the positive mission that God sets before us who are saved.**

The significance of this is explained in Hebrews. “The “*holiness without which no one will see the Lord*” (Heb. 12:14) is progressively wrought within the lives of believers on earth by the Spirit, and will be consummated in glory at the *parousia*, the time of the “redemption” anticipated in Eph. 1:14; 4:30. And the clear implication for believers is that even now they should live according to the divine intention.”⁴⁶ Nothing short of holiness for the believer will do, for ***we should be holy and with blame before Him*** (1:4).

in love.... Grammarians are not sure where “*in love*” goes. If with verse 4 as “*before Him in love*,” then the meaning is that believers “*should be*” holy, without blame, and loving people. If the phrase goes with verse 5, “*in love having predestined us*,” then it is God who loves. Sense both meanings are true, certainty in the reading has not been established.

Ephesians 1:5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself [God], according to the good pleasure of His [God’s] will,

Paul clarifies what he meant when he said, “***He chose us in Him***” (1:4) or, as he says here, He ***predestined***⁴⁷ ***us***. He chose us in verse 4 is synonymous with *having predestined us* in verse 5. “He chose us ... by predestining us....”⁴⁸

The Greek word for ***predestined*** consists of two words: “before” and “to determine” or to *determine before*. “The word literally refers to deciding upon something beforehand.”⁴⁹ “It is used only of God, and **it serves to emphasize God’s sole and complete initiative and authority in the experience of salvation, his independence of action based on a decision already made in the past, in God’s own eternal time.**⁵⁰ **At that time, or “before the foundation of the world” (1:4), he determined beforehand (predestined) that we would be adopted, that is, become a part of his family.**

to adoption⁵¹ ***as sons....*** God’s choice or predestination before the foundation of the world was for ***adoption as sons***.

A cultural note: God’s adoption addresses both men and women, however, to translate the Greek word ***sons*** as “children” although right at one point is wrong at another. Using ***sons***, we get the full meaning of *heir* which in the ancient world was limited to

⁴⁶ Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 101.

⁴⁷ *predestined* προορίζω “To determine or decree beforehand (Acts 4:28; Rom. 8:29, 30; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:5, 11).” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

⁴⁸ Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians* (UBS Handbook Series; New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 13.

⁴⁹ Derek R. Brown, Miles Custis, and Matthew M. Whitehead, *Lexham Bible Guide: Ephesians* (ed. Douglas Mungum; Lexham Bible Guide; Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2013), Eph 1:21.

⁵⁰ Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians* (UBS Handbook Series; New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 13–14.

⁵¹ *adoption* υιοθεσία “Adoption, receiving into the relationship of a child. In the NT, figuratively meaning adoption, sonship, spoken of the state of those whom God through Christ adopts as His sons and thus makes heirs of His covenanted salvation.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

sons. So, the use of **sons**, conveys that idea from that culture. But in fact, all in Christ are heirs, men and women.

Adoption is made up of two words “son” and “place.” Adoption is the placing of a child from one family into another family, not by natural birth, but by the choice of the new family. God determined from eternity past to place his elect, us, into his family.

In the Roman world, “Once the young lad was adopted into the new family, he was no longer accountable to his natural father, only to his newly acquired father. Likewise, believers are now accountable to their new father, the heavenly father, and no longer to the old father, Satan (cf. John 8:38, 44), the ruler of the realm of the air (2:2).”⁵²

“Often the adopted child was a slave.... Adoption would bestow the child with the *benefits and responsibilities* of a family member. Paul seems to be drawing on this aspect of adoption in Romans when he contrasts the “spirit of slavery” with the “spirit of adoption” (Rom 8:15). Because of their adoption as children of God, believers become co-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:16–17).”⁵³ Notice the cultural use of “heir” in this quote. This point is central to our context as well.

This is not the first time God adopted children.

“who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises;” (Romans 9:4, NKJV)

Before the adoption of Gentiles in the Church, Israel was adopted to be the people of God. What happened, isn't *biological Israel* still adopted? Notice, this is not the same question as “Aren't Jews still adopted.” It's not even the same question as “Isn't Israel still adopted.” The answer to both is that **the Israel of God today consists of Jews and Gentiles who have been adopted and are now “in Christ.”** But **Israel as a biological nation**, what about that? This issue is much confused in the current Christian world. So, let's take some time to examine it.

Jesus in a parable discusses two sons.

“But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go, work today in my vineyard.’ He answered and said, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, ‘I go, sir,’ but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said to Him, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him.” (Matthew 21:28–32, NKJV)

This parable is immediately followed by a second that explains the behavior of the first son toward the second—although the nature of the story changes in order to do this.

⁵² Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 33.

⁵³ Derek R. Brown, Miles Custis, and Matthew M. Whitehead, *Lexham Bible Guide: Ephesians* (ed. Douglas Mangum; Lexham Bible Guide; Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2013), Eph 1:21.

“Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.’ So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. “Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?” They said to Him, “He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.” Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’ “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.”” (Matthew 21:33–44, NKJV)

Hear another parable, this one in different form again addresses the behavior of the first son to the second.

“The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. Again, he sent out other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.”’ But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.’ So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.” (Matthew 22:2–10, NKJV)

These parables explain why there was a new adoption; it is because: “those who were invited were not worthy.” So, the king “sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.”

So now a new adoption is taking place. *“So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.”*

“Paul asserts that adoption as sons was one of the particular privileges belonging to Israel (Rom. 9:4). Now it belongs to Christians (cf. Rom. 9:26; 2 Cor. 6:18).”⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 102–103.

“And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ There they shall be called sons of the living God.” (Romans 9:26, NKJV)

So, to the question “isn’t *biological Israel* still adopted?” the answer is no. Salvation is by grace not race. Adoption is now of Jews *and* Gentiles.

But we must not think that the second group, Gentiles, is any better than the first, Jews. Both are the objects of God’s grace, none deserving in themselves, it is still “**the good pleasure of His will.**” Now all that are saved, Jews and Gentiles, are a part of God’s new covenant community, the Church, where there is no distinction between them.

by⁵⁵ **Jesus Christ....** “This personal relationship is made possible only *through Jesus Christ*, a highly significant expression which points to his agency.”⁵⁶ The work that made this possible was his virgin birth, sinless life, substitutionary death, bodily resurrection and accession to the Father. All that is laid to our account, just as if we had done all those things ourselves; this is what “**by Jesus Christ**” means.

according to the good pleasure⁵⁷ **of His will**⁵⁸.... A natural question upon reading the prior material would be “What is the basis of God’s decision to do all this?” “**Why did he choose (1:4), predestine (1:5) and adopt (1:5)?**” The tendency is to look for some reason found in us for that decision. But here Paul makes it clear that this is not the case but that this decision was found only in God, in eternity past in “**the good pleasure of His will.**” But, what does that actually mean?

good pleasure can be translated desire, favor, kind intention, and goodwill. This word “has warm and personal connotations, and draws attention to God’s willingness and joy to do good.”⁵⁹

will “signifies that which is purposed, or intended....”⁶⁰

Perhaps the best summary would be something like, “**the kind intention that he favored us with**” from eternity past. To humans that is vague; we are looking for something like: “He was good, so God saved him.” Now that makes sense. But, of course, it’s wrong. But still, that is the way we think. Instead, here we learn that in eternity past God chose

⁵⁵ *by* δία “Through, throughout ... Of place implying motion, through a place....” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

⁵⁶ Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 103.

⁵⁷ *good pleasure* εὐδοκία...

① state or condition of being kindly disposed, *good will*...;

② state or condition of being favored, *favor, good pleasure* this would refer to the persons upon whom divine favor rests

③ desire, usually directed toward something that causes satisfaction or favor, *wish, desire* William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 404–405.

⁵⁸ *will* θέλημα...

① what one wishes to happen, objective sense, *what is willed*

② the act of willing or desiring, subjective sense, *will*. William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 447.

⁵⁹ Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 103.

⁶⁰ Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 103.

to love us and then save us. We don't get an answer to the type of "why" we like to ask. That is hidden in God; all we know is that, it **"gave him great pleasure" to do so**. And that is amazing!

Ephesians 1:6 to the praise of the glory of His [God's] grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

to the praise⁶¹ of the glory⁶² of His grace⁶³.... Or, "praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son."⁶⁴ This is found also in 1:12 and 1:14; each of these verses ends a section in this eulogy. The phrase means something like this, **"The final consequence, to which all of God's plan leads, is that the new humanity shall "praise his glory" (verses 6, 12, 14)."**⁶⁵

This verse could also read something like, "to the applause [praise] of his amazing thoughts [glory] from his undeserving mercy [grace]." But, where did "thoughts" come from in this phrase? Interestingly, the word "glory" originally contained the idea of thought or opinion. Looking at it that way, God thought up this plan, therefore, these were glorious thoughts, this was a glories plan. Of course, "Glory also speaks of the splendour and brightness of the divine presence."⁶⁶

The result of verse 5, our predestination to adoption as sons, is **the applause of the universe to God for thinking all this up!**

of His grace.... Grace is an undeserved favor, the opposite of a reward for work.

So, the universe applauds [praises] God's amazing [glorious] idea whose origin was in the unearned favor [grace] that he pours out on his chosen ones [the predestined], all driven by his own kind intention and goodwill [the good pleasure of his will] toward his creation.

by which He made us accepted⁶⁷.... Or, perhaps better, ***by which He highly favored us***. The only other place this word is used is in Luke 1.

"And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" (Luke 1:28, NKJV)

⁶¹ *praise* ἔπαινος "Applause, commendation, praise, approbation...." Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

⁶² *glory* δόξα "Etymologically, the word primarily means thought or opinion, especially favorable human opinion, and thus in a secondary sense reputation, praise, honor (true and false), splendor, light, perfection, rewards (temporal and eternal)." Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

⁶³ *grace* χάρις "A favor done without expectation of return; the absolutely free expression of the loving kindness of God to men finding its only motive in the bounty and benevolence of the Giver; unearned and unmerited favor. Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

⁶⁴ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*. (vol. 16; Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 33–34.

⁶⁵ Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians* (UBS Handbook Series; New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 7.

⁶⁶ Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 131.

⁶⁷ *accepted....* Χαριτώ "To grace, highly honor or greatly favor. In the NT spoken only of the divine favor, as to the virgin Mary in Luke 1:28...." Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

in the Beloved. Acceptance before God is dependent on being “***in the Beloved***”(1:6) or “*in Christ*” (1:3), or “*before him*” 1:4, or “*by Jesus Christ*” 1:5. Paul doesn’t want you to miss it!

“And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:17, NKJV)

“And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” (Mark 9:7, NKJV)

As a reminder, this is our outline:

The Sovereignty of the Father-Past 1:3-6;

The Administration of the Son-Present 1:7-12;

The Faithfulness of the Spirit-Future 1:13-14.