

Spiritual Blessings in Christ: An Exegetical Examination of Ephesians 1:3–14 and Implications for Christian Living

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Abstract

The central tenets in Paul's epistle to Ephesians include soteriology and ecclesiology. Ephesians 1:3–14 details the spiritual blessings that come from God's redemptive plan and work. Each member of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is actively involved in the salvation process from the beginning. Paul instructs that believers in Christ have been chosen (v.4), predestined to a divine adoption (v.5), redeemed (v.7), have received the mystery of God's will (v.9), and have been sealed with the Holy Spirit, the guarantee of the future inheritance (vv.11–14). The exegetical method has been used to interpret the passage. In this chapter, God's grand plan for human salvation from the eternity past is revealed. As a result, Paul praises God for his sovereign will, good pleasure, and the richness of his grace. Also, implications of the study for Christian living are considered.

Keywords: In Christ, Believers, Spiritual blessings, Adoption, Redemption, Inheritance.

Introduction

Ephesians 1:3–14 reveals the spiritual blessing that believers in Christ have received. Believers have been chosen (v.4), predestined to a divine adoption (v.5), redeemed (v.7), have received the mystery of God's will (v.9), and have been sealed with the Holy Spirit, the guarantee of the future inheritance (vv.11–14). Spiritual blessings are spiritual resources from God in and through Christ.¹ For clarity, "They are spiritual not merely because they pertain to the soul but because they are derived from the Holy Spirit, whose

¹ Stott, John, God's New Society. *The Message of Ephesians*, (Downers Grove, IL Intervarsity Press, 2012), 34–35.

presence and influence are the great blessing purchased by Christ.”² Each member of the Trinity is a participant in the bestowal of the blessings; “God the Father planned our salvation (1:3–6); God the Son purchased our salvation by his death on the Cross (1: 7–12), and God the Holy Spirit protects our salvation as the seal (1:13 –14).”³ Apostle Paul, in Ephesians 1, praises God for the blessings that have given believers a new identity and hope. Christians need to understand how these blessings inform their identity and day-day living.

Background Information

Apostle Paul planted the church in Ephesus after spending three years in this key ancient city during his third missionary journey (Acts 18:18–21; 19; 20:17–38). He wrote the letter to the Ephesians during his last imprisonment in Rome (Eph 3:1, 4:1; Acts 27:1–28:16) around AD 61–63. In the introduction section of the letter, he identifies himself and then proceeds in a typically Pauline style to ascribe his apostolic authority to the will of God (Eph 1:1). Ephesians has been seen as representing the crown of Paulism. Some scholars who dispute Pauline authorship cite doctrinal differences with other epistles; however, such reasons do not provide an adequate basis for dissimilar authorship.⁴ Sanders rightly argues that Ephesians is Pauline until proved non-Pauline.

Paul’s audience in Ephesus were both Jews and Gentiles (2:11). The Jews had the Old Testament background, but the Gentiles came from a pagan and polytheistic religious background.⁵ The church at Ephesus knew that Paul was imprisoned because of the gospel (3:1, 4:1; 6:20). Paul wrote the letter to establish the Ephesians on the right doctrinal foundation (1:15–23, 3:14–19).⁶ He instructs believers on the knowledge of Christ and highlights some practical considerations for believers.

Exegesis of Ephesians 1:3–14

The Role of the Father in the Planning of Salvation (vv.3–6)

Greek Text: 3 Εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ εὐλόγησας ἡμᾶς ἐν πάσῃ εὐλογίᾳ πνευματικῇ ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν Χριστῷ, 4 καθὼς ἐξελέξατο ἡμᾶς ἐν αὐτῷ

2 Charles, Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle in Ephesians*, (Baker Book House. Grand Rapids. Michigan, 1982.1982), 28.

3 Gary Gromacki, The Plan and Power of the Father in Ephesians. *Journal of Ministry and Theology*. JMAT 19:2 (Fall 2015), 9.

4 F.J.A. Hort, *Prolegomena to St. Paul’s Epistles to the Romans and Ephesians*, (London: Macmillan, 1985), 123.

5 Clinton E. Arnold, *Romans to Philemon. Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 304.

6 John Calvin, *Sermons on the Epistle to the Ephesians*. (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1979), 4.

πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου, εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ, 5 προορίσας ἡμᾶς εἰς υἰοθεσίαν διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς αὐτόν, κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ, 6 εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ ἧς ἐχαρίτωσεν ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ ἡγαπημένῳ.⁷

Translation: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly realms in Christ, (4) just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world was laid, to be holy and blameless before him; in love (5) he pre-ordained us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (6) resulting in praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed upon us in the Beloved.⁸

Apostle Paul commences his doxology with the adjective εὐλογητὸς (blessed be) in the predicate state, which refers to God alone. The term εὐλογητὸς here denotes ‘repute’ or being well-spoken of.⁹ This is followed by the phrase, ὁ Θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ). He identifies the One to be blessed as ὁ θεὸς (the God) through his relationship with Christ as a πατὴρ (Father). The (God) and (Father) are joined by the conjunction καὶ (and) with God having the article ὁ (the) and the Father having none, based on the Granville Sharp theory, ὁ Θεός, and πατὴρ refer to the same Person.¹⁰ The reason for blessing the Father is because he has blessed us (ὁ εὐλόγησας ἡμᾶς). The phrase ὁ εὐλόγησας is a substantival participle; while the verb εὐλόγησας is a resultative aorist focusing on the conclusion of the action of blessing. The personal pronoun ἡμᾶς refers to all those in Christ. In the last part of the verse, he enumerates the nature of the blessing, εὐλογία πνευματικῇ ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν Χριστῷ (with every spiritual blessing in heavenly realms in Christ). The adjective πνευματικῇ is a dative of sphere; these are spiritual blessings as opposed to physical ones. The dative ἐπουρανίοις in the phrase ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν Χριστῷ is also a dative of sphere; the blessings are experienced in the heavenly realm. Also, a dative of place can bring the idea of “heavenly places” where Christ is seated (v.20). Those who are in Christ (who have faith in Christ) enjoy these blessings ἐν Χριστῷ.

7 Barbara Aland et al., eds, *The Greek New Testament, Fifth Revised Edition*, 4th Corrected Printing (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2018). This is the Greek text used throughout the paper.

8 The author’s translation that is used throughout the research.

9 Marvin R. Vincent, D.D., *Word Studies in the New Testament Volumes 3, 4*. The Ages Digital Library Commentary. Ages Software Albany, or USA Version 1.0 1996.

10 Daniel Wallace. *Greek Grammar. Beyond the Basics*. An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament, (Zondervan, 2006), 220.

Believers are not deficient in spiritual blessing since God has supplied them with every spiritual blessing. Exclusively, it is when one is in Christ that believers enjoy these blessings. The blessings have their foundation and reason in Christ. I concur with Stuart that “believers are boundlessly rich because of Christ and God the boundless giver.”¹¹ Thus, believers are to praise God in response to his gracious and loving acts.

The first part of verse 4 starts with an adverb καθὼς (just as) to introduce the long and detailed description of how God has blessed believers. God the Father, ἐξελέξατο ἡμᾶς ἐν αὐτῷ πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου (just as he chose us in him before the foundations of the world were laid). The aorist indicative 3rd person ἐξελέξατο (he chose) resultative aorist, looking at the conclusion of the action. The first spiritual blessing is that believers have been chosen by God, not because of merit but his choice, grace, and power (see also Eph 2:8). The phrase ἐν αὐτῷ (in him) refers back to Christ. Paul profoundly reveals that this gracious act of choosing was done in Christ πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου (before the foundation of the world was laid). In other words, God’s choice was made “before eternity, time and creation.”¹² He planned the human salvation plan and implemented the blueprint according to His sovereign will (v.11). His choice was not without a purpose. Using an infinitive of purpose (εἶναι), Paul further states that believers were chosen εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ (to be holy and blameless before him; in love). Believers have been chosen, out of love, to conform to the image of Christ who is ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους (holy and blameless). The use of the phrase ἐν ἀγάπῃ (in love) is his motivation, and the means is the shed blood of his Son.¹³

In verse 5, Paul gives the second spiritual blessing. God the Father προορίσας ἡμᾶς εἰς υἰοθεσίαν διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς αὐτόν (he pre-ordained us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to himself). The aorist verb προορίσας (pre-ordained) is a resultative aorist which has in view the concluded act of God to believers. The verb means “to pre-ordain is to ordain beforehand, to predetermine and does with purposes.”¹⁴ According to Keener, “God pre-ordained Israel in Abraham to be his covenant people and adopted them as his children who fell short of

¹¹ Stuart Olyott, *Alive in Christ. Welwyn Commentary Series. Ephesians Simply Explained*, (Evangel Press, 1994), 17.

¹² Robert G. Gratcher and Eugene A. Nida, *A translator’s Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians*, (United Bible Society, 1982), 11.

¹³ John Lewis, *Doing Theology through the Gates of Heaven. A Bible Study on Ephesians 1:3-14*. ERS (2004) 28:4, 368.

¹⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe. *Be Rich. An Expository Study of the Epistle to the Ephesians*, (Victor Books, SP Publications, 1981), 19.

the covenant as per the Old Testament. In this, Paul explains that, in a practical sense, one becomes a member of God's covenant by Christ, not by one's background."¹⁵ The subsequent phrase has a combination of εἰς and υἰοθεσίαν, which is an adverbial accusative with benefit in focus. The adoption concept expresses the believer's special relationship with God, implying access to special privileges, communion, and rights of inheritance. Believers are adopted into God's household (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:5). Gaebelein underscores that "Under Roman law, an adopted son enjoyed the same status and privileges as a real son."¹⁶ Foulkes rightly argues, "because of sin, that privilege was forfeited, but by the grace, in and through Christ, restoration to 'son-ship' is made possible."¹⁷ The believer's agency through which the predestination happens is διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (through Jesus Christ), the agent God used to make us his children. It has the idea that God makes us his own through what Jesus accomplished. Believers are conformed to God's image of his Son (Rom. 8:29), thus use of εἰς αὐτόν (to himself). God the Father pre-ordained believers for adoption κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ (according to the good pleasure of his will). God's predestination happened according to his will. The act of God's choosing was εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ ἧς ἐχαρίτωσεν ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ ἡγαπημένῳ (to the in praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed upon us in the Beloved).

The use of the term δόξα (glory) has been used as an attribute of grace (χάρις). God should be praised for his glorious grace toward believers. Whenever we praise God for his doings, we also learn to praise him for who he is in our lives.¹⁸ Paul describes the grace of God as the unmerited favor God bestowed upon us in ἡγαπημένῳ (Beloved). The use of the phrase ἐν τῷ ἡγαπημένῳ (in the Beloved) in the expression of how grace has come to believers and continues the idea already found ἐν Χριστῷ (1:3), ἐν αὐτῷ (1:4) and διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (1:5).¹⁹ It shows God's absolute love in the sense that God the Father generously bestowed upon believers. The phrase "in the Beloved" means "God's dear Son made this possible."²⁰ Peter

¹⁵ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary. New Testament*, (Intervarsity Press. 1993), 541.

¹⁶ Gaebelein, Frank E. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1, 2 Thessalonians, 1, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, v.11: With the NIV of the Holy Bible, (Pickering & I, Zondervan, 1978), 24.

¹⁷ Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians*. Tyndale NT Commentary, (Intervarsity Press, 1999), 56.

¹⁸ Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies. Ephesians and Colossians in the Greek New Testament*, (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1981), 38.

¹⁹ Peter T. O'Brien, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary. The Letter to the Ephesians*, (Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 26.

²⁰ Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians*. (United Bible Societies, 1982), 16.

O'Brien rightly observes, "God's believers' election to be his children is intimately related to their being in Christ the Chosen One."²¹ Paul declares God as the architect of the salvation plan and giver of every spiritual blessing. God chose believers before the foundation of the world and has given believers a new identity. The spiritual blessing of being chosen and predestination into adoption as sons flows from Christ.

The Role of God the Son in Purchasing Believer's Redemption (vv.7–12)

Greek Text: Verse 7: ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν παραπτωμάτων, κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ, 8 ἥς ἐπερίσσευσεν εἰς ἡμᾶς ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ φρονήσῃ 9 γνωρίσας ἡμῖν τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ, κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν αὐτοῦ ἣν προέθετο ἐν αὐτῷ 10 εἰς οἰκονομίαν τοῦ πληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν, ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ, τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐν αὐτῷ, 11 ἐν ᾧ καὶ ἐκληρώθημεν προορισθέντες κατὰ πρόθεσιν τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐνεργοῦντος κατὰ τὴν βουλὴν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ, 12 εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης αὐτοῦ τοὺς προηλπικότας ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ.

Translation: In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace (8) which he caused to superabound toward us in every wisdom and understanding, (9) he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him, (10) to be administered upon the fullness of time, to gather together all things in Christ, the things in heaven, and the things on earth; in him: (11) in whom we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who worked out all things after the counsel of his will, (12) so that we who first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

The section starts with the prepositional phrases, ἐν ᾧ (in him) where the preposition 'ἐν' is interpreted as a dative of sphere; the relative pronoun ᾧ refers back to Christ. The present indicative verb ἔχομεν (we have) is a static present, focusing on the state of things. The third spiritual blessing is that believers have been redeemed. Believers in Christ already have τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν (redemption). They have been freed in Christ. Grudem remarks that the word 'redemption' in its metaphorical sense refers to the death of Jesus, which paid the ransom price.²² The work of Jesus on the cross is interpreted in various Scriptures as bringing redemption (Acts 20:28; Rom 3:24; Col 1:14).

²¹ Ibid., 26.

²² Wayne, Grudem. *Systematic Theology; An Introduction to Biblical Doctrines*. (Nottingham; Intervarsity Press, 1994), 580.

Paul uses the phrase *διὰ τοῦ αἵματος* (through his blood) as a genitive of means, “It is the redeemer’s shed blood that cleanses the guilty.”²³ He purchased believers with his own blood, “The price paid for man’s redemption from sin was the very lifeblood of Christ himself poured out in death.”²⁴ In the Old Testament, God has redeemed Israel from bondage through the Lamb’s Passover’s blood. The blood of animal sacrifices connoted that the price paid for forgiveness was life.²⁵ That which was pre-figured in the Levitical System was appreciated at the cross when Christ died and ransomed men from sin (Leviticus 17:11). The blood of Christ was the means through which redemption was secured for believers.

Believers have been forgiven and delivered from the mastery of sin. This is depicted in the phrase *τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν παραπτωμάτων* (forgiveness of sins). Redemption is equated to the forgiveness of sins, for it involves rescue from God’s just judgment on our trespasses.²⁶ Both redemption and forgiveness are *κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ* (according to the riches of his grace). This is because God abounds in love and grace (Ex 34:6; Rom 5:15). Therefore, believers have nothing to boast about regarding their deliverance and pardon of sins; because it is all obtained by God’s grace.

Further, verse 8 continues the discussion on “the riches of his grace” from verse 6. The spiritual blessings are given believers because of the riches of his grace; *ἧς ἐπερίσσευσεν εἰς ἡμᾶς ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ φρονήσῃ* (which he caused to superabound toward us in every wisdom and understanding). The phrase *ἧς ἐπερίσσευσεν εἰς ἡμᾶς* (which he caused to superabound toward us), relates to the phrase in verse 6, “which he freely bestowed upon us.”²⁷ God’s grace has abounded toward believers in great measure. The resultative aorist verb *ἐπερίσσευσεν* (superabounded) has an implication of an action completed in the past, but its effects are still felt. Paul adds that God’s grace superabounds to believers’ *ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ φρονήσῃ* (in every wisdom and understanding).

23 F.F. Bruce, E.K Simpson, *The Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament, (WM, B. Eerdmans Publishing Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1982), 29.

24 Frank E. Gaebelein, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1, 2 Thessalonians*, 29.

25 Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary. New Testament*, 542.

26 Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, 106.

27 Rudolf Schnackenburg. *The Epistle to the Ephesians. A Commentary*, (T, &T. Clark, 2001), 56. He argues that the expression “according to the riches of his grace” is nothing other than a resumption and intensification of the thought in verse 6.

God's grace brings every kind of wisdom and insight. Therefore, the recipients of God's grace have the wisdom and insight bestowed upon them. Turaki comments, "wisdom is the knowledge of the factual truth of a state, rather than of surface realities while understanding, on the other hand, is the sensitivity required to differentiate between reality and falsehood."²⁸ Biblically, wisdom is the capacity to comprehend God's things, whereas insight is the capacity to apply that understanding in hands-on matters.

In verse 9, Paul states the fourth spiritual blessing. He writes, *γνωρίσας ἡμῖν τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ* (he made known to us the mystery of his will). God has revealed his will to believers through Christ, prophets, and apostles. The revealed *μυστήριον* is "a new disclosure concerning God's purpose for its establishment, the one to come in future, in power, and in glory has already entered into the world in advance in a hidden form to work secretly within and among men."²⁹ Paul instructs about the mystery that had been hidden for long but now revealed; that "the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ through the gospel" (3:6). The *θέλημά* (will) of God "is the divine pathway toward Christ-likeness."³⁰ God revealed the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure as he purposed in Christ.

In verse 10, he writes, *εἰς οἰκονομίαν τοῦ πληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν, ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ, τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐν αὐτῷ*, (to be administered upon the fullness of time, to gather together all things in Christ, the things in heaven, and the things on earth; in him). The preposition *εἰς* and accusative *οἰκονομίαν* (administration/stewardship) is an adverbial accusative with purpose as the focus. It is as though God is carrying out the management of a task he has imposed upon himself.³¹ The *τοῦ πληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν* (fullness of time) may refer to God's pre-ordained times in his salvation plan; in Galatians 4:4 the fullness of time refers to the incarnation of Christ. It also refers to the period when God will administer the affairs of humankind in reconciling the universe. God, in his sovereign will, has always acted at the fullness of time.³² God's ultimate purpose is to bring all things under the authority of Christ (1 Cor 11:3; Col 1:20; Phil 2:10). The goal of salvation is to gather all things

28 Yusufu, Turaki, et.al, *Africa Bible Commentary*, (Word Alive Publishers, 2010), 1426.

29 Sam Storms. *The Restoration of All Things*. The Gospel Coalition Booklets, (Crossway Wheaton. Illinois. 2011), 11.

30 John Edmiston. *How to Know the Will of God*, (AIBI-International, 2007), 3.

31 Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene A. Nida. *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians*, 20.

32 Archibald M. Hunter. *The Layman's Bible Commentary. Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians & Colossians*, (John Knox Press, 1959), 51.

in Christ. It is to cause all created things to unite and look to Christ as one who reigns. He further describes the all things that will be headed up in Christ at the fullness of time, *τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς* (things in heaven, and things are on earth). This act will happen in Christ, who is the principle of unity.

Verse 11 repeats the words in verses 4 and 5 and is spoken of in the past tense. Verse 10 ends with a prepositional phrase *ἐν αὐτῷ* (in him) and verse 11 beginning with a relative phrase *ἐν ᾧ* (in whom) which both refers to Christ. Believers are spiritually united with Christ. In Christ, believers *ἐκκληρώθημεν* (we were also chosen- before the foundations of the world were laid). Apart from God's purpose of revealing the mystery of his will, he too made us his own and made his possession through Christ's finished work on the cross. Today, the church as the new Israel enters into the same privilege (Gal 3:29, Rom 8:17, Col 1:12). God works out all things in *κατὰ τὴν βουλὴν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ* (after the counsel of his will). It happened, verse 12, *εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης αὐτοῦ τοὺς προηλπικότας ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ* (so that we who first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory). Those who were the first to hope in Christ may be the Jewish Christians who also anticipated the Gentiles putting their hope in the Messiah.³³ It could also mean "hoping in the Messiah before Christ's advent."³⁴ In verse 6, believer's divine adoption as sons is another reason for the praise of God's glorious grace.

In a nutshell, in this section, Paul brings out the role of God the Father and the Son in the salvation plan for humanity. Human salvation was planned from before the foundations of the world were laid. Through the blood of Christ, believers have received redemption and forgiveness of sins. Additionally, God has made known to believers the mystery of his will. Having been predestined, believers have also obtained an inheritance from God. Paul praises God for his grace, salvation plan, and working out all things according to the counsel of his will.

The Role of the Holy Spirit in Securing Believer's Salvation (vv. 13–14)

Greek Text: 13 ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀκούσαντες τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς σωτηρίας ὑμῶν, ἐν ᾧ καὶ πιστεύσαντες ἐσφραγίσθητε τῷ πνεύματι τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τῷ ἁγίῳ, 14 ὃ ἐστὶν ἄρραβὼν τῆς κληρονομίας ἡμῶν, εἰς ἀπολύτρωσιν τῆς περιποιήσεως, εἰς ἔπαινον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ.

33 Archibald M. Hunter. The Layman's Bible Commentary. *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians & Colossians*, 51.

34 Kenneth S. Wuest. Wuest's Word Studies. *Ephesians and Colossians*, 48.

Translation: In whom you also, having heard the message of the truth, the good news of your salvation, also having believed, you were sealed in him with the Holy Spirit of promise, (14) who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

In concluding this pericope, Paul looks at the role of the Holy Spirit in the salvation process. He highlights the fifth spiritual blessing: believers have been sealed with the Holy Spirit, the guarantee of future inheritance. In verse 13, Paul notes that his audience (Jews and Gentiles) heard the message of the truth (the good news of salvation) perhaps through his proclamation. The use of the phrase ἀκούσαντες τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀλήθειας (having heard the word of truth) focuses on the point at which they began the journey of faith. Their hearing produced faith in Christ, resulting in them being sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise. He is the one who guarantees eternal hope. According to Paul, the Holy Spirit's role is to protect and preserve believers until they receive the inheritance that awaits them. Thus, the Holy Spirit continues and completes the work began by God the Father and God the Son in a complementary manner.³⁵

In verse 14, the term ἀρραβὼν (guarantee) is a legal and commercial technical term referring to “the caution money deposited by a purchaser in a pledge of full payment.”³⁶ The presence of the Holy Spirit and his continuous work in the ongoing salvation plan of God is a sure guarantee of what is to come (John 15:26). By use of the phrase τῆς κληρονομίας ἡμῶν (of our inheritance), the term κληρονομίας (inheritance) is an objective genitive. The Holy Spirit marks believers and guarantees them to receive the full inheritance which God has graciously promised.³⁷ The preposition εἰς and the accusative ἀπολύτρωσιν is an adverbial accusative with goal/end as the focus. He guarantees our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. Paul closes the section with a doxological phrase εἰς ἔπαινον τῆς δόξαν αὐτοῦ (to the praise of his glory), also used in verse 6 and 12. He started the pericope by praising God using εὐλογητὸς (blessed), now, he closes with another praise to God. God's salvation is so grand and profound that it can only lead one to praise him for his character and gracious doings.

35 Turaki, Yusufu., et. al. *Africa Bible Commentary*, 1426.

36 Marvin R. Vincent, D.D, *Word Studies in the New Testament Volumes 3, 4*. The Ages Digital Library Commentary. Ages Software Albany, or USA Version 1.0 1996, 24.

37 Turaki, Yusufu., et. al. *Africa Bible Commentary*. Word Alive Publishers, 1428.

In these two verses, when the believers in Ephesus heard the gospel and believed it, they were sealed in Him. The Holy Spirit was given as the security and the first installment of the believer's future inheritance. It is true that "at the end of the age, God will redeem his pledge and open the treasures of heaven to all who are in Christ."³⁸ The believer's inheritance now is the Holy Spirit (1:13–14).³⁹ According to Paul, "the bestowal of the Holy Spirit is God's part payment in the salvation he gives the believing sinner which guarantees the full delivery of all parts of the salvation given."⁴⁰ Believers are now, in this age, the beneficiaries of God's spiritual blessings. However, the ultimate experience of these blessings will be realized during the promised glorification, the final stage of salvation.

Application of the Study

Paul praises God, the giver of every spiritual blessing. He reminds the Ephesians how they are richly blessed in Christ by God the Father (1:3), the giver of every good and perfect gift (Jas 1:17). Apart from ascribing praise to God for his wondrous grace and love, believers can also praise God today by living an authentic Christian life, a life that glorifies God.

On the first spiritual blessing, the revelation that believers were chosen before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless is both lofty and humbling. As much as salvation involves human response, it is God's idea from the beginning. In our outreach initiatives, we should continually trust God to save. The purpose of God's choice is for believers to live holy and blameless lives, a goal that every Christian should embrace.

Second, Paul reminds his audience that God predestined them to be adopted as sons through Christ. Believers in Christ from all families of the earth now belong to the family of God. The members of God's household are related through the blood of Christ. The status of a child in the family of God should help the church today overcome ethnic, racial, gender, and all manner of distinction. No one should discriminate against those God has embraced. Every member of God's family should thus be treated with honor and dignity. Further, being a child of God comes with ethical implications; believers should emulate their Father in all things.

The third spiritual blessing is redemption and forgiveness that comes through the blood of Jesus. Through Christ, believers have been liberated from the powers of sin, flesh, and Satan.

³⁸ Frank E. Gaebelin, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1, 2 Thessalonians, 1, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, 27.

³⁹ Marvin R. Vincent, D.D, *Word Studies in the New Testament Volumes 3, No. 4*, 24.

⁴⁰ Kenneth S. Wuest. *Wuest's Word Studies. Ephesians and Colossians*, 50.

They are now free to serve and live for God. Believers should constantly remember that God “always has enough grace to redeem us and forgive us.”⁴¹ God, in his grace and mercy, has blessed believers with forgiveness and freedom. Fourth, Paul reminds his audience that they now have known the mystery of God’s will. God has revealed his secret things to believers, and as a result, we now have the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16). Believers should thus prove to be good stewards of God’s marvelous truths. Fifth, Paul reminds the Ephesians that they have been marked with the Holy Spirit, who guarantees future inheritance (vv.11–14). Today, the Holy Spirit is with believers to bring to an end the good things that God the Father has started in the lives of believers (Phil 1:6). Believers are a possession that God has purchased, and the Spirit is the proof of purchase as he is the pledge, the seal, the down payment, the promise of more things to come. He indwells the believer, thus making the sanctification process possible. These spiritual blessings elaborated in Ephesians 1:3–14 are for believer’s knowledge, transformation, and enjoyment.

Conclusion

Ephesians 1:3–14 reveals the spiritual blessings that believers have received through Christ. And for that, Paul praises God for his glorious grace, sovereign will, and good pleasure. The pericope reveals the role of each member of the Trinity in the salvation plan and in bestowing believers with spiritual blessings. First, believers in Christ have been chosen to be holy and blameless in God’s sight (v.4). Thus, believers endeavor to live as God’s chosen ones in an evil world, demonstrating that God’s demands for righteousness are livable. Second, they have been predestined to adoption as sons into God’s household through Jesus Christ (v.5). The status and identity as God’s children come with ethical implications of living a life worthy of the child of God. Third, believers have received redemption and forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus (v.7). The freedom that Christ gives leads to righteous living. It is freedom from sin, guilt, and the powers of the evil one. Fourth, believers have received a revelation of the mystery of God’s will that is to be revealed in totality when all things have been brought under one head, Christ (v.9–10). Believers are not unaware of God’s salvation plan as it has been revealed to them. The fifth spiritual blessing is that believers have been sealed with the Holy Spirit, the guarantee of the future inheritance (vv.11–14). A believer’s salvation is thus secure because the

⁴¹ Turaki, Yusufu., et. al. *Africa Bible Commentary*, 1425.

Holy Spirit protects and preserves believers until they receive their promised inheritance. These spiritual blessings give believers a new identity, an intimate relationship with God, and hope of salvation.

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