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small group material



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Turning Lost Students into Christ-Centered Labourers

TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY • Our Spiritual Blessings in Christ

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

Ephesians 1:1-14

When someone dies his or her heir inherits all that belonged to them. When we place our faith in Christ, who died for our sin, we inherit all of the blessings that were the privileged possession of the Son. We are adopted as God's sons and daughters and made heirs. This passage uncovers the great riches that are now ours because we belong to Christ.

Ephesians 1:3

Paul begins this letter by giving praise to God for what He has done in saving us, and bestowing upon us "every spiritual blessing in Christ." Verse 3 functions as a sort of topic sentence for this passage as well as for the whole book.

The next 11 verses go on to describe what these great blessings are. It's much like being at the reading of a will, knowing we are the heirs of a great estate. What follows is a description of the inheritance we have received. Verses 3-14 are actually one gigantic run-on sentence in Greek. When Paul was excited he got a little carried away and this is one of those times. But it's not hard to see why. Just pause for a second and consider what he is saying is ours in Christ.

Ephesians 1:4-8

First, we were chosen before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. Before we were ever born, and with His full knowledge that we'd rebel against Him, He determined to make us holy, no matter what it would cost Him.

Second, He predestined us to be adopted into His family. We are His sons and daughters. My wife and I adopted our little girl, Sadie. She is the best, sweetest, prettiest little thing. We are absolutely in love with her. Having been adopted by us she is in every meaningful sense our daughter. Everything we own is hers. Our house is her house. Our food is her food. We take her on vacation, buy her presents, and we're going to pay her tuition. Because she is ours, everything we have is hers.

The same sort of transaction happens when we trust Christ. God adopts us and we become uniquely His. While many people might refer to God as Father, this is only really true of those who have received Christ. But sometimes we can forget that we have the rights of sons and daughters and instead live as orphans. We have incredible riches in Christ, but we act like we're poor.

This adoption speaks not only of privilege but also of the security of our salvation. While there are many things we can do to hinder our fellowship with God,

What's the Big Idea?

The moment we trusted Christ we inherited a great deal of spiritual riches and blessings, all of which were purchased for us by Christ. This study surveys the great riches we now have because we are in Christ and the glory that is His due.

What's the Problem?

Although God has given us lavish blessings and adopted us into His family, we often live as spiritual orphans trying to find meaning, love and purpose apart from Him.





we cannot change our relationship. We will always be His children by virtue of our adoption into His family.

By the way, I don't think Paul intended to teach on predestination in this passage – he just kind of assumes it. However, it tends to get people's attention so don't be surprised if it becomes a tangent in your study. That's not a bad thing at all, just don't let it take you too far off course. It's clear from this and other passages that God is the initiator in our salvation. It's also clear that we are culpable for our sin and responsible to believe (and preach) the gospel. If it seems to be a distraction in your group you might offer to do a little research and cover it more fully another week.

Next, we have redemption. To redeem someone was to purchase them out of slavery. God has purchased us from slavery to sin and spiritual death with the blood of His Son. The result of this payment is that all our sins, past, present, and future have been forgiven.

These aren't meager gifts, nor were we given just enough to get by. Rather, they were done in accordance with the *riches* of God's grace that He *lavished* on us with *all wisdom* and *understanding*. Praise His glorious grace.

Ephesians 1:9-12

In addition to the blessings related directly to our salvation we were also given great insights. To the non-Christian, the meaning of human life and human history are unknowable: Why we are here, where we came from, and where we are going are profound mysteries. But to Christians, God has disclosed answers about these great questions.

In Ephesians 1:12, Paul explains that the purpose of our own lives is that we might live “for the praise of His glory.” This phrase is repeated several times in the passage so that we don't miss it. Christians know their ultimate purpose and meaning of their lives is to bring praise and glory to God. He has also revealed to us the ultimate meaning of history. It is to bring all things under the kingship of Jesus. The fact that He has chosen to do this by dying for lost sinners and lavishing grace upon them should only serve to bring Him praise. The spread of the knowledge of the glory of God and the reign of Christ throughout the earth are the great purposes for which we are to live. Evangelism, prayer, and discipleship are crucial to this end as we seek to extend God's kingdom on this earth and speed history to its fulfillment.

Ephesians 1:13-14

In verse 13, Paul underscores that all of these things became true, and are only true, when we trust Christ for our salvation.

The passage says that we are “sealed” in the Holy Spirit. The “seal” had several uses in the ancient world, two of which are very instructive as to what Paul meant in using the word. A seal was affixed to a document to guarantee its authenticity, and it was attached to goods in transit to guarantee protection. The Holy Spirit is the seal of the authenticity of our faith and a seal of protection, declaring we are God's personal and private possession.

In this last section, Paul addresses the security and assurance the Christian has that these things will all come to pass in their fullness. That security is connected to the indwelling Spirit of God, that acts as a down payment, assuring that the fullness of all of these truths will assuredly come to pass—to the praise of His glory.

What's Our Response?

As students see these blessings laid out before them we want them to:

- Understand that the chief purpose for God's blessing us is to bring glory to Himself by making us holy and blameless in love.
- Praise and thank God as they meditate on their many spiritual blessings.
- Live in such a way as to bring God the greatest glory possible.

What Are the Questions?

Ephesians 1:1-14

LAUNCH

What is the most lavish gift you have ever received?

EXPLORE

Read 1:1-2

1. Who is this letter from? What are his credentials?

Read 1:3-8

2. In verse 3 Paul summarizes this passage and gives the ultimate application for our entire lives. Read through the entire section. What are some of the spiritual blessings we have been given?

3. Paul uses the phrase “in Him” and “in Christ” a number of times in this passage. Take a moment to list and think about each occurrence. What do you think Paul is trying to communicate by this repetition?

4. What does it mean that He chose us before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight?

5. Paul says that God predestined us to be adopted as His sons (and daughters). What role does our faith play in this?

6. Take a look at Romans 8:15-17. How does being made sons and daughters free us from fear?

7. Paul says we have redemption. This means we have been purchased. What was our purchase price?

8. What motivated God to give us these blessings? What does this reveal about His character?

9. What did we do to earn these blessings?

Read 1:9-12

10. In addition to redemption, what else have we been given?

Read 1:13-14

11. Can you remember the day or time when all these things became true for you?

12. All of these blessings are secure because we have been “sealed” with the Holy Spirit. What do you think it means to be “sealed?” Can you become unsealed?

13. What is the great goal and ultimate result of God giving us all these blessings?

APPLY

14. Of all the great blessings and promises found in this passage, which means the most to you? Does any resonate with you more strongly than the rest?

15. When we are worried or frightened we can revert to living like an orphaned child. Can you describe a situation in which you looked for comfort or security to something other than your Father who has lavished every blessing on you?

16. What might look different in your life if you were living out of a rich experience of our spiritual adoption in Christ?

17. Based on this passage, what is our great purpose and motivation in life as Christians?

What Are the Answers?

1. Paul identifies himself as an apostle, meaning "sent one." His authority comes from the will of God.
2. As believers we are being made holy and blameless, we are adopted, redeemed, forgiven, and given knowledge of the mystery His will. Our salvation glorifies God and the sealing by the Spirit is a guarantee of our inheritance.
3. He's emphasizing that all the blessings come through Jesus. He is the centerpiece of it all and the hero of this passage.
4. It means that God initiated our salvation before time began and that by Christ's work He has made us holy.
5. The fact that God has chosen us does not mean our exercise of faith is meaningless. God has taken the initiative. Each of us whom God has chosen must respond to God's choosing by placing our faith in Christ.
6. We're not on the outside anymore. We are inside, loved, protected, and safe like all beloved sons and daughters.
7. Christ's blood.
8. He did it all in love (v. 4) and by His own pleasure and will (v. 5).
9. Nothing.
10. Knowledge of this mystery of His will to make Christ head of all things.
11. Discuss. This is a great opportunity to help members of the group determine if they have ever placed their faith in Christ.
12. The Holy Spirit in our lives is the promise that we really are saved, and will always be safe. Since our salvation is a gift, based entirely on Jesus' righteousness and not on our own, there is nothing we can do that would "unseal" us.
13. That God's glory will be praised. (v. 3, 6, 12, 14)
14. Allow the group to discuss.
15. Allow the group to discuss.
16. Allow the group to discuss.
17. To live for the praise of His glory, the praise of His glory, the praise of His glorious grace.

Memorize

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Ephesians 1:3