



## NG Study Guide: Ephesians 1:3-14 :: “In Christ You Are Blessed” [4.14.24]

### Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

### The Study

**Thesis:** God promises every spiritual blessing to those who are in Christ. Trust in Christ, receive the promises of His blessings, and give glory to God!

**Subject:** The blessings for those in Christ

**Object:** Trust in Christ and glorify God

#### A. Blessing of adoption [3-6]

*<sup>3</sup> 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, <sup>4</sup> just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, <sup>5</sup> having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.*

[Context: Paul is writing to the believers in Ephesus from prison in Rome. He is encouraging them to find their unity in Christ. Whether Jew or Gentile, all are one in Christ]

God blesses believers with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ [3]. This is in direct contrast with earthly blessings. We live in a material world, and therefore it’s so easy for us to be consumed with material comfort and blessings. Remember the affluent culture of the Ephesians, wealth was abundant, streets were made of marble, and Diana’s temple was extravagant.

Today, we see this incredible push to see material blessings, even within Christianity. And there are times when God does provide material blessings but they pale in comparison to the spiritual blessings that we will see in these verses. Christ came and demonstrated that the wealth, power, and comfort that we so deeply desire in this life are futile and so inconsequential. Our desires are so mis-ordered. But what we are promised is not material blessings, but every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places [3]. Now there is not even a way for us to know what “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” consists of, but the God of all power, glory, and majesty is promising you every spiritual blessing. That seems like a good deal, and what’s our responsibility? To be “in Christ” [3].

He chose us to be in Him [4] and this choosing was before the foundation of the world [4]. God is outside of time. CS Lewis uses the analogy of an author writing a fiction novel about a character. Now inside of that novel time moves along at the pace that the author intends, but the author is completely

outside of the time within the novel. The author knows prior to writing the book the storyline and the plot line for each of the characters. God is completely sovereign; He is in control of all things and He is all-knowing, and He is outside of time. Now this doesn't not necessarily remove the free will of the individual, which we will see unfold in verse 13. However, it does show us the sovereignty and power of the God who is blessing us. He chose us [4] or He predestined us [5] but what did he choose us for? Adoption as sons [5].

Those who are *in Christ* have been adopted into His family. Adoption is a beautiful act, it's the blessing of legally becoming part of a family. The more we contemplate the reality and extravagance of adoption, the more we realize how significant it is. And adoption, by its very nature, aligns with the concept that God chose us. Now, this is not to the exclusion of us choosing Him. But despite your shortcomings, despite your scars, despite your failures, despite your flaws, God saw you, loved you, and desired to bring you into His family as an adopted child. What a blessing!

Now this can tend to puff us up, but rather it demonstrates the loving nature of God. God adopts us into his family "according to the good pleasure of His will" [5]. He adopts you because you are pleasing to Him. Let that sink in. He chose you to bring you into His family because it is pleasing to Him according to His purpose.

This concept inevitably causes us to glorify someone: either ourselves or our Father. God's blessing of adoption should bring us to a place of praise of His glory, but also of His grace [6]. He is completely glorious: perfect and holy, and yet full of grace. If there is anyone who does not need to be gracious it would be someone who is perfectly glorious. And yet our Heavenly Father is both.

But what is this grace [6]? It is that He accepted us in Christ, or "in the Beloved" [6]. But this grace is also the blessing of redemption.

## **B. Blessing of redemption [7-10]**

*<sup>7</sup>In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace <sup>8</sup>which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, <sup>9</sup>having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, <sup>10</sup>that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.*

Again in Him, in Christ, we have redemption through His blood which happens through the forgiveness of sins [7]. Redemption is the idea of making free by payment of a ransom. We have been made free through His blood. You and I have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God [Romans 3:23]. And the wages of sin is death [Romans 6:23]. Therefore our punishment for our sin is our death. But God, in His glorious grace, sent his only son, Jesus, to live a sinless life, and make us free by paying our ransom. He took our death so that we could be redeemed.

The only way for us to be "holy and without blame" [4] is for us to be redeemed by Christ. We've been chosen to be holy, but that does not inherently make sinful people holy, we need the blood of Christ and His forgiveness to redeem us!

The rightful Son of God, Jesus who is of the very nature of God, poured out His blood, redeeming and forgiving you who are sinful so that you could be adopted into His family. The rightful Son gave up His life so that you could be adopted. That is the blessing of redemption. It is a perfect picture of the richness of His grace [7] which He made to abound toward us [8]. Not just available to us, but to abound toward us.

The only way that we know of this grace, of this redemption, of this forgiveness that is available for us is because God has made it known to us in all wisdom and prudence [8]. He is the one who made it known, He is the one who allowed us to understand the mystery of His will [9]. He has provided us with all wisdom and prudence, revealing the mysteries of His will, according to what is necessary to be

redeemed. We have not been given all wisdom of all things, like God (omniscience). We have been given all the necessary wisdom for us to receive grace and forgiveness through Jesus Christ to be redeemed. We've been given the wisdom we need to receive the blessing of redemption!

This redemption, this payment for our wrongdoing that allows us to be in the family of God, again is done according to His good pleasure [9]. He is pleased to redeem you. Again, this should not puff us up, but cause us to reflect on the goodness and grace of God. It should cause us to glorify Him.

We then see in verse 10 the fulfillment of this redemptive plan: that ultimately Christ will reign and rule over all of heaven and all earth. "In the fullness of times" refers to the end times when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord [Philippians 2:10]. This does not mean that all people will be saved, this is not universalism. It's simply referring to when Christ returns and vanquishes sin and gathers His people to himself. This is the ultimate fulfillment of the Gospel that we have to look forward to. This is an incredible blessing from God for those who are in Christ.

### **C. Blessing of inheritance [11-12]**

*<sup>11</sup> In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, <sup>12</sup> that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.*

Verse 11 again begins with "in Him also." This designates a new blessing that Paul is now pointing out, and it is the blessing of inheritance [11]. We see that again this blessing was something that was predestined according to His purpose [11]. When Paul points out this blessing of an inheritance for those who are in Christ, it points us back to the adoption that we see in verse 5. It clearly states "adoption as sons" [5]. The purpose of this was that culturally, the inheritance of the father was passed down to the son or sons that the father had. This is not to devalue the daughters, the system was in place that the daughter would marry someone else's son who was in line to receive their father's inheritance. However, what we see here is that we are all adopted spiritually by God, as sons, so that we might receive an eternal inheritance from Him.

Those who are in Christ are not just blessed by adoption and redemption, but here we are told that we are blessed with the inheritance from the sovereign God of the universe who stands outside of time.

Verse 12 states that the inheritance will be for those who trusted in Christ first. Paul is referring to the Jews. Now, one of the major themes throughout the letter to the Ephesians is that there is unity for those who are in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile. But in verses 11-13 we see that this is a specific reference to the Jews. Paul doesn't disregard the Gentiles who are in Christ but rather demonstrates in verse 14 that the inheritance is also for the Gentiles. Therefore the inheritance is available for everyone who is in Christ. This is truly an incredible blessing, that should again bring us to glorify God.

### **D. Blessing of assurance [13-14]**

*<sup>13</sup> In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, <sup>14</sup> who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.*

#### **1. The need to trust in Christ [13]**

"In Christ you also" is now referring to the Gentile believers. Therefore we see the inclusion and unity by the phrase "you also." We see that there is a need in order to receive the adoption, redemption, and inheritance: to trust and believe the word of truth, which is the gospel of salvation [13]. Now up until verse 12 in the passage, we see that every action has been on the side of God. Here in 12-14 we see the necessity of our belief and trust. Therefore, it is impossible with our limited understanding to grasp how God's sovereignty and our responsibility to believe and trust in God fit together as it relates to

salvation. But we know that God is completely sovereign, that God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life [John 3:16]. These are both true. We may not be able to fully comprehend this, but God is sovereign and all men have the opportunity to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ or reject it. Each and every person in the room has the opportunity to be in Christ and receive the promises of adoption, redemption, and inheritance. You've heard [13] and now you must believe and trust [14]. That's all that's required.

## **2. The guaranteed promise [14]**

At the moment you believe and trust Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins, you are sealed with the Holy Spirit [13]. When a seal was placed on something it was deemed official or certified. This is seal that cannot be undone. It is a guarantee of the promise of our inheritance, it is a guarantee of the redemptive work of Christ in our lives, it is a guarantee of a purchased possession of God.

Often people will question their salvation. If you have trusted in Christ, your eternity has been sealed, certified, and finalized. This sealing happens at the moment of belief, therefore for many of us this has happened in the past. But for some, this opportunity is available to you today. Believe in the gospel of Christ and receive the assurance of the blessing of adoption, redemption, and His inheritance.

Paul opens verse 3 by stating "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ", He concludes this passage with "To the praise of His glory" and two times in between he states "to the praise of the glory of His grace" and "to the praise of His glory." God adopted us, which should bring us to a place of praise! God redeemed us, which should bring us to a place of praise! God has given us an inheritance, which should bring us to a place of praise. And this inheritance is guaranteed, which should bring us to a place of praise of His glory!

### **Study Guide Qs**

***Q1. What are some ways believers might focus more on spiritual blessings than material blessings? Why is this challenging?***

***Q2. What is particularly interesting to you about the blessing of adoption and inheritance?***

***Q3. Why might believers question their salvation? Why is understanding the guarantee of our inheritance so important for believers?***

***Q4. These blessings should cause believers to glorify God. Share something you learned from these verses that gives glory to God.***

**"Disciples Who Dig Deeper" (optional or alternative study)**

- 1. David Guzik's commentary on Eph. 1: <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/ephesians-1/>**
- 2. A deeper understanding of the term redemption: <https://www.gotquestions.org/redemption.html>**

**Love your neighbors (inside + outside the group) better:**

- 1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors inside or outside the group?**
- 2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbors inside or outside the group?**

### **Disciples who make disciples:**

- 1. Who would like to share how they recently sought to make disciples?**
- 2. Here is a disciple making idea to consider for the weeks ahead: [The Passover Seder is approaching on April 22. Invite a neighbor to join you!](#)**

### **Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:**

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

### **Leader Notes:**

- 1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
- 2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
- 3. The "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
- 4. Every time you meet consider asking:**
  - a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.

### **Next week's passage:**

Ephesians 1:15-23 :: "In Christ You Are Enlightened"