



Contact Us:

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Meeting Times:

Sunday:

Bible Study9:45 AM
Worship10:40 AM
Care, Inc. Service 2:30 PM
Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday:

Ladies Bible Class.10:00 AM
Bible Study 7:00 PM

Elders:

Gene Bannister..... Billy Chism

Deacons:

Mike Bannister..... Don Smith

James Thomas

Preacher:

Johnny McCaghren

Works We Support:

Cherokee Home for Children
Gospel Broadcast Network
Heart of Texas Bible Camp (Bangs)
House to House, Heart to Heart
Mission Printing
Rohan Jones, Africa
The Truth in Love
World Bible School

Praise God for His Plan of Salvation

The book of Ephesians is about the church – the eternal purpose of God in Christ. The epistle takes us from eternity to eternity, in contemplation of the divine plan. Obviously, God wants us to understand something about his eternal purpose. Ephesians demands our careful attention. Its theme could not be more important.

What should we expect from studying this book? Will we understand God's plan better? Yes. And what else? If we put our hearts into the inspired letter, we will love God more, and live closer to him.

The book of Ephesians begins like many letters of the first century – an identification of the author, the recipients, and a greeting. But this is no ordinary letter. It is from "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus" (1:1). The letter has the authority that Christ gave to his apostles; it is a revelation of the mind of God (Luke 10:16; John 14:26; 16:13; Acts 22:14-15).

Paul adds, "...by the will of God" (cf. 1:5, 9, 11). He was appointed by God "to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from his mouth" (Acts 22:14). His preaching was authoritative – and still is. We are reading what God wants *us* to know (3:3-4).

Paul wrote to "the saints and the faithful." The word "saints" refers to Christians – not to an alleged spiritually elite. All Christians are saints (i.e., holy ones) because they are cleansed by blood, dedicated to God, and "set apart" for divine service.

They were "the faithful" because they exercised faith in Jesus Christ. They believed the gospel, obeyed it, and continuously lived in it (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1-3).

"The saints and the faithful" are "in Christ" (cf. 5:23). Being "in Christ" means that a person has been united with him, is hidden in him, and lives for him (Romans 6:5; Colossians 3:3; Philippians 1:21). Together, the faithful are his body, the church (1:22-23).

Spiritual Thoughts for Spiritual People

Paul greets them with spiritual thoughts of "grace and peace." These terms were common greetings in Greek and Hebrew circles. But the words take on fuller meaning in the Christian context.

"Grace" means favor. When used of God it refers to the favor bestowed in our interest, which is undeserved. God is praiseworthy because of his grace (bestowed freely, *but not unconditionally*). This favor is priceless and saving. If God were not gracious, we would have no hope.

Grace is coupled with peace. Grace is what God bestows; peace is the result of those who receive grace (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:1). We cannot be at peace with God without receiving his grace. We have peace with God and remain in his grace when we are justified through obedience to the gospel (Romans 5:1; 1:5, 16).

Accordingly, Paul salutes all readers of Ephesians, wanting us to know the fullness of the Lord's favor, the sufficiency of his grace, the reconciliation it effects, and the tranquility of being right with God.

The Source of Christian Life

"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1:2). The source of spiritual life is God, our heavenly Father.

The term "Father," applied to God, is used in two ways in Scripture. He is Father of *all* as *Creator* (Acts 17:28-29). Also, he is Father of the *saved* – as *Redeemer* (cf. John 1:12). The second sense is used here. Christians are "born again" by the will of the Father, and are in his spiritual household (John 3:5; Ephesians 1:5; 2:19).

Jesus Christ is also the source of spiritual life. He is the means by which God gives eternal life to those who obey him (Ephesians 1:7; Romans 3:23-26; 1 John 2:1-2). Christ is here identified as the "Lord." Paul reminds his readers of the deity of Jesus (cf. Colossians 2:9). He reigns in a domain where only deity belongs. Having taken on flesh for the redemptive work, he accomplished the eternal purpose of God – to bring grace and peace to undeserving and miserable humanity.

Paul in Praise

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Let us know if you want to study
the Bible to know more about
Christ and His Church.

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Many of Paul's letters begin with thanksgiving and prayer. A good example is Colossians. "We give thanks to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you" (1:3). This motif is also found in Ephesians, but it does not occur until 1:15. In 1:3-14, the apostle praises God. God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Paul "eulogizes" the work of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (1:3, 5, 14).

When the apostle John peered into heaven, he witnessed an anthem of praise: "Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the dominion, forever and ever" (Revelation 5:13). Will you echo Paul's praise of Ephesians 1:3-14?

Blessed Be the Father

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ..." (Ephesians 1:3).

The word "blessed" is *eulogeo* – like our word "eulogy." It means, "to speak well of." There are related words for "blessing" men, but this word is used only of God in the New Testament.

Men may be "praised" for their benevolent deeds occasionally, but God is "blessed" because of his intrinsic nature. God, because of his nature, blesses us. He is, therefore, worthy of praise (Psalm 18:3).

Paul shows that God is the source of all spiritual blessings by the phrase "according to" (Greek:*kata*; vs. 5, 7, 9, 11). It means "in accordance with, in conformity with, corresponding to" (Arndt, *et al.*, p. 407).

God's redemptive blessings are "in conformity with" his good pleasure, his grace, his purpose, and his will. He chose to bless us in Christ because that is his nature. We ought, therefore, to praise him.

In Christ

God blesses us "in Christ." He chose us "in him." He adopted us "through Jesus Christ." God's grace is given "in the Beloved." Redemption is "in him." Forgiveness of sins is "in him." God's purpose is "in him." Salvation is "in him."

God alone is the source of spiritual blessings, and Christ is the only way to access them. God's plan of salvation is inseparable from his Son. Jesus said, "Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). Likewise, he said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

Ephesians 1:7 defines salvation as redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Salvation is not just "...closing the gap between our real and our ideal existence and thus achieving self-fulfillment" (Cottrell, p. 49). Salvation is not finding freedom from the world and its suffering through "self-migration." Salvation is not human achievement. Hinduism and Buddhism fail to identify the *source* of man's problems; they certainly fail, therefore, to provide the *solution*.

God revealed to us our origin, nature, sinful state, needs, purpose, and the way of salvation. Salvation is redemption by God. It is accomplished by the in-our-place death of Jesus Christ. And we must submit to him (Hebrews 5:9; cf. Acts 4:12). Sin is the problem, and salvation in Christ is the solution.

In the Heavenly Places

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (1:3). The phrase translated "in the heavenly places" is *en tois epouraniois* (lit., "in the heavenlies"). This construction is only found in Ephesians. Paul uses this group of words four more times.

It is "in the heavenly realm" where Christ reigns (1:20). Christians sit with him "in the heavenlies" (2:6). God's wisdom is made known through the church to "the principalities and powers in heavenly places" (3:10). Christians war against evil forces "in the heavenly realm" (6:12). The clause appears to be synonymous with "spiritual."

As children of God, we are sojourners on earth, but we are citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20). We acknowledge the existence of spiritual realities, spiritual influences, and spiritual goals. Life is more than the physical. The spiritual realm is the place in which God gives all spiritual blessings. It is the domain of Christ's kingdom and God's eternal purpose. It is the essence of life.

Predestined to What?

As Paul identifies some specific spiritual blessings, he says God "chose us... before the foundation of the world... having foreordained us..." (1:4-5). Clearly God "predestined" or "foreordained" the saved. But what is the *nature* of this predestination? And is it *conditional* or *unconditional*?

The word translated "foreordained" (ASV) or "predestined" (KJV, *et al.*) is from the Greek term *proginosko*. It literally means "to know before," being a compound term (*pro*, before, *ginosko*, to know – Vine, p. 459). What the Father "decided before" is a very important thing (1:4-5). Did he determine *who* would be believers and *who* would be unbelievers?

Consider the following biblical truths. We read of man's obligation to obey God throughout the Bible. We also see the continuous pleading of God for men to believe and obey him (cf. Matthew 11:28-30). It is incredulous to think that God would plead with men who allegedly *could not* believe. Since people can and *must* respond to the preaching of the gospel, the Lord commanded us to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15-16). The ones who submit to it will be saved.

God did not decide who would believe and who would disobey. He did, however, determine that those who would believe would be saved.

It is clear that the Lord's predestination of a thing does not negate a person's freewill. God chose Christ (1 Peter 1:20; 2:4). But Christ exercised his own freewill in the redemptive plan (John 10:17-18; Galatians 1:4). If we want to share in the glory God chose for the saved, we must submit to his conditions.

Every Spiritual Blessing

God "chose us in him... that we should be holy and without blemish before him" (1:4). The word "that" expresses the goal of Heaven's scheme. This means we can be "void of offense" and "unreprovable" at the Lord's Second Coming (Philippians 1:10; 1 Corinthians 1:8). We know, however, of our many imperfections

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Bible Reading Schedule

Oct. 16—Mark 15-16; Oct. 17—Luke 1-3; Oct. 18—Luke 4-6; Oct. 19—Luke 7-9; Oct. 20—Luke 10-12; Oct. 21—Luke 13-15; Oct. 22—Luke 16-18; Oct. 23—Luke 19-21



Visitation Meeting

- ◆ Each Sunday night immediately before the evening worship. Last week **40 contacts** were made.

Announcements

◆ **Gospel Meeting Schedule:**

- Fellowship meal at noon today.
- Evening meals at 5:15 at area restaurants.
 - Monday—Underwood’s
 - Tuesday—Section Hand
 - Wednesday—CiCi’s Pizza
- Song leaders.
 - Monday—Johnny McCaghren
 - Tuesday—Foy Forehand
 - Wednesday—Joe Dennis

- ◆ There will be a **Ladies Get Together at Lasha’s, Friday evening** around 5:30. Bring snacks.

- ◆ **Ladies’ Day at 9th & Main in San Angelo Saturday.** We will leave here at 7:15am.

- ◆ There will be a **wedding shower for Caitlin (Barnum) and Ryan Settles** after evening services, October 30th. Selections are at Wal-Mart.

Upcoming Special Events at 4th & Stewart

- ◆ October 29—Ladies’ Day with Becky Blackmon. *“Making Christ the Lord of Your Life in Every Situation of Your Life”*
- ◆ March 26-29—Spring Gospel Meeting with Russell Bell.

Other Opportunities to Learn and Grow

- ◆ **Oct. 22—Ladies Day @ San Angelo with Cathy Iverson**
- ◆ Oct. 27-29—ACS Class: *“The Bible and Archaeology”* (Dewayne Bryant)—Dripping Springs, TX
- ◆ Nov. 6-9—Gospel Meeting @ Bangs with Josh Romo
- ◆ Dec. 9-11—*“Family Matters”* Seminar @ Lake Shore Drive (Waco).

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and weaknesses. Only “in him” is this result possible. The word “sons” (1:5) shows the relationship that Christians have with God. He is our Father. A child of God receives his love (1 John 3:1). A child of God will share in the glory of the Son (Romans 8:29).

God freely bestowed his grace in Christ, the Beloved (1:6). “Grace” underscores the reason he is disposed to save us, and it emphasizes our undeserving status. “But God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us... made us alive... by grace have ye been saved” (2:4-5).

“God so loved” that he chose to provide a way of salvation by giving his only Son. He has done what we never could do on our own (John 3:16; Romans 8:1-3).

Grace is not, however, *unconditional*. We can be forgiven of our sins (1:7), if we obey the gospel of God (cf. 1 Peter 4:17).

Apostolic preaching required a human response. “And Peter said unto them, ‘Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins’” (Acts 2:38).

When we, by faith, access God’s grace, we are forgiven and redeemed (1:7). “Forgiveness” means “to send away.” God sends away our trespasses by the blood of Christ. “Redemption” means deliverance or release. It contains the idea of the payment of a ransom. The blood of Christ is the purchase-price for our salvation (Acts 20:28). Together, these terms vividly express to us the idea of being released from the penalty of sin. How precious it is to be forgiven. What a blessing!

God has not left us in the dark. He has, according to his eternal purpose in Christ, revealed his will (3:9-11). It is a wonderful blessing to know the nature and destiny of his plan – the mystery of his will (1:7-9).

The Mystery of God’s Will

In a consideration of spiritual blessings, Paul refers to the revelation of the mystery of God’s will. “Will” indicates the intentions, or desires, that eternally characterized his plan. But his will was

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Celebrate

“Rejoice with those who rejoice...” (Romans 12:15)

October Birthdays: Lisa Greer (5), Matthew Churchwell (7), Jo Maninger (12), Hank Wheeler (13), Tina Barnum (14), Cassie Freeman (23).

October Anniversaries: Frank & Anita Alexander (4), Mike & Patti Bannister (27).

Mistakes? Left Out? Let Johnny know...



Records

	Oct. 3, 2016	Oct. 9, 2016
Bible Class	41	47
AM Worship	59	62
PM Worship	46	50
Wednesday PM	39	52
Contribution	\$1,810	\$1,905

	This Week: 10/16/16	Next Week: 10/23/16	October 2016	
Sunday AM:	Song Leader: Mike Bannister	Song Leader: Mike Bannister	Make Announcements: Don Smith	
Greeters	Tom & Carol Wilcox	Allen & Linda Griffith	Prepare Communion: Tom & Carol Wilcox	
Opening Prayer	James Fuller	Allen Griffith	Clean Building: M & P Bannister / Greer	
Communion	Randy Huckaby*, Larry Petty Don Smith, Allen Bland	James Fuller*, Ryan Rudloff Hank Wheeler, James Thomas	Hostess Committee: Laura Huckaby's group	
Closing Prayer	James Thomas	Gene Bannister	November 2016	
Attendance Cards	Jaceten Evetts	Caleb Dennis	Make Announcements: Ken Maninger	
Sunday PM:	Song Leader: Ken Maninger	Song Leader: Joe Dennis	Prepare Communion: Mike & Patti Bannister	
Opening Prayer	Gene Bannister	Tom Wilcox	Clean Building: John Barnum Family	
Scripture Reading	Tom Wilcox	John Barnum		
Communion	Randy Huckaby	James Fuller		
Closing Prayer	Allen Griffith	Don Smith		
Wednesday Devotionals:	October 19 Gospel Meeting	October 26 Tom Wilcox	November 2 Prayer Night	November 9 Don Smith

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not fully disclosed in the beginning; it unfolded progressively.

We have this blessing. God blesses us by "making known unto us the mystery of his will" (1:9). The knowledge of his saving plan – as revealed in the Christian dispensation – should not go unappreciated. Think of what we know that was unknown in Old Testament times. Consider that life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel (2 Timothy 1:10).

The term "mystery" is used in a special sense in Scripture. It means that which was hidden. It indicates that the eternal purpose was *undiscoverable* by man. However, God has *revealed* the unknowable to us.

What people could not know about God's plan was made plain through the gospel. The gospel – the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ – is the living message concerning God's eternal purpose.

The patriarchs were *promised*. The prophets *foretold*. But you and I see the immeasurable nature of God's love *in action*. "God so loved the world that he gave..." (John 3:16; cf. Romans 5:8).

"Who can be saved?" is another part of God's revealed will. Paul writes that "we" were made a heritage, and "you also" were saved (1:11, 13). The "we" refers to the Jews; the "you also" designates the Gentiles. Thus the apostle identifies the *universal* scope of the mystery (cf. Romans 1:16). This does *not* mean, however, that *all* will be saved (cf. Matthew 7:13-14). The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who *believes* (Romans 1:16; cf. Acts 10:34).

Another aspect of this blessing – what God has revealed to us – is the disclosure concerning the future. This involves both the duration of our heavenly habitation and the dignity that will be assigned to the saved. The Lord reveals to us that heaven is forever. The righteous, Jesus says, shall go away into "eternal life" (Matthew 25:46).

The plan – that the Lord has now disclosed in the gospel – also

includes the dignity that will be assigned to his redeemed children. "For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory..." (Philippians 3:20-21). Christians will be "conformed to the image of his Son..." (Romans 8:29). This is the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27), the redemption of our body (Romans 8:23), and the salvation of our soul (Romans 8:11).

What God has made known to us is so wonderful. It is powerfully motivating for us to walk in love, as Christ also loved us (Ephesians 5:2).

The Redemptive Finale

What a blessing! Having looked into "eternity past," and considered some things about the redemptive present, Paul gives a glimpse of the "redemptive future."

God's plan is "...unto a dispensation of the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth..." (1:10).

Paul speaks of a scheme that will certainly come to fulfillment. God's plan is going to reach its goal, and the completion of this divine economy will sum up "all things in Christ." What does Paul mean by the phrase "sum up"? When the divine economy is complete, there will be a unity, focused on Christ, of all things – things in heaven and on earth. All of the faithful – angelic and human – will be united "under one roof" for endless praise.

Praise God! He is our Father. He adopted us, chose us, freely bestowed his grace on us, redeemed us, and forgave our sins; he revealed his will to us, saved us, confirmed his promises to us, and possesses us – *in Christ*, who gave himself for our sins.

When we contemplate who God *is*, what he has *done*, and what we *will be*, we will know exactly for what we should praise.

Praise him from whom all blessings flow, and walk every day according to the calling of the gospel of the Son of God.

Jason Jackson (www.newtestamentchristians.com)