

Every Spiritual Blessing in Christ: An Exegetical Examination of Ephesians 1:3–14 and Its Implications

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Abstract

Ephesians 1:3–14 is a detailed doxology for God’s spiritual blessings bestowed on believers in Christ. The passage accentuates the believers’ participation in God’s redemptive plan through their election (vv. 3–6), their redemption through the Son (vv. 7–12), and their sealing into sonship by the Spirit (vv. 13–14). However, the prosperity gospel movement has often reinterpreted “blessing” in material, anthropocentric terms rather than in the spiritual, Christocentric terms of Ephesians. While prosperity teaching resonates with the socio–economic realities of many, it often overlooks the grammatical, literary, and theological contexts of the text. This article argues that a careful exegetical reading of Ephesians 1:3–14 provides a necessary corrective, grounding blessing in God’s eternal redemptive purpose in Christ rather than in temporal material gain.

Keywords: Spiritual Blessing, Blessings in Christ, Election, Predestination, Adoption, Redemption

Introduction

Ephesians 1:3–14, a single complex Greek sentence, articulates the nature and scope of “spiritual blessings in Christ.” The believers enjoy the blessing of election by the Father, redemption through the Son, and sealing into sonship by the Spirit. These blessings go beyond material concerns and express the believer’s share in the heavenly realm. Bruce states that spiritual blessings are “the Christian counterpart to those temporal blessings which the Old Testament promised to those who were pressing on to earthly inheritance.”¹ However, the meaning of this passage has often been misunderstood or reshaped within various theological and cultural settings. In particular, the

¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians: A Verse-by-Verse Exposition* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1977), 27.



prosperity gospel movement has reinterpreted “spiritual blessings” in largely material and human-centered ways.² This movement neglects the original exegetical context, and selectively uses Scripture to promote the idea that physical health, financial prosperity, and personal success are the main signs of God’s favor in a person’s life.³ Nevertheless, a careful study of this text reveals that divine blessing is primarily spiritual, Christocentric, and eschatological. These blessings are also not dependent on human effort or socio-economic status, but instead derive entirely from the believer’s union with Christ.

Background Information of Ephesians

It is until the nineteenth century that critical scholars challenged Paul’s authorship of Ephesians. The first seeds of scholarly skepticism were planted by Erasmus in 1519 when he “drew attention to the stylistic idiosyncracies”⁴ of Ephesians. Then came Evanson in 1792, Usteri in 1824, and de Wette in 1826 and 1843 with weighty arguments disputing the authenticity of Ephesians. Notably, Barth observes that at the dawn of the twentieth century, most scholars in Europe and America were convinced that Ephesians was not a genuine work of Paul.⁵ Scholars who oppose Pauline authorship of Ephesians cite the letter’s general, very impersonal nature and its mature Christology, ecclesiology, and eschatology, which appear to be a later stage of theological reflection than Paul’s authentic letters.⁶ Next is the issue of the different theological emphases in Ephesians compared to the traditional Pauline emphases and the relationship of Ephesians to Colossians, which scholars believe “points decisively away from Pauline authorship of Ephesians.”⁷ However, church history shows that Ephesians is widely cited by early church fathers who explicitly identify Paul as its

² Michael Maura, *Prosperity? Seeking The True Gospel* (ACTS Kenya, 2016), 3-13; Maura, *Prosperity?* 41-43.

³ Ebenezer Obadare, “‘Raising Righteous Billionaires’: The Prosperity Gospel Reconsidered.,” *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 72, no. 4 (October 2016): 1-8, 121925122, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i4.3571>.

⁴ Markus Barth, *Ephesians. 1: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on Chapters 1 - 3*, 1. ed, The Anchor Bible 34 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1986), 37.

⁵ Barth, *Ephesians. 1*, 37.

⁶ Pro Pauline scholars account for Ephesians’ impersonal nature by proposing that the letter was likely originally a circular letter intended not for one local congregation, but for multiple churches in Asia Minor. This explains the apparent omission of the words *ἐν Ἐφέσῳ* (*in Ephesus*) from the earliest and best manuscripts, \mathfrak{B}^{46} , \aleph , and B.⁶ Over this matter, Hoehner concludes his textual criticism of 1:1 with a confidence that there is a high likelihood that the words *ἐν Ἐφέσῳ* appeared in the earliest manuscripts, and were omitted later. Hoehner further argues that “...there is no lacuna in any manuscript, even those which omit “in Ephesus,” and no such lacunae exist in examples of letters in the ancient world. Moreover, the manuscripts which omit “in Ephesus” insert no other city in its place. [Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, epub loc. 241.]

⁷ Andrew T. Lincoln and Bruce Manning Metzger, *Ephesians*, Nachdr., ed. David Allen Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, Word Biblical Commentary / [General Ed.: David A. Hubbard; Glenn W. Barker. Old Testament Ed.: John D. W. Watts. New Testament Ed.: Ralph P. Martin], Vol. 42 (Waco, Tex: Word Books, 2005), 67.



author. Abbot observes that Clement's writings show that he knew and depended on the theology of Ephesians in the substance of his ideas. It is therefore safe to conclude with Abbott in this respect that "we are fairly justified in saying that evidence of its [Ephesians] reception is evidence of its genuineness."⁸ Paul therefore, likely wrote Ephesians between AD 60-62 during his first Roman imprisonment.⁹ During this period, he had sufficient freedom to teach, receive visitors, and compose letters.¹⁰

The city of Ephesus was a bustling, multiethnic commercial seaport at the mouth of the Cayster river.¹¹ Apart from the indigenous Anatolian populations, there was an influx of foreigners and merchants from Greece, Egypt, Rome, and Jerusalem. Courtesy of Pax Romana, these foreigners enjoyed the wealth of Ephesus and often made up the greater percentage of the upper class.¹² Due to its diverse population, the city was a center of cultic and idol worship, including worship of the emperor.¹³ As observed by Mertzger, Ephesus was a city in love with magic: "Of all ancient Graeco-Roman cities, Ephesus, the third largest city in the Empire, was by far the most hospitable to magicians, sorcerers, and charlatans of all sorts."¹⁴ Nevertheless, during Paul's time, the most prominent religion was the worship of the Greek goddess Artemis (Diana in Latin), which drew pilgrims from across the Roman Empire. Seen as the "legitimate wife of Ephesus," Artemis was the de facto "protectress and nourisher of the city."¹⁵ Regarding the letter's occasion, many

⁸ Thomas Kingsmill Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians*, latest impr, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament (Edinburgh: Clark, 1991), 21.

⁹ Frank Thielman, Robert Yarbrough, and Robert Stein, *Ephesians (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament)*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament Ser (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 40. On the other hand, scholars who argue that Ephesians is a pseudonymous letter typically date its composition to the late first century (ca. AD 87-92), after the death of the apostle Paul. Best [Ernest Best, *Essays on Ephesians*, 1. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997)] suggests a period between 80 - 90 AD because this period suits the widespread church persecution talked about in Revelation and 1 Peter, and which may have resulted into the imprisonment of Paul. However, Best is cautious to note that Ephesians does not mention any sorts of persecution, Paul does not say from where he is imprisoned, and Acts records several Pauline imprisonments. (44 - 45). Cf also C. Leslie Mitton, *Ephesians: Based on the Revised Standard Version*, Reprint, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans [u.a.], 1989), 261; Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians*, 12.

¹⁰ J. Armitage Robinson, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010), 10.

¹¹ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 6. print, epub loc. 243. Over the years, the Cayster river has continued silting and thus extincted the city.

¹² Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians: Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians in Light of Its Histor. Setting*, Monograph Series / Society for New Testament Studies 63 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr, 1989), epub loc. 57.

¹³ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 6. print, epub loc. 249.

¹⁴ Arnold, *Ephesians* (1989), 14.

¹⁵ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, epub loc. 252. Arnold notes that "the influence of this goddess and the cult attached to her permeated every area of life for those who lived in this city. The temple was the major banking center for the city, her



scholars argue that Ephesians does not “suggest any occasion” that would likely have prompted its writing.¹⁶ Its tone is formal and impersonal, and Paul does not seem to address any particular concern, heresy or question raised by the Ephesians.¹⁷ However, Best argues that such a position is too narrow because “contingencies range from an author’s inner need to a general cultural situation and do not necessarily center on the particular problems of a particular congregation.”¹⁸ Ephesians may therefore have been prompted by this “general cultural and religious situation in Ephesus.”

Exegesis of Ephesians 1:3 – 14

Praise to God the Father for the Blessing of Election (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 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.”¹⁹

Translation: 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms, 4 just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him. In love, 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 to the praise of the glory of his grace, with which he has graced us in the Beloved.²⁰

The apostle Paul opens his extended doxology with the word *Εὐλογητός* (*Blessed be*), a predicate adjective, with a passive verbal idea. It comes from the verb *εὐλογέω*, which means “to

image adorned the coinage, a month of the year was named after her, Olympic-style games were held in her honor (called the Artemisia), and she was trusted as the guardian and protector of the city.”[Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, epub loc. 57]

¹⁶ C. Leslie Mitton, *Ephesians: Based on the Revised Standard Version*, Reprint, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1989), 25.

¹⁷ Leslie James Crawford, “Ephesians 1:3-4 and the Nature of Election,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 11, no. 1 (December 2000): 76, ATLA0000912821. Crawford argues that “Ephesians gives no clear indication of any special circumstances that prompted Paul to write the epistle.”

¹⁸ Ernest Best, *Essays on Ephesians*, 1. publ (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 75.

¹⁹ Barbara Aland and Eberhard Nestle, eds., *Greek-English New Testament: Greek text Novum Testamentum Graece ... English text 2nd edition of the Revised Standard Version*, 9. rev. ed., including papyri 98-116, 60.-66. Tsd (Stuttgart: Dt. Bibelges, 2001), 503-4.

²⁰ This, and the subsequent translations in the pericope are the author’s own translation of the text.



say something commendatory, speak well of, praise, extol.”²¹ In the Septuagint and the Jewish *berakah* tradition, the term is typically applied to God, though it is occasionally used of human beings (e.g., Gen 24:31); however, in early Christian usage, *εὐλογητός* is reserved exclusively for God.²² Paul then designates the object to whom the eulogy is directed in the next phrase, *ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* (*the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*). According to the Granville Sharp rule, TSKS (article + noun + καί + noun) construction, “when the definite article appears before the first—but not the second—of two singular, personal, non-proper nouns joined by καί, both nouns designate the same individual.”²³ This compound designation, therefore, identifies God specifically as the Father in relation to Jesus Christ. The substantival participle *ὁ εὐλογήσας* (*who has blessed*) modifies *ὁ θεός*. It introduces the reason for praise to the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. The participle is in the aorist to show the completed and decisive nature of God’s blessing. The personal pronoun *ἡμᾶς* is an accusative direct object of *εὐλογήσας*, designating everyone in Christ as the beneficiary of the blessing.

Paul then uses three prepositional phrases to specify the nature and sphere of this blessing. The first prepositional phrase is *ἐν πάσῃ εὐλογίᾳ πνευματικῇ* (*with every spiritual blessing*). The adjective *πάσῃ* points to the comprehensiveness or totality of the blessing. The feminine dative noun *εὐλογία* here refers not to spoken praise but to concrete salvific benefits, as clarified by the ensuing eulogy (election, adoption, redemption, inheritance, and sealing into sonship). As observed by Lemmer, *πνευματικῇ* (*spiritual*) in Pauline usage most often designates that which is originated, mediated, or effected by the Holy Spirit.²⁴ Thus, “spiritual blessings” are not abstract or non-material in contrast to physical blessings, nor are they reducible to ethical virtues.²⁵ Stott states that “a contrast is probably intended with Old Testament days when God’s promised blessings were largely material...It is true Jesus also promised his followers some material blessings...Nevertheless, the distinctive blessings of the new covenant are spiritual, not material.”²⁶

²¹ Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*, 3. ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 359.

²² Archibald Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1933), 595.

²³ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, 9. Repr (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2001), 271.

²⁴ H. R. Lemmer, “Reciprocity between Eschatology and Pneuma in Ephesians 1:3-14,” *Neotestamentica* 21, no. 2 (December 1987): 163, ATLAiREM221021000503. *pneumatikē* connotes that which is caused by the Spirit.

²⁵ Lemmer, “Reciprocity between Eschatology and Pneuma in Ephesians 1,” 168.

²⁶ John R. W. Stott and J. Alec Motyer, *The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today Series (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 34–35. Drawing heavily on John Calvin, Karlberg argues that the New Testament blessing is no longer defined by earthly, conditional, or national categories, as it largely was under the Mosaic covenant.



The second prepositional phrase *ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις* (*in the heavenly places*) is a dative of sphere, possibly referring to a realm beyond the earth.²⁷ It is doubtful whether this realm is synonymous with heaven as the believers' future destination or is reducible to a metaphor for spiritual experience. It is thus appropriate to conclude that *ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις* is a real but non-visible cosmic domain of existence.²⁸ The third prepositional phrase is *ἐν Χριστῷ* (*in Christ*). The preposition *ἐν* generally carries a locative meaning, denoting Christ as the sphere in which the believers exist and within which salvation is experienced. The *ἐν Χριστῷ* phrase thus reveals that, in Paul, salvation and all its benefits are Christocentric, accessible only through the believers' mystical union with Christ.²⁹

Verse 4 begins with *καθὼς*, which can be understood in two ways. According to Hoehner, both the manner and the cause are probable here. This, therefore, would mean that “the election of the Father, the redemption of the Son, and the seal of the Holy Spirit are themselves spiritual benefits as well as being the basis for every spiritual benefit.”³⁰ The aorist middle verb *ἐξέλεξατο* (*he chose*) is resultative and comes from the verb *ἐκλέγομαι* (*to choose*), which means “to pick out someone or something, choose (for oneself).”³¹ Paul uses this term in the context of salvation to highlight God's sovereign initiative in choosing the believers (Rom 9:11; 1 Cor 1:27). According to Westcott, whenever *ἐκλέγομαι* is used in the New Testament, the middle voice emphasizes “the relation of the person chosen to the special purpose of him who chooses.”³² Hoehner agrees that the middle voice shows that “God chose with great personal interest rather than a random

Instead, it is grounded entirely in the redemptive work of Christ, it is heavenly rather than earthly, it is secured by Christ's obedience as opposed to human obedience, and finally the blessing is received by faith, not law-keeping. [Mark W. Karlberg, “Legitimate Discontinuities between the Testaments,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 28, no. 1 (December 1985): 12, ATLA0000954069.]

²⁷ Some scholars think that *ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις* pertains to the believer's personal, inner spiritual life; the experience of the blessings in the heavenly realm. They cite the absence of an explicit noun (e.g., *τόποις* “places”) to suggest a conceptual rather than spatially precise designation, pointing to a realm defined by its relation to heaven rather than a localized geography. [Lincoln and Metzger, *Ephesians*, 20; Larkin, *Ephesians*, 6.]

²⁸ Lemmer, “Reciprocity between Eschatology and Pneuma in Ephesians 1,” 168.

²⁹ Robinson, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, 25. The blessings are thus bound “in Christ, the eternal Christ, who suffered, rose, ascended, “who is seated now at God's right hand supreme over all the forces of the universe.”

³⁰ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 6. print, epub loc. 445. Lincoln agrees that *καθὼς* has “both a comparative and causal force.” [Lincoln and Metzger, *Ephesians*, 17.]

³¹ Danker and Bauer, *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 270.

³² Crawford, “Ephesians 1,” 78. Usually the term refers to an appointment into a position of service, for example Jesus's appointment of the twelve, Jesus' designation as the Elect in Luke 9:35 and the church's designation as the chosen people in 1 Peter 1:1;2:9 [Crawford, “Ephesians 1,” 78].



impersonal choice.”³³ ἡμᾶς (*us*) is an accusative direct object of ἐξελέξατο³⁴, denoting the believers in Christ who God chose.

The prepositional phrase ἐν αὐτῷ (*in him*) further modifies ἐξελέξατο to show that election takes place in relation to Christ. Christ is not merely the means by which the elect later receive salvation but the representative locus in whom election occurs. God’s election of the believers “was a free decision not dependent on temporal circumstances but rooted in the depth of his nature.”³⁵ God’s choice of the believers is not out of any good in the believers themselves. Neither is it out of outside compulsion. Rather, it is out of God’s own sovereign grace and purposes. The temporal modifier πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου (*before the foundation of the world*) situates election in eternity past, prior to creation. According to Calvin, “the very time when the election took place proves it to be free; for what could we have deserved, or what merit did we possess, before the world was made?”³⁶ What follows is an infinitival clause εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους (*to be holy and without blame*). “The present infinitive of the verb εἶναι shows the purpose of election, and ἡμᾶς (*we*) is the accusative subject of the infinitive.”³⁷ Holiness and blamelessness are the intended outcome of election, not its prerequisite. Calvin notes that “holiness, purity, and every excellence that is found among men, are the fruit of election; so that once more Paul expressly puts aside every consideration of merit.”³⁸ The phrase κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ (*before him*) introduces a relational and cultic dimension in the eulogy, evoking the imagery of acceptable worship before God. The believers’ expected holiness and blamelessness as a result of their election have a primary audience – before him.³⁹ This brings the argument full circle. The purpose of God’s choice for the believers is so that they can stand in his presence as holy and blameless people.

Verse 5 continues the syntactical flow with the aorist active participle, nominative masculine singular verb προορίσας (*he predestined*). It comes from the root verb προορίζω, which is usually used of God’s eternal decrees, and which means to “decide upon beforehand, predetermine.”⁴⁰ The verb is a compound of ὀρίζω, “to set a boundary, determine, separate,” and

³³ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 6. print, epub loc. 448.

³⁴ Larkin, *Ephesians*, 7.

³⁵ Lincoln and Metzger, *Ephesians*, 23.

³⁶ Jean Calvin and T. H. L. Parker, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians* (Grand Rapids, Mich., Carlisle: Eerdmans; Paternoster, 1996), 8.

³⁷ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 6. print, epub loc. 451.

³⁸ Calvin and Parker, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, 8.

³⁹ Barth, *Ephesians*. 1, 80.

⁴⁰ Danker and Bauer, *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 775.



the prepositional prefix *προ-*, “before,” which denotes time.⁴¹ Here, *προορίσας* is causal, providing the reason for God’s election of the believers.⁴² It modifies the main verb *ἔξελέξατο* and “specifies the action of God in eternity whereby He has fixed in advance the destiny of certain people.”⁴³ *ἡμᾶς* here refers to the believing community, who are God’s special foreknown people, who have now benefited from the blessing of election. The prepositional phrase *ἐν ἀγάπῃ*, given its proximity to *προορίσας* and the emphasis on God’s motivation in the immediate context, most plausibly describes the motive of predestination. The purpose phrase *εἰς υἰοθεσίαν* (for adoption as sons) functions as an adverbial accusative, indicating that adoption is the ultimate goal of God’s predestination of believers. The noun *υἰοθεσία* denotes the conferral of legal status as sons, drawing on Greco-Roman adoption practices. The believers’ relationship with God, therefore, changes to that of legal sonship with access to special privileges and responsibilities reserved for sons. The mediating means by which God adopts the believers is expressed by the prepositional phrase *διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* (*through Jesus Christ*). This means that the redemptive work of Christ on the cross is the means by which God makes believers his own sons. The prepositional phrase *εἰς αὐτόν* (*to himself*) indicates God as the ultimate recipient and goal of this filial relationship. Paul then uses his standard measure clause *κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ* (*according to the good pleasure of his will*) to emphasize that predestination arises from God’s gracious pleasure and sovereign will. The preposition *κατά* with the accusative denotes a standard⁴⁴ which, in this case, is “God’s kindly disposition,”⁴⁵ the good pleasure of God’s will.

Verse 6 provides the climactic purpose statement: *εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ* (*to the praise of the glory of his grace*). The noun *ἔπαινον* comes from the masculine root noun *ἔπαινος*, which connotes “the act of expressing admiration or approval, praise, approval, recognition.”⁴⁶ The genitive feminine *δόξης* “connotes the idea of the reflection of the essence of one’s being, the summation of all of one’s attributes.”⁴⁷ According to Hoehner, the first genitive in this sentence is an objective genitive dependent on *ἔπαινον* (*praise*), and the second is a genitive

⁴¹ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 6. print, epub loc. 486.

⁴² Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians*, 8.

⁴³ Crawford, “Ephesians 1,” 81.

⁴⁴ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 6. print, epub loc. 496.

⁴⁵ Larkin, *Ephesians*, 8; Best, *Essays on Ephesians*, 126. Hence Barth states that God’s predestination for the elect into adoption as sons is not in such a way as of “a grim Lord watching over the execution of his predetermined plan, but a smiling Father is praised. He enjoys imparting his riches to many children.” [Barth, *Ephesians. 1*, 81]

⁴⁶ Danker and Bauer, *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*, 315.

⁴⁷ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 6. print, epub loc. 503.



of quality. This yields the ASV's translation: "to the praise of the glory of his grace." The aorist indicative active third-person singular verb of χαριτώω, ἐχαρίτωσεν (he graciously favored), echoes the noun χάρις and denotes that salvation is an act of God's unmerited favor. The phrase ἐν τῷ ἠγαπημένῳ (in the Beloved) again underscores the mediating role of Christ, who is uniquely loved by the Father and in whom the believers share that favor.

In conclusion, this unit highlights God the Father as the ultimate source of salvation. He is the one who blesses, chooses, predestines, and adopts. The Father's will (τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ) and good pleasure (εὐδοκία) govern the entire salvation plan. Salvation is thus grounded in God's gracious initiative rather than human merit. Although the focus is on the Father, the Son is integral to every aspect of the blessing. Election is "in Christ," adoption is "through Jesus Christ," and grace is bestowed "in the Beloved." This anticipates the fuller trinitarian pattern developed in vv. 7-14, where the Son and the Spirit receive explicit attention.

Salvation Accomplished through the Redemptive Work of Christ (vv. 7 – 12)

Greek Text: "7 ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν παραπτωμάτων, κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ, 8 ἧς 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 ἐκκληρώθημεν 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."⁴⁸

Translation: 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace 8 which he lavished on us in all 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 for the administration of the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth. 11 In him we were made God's own inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

Verse 7 begins with a prepositional phrase ἐν ᾧ (in whom); a dative of sphere. The relative pronoun ᾧ (whom), refers back to ἐν τῷ ἠγαπημένῳ (in the Beloved) (v. 6). Here, ἐν refers to a

⁴⁸ Aland and Nestle, *Greek-English New Testament*, 504.



location or sphere. Paul uses it to show the believers' incorporative union in the Beloved. Christ is the sphere in which the blessings of redemption are presently experienced. The verb ἔχομεν is the present indicative active first-person plural of ἔχω. It is static, indicating the believers' current possession of redemption rather than a future hope alone.⁴⁹ The accusative τὴν ἀπολύτρωσις (*the redemption*) is the direct object of ἔχομεν. BDAG defines it as "release from a captive condition, release, redemption, deliverance..."⁵⁰ O' Brien rightly observes that "Paul's understanding of redemption is rooted in the Old Testament, where redemption refers to the freeing of slaves and, more significantly, to God's powerful act of rescuing Israel from slavery in Egypt."⁵¹ Consequently, ἀπολύτρωσις is the liberation from captivity by payment of a ransom.⁵² Paul further defines τὴν ἀπολύτρωσις (*the redemption*) by two modifying phrases: διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ (*through his blood*) and τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν παραπτωμάτων (*the forgiveness of our trespasses*). The preposition διὰ with the genitive indicates means, and specifies the blood of Jesus Christ as the instrumental basis of redemption. The accusative τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν παραπτωμάτων (*the forgiveness of our trespasses*) is in apposition to τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν. This grammatical relationship indicates that forgiveness is not an additional benefit; rather, it is the concrete expression of redemption. Paul then proceeds to his standard measure clause: κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ (*according to the riches of his grace*). Redemption and the forgiveness of trespasses are not given sparingly but in accordance with the immeasurable wealth of God's grace. The repetition of χάρις, a genitive of the thing, throughout the eulogy shows that grace is the dominant motif of salvation. In other words, "all Christian experience begins and ends with grace."⁵³

Verse 8 begins with the singular feminine genitive relative pronoun ἧς, referring back to χάριτος (*grace*). The aorist verb ἐπέρισσευσεν (*he lavished or he caused to abound*) is resultative and thus denotes a completed action whose effects are presently felt. God already caused grace to overflow upon the believers beyond measure. The verb is intensified by the prefix περί-, which denotes excess and abundance. The prepositional phrase εἰς ἡμᾶς (*upon us*) indicates the direction

⁴⁹ Best, *Essays on Ephesians*, 151. Best suggests that "the present tense implies redemption and forgiveness are present possessions and this is in keeping with AE's [Author of Ephesians] stress on the present nature of salvation."

⁵⁰ Danker and Bauer, *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*, 102.

⁵¹ Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 7, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009), 107.

⁵² Lincoln and Metzger, *Ephesians*, 28.

⁵³ Best, *Essays on Ephesians*, 132.



of God's gracious action toward the believers.⁵⁴ Next is a prepositional phrase *ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ φρονήσει* (*in all wisdom and understanding*). God's gracious plan is executed with divine wisdom and discernment.⁵⁵

In verse 9, the aorist active participle *γνωρίσας* (*he made known*) is circumstantial and dependent on the main finite verb from v.8 *ἐπερίσσευσεν* (*he lavished*). Lexically, *γνωρίσας* is from *γνωρίζω*, which means "to cause information to become known: make known, reveal."⁵⁶ The participle functions contemporaneously with *ἐπερίσσευσεν* to explain the manner in which God's grace overflows, that is, through revelation.⁵⁷ The dative of advantage *ἡμῖν* is an indirect object of *γνωρίσας* and highlights the believers as recipients of God's disclosure.⁵⁸ Next is the accusative direct object of *γνωρίσας*, *τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ* (*the mystery of his will*). In Pauline usage, *μυστήριον* does not denote something unknowable but a divine purpose once hidden and now revealed. The genitive construction identifies the mystery as belonging to God's will.⁵⁹ The phrase *κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν αὐτοῦ* (*according to his good pleasure*) modifies *γνωρίσας* and again denotes that this revelation is based on God's own initiative and pleasure. The preposition *κατὰ* used with the accusative indicates the standard God employed: *εὐδοκίαν*. "This secret plan of his will was not given begrudgingly but with God's pleasure."⁶⁰ The relative clause *ἣν προέθετο ἐν αὐτῷ* (*which he purposed in him*) clarifies that this purpose was decisively established in Christ. As it stands, the believers belong to God's inner circle, having access to God's secret things.

Verse 10 introduces an infinitival clause dependent on *προέθετο*: *εἰς οἰκονομίαν τοῦ πληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν* (*for the administration of the fullness of times*). The term *οἰκονομίαν*

⁵⁴ Calvin and Parker, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, 12. According to Calvin, these overflowing riches of the grace of God indicate the "the largeness of the divine kindness, which has given Christ to us as our Redeemer."

⁵⁵ Larkin, *Ephesians*, 10. However, Bruce takes a different view. He believes that the wisdom and insight are among the blessings that God has granted to the believers as a consequence of God's grace. [Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, 33; Lincoln and Metzger, *Ephesians*, 29.]

⁵⁶ Danker and Bauer, *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 179.

⁵⁷ Larkin, *Ephesians*, 11. Larkin however objects this position and posits that this participle "should be tied to *ἐξελέξατο* (1:4), as part of a "threefold link emphasizing the unity of the discourse, and also pointing to the fact that the total sentence (vv. 3-14) is a continuous repetition, with expansions, of the same content introduced by v. 3 and elaborated on by vv. 4-14."

⁵⁸ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 6. print, epub loc 533. "The revelation of God's mystery is not limited to Paul or a select group, but is shared with all believers, in line with the consistent use of the pronoun throughout the surrounding verses (cf. vv. 4-6, 8)."

⁵⁹ Thielman, Yarbrough, and Stein, *Ephesians (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament)*, 63.

⁶⁰ Lincoln and Metzger, *Ephesian*, epub loc. 537.



should be understood “actively as “activity of administration,”⁶¹ a meaning more congruent with *εἰς*. The thought is that “of the “carrying out” of the secret Purpose of God.”⁶² The objective genitival phrase *τοῦ πληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν* (*of the fullness of the times*) “denotes the completion of an appointed period of time and hence the arrival of a new epoch.”⁶³ Larkin understands the next objective genitive *τῶν καιρῶν* as pointing “more to periods or seasons within human history than to events within history.”⁶⁴ The aorist middle infinitive *ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι* (*to sum up*) functions exegetically to explain the content of God’s plan. It comes from the verb *ἀνακεφαλαιώω* which carries the connotation “of a mathematical total sum up...”⁶⁵ Hence J.B Lightfoot puts it aptly: “the entire harmony of the universe, which shall no longer contain alien and discordant elements, but of which all the parts shall find their centre and bond of union with Christ.”⁶⁶ The middle voice in the infinitive *ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι* highlights God’s personal involvement in this unifying act.⁶⁷ The comprehensive scope of this action of the summation or summarization in Christ is expressed by the accusative *τὰ πάντα* (*all things*), further specified as *τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς* (*things in heaven and things on earth*). Here, “the articles function as nominalizers...resulting in conjoined noun phrases that are accusative in apposition to *τὰ πάντα*.”⁶⁸ The final phrase *ἐν αὐτῷ* (*in him*) is a dative of sphere that reiterates Christ as the sphere and agent of cosmic reconciliation. The grand purpose of God is to summarize all things, the whole creation, into Christ. But what are ‘all things’ to include? John Stott supplies the answer for the “all things” which will be brought under the headship of Christ: “...they include the Christian living and the Christian dead, the church on earth and the church in heaven...will one day be perfectly united ‘in him’ (v.10) ...God’s plan is that ‘all things’ which were created through Christ and for Christ, and which hold together in Christ, will finally be united under Christ...”⁶⁹

⁶¹ Ibid., 32.

⁶² John T. Trinidad, “Mystery Hidden in God: A Study of Ephesians 1:3-14,” *Biblica* 31, no. 1 (December 1950): 18, ATLA0000653756.

⁶³ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1977), 33.

⁶⁴ Larkin, *Ephesians*, 12. Barth contends that “according to this epistle, history makes sense because it moves, or rather, it has already moved, to an apex. That moment is—now!” [Barth, *Ephesians. 1*, 128]. Similarly, Lincoln quips that “God has ordered history in such a way that it culminates in the achievement of his purpose, as the various eras of history are crowned and completed by a climactic point at which the disclosure of the mystery of his will takes place.” [Lincoln, 32].

⁶⁵ Danker and Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 57.

⁶⁶ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1977), 33.

⁶⁷ Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians*, 18.

⁶⁸ Larkin, *Ephesians*, 12-13.

⁶⁹ Stott and Motyer, *The Message of Ephesians* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 44.



Verse 11 opens with yet another prepositional phrase ἐν ᾧ (*in whom*), once again locating salvation firmly in Christ. “The preposition with the relative pronoun (ἐν ᾧ) relates this verse back to Christ mentioned in verse 10 (showing incorporative union with Christ). The conjunction καί is most likely adjunctive (*also*), which enhances this next section.”⁷⁰ The verb ἐκληρώθημεν is an aorist passive indicative from κληρώω. But whose inheritance does Paul have in mind? Considering the passive voice and given the immediate reference to inheritance in v. 14, the inheritance Paul had in mind is the one belonging to God, in the sense that he has claimed the believers as his own heritage.⁷¹ Next, we have the aorist passive participle προορισθέντες (*he predestined*), which functions causally, further explaining how the believers were made God’s own inheritance. Grammatically, it is circumstantial and dependent on ἐκληρώθημεν (*we were made God’s own inheritance*). It echoes the language of vv. 4–5 and reinforces the continuity of God’s saving purpose.⁷² The prepositional phrase κατὰ πρόθεσιν (*according to [his] purpose*) again highlights intentionality. God is not simply reacting to the course of history. He has predetermined it, and he will make sure that everything shall come to pass in accordance to his plan.

Additionally, πρόθεσιν, preceded by κατὰ, is a measure clause showing the standard by which the action of predestination happened. This is expanded by the participial clause τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐνεργοῦντος, which denotes God as the one “*who works all things*.” The present active participle ἐνεργοῦντος is a subjective genitive functioning substantivally to denote God’s continuous and sovereign activity.⁷³ In most of its occurrences (1:11, 20; 2:2; 3:20), it refers to God’s power at work in the lives of believers, except in 2:2, where the power of the devil is referred to. Hoehner suggests that “this may include the concept of infusion with supernatural power.”⁷⁴ To remove all doubts as to the power of the outworking of God, Paul adds that God accomplishes τὰ πάντα (*all things*). He then qualifies all things. God’s power is not magic to just accomplish things. No, it accomplishes τὰ πάντα, κατὰ τὴν βουλήν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ (*according to the counsel of*

⁷⁰ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), epub loc. 557.

⁷¹ F.F. Bruce supports this view, arguing that “in Christ, we have been admitted to the ranks of the chosen people, the holy heritage of God.” [Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, 33].

⁷² Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 6. print, epub loc. 564. Hoehner informs that “[i]n the present verse the passive finite verb shows that believers are the recipients of the action and the participle coincides with it. Therefore, the reason we become God’s heritage is because our destiny as his inheritance was predetermined beforehand by him.”

⁷³ Larkin, *Ephesians*, 14.

⁷⁴ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 6. print, epub loc. 564.



his will). The combination of *βουλή* (counsel) and *θέλημα* (will) suggests both deliberation and resolve, and shows God's will as purposeful, wise, and effective.⁷⁵

Verse 12 introduces a purpose clause with *εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς* (so that we might be). The present active infinitive *εἶναι* expresses the purpose, not of the participle *προορισθέντες*, but of the finite verb *ἐκκληρώθημεν*, “we were made a heritage,” in verse 11. Therefore, we were made a heritage in order that we might be to the praise of his glory.⁷⁶ The accusative *ἡμᾶς* is the subject of the infinitive.⁷⁷ The participial phrase *τοὺς προηλπικότας ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ* (who were the first to hope in Christ) is substantival in apposition with *ἡμᾶς* and further explains the identity of the *ἡμᾶς*. According to Lincoln, *ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ* is the object of the believers' hope.⁷⁸ *ἡμᾶς* likely refers to all the believers in Christ without distinction.⁷⁹ The believers were destined and appointed to live *εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης αὐτοῦ* (to the praise of His glory).⁸⁰ Thus, the whole plan of salvation finds its end goal in the praise of his glory. This sentence brings us to the conclusion of the second strophe, which was centered on the redemption work of the second person of the Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this section, it is clear that Christ is the decisive agent through whom God's eternal plan of salvation is accomplished. The believers enjoy the gifts of redemption and forgiveness of sins through His blood. These blessings are generously granted to believers according to the abundant riches of the grace of God. In addition, this grace of God has revealed the mystery of God's will – the unification of all things in Christ. The unit, therefore, forms the Christological nerve center of the entire eulogy.

⁷⁵ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 6. print, epub loc. 567. Also, Abbott suggests that “the combination ‘Counsel of His will’ seems intended to express emphatically the absolute self-determination of God. (Compare 1 Pet. 3. 17).” [Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians*, 21.]

⁷⁶ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 6. print, epub loc. 571.

⁷⁷ Larkin, *Ephesians*, 14.

⁷⁸ Lincoln and Metzger, *Ephesians*, 37; Larkin, *Ephesians*, 14. Best however rejects Lincoln's position and proposes that “[t]he object of hope is normally expressed with either the dative or a preposition... ‘In Christ’ thus retains here its formulaic significance and relates either to the togetherness of Christians in Christ (Gnilka) or gives the reason for hope (Masson; cf Phil 2.19)” [Best, *Essays on Ephesians*, 147.]

⁷⁹ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 6. print, 573-74. Another group of scholars adopt the view that *τοὺς προηλπικότας ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ* likely refers to the Jewish believers who first placed their hope in the Messiah. Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians*, 21; Mitton, *Ephesians*, 57; Robinson, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, 34-35k; Bruce, 34 – 35.

⁸⁰ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1977), 34.



Salvation Applied and Guaranteed by the Holy Spirit (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 ἄρραβὸν τῆς κληρονομίας ἡμῶν, εἰς ἀπολύτρωσιν τῆς περιποιήσεως, εἰς ἔπαινον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ.”⁸¹

Translation: 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth—the gospel of your salvation—and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of God’s possession, to the praise of his glory.

The final major segment of the eulogy begins at v. 13, which presents two relative clauses, both introduced by the prepositional phrase ἐν ᾧ καὶ (*in whom also*). The prepositional phrases both refer back to the believers’ incorporative union with Christ. Larkin maintains that “the relative clauses stand in apposition to one another and both modify ἐσφραγίσθητε.”⁸² The personal pronoun now also changes from ἡμᾶς (*we*) in verse 12 to ὑμεῖς (*you*) in v.13. According to Larkin, the “first person includes both writer and audience. The second person is simply a heightening of focus on the reading audience. In both cases, Christians are referred to, both Jewish and Gentile.”⁸³ Next, the apostle describes the process by which salvation is personally appropriated to the believers: ἀκούσαντες τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς σωτηρίας ὑμῶν (*when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation*). The aorist active participle ἀκούσαντες (*when you heard*) is temporal, denoting antecedent action relative to the main verb ἐσφραγίσθητε (*you were sealed*). The object of hearing is described appositionally as τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας (*the word of truth*) and τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς σωτηρίας ὑμῶν (*the gospel of your salvation*). The apposition highlights both the content of truth and the saving power of the gospel. The power of the good news is seen in its accomplishments, that is, the salvation of the readers.⁸⁴ The next aorist participle in this verse: ἐν ᾧ καὶ πιστεύσαντες (*and believed in him*) is temporal, denoting antecedent action relative to the

⁸¹ Aland and Nestle, *Greek-English New Testament*, 504.

⁸² Larkin, *Ephesians*, 15. Hoehner agrees, proposing that the prepositional phrase “...connects with the central theme of being “in Christ” and relates it to the main verb of the present verse (ἐσφραγίσθητε) so that “you also were sealed in him” (RV, ASV, RSV, NASB, NRSV) indicating location...This is consistent with its use in verse 11 where the ἐν ᾧ καὶ refers back to ἐν αὐτῷ of verse 10. [Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 6. print, epub loc. 578.]

⁸³ Larkin, *Ephesians*, 15; Best, *Essays on Ephesians*, 148.

⁸⁴ Lincoln and Metzger, *Ephesians*, Nachdr., ed. Hubbard and Barker (Waco, Tex: Word Books, 2005), 39. Thus, Lincoln affirms that “the good news effects a rescue operation, a deliverance from spiritual death, from God’s wrath, from bondage to evil powers, sin and the flesh (cf. 2:1- 3).”



main verb *ἐσφραγίσθητε* (*you were sealed*). Accordingly, *πιστεύσαντες* indicates that believing precedes the act of sealing, even though this does not imply a significant temporal gap between the two. In Pauline usage, an aorist participle followed by an aorist indicative often conveys logical priority rather than a prolonged chronological delay.⁸⁵ Lincoln thus opines that *πιστεύσαντες* highlights “an action coincident in time with that of the main verb *ἐσφραγίσθητε*.”⁸⁶ The main verb of this verse, *ἐσφραγίσθητε* (*you were sealed*), is the first aorist passive indicative of *σφραγίζω*, “an old verb,”⁸⁷ meaning “to mark with a seal as a means of identification, mark, seal.”⁸⁸ As noted by Stott, “a seal is a mark of ownership and of authenticity...[God] puts his Spirit within his people in order to mark them as his own.”⁸⁹ The passive voice again highlights divine initiative: the believers are sealed by God, not by themselves. The instrumental dative *τῷ πνεύματι τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τῷ ἁγίῳ* (*with the promised Holy Spirit*) identifies the Holy Spirit as both the agent and the content of the sealing. The genitive *τῆς ἐπαγγελίας* may be understood as either descriptive (the promised Spirit) or possessive (the Spirit who brings promise), with the former fitting well with Old Testament and early Christian expectations of the Spirit.⁹⁰ *τῷ ἁγίῳ* denotes the personal holy character of the Spirit.

In verse 14, the Spirit himself, not merely the Spirit’s gifts, is the guarantee of the believer’s inheritance: *ὁ ἐστὶν ἀρραβὼν τῆς κληρονομίας ἡμῶν* (*who is the guarantee of our inheritance*). The predicate nominative noun *ἀρραβὼν* refers to a “payment of part of a purchase price in advance, first installment, deposit, down payment, pledge which secures a legal claim to the article in question, or makes a contract valid.”⁹¹ The partitive genitive *τῆς κληρονομίας ἡμῶν* (*of our inheritance*) refers to the eschatological inheritance that is promised to God’s people. For Larkin, “the inheritance” is the whole of which the *ἀρραβὼν* (“downpayment”) is a part.”⁹² Worth noting is that the apostle Paul now shifts from “you” (v. 13) back to “our”; the inheritance belongs to all

⁸⁵ Best, *Essays on Ephesians*, 149. It is therefore worth noting that “participles can indicate an event contemporaneous with the main verb (cf Mt 19.27; 27.4; Acts 10.33; 27.3).”

⁸⁶ Lincoln and Metzger, *Ephesians*, 39.

⁸⁷ Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 599.

⁸⁸ Danker and Bauer, *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*, 871.

⁸⁹ John R. W. Stott and J. Alec Motyer, *The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today Series (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 48–49.]

⁹⁰ Lincoln and Metzger, *Ephesians*, 40.

⁹¹ Danker and Bauer, *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*, 117. Foulke thus suggests that the “Christians’ experience of the Spirit now is a foretaste and pledge of what will be theirs when they fully possess their God-given inheritance.” [Francis Foulkes, *The Pastoral Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, 64.]

⁹² Larkin, *Ephesians*, 16.



the believers. The following phrase *εἰς ἀπολύτρωσιν τῆς περιποιήσεως* (*until the redemption of God's possession*) denotes the believers in Christ who will be redeemed as God's possession.⁹³ This unit ends with the standard Pauline doxology in this pericope, *εἰς ἔπαινον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ* (*to the praise of his glory*). As Hoehner notes, this marks the third occurrence of a similar refrain (see vv. 6 and 12), and in each case it follows a description highlighting the saving work of a distinct person of the Trinity.⁹⁴ Here, it indicates that the Spirit's end goal in guaranteeing believers of their eternal inheritance is the praise of God's glory.

In this unit, the Holy Spirit is the agent who bridges God's eternal purpose and the believers' future hope. Salvation is not left uncertain or incomplete; it is sealed and secured. The Spirit's presence is both a present reality and a future-oriented pledge. Literarily, vv. 13–14 complete the trinitarian rhythm of the eulogy and bring the passage full circle with the repeated refrain *εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης αὐτοῦ*. Salvation begins in God's purpose, is accomplished in Christ, and is applied and guaranteed by the Spirit — all for the glory of God.

Application of the Study

The exegetical study of Ephesians 1:3–14 carries profound implications for believers, the church, and the wider Christian community. For the individual believer, Ephesians 1:3–14 is a stable foundation for identity formation and assurance of salvation. The text teaches that the believers are chosen, redeemed, adopted, and sealed by God through Christ and the Spirit, independent of their socio-economic status or external circumstances. This directly confronts the feelings of spiritual inferiority often experienced by the believers who struggle with poverty, disease, or other forms of suffering.⁹⁵ Instead of viewing hardship as a sign of God's displeasure, the believers are invited to ground their worth and acceptance in God's gracious election and redemptive purpose.⁹⁶

⁹³ Abbot argues that since the whole passage has been talking about our inheritance, it would be a confusing change of metaphor quite unlike the Apostle Paul to refer to God's possession. [Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians*, 24.] The Spirit is thus the pledge of our inheritance, unto the final securing of it. The RSV quoted above, like many English translations, suggests that this is the believer's possession. However, Houlden calls this 'a loose and tendentious translation'. [J. L. Houlden, *Paul's Letters from Prison: Philippians, Colossians, Philemon and Ephesians*, 271.] However, According to Stott, "it seems more probable that the possession (like the inheritance) is God's and that it again refers to his people. So, NIV: 'until the redemption of those who are God's possession.' The main argument for interpreting it this way is once more the Old Testament background." [Stott and Motyer, *The Message of Ephesians*, 46.]

⁹⁴ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 6. print, 598.

⁹⁵ Bernard Alwala, "The Fate of Prosperity Gospel in Kenya," *East African Journal of Traditions, Culture and Religion* 2, no. 1 (May 2020): 13–22, <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajtr.2.1.141>.

⁹⁶ John Lewis, "Doing Theology through the Gates of Heaven: A Bible Study on Ephesians 1:3-14," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 28, no. 4 (January 2004): 363–68, ATLA0001588676.



For the church, this passage calls for a reformation of teaching, worship, and discipleship. Ephesians 1:3–14 defines blessing in spiritual and redemptive terms. The church must also do the same and move away from transactional and consumer-driven models of faith. When churches emphasize giving as a means to secure material prosperity, they undermine the gospel of grace.⁹⁷ Rather, the church is called to center its preaching on God’s saving work in Christ, cultivate doxological rather than utilitarian worship, and form disciples whose faith is rooted in biblical hope.

At the community and societal level, the passage gives a framework for addressing the theological and moral challenges posed by prosperity-oriented Christianity. The prosperity gospel often reinforces individualism and unrealistic expectations, which often lead to disillusionment, blame of the poor, and/or neglect of communal responsibility.⁹⁸ Ephesians 1:3–14, by contrast, presents salvation as a participation in God’s redemptive plan and inheritance. This perspective empowers the church to engage social issues like poverty and injustice with compassion rather than condemnation because God’s ultimate blessing is not material wealth but restored relationship and future hope.

Conclusion

Ephesians 1:3–14 opens by presenting God the Father as the source of all spiritual blessings. In vv 3 – 6, Paul reveals that the Father is the one who sovereignly blesses, elects, predestines, and adopts the believers in Christ, not based on human merit but according to His gracious will, with the purpose that they be holy and blameless before Him and ultimately to the praise of His glorious grace. In vv. 7–12, the focus shifts to Christ as the agent through whom salvation is accomplished. Redemption, which is defined as the forgiveness of sins, is only possible through His blood and is granted according to the abundant riches of God’s grace; this redemptive work also includes the revelation of God’s once-hidden plan to unite all things in Christ, establishing Him as the center of both personal salvation and cosmic restoration. Finally, in vv. 13–14, the Holy Spirit is presented as the one who applies and guarantees salvation. He seals the believers upon hearing and believing the gospel and serves as the down payment of their future inheritance, thus assuring the completion of their redemption. Additionally, key to this study is the comparison of Paul’s understanding of

⁹⁷ Beatriz Melano Couch, “Blessed Be He Who Has Blessed: Ephesians 1:3-14,” *International Review of Mission* 77, no. 306 (December 1988): 213–20, ATLA0000802460.

⁹⁸ Michael Maura, *Prosperity? seeking the true gospel* (ACTS Kenya, 2016), 3–13; Maura, *Prosperity?* 41–43.



spiritual blessing with the prosperity gospel prevalent in contemporary Christianity, which found a significant theological contrast. While prosperity teaching equates blessing with material wealth and health, Ephesians 1:3–14 defines blessing in redemptive and eschatological terms: union with Christ, forgiveness, adoption, participation in God’s redemptive plan, and the assurance of future inheritance. Ultimately, Paul’s theology directs all blessings toward the praise of God’s glory and effectively challenges interpretations that reduce the gospel to human praise.

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