

Day 1 – Introduction to the Text

Ephesians 1:3-14

There are two ways that I view this passage. The first is similar to the show “Extreme Makeover.” In the show, they select a family who has been nominated by their community to receive a complete rebuild of their dilapidated house, because the family nominated lacks the financial means to do it themselves. The show would send the chosen family away on vacation for a week while they worked on their house. Then after their week vacation, the family would return and be introduced to their new house. The most exciting part of the show was to see the reaction of the family when they were introduced to their new home. The tears of joy and the looks of utter disbelief on the surprised family’s faces were always priceless. And when asked by the host to explain how they felt about their new house, most of the family members were so overwhelmed with emotion that they could not find the words to describe how they felt.

The other way to look at this passage is in terms of reading a Tom Clancy novel. Clancy novels always start out with two or three mini-stories consisting of different characters involved in some plot. As the overall story progresses, it becomes clearer and clearer that the individual mini-stories all feed into a larger story. Clancy was a master at weaving these mini-stories into one grand story that always left you wondering how he was able to bring seemingly unrelated events together so perfectly.

In the same way, the Apostle Paul is so amazed at what God has done through Jesus Christ, that he is like those families in “Extreme Makeover”—he is so overwhelmed with joy that he explodes with a flurry of praise. Like those families who now have a brand new house to live in, Paul praises God for his mercy and grace in taking dilapidated unbelievers and making them new again in Christ Jesus. Furthermore, Paul stands in awe of God, who through the mini-stories of the Old Testament, has masterfully compiled one grand story which culminates in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Scripture Memory: Ephesians 1:13-14

Day 2 – What Does the Text Say?

Read Ephesians 1:3-14

1. How has God blessed believers (v3)?
2. When did God choose believers and for what purpose did He choose them (v4)?
3. What did God determine beforehand for those who believe in Christ (v5)?
4. What does the work of Christ do for the believer (v7)?
5. What has God given the believer (vv8-10)?
6. How did God's plan include people of different cultures (vv11-12)?
7. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those called to receive spiritual blessings in Christ (vv13-14)?

Day 3 – What Does the Text Mean?

Read Ephesians 1:3-14 again

Verse 3: “The opening words are an outburst of *praise* to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 1:3–4; 1 Pet. 1:3–5) in the typical Old Testament and Jewish style of an extended blessing or *berakah* (‘Blessed be God, who has ...’). . . . Here the adjective *spiritual* means ‘pertaining to or belonging to the Spirit’, and thus ‘spiritual blessings’ signify those which ‘properly pertain to the life of the Spirit’. . . . The nature of these gracious gifts is made plain in the following words of the eulogy (vv. 4–14), and include election to holiness, adoption as God’s sons and daughters, redemption and forgiveness, a knowledge of God’s gracious plan to sum up all things in Christ, the gift of the Spirit, and the hope of glory” (O’Brien, 93-95).

Verse 4: Paul uses the common word for “chose”, *eklegomai*, which means “to pick out, select, or choose something or someone” (BDAG, 305)

Verses 5-6: The verb “predestine” (*proorizō*) means “to decide on before-hand” or “to predetermine” (BDAG, 873).

“Slaves in Graeco-Roman antiquity were legally not human persons. For the Christians at Ephesus who were or had been slaves, to hear that God had predestined them not just to become God’s freedmen (1 Cor 7:22) or free children (John 1:12) but through *υιοθεσία* (*huiiothesia*) to become ruling sons (whether male or female) was an astoundingly magnificent statement of God’s lavish grace, poured out upon the objects of his eternal love” (Baugh, 87-88).

Verse 7: “in Greek usage ‘redemption’ denoted deliverance from bondage or imprisonment through the payment of some price. For example, a slave attained freedom (i.e., was redeemed) from slavery upon the payment of the required fee. The concept occurs in the OT as well (Ex 6:6; 21:30; Nu 18:15–16; see 2 Sa 7:23 for redeeming a people). Using this metaphor, Paul pictures what Christ has done to secure forgiveness for his people: *he died for them*” (Klein, 50).

Verse 8: The themes of wisdom, understanding (note the parallel Col. 1:9), and insight were frequently found in various combinations in the LXX. . . . Here the second term, ‘insight’, consistent with the author’s

style of heaping up synonymous terms, probably reinforces the more general term ‘wisdom’ and forms one idea with it” (O’Brien, 108).

Verse 9: The term *mystery* has been taken down all sorts of winding paths (including the Graeco-Roman mystery religions). There is nothing here to suggest that God is making known mysterious rites or rituals or is granting secrets to a select few, but rather he is broadcasting what he had eternally planned about the extravagant largesse of grace in the present time ‘to sum up all things in [Christ]’ (v. 10b). Redemption in Christ had been prophesied earlier, but in such a way that its exact character was hidden until its historical fulfillment” (Baugh, 91).

Verse 10: “The word *oikonomia* occurs nine times in the NT in three essential senses (cf. BDAG, 697–98) . . . Paul’s use here fits the sense of ‘management’ or of a ‘plan,’ specifically, the plan of salvation” (Klein, 52). “Times” translates the common word *kairos*, which can specify a point of time, a definite or fixed time, or a time characterized in some special way as a time of crisis (BDAG, 497). “When ‘fulfillment’ occurs, cosmic unity arrives. Paul uses a unique verb, *anakephalaioō* (GK 368), that conveys the sense of arriving at a sum—as in a sum of numbers—or a main point, summary, recapitulation (cf. BDAG, 65; TDNT 3:681)” (Klein, 52).

Verses 11-12: “Who are the *we* that have become God’s portion? At first glance the clause appears simply to be describing all Christians, that is, the same recipients of all the other blessings in Christ mentioned in the eulogy of vv. 3–10. However, at v. 11 the *we* is restricted, for in the following verse the same people are spoken of as those who ‘first hoped in Christ’ (v. 12). The reference is to Paul and his fellow Jewish believers. The Gentile readers of the letter are not included in this designation, but are explicitly mentioned, in some sense by way of contrast, in the *you* of v. 13” (O’Brien, 116).

Verses 13-14: “Not only are the previous acts accomplished, but you, *yes you*, were *also* sealed with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not an agent who stamped us with a seal; the Spirit is the seal. Believers possess the Spirit . . . BDAG, 134, describe this entity as the ‘payment of part of a purchase price in advance, first installment, deposit, down payment, pledge.’ The sense is clear enough. The Spirit in believers’ lives constitutes God’s ‘earnest money,’ a kind of deposit from him by which he assures that he will give them their full inheritance” (Klein, 54-55).

Day 4 – What Difference Does the Text Make?

Read Ephesians 1:3-14 again

1. In everyday language, how would you describe the spiritual blessings given to you?
2. How should knowing that we were chosen to be in the family of God affect our involvement in evangelism?
3. How have you benefitted from the grace of God?
4. Why did God do this amazing work for us?

Day 5 – What Must I Change?

Review and reflect on your study of the passage

1. How will you thank God this week for what He has done for you?
2. What will you do differently to live for the praise of God's glory this week?
3. How do you plan to share with other people those blessings God has given to you?

Bibliography

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from the New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update.

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- O'Brien, Peter Thomas. *The Letter to the Ephesians*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999.