

DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

Our Mission: Reaching Out to Leaders Who Can Change the World.

April 2013

Ephesians: God's Plan For His Church

Lesson #1: Spiritual Blessings In Christ

INTRODUCTION

What blessings have you received recently?

OBSERVATION/INTERPRETATION

Read Ephesians 1:1-14

Note: Ephesus itself was the gateway to Asia. It was at the mouth of the important Cayster River. Waterways were crucial links of transportation and commerce before the advent of mechanized travel. A highway to Ephesus also served as a hub for caravan travel. In ancient history the Greeks and the Romans both vied for control of Ephesus because of its strategic military and commercial location.¹

1. How does Paul refer to his intended audience in verse 1? What impact do you think this had on them?
2. Why does he emphasize how he became an apostle?
3. What are some examples of 'spiritual blessings' in 'heavenly realms'? How do these compare with material or temporal blessings from earthly realms? Matt 6:19-21
4. If God "chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight", what is our responsibility in the quest for personal holiness and sanctification? 2 Peter 1:3-11

Note: Ref Verse 1:4 Debates over whether God has chosen specific individuals for salvation or whether they choose to believe in Christ may miss Paul's point here. He affirmed the corporate election of the church "in Him." Individuals are elect because they are in Christ.²

5. What is the significance of adoption as used by Paul in verses 5-6? How should this impact believers? Unbelievers?

Note: Ref Vs 5 Paul affirmed predestination—a divine action that determines future realities. God predestined that those in Christ will be adopted as His children so that God will receive praise (vv. 5–6) and that they will live for the praise God's glory (v. 12). In Vs 1:11 Paul did not claim that humans have no self-determining free will. As Rm 9 indicates, God is able to use even sinful human choices for His purposes. But the point here is that whatever God does for those in Christ, He does according to a carefully orchestrated plan for their benefit.³ In Roman law, "When the adoption was complete the person who had been adopted had all the rights of a legitimate son in his new family and completely lost all rights in his old family. In the eyes of the law he was a new person. So new was he that even all debts and obligations connected with his previous family were abolished as if they had never existed." (Barclay)

6. What are some implications associated with the word "redemption" as used in verse 7?
7. How is God's grace described in verses 7-8? Why is this significant?
8. What is the 'mystery of His will' that God has 'made known to us'? vs 9
9. How do we see verse 10 unfolding today?
10. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those called to receive spiritual blessings in Christ? vv 13-14
11. For what work of God on your behalf are you most thankful?

APPLICATION

- What can you do differently to live for the praise of God's glory this week?

¹ Sproul, R. C. (1994). *The Purpose of God: Ephesians* (12). Scotland: Christian Focus Publications.

^{2, 3} Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J., & Powell, D. (2007). *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (1762). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

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