



The Believer's Position in Christ Ephesians 1

Introduction

Paul's letter to the Ephesians was written to strengthen the faith of all believers and nurture us in holy living. Ephesians explains the nature and purpose of the body of Christ, the church. In the church, God has brought together believing Jews and Gentiles under Jesus Christ as the head (1:22, 23), a unity that had formerly been undisclosed. There is one body and one Spirit, *just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all* (4:4-6). All believers are called to live by this truth.

In Ephesians Chapter 1, Paul reinforces spiritual truths about redemption and the believer's true identity in Christ. Those in Christ are blessed with *every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ* (1:3):

- in Him, we were *chosen before the foundation of the world* to be holy and blameless in God's sight (1:4)
- through Him we are adopted into God's family (1:5, 6)
- we are redeemed through His blood and our sins are forgiven (1:7)
- He has *made know to us the mystery of His will* (1:9-10)
- we have been promised a divine inheritance (1:10, 11) which is fully guaranteed by the Holy Spirit (1:13).

Paul closes Chapter 1 with an inspirational prayer of encouragement and blessing, desiring his readers to be given *the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him* (Christ); *with eyes of...understanding enlightened; to know the hope of His calling and the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe.* (1:17-19). Paul's beautiful prayer was not only for his original readers but for all believers. It is an excellent example of how we can pray for one another. How will you use Paul's prayer to help strengthen your Christian friends, missionaries, or those in your church?

Outline of Ephesians 1

- I. Paul's Salutation - Ephesians 1:1-2
- II. The Believer's Spiritual Blessings - Ephesians 1:3-14
- III. Paul's Prayer - Ephesians 1:15-23

I. Paul's Salutation - Ephesians 1:1-2

A. Paul the Author

Paul opened this letter, just as he did all his thirteen epistles, by naming himself as the author. This left no doubt the letters were his. It was important for Paul to distinguish his writings from the many false prophets who were teaching and writing during the New Testament period. Paul knew his message was important because it carried the authority of God and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

1. An apostle

Paul was chosen and authorized as an apostle by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (Acts 9).

2. By the will of God

Paul had not aspired to be an apostle but was chosen to be one, as God's will for his life. This knowledge gave him security in every circumstance. He knew his life was ordained and planned by God. He had only to obey. Do you have this security and assurance? Do you know that you are the person God planned you to be? Are you doing the things God planned for you to do? Do you actively seek God's will in your life so you may have the same assurance as Paul?

B. The Addressees

1. To the saints

Paul had just written his letter to the Colossians and then wrote to the Ephesians so Tychicus, whom Paul referred to as a *beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord* (6:21), could take both letters to the churches in Asia. Comparing Ephesians 6:21 with Colossians 4:7-8, we see that both letters were to circulate among the churches (Colossians 2:1). Colossians had a specific purpose whereas Ephesians had a more general purpose. Both were written to the saints, those set apart by their faith in Jesus Christ and living cleansed lives by the grace of God.

2. Who are in Ephesus

The words "*in Ephesus*" are not found in the earliest manuscripts but appear soon thereafter. Ephesus was the capital city in the region where Paul stayed and ministered the longest (Acts 19-20).

3. *And are faithful*

It is conceivable that Paul looked beyond his time and intended this letter for future faithful saints as well. Regardless, the Holy Spirit wrote this message through Paul to all new covenant believers. If you are a believer in Christ, this letter is for you.

4. *In Christ Jesus*

This introduces us to the letter's theme, ***in Christ***. Being "in Christ" is much more important than being in Rome, or in Ephesus, or in the first century or the twenty-first. Believers are brought into God's family "in Christ".

C. Grace and Peace

Paul combines the Greek greeting "charis" which can mean "grace" with the Jewish greeting "peace" (shalom) to form a uniquely Christian greeting, "grace and peace".

1. *From God our Father*

In Ephesians all three persons of the Trinity are prominent, beginning with God the Father. Since Paul wrote to believers, and Ephesians has been placed in the New Testament for us, He is God our Father too. Grace, one of God's attributes, refers to His favor, undeserved and freely given. God's grace cannot be bought or earned. It is available to all by faith in Jesus Christ and only because it is God's nature to be gracious (2:8-9). In His mercy, He is gracious to all in many ways. For example, *He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust* (Matthew 5:45). Along with many other blessings, He gives the capacity to think, enjoy beauty, and love to all human beings, unbelievers as well as believers.

2. *And the Lord Jesus Christ*

God is the originator of grace and peace which are available to all in the Lord Jesus Christ. In what ways are you experiencing His grace and peace today?

II. The Believer's Spiritual Blessings - Ephesians 1:3-14

A. Position in Christ – Ephesians 1:3

1. Blessed *with every spiritual blessing*

After his greeting, Paul introduces his theme of the believer's position in Christ: God has blessed those who are His with *every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ*. Since this is true, the converse is also true; no spiritual blessing is withheld from us. Our

wealth in Christ is based on our position in Christ. Paul explores and elaborates on this theme in the verses to follow.

2. *In the heavenly places*

Where are these blessings? Certainly they are not earthly blessings as some teach. God promises to *supply all our need* (note the singular) *according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus* (Philippians 4:19). However, He is the One to assess our need, we are not. His riches are provided in the spiritual realm of His glory, not in the bank or the marketplace.

Modern translations read, *in the heavenly places*, but the King James properly translates the Greek text, *in the heavenlies*, a real place, although in a different dimension from our physical world. John MacArthur defines it as "The realm of God's complete heavenly domain, from which all His blessings come" ([The MacArthur Bible Commentary](#)).

B. Blessed by Each Person in the Trinity – Ephesians 1:3-14

1. Three blessings from God the Father - 1:3-6

a. Election – verse 4

Not only are believers chosen *in Him* (Christ) by God, the awesome Creator of the universe, *before the foundation of the world*, but we are chosen for the wonderful purpose to *be holy and without blame before Him in love*. The Almighty God considers all believers as being *without blame before Him* and in an intimate love relationship with Him! This spiritual blessing is ours in Christ.

b. Adoption into His family – verse 5

This is another blessing which comes as a surprise to new Christians. Not only do they come into a precious, special, personal relationship with the eternal God, who becomes their Father, they become members of His family with all who belong to Him.

c. Accepted in the Beloved – verse 6

Being adopted into God's family, after being chosen by Him, may cause some to feel they are not entitled to the same status as other more prestigious family members. After all, God's family includes Abraham, Moses, David, Ruth, Mary, Paul, Martin Luther, George Whitefield, and many other faithful and distinguished men and women. But Paul reveals that all are accepted, not on the fringe or as second-class, but *in the Beloved* with Jesus Christ Himself. He is the *Beloved Son*, as God the Father testified at Jesus' baptism (Matthew 3:17).

As the apostle John exclaimed, *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called the children of God!* (1 John 3:1). Will you pause for a moment to adore and thank the Father for these blessings?

2. Three blessings from the Son – 1:7-12

a. *Redemption through His blood* - verse 7

None of these blessings would be available if Christ had not died and risen from the dead. Only His shed blood could reconcile man to God (Hebrews 9:14; 1 John 1:7; Revelation 1:5). His blood paid the price for our sin and ransomed us from the grave (Romans 3:24-25).

b. *The forgiveness of sins* - verses 7-10

Christ's sacrifice on the cross provided a way for our sins to be forgiven and washed away. In Leviticus 17:11, God commanded Moses to tell the children of Israel, "*It is the blood that makes atonement for the soul,*" and this is echoed in the New Testament, *without shedding of blood there is no remission* [of sin] (Hebrews 9:22). Sins are indeed remitted (sent away) by the blood of Christ alone. John the Baptist said, "*Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29)!

To those who have been forgiven, God has made known *the mystery of His will*. The mystery is God's gracious will in saving sinners through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It is a mystery because it was not fully disclosed in the Old Testament but has been revealed in Christ. The completion of the mystery will come in *the fullness of the times* (in His perfect time, at the end of time) when God gathers to Himself all who have been saved by His grace through faith.

c. *Obtained an [eternal] inheritance* - verse 11-12

Through the finished work of Jesus Christ, God the Father *has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light* (Colossians 1:12). Every believer is an heir of God and when Christ *comes in His glory*, He will call us to "*inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*" (Matthew 25:31-34). It is *an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith* (1 Peter 1:4-5).

3. Three blessings from the Holy Spirit - 1:13-14

a. *Heard the word of truth* - verse 13

The Holy Spirit enables sinners to hear, believe, and understand the Word of God.

b. *Sealed* – verse 13

God, who establishes believers in Christ, seals each one with the *Holy Spirit of promise* as a guarantee of His ownership (2 Corinthians 1:21-22).

c. *Guaranteed inheritance* – verse 14

The guarantee is like a down payment on a purchased possession. We were *bought at a price* (1 Corinthians 6:20), redeemed for eternity.

III. Paul's Prayer - Ephesians 1:15-23

Having delivered powerful and personally relevant teaching, Paul offers a heartfelt prayer for all recipients of his letter. With a desire for believers to understand the life-changing significance of the truths he had written, he gives assurance that he is perpetually praying, praising God, and making petition for them. He closes with the encouraging reminder of the promise and power of Christ's position at the right hand of God.

A. Perpetual Prayer – Ephesians 1:15-16

After I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and your love for all the saints, [I] do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.

B. Praise to God – Ephesians 1:17

The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory.

C. Petition – Ephesians 1:17-19

Paul asks God to bless the believers with:

- *the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him*
- *enlightened understanding*
- *knowledge of the hope of His calling,...the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,...and the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe.*

Paul's desire was for God to give his readers insight to understand the greatness of the truth he had delivered. Our minds must be spiritually enlightened to understand, appreciate, and live according to God's precious truths and the hope to which we have been called.

What a great hope we have as believers: a hope *which does not disappoint* (Romans 5:5); is *an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast*; and enters into the very Presence of God (Hebrews 6:19).

D. Power – Ephesians 1:19-21

God's *mighty power* was demonstrated *in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named*. The *exceeding greatness* of this same power is at work in all who believe.

E. Promise - Ephesians 1:22

He [God] put all things under His [Christ's] feet. According to Hebrews 2:8, this is a promise awaiting total fulfillment in the future. *For in that He put all in subjection under Him, He left nothing that is not put under Him. But now we do not yet see all things put under Him*.

Applications

1. Have you put yourself in subjection under Christ? How does your position in Christ affect you daily in words, actions, and attitudes?
2. To what extent are the spiritual blessings in Ephesians Chapter 1 so real to you that you want to share them with others? Who will you share them with this week?
3. How is Paul's prayer being answered in your life?
4. In what ways is God's power evident in your life?