

Living with New Eyes

St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

Study 2 | Ephesians 1:3-14

"Chosen for a Purpose"

- 1. What are some of the benefits that Jesus has secured for his people in this passage? What are the resulting *indicatives* for the church? How do these encourage you personally? Be specific.**

After Paul's initial greeting in verses 1-2 he moves without hesitation or comment into a very long section of doxology in which he extols the magnitude, beauty, and expansive provision of God's grace in salvation through Jesus Christ. In fact, in the original Greek, the passage is only a few sentences made up of a multitude of dependent clauses—it is as if Paul couldn't stop for breath. To rehearse all of the benefits of salvation wrought for us in Christ mentioned in this passage would be simply to reproduce the passage *in toto*. The trick is in untangling what is praise for Christ's work in history, what is indicative of the church in Christ, and what is imperative for us as recipients of Christ's work and benefits. And perhaps that is part of Paul's point. Nevertheless, for the sake of discussion it would be helpful to try to parse the passage a bit. To that end, let us mention a few of the benefits secured by Christ for his people. V. 3 – *[He] has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.* V. 4 – *We have been made holy and blameless before him.* VV 5-6 – *In Christ we have been adopted into the family of God the Father and have been loved and blessed by God's glorious grace.* V 8 – *We have been bought back from slavery to sin (redemption) through Christ's blood and have forgiveness of our trespasses.* V 9 – *We have been given 'insider knowledge' of God's will to unite all things in Christ.* V 10 – *We have obtained and inheritance from him who has the power to work all things according to the counsel of his will.* VV 13-14 – *We have been sealed with the Holy Spirit who is a down-payment, or guarantee (Gk: *arrabon*), of our future inheritance.*

What do these blessings indicate about us as God's people? Objectively and definitively? How should these indicatives encourage you personally in all types of experience, mood, quality of belief, etc?

- 2. What thoughts or actions are expected of the church in this passage as a result of Christ's work? Which of these *imperatives* do you most need to grow in?**

A phrase that is repeated throughout this passage is *to the praise of his glory*. Paul says again and again that all of these blessings have been granted so that we might be *to the praise of his glory*. Throughout the Scriptures glory is that presence or work of God that is actually revealed to people and seen by

them, even if it is run from or rejected. God's glory is revealed that people might respond to him by giving God his due worth in praise and confession of his glory. For example, in Matthew 5, at the end of the Beatitudes, Jesus says that his people are the salt of the earth and the light of the world and that they ought to let that light shine by doing good works so that the world might see their good works and "give glory to your Father who is in heaven". So all of these blessings should be displayed and shared with the world around us, that the world might give God his praise and glory.

Think of the various ways in which the blessings listed above might be shared with those around us in theological and practical ways (e.g. adoption, forgiveness, a secure inheritance, knowing the will of God, etc.).

3. On what basis has God chosen people? For what purpose has he chosen them?

We have chosen as a title for this sermon "*Chosen for a Purpose*". This choice was very intentional. The word *predestination* is used throughout the passage. The word's most basic meaning is "fore-loved". So God, before time, knew those he would call his own and loved them before he had ever made them. And he predetermined that they would come into possession of all the aforementioned blessings in Christ, in due time. This choice was based on nothing foreseen in us—no talent, no moral fibre, no merit, no desert, etc.—but only on God's discriminatingly indiscriminate love. Election is a fact, but a mysterious one meant to level all pride and drive the chosen toward humility and endless marvel and gratitude. But just as importantly, anytime that God's foreordination is mentioned it is done so with the purpose that God's people be reminded of God's sovereign initiative in salvation and his concomitant calling placed upon them in that salvation; namely, that they would extend God's blessings in salvation to all the nations of the earth. In short, we were chosen for a purpose; we were elected to bear blessing—these salvation blessings--to others.