



# 2 | EPHESIANS 1:1-10

## OUR DESTINY IN CHRIST

*Jesus Christ will save and sanctify you if you trust in him alone.*

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## Sunday School Introduction

What should be the direction and vision for a local assembly? What is our destiny? Alice in Wonderland came to a fork in the road. Icy panic stung her as she stood frozen by indecision. She lifted her eyes toward heaven, looking for guidance. Her eyes did not find God, only the **Cheshire cat** leering at her from his perch in the tree above. **“Which way should I go?” blurted Alice.** “That depends ...” said the cat, fixing a sardonic smile on the confused girl. “On what?” Alice managed to reply. **“On your destination. Where are you going?”** queried the Cheshire fiend. “I don’t know ...” stammered Alice. “Then,” said the cat, with grin spreading wider, “it doesn’t matter.” It matters to the Christian. Every Christian has a destiny in the kingdom of God. We are a pilgrim people, a people on the move—our destination matters. Where are we going as a church? It’s important. The primary words of Ephesians 1 are “in Christ.”

The epistle of the Ephesians was delivered by Tychicus to a number of churches (6:21) – the first being Laodicea and the final being Ephesians. This is why some scholars consider this to be the letter Paul refers to as his letter to the Laodiceans, yet the epistle rightly bears the name “to the Ephesians”.

God has his hand on his church. Jesus promised: **“I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it”** (Mt 16:18). The church will continue until the end of time. One of the oldest products ever continually manufactured in the world is the Beretta firearm. They began production in 1526. The printing press was barely a decade old. But there is coming a day when Beretta will cease manufacturing. That is the day when Jesus comes. But there is never a day when the church will end. The church of Jesus Christ will last forever.

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## 1. OUR DESTINY IS ETERNITY (1:1-3)

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We have gone from “in Ephesus” to “in Christ.” We have moved our citizenship from a temporary place to an eternal dwelling. It is the apostle Paul who helps the Ephesian believers how to have this eternal, enduring perspective.

**Ephesians 1:1-2** | Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: <sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul speaks of eternal concepts of holiness, favor, and blessing that are not found on this earth, but in “the heavenly places.” As Colossians 3 says, we have to look to heaven for these things.

**Colossians 3:1-3** | If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup> For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

### BACKGROUND OF PAUL/SAUL OF TARSUS

Paul was most certainly an apostle of Jesus by the will of God. Originally **Saul of Tarsus, he had a dramatic conversion on the Damascus road.** Saul, which is Paul’s given name, was born into a Jewish family in Tarsus (Turkey) around the year AD 8; he was also a Roman citizen, a fact that would play a large role later in his life. Schooled as a Pharisee, he was a tent maker by trade, but was most noted for his hatred of Christians. He believed the teachings of Jesus violated the Mosaic Law and zealously harassed, and even jailed, anyone who followed those teachings.

The first scriptural mention of Saul is found in Acts 7:58, as he is a bystander watching his fellow Jews stone Stephen to death. An aggressive persecutor of Christians in Jerusalem, Saul sought and received permission from the high priest to proceed to Damascus for the purpose of

imprisoning more followers of Christ. Most Christians know the story of what happened on the Damascus road: the bright light that knocked Saul down, the voice of Jesus, Saul’s blindness and immediate response to the calling of Christ.

Saul’s sudden change confused those around him, because he was known as one who hated Christians, who went about seeking them out to eliminate those individuals he genuinely considered as breaking Jewish law. Suddenly he was transformed from despising the followers of Jesus into fervently espousing the gospel of that same Jesus. No one could have anticipated this conversion; it is one of the great miracles of mankind.

Why would Jesus select the likes of Paul? There were certainly other devoted followers of Jesus available in those early days of the Church — followers ready to give their lives to proclaim Jesus Christ as savior of the world. But Jesus picked and converted this Pharisee, known as Saul, saying, “This man is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles, kings and Israelites” (Acts 9:15). God selected this man who had a strong hatred of all Jesus stands for, a man who went into the houses of Christians and “dragging out men and women,” then “handed them over for imprisonment” (Acts 8:3). This man became God’s chosen instrument to spread the message of Jesus across the Middle East and parts of Europe. Why Saul? The answer is simple: grace! God chose to take someone totally undeserving, a “chief of sinners” to expand the kingdom of Jesus. Paul would end up writing thirteen New Testament books and ultimately sacrificing his life for Christ in AD 64 under the reign of Emperor Nero. It was worth it to Paul to give his life for a the message of grace and peace in Jesus.

## AN ETERNAL CITIZENSHIP

Through the grace and peace that this world cannot give, I have all that I need to remain faithful to Christ. Everyone that Paul was trying to reach was living in and for Ephesus. Here is a heathen city, just like the city of Nineveh—totally wicked and unregenerate—completely given over to idolatry and wickedness. By ancient standards, **Ephesus was a mega-city of over 300,000 people**. By comparison, the city of Rome was around two to four million in population. Ephesus was the capital city of the Roman province Asia Minor and the home of one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World: the temple of the goddess Diana. But now these former pagans in Ephesus were now in Christ.

We find in the book of Acts that Paul had labored among the **Ephesians for three years**—by far his longest time in one church (Acts 19; 20:31). The church was probably begun by Aquila and Pricilla (when they were kicked out of Rome with the rest of the Jews in AD 41), but it is Paul who labors among them and brings them together as a church—a unified body under Christ. Aquila and Pricilla would have ministered in **Ephesus from AD 41 until Paul’s arrival in AD 54**, just before the Jews were permitted to return back to Rome under the reign of Nero in AD 54.

Paul would later hand the Ephesian church over to young Timothy after planting the church, and so when you read 1 and 2 Timothy, you are reading a letter originally intended for the Pastor of the Ephesian church who succeeded Paul. The **apostle John** is also traditionally held to be one of the **later pastors at Ephesus** (around AD 64 when Paul was beheaded).

## AN ETERNAL HOLINESS

The Ephesian church has such a rich history. Yet they were brought out of paganism. Look at what these former idol worshipping heathens are called in our text:

**Ephesians 1:1** | Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus.

Paul and the Ephesians are certainly a strange pair. It wasn’t Paul’s idea to be an apostle or the Ephesian pagans to be saints. But this strict Jew and these wild pagans had one thing in

common – at one time they were lost, dead in their sins, without God. In Ephesus, everyone was faithful to Diana. She was the goddess of fertility. And there were many gods in the Roman empire. In your town, there are just as many gods. **People serve work, or family, or money, or pleasure!** But now these pagans were saints, or “holy ones”. They were cleansed from their sins and made righteous in the sight of a holy God. **Saints are not super Christians**, such as in Roman Catholicism where you have to have performed miracles, etc. Every Christian is a saint. Paul was writing to ordinary people who had put their faith in Jesus, and because of that they were made holy and righteous as saints. **We reflect the glory of God’s holiness as saints.** That’s our calling.

## AN ETERNAL FAVOR

The church is built on two gospel pillars of God’s favor which Paul uses as a greeting: grace and peace.

Ephesians 1:2 | Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace is God exercising **his free pleasure to unworthy sinners**. The principle of grace is found on every page of the Bible. Grace is the source and fountain of God’s unmerited favor to wicked and defiled people who are worthy of nothing else but to be destroyed by God’s wrath in the eternal refuse pile of hell, and yet God shows them free grace—it’s God’s pleasure to show you his favor. Grace is God giving you heaven, when all you deserve is condemnation. Grace has been called “favor you receive but to which you have no right or title in any shape or form, and of which you are entirely unworthy and undeserving.”<sup>1</sup>

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, “**Grace is the free favor of God**, the undeserved bounty of the ever-gracious Creator against whom we have offended. Grace is the generous pardon, the infinite, spontaneous loving-kindness of the God who has been provoked and angered by our sin, but who, delighting in mercy, and grieving to smite the creatures whom he has made, is ever ready to pass by transgression, iniquity, and sin, and to save his people from all the evil consequences of their guilt.”<sup>2</sup>

Paul introduces grace here in the very beginning of his letter, but he spends the rest of chapters applying it to our daily struggles against sin and self and to our most intimate relationships in life. Paul never just presents theological truths about God—no, Biblical truth arrives in action. So many times we talk about grace in this “happy-go-lucky,” nonchalant, superficially sweet tone. No, grace is known by those who smell the battlefield. Grace is known by those who fight for righteousness. They are crucified to the world and crucified to self. Grace is a living, breathing, transforming principle that makes its mark on every area of our lives. Truth is alive.

**Paul also greets the Ephesians with peace.** Peace in its very essence is a **reconciliation**. This reconciliation is not invented by man, but by designed God. The idea is a bringing together of a man at war with God restored to a right relationship. The man has stopped fighting. And yet, this peace does not merely mean “cessation of war, rest, and quiet.”<sup>3</sup> Surely it means that, but that’s not all it means. It’s not that we’ve simply stopped fighting against God. The actual idea in the Greek language is “a union after a separation,”<sup>4</sup> i.e., reconciliation.

God calls us rebels to put down our weapons and be united to Christ. Perhaps you are fighting him right now. Recognize this natural aggression in your own heart. It exists most obviously in the lost person, but it still remains in the saved person. God calls us to put down our weapons. It’s time for surrender. Come to Jesus with a broken heart. Come to the Lord bleeding and wounded,

<sup>1</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. *God’s Ultimate Purpose: An Exposition of Ephesians 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1978), 37.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Haddon Spurgeon. *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 3115. 506.

<sup>3</sup> Lloyd-Jones. *Ephesians 1*, 17.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

ready to be brought into a renewed relationship with him. Christ will give you peace. If you have peace with God, you have something the world cannot touch. The stock market may crash, but you are reconciled. Tragedy strikes, but you are redeemed. Bankruptcy, sickness, poverty, persecution, all these things come upon us, but we have a clean conscience. We are right with God. And no one and nothing can take that away. This is what God has done.

## AN ETERNAL BLESSING

Our ultimate blessing is not sought after in this world's fame, fortune, or favorability, but in Christ. All in Christ are blessed with every kind of spiritual blessing through Jesus. We have so much to praise God for.

**Ephesians 1:3** | Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

### *Christians Bless God*

Praise is the mark of true Christianity. We are always praising God, because God's work in the heart always makes its way to our lips. We are genuine Christians. Christians may never be happy in circumstances, but they are always happy in God. They are always saying, "**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.**" Can you say that in your life right now? Vital, living Christianity is always marked by *praise*! This is the starkest contrast between the children of heaven and the children of hell. Paul says that one of the primary marks of those who are unregenerate, in Romans 1:21, is that they are not "**thankful.**" Do you find yourself fighting against the message today, hanging on to bitter thoughts? Come to Christ, and he will sweeten your soul with praise. Praise is not just a sentimental response to God; it is a command. "**Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice**" (Phil 4:4). All true Christians will have a happy spirit in God.

In our English translation, verses 3 through 14 are stretched out over several sentences, but when Paul wrote this, it was one sentence of over 200 Greek words! Paul is brimming over with powerful words in trying to describe all the spiritual blessings we have in Christ, and it is as if he almost gets lost in his praise. Each word is bursting with meaning, and it is all one long continuous thought. This is doctrine that fills our hearts with praise! So after the doctrine of verses 1 and 2, we see nothing but doxology. Doxology is our response to doctrine! This is an important point: you and I have not truly understood doctrine, until it results in doxology!

It is so clear in this text that our pleasure comes by blessing God. We should bless God, because God has created us to praise him. We are created to reflect God's glory. You need to come to the realization in your life that the only way you are going to find true happiness, is if you find your happiness and pleasure in pleasing God. Man's chief end, the reason God created us, is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

### *Christians are Blessed by God*

It was God's design to "bless us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places." We are blessed specifically "in Christ." Those who are in Christ Jesus have lives filled with God's blessings, with all the good gifts from God. If there is anything good in your life, God alone produced it! God's blessings come from his sovereign hand! He is the Strategist, the Designer, and the Engineer of our salvation! All that is good about our life, our past, our present, our future—we can attribute it all to God! This also means that everything you could possibly need to live out the Christian life, you already have if you are in Christ. Let me encourage you, that however little or much you have, you are blessed in Christ! You have all you need to please God and more than you need to bless God.

We are blessed “in heavenly places.” As Christians we live a “paradoxical, two-level existence— a dual citizenship. While we remain on earth, we are citizens of earth. But in Christ our primary and infinitely more important citizenship is in heaven. Christ is our Lord and King, and we are citizens of his realm, the heavenly places.”<sup>5</sup> Fix your eyes on the author and finisher of our faith. Let us live, not like we’re going to be here forever, but like we’re going to be there forever, as you live like that then you will experience the fullness and the richness of all the blessings that you have in Christ.

This verse does not say that God blesses us, but that he “has blessed us.” The idea is that it is already fulfilled—it is accomplished. It is a moment, an event, a point on the horizon line of history. It’s already taken place. All that we need in this life, we will find in what Christ has already given us in our salvation. He is all we need for the here and the now. It’s all accomplished. Everything we need to live was given to us when God called us to faith in Christ. It’s done!

2 Peter 1:3 tells us that God’s “divine power has given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness.” It is not that God *will* give us “all things pertaining to life and godliness,” but that he has *already* given them to us. God has already blessed us with “all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.” Our resources in God are not simply *promised*; but they are in actuality already *possessed*. So, God cannot give us more than his Son. Are you saved? Is the Son of God your all? You don’t need to receive something more, but you need to do more with what you already have.

God has blessed us “with *all spiritual blessings*.” We have to ask ourselves the question—how are we blessed with **all spiritual blessings**? How far do these blessings go? Paul in the rest of this chapter gives a survey of the multitude of blessings we have—and we have all of them: election, adoption, redemption, sanctification, forgiveness, and resurrection in Christ—if you get a hold of these blessings, they’ll change your life!! And no blessing is left out—all that God has promised has been secured by Christ, so that at this moment we have all we need to be all that Christ wants us to be.

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## 2. OUR DESTINY IS SANCTITY (1:4-6)

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God promises that whoever he justifies, he is predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son (Rom 8:28-29). Theologians call this the doctrine of sanctification. This is exactly what Paul teaches the Ephesians. We are chosen in Christ to become like Christ.

### CHOSEN IN CHRIST

Ephesians 1:4a | ...even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world...

God has chosen us. This speaks of the doctrine of election. Before you were born, before your father or mother, before the creation of the universe, God chose you.

When I was younger, I moved from Chicago to Louisiana. I was the strange city boy. I can remember a game of stick ball on the playground, and I was the last one picked. God doesn’t choose us because of anything in us. It is because of his goodness and glory he chooses us. Remember the words of Jesus: “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Lk 12:32). It is according to his kind will that he chose you.

We come to what has been called the eternal counsel of redemption. We have often called it God’s plan of salvation. There was a counsel, a plan, a compact in eternity past. This verse brings us there into the mind of God before the creation of the world. At that time, God had a plan to create man. And he knew that once he created human beings that they would fall—they would sin against him—they would be cut off from him. God knew that. In eternity past he planned the way,

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<sup>5</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *Ephesians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 9.

and how we would be purchased back and be forgiven and redeemed. And there was a counsel in eternity past, and the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, all one God, three distinct personalities, equal members of the Godhead, met as it were together to determine how men and women would be saved and forgiven. And they agreed together; they made a compact together.

We are chosen in Christ. Christ for his part would in due time enter into this world, put on a robe of humanity, and suffer and die for them, take the punishment that they deserved for all eternity because of their rebellion against God and because of sin—he would purchase these people from the slave market of sin. He would be their representative. He would by his grace grant them faith and repentance. So based on all those conditions, the Father made an agreement to give these people to the Son. And the Son therefore came and suffered and died for them. He substituted himself for them and paid an immeasurable price.

## CHOSEN FOR HOLINESS

**Ephesians 1:4** | ...even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

God has chosen us not just to be saved from the penalty of sin, but to live free from the power of sin here and now in holiness. Holiness means to be “separated, set apart” for God’s special purposes. We are called saints. Holy ones. We are not chosen to be taken out of this world but elect in Christ for a life of holiness in this wicked world (1:4-6). The Bible is full of assurances that all who are “in Christ” are chosen by God. We are chosen to be inwardly holy and outwardly blameless. He accomplishes the outworking of our holiness through the indwelling Holy Spirit (Eze 36:25-27; Phil 2:12-13).

*1 Thessalonians 5:24* | He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

*Isaiah 41:9-10* | You whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, “You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off”; <sup>10</sup> fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

*Romans 8:28-29* | And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.

*Jude 24-25* | Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, <sup>25</sup> to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

*Philippians 1:6* | And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

*2 Thessalonians 2:13* | God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

*Ephesians 2:10* | For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

*1 Corinthians 1:8-9* | God will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

You may live in the sin-city of Chicago, but you are chosen, set apart, separated unto God among his people for his purposes. We not only have justification; we also have sanctification. God does not simply justify you (give you a right standing before him); it is his will that you would

be experiencing holiness and blamelessness here. Not sinlessness—but blamelessness. Those whom God has chosen, he’s given them his Spirit, from the time they believed to the time they are delivered into glory, there is a work called sanctification that is going on in the lives of everyone whom the Lord has justified. And that work of sanctification is the Lord progressively changing you for the rest of your life more and more into the image of his Son. We are not only a changed people—praise be to God—we are a changing people. He changed me when he saved me, and he’s changing me today, and he’ll be changing me for the rest of my life because I have not arrived, I never will arrive until the day comes that I’m glorified and with the Lord forever. So the rest of my time on this earth is going to be a time of growing. It’s a time of being in the school of Christ, it’s a time of being purified, it’s a time of the Lord changing me more and more into the image of his dear Son and my Savior. That’s Christian growth, and that’s what the Lord is doing in the life of every person that he’s chosen, once he’s saved them and brought them to faith in Christ.

## CHOSEN FOR ADOPTION

The god of this world is no longer our father. God has brought us to himself and made us his children! The highest expression of God’s love in the universe is that he would give us the adoption of sons so that all the rights and privileges won by Christ would be ours. “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God” (1 Jn 3:1).

Ephesians 1:5a | In love <sup>5</sup>he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ...

Adoption in Paul’s day would happen when **the head of a family would adopt a son** (often a grown man) in order to pass on the family name and inheritance.<sup>6</sup> Often this would occur by going to the slave market to pay the purchase-price in order to release them from their bondage.<sup>7</sup> Once the slave was purchased, adoption could take place. **Once a person is adopted, they get all the rights and privileges of a full-fledged, naturally born son.**

Adoption for the Christian means that the true and living God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, by grace has made believers members of his family with all the rights and responsibilities that go with that status (Rom 8:14-17, 23, 29; Gal 3:25-4:7; 1 Jn 1:12, 3:1). Do you understand that we are God’s dear children? This did not happen by our natural birth. I have had a mother and a father on this earth, and how grateful I am for them, but they themselves gave me no right to be called into God’s family. It is only by the divine purpose and plan of God that I have been **born into God’s family!** I am a child of God, not just by creation, but by regeneration, and through my adoption **I now have all the rights and privileges of a child of God.** I’m a joint-heir with Christ (Rom 8:17)

It was always God’s plan to bring you into his family as an adopted son or daughter. Predestination speaks of God’s plan. This is something God has intended. In other words, God has a plan in every event that comes to pass. He has a pattern for every thread on the fabric of history. He has destined all things that come to pass. This plan is referred to in this verse as “predestination.” It is “pre” because God lives outside of time and before time. If God intends something, it must come to pass—it is automatically destined through his omnipotence. God knows all things, and he has always known all things. It is not that God predicts all things, but he predestines them. He is the cause of all things that come to pass. This is what in this verse is called predestination. Listen to Spurgeon explain: **“Predestination is both a doctrine of Scripture and of common sense that whatever God does in time he planned to do in eternity.”**<sup>8</sup> In other words, predestination is simply the architectural plan of history. It is the plan that God

<sup>6</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Ephesians* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishers, 2009), 25.

<sup>7</sup> R. C. Sproul, *The Purpose of God: Ephesians* (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 27.

<sup>8</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon. *Adoption*. Sermon delivered on Sunday evening February 10, 1861.



formed before time, the blueprint of history. In a more personal way we can say, like Jeremiah, before I was born, God chose me for his family, his plan, and his purposes (Jer 1:5).

The wonderful truth of adoption is that because of your faith in Christ, you are adopted into God's forever family and now have all the rights and privileges of a true child of God. When the Father looked upon his Son at Jesus' baptism, he said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Mt 3:17). Because of adoption, this is now what he says about you.

To add to this, the grace you receive in adoption includes an inheritance. You are an heir of God and a co-heir with Jesus. All things are yours because of Christ. As God's child, you are pitied, protected, provided for and disciplined as a true child of God. You can stray, but God will always track you down. He will never leave or forsake you (Heb 13:5). The unrelenting covenant love (*hesed*) described throughout the Old Testament that God has for Israel is now yours.

### CHOSEN FOR THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORIOUS GRACE

There was nothing in us that made us appeal to God. In fact, we were rebels in his sight. We were dead in trespasses and sins—his enemies. Yet it was God's highest pleasure to adopt us. One of the most important doctrines in Scripture is that of **God's sovereign pleasure**. His sovereign pleasure is what makes him God. God had our adoption in mind when he created the world. It was the best thing that God could do. It was his highest pleasure to do it.

Ephesians 1:5b-6 | ...according to the purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup>to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

God elected us in order that he might give us all the blessings and benefits of adoption. That we, the vilest sinners on the face of God's earth, would be the sons and daughters of the living God and have all the rights and privileges of God's children. And what we find out in this verse, is that it is God's purpose for our lives to incessantly praise God. That we would live lives that do nothing but praise God and that we would live lives that do nothing but draw attention to the greatness and majesty and glory of God.

Anything God is pleased with is founded on the work that Jesus Christ, the beloved Son of God accomplished of his own free will and pleasure. All that is good comes from the beloved Son Jesus Christ. Five times in Scripture, God the Father reveals his supreme pleasure. He proclaims from his throne in Heaven: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Mt 3:17, 17:5; Mk 9:7; Lk 9:35; 2 Pet 1:17). God is satisfied, utterly happy and content in the person of his Son. He delights in him (*cf* Psa 2).

Christians who lived in the time of the Reformation had a Latin phrase that summarized our purpose for living: **Soli Deo Gloria—God's glory alone**. That is all that matters. We have one burning and shining purpose dear brethren – that we would live to the glory of God demonstrated only in the grace of Jesus Christ. You cannot rightly glorify God in any way unless you know the grace of Christ in your own soul. God is not pleased with any one of us in and of ourselves. God has one only in whom he is pleased—that is his beloved Son. This text tells us that we are blessed in the Beloved. God's grace is found in Jesus, God's mighty Son and our mighty Savior—God's grace is the only thing that we can grasp that will bring God glory through our lives!

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## 3. OUR DESTINY IS LIBERTY (1:7-10)

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We have gone from being in slavery to sin, to freedom in Christ. We are **purchased by Christ from the slave market of sin!**

Ephesians 1:7a | In him we have redemption through his blood...

We come now to the centerpiece of the entire Bible. All throughout the Old Testament, God promised a redeemer. God promised to send Christ. It is clear from the Scripture that the Redeemer of mankind is the same in all ages. Redemption in Jesus Christ is the scarlet thread of the Bible. In the Old Testament He was called the Seed of the woman, the Prophet, the Seed of Abraham, the Son of David, the Branch, the Servant of the Lord, the Ancient of Days, the Great King, the Holy One of Israel, the Sun of Righteousness, the Prince of Peace, and the God of the whole earth. In the New Testament, we see that God fulfills all His promises, and the Word becomes flesh, and his name shall be called Jesus “for he shall save his people from their sins” (Mt 1:21).

All of the sacrifices of the Old Testament foreshadow what we see in this verse. All the Old Testament prophets “searched and inquired carefully,<sup>11</sup> inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories” (1 Pet 1:10-11). When we come to this verse, it is as if all the angels in heaven were peering through the clouds in anticipation—Abraham and Moses, Isaiah and Ezekiel—they all anticipated this *redemption*. Job said: “For I know that my redeemer lives, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth” (Job 19:25).

The word redemption in our text means “to purchase something from the marketplace, and also to loosen or set free from bondage and slavery.”<sup>9</sup> The term is used of freeing from chains, slavery, or prison. In the theological context, the term “**redemption**” indicates a freeing from the slavery of sin, the ransom or price paid for freedom. This idea is often used in the Gospels, which speak of Christ who came “to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45).<sup>10</sup>

During New Testament times the Roman Empire had as many as six million slaves, and the buying and selling of them was a major business. If a person wanted to free a loved one or a friend who was a slave, he would buy that slave for himself, and then grant him freedom, testifying to the deliverance with a written certificate.<sup>11</sup>

This word “redemption” is used to designate the freeing of a slave in that way. It is an emancipation—a setting free from the slave master of sin. Redemption is Christ purchasing freedom for us with his own blood on the Cross. We are locked up in the shackles of sin, and Christ frees us, by buying our freedom through his own substitution. He paid the redemption price to buy for himself sinners who would make up his church—his elect people. “[Jesus] entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption” (Heb 9:12b). That ransom sets us, the people of God, free from the *penalty* and *power* of sin, and one day we will be free even from the very *presence* of sin!

## FREE FROM THE PENALTY OF SIN

God provides redemption in Christ in order to wipe out the record of our sin. Christ gives his blood as the payment price to buy us from the bondage sin. This speaks of our justification.

**Ephesians 1:7b** | In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses...

He walks right into the shopping center of the world – into the slave market. And as it was in New Testament times, he goes to this place where the slaves are—these people that had been conquered or had been in debt. But Christ goes to the spiritual slave market where all of us are in

<sup>9</sup> John H. Sailhamer, Tremper Longman, and David E. Garland, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 10* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 461.

<sup>10</sup> Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Redeemer, Redemption,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1827.

<sup>11</sup> MacArthur. *Ephesians*, 18.

bondage to sin with an impossible debt to pay, and he substitutes his life for us. He pays the price of that slavery with his blood. Christ gave his blood to redeem us from the bondage, the guilt, the enslaving power, consequences, and the effects of sin. He has even redeemed our bodies so that when he comes again, we will receive a perfect, glorified body, free from the bondage of sin.

The liberty we have from the massive price Jesus paid is the forgiveness of our trespasses. By nature, we are enslaved to sin. Over and over, we break God’s law. God’s justice cries out for our condemnation. But Christ’s blood cries out for our forgiveness. Because of Christ’s payment, we are now free from the penalty of sin. “There is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1). No one can accuse us any longer. The only thing for us to do is rejoice.

*Romans 5:1-2* | Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>2</sup>Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

John Calvin said, in preaching on this very text from Ephesians 1:7 in Geneva in 1558, “God puts our sins out of his remembrance and drowns them in the depths of the sea, and, moreover, receives the payment that was offered him in the person of his only Son.”<sup>12</sup>

### FREE FROM THE POVERTY OF SIN

Not only has God removed the penalty and cleansed us by his grace. While before we were swimming in sin, **now we are swimming in grace**. Before we were poor wretches, unable to pay for the great debt of sin, but now we are enriched with God’s grace.

*Ephesians 1:7c-8a* | ...according to the riches of his grace, <sup>8</sup> which he lavished upon us.

Our trespasses that once characterized us have been wiped away. We are clean, washed, forgiven. In the place of our sin is lavished the perfect riches of Christ’s righteousness, rewards and inheritance. It’s all ours in Christ. We who were once poor in sin are now rich in faith.

### FREE FROM THE POWER OF SIN

God’s grace was poured out upon us in all wisdom and insight. Our once fallen minds were renewed by **the power of the Holy Spirit working faith in our minds**. This speaks of our sanctification when we grow in wisdom and insight to know his purpose and his will each day for our lives.

*Ephesians 1:8b-9* | ...in all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup> making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ.

Before we were justified, our broken wills were utterly subject to the power of sin. We chose sin at every turn. Even when we made choices that appeared good from an external standpoint, because we had no higher internal purpose than to glorify self these choices were ultimately sinful as well. Now, the power of sin is broken. We have been given the deposit of the Holy Spirit.

Our spirit has been united with the Holy Spirit (Eze 36:26-17) who now causes us to “walk in his statutes and keep his judgments.” All was hidden because of the corruption of sin in the human heart. We were unable to see God clearly, only wanting to “suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom 1:20). We were enemies of God, fighting against his constant appeal to us. “All day long” he spread his arms out to us, but we kept rejecting him (Isa 65:2). But there came a day when he made known to us the mystery of his will.

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<sup>12</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 202.

His purpose, which he set forth in Christ was to renew the whole creation, beginning with the minds and hearts of his people. This great redemption was set forth from the beginning. Abraham would bless all nations through Christ who would be born through his family lineage. The blessing of Abraham, through Christ, is to be renewed to our original holiness by the power of the blessed Holy Spirit. In Christ you are no longer a slave to sin. God's grace is also his empowerment.

*Romans 6:6–14* | We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. <sup>7</sup> For one who has died has been set free from sin. <sup>8</sup> Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup> We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. <sup>10</sup> For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. <sup>11</sup> So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. <sup>12</sup> Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. <sup>13</sup> Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. <sup>14</sup> For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Transformative wisdom and insight are gifts of the Holy Spirit that empower us to live a holy life, free from the domination of sin. It is not God's will for any of his children to live in sin of any kind. He will bring about whatever it takes to make his children holy so that they might daily die to sin, renew their minds, and learn to keep in step with the Holy Spirit. God will most definitely accomplish this in every single one of his people, though it will always be a very imperfect process (Phil 1:6).

God's will and plan of salvation was such a mystery until Christ came. The Old Testament saints could not have comprehended the substitutionary atonement of Christ and his resurrection with the clarity we have, yet it was all there in the ceremonies, prophecies, and in the Psalms and poetry. His salvation is also naturally hidden from the natural or unregenerate heart, which is from birth hostile to God (Psa 58:3). Also, the idea of the Gentiles being grafted into Israel as "one new humanity" was also a great mystery. All who are in Christ can now understand the mystery of salvation through the wisdom and insight that comes through the Spirit. No longer is our mind totally depraved. **We have the light and insight of the Spirit.**

*1 Corinthians 2:12-14* | Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the **Spirit who is from God**, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. <sup>13</sup> And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. <sup>14</sup> The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

Because of sin, man is blinded, and Christ, his kingdom, and his plan are all a mystery. The significance of who Christ is as Creator and Savior is all a gigantic *blind spot* for every unregenerate person in this world. Christ is a mystery to lost people. Oh, they can understand the historical figure in a historical context. What they cannot do is see Christ for who he is, as the Son of God, the Creator of the world, and the only mediator between God and man. The person and work of Christ is a mystery to the lost person. They do not understand Jesus Christ, for if they did, they would let go of all their worldly aspirations, repent of their sins, and follow him. The Father in heaven revealed the wisdom of Christ to Peter, and so he can reveal this wisdom to us.

*Matthew 16:15-17* | Jesus said to his disciples, "But who do you say that I am?" <sup>16</sup> Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." <sup>17</sup> And

Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For **flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.**”

We give glory to God that through the Word and the Spirit, lost people can receive God’s grace and have the wisdom and insight of the Spirit lavished upon them that they might turn this mystery of his salvation and miracle of salvation.

## FREE FROM THE PRESENCE OF SIN

The plan of God is to remove sin from all creation and unite all things in Christ, so that there will be perfect unity and harmony with all sentient beings in heaven and earth. This verse refers to our glorification, when the very presence of sin will cease forever.

**Ephesians 1:10** | ... as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

The **redeemed see that a new order is coming.** Sin will be no more. One day we will be completely set free. We will be set free from sin and sorrow. The former things will soon pass away. All creation is moving toward its consummation in him, as described in by Paul in Romans.

**Romans 8:19–21** | The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed ... the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

Thus, all redeemed souls, all the universe, and all the faithful angelic hosts – literally everything in heaven and on earth – everything material, everything spiritual, everything within, without, above, and below – will be united in Christ. This is the blessing of the universe! It is this day that all creation is groaning for: a day when we shall all be set free from the very presence of sin.

We will fight to grow in holiness our entire lives while we live on this sin cursed earth. But when we have run the race and fought the good fight, we will enter into the presence of the Lord forever. We will be glorified. In his presence, our soul rest will at last be complete, as sin and its devastation will cease to assail us. There can be no evil in his presence. Though now we are surrounded on all sides by sinfulness, though now sin continues to cling to our hearts, on a day not too distant we will go to a place where sin is no more. In our glorification we will at last be granted freedom from the very presence of sin. Our glorification is coming. It is the day we trade the persistent presence of sin for the perfect presence of the Lord. *We will be saved* from sin’s presence.

### Conclusion

Our full destiny will become clear when we stand before God and are fully reconciled. Christ will come forward and based on his sacrifice God will declare: “Righteous! No condemnation!” Those who are Christians will also have the proofs of the Holy Spirit working in their lives. Any crowns we receive will be cast at Jesus feet. We will say: *It was all of grace.* We will be able to testify how God changed our hearts and set us on Christ the solid Rock. I can’t wait for that day. The whole church, Old Testament and New, are destined for that glorious day.

Most of us struggle so often, day by day, because we cannot yet see our full destiny. Our view of God’s glorious grace gets obscured by some temporary thing. The only way forward is diligently focusing on the promises of God and remembering who we are. We are destined for glory. Our destiny is eternity, sanctity, liberty, and it is all guaranteed. Ephesus was a place of sin and slavery and much insecurity. We as believers in Christ are not in slavery to sin. We are in Christ. We are rooted in Christ. And our destiny is guaranteed in Jesus, because we trust in him.