

# **This is a Great Mystery**

## A Study of Ephesians

### Week 2 – Ephesians 1:1-6

#### **From Last Week**

Before we jump into today's verses, I want to see what you came up with for our take-home activity from last week. Having read through all of Ephesians, answer one of the following:

1. I have trouble understanding \_\_\_\_\_ in Ephesians (a specific doctrine, verse, or section).

OR

2. I look forward to spending a lot of time on \_\_\_\_\_ in Ephesians (a specific doctrine, verse, or section).

I will do my best to include extended discussions on these things in the following weeks.

#### **Introduction/Recap**

Remember that last week, we talked about some of the real experiences that Paul had with real people who lived in this real city called Ephesus. As we go through, it will be important to remember these things that actually happened. While these words are certainly meant for us, they were also meant for the first people who read them. And they will also be intended for the people who will read them after us all the way until Jesus comes back. That's especially important to remember in these opening verses.

#### **Verses 1 and 2**

Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ τοῖς ἁγίοις τοῖς οὖσιν [ἐν Ἐφέσῳ] καὶ πιστοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

My personal translation: **Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the will of God. To the holy ones who are [in Ephesus] and the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

1. This is a typical apostolic (ἀπόστολος) greeting
  - It establishes who the letter is from
  - Paul does this in every letter that we know he wrote (so do Peter, James, and Jude)
  - What would Paul's appeal to his apostleship accomplish in the minds of the Ephesians (τοῖς οὖσιν [ἐν Ἐφέσῳ])?
2. There's our first "in Christ" (ἐν Χριστῷ) - remember, we're going to keep track of these.
  - Christ is already brought up three times in two verses!
  - This is important—the faithful (πιστοῖς) are not found or rooted in themselves or in the world or in their city or in anything else except Christ!
  - Which people are the ones who are in Christ? Look up **Romans 6:3** and **Galatians 3:27**.
3. Recall from previous weeks: on what basis can Paul address these people as saints (τοῖς ἁγίοις)?
  - Look up **Romans 1:7** and **1 Corinthians 1:2** to see what Paul writes in relation to "saints."

4. Also, grace (χάρις) and peace (εἰρήνη) make their first appearances already in the introduction.

What comments or questions do you have?

### **Verse 3**

Εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ εὐλογήσας ἡμᾶς ἐν πάσῃ εὐλογίᾳ πνευματικῇ ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν Χριστῷ,

My personal translation: **Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who blesses us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ,**

5. ἐν Χριστῷ counter – 2
6. Where/when do we hear these words (or words that are very similar) on Sundays, perhaps even today in our worship service?
7. The first word of this verse, Εὐλογητὸς, could be translated “blessed” or “praised” (notice that the same εὐλογ- root comes up two more times in this verse, referring to blessing). Obviously, translations will handle it differently, depending on the context and other variables. Which translation do you prefer?
8. Why do you think Paul would specify that every spiritual blessing is from God as opposed to every kind of blessing (physical, mental, emotional, etc.)?
- Look up **James 1:17**. What other thoughts does this verse add to the discussion of spiritual blessings?
  - Agree or disagree – God is more concerned about spiritual blessings than physical blessings.
  - Agree or disagree – We are more concerned about spiritual blessings than physical blessings.
  - Agree or disagree – Since physical things are tainted with sin, I should be less thankful for them.

What comments or questions do you have?

### **Verses 4, 5, and 6**

καθὼς ἐξελέξατο ἡμᾶς ἐν αὐτῷ πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ, προορίσας ἡμᾶς εἰς υἰοθεσίαν διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς αὐτόν, κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ, εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ ἧς ἐχαρίτωσεν ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ ἡγαπημένῳ.

My personal translation: **Just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world for us to be holy and blameless before him (in his sight). In love he predestined us into adoption through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will for the praise of the glory of his grace which he bestowed on us in the One he loves.**

### Verse 4

9. Some versions take ἐν αὐτῷ in the first line and translate it as “in Christ,” since that’s who the “him” is referring to. We can count that as partial credit; ἐν Χριστῷ counter – 2.5

10. In these verses, Paul begins to speak about a doctrine that, perhaps, some of us might have trouble coming to grips with—predestination.

- First of all, is that an accurate assessment on my part?
- For what reasons is it such a difficult thing for us to understand or explain?
- Let’s look up **Romans 8:28-30**, where Paul writes about predestination again
  - Look at all the words Paul uses to refer to how God chose you:
    - Call – in a biblical sense, choose for receipt of a special benefit or experience
    - Foreknow – be aware of something before it happens
    - Predestine – determine in advance (usually by divine power or will)
    - Justify – make someone free of charges
    - Glorify – cause to have splendid greatness
  - What is so amazing about God doing all these things for each and every one of us?
  - When God says that he has done all these things for you, what is your response?

While difficult to understand (most doctrine is, if we’re honest—creation, trinity, dual nature of Christ, etc.), predestination is a source of COMFORT, not confusion. It is a reason to thank God, not question him.

- What do we run the risk of doing if we try to make sense of predestination?

11. Now, let’s go back to Ephesians and chew on verse 4 a little more:

- What did God do?

- When did he do it?
- What did he make us to be?
  - Some people might say that God makes us “better” or “gets us on the path to healing.” What can we say about the words of verse 4 to say otherwise?
- What motivated him to do what he did?

#### Verse 5

12. The word for adoption (υἰοθεσίαν) is a compound word in Greek, combining the words for son (υἱός) and placing (θέσις). Given what Paul is talking about in these verses, in what ways is that a fitting term?
13. Even though “through Jesus Christ” (διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) is a short phrase, what is all packed into those three words?
14. “Good pleasure” (εὐδοκίαν) can sometimes be translated as “wish” or “desire.” God simply wanted to do all of this! It brings to mind verses like **John 3:16** and **1 Timothy 2:4** (a different word for “want” is used here, but the idea is the same).

#### Verse 6

15. εἰς (here translated “for”) is a fun little preposition that sometimes shows the purpose for which something happened. Such is the case here.
  - So, why did God do all this?
    - So that his glorious grace would be praised!
  - Grace (χάριτος) counter – 2
  - τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ ἧς ἐχαρίτωσεν ἡμᾶς – literally, this could be translated as, “his grace which he graces to us” – this happened earlier with the “blessing” root.

What comments or questions do you have?

**Closing Prayer** – v. 1 of CW 380 Lord, ‘Tis Not that I Did Choose You  
**Lord, ‘tis not that I did choose you; That, I know, could never be,**  
**For this heart would still refuse you Had your grace not chosen me.**  
**You removed the sin that stained me, Cleansing me to be your own;**  
**For this purpose you ordained me, That I live for you alone. Amen.**