

This is a Great Mystery

A Study of Ephesians

Week 3 – Ephesians 1:4-8

Opening Prayer

Lord, we trust you; not perfectly, but we trust all the same. Help us to continue to trust you as we dive into your Word and discuss some things that might confuse us. You made everything so that it would point to the cross of your Son, Jesus. Point us there again today. Amen.

Last Week

Any questions or comments that came up following last week's discussion on Ephesians 1:1-3? Just as a refresher, we had touched mainly on these two things:

- Every spiritual gift is perfect
- What “in Christ” and “through Christ” mean

Verses 4, 5, and 6

καθὼς ἐξελέξατο ἡμᾶς ἐν αὐτῷ πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ, ⁵ προορίσας ἡμᾶς εἰς υἰοθεσίαν διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς αὐτόν, κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ, ⁶ 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 ⁵ he predestined us into adoption through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will ⁶ for the praise of the glory of his grace which he bestowed on us in the One he loves.**

1. 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
2. In these verses, Paul begins to speak about a doctrine that, perhaps, some of us might have trouble coming to grips with—predestination.
 - For what reasons is it such a difficult thing for us to understand or explain? In other words, what specific thoughts come up when struggling with predestination?
 - Let’s look up **Romans 8:28-30**, where Paul also writes about predestination.
 - 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?
3. Now, let's go back to Ephesians and chew on verse 4 a little more - **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...**
- 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?
 - A few notes about why “in love” is at the end of the verse, but is the start of a new sentence:
 - The original Greek manuscripts didn't have verse numbers or punctuation.
 - Throughout history, each were added and, eventually, generally agreed upon by the Church at large.
 - Still, there are some places where the decision about verse markings could be questioned or adjusted
 - That's because there are some places where certain words or phrases could fit at the beginning of one sentence or another.
 - Is that true here? Could “in love” fit as part of the main sentence in verse 4?

Verse 5 - ...he predestined us into adoption through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will...

4. The word for adoption (υιοθεσίαν) is a compound word in Greek, combining the words for son (υιός) and placing (θέσις). That's fitting for physical adoption. In what ways is it fitting for what God does for us?
5. We touched on this last week – Even though “through Jesus Christ” (διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) is a short phrase, what is all packed into those three words?
6. “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 - ...**for the praise of the glory of his grace which he bestowed on us in the One he loves.**

7. 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?

 - 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?

Verse 7 – ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν παραπτωμάτων, κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the abundance of his grace

8. τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν – literally, “the buying back from captivity by paying a ransom”
 - The same root (λύτρον) is used when Jesus spoke in **Matthew 20:28**
 - This concept comes up a lot in our hymnody:
 - At least 30 hymns in *Christian Worship* and *Christian Worship Supplement* use “ransom.”
 - 121 hymns make mention of “redeem” or “Redeemer”
 - 18 hymns use “redemption”
 - This “buying back” concept is one of the central doctrines of the Christian faith.
 - Paul summarizes how God carried it out in **Colossians 2:13-14**.
 - What illustrations have you heard to describe this concept? OR What illustration could you use when describing to someone else what it means that Christ has redeemed us?

9. διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ - “through his blood”
 - Blood has always had a close connection to the forgiveness of sins. In fact, look up **Hebrews 9:22** to see how strongly God speaks about blood and forgiveness.

 - This is why the sacrificial system was put into place in the Old Testament. Look at **Leviticus 17:11**. For what purpose did God give the Israelites the blood of animals?

 - What’s the problem with animal blood, according to **Hebrews 9:25**?

 - What does **1 Peter 1:17-19** say is different about the blood of Jesus?

10. τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν παραπτωμάτων – “the forgiveness of sins”
- ἄφεσιν has its roots in letting someone or something go free; it’s can also be used to refer to a legal pardon
 - παραπτωμάτων refers to a “violation of moral standards” or “wrongdoing”
 - Some translations take this word as “trespass,” others stick with the more generic translation “sin.” What’s communicated through each one?
11. κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ - “according to the abundance of his grace”
- What verses from other places in Scripture come to mind when you hear the phrase “abundance of grace”?
12. Χάριτος counter – 3

What comments or questions do you have?

Verse 8 - ἣς ἐπερίσσευσεν εἰς ἡμᾶς, ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ φρονήσει,

...which he lavished on us in all wisdom and understanding.

13. God took the abundance of his grace...and he caused it to abound on us. This is a typical ancient way of emphasizing something (both Greek and Hebrew do this). The more descriptors that say basically the same thing, the more emphatic it is!

14. What do we know about God’s wisdom and understanding from Scripture?

- **Romans 11:33** –
- **1 Corinthians 1:23-25** –
- **Colossians 2:3** –
- **Isaiah 40:13-14** –

What comments or questions do you have?

Closing prayer – CW 388 v. 1 Redeemed, Restored, Forgiven
**Redeemed, restored, forgiven Through Jesus’ precious blood,
 Heirs of his home in heaven—Oh, praise our pardoning God!
 Praise him in tuneful measures Who gave his Son to die;
 Praise him whose sevenfold treasures Enrich and sanctify. Amen.**