

Ephesians 1:1-14 Spiritual Blessings

by R H Johnston

This concentrated passage summarises the Good News of the Lord Jesus Christ in a hymn of praise to God the Father. The distinctive character and functions of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are portrayed. Supremely it glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ to whom reference is made in almost every verse.

[These notes are from my annotated Bible (RSV), but the text was retranslated from Greek where necessary. The inter-connectedness of all the ideas is strong, and the Greek consequently complex and mostly one long sentence, making it an especially difficult passage to translate into normally structured modern English while retaining the full meaning of the original. My intention was to bring out the full meaning. Words not in the Greek are in ().

In addition to the footnotes, emphasis is used to identify key words and concepts, and (*) and superscript capital letters are used to link related words/ideas in different places together. Underlined materials are inserted "headings" to indicate the key stages of the argument.]

The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians¹

1:1 Paul, an apostle² of Christ Jesus by the (*)**will**³ of God⁴, To the **saints**⁵ who are in Ephesus and **faithful**⁶ in Christ Jesus⁷:

2 **Grace**⁸ to you and **peace**⁹ from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Father blesses Son

3¹⁰ **Blessed**^{A11} be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has **blessed**^{A12} **us**¹³ **in Christ**^{B14} with every spiritual blessing¹⁵ in the heavenly (places),

¹ main theme of Ephesians: riches in Christ

² One sent forth with a specific mission: Luke 11.49; Gen 45.7; Ex 3.10-15; Is 6:8-9; Jer 1.7; Ezek 2.3; Amos 7:15; Jer 23.21.

³ Eph 1.5,9,11

⁴ Or "Paul, one Jesus Christ sent forth through the will of God". Man's desires are irrelevant: must know God's will, and that what we do is sent of Christ. Jesus always did God's will (John 6.38)

⁵ normal description of God's people (never addressed as "sinners")

⁶ part of will of God for us

⁷ Or, if "in Ephesus" omitted (as some texts), then "who are in Christ Jesus and faithful (to him)". (RSV, "who are also faithful in Christ Jesus"). This appears to be a General letter: there is no reference to anything or anyone specifically at Ephesus

⁸ expanded in Eph 1.3-8

⁹ refers to the reconciliation of all things (Eph 1.9-10)

¹⁰ Eph 1:3-14 is one long sentence, summarising the Gospel of Christ in a hymn of praise to God the Father, and revealing the character and functions of each member of the Trinity.

Chosen to holiness

⁴ even as he **chose**¹⁶ us **in him**^B before the foundation of the world¹⁷, that **we** should be **holy**¹⁸ and **blameless**¹⁹ before him,

Destined to sonship

⁵ having predestined²⁰ us in love to receive **sonship**²¹ through Jesus Christ according to the **purpose**²² of his ^(*)**will**²³, ⁶ to the praise²⁴ of the glory^{D25} of his grace²⁶ which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved²⁷,

Supremely it glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ to whom reference is made in almost every verse. The convoluted nature of the sentence and the complexity of the concepts makes translation difficult. Breaking it into short English sentences seriously spoils the balance of the Greek ¹¹ = "Well spoken of". Essentially same Greek word as that used of Father blessing us. Paul obeys command to bless God (Psalm 134.1)

¹² Old Testament concept of Father blessing his son in view. Father's blessing is very powerful with respect to destiny (e.g. Isaac's blessing of Jacob (Gen 27) and Jacob's blessing his of sons (Gen 49)). The blessing not only affects the son but his seed within him (Gen 27:18 relates to Christ (Gal 3:16)): this is how we are blessed in Christ

¹³ us = faithful servants (Eph 1.1)

¹⁴ everything in Eph 1 and Eph 2 is "in Him"

¹⁵ Note the wide extent of this blessing; Eph 1.14; We shall bear Christ's image (1 Cor 15.45-50)

¹⁶ What is in view is a "choosing of a corporate people (us) in Christ for a purpose", not the selection of individuals to be in Christ. Realisation of this destroys presumption and elevates Christ, we have nothing unless we are in Him

¹⁷ as we are chosen on the basis of a specification (that we are the body of Christ, and Christ has been chosen on the basis of His merit) this pre-choosing presents no conceptual difficulty

¹⁸ = "set apart" Part of God's will for us

¹⁹ = "guiltless" Part of God's will for us

²⁰ = Greek (RSV = "He predestined")

²¹ (RSV="be his sons"). Part of God's predestined will for us is that we become exactly like Christ in all respects (Rom 8:29), achieved through the work of the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13). Sonship is greater than childhood: we must receive our position as sons (there was a ritual in which a child became a "son" of his father, which could be applied equally to his own son, or to someone else he wished to make his son. This sonship allowed the son to fully inherit his father's estate etc. (see Gal 4:1 for the slave status of a child until this has been done). This is NOT adoption of children as now understood (AV text very misleading): we must be BORN (John 3:3-7) into God's family

²² Lit "good pleasure"

²³ Eph 1:1,9,11

²⁴ commendation

²⁵ Eph 1:12,14

²⁶ (RSV = "his glorious grace") God's purpose was to show the immense greatness of His graciousness towards us by accounting us part of His Beloved Son, so that onlookers (e.g. the angels 1Pet 1:12) might be caused to marvel and praise the LORD. The work of grace in salvation in Christ was done before we knew it. His grace gets praised by us when we come to know it, Eph 1.9,17,18. It is made to abound to us ("lavished upon us" Eph 1.8) when we really know it: until we know it cannot abound by effectually saving us from the power of sin, the world, devil etc..

²⁷ Or (following Received Text) "in which (grace) he has made us favoured in the Beloved"

Freed slaves

7 **In whom**^{B28} we

1) have redemption²⁹ through his blood,
2) the forgiveness of our trespasses³⁰, **according**³¹ to the **riches**³² of his
grace³³ which he **lavished**³⁴ upon us,

How we recognise and receive it

9 **having**³⁵ made known³⁶ to us in all wisdom and insight the **mystery**³⁷ of his
(***will**³⁸,

The ultimate purpose to bring peace in Christ

according to his **purpose**³⁹ which he had⁴⁰ set forth⁴¹ **in Christ**^{B42}₁₀ as a **plan**⁴³
for the fullness of time, to head up⁴⁴ **all**⁴⁵ (things) **in Christ**^{B46}, things in⁴⁷ heaven
and things upon⁴⁸ earth⁴⁹;

The inheritances of God's people to God's glory

11⁵⁰ (that is) **in him**^B in whom also we have obtained an inheritance⁵¹ having been
predestined⁵² according to (the) **purpose** of him⁵³ who accomplishes all (things)
according to the counsel of his (***will**⁵⁴, 12 to the end that⁵⁵ we who⁵⁶ hoped in the

28 (RSV "him")

29 Lit: "the loosing away" - the favour experienced by a redeemed slave.

30 the favour experienced by a condemned man

31 Not "out of", but in proper proportion to the riches

32 Eph 2.7; 1.18.

33 See note on "grace" in Eph 1.6

34 Lit: "made to abound to us"

35 (RSV = "For he has")

36 Greek perfect tense, so ALREADY revealed, with continuing implications

37 It was previously hidden, but is no longer hidden to us (Eph 3.4-5; 1.17)

38 Eph 1:1,5,11

39 Lit: "good pleasure"

40 (RSV omits "had") This was done before the foundation of the world (Eph 1.4)

41 Or "purposed"

42 Lit "him"

43 Lit "stewardship"

44 Greek (RSV = "unite")

45 Main focus is the principalities and powers etc. (Eph 1:20-23; Col 1.15-20); secondary focus is the reconciliation of Jew and Gentile (Eph 2.15)

46 (RSV = "him") Done through his flesh: Eph 2.15

47 Lit "upon"

48 (RSV = "on")

49 This is the ultimate purpose of God in history

50 Translation of the Greek of Eph 1:11-14 is difficult, as it is not entirely clear whether it speaks of us being God's inheritance and God benefits, or, what is more probable (Eph 1:18), of our inheritance and benefit

51 Or, less likely, "were chosen as (his) inheritance"

52 (RSV wrongly rearranges the sentence and omits "in whom...predestined")

53 I.e. of God (Eph 1.1)

54 Eph 1:1,5,9

55 (RSV omits "to...that")

Messiah⁵⁷ beforehand⁵⁸ should be to⁵⁹ the **praise of his glory**^{D60}.¹³ **In him**^B you⁶¹ also, having heard⁶² the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and having⁶³ believed in him, were **sealed**⁶⁴ with the promised⁶⁵ Holy Spirit,¹⁴ who⁶⁶ is the guarantee⁶⁷ of our inheritance⁶⁸ until the possession⁶⁹ is redeemed⁷⁰, to the **praise of his glory**^{D71}.

This is extracted from R H Johnston's Bible notes and the Bible is partly retranslated by him. (22.4.1994, 2.9.2018, 15.9.2018 (footnote version))

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⁵⁶ (RSV inserts "first")

⁵⁷ Lit & RSV: "Christ"

⁵⁸ (RSV omits "beforehand"). Those who were looking to the deliverance from the Messiah before He came, that is the Jews (Rom 8.29; Rom 11:2)

⁵⁹ (RSV = "have been destined and appointed to live for")

⁶⁰ Ultimate destined purpose of God for us (Eph 1:6,14). In terms of the Jews what magnifies God's grace "to the praise of his glory" (Eph 1:6) is that God has kept His promises of the coming Messiah to Abraham and David in spite of all the human failures

⁶¹ Gentiles (Eph 2.11)

⁶² Greek (RSV= "who have heard")

⁶³ (RSV = "have")

⁶⁴ This is the security mark signifying God's new ownership of us. (This probably refers to the indwelling Holy Spirit rather than the empowering of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit: 2 Cor 1:21 refers to the anointing (= Baptism in the Holy Spirit) as being distinct from the sealing of the Spirit in our HEARTS (2 Cor 1:22); sealing relates to salvation (Eph 1:13) and redemption (Eph 4.30), again both inward works rather than to the Spirit's empowering; Rev 9.4 refers to the seal of God being on the forehead, again relating to our position in Christ, rather than power for service)

⁶⁵ Acts 2:39 promises Him to Gentiles

⁶⁶ (RSV ="which")

⁶⁷ Or "pledge" (Greek word is transliterated Hebrew used in Gen 38:17,18,20) or "down-payment". (A traders' word: money given in advance to a vendor as security for the rest). See also 2 Cor 1.21-22 & 2 Cor 5.5 which make clear that the down-payment of the Spirit is given to us in our hearts. Remarkably, the down-payment is paid TO US to provide our assurance.

⁶⁸ We get this in virtue of being among the sanctified (Acts 20.32). Inheritance is never random or arbitrary, but is the result of a definite choice by the testator, usually to a member of the same family. Note, the Greek could possibly read "who is the guarantee of (Christ's) possession of us"

⁶⁹ We are a people for God's possession (1 Peter 2:9)

⁷⁰ Lit. "with a view to the redemption of the possession", i.e. until the whole of the christian is redeemed by God. (RSV = "until we acquire possession of it") Again the unusual feature is that when God has paid the full price and possesses all of us it is WE who obtain the full benefit and possess all our inheritance (in Christ). That God allows even Gentiles to receive this magnifies God's grace "to the praise of his glory" (Eph 1:6). For the nature of the inheritance see Eph 1.3 (blessings in Christ), Rom 8.23 (the redemption of our bodies), 2 Cor 5.4-5 (to be fully clothed, so that what is mortal is swallowed up by life). "redemption" is same word as in Eph 1:7

⁷¹ Eph 1:6,12