

**CORE Seminar**  
**Spring 2024**  
**Paul's Letter to the Ephesians**  
**Week 2: Ephesians 1**

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**ICE BREAKER**

Choose an ice breaker from the *Spring Community Group Guide* or go to [www.fbcportland.org/icebreakers](http://www.fbcportland.org/icebreakers) to select an ice breaker to ask your group.

- Spend about 5 minutes discussing the question – this is a great way to “warm up” your group.

**INTRODUCTION**

Ok guys! We've made it to Week 2 – and today we will be in Ephesians 1.

Just a reminder that the goal of this Seminar is to give everyone a working knowledge of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. When this seminar was written, it was written with an expository approach in mind. Meaning we will go over each section, and we will hit the high points of each section.

Everyone has the schedule for each week and the group is **STRONGLY ENCOURAGED** to read the book of Ephesians several times – especially throughout the week and before our next schedule meeting. Before you read through it, pray that the Holy Spirit would open your heart to the truths of God's Word and open your mind to questions that you may not understand from the text.

Last, I need you to remember that there will be some words and phrases that have traditionally been “scary” for the church. Today, the word “predestination” will be in our reading. We don't run away from words or phrases like this. We study them so that we can fully understand how Paul intended them when he wrote this letter to the church. Our hope is to simplify the “scary” parts so that we understand Paul's letter more fully.

Everybody good with that plan? Let's open in prayer.

**PRAYER**

**QUESTION: After reading Ephesians 1 this week, why is it good to be reminded - at least sometimes - of who you were before you came to faith in Jesus Christ?**

Today, we're going to read all of **Ephesians 1** – I hope you read ahead. In the first 14 verses, Paul reveals that the church is a spiritual body which was formed by Jesus. And, since Jesus formed up the church, then it is blessed with a spiritual identity that should lead to a new behavior/ conduct. Paul is encouraging the church in Ephesus to practice this new spiritual identity.

The big picture in these verses is to show that the church has been a part of God's plan "since the foundation of the world" – that's pre **Genesis 1:1**. The church is a demonstration of God's grace – through the finished work of Jesus Christ – and intended to bring God the glory and to accomplish His will on earth and in heaven.

**QUESTION: As you read through Ephesians 1 this week [especially the first 14 verses] were their words or phrases that you had problems with or that you didn't understand? [Please make notes on these. This will be helpful in preparing this content in the future.]**

Ok... let's get started!

**Have someone in your group read Ephesians 1:1-2 [ESV]**

Ok – so far so good. Just making it through a typical letter introduction. Some simple things we learn from these verses that help us to understand the context.

- We're given the Author of the letter – **Paul**
- We're given the authority/ position of the author – **an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God**
- We're given who the letter was written to – **the saints who are in Ephesus**

**QUESTION: In the first two verses what way might Paul's greeting – both the title he writes with and the words of blessing that he uses – have been an encouragement to the church at Ephesus?**

- **Say you were a part of the church at Ephesus, how would these words have encouraged you?**

Let's keep on reading...

**Have someone in your group read Ephesians 1:3a [ESV]**

**<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us...**

Who is the “us” here? Who is Paul writing to? [the church at Ephesus]

- What makes up the church? [**regenerate believers who have come to faith in Jesus Christ**]
- So there is a corporate element [the church] and an individual element [regenerate persons make up the church.]

But this letter is to the “saints who are in Ephesus,” – the church at Ephesus.

And remember in our intro – **“the church is a demonstration of God’s grace – through the finished work of Jesus Christ – and intended to bring God the glory and to accomplish His will on earth and in heaven.”**

So, God has blessed the church – how? [**In Christ – next verses...**]

**Have someone in your group read Ephesians 1:3b-4 [ESV]**

**... in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup> even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.**

Ok, so God has blessed the church through Jesus Christ with every spiritual blessing...

And **verse 4** tells us that he did what to – there’s that word “us” again – to “us” before the foundation of the world

- He chose the church – *the corporate body made up of regenerate sinners* – before the foundation of the world.
- The big picture in these verses is to show that the church has been a part of God’s plan “since the foundation of the world” – *that’s pre **Genesis 1:1***.

Now, He chose us that we should be holy and blameless before Him –

- Again – this isn’t like a 5 step program on how to be holy and blameless – we would never be able to accomplish it anyway.
- **NOPE** – this is because Jesus Christ has already accomplished this on behalf of His church.

**QUESTION: What is God’s goal and purpose for His church, according to verse 4?**

- **Knowing yourself, why is it incredibly good news that He wants to make us “holy and blameless” before Him?**
- **What does this reveal to you about God’s grace & mercy?**

- **How did God the Father ultimately accomplish this?**

That's why Paul can write that the church HAS BEEN blessed "in Christ with every spiritual blessing." The work is done.

Keep reading...

**Have someone in your group read Ephesians 1:5-6 [ESV]**

**In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, 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.**

**QUESTION: Let's just talk about this now. In verse 5, why is the word "predestined" a difficult word for Christians to understand and accept?**

- **Knowing this letter was written to the church, why did Paul use this word to talk about the church's relationship to God?**
- **How does the picture of adoption help you to understand God's grace and acceptance toward His church through Jesus Christ?**

Paul uses the word "predestined" in connection with adoption – and the relation is that in His love, God adopted us – the church made up of the regenerate members – to Himself according to the purpose of His will.

In reference to **verses 5-6**, Charles Spurgeon comments:

*The chosen ones are adopted; they become the children of God. The universal Fatherhood of God, except in a very special sense, is a doctrine totally unknown to Scripture. God is the Father of those whom he adopts into his family, who are born again into his family, and no man hath any right to believe God to be his Father except through the new birth, and through adoption. And why God thus elects or adopts is declared here: 'According to the good pleasure of his will.' He does as he pleases. That old word of God is still true: 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.' Men do not like that doctrine; it galls them terribly; but it is the truth of God for all that. He is Master and King, and he will sit on the throne, and none shall drag him thence.<sup>1</sup>*

Let's keep on reading so that we can see how the church is blessed through Jesus Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> [Ephesians 1:5-6 Commentary | Precept Austin](#). Accessed February 20, 2024.

## Have someone in your group read Ephesians 1:7-14 [ESV]

Paul shares with the church that the church is blessed through Jesus Christ in three ways:

1. **The church has been redeemed through His *blood* – have received forgiveness of our sins.** Another way of saying this, the members of the church have been made regenerate through the finished work of Jesus Christ.
2. **The church has received an *inheritance*.** Don't know if you picked up on it, but in **verses 12-13** – there's a pronoun shift. This is in reference to Jew and Gentile. But now they are all combined into ONE CHURCH. This is ultimately the church that has received an inheritance.

In the Greek, the phrase “we have received an inheritance” is one compound word. In using this phrase, Paul speaks of something in the future that is sure to happen. This makes the translation difficult. It could mean “we were made an inheritance [or heritage]” or “we have received an inheritance.” The first translation has an Old Testament feel to it and is the idea that we are God's possession. The second translation sounds more like **1 Peter 1:3-4** – that we have received an inheritance through Jesus. Both are great options! Because we are God's possession, and through Christ we have received an inheritance.<sup>2</sup> But remember, this is one church – combining Jew and Gentile. Based on this, I tend to lean to the Old Testament feel and say that the church is God's possession through Jesus Christ.

3. **And, the church has been sealed with the promised *Holy Spirit*.** A seal is a mark of ownership and authenticity. It is used by ranchers to mark their cattle – as a sign that these cattle belong to a certain ranch. These seals are external. What Paul is referring to is an internal seal. God puts His Holy Spirit as a seal on our hearts as a sign that He has eternally adopted us through His Son Jesus Christ.

**QUESTION: In verses 11-14, explain the Holy Spirit's role in salvation.**

- **What assurance of salvation does the working of the Holy Spirit provide?**

Before we move into the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of Ephesians **are there any questions?**

- If so write them down, and encourage the group to study them in the week ahead.

**Moving on...**

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<sup>2</sup> Merida, Tony. *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Ephesians*. Holman Reference. Nashville, TN, 2014. 29.

In the second half [verses 15-23], Paul prays that the mystery of everything that Jesus has done for the church can start to be revealed – *can be illuminated* – to the church. The big picture in the second half revolves around Paul’s prayer. In this prayer of thanksgiving and intercession, Paul gives thanks to God for the church in Ephesus, and he prays for them to grow in their knowledge of God – as well as grow in their awareness of all they have been blessed with through Jesus.

**Have someone in your group read Ephesians 1:15-23 [ESV]**

Paul’s prayer provides some important details – especially as prayer relates to knowledge and understanding. Just as we need the Spirit to “seal us,” we need Him to help understand the greatness of God and the role of the church within the eternal plans of God.

Through Paul’s prayer for the church, we can see three things:

1. Paul’s **thanksgiving** for the church at Ephesus. [verse 15-16]
2. Paul’s **intercession** for the church at Ephesus. [verses 17-19]
3. And, Paul’s **recognition** of Jesus’ Lordship over His church – “which is His body, and the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” [verses 20-23]

**QUESTION: In verses 15-16, Paul gives thanks for the church at Ephesus. Are you thankful to God for your brother’s and sister’s at First Baptist?**

- **Have you told a brother or sister that you are thankful for them – lately?**

**QUESTION: In what ways have you heard people “bash” the church?**

- **Do this bashing OR complaints come more from inside the church OR outside?**

**QUESTION: How does Paul’s indication that Jesus is “head over all things to the church,” and the church’s identity as “His body,” indicate how the church is to be led and the role of the church?**

## **CONCLUSION**

I would really encourage you to read **Ephesians 2:1-10** next week. Really spend time on them and study them. Work through those verses, and if you have questions – write them down. Also, don’t read those 10 verses in isolation. Go back and re-read chapter 1 with them. This is a good practice as we make it through Paul’s letter. The church at Ephesus would have read all six chapter as one letter. They would not have had chapters or verses to slow their reading OR pause their reading.

## CLOSING PRAYER