

EPHESIANS

ENGAGING THE POWER OF GOD'S AMAZING GRACE



ABUNDANTLIFE
FOURSQUARE CHURCH

WE ARE BELIEVERS, CHOSEN AND ADOPTED BY GRACE

Week One

Ephesians 1:1-6

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. NKJV

COMMENTS & THOUGHTS

This letter is to the Ephesian believers and all other believers to give them in-depth teaching about grace and how to nurture and maintain the unity of the Church. Paul wanted to put this important information in written form because he was in prison for preaching the Good News and could not visit the churches himself. When the Apostle Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians, he was under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:16 ff). Though a prisoner, he was free to have visitors and write letters.

Ephesus was one of the five major cities in the Roman Empire, along with Rome, Corinth, Antioch, and Alexandria. Paul first visited Ephesus on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19-21). During his third missionary journey, he stayed there for almost three years (Acts 19). Paul later met again with the elders of the Ephesian church at Miletus (Acts 20:16-38). Ephesus was a commercial, political, and religious center for all of Asia Minor. The temple to the Greek goddess, Artemis (Diana is her Roman equivalent), was located there.

Faithful followers of Christ Jesus—what an excellent reputation! Such a label would be an honor for any believer. Hold fast to your faith, one day at a time; faithfully obey God, even in the details of life. Then, like the Ephesians, you will be known as a person who is faithful to the Lord.

The church is a spiritual entity initiated and formed by Christ, leading to a social identity of earthly relationships. The blessings of the Church's heavenly identity become the basis for the new kind of conduct the Bible exhorts the Church to practice.

These passages show that the Church is part of the plan of God from all eternity. God forms the Church in Christ to bring Himself glory. This is a demonstration of God's grace based on the work of Christ and is intended to accomplish God's will both here on earth and in heaven.

Ephesians 1:3 *Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms (NLT)* means that in Christ we have all the benefits of knowing God—being chosen for salvation, being adopted as His children, forgiveness, insight, the gifts of the Spirit, power to do God’s will, the hope of living forever with Christ. Because we have an intimate relationship with Christ, we can enjoy these blessings now. The “heavenly realms” means that these blessings are eternal, not temporal. God “chose us” to emphasize that salvation depends totally on God. We are not saved because we deserve it, but because God is gracious and freely gives salvation. We did not influence God’s decision to save us; He saved us according to His plan. Thus, there is no way to take credit for our salvation or to allow room for pride. The mystery of salvation originated in the timeless mind of God long before we existed. It is hard to understand how God could accept us. But because of Christ, we are holy and blameless in His sight. God chose us, and when we belong to Him through Jesus Christ, God looks at us as if we had never sinned. All we can do is express our thanks for His wonderful love.

God deciding in advance to adopt us is another way of saying that salvation is God’s work and not our own doing. In His infinite love, God has adopted us as His own children. Through Jesus’ sacrifice, He has brought us into His family and made us heirs along with Jesus (Romans 8:17). In Roman law, adopted children had the same rights and privileges as biological children, even if they had been slaves. Paul uses this term to show how strong our relationship to God is.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What characterizes you as a faithful follower of Christ Jesus?
2. What are some other spiritual blessings you can think of?
3. The Bible includes redemption and forgiveness of our trespasses among the blessings lavished upon believers by grace. What does this working of grace indicate about the Ephesians’ previous and current condition?
4. How would you summarize the earthly and eternal goals of the work of Christ in the Church and for every believer?
5. Since we have been chosen to be holy and blameless sons/daughters of God, how should we live our lives?

Our True Identity in Christ (read these out loud as a group)

- Ephesians 1:3 We are blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ.
- Ephesians 1:4 We are holy, blameless, and the objects of God's love.
- Ephesians 1:5-6 We are adopted as God's children.
- Ephesians 1:7 We are forgiven — our sins are taken away.
- Ephesians 1:10-11 We will be brought under God's headship.
- Ephesians 1:13 We are marked as belonging to God by the Holy Spirit.
- Ephesians 2:6 We have been raised up to sit with Christ in glory.
- Ephesians 2:10 We are God's work of art.
- Ephesians 2:13 We have been brought near to God.
- Ephesians 3:6 We share in the promise of the gospel.
- Ephesians 3:12 We can come with freedom and confidence into God's presence.
- Ephesians 5:29-30 We are members of Christ's body, the Church.

What does this list of a believer's identity mean to us?

Additional Passages:

- Romans 3:24 We are justified (declared "not guilty" of sin).
- Romans 8:1 We await no condemnation.
- Romans 8:2 We are set free from the law of sin and death.
- 1 Corinthians 1:2 We are sanctified and made acceptable in Jesus Christ.
- 1 Corinthians 1:30 We are righteous and holy in Christ.
- 1 Corinthians 15:22 We will be made alive at the Resurrection.
- 2 Corinthians 5:17 We are a new creation.
- 2 Corinthians 5:21 We receive God's righteousness.
- Galatians 3:28 We are one in Christ with all other believers.
- Colossians 2:10 We have been given fullness in Christ.
- Colossians 2:11 We are set free from our sinful nature.
- 2 Timothy 2:10 We will have eternal glory.

**WHAT WILL YOU
DO WITH WHAT
YOU HAVE LEARNED
???**
