



One: A Study of Ephesians

Predestination & Adoption

Ephesians 1:3-12

Summary:

Ephesians is a marvelously concise yet comprehensive summary of the good news and its implications. Nobody can read it without being moved to wonder and worship, and challenged to consistency of life. The letter focuses on what God did through the work of Jesus Christ and what he does through his Spirit today in order to build his new society in the midst of the old.¹ Chapter one focuses on the spiritual blessings given to all who are “in Christ.” This chapter helps us know who we have become in Christ and concludes with Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians that they might have the spiritual enlightenment to grasp the spiritual blessings they have received and who they have now become. As we understand who we are and who we have become, we should experience great joy that leads to great praise. To do so is to enjoy the Christian life more completely and to live like Christ more consistently.²

¹ John Stott and Andrew T. Le Peau, *Reading Ephesians with John Stott*, (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 2017), Introduction - Kindle.

² Max Anders, *Galatians-Colossians*, Vol 8, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 91.

Ephesians 1:3-12

[3] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing** in the heavenly places, [4] even as in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love [5] he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, [6] to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. [7] In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, [8] which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight [9] making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ [10] as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. [11] In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the

counsel of his will, [12] so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

1. God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

2. Our spiritual blessings include predestination.

- Predestination reminds us that God is the final arbiter of all things now and forever.

- Predestination and Free-Will are both found in Scripture therefore both are true. One does not overrule the other. The great mystery is that God is sovereign over all.

Implications of the doctrine of predestination...

- God's plan will be fulfilled and completed.
- God is judge and we are witnesses.
- We do not know who God has chosen or rejected. Our task is to share the good news with everyone without partiality.
- Grace is the heart of the gospel and that includes predestination.

Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* 2nd Edition

Charles Spurgeon on Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility:

The system of truth revealed in the Scriptures is not simply one straight line, but two; and no man will ever get a right view of the gospel until he knows how to look at the two lines at once. That God predestines, and yet that man is responsible, are two facts that few can see clearly.

May the Lord grant us humility to joyfully submit to the truths of His authoritative Word, even when we cannot fully understand or comprehend how those truths might "work" or fit together.

Romans 8:28-30

[28] And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. [29] For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. [30] And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

Baptist Faith and Message 2000

Any interpretation of this mysterious doctrine that detracts from the love of God is rightly suspect.

The Expositors Bible Commentary, Vol. 11, Frank E. Gaebelin general editor, (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1981), 24.

3. He chose us; He gets us!

4. Our spiritual blessings include adoption.

We have two spiritual blessings from God the Father: We have been chosen and adopted by Him to be His spiritual children. He made this choice before the creation of the world with the result that we will someday stand before Him holy and blameless. God the Father accomplished this through the work of His Son, Jesus, motivated by His desire to be kind to us and by His desire to receive praise for His grace.

Max Anders, *Galatians-Colossians*, Vol 8, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN:Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 92.

5. He loves us; He wants us!

So redemption, forgiveness, and adoption all go together. We become his sons and daughters because of the lavish outpouring of his grace on us. But adoption implies responsibility too, for the heavenly Father does not spoil his children. On the contrary, he “disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness” (**Hebrews 12:10 ESV**).

Paul uses the first three chapters of Ephesians to explain the spiritual blessings we have received IN CHRIST and the last three explaining how these spiritual blessings cause believers to live differently.

“We are the family of God the Father, the body of Jesus Christ his Son, and the temple or dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.”

John Stott and Andrew T. Le Peau, *Reading Ephesians with John Stott*, (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 2017), Introduction - Kindle.

Life Application Questions

1. God has granted us spiritual blessings “in Christ.” What have you learned about spiritual blessings?
2. No one understands predestination and the free-will of man well enough to explain how both are true. How does one explain the sovereignty of God?
3. Predestination, election and God choosing us to be saved keeps the authority with God and never with man. What relief might you feel knowing that God is always in control and you can always trust Him? What joy?
4. Adoption. Were you adopted? Have you adopted? What can you share about your adoption?
5. What benefits do you have as an adopted child of God?
6. Focus on the spiritual blessings that you have “in Christ.” Pray and as you do, give thanks to God that he has predestined you for redemption and adoption!