SESSION 1
REJOICE

EPHESIANS 1:3-14

3 ❄️ Blessed is the God and Father of our ❄️ Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ. ❄️ For he ❄️ chose us in him, before the ❄️ foundation of the world, to be ❄️ holy and blameless in ❄️ love before him. ❄️ He ❄️ predestined us to be ❄️ adopted as sons through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, ❄️ to the praise of his glorious grace that he lavished on us in the ❄️ Beloved One. ❄️ In him we have ❄️ redemption through his blood, the ❄️ forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ✶ that he richly poured out on us with all wisdom and understanding. ❄️ He made known to us the ❄️ mystery of his ❄️ will, according to his good pleasure that he purposed in Christ ❄️ as a plan for the right time—to bring everything together in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth in him. ❄️ In him we have also received an ❄️ inheritance, because we were predestined according to the plan of the one who works out everything in agreement with the purpose of his will, ❄️ so that we who had already put our hope in Christ might bring praise to his glory. ❄️ In him you also were sealed with the promised ❄️ Holy Spirit when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and when you believed. ❄️ The Holy Spirit is the ❄️ down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of the possession, to the praise of his glory.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

A ❄️ The writer calls us to worship and adore God for who He is and what He has done for us (Ps. 18:46).
B ❄️ Jesus has “all authority” over us (Matt. 28:18) and is equal in divinity to God the Father.
C ❄️ “He had us in mind” (The Message).
D ❄️ “Creation” (NIV)
E ❄️ “Without fault in his eyes” (NLT). We’re made holy through belief in Jesus’ sacrifice on our behalf.
F ❄️ God’s act of salvation is a result of His love for us.
G ❄️ “Already decided” (GNT). God planned to bring us to Himself before time began.
H ❄️ “Make us his children” (GNT)
I ❄️ “The One he loves” (NIV), referring to the Messiah
J ❄️ “He took away all our sins” (TLB). Jesus’ blood paid the price to redeem God’s people.
K ❄️ God extends us forgiveness because of His grace, and it’s only available through Christ’s shed blood.
L ❄️ “His secret reason for sending Christ” (TLB).
M ❄️ “Good pleasure” (KJV). God will work out all things for those He has predestined (Rom. 8:28-30).
N ❄️ “Who we are and what we are living for” (The Message); the blessings God promises His people both now and in heaven
O ❄️ The Third Person of the Trinity (John 14:15-17)
P ❄️ “Guarantee” (ESV)
1. CHOSEN (Eph. 1:3-6)
   - Paul reminded his readers that believers are recipients of God’s gracious blessings.
   - One of these blessings is God the Father choosing to adopt us as His spiritual children.
   - Focus on God taking the initiative in offering salvation out of His sovereignty.
   - Highlight God having a plan for our salvation prior to creation.

2. REDEEMED (Eph. 1:7-12)
   - Another blessing Paul identified was the believer’s redemption through Christ.
   - This redemption grants the believer forgiveness, spiritual enlightenment, and an inheritance.

3. SEALED (Eph. 1:13-14)
   - Paul pointed to the Holy Spirit as sealing believers at their conversion.
   - This sealing provides for a secure salvation for eternity.
   - Emphasize the role of the Trinity in the believer’s salvation.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

God chose to provide the blessings of salvation through Jesus’ sacrifice.

- Since God the Father chose believers to be His children as an act of grace, there’s no room for spiritual pride or boasting.
- Jesus redeems all believers through His death and resurrection, giving them forgiveness, spiritual understanding, and an eternal inheritance.
- The Holy Spirit guarantees the salvation of all believers, marking them with confidence as God’s children.
FOCUS ATTENTION

What are you more likely to do each morning: list everything you’ve got to do, review your problems, or count your blessings? Why?

• One of the reasons Paul wrote Ephesians was to give believers specific ways to live out their salvation.
• Before Paul addressed matters of unity and ethics, he recounted the marvelous blessings of salvation.
• Understanding what we have in Christ paves the way for us to live like who we are in Christ.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

EPHESIANS 1:3-6

What’s significant about how Paul described God’s blessings?

• Christ is the channel of God’s blessings. Note the prepositional phrases: “in Christ” (v. 3); “in Him” (v. 4); “in the Beloved One” (v. 6).
• God holds nothing back from His followers. He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing.
• Material blessings don’t last. Spiritual blessings are infinite.

When and why did God choose to bless those who trust in His Son?

• In His infinite wisdom and sovereignty, God had a plan to save humanity before He created the universe.
• God takes the initiative in salvation. He predestined—marked out beforehand—that people separated from Him by sin would be reconciled to Him through His Son’s sacrifice.

What does God’s choosing us reveal about His nature?

• Believers weren’t chosen by God because we were holy and blameless. Rather, because God chose us, He is making us perfect and whole.
• God wanted us for Himself, so He chose to adopt us as His own children.

EPHESIANS 1:7-12

What makes redemption such an incredible blessing?

• Redemption—the ransom paid to liberate us from sin and death—cost the life of God’s Son.
• Redemption grants forgiveness. Our sins are literally washed away and forgotten upon receiving Christ Jesus.
• Redemption lets us in on what God is doing, giving us spiritual enlightenment.

What’s God’s ultimate purpose for creation? Why is knowing this a blessing?

• God administers world events, gathering all the pieces into a cohesive whole and bringing everything into fulfillment in Christ.

EPHESIANS 1:13-14

How is this inheritance received?

• This inheritance is for all who receive the Spirit—meaning they hear the gospel and believe in Jesus as Savior.
• Each person of the Trinity plays a role in salvation. God the Father chooses and adopts; God the Son redeems and forgives; God the Spirit seals and secures.

How can we be certain we will obtain our inheritance?

• A seal indicates ownership, authenticity, authority, and security.
• God gives each believer the Holy Spirit at conversion.
• His presence in our lives signifies we belong to God and guarantees we will finally and fully enjoy every spiritual blessing Christ has given us.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

What are logical responses to God’s blessings of salvation?

• Out of His infinite grace and sovereignty, God chose to provide salvation through Jesus’ sacrifice.
• Respond with humility. God chose us to be His, not because of who we are or what we’ve done, but because of who He is.
• Adoption gives us privileges and duties as God’s children.
• Ephesians teaches us how to lead lifestyles that reflect our spiritual blessings.
• The last verse of each section (vv. 6,12,14) indicates that a faithful response to God’s blessings is to rejoice and give God praise.

Personal Challenge: What are you doing with God’s blessings? Do you think on them? Take them for granted? Think you’re superior because you have them? Marvel and rejoice at what God has graciously chosen to bless you with in Christ? Begin each day recounting your blessings of salvation in Christ, and go out in the world rejoicing in your gracious God.
PICTURES OF MARRIAGE PROPOSALS

Secure photos of marriage proposals. As the group arrives, call attention to the photos and invite them to share stories about unique marriage proposals. Ask: What makes a marriage proposal story compelling or interesting? When you see a man proposing to a woman, what thoughts run through your mind? Highlight any responses that point to life change.

Explain that Paul’s opening doxology in Ephesians 1:3-14 is filled with life-changing exclamations. Call for the group to site examples, such as “We have redemption in Him!” or “You were sealed with the Holy Spirit!”

Call attention to the marriage proposal photos, and comment that when a man proposes to a woman, he is declaring his intentions. Explore what God revealed about His intentions for the world through the gospel. Point out these divine intentions were in place before God created the world.

State: We need to know what’s going on in the world so we can pray, give, serve, and lead as God guides us. However, we would do well to spend as much time focusing on the eternal, life-transforming news of the gospel as we do marriage announcements. Marriage proposals usually give a reason to rejoice. In Ephesians Paul declared cause for us to rejoice. The gospel changes everything, and it’s all for our good and God’s glory.

ADOPTION IN THE FIRST CENTURY

In Ephesians 1:5, Paul told the church that God “predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.” What exactly did this image of adoption mean to the first-century hearer, and why was it so powerful to the reader of this letter?

By the first century, the Greek and Roman cultures had in place a legal process of adoption by which a father could adopt a son for purposes of inheritance and to aid in taking care of the family when the father died. As noted by Timothy Boyd,

Adoption meant that you became an heir of your adoptive father ... adoption brought equal rights for the adopted heir as any natural children held.

Adoption meant that a child who had no previous hope of an inheritance or a secure future then had that opportunity because they were legally made a part of the family. In Roman adoptions, the adopted son was immediately and legally considered an heir, and it could happen even into adulthood. (For instance, future Emperor Augustus was adopted by his great-uncle Julius Caesar when he was eighteen.)

When God adopts us, He makes us His own children. We become “heirs of God and coheirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17). Our adoption, predestined by God, goes into effect upon conversion and lasts for eternity: “And those he predestined, he also called; and those he called, he also justified; and those he justified, he also glorified” (Rom. 8:30).

We must also never think one is too old or too lost to receive God’s adoption. God can make anyone His child at any point, and it brings Him “good pleasure” to do so (Eph. 1:5).