

## Ephesians 1:3-6

### "God's People, God's Purpose"

Today we enter the single longest sentence in the entire bible. Though translators have broken it down a bit for us, in the Greek, Eph Ch 1 Vs 3-14 is one long sentence. It's like Paul was so pumped, so excited to share that which was welling up *in* & overflowing *out* of his heart that he couldn't finish his sentence, but he just kept going & going & going.

It's as though Paul wants us to be overwhelmed/overjoyed *by*, assured *of* & confident *in* the love of God for us, the goodness & grace of God toward us. He wants us to see the work of the Triune God; the unity of the Father, the Son & the Holy Spirit in every detail that makes for our salvation, our sanctification & our eternal destination. He speaks of the selection of the Father, the sacrifice of the Son & the seal of the Spirit. He highlights the work of the Father in the past (Vs 3-6), the work of the Son in the present (Vs 7-12) & the work of the Spirit in the future (Vs 13-14). Each section he draws to conclusion w/the phrase, "to the praise of His glory" or "to the praise of the glory of His grace."

& Again, it blesses & blows us away because Paul is writing from *prison*, yet he's pumped & ready to praise God! Paul was the kind of guy that realized the fact that God didn't owe him *anything*, but he owed God *everything*! & He was just stoked that God had *saved* him & beyond that was willing to *use* him. Oh, he was human like you are & I am, I'm sure that had you asked him he'd have preferred to have been someplace else. But he was eternally minded, he knew that life was even a vapor that appears for a little while & then vanishes away. So he was all about redeeming the time (we're too often about wasting time). Paul looked to redeem the time. & He rested in the fact that God was in control. So if he was in prison he'd share the gospel w/prison guards, other inmates or whoever.

How many of you realize that God is able to take the things that Satan means for evil & turn them for good? We thank God that He allowed Paul to be placed in prison! Not because we rejoice or take pleasure in his hardship, but because it was there that we were given the letters to the Eph, to the Colossians, Philippians & Philemon... We don't always know what God is up to in certain circumstances, but God is good, & we can trust in Him. We have precious portions of scripture today, due to the hardship that Paul endured in his life. Trust me when I tell you that the same God who glorified Himself through Paul's tough times, hardships & difficulties is the same God who will redeem the trials & tribulations of your life as well...

### Vs 3-6

"Blessed be the God & Father of our Lord J.C."

Family let it soak into your soul; Paul was in prison w/only words of *praise* for God! There was no, “I’m not sure why God let this happen...” or “If God is a good God, then why do bad things always happen to me?” He says, “Hey; praise God! Bless the Lord!” This word, “Blessed” is the word from which we get our word, “Eulogy”. It means, “to speak well of.”

Paul doesn’t draw attention to the difficulty of his hardship, but to the goodness & praise worthiness of God. Family it’s so important that we have the issue of the fundamental goodness of God settled in our heart. That God has our eternal good & His eternal glory in His heart at all times. If you don’t have that issue resolved, you’re in for a bumpy ride. You’ll all the time have questions, or be confused, wondering why “this” has happened or “that’s” taken place in your life. But if you rest in the fact that God is good, then even if I don’t understand the “what” or the “why” I take heart in the “Who”.

“Well how can I know that God *is* intrinsically, only good?” Do you believe the word of God? “Yes”. What does the bible say? **“Truly God is good...” Ps 73:1** That settles it, doesn’t it? God wants you to trust in Him, He cares for you, you can cast your cares upon Him... Prison was Paul’s plight, yet he gave praise to God.

Perhaps you recall that scene in the book of Job when Satan set his crosshairs on Job, he was seeking to solicit Job to curse God, to question the goodness of God... In one day Job lost his family, his friends, his fortune (you think you’ve had a bad day). He was overwhelmed w/one horrific report of tragedy after another. & We read, **“Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, And naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord.’ In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.”<sup>1</sup>** The issue of God’s goodness wasn’t even a question. God is good, & He’s worthy to be praised.

“Blessed be the God & Father of our Lord J.C.” & When we bless God it’s not from a greater to a lesser, as though God needs our blessing in some sense. No, this speaks of recognizing His glory, His honor & His goodness, to speak well of Him & to praise Him with worshiping love.

But listen, it goes farther still. All I’ve drawn attention to is the inherent goodness/worthiness of God. That alone is enough to invoke our praise. However, Paul wants us to recognize & *respond* to God (blessing God) due to the fact that He’s *already* blessed us!

<sup>1</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Job 1:20-22]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

He's in essence saying, "Bless Him who has already *blessed* us" he's speaking here of the reasonable response to the goodness of God that's already been poured out in unfathomable abundance in our lives. In other words; we're to *do* something in response to the fact that God has already *done* something. *Family, that's always the way it is. Our relationship to God is always a matter of Divine initiative & human responsibility. God always initiates, we always respond. We love Him because He 1<sup>st</sup> loved us, we're to bless Him because He's already blessed us (notice) "...w/every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."*

There's not a thing lacking, you're rich beyond your wildest dreams in Christ. You have every resource available, God's held nothing back from you that would enable you to live a fruitful life for His glory in His Son.

*However; let's be careful to keep the context concerning the resources that God has availed to us in Christ. When I say, "You're rich beyond your wildest dreams in Christ." What does your mind gravitate toward? Material things? Money? Things that are physical? That's not what the bible teaches at all... As a matter of fact, the bible warns *against* perceiving & using godliness as a means of material gain. Paul described such men to Timothy (1 Tim 6) as men of corrupt minds, destitute of the truth & exhorted him to w/draw from such men.*

*So let's not be confused. We don't read that we've been blessed w/every "conceivable" blessing, or every "physical" blessing. God has blessed us w/every *spiritual* blessing (in the heavenlies) in Christ. So we're talking here about the blessings available to you in Christ through the work of the Spirit in your life.*

There was a woman by the name of Hetty Green who died in 1916 who was called America's greatest miser. When she died, she left an estate valued at \$100 million (a vast fortune for that day). Yet she would eat cold oatmeal so she could save the expense of heating the water. Her son received a severe leg injury but she took so long trying to find a free clinic to treat him that his leg had to be amputated due to advanced infection. Listen, she had *access* to enormous wealth, but she refused to *appropriate* (or take advantage of) that wealth. The result was a life of misery though none of it was necessary...

*Some Christians are that way. They have *access* to enormous resources *in* Christ, benefits & blessings that would enable them to live fruitfully/effectively *for* Christ, but they never appropriate them (take advantage of them) therefore they live miserable Christian lives...*

In these 1<sup>st</sup> 3 Ch's Paul wants us to learn what's *available* to us *in* Christ so that we might (Ch's 4-6) live *appropriately for* Christ.

You might take the time later to read through these 1<sup>st</sup> 3 Ch's & highlight or underline every time you see the words "in Christ" or "in Him" or "through Him" or "by Him". All that God has availed to you in Christ Jesus. Every spiritual blessing.

Btw we should say that spiritual blessings & much rather to be desired than physical blessings. Amen? A new heart is much better than a new house. The bread of life far outweighs any earthly meal. To be an heir of God shouldn't even be compared w/any inheritance in this world... The material things of this world will pass away, the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places are forever...

& God has held nothing back. He has blessed you w/*every* spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. To the Colossians Paul said that like this, "*and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.*"<sup>2</sup> Complete, lacking nothing, there's not a single short coming in Christ. Peter said it like this, "*... His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*"<sup>3</sup>

So... God the Father is the *source* of blessing (the Fountain Head if you will). The *scope* of blessing is *every* spiritual blessing, all of them, nothing held back. The *sphere* of the blessings is "in the heavenlies *in Christ*." Understand (ladies & gentlemen) that God has *more for you than you could possibly imagine*. But He has *nothing* for you outside of Christ. Every blessing that comes from God will be given to you only *in* Christ. If you've not given your life *to* Christ, you're not *in* Christ. By your natural birth you're in Adam, to be in Christ you've got to be "born again" as by the Spirit of God. (You need to believe on the Lord J.C. )

Now; once you're *in* Christ, they're yours. You don't really need to ask for them so much as you need to access them. Even as when God gave the Promised Land to Israel, they didn't really need to ask for it (He'd already given it), they needed to enter into & enjoy God's provision by faith. So to w/*this*. & It's the spiritual blessings that enable & empower you to live a fruitful earthly life.

<sup>2</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Col 2:10]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>3</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). [2 Pe 1:3-4]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

## Vs 3-4

Oh man, dilemmas for days right? People so often struggle w/the “doctrine of election.” (The fact that God has chosen some & has not chosen others.) Now I should just say that at Calvary Chapel we’re not Calvinists, we’re not Armenianists, we’re “bibleists”☺. I feel no need to reconcile what God has said w/human rationale, I won’t defend God’s word, but I will declare God’s word. The truth is that the bible demonstrates the responsibility of the freewill of man, & the sovereignty of the will of God.

Like a set of train tracks running side by side, both in effect running parallel to one another if the train is to operate efficiently. Where is the balance between freewill & God’s sovereignty? I don’t know. I just know both are true.

I find it interesting that man appreciates the attribute of freewill (the ability to choose who *they* want to be with) but they want to deny God that same privilege. But listen, don’t let God’s choosing frustrate you, be blessed, He’s chosen you! **The bible makes it clear in no uncertain terms that the work of salvation (from beginning to end) is entirely of God & has nothing to do w/us (outside of the fact that we’re the ones in need).**

He chose us... The bible demonstrates the fact that there are none who seek after God, God is the One who seeks after us. Jesus said, **“...for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”**<sup>4</sup> He said, **“You did not choose Me, but I chose you,”**<sup>5</sup> Of course for Paul that played out in dramatic fashion didn’t it? He was on a mission to destroy anything/everything that had to do w/Jesus, but Jesus chose to confront him, to convict him & to save him (Acts 9). & This is the beauty of election, not that we should choose God, but that God should choose us!

& That’s why Paul is bringing this up, not to stir confusion, but to encourage confidence. Your salvation wasn’t an afterthought. God wasn’t just hanging out in heaven & one day He noticed you & by some good thing He saw in you He decided to save you... Not at all! You didn’t draw Him, He drew you! He chose you (notice) *before the foundation of the world!*

But let me just say this. Though the bible does teach that God elects for salvation. It nowhere even indicates that He’s chosen *anyone* for condemnation. To the contrary, for God so loved *the world* (Jn 3:16). The bible declares that God’s not willing that *any* should perish, it’s His heart that *all* would come to repentance.

<sup>4</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Lk 19:10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>5</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jn 15:16). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Jesus made it clear (Jn 6:37) that *anyone* can come to Him & He will cast no one who comes to Him out...

So how then does God determine whom He will choose? I can only tell you 2 things. #1 His reason don't lie in us they lie in Him. Again it wasn't some awesome quality in me that caused God to save me. He chose me before the world ever was. Vs 5 tells us that it was according to the good pleasure of His will. So it's not about my goodness, it's about His grace. Paul told Timothy that God, *"...has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,"*<sup>6</sup>

#2 God's election is intricately tied into God's foreknowledge. Peter in speaking on this topic said, *"elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ:"*<sup>7</sup>

So the reasons for election lie in Him, not in us, as for how He determines whom He will elect it's tied in someway to His foreknowledge. God knows who will respond to Him, you can't fault God for that. He knew that when He called you, you'd respond, so He chose you. *"I'm not saved does that mean God didn't choose me?"* Give your life to J.C. (you're free to do so) & you'll discover God has chosen you as well... Again, the bible teaches both the responsibility of man & the sovereignty of God. We'll let God worry about reconciling to the 2, we'll just teach the word.

Now as for the purpose of His election? *"That we should be holy & w/out blame before Him in love."* & He hasn't left you to figure out how to be holy & w/out blame, He's blessed you w/every spiritual resource to do so.

One false charge against the doctrine of election is, "If we're chosen, then we can do what we want, live how we want." That's not true at all. How can he who died to sin live any longer in it? God has a plan a purpose for which He's chosen you & it's that you should be holy & w/out blame before Him in love. The purpose of election is *sanctification*. Election promotes & demands holiness in our lives.

This is why the bible exhorts us to make our calling & election *sure*. Listen, if you're living like the world, odds are you're not *in* Christ. Jesus doesn't save us *in* our sin, He saves us *from* our sin. Holiness is the telltale evidence of election. Make sense?

We're to be set apart *to* Him & blameless (or w/out reproach) *before* Him (in His sight).

<sup>6</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (2 Ti 1:9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>7</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (1 Pe 1:2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.



It's interesting that word, "blameless" literally means "w/out blemish" it was used of the type of sacrifice that could be offered to God. Only those bulls/goats/lambs w/out blemish were acceptable before God.

What does the bible say? *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."*<sup>8</sup> Holy, w/out blame before Him in love.

Let's not leave out the words, "in love". Some folks seem to have the holiness/blamelessness down, but they're radically lacking in the "love" department which results in spiritual snobbery & pride. Holiness/blamelessness amount to nothing apart from love (1 Cor 13).

### Vs 5

In brief, God's plan for us not only includes salvation and personal transformation, but also a warm, loving secure relationship with the Father. God didn't have to make us family to save us, but He did. He's made us joint heirs w/Christ. We've been brought in (& born in) to the family of God through faith in Christ. & It's all been done according to *the good pleasure* of His will. Jesus said that like this, *"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."*<sup>9</sup> Notice...

### Vs 6

Here we discover the ultimate goal of God's election. It's to the praise of the glory of His grace. Or another way to understand that? God's election of me doesn't highlight some great quality in me (like I'm so cool), it magnifies the *grace* that's in Him! You & me, we are trophies of the grace of God!

You have been "highly favored" by God through His grace to magnify His grace & bring glory to Him. That's what the word "accepted" means here in Vs 6. Used only 1 other time in the N.T. when the angel told Mary she was "highly favored" before God. Accepted, full of grace. That's your position in Christ, highly favored, graced of God... in the Beloved (the Person of His Son).

God has Elected you, adopted you & accepted you (favored you) in Christ Jesus that you should be holy & w/out blame before Him in love to the praise of the glory of His grace.

<sup>8</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ro 12:1-2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>9</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Lk 12:32). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Let's leave the book of Eph, winding down, wrapping up in **1 Corinthians 1** (Vs 26-31).

### **Prayer Points:**

God we are overwhelmed & overjoyed when we consider Your love for us, the favor that You have so generously bestowed upon us, in Christ. May we not fight against it, but be anchored in it, thankful for it & respond appropriately to it. Strengthen us to lead lives of holiness, w/out blame before you in love, to the praise of the glory of Your grace...

God loves you, Jesus died for you... God's grace is available to you, turn from your sin, trust in Him today for *whoever* calls upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved. You can leave here today a new creation, old things having passed away, being made new in Christ Jesus, surrender your heart to Him today.