

Ephesians 1:1-10 Answers The Blessing of Election & Predestination

******What purpose does 1:1-2 serve?** It is introductory paragraph that tells who wrote the letter and to whom it was written. It also expresses a greeting or blessing.

How did Paul describe himself in 1:1a? Paul identified himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.

What is an apostle (1:1a)? The Greek word is *apostolos* and was simply transliterated letter for letter from Greek into English. In a sense it remains an untranslated word.

If we did translate it, what English word(s) would best represent *apostolos*? It carries the idea of delegate, envoy, or messenger (BAGD, p. 99). Most churches support missionaries, yet the word missionary is found nowhere in the English Bible. The existence of missionaries and their support is derived from the New Testament existence of apostles.

Why might the translators have preferred to use the word apostle here rather than missionary (1:1a)? The New Testament sometimes uses the word *apostolos* to refer to the Twelve disciples, a highly honored group of believers who were handpicked and hand trained by Jesus Himself in person. It was the Twelve (including Paul) who wrote most of the letters of the New Testament that the church now considers to be inspired. It was the Twelve who set the standard for doctrine and practice.

In New Testament times there were two types of apostles, what we might artificially call “big A” Apostles and “small a” apostles. The “big A” Apostles (like Paul) were sent out by Jesus. The “little a” apostles (like Timothy or modern missionaries) were sent out by the Holy Spirit. The big A Apostles wrote Scripture. The little a apostles read Scripture. The big A Apostles set the standard for doctrine and practice. The little a apostles taught the doctrine and lived by the standard.

Thus, to save confusion over the different types of apostles (big A versus little a), the translators may have preferred to keep *apostolos* untranslated to better designate the Twelve as a special category of missionaries that no longer exists.

1. What happened that might have caused Paul to add that he was an apostle “by the will of God” (1:1a)? See *Acts 9, 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, 2 Corinthians 12:1-10, Galatians 1:11-2:10*. One did not simply decided to be an apostle; God had to called you to be one. Paul, formerly known as Saul, was never one of the original twelve disciples. Instead, after Jesus’ resurrection, he began to persecute the church. While on the road to Damascus to persecute the church there, Jesus supernaturally appeared to Saul in a blinding light and called him to be an apostle. Paul spent many subsequent years in Arabia being taught by Jesus (something Jesus did with the twelve disciples during His three years of ministry; *Fausset’s Bible Dictionary*, entry 2763).

The letter we are about to study was written by someone who had been hand chosen and personally trained by Jesus to be His representative. Paul had authority from Jesus, and this authority was not derived from *who* he was, but *whose* he was.

How did Paul describe the recipients of this letter (1:1b)? They were described as 1.) saints who were 2.) in Ephesus and who were 3.) faithful in Christ Jesus.

Are you a saint? (Let's see a show of hands). Positionally you are a saint, even if not always practically!

What does the word saint mean (1:1b)? It is from *hagios*, which fundamentally means "holy". The word holy (*halig*) is old English; the Latin equivalent is *sanctus*, from which "saint" is obviously derived (www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=holy). In Christ, any Christian is a saint, a holy one, because of our relationship to Jesus. We are also all called to be holy.

In what modern country is Ephesus located (1:1b)? Its ruins are in modern Turkey. Originally a port city, the harbor later silted over and the city was abandoned. In Paul's day was famous for a temple to Artemis that was there, which was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. After his departure, Paul later stationed his assistant Timothy in Ephesus (**1Tim 1:3**). Ephesus was also one of the churches that received instructions from Jesus in the book of Revelation (**Re 2:1-11**).

Note: Some manuscripts omit "in Ephesus"; it is possible that this was a circular letter.

2. What was Paul's relationship to the church in Ephesus (1:1-2)? See *Acts 19*. The church in Ephesus had been founded by Paul himself, who then remained on in Ephesus for two years making disciples (this is where he rented the lecture hall of Tyrannus). It is thought that Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesian saints while he was under house arrest in Rome (in the A.D. 60s).

What is the link between being a saint and being "faithful in Christ Jesus" (1:1b)? Along with the word saint, this describes any true Christian: someone who has faith in Jesus and is faithful to Jesus. The Greek for faithful can also simply mean believers (in Christ).

What short greeting did Paul give them in 1:2?

In Star Wars it was, "May the Force be with you." Here it is, "Grace to you and peace". **What does it mean to wish, "Grace to you and peace" (1:2)?** Often in English when we greet someone we say, "Hi, how are you?" We don't really want an answer. This greeting by Paul, however, was more than a mindless utterance. He really did want them to experience grace and peace in their daily lives.

Grace always comes before peace. If you have not experienced God's grace you'll never know his peace. In his commentary on Ephesians William Hendriksen said peace is the smile of God (p. 71). Formerly we were God's enemies (Ro 5:10).

******How has God blessed us that in turn caused Paul to bless God (1:3-10)?** Paul began this section by blessing God because God has blessed us with spiritual blessings in Christ (1:3), chose us to be holy and blameless (1:4), predestined us for adoption (1:5), blessed us with grace (1:6), redeemed us (1:7) and make known the mystery of His will (1:9).

No Periods? It has been said that 1:3-14 is, in the Greek, a single, amazingly long sentence. However, punctuation marks were not used in Greek writing until several hundred years after Christ. The reason there were no periods is simply because the Greeks at that time did not use punctuation marks (<http://greek-language.com/grklinguist/?p=657>)! Single sentence or not, 1:3-14 is an amazing passage.

God truly deserves our blessing! The Greek for “blessed” (1:3) is *eulogétos* which literally means “good words”. Enough good words cannot be said about what God has done for us in Christ.

Now, let’s go back and take the first part (1:3-10) of this amazing blessing apart (1:3-14).

3. What does it mean to have spiritual blessing in heavenly places (1:3)? See *Matthew 6:19-20*. Heaven is the Christian’s future eternal home. God has blessed us with “every” spiritual blessing we will need for life in heaven.

ESV **Matthew 6:19-20** Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

7. Theologians talk about the doctrine of divine election. God has elected (chose) certain people before they were ever born. **Based on 1:4, what was the purpose for which God chose us?** God chose us to be holy and blameless. The doctrine of election is not some abstract theory with no real world application. Those God has chosen were chosen for the purpose of being holy and blameless.

Jesus: Verse 3 states that God blessed us in Christ and then verse 4 states that God chose us in Christ (“in him”). Christ is intimately connected with every aspect of our election. Grammatically, it reads as if we were *already* in Christ when God chose us to be holy and blameless. Paul could have meant that we were chosen *to be* in Christ. Alternatively, he could have meant that God chose us *through* Christ. You can’t separate Jesus from the process.

5. According to 1:4, when did this choosing (election) take place? See *Romans 9:10-12*. God’s choosing of us took place before the foundation of the world, in eternity past.

ESV **Romans 9:10-12** . . . when Rebecca had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad - in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of his call - she was told, "The older will serve the younger."

Summary: Election happened in Christ, in eternity past, so that we would be holy and blameless.

6. A word that commonly goes along with election (being chosen) is predestination.

According to 1:4b-6, why did God predestine us? (Note: The sentence starts in 1:4b with "In love"). God predestined us to be adopted as His Sons to the praise of His grace.

The first part of verse 4 states that we were chosen in Christ. According to the last part of verse 4, in what were we predestined? We were predestined "in love" (*agapé*, 1:4b).

Write on Board: Chosen in Christ, Predestined in love.

7. Why is it significant that we were predestined "in love" (1:4b)? It is common for people to rail against the doctrine of predestination. Election and predestination are seen as negative doctrines wherein an almost hateful and miserly God grudgingly ekes out salvation to a very few people. In contrast, the Scripture clearly states that our predestination was based in God's love (not hate) and that He has lavished blessings and grace upon us. The doctrine of election is not something to be afraid of; it is the fruit of God's amazing love.

Note: Since there were no punctuation marks in the Greek, it is possible that "in love" goes with the previous information.

8. What does the word predestined mean (1:5)? If you call a travel agent, you will be asked, "What is your destination?" Your destination is where you are headed. The prefix pre means before. Thus, predestination means your destination was determined in advance.

According to 1:5, what is the destination of those God predestined? Their destiny is to be adopted as God's sons.

9. What does it mean to be adopted as God's sons (1:5)? To be adopted into God's family is the same as being saved or born again. It is to become one of God's people. The purpose of predestination is clearly salvific.

Sum: We were chosen unto holiness and predestined unto salvation.

Prepositions: Paul wrote that we were predestined "in" love "for" adoption "through" what (1:5)? It was "through" Jesus Christ. Jesus is an integral part of the equation. We were blessed in Christ (1:3), chosen in Christ (1:4) and predestined through Christ (1:5).

10. Based on 1:5, whose will determines who gets predestined? See *Romans 9:15-19*. The whole process was "according to the purpose of his (God's) will".

ESV Romans 9:15-16 For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.

- 11. Based on 1:6, once you have a proper understanding of predestination, what should it cause you to do?** A correct understanding of it should cause us to praise God's glorious grace. A proper view of predestination will not bewilder you, it will bless you ("he has blessed us in the beloved").
- 12. In the ESV, 1:7-10 is one very long sentence. According to 1:7-10, what is the mystery of God's will?** See also 1:20-23 & *Philippians 2:10*. The mystery of God's will is the uniting in Christ of the things on earth with the things in heaven (more on this later in **1:20-23**). Part of this uniting involves those in Christ having redemption and forgiveness.
- 13. What is redemption (1:7)?** The Greek word is *apolutrosis*, which means "a release effected by the payment of a ransom". In the old days soda pop bottles could be redeemed; the bottler could pay you money in exchange for the bottle. If you redeem a coupon, the manufacturer will pay you money for the coupon (if you buy their product). So it means to recover ownership by paying a specified sum. It means to set free or to rescue or to ransom.
- 14. Based on 1:7, what ransom price was paid for our redemption?** Our redemption came through the blood of Christ; that was the price paid. Nothing we can do would ever buy our own redemption. Only the blood of Christ will suffice.

Based on 1:7, from what were we redeemed (1:7)? We were redeemed and forgiven from the penalty of our trespasses.

Word Study: "forgiven" (1:7) is from *aphesis* which was used in the Septuagint with reference to the scapegoat that was "send away" (Le 16:21). The idea is to be released from captivity or that have an obligation cancelled (BAGD, p. 125).

- 15. How might sin be defined, based on 1:7?** To sin is to trespass against God. God has moral standards and we have violated those laws. **Note:** The Greek here is *paraptoma*, "a false step". It is any deviation from the standard or norm.
- 16. Our redemption is according to the riches of God's lavish grace (1:7-8a). What is grace?** See ahead to 2:8. The Greek is *charis* and means undeserved favor or kindness. Grace is when you get something good that you do not deserve.

ESV Ephesians 2:8 . . . by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God . . .

Word Study: "riches" (1:7) is from *ploutos* (basis for plutocrat). Pluto was the Roman god of the underworld; Ploutos was the Greek god of wealth. The two were conflated because wealth often comes from underground [silver, gold, etc.; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pluto_\(mythology\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pluto_(mythology))].

It is stated in 1:8 that God "lavished" His grace upon us. What does that imply about our own role in the salvation process? Salvation is truly of the Lord. It does not depend on our actions since we are totally incapable of earning a right relationship with God. Because we are so powerless, God has "lavished" His grace on us, redeeming us through the blood of Jesus.

17. What is the solution to the mystery (1:8-10)? See *Romans 8:20-23*. The revealed secret is the uniting of all things in Christ (things in heaven with things on earth). This idea of cosmic reconciliation will be developed further in the letter.

Universalism ~ Not: Some persons make take 1:9 and force into it the notion that everyone who ever lived will go to heaven. If this were the only text on the subject then such a thing might be a possibility, but other texts make it clear that not everybody who talks about heaven is going there. Whatever this universal reconciliation is, it does not extend to unbelievers and fallen angels. It is significant that this reconciliation is only "in Christ" (1:9).

Note: Romans 8 mentions a future release of the created order from its bondage to decay. Also, Philippians refers to a time when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord.

So What?

18. What is the difference between a sinner and a saint (1:1)? Jesus makes the difference!

19. For what purposes did God chose us (1:4)? He chose us to be holy and blameless.

20. To what ends were we predestined (1:5, 6)? We were predestined to adoption as sons to the praise of His glorious grace.

21. What determined who got predestined (1:5)? It was according to God's purpose.

22. What is the mystery of God's will (1:9)? God's plan is to unite all things in Christ.

**** = ask this question before reading the text aloud. This is put people's minds in gear and them something to look for as the text is read. It causes focus.

- These lessons are designed for a 45 minute session and are based on the ESV.

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