

EPHESIANS

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CLINTON E. ARNOLD

CLINTON E. ARNOLD
General Editor



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Ephesians 1:3 – 14

Literary Context

Paul begins his letter with an introductory eulogy or *berakah*, that is, an ascription of praise to God for who he is and what he has done. Second Corinthians is the only other letter that he begins this way (2 Cor 1:3–7), following a pattern of blessing God that is very Jewish in style. A fellow Jewish writer, the apostle Peter, also begins his first letter with an introductory blessing (1 Pet 1:3–9), where he praises God for his marvelous plan of salvation. Similar worshipful expressions of praise to God can be seen, for example, in Zechariah’s hymn of praise to God (Luke 1:67–79), various expressions of thankfulness to God for his deliverance in the OT (e.g., Gen 14:20; 24:27), a conclusion to hymns of praise to God in the book of Psalms (e.g., Pss 41:13; 72:18–19), and in the language of worship at Qumran (e.g., 1QS 11:15; 1QH 13:20ff.; 18:14ff.; 19:27–35).

Paul’s blessing of God is unusually long—one sentence containing 202 words. He does this by using 32 prepositional phrases, 21 genitive expressions (not counting genitives connected to a preposition), 6 relative clauses, and 5 adverbial participle clauses. Paul weaves this together into a beautiful, artistic, and smooth-flowing declaration of praise to God for his indescribable work on our behalf. It is expressed with emotion and is designed to profoundly move all who hear it or read it.

Because of the poetic qualities of this passage, some interpreters have wondered if Paul has included and modified a hymn from the worship and liturgy of the early church.¹ The vast majority of scholars, however, doubt this supposition not only because of the highly speculative nature of such a conclusion, but also because the passage functions so well as an introduction to many of the themes that Paul will develop in the letter. These include themes such as the meaning of incorporation into Christ, the role of the Holy Spirit, love, grace, the meaning of redemption, salvation, the sovereign plan of God, the mystery, the power of God, the spiritual

1. E.g., Gottfried Schille, *Frühchristliche Hymnen* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsgesellschaft, 1965), 65–73.

realm (i.e., “the heavenlies”), and Christ’s lordship over spiritual powers. Paul has skillfully created this eulogy to honor his God and to introduce what he will address in a worshipful way.

Ironically, some interpreters point to the grammatical and rhetorical features of this passage as a further indication that Paul did not write this letter. While their arguments are not persuasive, the net result simply demeans Paul’s ability to express himself in a Jewish fashion in praise of the God who has saved him and commissioned him with the task of taking the marvelous good news of his plan of salvation to the Gentiles. This introductory *berakah* is tribute to Paul’s desire to honor the glory of God and to his skill and versatility as a writer.

I. Introduction to the Letter (1:1 – 2)	
➔ II. Praise to God for His Remarkable Plan of Redemption (1:3 – 14)	
A. Praise to God! (A Summary of the Section) (1:3)	
B. Because He Chose and Predestined Us (1:4 – 6)	
C. Because He Forgave Our Sins and Revealed His Plan to Us (1:7 – 10)	
D. Because He Chose and Predestined Us (1:11 – 12)	
E. Because He Sealed Us with His Spirit (1:13 – 14)	
III. A Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession (1:15 – 23)	
A. The Occasion for the Prayer (1:15)	
B. The Thanksgiving and Prayer (1:16 – 19)	
C. A Description of the Magnitude of God’s Power (1:20 – 23)	

Main Idea

Paul has carefully crafted a heartfelt expression of praise to God for his extraordinary plan of salvation, which he sees as a manifestation of his glory and grace. God imparts abundant blessings through the Spirit to all who are connected to Jesus Christ in a dynamic, personal relationship. Before he created the world, God lovingly chose a people for himself and devised a way of freeing them from their enslavement to sin. One day God will bring all of his rebellious creation under the reign of Jesus Christ.

Translation

Ephesians 1:3–14

- 3a Exclamation of Praise
 b basis
 c content
 d location
 e sphere
- Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!**
 who blessed us
 with every spiritual blessing
 in the heavenly places
 in Christ.
- 4a Basis for the Praise
 b relationship
 c time
 d purpose
- 5a Explanation
 b agency
 c advantage
 d basis
 6a ultimate purpose
 b description
- Because
he chose us
 in him
 before the foundation of the world
 so that we would be holy and blameless in his presence.
 In love he predestined us to adoption
 through Jesus Christ
 to himself
 on the basis of the good pleasure of his will
 to the praise of his glorious grace
 which he graced us with in the beloved.
- 7a Basis for the Praise
 b expansion
 c basis
 8a
- In him we have** **the redemption through his blood,**
 the forgiveness of our offenses,
 on the basis of the abundance of his grace,
 which he poured out on us
 in all wisdom and insight
 when he revealed to us the mystery of his will
 on the basis of his good pleasure
 which he designed with Christ
 as a plan for the fullness of times
- 9a assertion/temporal
 b basis
 c description
 10a temporal

- b purpose to bring everything under the headship of Christ, everything in heaven and everything on earth, in Christ.
- c
- d
- 11a **In him also we were chosen,** having been predestined on the basis of the plan of the one who powerfully works everything out on the basis of the counsel of his will
- b
- c
- d that we might exist to the praise of his glory those who have placed their hope firmly in Christ.
- 12a
- b
- 13a In him also when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in him also when you believed, **you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,** who is a deposit on our inheritance until the redemption of [God's] possession, to the praise of his glory!
- b
- c
- 14a Basis for the Praise description temporal ultimate purpose
- b
- c

Structure

A wide variety of opinions have been shared about the structure of this passage. Those who think the passage is hymnic have suggested three or four strophes to the text. Others have tried to organize the passage around the three expressions of praise (“to the praise of . . .), the use of “in him,” or the use of the participles. A variety of proposals have also been put forward organizing the passage chiasmically. The one thing that has not emerged in the discussion is a consensus on how the passage is organized. In light of this, it is with a degree of tentativeness that I offer a slightly new perspective on the structure (although it has much in common with aspects of other ideas that have been put forward).

Paul’s exclamation of blessing in v. 3 functions as a summary of the entire passage. Beginning in v. 4, Paul explains the reasons why God is so worthy of praise. The term “because” (καθώς) carries its force throughout the passage, which gives the ground and basis for the blessing of God.

The rest of the passage can be divided into four sections. The first (1:4–6) and third (1:11–12) are parallel with one another and give similar reasons for Paul’s praise for God related to his choosing and predestining of his people.

The second, and central, section (1:7–10) focuses on the redemption and forgiveness, flowing out of God’s grace, as a major reason for praise. This is part of a plan that God has designed that will ultimately lead to a time in the future when God will consummate all of history by bringing it under the reign of Christ. This central section differs from the others in that Paul uses a present indicative verb (“we have”; ἔχομεν) to emphasize the present blessings of believers. It ties in with the previous section by taking up the theme of grace, but here presenting it as the basis for the redemption. An additional manifestation of this grace is the revelation of the mystery of his will (1:9a). This aorist participle (“he revealed”; γνωρίσας) is dependent on and explanatory of the immediately preceding verb (“he poured out”; ἐπερίσσευσεν) rather than introducing an entirely new section.

The fourth and final section (1:13–14) of the passage represents an application of these great truths to the readers. This transition is signaled by the shift of persons from “we” to “you.”

The parallelism between the first and third sections can be more clearly seen by displaying the parallel members in the following fashion:

1:4–6

He chose us in Christ
He predestined us
on the basis of his will
... to the praise of his glorious grace
in Christ.

1:11–12

He chose us in Christ
He predestined us
on the basis of his will
... to the praise of his glory
in Christ.

Paul ends both of these parallel sections with the refrain “to the praise of . . .” (εἰς ἔπαινον . . .) and then concludes his application to the readers with the same exclamation of praise.

This parallel, repetitive structure suggests an emphasis on God’s gracious choosing and predestining of believers in Christ, which he does on the basis of his sovereign plan. But equally there is an emphasis on redemption and the future “bring[ing] everything under the headship of Christ” because it constitutes the central section of the A B A’ structure.

Exegetical Outline

➔ II. Praise to God for His Remarkable Plan of Redemption (1:3 – 14)

A. Praise to God! (A Summary of the Section) (1:3)

B. Because He Chose and Predestined Us (1:4 – 6)

1. He chose us to be holy (1:4)
2. He predestined us to belong to him (1:5 – 6)

C. Because He Forgave Our Sins and Revealed His Plan to Us (1:7 – 10)

1. He redeemed us and forgave us (1:7a-b)
2. He bestowed his grace upon us (1:7c – 8a)
3. He revealed his plan to us (1:8b – 9)
 - a. It is a plan for the consummation of the age (1:10a)
 - b. The plan involves bringing all of creation under the headship of Jesus Christ (1:10b-d)

D. Because He Chose and Predestined Us (1:11 – 12)

E. Because He Sealed Us with His Spirit (1:13 – 14)

Explanation of the Text

1:3a Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! (Εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). Paul begins his letter with an exclamation of praise to God and continues with a threefold refrain of praise throughout this section (1:6, 12, 14). Although there is no verb in the clause, one should assume the presence of the indicative form of “to be” (εἶ), “blessed are you, God,” or possibly the optative or imperative forms (εἴη or ἔστω), “may God be blessed” or “let him be blessed,” respectively. This manner of expression

is Jewish and can be seen throughout the OT and Jewish literature, where the Hebrew term *bārak* is frequently used in these ascriptions of praise, as in the expression, “blessed be the Lord/Yahweh” (*bārûk yhw̄h*; see Pss 28:6 [27:6 in the LXX]; 31:21 [30:22]; 41:13 [40:14]; 119:12 [118:12]; 1 Chr 29:10; 1QS 11:15). In fact, there was a prescribed set of prayers for all Jews to pray every morning, evening, and afternoon called the Eighteen Benedictions, each of which contain the expression, “Blessed are you, Lord.”²

2. On the first-century form of these benedictions, see David Instone-Brewer, *Traditions of the Rabbis from the Era of*

the New Testament; Volume 1: *Prayer and Agriculture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 41 – 119.

What is striking in this *berakah* (or, benediction) from a Jewish point of view is the description of God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul thereby stresses that the God of Israel has a close father-son relationship with Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah of Israel, who has come to bring redemption. This blessing highlights the central function Jesus Christ will play throughout the introductory *berakah* and throughout the entire letter. He will be praised as the principal figure in God's plan for history.

Jesus is also here called "Lord" (κύριος). The central point of the blessing is a celebration of Jesus' lordship when God brings the entire creation under his reign as Lord (1:10).

Paul also begins 2 Corinthians with an introductory *berakah* with exactly the same wording as here (2 Cor 1:3). Strikingly, Peter also begins his first letter in precisely the same way (1 Pet 1:3). This could mean that such an introductory exclamation of blessing was known and used in the worship of the early church.

1:3b-e Who blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (ὁ εὐλογήσας ἡμᾶς ἐν πάσῃ εὐλογίᾳ πνευματικῇ ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν Χριστῷ). The reason Paul gives for blessing God is based on the fact that God has, in fact, blessed all Christians. The attributive adjectival participle (ὁ εὐλογήσας) thus serves to further describe God by introducing three prepositional phrases all beginning with "in/with" (ἐν).

The first continues the emphasis on blessing by using yet another form of that word group (εὐλογία) and asserting that believers have received "every spiritual blessing." The term "spiritual" (πνευματικός) clarifies that the nature of this blessing is associated with the new covenant gift of the Spirit (Ezek 36:27), which is highlighted

at the end of the section (1:13c–14), thus forming an overarching *inclusio* (also called "bracketing"; this is a literary form in which the beginning and end of the passage contain parallel wording or ideas).

What are the blessings that Paul is referring to? With respect to God, his people can offer him words of praise for all that he has done. This meaning of blessing is consistent with its etymology, which means "to speak well" of someone. God blesses his people, however, by choosing them to be his very own and by making this possible by forgiving their evil behavior that has alienated them from him. The entire section, then, unpacks this and clarifies the many ways God has blessed all Christians.

The second phrase indicates the location of the blessings and does so in a way that stresses their nonphysical character. "In the heavenly places" (ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις) should probably be understood as the substantival use of a neuter adjective (τὰ ἐπουράνια) and interpreted metaphorically as "the spiritual dimension" or "the unseen world of spiritual reality" ("the heavenly realms"; TNIV; NLT; NET).³ This is not to deny that the term has a local sense in which heaven is understood as a literal place in the upper part of the cosmos (as in the OT and Judaism). Here, however, Paul seems to be using the term more in the sense of "the heavenlies" as a sphere of spiritual blessings to which believers now have access as well as the realm populated by evil spiritual powers. Thus, the term might be best understood as "the spiritual realm."

Paul may have chosen this term to provide an implicit contrast with "earthly things" (τὰ ἐπίγεια; 1 Cor 15:40; Phil 3:19; John 3:12) and takes the reader's focus off of such things as land, power,

3. So also, Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 168–70; Schnackenburg, *Ephesians*, 51; Robinson, *Ephesians*, 20–21.

and wealth. It does not mean, however, that there is no connection between blessings in the heavenly dimension and earthly life. Paul stresses this connection in the second half of the letter, where the spiritual blessings transform how one interacts with members of the household and church body, how one behaves, and how one develops the proper perspective on possessions.

There does not appear to be any particular emphasis by the use of the compound form of the word (prefixed with the preposition ἐπί). Paul seems to use both forms of the word “heaven” interchangeably in the letter.⁴ Both (οὐρανός and ἐπουράνιος) are a place not only where God dwells (cf. 6:9 with 1:3), but where spiritual powers can be found (cf. 1:10 and 3:15 with 6:12), although in 4:10, Paul says that God dwells “high above all the heavens.”

Paul finalizes his preview of 1:4 – 14 by stating that all of these blessings are found “in Christ” (ἐν Χριστῷ). Although the preposition can have an instrumental sense (“by means of”) and some have taken it in that way here,⁵ it is best to interpret it in its local sense to refer to the incorporation of believers in Christ. The resultant meaning is that God has blessed his people by virtue of their union with Christ. Whereas once they belonged to Adam, participating in his sin and sentence of death, those who have exercised faith in the Redeemer are now joined to Christ and participate in his death, resurrection, and new life. This use of the dative case could additionally have the sense of “sphere,” that is, referring to the new life as lived in the realm of and under the influence and leadership of Christ.

“In Christ” is the most important phrase of this passage and for the letter as a whole. Some

form of it (“in him,” “in the beloved,” or “in the Christ”) punctuates this passage eleven times. The key for understanding this letter is recognizing that believers have a new identity in Christ. A new self-understanding based on a new reality permeates every aspect of life and transforms individuals.

1:4a-c Because he chose us in him before the foundation of the world (καθὼς ἐξελέξατο ἡμᾶς ἐν αὐτῷ πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου). Throughout the remainder of this passage (1:4 – 14), Paul gives a series of reasons why God is so worthy to be praised. The first refers to God’s choosing of his people in eternity past.

The conjunction he uses to introduce this (καθὼς) is often interpreted as a comparative adverb, its most common function: “just as he chose us . . .” (NASB; NRSV) or “even as he chose us . . .” (ESV). But it makes better contextual sense to take it as a causal conjunction (so the TNIV and NIV, which translate with “for”) and see it as giving the basis for the praise.⁶ The force of this “because” carries throughout 1:4 – 14 with the rest of the passage providing important reasons why God is so worthy of blessing and praise.

The principal reason for the praise is that “he [God] chose us” (ἐξελέξατο). This term was commonly used in the LXX for God’s choice of individuals: He chose Abraham (Neh 9:7), Aaron (Ps 105:26 [104:26]), Moses (Sirach 45:4), David (1 Kings 11:34; Ps 78:70 [77:70]), and Eli’s father (1 Sam 2:28). Most importantly, he chose Jacob/Israel (Isa 41:8; 44:1 – 2) to set his love upon him and his descendants (Deut 7:7; 10:15) and for Jacob to be his own special possession (14:2). The verb is also used to speak of God’s choosing Christ. When

4. A. T. Lincoln, “A Re-Examination of ‘the Heavens’ in Ephesians,” *NTS* 19 (1972): 478 – 79.

5. J. A. Allan, “The ‘In Christ’ Formula in Ephesians,” *NTS* 5 (1958 – 59): 54 – 62.

6. This is the interpretation of the word in BDAG, s.v., and preferred by BDF §343 (2); so also, O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 98; Best, *Ephesians*, 119.

God spoke from the cloud at the scene of the transfiguration, he said, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him” (Luke 9:35). The latter case, of course, does not mean that God has chosen Christ to experience redemption and the forgiveness of sins as is in view for the elect here, but that he chose Christ to fulfill a particular and indispensable role for securing salvation.

The usage of the verb suggests that God chooses individuals and together they comprise the group (“us”; ἡμᾶς).⁷ Throughout this letter there is an oscillation between the individual and the group. In the ethical exhortation of chapters 4–6, Paul addresses the group (“you”; second person plural), but implicit with each admonition is the personal responsibility of each individual member of the group. Thus, when he admonishes them to “speak truth” (4:25), “be kind” (4:32) or “walk in love” (5:2) using the second person plural, each individual is expected to receive this as a command directly to him or her and to bring their conduct in line with these virtues. At times, Paul can make this more explicit, such as when he says “speak truth, each one of you” (4:25), but this is for emphasis. An individual application is present with each second person plural exhortation.

Similarly, the election, redemption, and salvation truths of Ephesians 1–2 are stated to be true of the corporate group of believers whom Paul addresses (“we” [Paul and his readers] and “you” [the readers, or sometimes, the Gentile readers]), but there is always implicit an individual application.⁸ To say, then, that “the concept of election

and destining here is corporate”⁹ is correct in what it affirms, but wrong in what it denies. Paul is affirming that his believing readers have been chosen by God, but he is not denying that God has individually chosen them to be in a relationship with himself, as the choice of the verb strongly suggests. Individual election is also necessitated by the metaphor of adoption that he uses two lines later (1:5a). In the Roman world, groups were not adopted by a *paterfamilias*, only individuals.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the Father is forming these individuals into a family; thus, a strong corporate element is retained, but not to the exclusion of the individual.

When Paul says that God chose us “in him” (ἐν αὐτῷ), he is referring to Christ’s participation in God’s act of choosing. Just as Christ was involved with the Father in the creation of the world (“by him all things were created”; Col 1:16; see also John 1:3), so also Christ participated with the Father in choosing people for himself.

Because this sovereign and gracious act took place “before the foundation of the world,” the text therefore implicitly teaches the preexistence of Christ.¹¹ God’s choosing took place in eternity past. John uses the same expression (πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου) to speak of the love of the Father for the Son prior to his creation of the universe (John 17:24). Peter uses it to describe God’s foreknowledge of how he would save the world through his Son (1 Pet 1:20).

The idea of God choosing a people for himself in eternity past is taught elsewhere in the Bible.

7. So Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 176, and O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 99, in contrast to Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 48–49.

8. Eadie, *Ephesians*, 19, noted correctly long ago that “the choice of a multitude is simply the choice of each individual composing it.”

9. Witherington, *Philemon, Colossians, and Ephesians*, 234. See also Carey C. Newman, “Election and Predestina-

tion in Ephesians 1:4–6a: An Exegetical-Theological Study of the Historical, Christological Realization of God’s Purpose,” *RevExp* 93 (1996): 237–47.

10. So also Trevor J. Burke, *Adopted into God’s Family: Exploring a Pauline Metaphor* (NSBT; Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 75, notes, “God elected individuals to adoption.”

11. Gordon Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 344–45.

The psalmist prays that God will “remember the people you purchased long ago (ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς)” (Ps 74:2 TNIV [73:2 LXX]). The Greek prepositional phrase could be rendered, “from the beginning of time”; the corresponding Hebrew expression (*qedem*) is best rendered, “from prehistoric times.”¹²

A variety of Jewish texts also speak of God’s choosing his people before creation. *Joseph and Asenath* 8:9, for instance, speaks of Israel as “your people whom you have chosen before all (things) came into being.”¹³ The idea of God’s choosing people in a pretemporal period may also be present in Rev 13:8, where one reading of the syntax is that the names of believers are written in the book of life before the foundation of the world (ESV [“everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain”]; NLT; NASB; NRSV).¹⁴ The fact that God did his choosing in this pretemporal period strongly underlines his initiative and grace in salvation.

Since Paul is addressing a group of people who already comprise the “us,” he does not address the more theoretical question of people who decline the offer or refuse to put their faith in Christ. Similarly, neither here nor elsewhere in Ephesians does Paul take up the question of whether God rejects those whom he does not choose. As Lincoln notes, the text “provokes absolutely no speculation about the negative side of election, reprobation.”¹⁵

1:4d So that we would be holy and blameless in his presence (εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἁγίους καὶ ἀμώμους

κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ). The infinitive phrase here expresses the purpose or goal of the election. Under the old covenant, God summoned his chosen people to a life of holiness and purity (Lev 11:44). This has not changed under the new covenant (see 1 Pet 1:16). Thus, Paul begins the second half of the letter with the admonition to “walk worthily of the calling to which you were called” (Eph 4:1). The prepositional phrase (κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ), however, suggests that Paul is thinking about that time in the future when all believers will stand before God. This is the idea behind the parallel passage in Colossians, where Paul’s goal in ministry is to present believers holy and blameless “before” God (Col 1:22). It is also suggested by Paul’s statement of Christ’s goal of presenting the church to himself without spot or wrinkle and that she should be “holy and blameless” (Eph 5:27). Although Paul envisions a process of renewal and becoming holy, he also recognizes that based on the work of Christ on the cross, believers have already been bestowed with holiness. He thus refers to believers as “holy ones” nine times in this letter (see 1:1, 15, 18; 2:19; 3:8, 18; 4:12; 5:3; 6:18).

1:5a-c In love he predestined us to adoption through Jesus Christ to himself (ἐν ἀγάπῃ προορίσας ἡμᾶς εἰς υἰοθεσίαν διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς αὐτόν). With this clause, Paul now expands on the idea of God’s choosing us. He expresses this with an aorist participle dependent on the aorist main verb (ἔξελεξατο). This should be interpreted as temporal with the time of the participle, contemporaneous with the main verb.¹⁶ That is, the

12. HALOT, s.v. 5a.

13. For additional texts, especially rabbinic materials, see Otfried Hofius, “‘Erwählt vor Grundlegung der Welt’ (Eph 1,4),” in *Paulusstudien* (WUNT 143; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 234–46.

14. There is a plausible alternative rendering of the clause, however, that would nullify this interpretation of the passage: “whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb

slain from the foundation of the world” (KJV; see also NIV). In this view of the syntax, the pretemporal action of God was not writing people’s names in the Book of Life, but making a plan to sacrifice his Son.

15. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 24.

16. See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 624.

actions of choosing and predestining occur at the same time with no apparent sequence.

Although the verb “predestine” (προορίζω) is popular in theological discussions, it is actually rare in biblical literature, appearing only six times in the NT (twice here) and never in the LXX, Josephus, Philo, the Greek Pseudepigrapha, or the Apostolic Fathers. The etymology and usage of the word suggest that it means “to decide upon beforehand” and, thus, “to predetermine.”¹⁷ Our surest guide to its meaning lies precisely here in the context of Ephesians 1, seen in conjunction with its usage in Rom 8:29 – 30 and 1 Cor 2:7.

God not only chose us to be in Christ, but at the same time he decided to bring us into a relationship with himself that could best be described through the metaphor of adoption. The advancement in thought here is the emphasis placed on a close personal relationship with the Father. We also find out that he made this decision out of a heart of love (ἐν ἀγάπῃ). Some have taken the prepositional phrase with what precedes (e.g., “that we should be holy and without blame before him in love”; KJV; NRSV), but it is more naturally taken with the participle that follows (NIV; ESV; NASB).¹⁸ It precedes the participle in Eph 3:17, where there is no dispute over its placement. This statement then gives an endearing picture of God as one who has chosen people to be in a relationship with himself, contemplating this out of a heart of love. This runs counter to any picture of God where he appears as cold, calculating, or austere in election.

The term for adoption (υἱοθεσία) is common in Greek and Roman law, but it never occurs in the LXX. Furthermore, there are no laws or teaching

in the OT governing the practice of adoption. Consequently, the readers would necessarily think of the legal practice of adoption as practiced under the prevailing Roman societal structure. Under Roman law, an adopted child acquired all of the legal rights of a natural-born child and was released from the control of his natural father. The child also received the adopting parent’s family name and a share in the status of the new family.¹⁹

Nevertheless, given the pervasive influence of OT thought on this passage (and the letter as a whole), Paul also has in mind the concept of adoption that characterized David’s relationship to God. Through Nathan the prophet, God promised to be a father to David and said, “He will be my son” (2 Sam 7:14). Second Temple Judaism looked to this passage as a promise that would also be fulfilled in the future at the time of the restoration, but with an extended application to all God’s people: “And I shall be a father to them, and they will be sons to me. And they will all be called ‘sons of the living God’” (*Jub* 1:24 – 25; see also 4QFlor 1:10 – 12).²⁰ One author accurately notes, “If adoption is about anything it is about belonging, a belonging where God as ‘Father’ occupies centre stage in his ‘family.’”²¹

As the descendant of David who has come and sits on the throne by the Father’s side, Jesus Christ has fulfilled this promise and has been “declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead” (Rom 1:4). “Through Jesus Christ” (διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) and based on their close and vital union with him, believers share in this adoption and truly become children of God (see also Rom 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal 4:5).

God has chosen us and has predestined us to

17. BDAG, s.v.

18. Best, *Ephesians*, 122 – 23; Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 50; Ellicott, *Ephesians*, 19.

19. See “Adoption” in *OCD*², s.v.

20. See J. M. Scott, “Adoption, Sonship,” *DPL*, s.v., and

his complete study *Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of ΥΙΟΘΕΣΙΑ in the Corpus Paulinum* (WUNT 2/48; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992).

21. Burke, *Adopted into God’s Family*, 73.

adoption “to himself” (εἰς αὐτόν). This ties in with love as the basis for his predestinating act and reinforces the idea that he views his people as his own glorious inheritance (Eph 1:18). The final purpose of election is then relational. God is bringing together a people whom he can delight in and enjoy.

Why does Paul choose to elaborate on election and commend this truth to the readers? It could be, as some have suggested, that he is in a more pensive mood with extra time on his hands as he faces the constraints of Roman custody. More likely, he stresses election because it is an important truth that his readers need to hear and reflect on. Paul’s teaching on election will provide comforting and instructive counter-teaching to the fears of readers who formerly embraced astrology, magical practices, and even the worship of the renowned goddess Artemis. Although cultic images of the Ephesian Artemis depict the signs of the zodiac prominently on her chest as a necklace, she provided false hope to those who looked to her to break the inexorable chains of cosmic fate.

Similarly, those who were accustomed to paying a great deal of money to a local magician for a spell to break a bad horoscope or to thwart the impact of astral spirits on their lives would find Paul’s teaching remarkable and moving. Their fate does not rest with capricious and hostile spirit powers populating the heavenly realms. Their fate and their eternity rest in the hands of the one true God, who has chosen them to be in a relationship with him before the hostile spirit beings even came into existence. Their future is secure and blessed because of their election in Christ and their present dynamic relationship to him.

1:5d On the basis of the good pleasure of his will (κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ). The

simplest way Paul could have expressed this would be: “he predestined us on the basis of his will (θέλημα).” The term “good pleasure” (εὐδοκία), however, clarifies that God did not select a people in some austere, dispassionate way. Long ago, John Eadie noted that the term “defines His will as being something more than a mere decree resting on sovereignty.”²² God took great delight in thinking of his future people and being kindly disposed toward them.

Conceptually, the term “good pleasure” (εὐδοκία) is part of the range of vocabulary used by Paul to denote the will of God. The term is actually somewhat rare outside of biblical literature, but is found many times in the LXX and, especially in wisdom literature, refers to the pleasure and delight in one’s heart that forms the basis for decision making and action. The exact prepositional phrase that appears here (κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν) can be found in Sirach 33:13, where it speaks of the creative delight of the potter in molding a vessel. The Hebrew counterparts to both “will” and “good pleasure” occur together in one passage in the Dead Sea Scrolls: “God established his covenant with Israel for ever, revealing to them . . . *the wishes of his will* which man must do in order to live by them” (CD 3.13–16; emphasis mine). By contrast, good works and ritual observances have nothing to do with what God reveals about his electing purposes in Ephesians 1.

The good pleasure of his will, then, is “the basis of” (κατὰ) his election. This preposition is important in this passage, occurring five times (cf. 1:7, 9, and twice in 1:11). It typically indicates the norm or standard by which an action is carried out and is often translated “according to” (so the NASB; ESV; NRSV). A contemporary equivalent would be, “the boy assembled the model according to the

22. Eadie, *Ephesians*, 34. So also W. Schrenk, “εὐδοκέω, εὐδοκίαν,” *TDNT*, 2:746.

instructions.” Here, however, the norm is at the same time the reason for the election.²³ One can also translate, “because of the good pleasure of his will.”

1:6 To the praise of his glorious grace which he graced us with in the beloved (εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ ἧς ἐχαρίτωσεν ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ ἡγαπημένῳ). God’s ultimate purpose in selecting and predestining a people for himself is that it would lead to his own glory.

The prepositional phrase (εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης ... αὐτοῦ) punctuates this passage three times somewhat like a refrain (1:6, 12, 14). Paul leads his readers to the conclusion that the only proper way to respond to the incredible favor and love God shows to his people is by rendering praise to him, magnifying his glory. Just as he began the passage with praise (εὐλογητός; 1:3), he now ends this section with praise (ἔπαινος). This word and its verbal cognate (ἐπαινέω) occur many times in the OT, especially in the book of Psalms, to express the praise of God’s people. The psalmist exclaims, “Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee” (Psalm 63:3 [62:4]; KJV). Of course, the proper response of God’s people goes beyond mere words to living lives transformed by his love as a glorious display of his grace (2:10). God chose us for the purpose of becoming like him in holiness and purity (1:4).

Here, in contrast to the identical phrase in vv. 12 and 14, where the glory of God is praised, he inserts God’s grace (χάρις) into the refrain. The question then surfaces whether Paul is here praising God’s glory or his grace. Grammatically, which of the first two genitives (“grace” or “glory”) should be regarded as the objective genitive to the verbal idea of “praise”? The best explanation is

to regard “grace” as the objective genitive and to take “glory” as an attributed genitive modifying “grace.” In the attributed genitive construction, the head noun functions like an adjective — precisely the opposite of the relationship expressed by the attributive genitive.²⁴ With the multiple stringing of genitives in this first chapter of Ephesians, there are a number of attributed genitives (see 1:17 – 19). In this instance, the grace of God is praised; Paul here extols “the quality of its splendour, its magnificence.”²⁵ Because grace receives further emphasis in the following relative clause (ἧς ἐχαρίτωσεν ἡμᾶς), it is better to see it as the object of praise than the glory of God here. Thus, the first refrain functions as an exclamation of praise to the marvels of God’s grace bestowed on his people.

Paul brings this section to a conclusion by taking his readers back to the beginning: the blessing of his grace is found only in Christ. He describes Christ with an endearing title of affection that was applied to Israel in the Old Testament: “the beloved one” (ὁ ἡγαπημένος; see the LXX of Deut 32:15; 33:5, 26; Isa 44:2). Although this is the only place in the NT where the perfect tense of this participle is applied to Jesus, Paul speaks of Jesus as (lit.) “the Son of his love” in Col 1:13. The gospel writers also use the expression (lit.) “my beloved Son” (Matt 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 3:22; 20:13; see also 2 Pet 1:17).

1:7a-b In him we have the redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our offenses (ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν παραπτωμάτων). The central section (1:7 – 10) of this text emphasizes incorporation into Christ by beginning and ending with “in him” (ἐν ᾧ ... ἐν αὐτῷ), which thus forms an

23. BDAG, s.v.

24. Wallace, *Grammar*, 87 – 88.

25. S. D. F. Salmond, “The Epistle to the Ephesians,”

in *The Expositor’s Greek Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1903; repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 3:253.

inclusio. There is also a noticeable shift of tenses away from the aorist, which Paul used to describe God’s past actions of blessing, to the present tense “we have” (ἔχομεν). This enables Paul to stress the present experience of redemption and forgiveness that believers enjoy through their dynamic relationship to the exalted Lord.

The concept of redemption to describe the work of Christ on the cross for us and our resulting freedom was important to Paul, who included this metaphor in his description of the heart of the gospel in Rom 3:21 – 26, esp. v. 24. It was suggested by Jesus himself, who used it in one of the rare instances that he reflected on the meaning of his impending death during his earthly ministry. In pointing to the cross, Jesus remarked, “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom (λύτρον) for many” (Mark 10:45//Matt 20:28).

Because of the prevalence of slavery in the Roman world (including Ephesus and western Asia Minor), the concept of the payment of a price to secure freedom for a slave was common. The main informing background to Paul’s usage of the term comes from the OT and, particularly, the exodus event. When God raised up a redeemer in Moses, he told him, “Therefore, say to the Israelites: ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem (λυτρώσομαι) you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment’” (Exod 6:6). This was a defining event for Israel, and they were called to remember their redemption from slavery on a continual basis (see Deut 13:6; 15:15; 24:18).

The new covenant people of God have also experienced redemption — a second exodus. Christ has purchased them from the curse of the law (Gal 3:13), and they have been bought with a price (1 Cor 7:21 – 23). That price was his blood (διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ) that he gave on the cross as the

means of securing the redemption (Titus 2:14). He did this by taking their place in receiving the condemnation and punishment due to them because of their transgressions (2 Cor 5:21; see also 1 Pet 2:24). Paul elsewhere expresses this idea of substitution through the use of a preposition meaning “in place of” in connection with the word for the price of redemption: he “gave himself as a ransom (ἀντίλυτρον) for all” (1 Tim 2:6).

The slavery from which God freed his people was the bondage to sin. Thus, this redemption implies “the forgiveness of our offenses” (τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν παραπτωμάτων), which is an accusative expression linked to “redemption” in simple apposition (note that it is not connected with “and” [καί]). It is not entirely surprising that Paul uses “offenses” (παραπτώματα) here instead of “sins” (ἁμαρτίαι) although the parallel passage in Col 1:14 actually uses the word “sins” (ἁμαρτίαι). Paul frequently uses both terms (see, e.g., Rom 4:25; 5:15 – 20), and both can be found in the OT (see, e.g., Ps 19:12 [18:13]; Ezek 3:20; 14:11) to refer to sinful actions, whereas he can also use the term “sin” (ἁμαρτία) to refer to the condition afflicting all of humanity that bends it toward evil.

In the larger context of Ephesians, redemption is not only to be defined in terms of forgiveness. Eph 2:1 – 3 makes it clear that believers now have freedom from the three forces that once held them in bondage and destined them to death, that is, the power of “the age of this world,” “the ruler of the realm of the air,” and the “flesh.” Believers have also been redeemed from “darkness” and the resultant alienation from God (4:18). Ultimately, their experience of redemption exempts them from condemnation on the future day of judgment (4:30).

1:7c – 8a On the basis of the abundance of his grace, which he poured out on us (κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ ἧς ἐπερίσσευσεν εἰς

ἡμᾶς). Paul once again points to the grace of God as the reason for redemption and forgiveness (see 1:6). Here he emphasizes the more than adequate measure of God's grace with an adjective that denotes "riches" and "wealth" (πλοῦτος). It is used in the OT to refer to the riches of King Solomon, which excelled beyond all of the kings of the earth (1 Kings 10:23).

This abundant grace is not only potential, but actual. God has already (aorist indicative) poured it out, or "lavished it," on his people. This grace is sufficiently abundant to cover the sins of all and is adequate for the worst of sinners. Paul says elsewhere, "The law was added so that the trespass (παράπτωμα) might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased (ὑπερεπερίσσευσεν) all the more" (Rom 5:20).

1:8b – 9a In all wisdom and insight when he revealed to us the mystery of his will (ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ φρονήσει γνωρίσας ἡμῖν τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ). The position of the prepositional phrase (ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ φρονήσει) leaves some ambiguity over whether it modifies what precedes (either "grace" or "God poured out his grace") or what follows ("God revealed to us"). It is best to take it with what follows and understand it as the manner in which God revealed his mystery to believers. It is not unusual for a prepositional phrase to precede the verb it modifies, and it may indicate some level of emphasis on the phrase. Paul used this kind of construction earlier when he spoke of predestining us in love (1:4 – 5).

It is also important to observe that words dealing with wisdom are naturally associated with revelation.²⁶ Thus, it is God's wisdom that is in view here, informing how he unfolds his plan of salvation. Similarly, it is God's wisdom that is stressed

in 3:10, when Paul later speaks of the revelation of the mystery. This is the view reflected in a variety of major translations (e.g., TNIV; ESV; NRSV; RSV; NASB).²⁷

The word for "revealed" (γνωρίσας) is an aorist participle dependent on the previous finite verb (ἐπερίσσευσεν). It is best understood as temporal, but used for amplification contemporaneous with the main verb.²⁸ The flow of thought would be: "God lavished his grace upon us when he revealed to us the mystery of his will." The verb "make known" (γνωρίζω) is common in Jewish literature, especially in prophetic contexts, where God provides revelatory insight into his plan for the future (see esp. the Theodotian version of Daniel, where it appears nineteen times with this sense).

The object of God's revelation is "the mystery of his will" (τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ). Although many take the genitive expression as objective,²⁹ this is difficult to see since the head noun ("mystery") is not a verbal idea. It would probably be more accurate to refer to it as a genitive of apposition, which restricts the reader's understanding of the identity of the mystery to the will of God. Logically and contextually, this would not entail the entirety of God's will, but only that portion of it that is currently being revealed.

Since many of the local religions had mystery rites, it was important for Paul to clarify that he was referring to another special kind of mystery. Many of the readers of this letter had perhaps once been initiated into the mystery rites of Artemis, Isis, Cybele, Dionysus, or any of a number of pagan gods. These secret rituals brought the initiates into a deeper connection with the deity that promised the impartation of spiritual power and insight.

26. Best, *Ephesians*, 133.

27. Ibid.; see also Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 52; Eadie, *Ephesians*, 45.

28. Wallace, *Grammar*, 625.

29. E.g., Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 214; Salmond, "Ephesians," 258.

Paul's understanding of mystery, however, should be seen in light of the usage of the word (μυστήριον; Heb. *rāz*) in the book of Daniel, where it is used to describe the hiddenness or secrecy of the redemptive plan of God. This usage stimulated a similar usage in the Dead Sea Scrolls and among a variety of apocalyptic documents.³⁰ In the multiple occurrences of "mystery" in Daniel 2, it is used to refer to the secret plan of God that Nebuchadnezzar had seen in a dream, but only Daniel could explain because God imparted to him revelation to interpret it (see Dan 2:18, 19, 27, 28, 29, 30, 47). This dream was a revelation of God's redemptive plan for the end of the age (ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν; Dan 2:45), when God would raise up his Messiah and establish his kingdom that would last forever.

The apostle Paul uses this term elsewhere in his letters to speak of the advent of Christ and his mission of bringing salvation through his work on the cross (see 1 Cor 2:1, 7; Col 1:26, 27; 2:2; 4:3). While this is the principal content of the mystery, there are several specific applications of this idea. One that will become important later in Ephesians is that Gentiles have been brought in as fellow heirs in the new people of God (Eph 3:3–9). Ernest Best has rightly stressed that "the redemption which it involves was not then some afterthought but part of God's plan from the beginning."³¹

1:9b – 10a On the basis of his good pleasure which he designed with Christ as a plan for the fullness of times (κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν αὐτοῦ ἣν προέθετο ἐν αὐτῷ εἰς οἰκονομίαν τοῦ πληρώματος τῶν καιρῶν). Paul reiterates that the unfolding of God's will in his redemptive plan for

humanity was done on the basis of his "good pleasure" (εὐδοκία). See the discussion of this word at 1:5, where Paul asserts that this delight forms the basis for God's predestining work.

But it would be wrong for us to think of God as devising this plan in isolation. He formed this amazing redemptive plan in close connection and communication with the preexistent Christ. This use of the expression "with Christ" ("in him," ἐν αὐτῷ) thus varies from the other uses in this section (such as in 1:7, 11). Here it does not refer to the sphere of the new life in which believers now live as contrasted with their previous solidarity with Adam, but it speaks of the union and intimacy of the Father and the Son prior to creation. In his preexistence, Christ was not a passive observer of all that the Father was doing, but participated with him in the delight of planning a way to overcome the obstacle that sin presented to the divine-human relationship. Markus Barth thus rightly notes that God did not make his plans "in splendid loneliness,"³² but in close connection with the preexistent Christ.

Before he made the heavens and the earth, God developed a long-range plan for humanity, taking into account their fall into sin and their need for redemption. Although the prefix (προ-) on the verb for "planned" (προτίθημι) may have temporal significance and thereby hint of a planning "beforehand," the word was commonly used with the simple sense of "planned."³³ The context here, however, points to the planning that occurred "before the foundation of the world" (1:4).

God thus designed a plan (οἰκονομία) for the redemption of the world (see also 3:2, 9). This term was common in the daily life of people living in

30. Markus N. Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (WUNT 2/36; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990), 221–30; Chrys C. Caragounis, *The Ephesian Mysterion* (ConBNT 8; Lund: Gleerup, 1977), 143–46.

31. Best, *Ephesians*, 136.

32. Markus Barth, *Ephesians* (2 vols.; AB 34–34A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 1:86.

33. BDAG, s.v.

the Graeco-Roman world because it related to the foundational social unit of society — the household (οἶκος). Every household, which included the extended family and the slaves, was overseen by a household manager (οἰκονόμος). Jesus gave five different parables in which he portrayed God as the manager of a household (οἰκοδεσπότης; Matt 13:27; 20:1, 11; 21:33; Luke 13:25; 14:21). In this passage, Paul portrays God as the household manager, but the focus lies more on his plan for his household, which for God encompasses everything in heaven and on earth.

God began unfolding his plan of salvation with the coming of Messiah because that represented “the fullness of time” (τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν καιρῶν). This precise expression occurs no other time in biblical literature, but its closest counterpart occurs in Gal 4:4–5: “But when [lit.] the fullness of time (τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου) had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights as sons.” This passage highlights many of the same themes as here: the coming of Messiah, redemption, and adoption. The church still lives in the fullness of times, but they will not be completely fulfilled until the day of redemption (4:30).

1:10b-d To bring everything under the headship of Christ, everything in heaven and everything on earth, in Christ (ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ, τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐν αὐτῷ). Paul here proclaims the assurance that the problem of sin and rebellion will one day be dealt with by a decisive intervention of God. He will act once and for all to bring under control all of rebellious creation in and through Christ. All who resist God — both human and spiritual forces — will be subjugated and no longer allowed to oppose God in active and hostile defiance.

The word that Paul uses here (ἀνακεφαλαιώω), which I have translated as “bring everything under the headship of,” is unique in biblical literature (it appears one other time in Paul’s writings and nowhere else in the NT or LXX) and is often translated “to sum up” (see NASB) or “gather up/ unite” (see ESV; NRSV; RSV). The idea of summing up comes from its use in philosophical and rhetorical writings, where it is used to refer to a speaker or writer who summarizes the main points of his argument. Each main point in a discourse can be referred to as a “summary point” (κεφάλαιον). In fact, a chapter title in a book is a “heading” (κεφάλαιον). Similarly, the word can refer to the “sum” of a series of numbers and, thus, even a “census.” Paul uses the word to summarize the social aspects of the law in Rom 13:9, when he says that the law is “summed up” in this saying: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

This usage is difficult to apply to Eph 1:10, where Paul is not summarizing an argument or counting. He is speaking about the climax of history. This has led many interpreters to find a different meaning for the term in this context, such as the rendering in the NIV, “to bring all things ... together under one head, even Christ,” which is the best interpretation of the expression. Some have tried to combine this with the notion of “summing up” by suggesting that Paul “gathers together” all of creation under the lordship of Christ. This is coming closer to the sense of what Paul has in mind in this verse.

It is important to note that the term κεφάλαιον is a cognate term for “head” (κεφαλή) and can be used in a literal sense to denote a physical head of an animate being. It can also be used in a metaphorical sense for a person who is “the head” or “chief.”³⁴ Furthermore, there are no comparable verbs in the Greek language built on the more

34. See LSJ, s.v.

common word for “head” (κεφαλή) that Paul could have employed (such as ἀνακεφαλάω or κεφαλάω). Because the “headship” of Christ over all things is so prominent in this letter, it is likely that the readers would have read this term in light of those statements (e.g. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23).³⁵ Markus Barth came to a similar conclusion regarding the word when he noted, “the meaning of the ambiguous Greek verb is to be derived exclusively from the context of Eph 1:10, and is ‘to make [Christ] the head.’”³⁶ Because the term κεφάλαιον can denote “head,” it is not necessary to go as far as Barth did, however, in relying only on context.

Paul may have intended the preposition ἀνα- to have the same function as it does with many other compounds and express the idea of “again.”³⁷ If so, it would mean “to bring under headship once again.” Behind it lies the idea of a rebellion in the creation — of things on earth (humans and the institutions they control) and in heaven (the realm of angels and spirit beings).

This expression contributes to Paul’s larger argument that Christ is the solution to the problem of rampant rebellion against God, especially in the spiritual domain. Christ has begun to exercise his headship over the powers, but there will come a time when all of creation will have to submit to his authority as sovereign Lord. The final “in Christ” reiterates — in a way that seems redundant but is here simply emphatic — that Christ is the one who will serve as God’s agent in bringing all the rebellious creatures in all of creation under God’s sovereignty. Paul expressed a similar idea to the Philippians when he declared that there will be a day when “at the name of Jesus every knee should

bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:10 – 11).

1:11a-b In him also we were chosen, having been predestined (ἐν ᾧ καὶ ἐκκληρώθημεν προορισθέντες). This begins the fourth major section of this passage and corresponds significantly in vocabulary and content with the second major section (1:4 – 6). Paul here uses a different word for choosing (κληρώω) and expresses it in the passive voice while maintaining his use of the first person plural. Although using the verb is rare in the OT, the noun “lot” (κλήρος) is common and was used to refer to something obtained by lot (such as the inheritance the tribes of Israel received in the Promised Land) or, more importantly, to the fact that Israel itself was God’s lot or inheritance: “But they are your people, your inheritance (κλήρος) that you brought out by your great power and your outstretched arm” (Deut 9:29). The Jews at Qumran used this language to refer to themselves as God’s chosen people, but conversely, those outside of the community were “the lot of Belial” (1QS 2:2).

Paul’s statement here is different from what he says in Col 1:12, where he uses the noun to refer to the inheritance believers will receive from God. Although some have interpreted this passage as the believers’ inheritance (ESV; NASB; KJV),³⁸ it is better to understand it as referring to God’s inheritance in believers.³⁹ This is consistent with the earlier emphasis on God’s benefit in choosing a people for himself (εἰς αὐτόν; 1:5) and the declaration in the prayer that believers are God’s inheritance (1:18).

35. So also H. Schlier, “κεφαλή,” *TDNT*, 3:681.

36. Barth, *Ephesians*, 1:91. So also Caragounis, *Ephesian Mysterion*, 126.

37. Such as “make alive again” (ἀναζάω; Luke 15:24); “show concern again” (ἀναθάλλω; Phil 4:10); and, “crucify again” (ἀνασταυρώω; Heb 6:6).

38. E.g., Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (New York: R. Carter and Brothers, 1856; repr. Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1954), 55 – 56.

39. This is the view of most commentators. See, e.g., Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 227; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 35 – 36; Robinson, *Ephesians*, 146.

Once again, Paul uses language normally reserved for the old covenant people of God and applies it to all believers — Jews and Gentiles who form the new people of God. As in the parallel statement in 1:4 – 5, Paul follows this with an aorist participle indicating the contemporaneous action of God’s predestining activity.

1:11c – 12a On the basis of the plan of the one who powerfully works everything out on the basis of the counsel of his will that we might exist to the praise of his glory (κατὰ πρόθεσιν τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐνεργοῦντος κατὰ τὴν βουλήν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης αὐτοῦ).

Paul ever so strongly emphasizes that God is not responding to events as they unfold with various countermeasures, but that he has a carefully designed plan that he is revealing and fulfilling, especially as it relates to the choosing and redeeming of his people. He here uses three different words to express the fact that he has a plan (πρόθεσις, βουλή, and θέλημα). It is difficult to find shades of differences between the three words, especially as they appear in this context. It is better to recognize a rhetorical stress on God’s sovereignty. It offers great assurance to the Gentile readers of this letter who may still have doubts or concerns about God’s sovereignty over all of the other gods, especially those who once laid claim on their lives.

It is also important for the readers to know that God has the power (ἐνεργέω) to put his plan into effect. The power of God is a major theme in this letter, and Paul here introduces it by emphatically asserting that God will powerfully unfold his plan as he has willed it and against any conceivable opposition. To ward off any doubt, Paul explains that God works out “everything” (τὰ πάντα) according to his purpose. These thoughts lead Paul to an exclamation of praise. Whereas in the first refrain of praise, Paul extols the glory of God’s grace, in

this and the final refrain (1:14c), he praises the glory of God.

The “glory” (δόξα; Heb. *kābôd*) of God is partly to be explained as his brightness, splendor, and radiance that are visible to people. Moses was only able to see God’s glory as it passed by him (Exod 33:22). It is compared to thunder (Ps 29:3 [28:3]), fire (Exod 24:17; 2 Chr 7:3), a bright radiance (Ezek 1:28), and a brilliant cloud (Exod 40:34 – 35; 1 Kings 8:11). Paul elsewhere says that God is immortal and “lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see” (1 Tim 6:16). Jesus displayed this divine splendor in his transfiguration (Luke 9:29). When the new Jerusalem comes, it will not need the sun or the moon, because “the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp” (Rev 21:23; Isa 60:19). God’s glory is a manifestation of who he is in his essence, majesty, and power, and, indeed, in his holiness and purity (Ps 29:2). Being in the presence of God’s holiness leads the angels surrounding the heavenly throne to exclaim in praise, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isa 6:3).

To praise his glory is thus to recognize that he is the one true God, the creator of heaven and earth, and to give him the honor due him. God has no peer. As the psalmist explains, “the gods of the nations are idols” (Ps 96:5). God is the one eternal King and displays the majesty of his sovereign authority. For that alone, he is worthy of honor and praise (Ps 145:12 [144:12]).

God is also due praise for his marvelous plan of redemption. He chose Israel for his glory that they should sing his praise (Isa 43:7, 21). He repeatedly demonstrated his power to save her from her enemies as a manifestation of his glory (Exod 15:7; Ps 21:5). But his greatest act of deliverance was the redemption of his people from their bondage in Egypt, which demonstrated his power and glory over Pharaoh (Exod 14:4, 17, 18).

Now Paul praises the redeeming power and glory of God for the great plan of redemption he has enacted in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. More specifically, he declares that God has chosen us, Jews and now Gentiles as well, to praise his glory. In Paul's view, redeemed humanity exists in order to praise God's glory.

1:12b Those who have placed their hope firmly in Christ (τοὺς προηλπικότας ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ). Some commentators have suggested that a change of referent has taken place here and that the "we" refers to Jewish Christians. One of the most significant arguments in favor of this view is the compound form of the verb "hope" that is prefixed with a preposition that often means "before" (προελπίζω). The idea would then be that historically, Jewish Christians put their hope in the Messiah before Gentile Christians did.⁴⁰ Some hold to a variant of this temporal view of the verb and suggest that it refers to Jews who had put their hope in Messiah in the anticipation of his coming, but historically before the incarnation.⁴¹

It is better, however, to take the preposition as intensifying the force of the verb and maintain the referent of "we" as all Christians — Jewish and Gentile. Thus, "placed their hope firmly" expresses this idea well. Part of the difficulty in determining the meaning of this compound verb is that it appears nowhere else in the LXX or NT. It is clear, however, that the preposition προ- does not necessarily have a temporal connotation. There are many examples of words for which it simply serves to intensify their meaning.⁴² Ernest Best correctly notes, "In Hellenistic Greek prepositions often do

little more than stress the main thought of their verb" and thereby concludes that "this verb may mean the same as the simple verb."⁴³ The perfect tense refers to all those who have already put their hope in Christ and continue to do so.

1:13a-c In him also when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in him also when you believed (ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀκούσαντες τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς σωτηρίας ὑμῶν, ἐν ᾧ καὶ πιστεύσαντες). By the time we reach this fifth and final section of the introductory eulogy, Paul's use of "in Christ" almost reaches a monotonous level because of its repetition. He does this, however, to stress the importance of incorporation in Christ as the source of all of these spiritual blessings. Outside of Christ, such blessings do not exist.

At this stage of the introductory blessing the person changes from "we" (ἡμεῖς) to "you" (ὑμεῖς). This marks a narrowing of focus from all Christians to the readers of this letter in particular. But it does not mark a shift to an exclusively Gentile focus. That will happen later in the letter; Paul will clearly indicate this by expressing it as "you Gentiles" (ὑμεῖς τὰ ἔθνη; 2:11).

Paul indicates that the readers have "heard" (ἀκούσαντες) and "believed" (πιστεύσαντες) the word of truth, using two aorist participles dependent on the main verb "you were sealed" (1:13). These are best interpreted as temporal participles. The first participle is followed by two expressions in the accusative case that serve as the direct object of both participles. The second accusative is in apposition to the first and further defines it.

40. O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 116–17; Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians*, 264; T. K. Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1897), 21.

41. Barth, *Ephesians*, 1:130–33; Salmond, "Ephesians," 265–66.

42. E.g., προνοέω, "to give careful thought to" (2 Cor 8:21);

προτρέπω, "to encourage, impel, persuade" (Acts 18:27); προχειρίζω, "to select, appoint" (Acts 3:20; 22:14; 26:16); προβιβάζω, "to prompt" (Matt 14:8); and προαιρέω, "to choose, purpose" (2 Cor 9:7).

43. Best, *Ephesians*, 147. See also Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 233; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 37.

Paul refers to the gospel as “the word of truth” (τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας; attributive genitive) on two other occasions (Col 1:5; 2 Tim 2:15). In a pluralistically religious environment like the west coast of Asia Minor, such a statement could have been perceived as exclusivistic and narrow by outsiders. For those who had turned to Christ from other religions, however, Paul’s assurance that they were following the truth would have been greatly encouraging. Paul frequently spoke of the gospel as the truth (Gal 2:5, 14; 5:7; 2 Cor 4:2).

He also defines the gospel as the source of their salvation. This is reminiscent of the beginning of his letter to the Romans, where he describes the gospel as “the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile” (Rom 1:16). Although some have taken this as a genitive of content (“the gospel, which consists of your salvation”),⁴⁴ it may be better to understand the head noun as more active and interpret the genitive either as an objective genitive or the genitive of product, i.e., “the gospel produces your salvation.”⁴⁵

As with all of Paul’s letters, faith/belief is a significant theme in Ephesians. Here it is portrayed as the response to the gospel that leads to the sealing with the Spirit.

1:13d – 14a You were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is a deposit on our inheritance (ἐσφραγίσθητε τῷ πνεύματι τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τῷ ἁγίῳ, ὃ ἐστὶν ἀρραβῶν τῆς κληρονομίας ἡμῶν). Whereas we might expect Paul to say that after hearing and believing the gospel, they were saved,

here he uses an expression that he has used only one time earlier (2 Cor 1:22) to describe God’s work in their lives. The principal idea here is that God has bestowed his Spirit on believers and that this occurs after people hear the gospel and put their faith in its message. In spite of the fact that the image of sealing occurs in the texts of some of the early church fathers to speak of the Spirit’s coming after baptism,⁴⁶ it is best here to stay with the explicit words of the text and link the coming of the Spirit with the exercise of faith. Nowhere in the NT is “sealing” used as a metaphor of the baptism in the Spirit; this usage appears only later.

The dative case in “with the Spirit” (τῷ πνεύματι) is best understood in its common usage as a dative of means,⁴⁷ but the Spirit is simultaneously to be understood as the content of the sealing. Thus, Fee rightly comments, “there can be little question that the Spirit himself is the ‘seal,’ the mark of ownership.”⁴⁸ This is the promised Spirit (attributive genitive) in the sense that he was promised to Israel (see Ezek 36:26 – 27; 37:14; Joel 2:28 – 30). The good news for Gentiles is that the Spirit is made available in Christ to any who hear and believe.

A seal (σφραγίς) was indeed a mark of ownership in the ancient world. Seals were often made of hard stones or precious metals and had a distinctive image engraved on them, such as the figure of a deity, a hero, or a portrait. All of a person’s significant possessions were marked with the impression of the seal. Even slaves and livestock were marked by the owner.⁴⁹ In some cases, people declared themselves the possession of a deity by

44. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 237; Eadie, *Ephesians*, 64.

45. See Wallace, *Grammar*, 106.

46. Those who take “sealing” to refer to baptism here would include: Nils A. Dahl, “The Concept of Baptism in Ephesians,” in *Studies in Ephesians* (WUNT 131; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 413, 425; Schnackenburg, *Ephesians*, 65 – 66.

47. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 239; A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934), 533.

48. Gordon Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 669.

49. R. Schippers, “Seal,” *NIDNTT*, 3:497.

the imprint of a seal (Herodotus 2.113; 3 Macc 2:29 – 30.). Under the old covenant, the priest wore a seal engraved with the phrase, “Holy to the LORD” (Exod 28:36; 39:30 [LXX 36:37]). Through the prophet Haggai, the Lord declared that he would make Zerubbabel, king of Israel, “like my signet ring (LXX σφράγις), for I have chosen you” (Hag 2:23).

In the new covenant era, the one true God has marked all of his people as belonging to himself by means of a seal. This seal is the eschatological fulfillment of the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer is a firm indication that the person is possessed by God.

The Spirit is also a “deposit” (ἀρραβών) on the future inheritance of believers. Although this word is a transliterated Hebrew term, it came into Koine usage (especially in documentary papyri) and was commonly used with the sense of “down payment” or “earnest money” in the context of business and commerce.⁵⁰ Examples abound in the papyri of people receiving a certain amount of money as a down payment on the purchase of land, animals, or services. The message that Paul is communicating here is that God so values his people that he has put down a deposit and will complete the transaction in the future.

The genitive form (τῆς κληρονομίας) is best understood as a partitive genitive since the Spirit is an earnest of a much greater set of blessings in the future.⁵¹ Paul frequently refers to believers inheriting the kingdom of God (see Eph 5:5; 1 Cor 6:9 – 10; 15:50; Gal 5:21). Jesus spoke of his followers inheriting eternal life (Matt 19:29; Luke 18:18), a promise that Paul reiterates (Titus 3:7). Paul will later say that these promised blessings accrue to

Gentile believers because they are now regarded as fellow heirs with Jewish believers (Eph 3:6). The good news here is that all believers have already begun to experience their inheritance as a result of the presence of the Spirit in their lives.

1:14b-c Until the redemption of [God’s] possession, to the praise of his glory! (εἰς ἀπολύτρωσιν τῆς περιποιήσεως, εἰς ἔπαινον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ). Believers have received a mark of God’s ownership and the empowering presence of the Spirit, which will abide with them until the day of consummation. The preposition used here (εἰς) here has temporal significance as it does in the similar passage in 4:30 (so also the ESV, NIV, KJV, and RSV).

It is striking that Paul speaks of believers as God’s possession.⁵² The phrase does not include the pronoun (αὐτοῦ), which has led some interpreters to take the phrase as a continued reference to the inheritance of believers, “until the redemption of your possession.”⁵³ But here the thought ties back with 1:5, where Paul says that God has chosen and predestined believers to adoption *for himself*. Furthermore, this prepositional phrase depends not on the immediately preceding relative clause, but on the main verb, “you were sealed.” Paul’s thought also coheres with his prayer in 1:17 that the readers may gain a greater appreciation of their value to God as his inheritance. Peter expressed a similar idea in his letter when he spoke of believers as a royal priesthood and as “a people belonging to God” (λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν; 1 Pet 2:9).

Paul then ends the introductory *berakah* on an exclamation of praise. This is the third occurrence of this refrain in the passage (see comments on 1:6, 12).

50. See MM, s.v.; G. H. R. Horsley, *NewDocs*, 1:83.

51. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 243.

52. This is the view reflected in the NIV; NASB; NLT;

NRSV. See also O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 122; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 41.

53. Schnackenburg, *Ephesians*, 67.

Theology in Application

Paul is writing this letter into a situation nearly six or seven years after he has last been with the Ephesian believers. During this time, presumably numerous Gentiles have become Christians and streamed into the local house churches in Ephesus and throughout western Asia Minor. It must not be forgotten that these Gentiles have not come from a background of secular materialism and scientific naturalism; they have turned to Christ from a background of devotion to Artemis, Cybele, Isis, Dionysus, and an array of other deities. They have practiced magic and forms of ritual power, observed omens and signs, and were vitally concerned about the implications of astral fate for their lives. What Paul says in the introductory eulogy is perfectly suited to help these many new Gentile believers in the process of transforming their worldview from a pagan perspective to a Christian set of convictions.

Contrary to contemporary belief in some circles, theology is not sterile and dry. It is such life-changing truth that Paul deems it essential to growth and sanctification. The theological truths he contemplates and shares lead him to fall on his face in emotional exclamations of praise to our awesome God.

There are a variety of truths to reflect on stemming from the main point of this passage.

The Sovereignty of God

There is one God who is sovereignly unfolding his plan for all of creation that includes the redemption of humanity. Behind this poetic passage of praise is the conviction shared by all of Judaism and early Christianity that there is one true God who revealed himself to Israel and is sovereign over all history. As a Jew, Paul continues to hold unswervingly to the confession of Israel in the Shema, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one” (Deut 6:4). While there were small groups of people in Asia Minor who worshiped one deity known as Theos Hypsistos (“God Most High”) while still acknowledging the existence of other deities (henotheism),⁵⁴ Paul maintains a conviction that there is truly only one God (monotheism) and worship is due to him alone. The implication of this for these Gentile believers is that there are not numerous gods and goddesses who need to be feared and honored. Nor is there an ultimate dualism with two gods of relatively equal power contending with one another. There is one sovereign God who deserves their full devotion and worship.

This passage also reflects some of the central convictions of a Jewish apocalyptic worldview, which was prominent in the Judaism leading up to the time of Jesus

54. On Theos Hypsistos, see chapter 6 (“Theos Hypsistos’ and Sabazios”) in Paul Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in*

Asia Minor (SNTSMS 69; Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), 127–44.

and the apostles. In the forty years, there was an increasing recognition by scholars of the importance of the book of Daniel (the fountainhead of apocalyptic) to the thought of Ephesians and especially to this introductory eulogy. At the heart of apocalyptic is the belief that God is sovereign over all of creation and has a plan for the ages that he is unfolding as the times reach their fulfillment. This is particularly prominent in Daniel, where the book speaks of a periodization of history that will climax in a decisive intervention by God when he establishes his King to rule over an everlasting kingdom that spans all of creation (see Dan 2; 7).

These elements are also central to Eph 1:3 – 14. The sovereign will and plan of God are repeatedly stressed with a variety of different expressions: “he chose before the foundation of the world” (ἐκλέγομαι; 1:4); “he chose” (κληρώω; 1:11); “he predestined” (προορίζω; 1:5, 11); his “good pleasure” (εὐδοκία; 1:5, 9), his “will” (θέλημα; 1:5, 9, 11), “he revealed” (γνωρίζω; 1:9), “the mystery” (μυστήριον; 1:9); his “plan” (οἰκονομία; 1:10); he “designed” and his “plan” (προτίθημι; πρόθεσις; 1:9, 11), and his “counsel” (βουλή; 1:11). The net impact is that the readers can be assured that they are not left to an inescapable fate charted somehow in the stars. Nor is their future in the hand of capricious deities fighting among themselves. Their future is bound up with the will of the one true God, who has chosen them and predestined them even before the world was created. All who are in Christ can be assured that they were planned, loved, chosen, pursued, and included.

Our Election before Creation

This passage makes it clear that God sovereignly chose us before he made the heavens and the earth. The two parallel sections (1:4 – 6 and 1:11 – 12) strongly emphasize God’s initiative, decision, and choice in our salvation. The motivation for the election is his love (1:4c, 6b), the basis is expressed as his “good pleasure” (1:5d) and “the counsel of his will” (1:11d), and the purpose is that we would be a people “to himself” (1:5c). It is conspicuous that Paul never says that we chose God or that the basis of election is rooted in God’s choice of those who would believe in him. It is difficult to find within this text any notion of God foreseeing those who would exercise faith. “Hearing” and “believing” are expressed in the application section of this text (1:13 – 14), but as subsequent to God’s electing and predestining.

Why has God revealed his teaching about election in this passage? He wants to encourage our hearts by helping us see not only God’s sovereignty, but also his extraordinary love for us. As it did for Paul, these truths should lead us to praise God and thank him for his indescribable kindness to us in pouring out his grace.

This text, of course, raises a question that has gripped many theologians throughout the ages. That is, if God chose some for salvation, then has he necessarily selected others to suffer eternal damnation? Although this is certainly a logical

question to ask as the other side to the overwhelmingly positive teaching of this passage, it is an implication that Paul does not draw here or elsewhere.⁵⁵

A Rupture in Creation Needing Resolution

A rupture has taken place in the creation that needs resolution. Looming ominously in the background of this awe-inspiring praise to God is the assumption that a serious disturbance has taken place in the creation. Paul indicates that people have engaged in transgressions (παραπτώματα; 1:7) against the law of God from which they need forgiveness. What the passage says about “redemption” (ἀπολύτρωσις; 1:7, 14) presupposes that people have fallen into slavery and bondage to sin, which is precisely what Paul draws out in the next chapter. In fact, their bondage to the world, the flesh, and the devil has resulted in death (2:1 – 3). Paul also suggests that this rebellion is not only limited to people on earth, but extends to the angels in heaven. All of creation, then, needs to be brought back under the lordship and ruling authority of God (ἀνακεφαλαιώω; Eph 1:10).

This understanding of the plight of humanity is at the heart of the Pauline gospel and the early Christian preaching as a whole and thereby establishes the need for Christ to die as a sacrifice (διὰ τοῦ αἵματος; Eph 1:7) on the cross. This passage also points ahead to the resurrection as the basis for Christ’s sovereign power as Lord (see 1:19 – 23), which will enable him to bring all of the rebellious creation under his reign (1:10).

It suggests that people have been stricken so deeply by the power of sin that they have become willing accomplices to its enticements and are unable to choose God in any objective, neutral way. This further highlights God’s grace and favor by choosing people to be his own sons and daughters who were delighting in their own sinful and self-centered pursuits.

Jesus’ Preexistence and Revelation

Christ preexisted with the Father and has now been revealed as the means of redemption and the source of intimacy with God. This passage portrays the Father in eternity past as not alone, but jointly planning with Christ the redemption of humanity (προέθετο ἐν αὐτῷ; 1:9). This plan involved making Christ the means for atonement by his death and then the connection point of a relationship with God. Paul emphasizes this in 1:3 – 14 with his repeated emphasis on “in Christ.” Some form of this expression occurs eleven times in these twelve verses. Paul thus prefigures this as a major theme throughout this letter.

55. Best, *Ephesians*, 119, observes, “The seemingly logical deduction that when some are chosen others are rejected is

not worked out in the NT, though later it came to be discussed widely in the church.”

It is also a principal theme in Paul's theology that speaks of our participation in Christ. It refers objectively to our participation in his death, resurrection, ascension, as well as to his present position of power and authority at the right hand of God. Because of this identification with the victorious Lord, those who are "in Christ" will have power for living lives of obedience and for engaging in spiritual warfare (6:10 – 20). But "in Christ" also refers to the present dynamic experience of closeness and unity with Christ, who cherishes them, nourishes them, provides for them, and gives them direction. A strong relational experience is suggested by this expression.

The Role of the Spirit

The Spirit imparts God's blessings to us, marking us as belonging to God and assuring us of our future with him. The passage begins and ends with the Spirit of God (1:3, 13), as it likewise does with reference to the Father, yet Christ is at the center of the text. There is thus a strong Trinitarian character to this passage with the Father as the main planner and initiator of redemption, Christ as the central figure of the plan, who secures the redemption and becomes the nexus point for the relationship the redeemed have with God, and the Spirit now as the agent who bestows the blessings on the people God has redeemed.

In a context where people were seeking help and inspiration from a wide variety of spirit beings, this passage would be instructive in helping them to see that there is only one Spirit they should seek. God's Spirit does not come alongside as a divine supernatural assistant (*paredros*) to fulfill our every self-serving demand. In the first place, this Spirit comes to abide with us as a sign of God's presence; we are God's property until the final redemption. This Spirit is also a powerful presence within us as a resource for living the Christian life. The Spirit, in fact, has his own agenda, which involves promoting and empowering a holy life (1:4). This is consistent with the fact that he is the *Holy Spirit*.