

**Ephesians 1:3—Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,**

What a powerful verse! We could camp out in verses 3-14 the remainder of our days and fail to exhaust the depths of their significance. Therefore, even the short time allotted to them in this study should be extremely enlightening. If we can grasp even a portion of what Paul is communicating, all doubt, worry, and fear—anything that might steal our joy—will be given to the Father to rectify, rather than remain a deterrent to our spiritual wellbeing. We have all eternity to bask in the greatness of these Scriptures, so be encouraged.

Verses 3-14 comprise one sentence in the Greek language. As he begins verse 3, Paul seems to become so enthralled in the wonder of these truths that he can hardly contain himself. He almost seems out of breath by the end of verse 14. My prayer is that these truths might stimulate the same wonder, gratitude, and awe in us as well!

***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (1:3a)***

Paul begins by blessing (praising) “*the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,*” the Source of all blessings—including those listed in verses 3-14. Blessing (praising) God comes naturally once one has a proper view of God’s blessings. Blessing, praise, and adoration are natural byproducts of understanding the heart of God and His provision for man. If faith is to work “*by love*” (Galatians 5:6), and if love is the only legitimate motivator for the believer (2Corinthians 5:14), what better way to begin establishing a deeper love and faith than to understand His blessings? But we must be very careful. Paul praised (blessed) God not only for the blessings he had received through Christ, but also because he had come to understand God’s heart and His ultimate plan and purpose in the gospel.

As long as the believer walks with and worships God solely for what he (the believer) receives through the cross, he lives in shallowness and immaturity—which was the case with me. I initially submitted to Christ for the benefits I received, never considering what the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit might have received (and continue to receive) through Christ’s selfless submission to the cross. After all, I was delivered from hell (John 3:16), God would supply all my needs (Philippians 4:19), He would work all things for my good (Romans 8:28), I would reign with Christ (Revelation 20:4), and on and on. In other words, my gospel was a man-centered gospel. I submitted to Christ for what “I” received through the cross. But eventually, as I matured in the faith, I began comprehending what God the Father received through Jesus’ sacrifice, what the Son received through the same, and what the Person of the Spirit received as well. This new insight allowed me to begin, and I emphasize “begin,” to comprehend how the three Persons of the Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—relate to one another. In essence, the heart of the Triune God, as well as His ultimate plan for man, was revealed in such a new and exciting way that every aspect of my Christian experience was totally revolutionized.

Have you ever wondered why God the Father would subject Himself to the pain of having His Son die on a cross? When I think of having my son Benjamin put to death for any reason, especially by way of crucifixion, I realize my agony would greatly surpass his. The Father’s pain must have been excruciating! But consider that the Father suffered this heartache for the sake of the Son, so the Son might receive a body (the body of Christ, the church—which began in Acts 2) through which to express Himself to the universe (Ephesians 5:23, 29-30; Romans 12:4-5; 1Corinthians 10:17; 1Corinthians 12:12-27). The Father suffered also that the Holy Spirit might receive a temple in which to dwell (Ephesians 2:19-22). (We will discuss this temple at greater length when we study Ephesians chapters two and five.) The Father submitted Himself to such agony solely for the benefit of the other two Persons of the Trinity, the Son and the Spirit. Also consider that the Son went to Calvary, not for what He would receive through the cross, but for what the Father and Spirit would receive. Jesus’ statements in John 7:18, John 8:50, 54, and John 14:13 confirm

that Jesus never sought His own glory, but desired that through His obedience the Father might be glorified. Through the cross, the Father received a family (John 1:12) that increases numerically as individuals submit to Christ—and, again, the Spirit received a temple that enlarges as believers accept Jesus during the church age (Ephesians 2:19-22). But what is the Spirit's mindset? The Spirit glorifies the Son by revealing what Christ accomplished through the cross and His subsequent resurrection (John 15:26; 16:13-15). Hence, the Spirit's choices are never for the betterment of Himself, but for the benefit of the Son. If anyone knows the Son, he knows the Father also (John 14:9). Therefore, as the Spirit glorifies the Son, He glorifies the Father also. Thus the Spirit's actions are for the benefit of the other two Persons of the Trinity—as was the case with the Father and Son. No selfishness is involved in these relationships!

We, in our lives today, are to love the Father not just for what we receive from the relationship, but to bring joy to Him through being His offspring (John 1:12). After all, we “*exist for Him*” (1Corinthians 8:6). The same principle applies with the Son. We are privileged to be brothers with Christ, not just for what we gain through the relationship, but because we, as His body (Ephesians 5:23, 29-30), can serve as a vehicle through which He expresses Himself to the world. As for our relationship with the Spirit, we are being fitted together into a temple, a temple that serves as a “*dwelling of God in the Spirit*” (Ephesians 2:20-22). Because each member of the Triune Godhead lives for the Others' good, the individual members of the body of Christ, having “*the mind of Christ*” (1Corinthians 2:16), should display selfless living in all relationships, including those with the Godhead.

As we begin to understand God's heart and live as He lives, “self” is taken out of the equation. Only then can we enter into meaningful, fulfilling, and lasting relationships that benefit others. The transformation in our families, churches, workplaces, schools, in fact, in every facet of our lives, would be beyond belief should this type of love be the norm?

We must begin to perceive the cross from a selfless point of reference if we are to properly understand the heart of God and His ultimate plan. Therefore, as we speak with others concerning Christ, we must present a God-centered gospel—never one so shallow as to be man-centered.

You will understand very little from this point forward if your view of the cross remains self-centered—that Jesus died solely to get you out of hell and into heaven, leaving you to flounder on planet earth until He takes you home. Are you willing to allow the Lord to deepen your understanding of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ? If so, Paul's epistle to the Ephesians should provide insight into the awesomeness of God, which, in turn, will result in praise. Just wait and see!

Overall, a deep passion for God's heart is lacking in believers today. Is it any wonder that Christ's body knows so little about praise? The solution is not better voices, better songs, better lyrics, or a new style of worship. The answer lies in understanding God's heart and the awesomeness of the selfless sacrifice of His Son.

God doesn't possess an ego that needs to be stroked. His desire for praise is not linked to such immature reasoning. Praise brings us into His presence (Psalm 100:4) so we can begin to know Him (Philippians 3:10) and, in turn, allow His Spirit to lead us in the way of truth (Romans 8:14; 2Corinthians 3:18). But some believers perceive God as incapable of functioning without their encouragement, so they praise Him out of duty rather than love. This mindset could not be more misguided. Only adoration from a heart filled with gratitude and awe will fulfill God's ultimate purpose in praise—that the one doing the praising will, in the end, benefit the most.

Verse 3 conclusively settles the matter of Christ's relationship to the Father. Jesus is God the Father's offspring, regardless of who teaches otherwise. If not, Joseph would have been Jesus' father, and Jesus would have been born with a sin nature (Adamic nature or dead spirit)—the Adamic nature is inherited by

all descendants of Adam (Romans 5:12-19). Ephesians 2:3 reveals that man's sin "*nature*" (Adamic "*nature*"), not the sins he commits as an unbeliever, makes him a child "*of wrath*":

*Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. (Ephesians 2:3)*

Thus, had Joseph been Jesus' father, Jesus could not be Savior—even having lived a sinless life. His sin nature would have made Him a child "*of wrath*" (Ephesians 2:3). Hence, He had to be God the Father's Son. The *Romans 1-8* course produced and distributed by this ministry includes a section (Romans 5:12 through Romans 6:6) that addresses this subject, which would be beneficial to reference should you possess that resource.

Matthew includes Joseph's lineage in Matthew 1:1-16 to prove that had Jesus been Joseph's son, He could never prosper as King over Israel because Jeconiah (Matthew 1:11) was part of Joseph's lineage. According to Jeremiah 22:24-30, Coniah, the same person as Jehoiachin, or Jeconiah, could have no descendant prosper while sitting on David's throne. Thus, had Jesus been Joseph's son, Jesus could never rule as "*KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS*" as required by Revelation 19:16. Thank you, Matthew, for helping confirm the virgin birth.

***who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. (1:3b)***

God's idea of a good time is blessing His people. As early as the days of Abraham, God was preparing to bless mankind through Abraham's offspring (Genesis 12:3), the "*seed*" of Genesis 3:15. This "*seed*," Who is Christ (Galatians 3:16), a descendant of Abraham, would "*bruise*" the serpent's (Satan's) "*head*" (Genesis 3:15). Through this avenue Abraham would bless the world (Genesis 12:3). Therefore, Christ was sent to bless all men who choose to accept Him as Savior (John 3:16-17).

Paul blessed "*the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Ephesians 1:3a) because He "*has blessed*" New Testament believers "*with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ*" (Ephesians 1:3b). Can we even begin to comprehend the scope of this astounding truth? God the Father not only sent His Son to offer salvation to fallen man, but to bless repentant sinners "*with every spiritual blessing*" the moment they repent and believe. These blessings mean that the instant we were saved (justified—Romans 5:1), God gave us everything we needed to live life abundantly. In fact, all we will be doing until the Lord takes us home is digging through that huge treasure chest of spiritual blessings we received the moment we accepted Christ. For this reason (and an abundance of others) we should pursue spiritual maturity, for only then can we begin to comprehend all that is already ours. Many church saints, due to immaturity, are "doing" to try to attain what is already theirs. Defeat and despair result—a big smile and very sad eyes.

God blessed us with these spiritual blessings "*in the heavenly places in Christ*" (Ephesians 1:3b). Because Christ is now at the right hand of the Father (Hebrews 8:1-2; 9:24), to be placed into Christ means that we were taken into the realm of the heavenlies. As a result, Paul's words, "*who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ*" (Ephesians 1:3b), mean that when we repented of our sin and accepted Christ through faith, He, through the avenue of the Holy Spirit (1Corinthians 12:13), placed us into Christ. I don't even pretend to understand all the positive ramifications here, but one thing is certain. We who believe during the church age (an age which began in Acts 2) are "*in Christ*" (2Corinthians 5:17) and have been blessed with every spiritual blessing required for victorious living (Ephesians 1:3b). So, if you are God's child, give up on trying to perform well enough to obtain more spiritual blessings. They are already yours. So, "*rest*" dear friend (Hebrews 4:9-10) while enjoying the view from above.

As we continue, key on the phrases “*in Christ*” and “*in Him.*” To omit these phrases would drastically change the meaning of this epistle; in fact, removing them from the New Testament would birth utter chaos. On the other hand, through viewing our walk from this perspective we realize that whatever we are or possess is “*in Christ.*” Our battles are His battles, for we fight “*in the strength of His might*” (Ephesians 6:10). We also wear His armor (Ephesians 6:11 and 13). “*In Christ*” we: have “*redemption*” (Romans 3:24), are “*alive to God*” (Romans 6:11), have “*eternal life*” (Romans 6:23), are “*saints*” (1Corinthians 1:2), have received “*the grace of God*” (1Corinthians 1:4), are lead “*to triumph*” (2Corinthians 2:14), are made into a “*new*” creation (2Corinthians 5:17), have “*liberty*” (Galatians 2:4), have received “*the blessing of Abraham*” (Galatians 3:14), have been “*seated*” with Christ in the heavenlies (Ephesians 2:6), “*have been brought near*” to God “*by the blood of Christ*” (Ephesians 2:13), have been “*forgiven*” (Ephesians 4:32), have all of our “*needs*” supplied (Philippians 4:19), are “*complete*” (Colossians 1:28). “*In Him*” we: are “*enriched*” in “*everything*” (1Corinthians 1:5), have “*become the righteousness of God*” (2Corinthians 5:21), “*have redemption*” and “*forgiveness*” (Ephesians 1:7), were “*sealed...with the Holy Spirit*” (Ephesians 1:13), “*have been made complete*” (Colossians 2:10), were “*circumcised with a circumcision made without hands*” (Colossians 2:11). And this is only a partial listing of the blessings received as a result of being “*in Christ*” or “*in Him.*”

Scripture also speaks of Christ living in the New Testament believer. Passages such as Galatians 2:20 and Colossians 1:27 confirm that Jesus lives in all church saints. But Scripture communicates more about us being in Christ than it speaks of Christ dwelling in us. Therefore, from what vantage point would the Lord have us live? From the heavenly vantage point, of course!

### **Ephesians 1:4—just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love**

New Testament believers were chosen in Christ “*before the foundation of the world*” (Ephesians 1:4a). This phrase must be handled with care, for many strange doctrines have evolved from misconstruing Paul’s intent.

#### ***just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, (1:4a)***

God chose us, but understanding where He chose us is of utmost importance if the passage is to be interpreted in context. We were chosen by God in Christ (“*in Him*”—1:4a). Thus, we were not chosen to be placed in Him. We were chosen once we were “*in Him.*” The Scriptures teach as well that we were not placed in Christ and made new until we chose (in our depravity) to receive Him as Savior (John 1:12; 1Corinthians 12:13; 2Corinthians 5:17). Let’s allow the full counsel of God’s Word to reveal how these truths are to be perceived.

We learned earlier that we, like the church at Ephesus, were “*blessed...with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ*” (Ephesians 1:3b). Hence, having been placed “*in Christ*” we are “*blessed...with every spiritual blessing*”—one of which is sharing in Jesus’ chosenness. Let me explain.

Christ, according to Luke 9:35, was “*chosen*”:

... “*This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!*” (Luke 9:35)

Isaiah 42:1 also speaks of Christ’s chosenness:

“*Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations.* (Isaiah 42:1)

God the Father chose Jesus to be the Savior of the world, further confirmed by Luke 23:35, 1Peter 2:4, and 1Peter 2:6. His chosenness, however, had nothing to do with His eternal destiny, for He was in heaven when the Father chose Him. Nor was He chosen, obviously, to spend eternity in hell. He was chosen to serve as Savior.

We must be careful not to equate Jesus' chosenness with selection. Christ was not "selected" from a group of candidates qualified to function in the "office" of Messiah. No one but the eternal Son was capable of paying man's sin debt. Therefore, His chosenness had nothing to do with selection.

But you may ask, "Were not the twelve disciples chosen?" The twelve apostles were chosen, but not for salvation. They were chosen to be apostles—to fulfill a particular function within the body of Christ—an office they could accept or reject. In John 6:70 Jesus states:

... *"Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?"* (John 6:70)

Had they been chosen for salvation, why was Judas, who died unsaved (John 17:12), included in the twelve? The disciples' chosenness is also mentioned in passages such as Luke 6:13, John 13:18, John 15:16 and 19, Acts 1:2 and 24-25, some of which reference all twelve apostles while others speak of only eleven (the twelve minus Judas). The apostles were chosen to office, an office Judas chose to reject.

God even chose the nation of Israel (Deuteronomy 7:7-8; Isaiah 44:1; 45:4; Acts 13:17; Romans 9:11; Romans 11:28), but not for salvation. She was chosen to bring the Messiah into the world and to take the message of His coming to the Gentiles, but God has saved only those Jews who have exercised faith in the "seed" of Genesis 3:15. This "seed," of course, "is, Christ" (Galatians 3:16). Consider as well that since the beginning of the church age in Acts 2, all who have chosen in their depravity to receive Christ (both Jews and Gentiles) have been placed into Christ (after believing) and entered into His chosenness. For this reason Paul can say, "Just as He chose us in Him" (Ephesians 1:4a). We were chosen "in Him" (and entered into His chosenness) because we were placed "in Him" after we exercised repentance and faith while depraved. Thus, we were not chosen (or selected) to be placed into Christ, but were chosen once we were "in Him."

Ephesians 1:4a states that we were chosen in Him "before the foundation of the world." Paul is not teaching that God "chose" (selected) us before we were born (or from eternity past) to be placed into Christ, rather he is communicating that when we accepted Christ we were placed into Christ (2Corinthians 5:17; 1Corinthians 12:13) and entered into His chosenness. We also received Christ's kind of life, eternal life, having no beginning and no end. Therefore, once we were placed into Christ and received eternal life, the Father saw us as having always been in Christ. This rock-solid truth allows us to have been in Him before the foundation of the world, even though our entry point into Christ occurred almost two thousand years after the cross. Are you beginning to see the necessity of living from the view above—from the heavenlies where you are "in Christ"? Without this view our vision is extremely limited.

We must not overlook the fact that "elect" and "chosen" are synonymous, and thus interchangeable, as evidenced by 1Peter 1:1-2 in the NASB ("chosen") and the KJV ("elect"):

*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.* (1Peter 1:1-2 KJV)

*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the*

*foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure. (1Peter 1:1-2 NASB)*

The following truth confirms that a New Testament believer is chosen/elected to office when he is placed in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit after repenting and believing while depraved—not chosen/elected to salvation from eternity past.

1Peter 1:1-2 states that New Testament believers, church saints, are “*chosen [elected] according to the foreknowledge of God.*” “*Foreknowledge*” means “to know beforehand.” We will verify shortly that the Scriptures require God’s “*foreknowledge*” to precede that time when a New Testament believer is “*chosen*” (elected). Thus, church saints could not have been “*chosen*” (elected) to salvation from eternity past by means of an eternal decree. Nothing, not even God’s eternal foreknowledge, can precede what has always existed. (If this statement is somewhat confusing, Diagrams 1, 2, 3, 7 and 8 in the Reference Section should bring clarification.) Consequently, church saints are chosen/elected once they are placed in Christ through God’s Spirit (1Corinthians 12:13) after repenting and believing while depraved, leaving ample room for God’s foreknowledge to precede such an arrangement.

The Scriptures teach, beyond doubt, that Christ is the Father’s “*chosen one*” (Luke 9:35; Isaiah 42:1):

... “*This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!*” (Luke 9:35)

“*Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations.* (Isaiah 42:1)

As confirmed earlier, Jesus was chosen by the Father, not to salvation, but to the office of Messiah. Hence, when we were placed in Christ subsequent to repenting and believing while depraved, we were placed in the “*chosen one*” of Luke 9:35 and Isaiah 42:1, Jesus Himself. To what were we chosen once we were placed in Him? We were chosen to office, for all New Testament believers receive a special gift (office) in conjunction with being placed in the Father’s “*chosen one*”:

*As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1Peter 4:10)*

This special gift is similar to the disciples’ chosenness. The disciples were not chosen to salvation, but rather to apostleship (John 6:70)—an office that could be accepted or rejected, as shown by Judas’ betrayal (John 6:70).

*Conclusion:* All New Testament believers are chosen to office (to a special position, or gifting, within Christ’s body—1Peter 4:10) after repenting and believing while depraved.

Would you agree that election (the New Testament believer’s chosenness) is relatively easy to comprehend? It becomes complicated only when branches of Calvinism redefine “foreknowledge” as “foreordination” or “predestination,” a subject addressed in *God’s Heart as it Relates to Foreknowledge/Predestination*—a resource produced and distributed by this ministry.

We can be certain that God’s foreknowledge must precede the New Testament believer’s election/chosenness because the action or entity that follows the words “*according to*” in any verse in God’s Word (such as in 1Peter 1:1-2) must occur (or exist) before the action or entity that precedes the words “*according to.*” Stated differently:

If **A** is according to **B**

Then **B** precedes **A**

For instance, God “*commanded*” Noah to act in a certain way before Noah responded in obedience:

*Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.*  
(Genesis 6:22)

This truth applies in every instance (all 790 in the NASB and 725 in the KJV) where “*according to*” is implemented in the Scriptures. Consequently, the election of New Testament believers cannot occur in situations where God’s foreknowledge cannot apply; for the election of church saints is “*according to*” His “*foreknowledge*” (1Peter 1:2 KJV).

*Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, ...* (1Peter 1:2 KJV)

Peter confirms that believers could not have been elected/chosen to salvation by means of an eternal decree, for such an arrangement would leave no room for God’s foreknowledge to precede the New Testament believer’s election/chosenness. God can’t foreknow what has always existed (refer to Diagram 2 in the Reference Section). Election, therefore, cannot point to God selecting (decreeing) certain individuals to salvation from eternity past by means of an eternal decree. To what then does election point in passages such as 1Peter 1:2? It points to an individual (during the church age) being placed in the “*chosen [elected] one*” (Isaiah 42:1 NASB), Jesus Christ (1Corinthians 12:13), subsequent to repenting and believing while depraved. Only then is the New Testament believer chosen (elected)—elected to a special office (position) within the body of Christ. This, however, is not the end of the story. Once New Testament believers are chosen (elected), through being placed in God’s chosen (elected) Son (subsequent to repenting and believing while depraved), they are perceived by the Father as having always been elected/chosen (Ephesians 1:4—“*before the foundation of the world*”). Why? The Son possesses eternal life, life with no beginning or end—the same “*life*” received by New Testament believers once placed in the eternal Son (John 3:16; John 10:28; Colossians 3:4; 1John 1:4) after repenting and believing while depraved. What a sovereign, wise, intelligent, and loving God we serve! Our *God’s Heart as it Relates to Foreknowledge/Predestination* study explains in more detail why God’s foreknowledge must precede His decrees, thus refuting all forms of Calvinism, including Reformed Theology.

Christ was chosen to be Messiah; and we, due to our having been placed into Him after having exercised repentance and faith while depraved, entered into His chosenness. But we by no means, having been chosen in Him, became little Messiahs. We became “*holy and blameless*” saints, as the remainder of the verse confirms.