

Chosen Before the Foundation of the World: Ephesians 1:1-6 Explained

Scriptures for Today:

***Ephesians 1:1-6** Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: **2** Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. **3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: **4** According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: **5** Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, **6** To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*

Introduction

We are starting the book of Ephesians, the 49th book of the Bible. It has 6 chapters. It takes about 18 mins to read the entire book.

This book is written by the apostle Paul, who was formerly known as Saul. Before Paul became an apostle, he was persecuting Christians. Understand if we saw Paul today before he was saved, we would see him as an evil and wicked man.

In Acts 26, Paul said he did many things contrary to the name of Jesus Christ. Imagine if there was a man here in West Louisville who devoted his entire life to having Christians be put to death. A man that despised the name of Jesus.

Imagine if we had to always be watching and looking out for this man while we are out soul winning. Because if he finds us, he's going to have us imprisoned and try to cause us to blaspheme and deny Jesus and then have us executed.

We would look at a man that is doing such horrible things and say, "That man for sure is going to hell"

But that is a foolish thought. That shows you how limited our minds are. We don't understand the power of God. Because God looked at Saul and saw something different. He saw someone that He could transform and use greatly.

And that's exactly what happened on the road to Damascus. Saul was stopped, humbled, and called directly by Jesus Christ himself to be a minister to the gentiles.

Saul, who became Paul, went from being a persecutor to becoming a powerful preacher of the Gospel. He went from making others to suffer to someone who endured suffering for Christ's sake.

What an amazing testimony of God's unlimited power. That's why we don't get to choose who we preach the gospel to...

Throughout Paul's ministry, God used him to write a large portion of the New Testament scriptures. He helped plant many churches and laid the foundation for believers which foundation continues to stand to this day (Because it was built on Jesus Christ who is unmovable)

During Paul's missionary journey's he spent a good amount of time in the city of Ephesus.

Ephesus was a major city in Asia Minor, in the area of modern-day Turkey. The book of Ephesians is a letter written by Paul to Christians in that city.

Paul was not writing to strangers. In **Acts 18**, he visited Ephesus briefly and reasoned in the synagogue. Then in **Acts 19**, he returned and stayed for an extended time teaching and preaching—so much that the Bible says **all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus**.

The gospel spread so powerfully that it shook the city of Ephesus and stirred up major opposition because it threatened the idol worship and the business tied to it. (People were profiting from creating shrines of false gods and selling them)

In **Acts 20**, Paul later called the elders of the church of Ephesus to meet him and warned them to watch over the flock and guard against false teachers.

Ephesus was a very pagan place—full of idolatry and spiritual darkness. It was famous for the great temple of the goddess **Diana**—It was a city where false worship wasn't just tolerated, it was celebrated and built into the culture. So Christians there needed to be grounded, not just emotionally, but doctrinally.

Now fast forward: Paul eventually ends up imprisoned, and when he writes this epistle, he repeatedly calls himself a **prisoner** and an **ambassador in bonds**. So Ephesians isn't written from comfort—it's written from chains. But Paul isn't focused on his chains; he's focused on what God has done for believers in Christ. And that's why he opens this letter the way he does—by reminding them who they are, and what God has already given them.

So when we read, *"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ... to the saints..."*, we're hearing from a man who planted, labored, warned, and now writes from bonds—and he starts by reminding the Ephesians and us of God's eternal work in Christ.

Ephesians 1:1

Ephesians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

So this letter is to the saints in Ephesus, remember last week we talked about what it means to be a saint.

A saint is someone that is sanctified (cleansed, set apart, made holy) by the offering of Jesus Christ. Everyone that believes in Jesus alone for salvation is a saint. You are not a saint because of some great thing you have done in your life.

Paul is writing to believers.

"to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:"

To be faithful IN Christ Jesus means to belong to Him. You are not merely religious or near the things of God. Those who are believing IN Christ are trusting Him and His gospel. Not trusting their own works.

You are a new creature that is sealed until the day of redemption of these sinful bodies that we are in.

Those who are IN Christ, can never be removed from Christ. This is a powerful reminder in Paul's opening introduction. Not only is he writing to believers in Ephesus, but he's also writing to all of us who are IN Jesus Christ today. Are you IN Jesus Christ? Not only do you want to be IN Christ, but you want to be FAITHFUL in Christ. You want to continue to be grounded in faith and not be moved away from the hope of the gospel.

Ephesians 1:2

Ephesians 1:2 Grace *be* to you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is a continuation of Paul's greeting. Paul opens all of his letters with this same statement with slight variations.

Josh mentioned this on Thursday night but notice the order. First comes grace, then peace.

You cannot have any peace in your life without the grace of God. Grace is unmerited favor from God. Salvation is a gift that is given to you that you don't deserve. Without that gift, you will have no hope and no peace.

Imagine going through this life thinking you are just a worthless animal that evolved from a single-celled organism that was created from an explosion billions of years ago. That's what children are being taught in public schools. That is a very sad life.

How do you have peace when you believe that your life has no meaning. You are here by chance. There is no purpose.

Thank God there is a creator. Thank God for His grace that He has given to us through Jesus Christ. Now we can have true peace that passes all understanding. And you can share with others how to have that same peace by receiving the grace of God.

Ephesians 1:3

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ:

Paul opens this letter with a reminder to the Ephesians of who they are and what they have in Christ Jesus.

Remember Ephesus was spiritually dark and idolatrous. The believers there, their old identities, were tied to idols, immorality, status, and the city's religion. Paul reminds them they're not defined by that anymore.

Just like in your life, you might have done some bad things in your past. Maybe you went along with the lifestyle that the world was offering. A lifestyle of selfish gratification, chasing the lusts of your flesh.

But now that you have received the grace of God through faith. You are now **IN** Jesus Christ. You have a new identity. You no longer identify with this world. God has blessed you with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places **IN** Christ.

Think of it like a team jersey: once you put it on, you're identified with that name. When you are **in Christ**, you're identified with Him, and God blesses you because of Christ—not because you earned it.

And for that reason, we should be blessing God our Father in Heaven.

Many people want to receive blessings from God but they fail to realize that we have already received ALL spiritual blessings through Jesus.

Instead of asking God for blessings, why don't **YOU** bless God in your life.

Psalms 103:1-2 Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, *bless* HIS holy name. **2** Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not ALL his benefits:

What are all his benefits? What are these spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ? Paul starts answering that by taking us back to the source and back to the timeline. Look at verse 4...

Ephesians 1:4

Ephesians 1:4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world...

That phrase **‘According as’** is tying verse 4 to verse 3. Verse 3 said we’re blessed with all spiritual blessings **in Christ**—and verse 4 is explaining that this has always been God’s plan.

Now notice the key words: **‘chosen us in him.’** God did not choose us because of our pedigree, or because of any good works that we would do in our life. God chose us **IN** Jesus Christ. It all comes back to Him.

And then he tells us the timeline: **‘before the foundation of the world.’** This wasn’t God reacting to history. This wasn’t a last-minute rescue plan. Before God ever spoke the world into existence, He already purposed salvation in His Son.

Why did he do that? Look at the rest of the verse:

Ephesians 1:4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

Because of the great love that God has for mankind, He created us in His image, He made a way for sinful man to be holy and without blame before him.

Think about the wickedness of man. All the evil that we have done against God. We don't deserve that love, yet He still chose us in and through Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God **in him.**

I hope you are seeing this pattern that is found throughout the entire Bible. Salvation is **IN HIM**. It's not in you. Imagine thinking your faithfulness to God is what is saving you. Or your devotion to serving other people in your life. The #1 reason people think they are going to heaven is because they think they are good.

Understand, you have zero goodness of your own. You don't have a single ounce of goodness that you could squeeze out of you to present before God that He would accept.

God the Father only accepts one man's righteousness. The man Christ Jesus. You must be in Him to receive His righteousness and to be presentable to God.

Ephesians 1:5

Ephesians 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

The word **predestinated** in this verse means to be predetermined, foreordained, or decreed.

For example, if you are written into a will, you could say you are predestinated or predetermined to receive an inheritance when that person dies.

There are people that have different ideas and beliefs on verses like verse 4 and 5 where it talks about being chosen before the foundation of the world and being predestinated.

There are those who refer to themselves as Calvinists, who follow the teachings of John Calvin, it's also known as reformed theology. They believe that verses like this are teaching **individual, unconditional election**—that God made a choice to save certain individuals and the rest will never have a chance of being saved.

They also believe in the limited atonement of Jesus Christ, which means when Jesus died on the cross, He didn't pay for the sins of the whole world. His payment was limited to only those who He elected to be saved.

This is completely contrary to the Word of God. There are tons of verses that prove us being chosen or elected by God is conditional based on our faith in Jesus Christ. God gave all men a choice. You have a choice right now to believe in Jesus or to reject him. God gave you that choice. God did not create robots that He forces to follow Him. And understand He wants us to follow Him, but He does not force us.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; **4** Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

God wants all men to be saved. He has not put a limitation on who can receive the gospel.

"That whosoever believeth in him should not perish" - John 3:15

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." - Romans 10:13

" And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." - Revelation 22:17

The invitation is to all because Christ died for all. His atonement was not limited.

1 John 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world.

Romans 5:18 Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life.

Every man and woman has the opportunity to receive the free gift. It came upon **ALL MEN** unto justification of life.

So with these things in mind, Let's go back to Ephesians 1:5 and read it carefully.

Ephesians 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

Notice what Paul keeps emphasizing—the center of everything is **Jesus Christ**. He says we are predestinated “**unto the adoption of children**” “**by Jesus Christ**” and “**to himself**.” The focus of this passage is that God’s plan of salvation was settled ahead of time, and that plan is **in His Son**—that God determined beforehand that everyone who is **IN Christ** would be received as His children.

This is not individual unconditional election. This is God predetermining to adopt all who believe in His son as his own children. This is proven over and over again throughout scripture.

Galatians 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

John 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name:

1 John 5:11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Again, it does not get any clearer if you just stick to God's Words and believe what He says.

Going back to verse 5 again, why did God adopt us to himself by Jesus Christ?

Ephesians 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

It was God's Will and it pleased him to adopt everyone that received His only begotten Son.

Imagine if you provided a way for people to be saved from eternal destruction and people just spit on you and called you names and rejected that offer that you provided. It was an open invitation.

Think about how that makes God feel. His own creation rejecting Him.

But it brings God great joy when people choose to place their faith in Jesus Christ and He adopts them to be His children because of faith.

Ephesians 1:6

Ephesians 1:6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

We praise God for His grace that He has shown us!

The fact that He has given us all Spiritual blessings in heavenly places.

He chose us before the foundation of the world.

He predestinated us to be adopted unto himself as His children.

But the only reason why we are able to enjoy any of these benefits is because of one person...

"wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

Who is the beloved? It's Jesus Christ. Paul is driving home this foundational truth that Jesus Christ is everything. We are nothing without him.

So please stop acting like you are something. Stop acting like you are involved with your own salvation. Paul was making sure the Ephesians knew exactly where their salvation came from.

We must plead with this world and show them before it's too late. Plead with your family, plead with your friends, plead with strangers, let them know that there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. It's only in Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

I want you to take something away from here today. Just like Paul was reminding the Ephesians of their identity in Jesus Christ, I want you to also understand your identity.

Stop letting your identity be in other people,
in organizations,
in political parties and politicians,
in the color of your skin,
in Christian movements.

Stop identifying with all of those things, and start identifying with the one and only Savior, the beloved, the only one who can justify you before a Holy God. Identify with Jesus Christ and Him alone. You are IN Him if you believe in Him. You are no longer of this World.

Let's Pray