**Brought to Life; Brought Together**

**Our Riches in Christ**

Ephesians 1:3-6

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David Taylor

We are in our new series, Brought to Life; Brought Together, based on Paul’s letter to Ephesians so if you have your bibles turn to Ephesians 1:3-14. Last week we started the series with an introduction to the letter. Paul wrote this letter to circulate to the churches in and around Ephesus with prayer that they experience God’s grace and peace through this letter. This week we are in 1:3-14 and are looking at Our Riches in Christ.

The structure of the passage centers around the *big idea* which is found in verse three, praise God because he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ (3). Then these blessings are described: the Father chose us (4-6); the Son redeemed us (7-12); and the Spirit sealed us (13-14). Today we are going to focus on the first of the three blessings described: The Father chose us (4-6).

**The Nature of Our Blessings (3)**

The appropriate response for the blessings God has given us is praise (3). God is to be blessed because he has blessed us. To bless God means we praise him for what he has done for us, blessing us. In contrast, God blessing us means God freely and graciously showering us with spiritual blessings so that we flourish in this life.

Then Paul describes the nature of these blessings. The *source* of these blessing is God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. All blessings flow from God as our Father because of our faith in Jesus as our Lord and Christ, Messiah. In fact, Paul uses the phrase in Christ or in him or through Christ over and over again to show that the work of God in our salvation centers around Christ. Then Paul gives the *breadth* of these blessings, he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. God does not withhold any spiritual blessing from his children. He is not stingy nor is he holding out on us. We have every blessing we need to flourish. Those blessings start in eternity past and find their fulfillment in eternity future. These blessing are *spiritual*. That is, they come to us are on the spiritual plane through the Spirit and so they are in found in heavenly places. What does heavenly places mean and are they any earthly good for us? In heavenly places describes the place where Christians are seated spiritually and positioned with the exalted Christ because we are in Christ, in union with him (2:5-7). Heavenly places describe a spiritual reality that exists behind the physical realty. Since we are in Christ, every spiritual blessing are ours because we are seated with Christ in the heavenly places. Once Paul describes the nature of our blessings, he goes on to give us a detailed description of these blessings.

**The Description of the Blessings (4-14)**

The description of the blessings center around the work of the triune God. The Father chose us (4-6); the Son redeemed us (7-12); and the Spirit sealed us (13-14). Today we are going to look at God the Father choosing us (4-6). Paul tells us that *God chose us* (4), referring to the doctrine of election. Election is a doctrine that it often debated and sometimes rejected but is clearly taught throughout the whole bible. Warren Wiersbe said this about it, “Try to explain election and you may lose your mind, but try to explain it away and you may lose your soul!” You cannot avoid it and if you try, it is kind of like driving down Pioneer Avenue in the spring and trying to avoid the pot holes. You can try to avoid them but at some time you are going to hit one of them. I did not always embrace it but when I became convinced of it, my heart was overwhelmed with gratefulness that God would set his affections on me! Election is like a very dark chocolate bar that is bitter at first because it has not been diluted by milk and sugar but is very satisfying. *Election can be defined* as the act of God before creation in which he chooses some people to be saved, not on account of any foreseen merit in them, but only because of his sovereign good pleasure.[[1]](#footnote-1) All humanity deserves God’s just judgment yet God lovingly and freely chooses to save some people. Before the foundation of the world tells us *when God chose us*, before creation or time. God did not choose anyone because he saw some spark of goodness, something meritorious, or loveable in us. He chose us before anything existed. Some understand election as God looking into the future and choosing those he saw would believe in him. But that is redundant, it is not necessary for God to choose anyone if they already chose him. Additionally, God choosing someone based upon their prior choice of him makes God’s will contingent upon and subservient to the human will. But the bible describes God by nature as free and self-determined. Finally, if God is not ultimate and decisive in salvation, then we should praise and thank ourselves for our salvation but that is contrary to experience. We intuitively thank God for saving us because salvation is work of God not man. Now, the fact that God chose us does not mean that our choices are irrelevant or unnecessary, it only tells us that as we dig deeper to find the ultimate cause of faith, we find God not ourselves. Paul is saying that God is the initiator and the decisive factor in salvation. Paul then gives us the purpose of God *in choosing us*, that we stand before him at the end of time, holy and blameless (4; 5:26-27; Col 1:22). God will make you morally perfect one day. Oh, what a day that will be when the root of indwelling sin is removed. Sin will no longer be lurking in the shadows, waiting to overtake you, deceive you, or seduce you.

Then Paul describes the means by which God chose us, *he has adopted us* (5-6). The *motivation* for God adopting us is love. In love God predestined us to adoption (5). God the Father predestined or predetermined before time to adopt us as sons through Jesus Christ. There was nothing attractive within us that motivated his choice to love us or adopt us. What does adoption *mean*? In the Ancient Near East, when families did not have a son, the family would adopt a son to be the heir, inheriting everything the family owned. Sons is used because daughters did not inherit anything. As adopted sons we are heirs of God and coheirs with Christ (Rom 8:15-16) so that all that belongs to Christ, belongs to us. As if he has not made is clear that God is the initiator and decisive factor in our salvation, Paul tells us that God adopted us as sons according to the purpose of his will. Finally, Paul ends where he began, the *purpose of adoption* is praise. The ultimate goal of election, that is, the supreme reason why God did not leave all humanity in the just judgement for our sin, is so that the glory of his grace might be praised. The spiritual blessing of election and adoption is described to establish a platform on which the glory of God's saving grace might be seen and magnified and adored and praised. As Paul will elaborate in this letter, all that God does, he ultimately does, to glorify himself!

God is the initiator and decisive factor in our salvation and ring us as heirs is not meant for philosophical debate but worship, the heart overflowing with gratitude and thanks and praise for what he has done for us in Christ. We have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ, starting with God choosing us and adopting us as sons and heirs.

Questions for Life Groups:

1. What is the big idea of this passage, 1:3-14?
2. What are the implications that we have every spiritual blessing?
3. What does this passage say about worship? How does it move you to praise God?
4. What is your understanding of the doctrine of election?
5. Why should the doctrine of election lead us to praise God?
6. Why should we reflect deeply on the doctrine of adoption?
7. How is God speaking you through this passage?
8. How does this passage after the command to make disciples?

1. Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 670. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)