

Ephesians 1:3-14^{vi}

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

^{vi} About Ephesians 1:3-14

This letter was probably first circulated as an encyclical letter to a number of churches, for there is no mention of Ephesus in the many early manuscripts or in quotations from the early fathers. There are no personal greetings, and the letter seems to presuppose that the recipients do not know Paul personally (1:15, 3:2-9). The letter may possibly have been a baptismal homily for new converts.

Chapter 1 centers on the privileges of the believer's new life in Christ. After the initial greeting, the usual Pauline thanksgiving (which comes in 1:15-23) is displaced by a blessing in the form of a hymn. In Greek, verses 3-14 are one long sentence, linked by relative clauses and prepositional phrases. The hymn is trinitarian in emphasis, framed by the repeated phrase "the praise of his glorious grace" (1:6, the Father; 1:12, the Son; 1:14, the Holy Spirit), and centered about the revelation of God in Christ. Just as Christ's mission of redemption was not a belated stop-gap measure on God's part but rather part of God's will for all time, so likewise the believer has been chosen to participate in that mission since "before the foundation of the world" (v. 4).

"The mystery of his will" (v. 9) is not an incomprehensible secret, but God's age-long purpose now revealed in Christ. God's aim is the unity of all things, heavenly and earthly, in Christ. The ultimate cosmic re-unification is to be shown forth on earth by the unity in the Church of Jew and Gentile (3:4-6). The individual believer appropriates a role in the Church through baptism, the sealing with the Holy Spirit, as the down payment on his new life (2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5; Romans 8:23).