



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Blessed and Chosen (Ephesians 1:1-14)

18 JANUARY 2011

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Capitol Commission state directors are pastors/missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for legislators, lobbyists, and staff members. These Bible studies are hand-distributed to each legislative office, emailed, and made available throughout the Capitol community. The love and grace of God compels us to proclaim the truth of the Gospel with a heartfelt compassion for the Capitol community, to faithfully teach and apply the Word of God, and it is our desire to build meaningful relationships that bear fruit for an eternity to come.

Bible studies are held Tuesday mornings at 7:15am for legislators, lobbyists, and staff. All Senate and House Members—all Democrats and all Republicans—are invited for a time of study and prayer on Tuesday mornings. The weekly Bible study is nonpartisan and non-denominational. The study for the 2011 General Assembly is the Book of Ephesians. I pray that this study will be edifying to you. I am here to serve you and to be a resource for prayer and counsel. Please accept my study in the Word of God, as an evidence of my desire to be serving you.

With the Bible as our foundation and authority, the mission of Capitol Commission is obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) within the Capitol communities of the world. We are not a lobbying group attempting to garner votes or reform society. Our mandate is to see the hearts and lives of elected officials transformed with the Word of God. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through the verse-by-verse teaching of Scripture. In the Bible, we see God's great love for the world, especially for those who have been placed in authority. This is the foundation for our ministry to you.

The church is instructed to submit and to honor government leaders (Rom 13:1-7), and as a matter of first importance, to pray for their eternal salvation (1 Tim 2:1-4). The desire of Capitol Commission is to witness God transform the hearts and lives of elected officials, lobbyists, and staff members. We apply this mandate to four major areas of making disciples: (1) *evangelize* those who have not experienced saving faith in Jesus Christ; (2) *establish* those who desire to grow in their faith and knowledge of Scripture; (3) *equip* those called to spiritual leadership; and, (4) *encourage* churches to participate with us in ministry.

Introduction

The Apostle Paul is identified as the author of the Epistle to the Ephesians in the opening words (1:1) and again in 3:1. If Romans is the most systematic and doctrinal epistle written by Paul, then Ephesians may be regarded as perhaps the most elegant. Ephesians

was written approximately AD 61, during Paul's two-year imprisonment in Rome. Ephesians was written as a circular letter to be read by several local churches in the region of Ephesus. On Paul's second missionary journey, he was "forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia" (Acts 16:6), but was able to journey to Ephesus upon returning from Corinth (19:1). Paul accomplished his greatest missionary work in Ephesus.

Ephesus was renowned for the city's art and culture. The worship of Diana (Gk. *Artemis*), the ancient Asian moon goddess and huntress, was especially prevalent; however, it was predominantly a commercial religion, or even a dishonest moneymaking scheme because the temple of Diana was the general bank of Asia (since it was believed that the goddess protected money deposited there). The people lived immoral lives because their gods were characterized by immorality. When the gospel was proclaimed in Ephesus, the worship of Diana was so well established that the inhabitants did not believe there would be any impact upon the city (19:35). The proclamation of the gospel would not only overturn the worship of Diana at Ephesus, but also the grand idolatry of the powerful Roman Empire.

Teaching with regard to the body of Christ was presented to the Ephesians as a new truth revealed by God. The revelation was called a "mystery" (Eph 3:3) because it was something previously unknown, but was now revealed by God through the writing of Ephesians. The fundamental aspect of this new teaching was that a distinction no longer existed between the Jew and Gentile. Consequently, a new society was established. Prior to the establishment of the church at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:1-4), the Gentiles became Jewish proselytes. The mystery of Christ is that God is presently working through a new society—the church—to accomplish His purpose and will.

ACCORDING TO THE NEW TESTAMENT, ALL BELIEVERS—MALE AND FEMALE, YOUNG AND OLD, POOR AND RICH, SIMPLE AND WISE—ARE SAINTS BY THE GRACE OF GOD.

According to the New Testament, all believers—male and female, young and old, poor and rich, simple and wise—are saints by the grace of God. They have been sanctified by faith for God's special purposes. Sainthood does not occur by years of diligent effort; rather, one becomes a saint by the spiritual regeneration and transformation

that occurs at the beginning of conversion. The church at Ephesus was taught many aspects with regard to the Christian life. Saints have “every spiritual blessing” through faith in Christ (Eph 1:1-3). In our study of Ephesians, we will learn how to praise God (1:4-14), how to pray (1:15-23), how believers are made alive in Christ (2:1-22), how believers are empowered by Christ (3:1-21), how to edify one another (4:1-32), how to live in a manner pleasing to God (5:1-17), how to be controlled by the Holy Spirit (5:18-21), how to function in marriage and family relationships (5:22—6:4), how to conduct ourselves in work (6:5-9), and how to escape sin and live victoriously (6:10-24).

THE BLESSING OF GOD’S CHOOSING

(1:1-14) Scripture teaches to two truths which appear to be an apparent contradiction, but which are in perfect agreement. The two truths affirm the sovereign work of God in salvation, and human responsibility. To state these two truths propositionally, the form would be:

1. God is sovereign so that He is just in commanding the moral actions of humanity as either good or evil.
2. Humanity is responsible to God for all moral actions.

The truth of God’s sovereignty does not negate human responsibility. The two truths are not contradictory because they assert something with regard to wholly different subjects. In verses 3-14 of chapter 1, the sovereignty of God is emphasized in relation to the faith of those in Christ.

Verses 3-14 were written as one sentence because the thoughts are related. In the English translation, the passage is divided into five sentences to make the verses more readable. The one continuing sentence in verses 3-14 praises the triune God for what He has accomplished in salvation. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are intricately involved in the sovereign work of God’s salvation. In verses 3-6, the focus is upon God the Father; in verses 7-12, the focus is upon God the Son; and, in verses 13-14, the emphasis is upon the Holy Spirit.

IN HIS VERY CHARACTER AND BEING, GOD IS BLESSED.

Verse 3 is prefatory for the theme of Ephesians. The Greek word (*eulogētos*) translated “blessed” is used only in reference to God; it refers to Him as the one who is worthy of adoration, praise, and worship. In His very character and being, God is blessed. God the Father is identified in the context of Jesus Christ. The primary emphasis for the redeemed is upon Jesus Christ and His substitutionary atonement on behalf of sinners.

The believer’s relationship to God the Father is also addressed. The redeemed have a relationship to God the Father by virtue of their relationship to Jesus Christ. Therefore, God the Father is seen in the context of His relationship to Jesus Christ, and believers are seen in the context of their relationship to Christ. It is through Jesus Christ that believers have a relationship to God the Father. God is the one “who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ.” He who is blessed in his very character and being bestows blessings upon others. God acts (blessing) and believers are the recipients of the action. All spiritual blessings come from God but they do so only in Christ. Throughout this passage, the phrase “in Christ” or “in Him” is repeated which is to emphasize the uniqueness of the gospel, where God saves men in Christ and in no other manner.

The one who is the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ has also placed the elect as sons by virtue of their relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus remains the unique Son of God in a manner that is true of no other, yet the elect receive the prerogatives of sonship. They receive a role as sons in the context of God the Father. As a redeemed person, the elect may truly address God as Father.

Verses 3-14 use some redundancy. Grace is referenced as freely bestowed, which is true by definition. When sinners stand redeemed before the presence of God, all attention will be focused on God to the effect of praising His glory. One of the evidences of true redemption is that those in Christ are in that process already. The redeemed are to have an appreciation of the overwhelming greatness of God’s grace and be living in a manner glorifying to Him. The essential character of grace is expressed as “freely bestowed . . . in the Beloved.”

The redeemed have redemption through the blood of Christ. The present tense verb, *echomen* (“we have”), indicates that redemption is a continuous possession; it is not hypothetical. There is no reason for suspicion with regard to God’s goodness and grace. The riches of His grace are lavished upon believers. God’s character is to bless, and redemption is His gracious provision. The spiritual blessings in Christ include: heavenly citizenship, election, adoption, redemption, forgiveness, revelation and wisdom, completion, inheritance, and glorification. The evidence of God’s spiritual blessings is confidence, empowerment, hope, peace, assurance, and sanctity.

The purpose for God’s choosing and blessing is “to the praise of His glory.” How does one become a child of God? Hearing the gospel, believing the gospel, and being sealed by the Holy Spirit. What a glorious inheritance and opportunity granted to those who hear, believe, and are sealed.