

BRIARCLIFF CHURCH

Small Group Study Guide: Ephesians

Weeks of September 3 & 11 (Weeks 1 & 2)

Ephesians 1:1-14



OVERALL SUMMARY

The Letter to the Ephesians is a circular letter written by Paul during his first Roman imprisonment in A.D. 60-62. In this letter, Paul tells the larger story of God's salvific work and narrows down to show how the Gentiles were included along with the Jews in God's salvific scheme to build a new believing community – the church. The broad focus on salvation narrows down to the salvation of the Gentiles. Paul's focus then shifts to how individual believers should relate with one another in the church, with Christ, with one's spouse, as children and parents, as slaves and master, and finally with the spiritual forces. Eric C. Redmond rightly notes that "Ephesians explains the theology of the inclusion of those formerly outside the covenant with Israel. Believing Jews and Gentiles in Ephesus are part of a larger design. The church will transform marriage, work, parenting, and morality of her members."

BIG IDEA

Our salvation is a magnificent work of the Triune God who bestows on us all the spiritual blessings, therefore, we ought to praise and glorify Him.

OVERVIEW OF THE TEXT

In this passage, Paul shows believers God's blueprint (keyword: "will" – verses 1, 5, 9, & 11) and the execution of salvation thereby making believers in His people. Central to God carrying out His plan (will) of salvation is "Christ." The phrase "in Christ" (or relating to Christ: "in him," "in the Beloved") occurs ten times in this passage. This passage sets the stage for the new identity in Christ for both the Jews and the Gentiles (chs. 2 & 3). The new identity in Christ is spiritual and transcends the material blessings, thus all the blessings we enjoy in Christ are spiritual blessings.

OBSERVING THE TEXT

Starting with God

1. What does this week's passage tell you about the character or attributes and work of the Triune God? Read Eph. 1:1-14 and find out what the passage says about who God is and what He did in our salvation.

CONNECTING WITH OTHER TEXT

1. According to Ex. 19:5 (see also Deut. 7:6; 26:18; Mal. 3:17) and Gen. 15:18-21 (see also Ex. 3:8; Deut. 26:1-3), God's promise used to be applied exclusively to Israel. But, according to Eph. 1:3-14; Heb. 9:15, & 1 Pet. 1:4, to whom is this promise applied? What is the nature of this promise?
2. Compare Deut. 7:7-8 (see also Deut. 10:15; Hos. 11:1; Mal. 1:2) and Rom. 9:11-13 with Eph. 1:4-5. What themes do you see in these passages?
3. In Gen. 15:7-21, God promised Abraham that he would receive the promised inheritance. Thus, God himself sealed the covenant. What similarity do we find in Eph. 1:13-14 regarding our salvation?

APPLYING THE TEXT

1. Paul addressed the believers as "saints and faithful in Christ Jesus" (v. 1). He also says in verse 4 that God chose us before the foundation of the world that "we should be holy and blameless before him." How are you living out the titles (v. 1) and the purpose to which God called you (v. 4)?
2. In verses 3-14, Paul repeatedly mentions the phrase "to the praise of his glory." How can we as individuals and community of believers live to the praise of God's glory?

3. What is the message of verses 13-14, and in what way is the message helpful to our Christian walk?

DAILY PRAYER GUIDE

The Epistle to the Ephesians was written to believers in Christ whom Paul calls *God's saints*. If you are *faithful in Christ Jesus*, God wants you to enjoy his grace and peace from God our Father.

Monday: We have a new identity in Christ. *He has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places*. We have a dual citizenship; one is temporary and the other is eternal. During the day, set aside a few minutes to remind yourself of your identity in Christ.

Tuesday: How do you feel about being *chosen in him to be holy and blameless*? Tell the Lord how you feel and what you will do and how you will act.

Wednesday: God has *blessed us in Christ...and ... he chose us in him*. What do you think God's purpose is in choosing us in him? Stop for a moment and think about that. How will you walk (live) in that purpose today?

Thursday: Consider your inheritance in him. Think about how rich you are. Everything we have in this world is temporary, but our inheritance is forever. What does that mean to you and how will you now live?

Friday: When you *believed in him, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit ... the guarantee of your inheritance*. What a gift! Think about that through the day.

For more resources, visit www.briarcliff.church/ephesians