
MELANIE COGDILL

I am a poster child for the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. In other words, I'm a meme for predestination. When I think of God predestining me, a third-generation Japanese American whose grandparents were non-English speaking, devout Buddhist immigrants from Japan, the "odds" were against me ever being adopted by God. But God takes the impossible situation, a 4-year-old kid baptized by (at the time) non-believing parents in a church that did not recognize Scripture as the Word of God, and turns that life of an undeserving sinner into something for the praise of His glorious grace (Eph. 1:6).

I don't think I'm the only meme for the doctrine of predestination. Every believer in the household of God is one too. As I make my journey to the Celestial City through this broken world, and many times as I've faced adversity, trials, suffering, or the overwhelming mundane tasks and details of life, I literally remind myself of Ephesians 1 and the spiritual blessings I have in Christ.

The forgiveness of my sins is not merely a judicial and theological transaction, it's so much more. God has lavished the riches of His grace upon me (Eph. 1:8). His grace is extravagant (Eph. 1:7). And my presence in the household of God is almost hard to fathom since Ephesians 1 reminds me that God had set His affection and love upon me from the time before I even existed (Eph. 1:4).

My story is not unique. Each believer can share the wonder and marvel of being called a child of God. And as we marvel at our salvation, we can eagerly await the day in which all things in heaven and earth will be united in Christ (Eph. 1:10).

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WEEK ONE

Ephesians 1:1-14

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CHRISTINA FOX
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Do you remember learning the parts of speech in English class? While not everyone would consider herself a grammarian, we know enough about our language to know words have specific functions. We know we need certain words to make up a sentence. We also know without certain types of words, our sentences lack meaning.

There is a critical part of speech that comes up repeatedly in the passage we are reading this week and is found throughout the book of Ephesians. It's an overlooked and even taken-for-granted part of speech, but it plays an important role. As you study Ephesians 1:1-14 this week, keep an eye out for the little word "in." This two-letter word is essential to this passage and our salvation! Paul shows us the glory of being "in" Christ.

Jesus came to earth, took on flesh, and united Himself to us in our humanity. He lived a perfect life, obeying God in all things. He died a sacrificial death, taking the punishment we deserved for sin. Because He was sinless, the grave could not hold Him, and He rose triumphant on the third day. He ascended into heaven, where He now lives to intercede for us. Through the gift of faith in who Jesus is and what He has done for us, we are united to Him. His righteousness is now ours. God looks at us and sees Christ's righteousness, not our sin. His resurrection from the grave is ours. Paul said in Colossians, we have "been raised with Christ" (3:1).

*WHEN WE ARE IN CHRIST,
EVERY PART OF CHRIST'S
LIFE, NOT ONLY HIS DEATH,
HAS SIGNIFICANCE FOR US.
WE SHARE IN HIS LIFE AND
OBEDIENCE, HIS DEATH,
AND HIS RESURRECTION,
EVEN HIS ASCENSION.¹*

Rankin Wilbourne

All we think of in terms of our salvation hinges on our union with Christ. Our salvation is "in Christ." Our sanctification is "in Christ." Our future glorification is "in Christ." It's essential to what it means to be a Christian.

MEMORY VERSE:

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, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. ~ Ephesians 1:3-4

OPENING PRAYER:

Father, I thank You for Your Word. It is true and brings life to me. As I begin to study Your Word, I pray You will remove distractions and help me to focus my mind and heart on what You have to teach me. Spirit, be at work, instructing, convicting, and sanctifying me through this lesson.

DAY 1: Ephesians 1:1-2

Underline the words or phrases that stand out to you.

¹Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: ²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- 1. How did Paul describe himself? Why do you think he said he was an apostle “by the will of God”?**
- 2. To whom was this letter written, and how did Paul describe them?**
- 3. How did he greet them? What is the source of “grace” and “peace”?**

HINGED MIND: THINKING BIBLICALLY

Letter writing is a relic of the past. These days, we send emails, text messages, or messages through social media. Little care is given to how we greet a person, and often we rush to the meat of the message. In Paul's day, letters followed a typical pattern. The beginning of a letter announced who was writing the letter and to whom it was written. It also included a blessing of some kind.² Paul transformed the normal cultural greeting in his letter with an emphasis on who he was and who the Ephesians had become because of God. In Paul's opening statements to the church in Ephesus, he identified himself as an "apostle of Jesus Christ." An apostle was someone who received a direct call from Christ to serve Him.

4. Read Acts 9:1-19. What was Paul (Saul) doing on the road to Damascus, and what did Jesus say to him?

Paul described the Ephesians as "saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus." Saint means "set apart." Christians are saints set apart for God's purposes. Through faith in Christ's work for us, we've been saved, redeemed, and rescued from sin. "In Christ" we have been set apart, and the Holy Spirit is making us holy and sanctifying us to be more like Christ.

**5. Read Philippians 1:1, Colossians 1:2, 1 Corinthians 1:2.
The church in Corinth was not known to be a healthy church, yet how did Paul address them?**

SAINTHOOD IS NOT A SPIRITUAL ATTAINMENT OR EVEN A RECOGNITION OF SUCH ATTAINMENT. IT IS RATHER A STATE OR STATUS INTO WHICH GOD BRINGS EVERY BELIEVER. ALL CHRISTIANS ARE SAINTS.³

Jerry Bridges

These saints in Ephesus were faithful in Christ. Their trust and hope were rooted in who Christ was for them, and they responded in obedience.⁴ They were living out their set-apartness of who they were because of who Jesus is and what He has done.

HINGED HEART: LIVING COVENANTALLY

Just as we often do with an email, in reading the Bible, we often rush through the first introductory verses. The question is, how does this impact our lives today?

- 6. In what ways was Paul's life transformed through the work of Christ in him? How do you see the transforming work of Christ in you?**

- 7. We tend to notice things that are set apart. The Christians in Ephesus probably stood out from the culture around them. People likely noticed their set-apartness. In what ways might people in your circles see your set-apartness?**

***DAY 2:* Ephesians 1:3-6**

Underline the words or phrases that stand out to you.

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

- 1. What do you think the word "blessing" or "blessed" means?**

- 2. What verbs did Paul use in explaining these blessings?**

HINGED MIND: THINKING BIBLICALLY

Verses 3-14 are part of one very long sentence in the Greek and together make up a doxology of praise to God.⁵ The word “blessed” in verse three is *eulogētos* in the Greek and means to speak well of or to praise. It is only used in the Bible in reference to God.⁶ Paul used every form of this word in these verses. Paul wanted the Ephesians and us to bless or praise God for His blessings to us in Christ.

What has He done for us?

- **He chose us in Christ (v. 4).**
- **He made us holy and blameless (v. 4).**
- **He predestined us to be adopted as His children (v. 5).**
- **He gave us His grace in Christ (v. 6).**

HINGED HEART: LIVING COVENANTALLY

As we'll see in the next chapter, God has gone to great lengths to bring us to Himself—and all out of love! Let's take some time to consider God's love for us in Christ by focusing on one of the spiritual blessings we have through our union with Him: adoption. I've walked with several friends through this process, and they all went to great lengths to adopt their children.

I once attended an adoption proceeding, where friends adopted a set of siblings. The judge had them stand before him, and he declared them to be adopted. They were given a new name. They now have all the rights and privileges of being a part of my friend's family. They call my friend “Mom” and her husband “Dad.” When they are hungry, they are fed. When they are hurt, they run for help.

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* describes our adoption into God's family like this:

All those that are justified, God vouchsafeth, in and for his only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption; by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God; have his name put upon them; receive the Spirit of adoption; have access to the throne of grace with boldness; are enabled to cry, Abba, Father; are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by him as by a father; yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption, and inherit the promises, as heirs of everlasting salvation.⁷

- 3. Using the benefits listed in the WCF quote above, compare (on the next page) what life was like before your adoption (before your salvation) and what it is like now that you are in Christ:**

BEFORE YOUR ADOPTION	AFTER YOUR ADOPTION

DAY 3: Ephesians 1:7-10

Underline the words or phrases that stand out to you.

⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

1. What additional spiritual blessings do we have in Christ?

2. What verb did Paul use to tell us God gave us redemption and forgiveness (v. 8)? Why do you think Paul used that verb?

HINGED MIND: THINKING BIBLICALLY

This redemption points back in time to the exodus, when God's people were rescued from slavery in Egypt: "Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians'" (Ex. 6:6-7).

The story of the exodus foreshadowed all Christ would do for us at the cross. Christ is the Passover Lamb, sacrificed to atone for our sins. He led us out of slavery to sin. He paid the price for our sin, so we would be forgiven and restored into right relationship with God. He is the ultimate mediator, greater than Moses. He is our Deliverer, who leads us not to a land, but to eternity in heaven with Him.

BY HIS DEATH ON THE CROSS, CHRIST HAS JUSTLY PURCHASED US BACK FOR GOD AT THE COST OF HIS OWN BLOOD (1:7). HE HAS DEALT WITH OUR GUILT, TO BRING US PARDON; HE HAS OVERCOME THE COSMIC FORCES OF DARKNESS WHICH BOUND US, HE HAS DIED TO THE REIGN OF SIN THAT MASTERED US, AND RISEN IN TRIUMPH OVER ALL HIS AND OUR ENEMIES.⁸

Sinclair Ferguson

3. Read 1 Peter 1:18-21 and John 1:29. How do these passages describe who Christ is and what He has done?

4. Read Deuteronomy 18:15 and Hebrews 3:1-6. What makes Christ greater than Moses?

Growing up, I wanted to be Nancy Drew, following the hidden clues and solving mysteries no one else could solve. While mysteries are fun to read and attempt to figure out, in this passage, the mystery Paul referred to is not a puzzle waiting for us to solve; rather, it is a secret that only God can make known.⁹ What is that secret? To unite all things in Christ.

The Old Testament contains some hints of this mystery. They are revealed in bits and pieces. We see foreshadowings of God's plan of redemption, but it's not clear. Like Moses, there are types of Christs seen throughout the Old Testament. It isn't until the New Testament God reveals His plan in full. This is what Jesus explained to the disciples on the way to Emmaus: "'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:25-27). Imagine what it was like, to hear Christ explain the mystery of God's plan to use Him to save His people from their sins!

5. Read Colossians 2:2-3. What is the mystery of God?

6. Read Ephesians 3:8-10. What is the church's responsibility with the mystery?

HINGED HEART: LIVING COVENANTALLY

We are rich in Christ. He has "lavished" on us spiritual blessings and revealed to us the secret mystery of redemption in His Son. He saved us from our sins and made us His. Like the Israelites who tasted the riches of God's grace during their exodus and quickly forgot all God had done, we too forget God's great love for us in Christ; we forget the riches of His grace. Instead, we live like we are in poverty. We live like spiritual paupers, begging for nourishment from counterfeit sources, rather than feasting on the abundance God has provided for us in His Son.

7. What does it mean to you to have forgiveness and redemption from sin?

8. Write down all the ways you are rich in Christ.

DAY 4: Ephesians 1:11-14

Underline the words or phrases that stand out to you.

¹¹In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹²so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

1. What are the additional spiritual blessings we've been given?

2. Paul mentioned twice in verses 11 and 14 the purpose of what God has done. What is the purpose?

HINGED MIND: THINKING BIBLICALLY

What do you think of when you hear the word *inheritance*? I can't help but think of money passed on to me or the set of fine china we inherited from my husband's grandmother. These inheritances were tangible things, things I could touch and hold and use.

Paul was referring to the spiritual inheritance we have through our union with Christ. It is an inheritance shared between both Jews (v.12) and Gentiles (v.13), a fulfillment of the promise made to Abram: "And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:1-2). With our spiritual inheritance, we have access to part of it now. It's like a down payment, a preview of the full inheritance to come.

SO, WHETHER WE REALIZE IT OR NOT, WE ARE VERY INTIMATELY CONNECTED WITH THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT, BECAUSE WHENEVER WE ARE DRAWN TO CHRIST AS SAVIOR, LED TO WORSHIP CHRIST AS LORD, MADE TO BEHOLD CHRIST AS GLORIOUS, WE ARE BEING OPERATED ON BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.¹⁰

Kevin DeYoung

3. Read Romans 8:17, Galatians 3:28-29, 4:7, and Ephesians 3:6. What do you learn through these verses about being an heir?

4. Read these verses and identify the Holy Spirit's work in us.

John 3:3, 5, 8	
John 14:26	
Romans 8:16	
Galatians 5:22-23	
1 Corinthians 12:7-11	

HINGED HEART: LIVING COVENANTALLY

I don't know about you, but I spend a lot of time thinking about the future. So, how often do I consider my inheritance to come in eternity? The Bible doesn't spend a lot of time talking about the exact details of what to expect in eternity. Nevertheless, do we look forward to going home? We know it is a place where sin is no more; sorrow and suffering have ceased. We will see Christ face to face.

Read the following passages and meditate on them:

- **1 Peter 1:3-5**
- **2 Peter 3:11-13**
- **James 2:5**
- **Revelation 21:1-4**

DAY 5: Ephesians 1:1-14

Reread Ephesians 1:1-14 and review what you have learned this week.

- 1. List all the spiritual blessings you have “in Christ.”**

- 2. This passage refers to each member of the Trinity. What did Paul say about each of Them?**

HINGED MIND: THINKING BIBLICALLY

Being “in Christ” is fundamental to what it means to be a Christian. It’s so important to the apostle Paul, he uses it over 160 times in his letters.¹¹ As Wilbourne wrote, “But being in Christ is to discover our true, God-given identity. You are alive in him, moving with him through this world, clothed in all his benefits and blessings. You are in Christ.”¹² The spiritual blessings we have through this union are that we are chosen, justified, redeemed, forgiven, adopted, sanctified, and so much more. No wonder Paul burst out in a doxology!

- 3. Read 1 Corinthians 1:2, 2 Corinthians 5:17, and Colossians 2:6-7. What are some other benefits we have from being “in Christ?”**

In Jesus’s High Priestly Prayer in John 17, Jesus began the prayer by praying for Himself, then His disciples, and finally, in verses 20-26, He prayed for those who would come to faith later—us.

4. What do you learn about your union with Christ from this passage?

HINGED HEART: LIVING COVENANTALLY

Paul used several metaphors to describe union with Christ. He compared it to marriage in Ephesians 5. He also compared our union to God's temple (1 Cor. 3). He even described our union as clothing we wear (Eph. 4, Gal. 3:27). One important metaphor is the human body. "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12).

In this metaphor, the Church is the body, and Christ is the head. Each member of the Church makes up different parts of the body. We are individual members, united together into one body. We are united to Christ and also united to one another. We are adopted children of the Father and are all siblings in the household of God. We will spend eternity with one another, loving and worshiping our Savior.

5. Read Hebrew 13:3 and Romans 12:15. What does our union with one another have to do with others' suffering?
6. Read 2 Corinthians 13:11, Colossians 3:13, and 1 Peter 3:8. Because we are united to Christ and one another, how do we treat each other in the church?

*WE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT AS LONG AS CHRIST REMAINS OUTSIDE OF US, AND WE ARE SEPARATED FROM HIM, ALL THAT HE HAS SUFFERED AND DONE FOR THE SALVATION OF THE HUMAN RACE REMAINS USELESS AND OF NO VALUE FOR US. THEREFORE, TO SHARE WITH US WHAT HE HAS RECEIVED FROM THE FATHER, HE HAD TO BECOME OURS AND TO DWELL WITHIN US . . . ALL THAT HE POSSESSES IS NOTHING TO US UNTIL WE GROW INTO ONE BODY WITH HIM.*¹³

John Calvin

As we finish out this week in Ephesians 1:1-14, aren't you amazed by the grace of God for you in Christ? What wondrous blessings we've received! Through faith in Christ, we are united to Him. He makes His home in us, and all He has is ours. It's almost too much to wrap our minds around!

The God of the universe wrapped Himself in flesh so He could live the perfect life we could not live, die the death we deserved, and triumphed over the grave. His righteousness is ours. His death is ours. His resurrection is ours. We are now adopted into His family and have all the rights of a child of God. We have the Spirit working in us to make us more like Christ each day. And eternity awaits us, where all the blessings will be revealed in full.



CLOSING PRAYER:



Father, as I soak in the truths of what it means to be “in Christ,” I am wonderstruck. You have chosen, saved, redeemed, forgiven, sanctified, and united me to my brothers and sisters. It will take me an eternity to plumb the depths of Your grace and to relish the joy of my union with Christ. Forgive me for all the times I forget and live independently and like an orphan, rather than Your child. I pray You will help me grasp my union with You and live this truth out for Your glory.

END NOTES

¹ Rankin Wilbourne, *Union with Christ: The Way to Know and Enjoy God* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2016), 45.

² Sinclair Ferguson, *Let's Study Ephesians* (Edinburgh, UK: Banner of Truth: 2005), 1.

³ Jerry Bridges, “Are You A Saint?” <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/are-you-a-saint/>, July 28, 2012.

⁴ Ferguson, 4.

⁵ James Strong, *The New Strong's Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010), Strong's number 2127-2128.

⁶ Ferguson, 7.

⁷ Chapter 12, *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Lawrenceville, GA: CDM, 2007), 56.

⁸ Ferguson, 14.

⁹ Ferguson, 12.

¹⁰ Kevin DeYoung, “Theological Primer: The Holy Spirit” <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/theological-primer-holy-spirit/>, April 19, 2016.

¹¹ Lewis B. Smedes, *Union with Christ: A Biblical View of the New Life in Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 55. Referenced in Rankin Wilbourne, *Union with Christ: The Way to Know and Enjoy God* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2016), 87.

¹² Wilbourne, 48.

¹³ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), Book 3, Ch 1.

 **Journaling Space**

