

## Ephesians 1:3-14

<sup>3</sup>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.

<sup>4</sup>He did this when he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, so that we would be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup>he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ. He did this in accordance with the good purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup>and for the praise of his glorious grace, which he has graciously given us in the one he loves.

<sup>7</sup>In him we also have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in keeping with the riches of his grace, <sup>8</sup>which he lavished on us in all wisdom and insight. <sup>9</sup>He made known to us the mystery of his will in keeping with his good purpose, which he planned in Christ. <sup>10</sup>This was to be carried out when the time had fully come, in order to bring all things together in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth.

<sup>11</sup>In him we have also obtained an inheritance, because we were predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in keeping with the purpose of his will. <sup>12</sup>He did this so that his glory would be praised as a result of us, who were the first to hope in Christ.

<sup>13</sup>In him, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and in him, when you also believed, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. <sup>14</sup>He is the down payment of our inheritance until the redemption of God's own possession, so that his glory would be praised.

## Sealed in Christ

It's always a good idea to authenticate important documents. Long ago, kings would wear a signet ring so they could make an impression in wax to authenticate the most important documents. Since the ring was always on the king's hand, it seemed reasonable that forgery of official documents would be difficult, at best.

The concept has continued today. While a business deal might be unofficially sealed with a handshake, a signature with witnesses is the approved way to authenticate. Sometimes a notary might be involved in witnessing the signature and putting an official stamp on the document. Government documents have the official seal crimped into the special paper to assure that this copy is, indeed, authentic. Certain church documents are also crimped with an official seal.

It is important to determine that information is certified and true. God wants us to have that same kind of certainty concerning our salvation. After enumerating the details of the contract we find you are **Sealed in Christ**.

### *I. By God's decision*

Contracts are usually drawn up by a third party. Lawyers work out the exact wording to make sure that everything is in compliance with the law. Contracts between governments are drawn up by diplomats who try to wring every last concession from the other government before the leaders sit down and put their signatures to the document.

You are **Sealed in Christ** totally by God's decision. There is something striking about verse 4. In the Greek the words "he chose" and "in love" bracket everything else in the verse. Most

English translations, including the EHV, put “in love” at the beginning of the next sentence. English sentence structure doesn’t bracket the thought the way the Greek. The verse could be translated: “For in love he chose us in him [Jesus] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight” (Ephesians 1:4).

Two things jump out at you when you translate that way. This contract for your election to eternity was drawn up totally by *God’s* choice out of his boundless love. Now you can look at the rest of the circumstances Paul records in this verse. God made this loving choice “before the creation of the world.” The events of Genesis 1-2 certainly happened, just as the only eye-witness— God— said they did. Yet even before he said the first “Let there be” God knew that you would need rescue. Before you ever came to be, God chose *you*; certainly there was nothing about you that could influence his decision in the vastness of eternity, yet he chose you in his love.

There is still more in verse 4 that is striking. He chose you to be “holy and blameless in his sight.” Even in eternity, God’s plan was sure and certain. Jesus would come and would do the work to establish the facts of this contract. With that fully completed, there remains nothing in us that could possibly deserve punishment.

In verse 5 Paul says: “He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ. He did this in accordance with the good purpose of his will” (Ephesians 1:5, EHV). God *hates* what is evil with a righteous hatred. Only one who is perfect and holy could be part of God’s family. We weren’t born perfect and holy, we had to be made that way, so God adopted us by means of Jesus’ blamelessness and holiness. Just as is the case today, at the time of the Roman Empire it was commonplace to adopt so that an individual would have a full claim to inheritance. At that time girls couldn’t inherit, which is why Paul says all believers were adopted as “sons.” This means that each person, male and female alike, chosen and elected by God are full, legal inheritors of eternal life.

Adopted children know in a very special way that they were wanted. If it weren’t the case, they would have never been adopted. Their parents “chose” to bring them in to the family. God wants us to be absolutely certain to understand this is the case with us, too. Scripture calls our natural human condition “dead” in our trespasses and sins. Dead people can’t do anything for themselves. Jesus said very clearly: “You did not choose me, but I chose you” (John 15:16, EHV).

## *II. According to God’s plan*

The details of God’s plan are sprinkled throughout these verses. Verse 11 says: “In him we have also obtained an inheritance, because we were predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in keeping with the purpose of his will.” (Ephesians 1:11, EHV). We’ve said that before eternity God planned salvation. He not only elected you and me to be part of his family, he set in motion the very thing that would make it possible. Every sin in the world would need to be paid for so that God could declare us righteous.

So, in conformity with his purpose, God’s plan was “to be carried out when the time had fully come, in order to bring all things together in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth” (Ephesians 1:10, EHV). Jesus was the One to bring God’s plan to fruition. He is the head of all things. He is the perfect Prophet, Priest and King who made God’s plan possible.

Here is the essence of God’s plan: “<sup>7</sup>In him we also have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in keeping with the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:7, EHV). Sin is serious. Sin demands a life as payment. All the Old Testament sacrifices were designed to reinforce this very concept. None of those sacrifices of the Ceremonial Law really accomplished forgiveness.

Rather, they pointed ahead to the one sacrifice that really was necessary— the blood of the perfect Lamb, the very Son of God, our Lord Jesus. God the Father’s righteous demand was that every single sin, every tiny infraction of his law, be fully covered by blood— the blood of Jesus.

Would you have come up with something like that if you were crafting the plan of salvation? I wouldn’t either. But this was “in keeping with the riches of his grace, <sup>8</sup>which he lavished on us in all wisdom and insight. <sup>9</sup>He made known to us the mystery of his will in keeping with his good purpose, which he planned in Christ” (Ephesians 1:7-9, EHV).

God’s plan is a mystery, developed in his wisdom and understanding. God revealed the mystery to us. He revealed the fact that Jesus did everything during his earthly life in fulfillment of the plan, so that we might have eternity in heaven with him.

None-the-less, God hasn’t seen fit to explain every tiny detail about this mysterious plan of salvation to human beings. That which he hasn’t explained is something we are *not* to try to logically deduce. We take what he says about things— nothing more, nothing less— and leave everything else to his direction. After all, his mysterious plan was developed in all wisdom and understanding.

Believe what he *does* tell us about the plan. He says: “In him, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and in him, when you also believed, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. <sup>14</sup>He is the down payment of our inheritance until the redemption of God’s own possession, so that his glory would be praised” (Ephesians 1:13-14, EHV).

God has not given a list of names of the elect which we can consult to determine whether or not we are on the list. We cannot look behind the scenes to see whether in eternity God was thinking about me.

However, God *has* given a description of the elect. Do you walk in the light? John writes: “If we walk in the light, just as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7, EHV). Are you blameless and holy before God? Paul says: “Who will bring an accusation against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies! <sup>34</sup>Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus, who died and, more than that, was raised to life, is the one who is at God’s right hand and who is also interceding for us!” (Romans 8:33-34, EHV). Are you a child of God? Paul says: “Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts to shout, ‘Abba, Father!’” (Galatians 4:6, EHV). Did Jesus die for you? Paul wrote: “This saying is trustworthy and worthy of full acceptance: ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,’ of whom I am the worst” (1 Timothy 1:15, EHV).

You know Jesus. You believe in him. You trust what he says concerning salvation. If that describes you, you are one of the elect. This doctrine, or teaching, is intended to be a great comfort for you, both in this life, and for eternity. “We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28, EHV). Jesus said: “I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand” (John 10:28, EHV).

### *III. For God’s praise*

This mysterious plan of God, which is so simple a child can understand it, yet at the same time so complex that theologians have struggled with it and written volumes to try to understand, is worthy of praise. That’s where Paul started. “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” (Ephesians 1:3, EHV). God’s many blessings to us are unfathomable. Not only is God worthy of

praise for this plan which is beyond our comprehension, we who are the elect are evidence of the praise that is his due.

All this is “for the praise of his glorious grace, which he has graciously given us in the one he loves” (Ephesians 1:6, EHV). The Holy Spirit “is the down payment of our inheritance until the redemption of God’s own possession, so that his glory would be praised” (Ephesians 1:14, EHV). As God’s possession, you bear Christ’s name— Christian, which marks you as one of his own.

#### *Conclusion*

At your baptism you were given such a seal, the water and the Words and promises of God, which made you his own dear child. At your confirmation you reaffirmed your desire to live in accordance with the promises the Almighty God showered upon you. At both events, you probably received a certificate with the seal of the congregation. That seal is not your guarantee, but it reminds you of the guarantee God gives you here. The Holy Spirit is with you. He has put faith in your heart which marks you as a child of God, one of his elect. Live a life of thankfulness that God has shown you nothing was left to chance or human error in your salvation. Amen.