



NG Study Guide: Eph. 1:3-14 "Blessed" [10.22.17]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. **Leader note:** *Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis:

What are blessings? A gift bestowed by God, thereby bringing contentment. If asked to count your blessings, how many do you think you would list? Would you list 10, 25, 50? How many would be likely physical or material as opposed to spiritual blessings? In Christ, you are blessed. Eph. 1:3-14 is one sentence in Greek, and forms a poetic praise to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The first three chapters of Ephesians explain our position in Christ, and the last three reveal the practical aspects of life in Christ. In these verses, we learn to appropriate and appreciate our blessings.

A. Predestined by the Father [3-6] The blessings of the Father

God the Father wants to bless you with every spiritual blessing in Christ [3]. It is God's very nature to want to bless His people [Num. 6:23-27]. The blessings flow from yielding to God and uniting with Jesus. The Old Testament blessings focus on the material, and the New Testament focus is the spiritual blessings that are just as real and of greater value. A.W. Tozer observed, "The goodness of God is the drive behind all blessings He daily bestows upon us." What are some of the spiritual blessings? God's love [Rom. 5:5], peace [Jn. 14:27], joy [Jn. 15:5], and strength [Phil. 4:13] are just a few of the countless gifts of God that come to mind. But Paul focuses on the fact that God chose you to be His child before the word was formed [4]. All of humanity is God's offspring or creation [Ac.17], but only those who put their faith in Jesus Christ are children of God [Jn. 1:12]. The Bible teaches God's election and man's choice or free will. It is paradoxical, but salvation begins with God, and man must respond [John 3:16, 3:36, 5:24]. Man's choice is real, but never surprises God. When Charles Spurgeon was asked to reconcile this paradox, he replied, "I don't reconcile friends." Paul describes four blessings directly related to God choosing you:

1. You are holy: set apart to reflect God's purity [4],

2. You are blameless: without blemish or defect [4]. This is a believer's current position before God [Eph. 5:25].

3. You are adopted [5]. Under Roman law an adopted son had the same rights and status as a blood son, with an immediate right to an inheritance. We are co-heirs with Christ [Rom. 8:17].

We were predestined to adoption as sons in the sense that God knew we would yield to Christ. No one is pre-selected for hell, God does not want any to perish [2Pet. 3:9]. Anyone who comes to Christ, He will by no means cast out [John 6:37], but you must choose to receive or reject. The Bible teaches God's Sovereignty and man's free will, and it is wise not to emphasize one to the exclusion of the other.

4. You are accepted in Christ, because of the grace of God for the glory of God [6]

2. Purchased by the Son [7-12] The blessings of Jesus

In Christ, you've been *redeemed* through Jesus' blood [7]. The idea of redemption was familiar in the Greco-Roman world. There were about 6 million slaves in the Roman Empire. Slaves were redeemed or purchased and would then serve a new master, or be set free. At the cross, Jesus redeemed us with His precious blood [14, 1Pet. 1:18-19]. We are now free to live for God rather than our flesh. "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" [Mark 10:45]. In Christ, *your sins are forgiven* [7-10]. The Greek refers to sending away. A Jew would connect this concept to Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, and the holiest day on the Jewish calendar. Part of the ceremonies of Yom Kippur involved the High Priest symbolically placing the sins of the people on the scapegoat that was sent away into the wilderness [Lev. 16:20-22]. This was a picture of what Jesus would do on the cross. While Yom Kippur provided a temporary covering for sin, Jesus provides forgiveness. Jesus took the penalty for our sin so that our account with God was settled. Our sins have been taken away. A mystery [9] is a truth that is veiled in the Old Testament, and revealed clearly in the New Testament. The mystery in this instance relates to the gospel message of salvation by grace for Jew and Gentile alike. Thus, bringing both together in Christ. In Christ, all believers have also *obtained an inheritance* [11]. The essence of our inheritance is heaven. The sum total of all God has promised in Christ. We have been born again "into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you" [1 Pet. 1:4]. This heavenly heritage is God's purpose and will for us [11]. We receive the promise of our inheritance by hearing the word of truth and believing in Christ [13]. When you understand and value, the glory that awaits you, you are better able to endure whatever comes your way in this life. We can give God praise even during trials because we have His guarantee that we will receive all He has promised [12].

3. Promise of the Spirit [13-14]: The blessings of the Holy Spirit

Paul refers to the third Person of the Godhead as the Holy Spirit of promise [13]. In the Old Testament God had promised to send His Spirit to inspire and empower [Joel 2:28]. Jesus comforted His disciples in the Upper Room hours before the cross by promising to send the Holy Spirit; and by assuring them that it would ultimately be better for them to have the Holy Spirit with them [Jn. 16:7]. It is hard to imagine anything better than to have Jesus physically present with us. Yet, Jesus during His earthly ministry was limited to one place at a time, and the Holy Spirit would be with and in believers everywhere. Finally, after the resurrection, Jesus reminded His disciples of the Promise of the Father and that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit had come upon them [Ac. 1:4-8]. When Jesus was with them during His earthly ministry, He would encourage them to live godly lives, but He did not empower them to do that until He sent the Holy Spirit at Pentecost [Ac.2].

How do you receive the Holy Spirit? First, you need to hear the gospel or the good news of

your salvation [13]. Paul affirms that the gospel is the word of truth [13]. We need to hear the message of salvation in order to respond [Rom. 10:17]. The message of the gospel is that man is restored in relationship with God through faith in the work of the Messiah, Jesus the Christ. He took the penalty for man's sin against God upon the cross as prophesied in the Scriptures and proven by the resurrection [1Cor 15:1-4]. You receive the Holy Spirit through belief or faith in Christ's atoning work upon the cross [13, Ac. 16:31, Eph. 2:8-9]. This kind of faith or belief is more than intellectual assent, and speaks of the action of yielding your will to Jesus. When you choose to yield to

Jesus, you experience a spiritual birth [Jn. 3:16, Eph. 2:1], and receive the Holy Spirit. When you receive Christ, you are sealed with the Holy Spirit [13]. A seal was the symbol of a finished transaction. Melted wax was imprinted with a signet to identify the owner of the goods, and to secure the safe arrival to the proper owner and destination. The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance until we go to Christ or He comes to gather us. The work of the Holy Spirit in transforming you to be more like Jesus, not only assures you of your inheritance, but also brings glory to God [14, 12, 6]. The Holy Spirit enables us to appreciate our spiritual blessings more than our material blessings as we navigate our journey through this world into eternity. The more you appropriate and appreciate God's spiritual blessings the more satisfied you'll be and the more glorified God will be.

Study Guide Qs

Q1. Consider your spiritual blessings. Make a list of some of them that you are grateful for. Why are spiritual blessings greater than material ones?

Q2. Review your identity described in the section above regarding the blessings of the Father [3-6]. In Christ, you are holy, blameless, adopted, and accepted. Why is it important to understand your identity in Christ, especially when you don't feel holy, blameless, adopted, and accepted.

Q3. Describe how your inheritance in Christ provides comfort during difficult times, and provide perspective in our material world?

Q4. Review the study notes about some of the specific blessings of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In this season, which of these blessings are especially exciting and why? Note: try to avoid writing "all of them" and take some time to reflect before answering.

"Digging Deeper" (optional or alternative study)

1. How does God's sovereignty and mankind's free will work together in salvation? Consider this linked article <https://www.gotquestions.org/sovereign-free-will.html>. Remember, the Bible teaches God's Sovereignty and man's free will, and it is wise not to emphasize one to the exclusion of the other.

2. Take time this week to write a message of thanks and praise to God for His blessings in your life. Perhaps write it as a song, poem, journal entry, or simply a letter to God. Discuss with your NG leader the possibility of sharing what you wrote with your group.

Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?
3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

As the days get shorter, and people spend less time outdoors you may get less opportunities to see neighbors outdoors where you live. Develop a rhythm to regularly pray and ask God to reveal who He wants you to engage when you see your neighbors outdoors. Don't miss those divine appointments.

Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

- 1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
- 2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
- 3. The "Digging Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Digging Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
- 4. Every time you meet consider asking:**
 - a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.