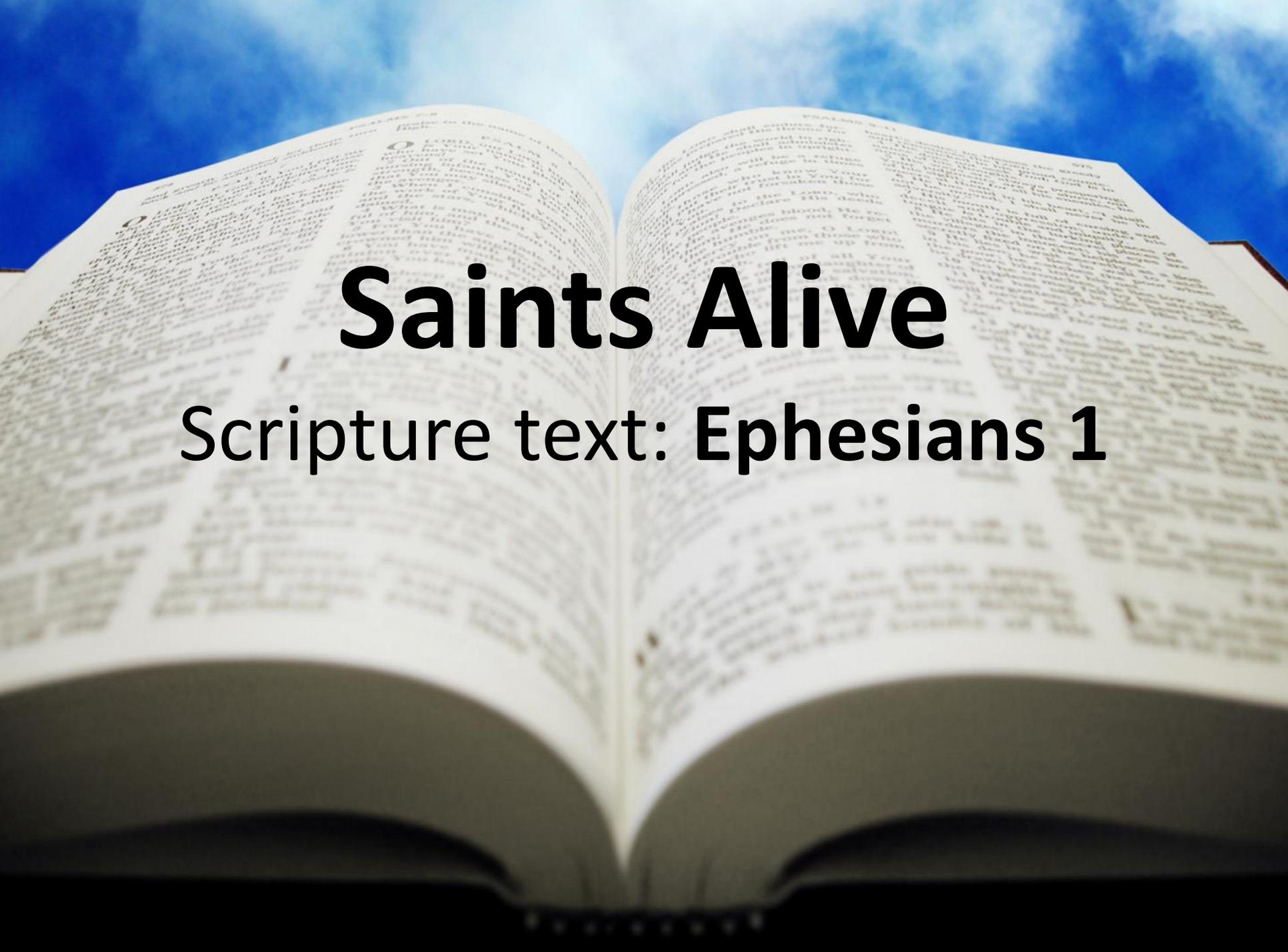


Welcome to Promise Land Bible Church
We're glad you're here!



An open Bible is shown from a low angle, looking up at the pages. The pages are filled with text, but it is mostly out of focus. The background is a bright blue sky with some light clouds. The text is overlaid in a large, bold, black font.

Saints Alive

Scripture text: **Ephesians 1**

She had gone down in history as “**America’s Greatest Miser,**” yet when she died in 1916, “Hetty” Green **left an estate valued at over \$100 million.** She ate cold oatmeal because it cost to heat it. Her son had to suffer a leg amputation, because she delayed so long in looking for a **free clinic** that his case became incurable. She was wealthy, **yet she chose to live like a pauper.**

Eccentric? Certainly! Crazy? Perhaps—but nobody could prove it.

She was so foolish that she hastened her own death by bringing on an attack of apoplexy while arguing about the value of drinking skimmed milk!

But Hetty Green is an illustration of too many Christian believers today.

They have limitless wealth at their disposal, and yet they live like paupers.

It was to this kind of Christian that Paul wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians.

The Author (Eph. 1:1a)

Some names in history we identify immediately, and “Paul” is one of them. His name was originally “Saul” (Acts 7:58); and, since he was from the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:5), it is likely he was named after the first king of Israel (1 Sam. 9).

Unlike his namesake, however, **Saul of Tarsus was obedient, and faithfully served God**. As a devoted rabbi, Saul became the leader of the antichristian movement in Jerusalem (Acts 9:1–2; Gal. 1:13–14). But in the midst of this activity, **Saul was “arrested” by Jesus Christ and was converted** (Acts 9:3ff; 26).

Act 9:1-2 But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Galatians 1:13-14 For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.

Saul of Tarsus became Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). While he was ministering in the church of Antioch, he was called by the Spirit to take the Gospel to the Gentiles, and he obeyed (Acts 13:1–3).

The Book of Acts records three missionary journeys that took Paul throughout the Roman Empire in one of the greatest evangelistic endeavors in church history. About the year 53, Paul first ministered in Ephesus but did not remain there (Acts 18:19–21).

Two years later, while on his third journey, **Paul stayed in Ephesus for at least two years and saw that whole vast area evangelized (Acts 19:1–20).**

Act 9:15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.

Act 13:1-3 Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

Act 18:18-21 After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had cut his hair, for he was under a vow. **And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there, but he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined. But on taking leave of them he said, "I will return to you if God wills,"** and he set sail from Ephesus.

Act 19:1-5 And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism." And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Act 19:8-12 And he entered the synagogue and **for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.** But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, **reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord,** both Jews and Greeks. And **God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul,** so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them.

During these years, he founded a strong church in the city that was dedicated to the worship of the goddess Diana. For a description of Paul's ministry in Ephesus, read Acts 20, and for an explanation of the opposition to Paul's ministry there, read Acts 19:21–41.

It was nearly ten years later when Paul wrote to his beloved friends in Ephesus. Paul was a prisoner in Rome (Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20), and he wanted to share with these believers the great truths the Lord had taught him about Christ and the church. Compare Ephesians 6:21–22 with Colossians 4:7–9 and Philemon to get a better understanding of the historical background.

Ephesians 3:1 For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—

Ephesians 4:1 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,

Ephesians 6:20 for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

Colossians 4:7-9 Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here.

Philemon 1:1 Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved fellow worker

Onesimus, a slave, ran away from Philemon, his master, who lived at Colosse. **While in Rome, Onesimus met Paul and was converted.** Tychicus, one of the pastors of the church at Colossae, which may have met in Philemon's house, was also in Rome to discuss some problems with Paul. **So Paul took advantage of the presence of these two men to send three letters to his friends:** the Epistle to the Ephesians, the Epistle to the Colossians, and the Epistle to Philemon. **At the same time, he sent Onesimus back to his master.**

So, the letter was written from Rome about the year a.d. 62.

Though Paul was on trial for his life, **he was concerned about the spiritual needs of the churches he had founded.** As an apostle, “one sent with a commission,” he **had an obligation to teach them the Word of God and to seek to build them up in the faith (Eph. 4:11–12).**

The Assembly (Eph. 1:1b–2)

Are you surprised to find Paul addressing his letter to saints? After all, saints are dead people who have achieved such spiritual eminence that they have been given that special title, saints. **Or are they?**

No word in the New Testament has suffered more than this word saint. Even the dictionary defines a saint as a “**person officially recognized for holiness of life.**” Who makes this official recognition? Usually some religious body, and the process by which a person becomes a saint is technically known as canonization. The deceased person’s life is examined carefully to see whether he qualifies for sainthood.

If the candidate's character and conduct are found to be above reproach, if he has been responsible for working at least two miracles, then he is qualified to be made a saint.

As interesting as this procedure is, **we do not find it authorized in the Bible**. Nine times in this brief letter, **Paul addresses his readers as saints** (Eph. 1:1, 15, 18; 2:19; 3:8, 18; 4:12; 5:3; 6:18). **These saints were alive, not dead**, though once they had been “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1–3). And it is clear that they had never performed any miracles, **though they had experienced a miracle by trusting Christ as Savior** (Eph. 2:4–10).

The word saint is simply one of the many terms used in the New Testament to describe “**one who has trusted Jesus Christ as Savior.**” The person is “alive,” not only physically, **but also spiritually** (Eph. 2:1). You will find Christians called disciples (Acts 9:1, 10, 19, 25–26, 36, 38), **people of the Way** (Acts 9:2) and **saints** (Acts 9:13, 32, 41).

The word saint means “**one who has been set apart.**” It is related to the word sanctified, which means “set apart.” When the sinner trusts Christ as his Savior, he is taken out of “the world” and placed “in Christ.” The believer is in the world physically, but not of the world spiritually (John 17:14–16).

John 17:13-18 But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them your word, and **the world has hated them because they are not of the world**, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, **but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.** Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. **As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.**

Like a scuba diver, he exists in an alien environment because he possesses special equipment—in this case, the **indwelling Holy Spirit of God**. Every true believer possesses the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19–20), and it is through the Spirit’s power that the Christian is able to function in the world.

Now for the important question: How did these people at Ephesus become saints? The answer is found in two words: “faithful” and “grace” (Eph. 1:1–2). When Paul addresses his letter to the “saints ... and **faithful in Christ Jesus**” he is not addressing two different groups of people. The **word faithful carries the meaning of “believers in Christ Jesus.”**

These people were not saved by living faithful lives; rather they put their faith in Christ and were saved. This is clear from Ephesians 1:12–14, 19.

Ephesians 1:12-14 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In 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, who is the guarantee of our inheritance** until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

The word grace is used twelve times in Ephesians, and refers to **“the kindness of God toward undeserving people.”** Grace and mercy often are found together in the Bible, and they certainly belong together in the experience of salvation. Grace and faith go together, because the only way to experience grace and salvation is through faith (Eph. 2:8–9).

The phrase “in Christ Jesus” is used twenty-seven times in this letter! It describes the spiritual position of the believer: he is identified with Christ, he is in Christ, and therefore is able to draw on the wealth of Christ for his own daily living.

The Aim (Eph. 1:3)

Each book in the Bible has its own special theme and message, even though it may deal with many different topics. Genesis is the book of beginnings; Matthew is the book of the kingdom; Galatians is the book of liberty. Ephesians 1:3 states its theme: **the Christian's riches in Christ.**

The source of our blessings. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” God the Father has made us rich in Jesus Christ! When you were born again into God's family, you were born rich.

Through Christ, **you share in the riches of God's grace** (Eph. 1:7; 2:7), **God's glory** (Eph. 1:18; 3:16), **God's mercy** (Eph. 2:4), and **“the unsearchable riches of Christ”** (Eph. 3:8). Our Heavenly Father is not poor; He is rich—and **He has made us rich in His Son.**

J. Paul Getty, one of the richest men in the world, was worth an estimated \$1.3 billion. The weekly income of some of the “oil sheiks” runs into the millions. **Yet all of this wealth is but “pennies” when compared with the spiritual wealth we have in Christ.** In this letter, Paul explains to us what these riches are and **how we may draw on them for effective Christian living.**

The scope of our blessings. We have “**all spiritual blessings.**” This can be translated “**all the blessings of the Spirit,**” referring to the Holy Spirit of God. In the Old Testament, God promised His earthly people, Israel, material blessings as a reward for their obedience (Deut. 28:1–13).

Today, He promises to supply all our needs “**according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus**” (Phil. 4:19), but He does not promise to shield us from either poverty or pain. The Father has given us every blessing of the Spirit, **everything we need for a successful, satisfying Christian life.** The spiritual is far more important than the material.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned many times in this letter, because He is the one who channels our riches to us from the Father, through the Son. **Not to know and depend on the Holy Spirit's provision is to live a life of spiritual poverty.** No wonder Paul began his Ephesian ministry asking some professed Christians **if they really knew the Holy Spirit** (Acts 19:1–7). We might ask professed Christians today, **“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? If the answer is no, then you are not saved.”** “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Rom. 8:9). Unless you have the witness of the Spirit (Rom. 8:15–16), **you cannot draw on the wealth of the Spirit.**

The sphere of our blessings. Our blessings are “in heavenly places in Christ.” Perhaps a clearer translation would be “**in the heavenlies in Christ.**” The unsaved person is interested primarily in earthlies, because this is where he lives. Jesus called them “the children of this world” (Luke 16:8). The Christian’s life is centered in heaven. **His citizenship is in heaven** (Phil. 3:20); his name is written in heaven (Luke 10:20); his Father is in heaven; and his attention and affection ought to be centered on the things of heaven (Col. 3:1ff). Evangelist D.L. Moody used to warn about people who were so “heavenly minded they were no earthly good,” but that is not what Paul is describing.

“The heavenlies” (literal translation) describes that place where Jesus Christ is right now (Eph. 1:2) and where the believer is seated with Him (Eph. 2:6). The battles we fight are not with flesh and blood on earth, but with satanic powers “in the heavenlies” (Eph. 6:12).

The Christian really operates in two spheres: the human and the divine, the visible and the invisible. Physically, he is on the earth in a human body, but spiritually he is seated with Christ in the heavenly sphere—and **it is this heavenly sphere that provides the power and direction for the earthly walk.**

The President of the United States is not always seated at his desk in the White House, but that executive chair represents the sphere of his life and power. No matter where he is, he is the President, because only he has the privilege of sitting at that desk. **Likewise with the Christian: no matter where he may be on this earth, he is seated in the heavenlies with Jesus Christ,** and this is the basis of his life and power.

When she was young, Victoria was shielded from the fact that she would be the next ruling monarch of England lest this knowledge spoil her.

When her teacher finally did let her discover for herself that she would one day be Queen of England, Victoria's response was, **"Then I will be good!"** Her **life would be controlled by her position.** No matter where she was, Victoria was governed by the fact that she sat on the throne of England.

The fact that Paul is writing about wealth would be significant to his readers, because Ephesus was considered the bank of Asia. One of the seven wonders of the world, the great temple of Diana, was in Ephesus, and **was not only a center for idolatrous worship, but also a depository for wealth.**

Some of the greatest art treasures of the ancient world were housed in this magnificent building.

In this letter, Paul will compare the church of Jesus Christ to a temple and will explain the great wealth that Christ has in His church. Paul has already used the word riches; but you may want to check other “financial” words such as inheritance (Eph. 1:11, 14, 18; 5:5) and fullness, or filled (Eph. 1:10, 23; 3:19; 4:10, 13; 5:18).

Paul is saying to us, “BE RICH!”

The Analysis

Paul's letter to the Ephesians is as carefully structured as that great temple of Diana, and it contains greater beauty and wealth!

We inherit the wealth by faith and invest the wealth by works.

Without this balance, our spiritual riches do us no good.

HOW RICH YOU ARE!

Ephesians 1:4–14

One of the funniest cartoons I ever saw showed a pompous lawyer reading a client's last will and testament to a group of greedy relatives. The caption read: "I, John Jones, being of sound mind and body, *spent it all!*"

When Jesus Christ wrote His last will and testament for His church, **He made it possible for us to share His spiritual riches.** Instead of spending it all, **Jesus Christ paid it all.** His death on the cross and His resurrection make possible our salvation.

He wrote us into His will, then He died so the will would be in force. Then He arose again that He might become the heavenly Advocate (lawyer) to make sure the terms of the will were correctly followed!

In this long sentence, Paul names just a few of the blessings that make up our spiritual wealth.

Blessings from God the Father (Eph. 1:4–6)

He has chosen us (v. 4). This is the marvelous doctrine of election, a doctrine that has confused some and confounded others.

A seminary professor once said to me, **“Try to explain election and you may lose your mind. But try to explain it away and you may lose your soul!”**

That salvation begins with God, and not with man, all Christians will agree.

“Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you” (John 15:16). The lost sinner, left to his own ways, does not seek God (Rom. 3:10–11); God in His love seeks the sinner (Luke 19:10).

Note that God chose us even before He created the universe, so that our salvation is **wholly of His grace and not on the basis of anything we ourselves have done.**

He chose us *in Christ, not in ourselves. And He chose us for a purpose: to be holy and without blame. In the Bible, election is always unto something. It is a privilege that carries a great responsibility.*

Does the sinner respond to God's grace against his own will? No, he responds because God's grace makes him willing to respond. The mystery of divine sovereignty and human responsibility will never be solved in this life.

Both are taught in the Bible (John 6:37). Both are true, and both are essential.

You will note that all three Persons in the Godhead are involved in our salvation. As far as God the Father is concerned, **you were saved when He chose you in Christ in eternity past.** But that alone did not save you. As far as God the Son is concerned, you were saved **when He died for you on the cross.** As far as God the Spirit is concerned, **you were saved when you yielded to His conviction and received Christ as your Savior.** What began in eternity past was fulfilled in time present, and will continue for all eternity!

He has adopted us (v. 5). Here we meet that misunderstood word **predestination**. This word, as it is used in the Bible, refers primarily to what God does for saved people. Nowhere in the Bible are we taught that people are predestined to hell, because **this word refers only to God's people**. The word simply means **“to ordain beforehand, to predetermine.”**

Election seems to refer to people, while predestination refers to purposes. The events connected with the crucifixion of Christ were predestined (Acts 4:25–28). God has predestined our adoption (Eph 1:5), and our conformity to Christ (Rom. 8:29–30), as well as our future inheritance (Eph. 1:11).

Adoption has a dual meaning, both present and future. You do not get into God's family by adoption. You get into His family by regeneration, the new birth (John 3:1–18; 1 Peter 1:22–25). **Adoption is the act of God by which He gives His “born ones” an adult standing in the family.** Why does He do this? So that we might immediately begin to claim our inheritance and enjoy our spiritual wealth!

A baby cannot legally use this inheritance (Gal. 4:1–7), but an adult son can—and should! **This means that you do not have to wait until you are an old saint before you can claim your riches in Christ.**

1Peter 1:20-25 He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. **Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;** for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever." And **this word is the good news that was preached to you.**

The future aspect of adoption is found in Romans 8:22–23, the glorified body we will have when Jesus returns. We already have our adult standing before God, but the world cannot see this. When Christ returns, this “private adoption” will be made public for everyone to see!

Romans 8:22-23 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly **as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.**

He has accepted us (v. 6). We cannot make ourselves acceptable to God; but He, by His grace, **makes us accepted in Christ**. This is our eternal position which will never change. Some translations read “which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved”. Or, “He has be-graced [literal translation] us in the Beloved.” The idea is the same. Because of God’s grace in Christ, we are accepted before Him. Paul wrote Philemon to encourage him to accept his runaway slave, Onesimus, using the same argument. **“If he owes you anything, I will pay it. Receive him as you would receive me”** (Phile. 17–19, paraphrased). The parallel is easy to see.