

ONE THING MORE...

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church
Ephesians 1.3-14 | November 3, 2019
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I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue our series in the topic of gratitude. As we saw last week, we have a problem with gratitude (well, maybe not *us*, but what about those *other people?*). This week we engage God's plan for gratitude.

II. Connecting with One Another

How did it go keeping a gratitude list this week? What did you include?

III. Study the Text

a. Read Ephesians 1.3-14.

In the original manuscript, before translation into English, Ephesians 1.3-14 was one, single sentence! John Stott states that in these verses Paul "neither pauses for breath, nor punctuates his words with full stops."

Why do you think this is so? Do you ever talk or write (or send messages) like this?

b. These opening words of Ephesians have been likened to "a magnificent gateway," "a golden chain of many links," "a kaleidoscope of dazzling lights and shifting colours," "a snowball tumbling down a hill, picking up volume as it descends," "some long-winded racehorse... careening onward at full speed," "the overture of an opera which contains the successive melodies that are to follow," "like the preliminary flight of the eagle, rising and wheeling round, as though for a while uncertain what direction in his boundless freedom he shall take."

Which of these resonates most with you?

c. Some scholars note a Trinitarian structure in this passage, similar to the Apostle's and Nicene Creeds, with God the Father electing (verses 4-6), the Son redeeming (verses 7-12), and the Spirit sealing (verses 13-14), with each stanza concluding "to the praise of His glory."

What do you think? How does that open up these verses to you?

d. What do you think of when you read the word "predestined"? How have you heard it explained? *Why* do you think we are predestined? What does *this passage* say? What is the *purpose* of predestination?

Warren Wiersbe writes, "[w]e often have the idea that God saves sinners mainly because He pities them or wants to rescue them from eternal judgment, but God's main purpose is that He might be glorified."

What do you think about that statement? Do you agree? Why or why not?



- e. Verse 3 declares “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.” Note three blessings, which relate to the past, the present, and the future, in verses 4, 7-8, and 11-12.

Stott writes that the “past blessing is ‘election’, the present ‘adoption’ to be God’s children, and the future ‘unification’ when all things will be united under Christ.”

Spend some time reflecting upon the past, present and future of God’s blessings. How have you seen these at work in your life?

- f. It has been written that “adoption as God’s sons and daughters brings both a plus and a minus, an immense gain and a necessary loss. We gain access to him as our Father through redemption or forgiveness. But we lose our blemishes, beginning at once by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, until we are finally made perfect in heaven. The words which seem to unite the privilege and the responsibility of our adoption are the expression *before him* (verse 4), meaning ‘in his sight’ or ‘in his presence’. For to live our life in the conscious presence of our Father is both an immeasurable privilege and a constant challenge to please him.”

How have you received the “immeasurable privilege” of adoption?

How do you respond to the “constant challenge to please him”?

- g. Reread verses 11-14. It has been written that in these verses “[t]he apostle moves from the pronoun *we* (himself and his fellow Jewish believers) to *you also* (his believing Gentile readers) to *our* inheritance (in which both groups equally share)... Already, however, by the repetition of the words *in him* (verses 11, 13) he emphasizes that Christ is the reconciler, and that it is through union with Christ that the people of God are one.”

Why do you think this theme of unity is an important one when talking about the church?

How could Good Shepherd become increasingly unified?

- h. In verse 14, Paul declares that the Holy Spirit is “a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance.” In Modern Greek, this word is used to refer to an engagement ring, but in ancient times it signified a “first installment, deposit, down payment, pledge, that [paid] a part of the purchase price in advance... [making] a contract valid.”

Have you experienced the gift of the Holy Spirit as the down payment of our future inheritance?

IV. Pray

- a. Thank God for his election, that believers were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world!
- b. Pray that God would open your eyes to his plan for gratitude – and how you can respond to it.

