

2.

**[THE SALUTATION]  
EPHESIANS 1:1-14**

Paul began his letter to the Ephesians in the manner that was customary for correspondence in that day. He addressed the letter by identifying himself as the writer and citing his authority for writing it, and then by stating to whom the letter was written (v. 1). He followed the address with words of greeting. In this letter, his greeting was rich with meaning but brief. He used common words of greeting for that day and filled those words with enlarged and enriched meanings (v. 2). Then Paul gave much fuller attention to the blessing, which also was a customary part of the opening words of letters of that day (vs. 3-14). The usual blessing was a wish for some good experience to come to the recipient of the letter. Paul's blessing in this letter was directed toward God instead of toward those to whom he was writing. He did so because he said God had already blessed "us" with every spiritual blessing that exists in heaven in Christ. For eleven verses, he elaborated on those blessings. His survey of those spiritual blessings began with what God designed for believers from before the creation of the cosmos and ended with God's ultimate plans for the final glory of His people and His creation. He encompassed all of those blessings in one elaborate sentence to show that all God's blessings are a package that He grants to those who belong to Him. He does not scatter His blessings among His people, giving a few to one and another few to others. He bestows all of His blessings on every one who belongs to Him.

Paul described those blessings as a way of introducing the grand theme of his letter. That theme concerned the ultimate goal of all of God's work for His people, but Paul showed that the grand finale was a part of what God had been planning since before He ever made the world. Probably no grander panorama has ever been given of God's master work for people from beginning to end. For sure, no grander statement has ever been made of God's ultimate design for the cosmos than that which Paul introduced in the blessing of this letter and then elaborated throughout the remainder of the letter.

The Book of Ephesians is a tight-knit whole. It considers all aspects of God's ultimate plan for His people and for His cosmos. It never deviates from that emphasis, so that it becomes the pinnacle of all of God's revelations in the Bible. The Book of Revelation might be called the crescendo of the Bible, describing the dramatic and chaotic conflicts that will lead up to the final victory of God at the climax of history. Ephesians has an even grander theme. It describes the glorious calm that will follow the final conflicts. It revels in the final peace and harmony that God will give to all things when all the conflicts are passed.

- A. [The Address] (1:1a-1d)
  - 1. [From] (1:1a-1d):
    - a. **Paul** (1:1a),
    - b. **An apostle** (1:1b)
      - (1) **Of Jesus Christ** (1:1c)
      - (2) **By God's will** (1:1d),

Paul clearly identified himself as the writer of this letter. If we accept that every word of the Scripture is true and inerrant, we must accept that what Ephesians says about who wrote it is as perfect as what it says about what he wrote. Strong considerations that support the view that Paul was

the writer of Ephesians have been surveyed in chapter 1 of this commentary. He will be recognized as the writer throughout the remainder of this commentary.

Paul called himself “an apostle of Jesus Christ by God’s will.” Many have understood that statement to mean that Paul was chosen by God to replace Judas after Judas betrayed Jesus or that Paul was chosen to serve as a thirteenth apostle. Both of those interpretations have serious flaws. If Paul was chosen to replace Judas, the believers who gathered in the upper room after Jesus’ ascension were mistaken both about the one requirement for being an apostle and about the one whom the Lord chose for the position (Acts 1:15-26). Peter outlined for them the one requirement that qualified a person to serve as one of Jesus’ chosen apostles. He said, *“Therefore, from among the men who have accompanied us during the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—beginning from the baptism of John until the day He was taken up from us—from among these, it is necessary that one become a witness with us of His resurrection”* (Acts 1:21-22, HCSB). The brothers present agreed with Peter’s proposal and found only two who met the qualification. They prayed for the Lord’s guidance and cast lots to determine God’s will. The lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the 11 apostles (Acts 1:26). If Paul was supposed to replace Judas, Peter and the 120 brothers present seriously misunderstood the Lord’s guidance, and their prayer and the resulting lot was mistaken. The Scripture does not give one hint that they made that kind of serious mistake.

Furthermore, Paul definitely did not meet the qualification outlined by Peter. He did not accompany them from the time of Jesus’ baptism by John until the day Jesus was taken up into heaven. In fact, he did not become a believer in Jesus until two or three years after Jesus ascended to heaven. Either Peter made a bad mistake when he outlined the qualification for being an apostle, or interpreters are mistaken who hold that Paul was one of those apostles. It is much better to accept Peter’s view, because it is a part of the inspired record.

If we accept Peter’s definition of the qualification for serving as one of the twelve apostles, it becomes clear that Jesus did not intend for apostles, in the sense that the twelve were apostles, to pass on the office to others, so that apostleship would become a continuing position. It was an office that was needed for laying the

foundation for the church, and it was not needed after the twelve died. Certainly no one who lived after the twelve died could meet the qualification of “accompanying Jesus’ followers during the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among [them]—beginning from the baptism of John until the day He was taken up from [them].” Those who have claimed to be successors to the twelve apostles since the death of the twelve or who claim to have that authority today misinterpret the Scripture and are imposters. For further discussion of that subject, see comments on Ephesians 2:19-22 in Chapter 5 of this commentary.

When Jesus appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus and then sent Ananias to tell him he was “a chosen instrument to carry My name before Gentiles, kings, and the sons of Israel,” Jesus said nothing about making Paul one of the twelve (Acts 9:1-18). He said much about his appointment to be a missionary. Later when Paul wrote the Book of Galatians, he told of his brief visit to the twelve apostles in Jerusalem three years after his conversion, and he clearly did not identify himself as being one of them (Gal. 1:11-2:10). That passage has often been cited as evidence that Paul considered himself to be one of the twelve. It actually provides proof of just the opposite. Paul stressed that he went to Jerusalem, not to learn from the apostles or to be accepted as one of them, but only to meet them. He called them “those who had become apostles before me” (Acts 1:17, HCSB). They certainly were apostles before he was even saved, but it is stretching that statement too far to make it go against all the evidence to the contrary and indicate Paul considered himself to be an apostle in the same sense that the twelve were apostles (Acts. 1:17). Nothing supports the view that Paul held the same office or position or filled the same purpose as the twelve apostles. He made no claim to be a replacement for Judas.

The alternate interpretation that Jesus chose Paul to be a thirteenth apostle has nothing to support it except the desire to make this verse in Ephesians mean that Paul was called to be an apostle in the same sense that the twelve were apostles. Not one word anywhere in the Scripture indicates that Jesus ever intended to have a thirteenth apostle or to have an apostle who was not

one of His followers during His time on earth. That view should not be considered valid in any sense.

A much better interpretation of Paul's statement arises from recognizing that the title "apostle" was used in a different sense to refer to other followers of Jesus besides the twelve. The word "apostle" means "one who is sent," which Jesus' twelve apostles certainly were. However, the word also was used to refer to people we call "missionaries." Missionaries also are people who are sent. They are sent to take the gospel to people who do not know it. Passages where the word is used in that manner are Acts 14:14; 15:33; Romans 16:7; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 9:5; 2 Corinthians 11:13; Galatians 1:15; and Hebrews 13:1. Jesus sent the twelve apostles to lay the foundation for the church after His departure. Jesus sent missionaries to spread the message of the gospel across the whole Roman world after the foundation had been laid.

It is much better to understand that, when Paul claimed to be an apostle, he used the word in the second sense. He certainly was chosen by Jesus to be a missionary, and He was sent to carry the gospel all over the Roman world to people who never had heard it before. He not only was a missionary. He was, in fact, the consummate missionary of all time.

2. *To* (1:1e-1g)
  - a. *The saints and believers in Christ Jesus* (1:1f)
  - b. *Who are at Ephesus* (1:1g),

Paul identified the recipients of the letter as "the saints who are in Ephesus." By saints, he meant people who had been made holy or saintly by Jesus. He was not referring to a special class of people among Christians. He addressed the letter to everyone in Ephesus whose lives had been changed by Jesus.

He also referred to them as "the believers in Christ Jesus." Most English versions translate the phrase as "the faithful in Christ Jesus," which is certainly a valid translation. The word translated "believers" is based on a root that means "to believe," "to trust," or "to have faith." All those who believe in Jesus are "the faithful" because they have faith in Him. Thus, Paul wrote this letter to all those who had been made holy by believing in

Paul said he was an apostle or missionary of Jesus Christ "by God's will." When he spoke of God's will, he certainly was referring to his call by Jesus on the road to Damascus. On that day, Jesus revealed His will to Paul; and Paul's whole life turned around. He became a totally changed man, not by his will but by God's will (Acts 9:1-18). Then Jesus sent Ananias to inform him he "was a chosen instrument to carry My name before Gentiles, kings, and the sons of Israel" (Acts. 9:15, HCSB). It would be hard to find a better definition of a missionary. He certainly was a missionary "by God's will" because it definitely was not his will. His will was to destroy believers in Jesus. God's will was for Him to declare the saving power of Jesus all over the Roman world. God's will won out when Paul was on the road to Damascus. Paul spent the rest of his life as a missionary and was glad to do it, because he had become convinced it was God's will for him.

Paul's identification of himself as an "apostle of Jesus Christ" meant that he was sent as a missionary by none other than Jesus Himself. He needed no other authority.

Jesus. HCSB recognizes that reality and translates the phrase as "the saints and believers in Christ Jesus."

Paul specifically identified the saints and believers to whom he addressed this letter as "those who are in Ephesus." Paul's relationship to the church at Ephesus was briefly described in Chapter 1 of this commentary. Paul's ministry among them was longer than in any other city where he served. He had a close and warm relationship with them. They were people with whom he felt free to share the subject that was nearest to his heart, the unity that Jesus brings to all people and all things. The result is that we have in Ephesians Paul's most heart-felt thoughts and the most elevated insights of all of his writings.

Some have doubted that Paul intended to address this letter to the Ephesian church in particular because some ancient manuscripts of the letter have a blank space where the name Ephesus usually appears. They surmise that Paul may have originally written the letter as a circular letter to several churches and that he did not name the city in order to allow each church to insert its own name when it was read to them. However, the great majority of ancient manuscripts do contain the name "Ephesus." In the few copies that omit it, the omission may have been done by the copyists, not by Paul.

Those who suggest that Ephesians was intended to be a circular letter seek to support that view by noting that Paul did not mention any individual in the church by name anywhere in the

- B. [The Greeting:] *Grace and peace* (1:2)
1. *From God our Father* (1:2b)
  2. *And [from] the Lord Jesus Christ* (1:2c).

Paul greeted the church in Ephesus with words that were unique to him and that were characteristic of his writings. The Jews' customary greeting was *שלום* (*Shalom*), which means "Peace." The Greeks' customary greeting was *Xaris* (*Charis*), which means "Grace." Paul customarily used both terms but greatly enhanced the meaning of both. By "Peace" the Jews meant absence of conflict. Paul meant inner contentment through Jesus' salvation. By "Grace" the Greeks meant kindness and happiness. Paul meant bountiful undeserved blessings from God. Paul longed for his beloved

- C. [The Blessing] (1:3-14)
1. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* (1:3a),
  2. *Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ* (1:3b-6)

In the beginning of his letters, Paul usually expressed a desire for a particular blessing to be given to those to whom he wrote. In this letter, Paul expressed a desire for the Ephesians to bless the God and Father of Jesus Christ. He wanted the Ephesians to be a blessing to God by being united in loving God, living for God, and serving God. He was careful to recognize the manifold nature of God by longing for the Ephesians to be a blessing to both "God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

letter. They say he probably did so because he intended the letter to be a circular letter and the same individual would not have been in all the churches. However, the opposite conclusion is equally valid. It may be he did not mention any individuals because he had such close relationships with all of the members of the church in Ephesus that it would have been embarrassing to mention any individual separately. He had lived and served among them for three years, and he had been gone from them for three years or less. He must have known all of the Ephesian believers so well that the letter would have become too long if he had tried to mention all of them. The better conclusion is that Paul wrote this letter to people who were especially close to him about a subject that was especially dear to his heart.

church in Ephesus to have both enhanced Peace and Grace in abundant measure.

Paul indicated the special nature of the grace and peace he sought for them by saying "from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." The blessings he sought for them could not be obtained from people. They come only from God. Paul mentioned both God the Father and the Lord Jesus, recognizing that God the Father and God the Son work together in unison and harmony and that all divine blessings come from both of them.

Paul said the Ephesians were able to bless God because God already had blessed "us," including himself with the Ephesian believers. The blessings God had given them were abundant, including every spiritual blessing that is in the heavens. Jesus had made available to them every blessing heaven possesses.

Paul then proceeded to describe those blessings in the longest sentence in the whole Bible. He described those blessings as belonging to all believers, not just to the Ephesians. Thus, the sentence gives a summary of all the spiritual blessings that God gives to all those who believe in Jesus. Those blessings could be elaborated much more fully, even more exhaustively, than Paul did in

- a. *So that* [When the blessings all began] (1:4-6)
  - (1) *He chose us* (1:4)
    - (a) *In Him* (1:4b)
    - (b) *Before the foundation of the cosmos* (1:4c)
    - (c) *To be holy and blameless before Him in love* (1:4d),
  - (2) *Predestinating us for adoption to Himself* (1:5-6),
    - (a) *Through Jesus Christ* (1:5b)
    - (b) *According to His choice and will* (1:5c)
    - (c) *To the praise of His glorious grace* (1:6),
      - [1] *With which He favored us* (1:6b)
      - [2] *In the Beloved* (1:6c)

Paul began his summary of Jesus' spiritual blessings with a Greek connecting word that means something similar to "according to which" or "just as." He used that word to indicate he was going to give details of what he had just described briefly. He meant he was going to explain more fully the great spiritual blessings that Jesus has in heaven to give to those He blesses.

In verses 4-6, Paul described when God's great blessings began. They began before God began to create and make the cosmos. He described two aspects of what God did for His people before the foundation of the world:

- (1) He chose us (v. 4);
- (2) He predestinated us (vs. 5-6).

**Verse 4. God chose us before the foundation of the cosmos.** Paul began his description of how God blesses and saves people by saying God chose us. He made those choices before He began to create the cosmos. That amazing statement means that God knew people before they were born and decided whom He would save. That statement troubles many people, because it seems to imply God also chooses those who will be lost. However, neither Paul nor any other Bible writer said God chose whom He would not save. We are

this one sentence. However, he gave a breathtaking overview of all the blessings that come from heaven to believers in Jesus. He summarized those blessings in three points:

- a. When the blessings began (vs. 4-6);
- b. When the blessings were paid for (v. 7);
- c. When the blessings will be complete (vs. 7-14),

lost because we make our own choice to sin, and our sin separates us from God. Because everyone chooses to sin, every human being who ever lived is lost. We make that choice for ourselves. God does not choose who is lost. We all make that choice ourselves, and we all are responsible for our own lost condition. God's choice is about whom He will save. Among the great mass of lost people, God chooses whom He will save.

Paul said God made those choices "in Him," that is, in Christ Jesus. If He made the choice in or through Jesus, He did not make it through any effort or accomplishment of ours. It was His free and sovereign choice, not based on anything we have done, were going to do, or could do. If God's choices had been based on what any person believes or does, they would not have been God's choices. He simply would have accepted our choices. If He based His choice of a person on what that person chose to do or was going to choose to do, His choice would not be His own, and it would not be real. Paul knew God chose him from his mother's womb, but God declared that choice to Paul when he was on the road to Damascus to persecute Christians there (Gal. 1:15-17). He knew that God chose every other person who is His in the same sovereign way. Paul considered that insight to be a joy, a privilege, an honor, and a magnificent

blessing. He rejoiced that he was chosen for salvation and for a special place of service assigned to him. To be chosen by God to belong to Him was an honor beyond compare. He believed every believer should rejoice equally that God chose him for salvation and gave him his own particular place in God's service. Every believer should rejoice above all because God made that decision through His Son Jesus, who gave Himself so people could be saved. Since the decision was made through such a compassionate One, the choice had to be a just and righteous one.

Paul went on to say that God made His choices before the foundation of the cosmos. By that statement, he made it clear that salvation is a work of God. He worked it all out before He began to bring into being the created order. The word Paul used to describe the creation means more than the "world." It even means more than the "universe," which means our solar system. Paul used the word *κόσμος* (*kosmos*), which is a Greek word that has been brought over into English almost unchanged and which means the whole of God's creation—sun, moon, planets, stars, galaxies, any other physical bodies in the whole created order, and everything they contain. God's first act in preparing to create the cosmos was to choose us for salvation. Only then did He begin the work of bringing the physical universe into being. Paul gave all the praise and credit to God for the privilege and blessing of being chosen for salvation.

God made His choices before any people came into existence to be able to do anything for themselves. Paul gave no indication that God made His choices based on His knowledge in advance of what people were going to choose. If He had, people would not be chosen by Him. He simply would have assigned that responsibility to people and only endorsed their choices. His choices would have been just accepting what people chose for themselves. The joy of knowing that God wanted us and picked us to be His would not exist. His choices would not be personal, warm, and meaningful. They would be choices He just accepted because someone else made them for Him. Paul considered it to be a miraculous wonder that God deliberately chose His own and knew them before He ever made the world. He knew in

advance who every person was going to be, and He chose those who were His kind of people before He ever undertook to create the world. He did not choose a vast host of people in mass. He chose every person individually who was His kind of person and who fitted into His family.

Paul added that God chose us to make us holy and blameless before Him, something we are totally incapable of being or doing on our own. He chose us not because we are blameless, but to make us blameless and to give us the ability to have fellowship with Him. Our salvation is a work of God. We owe all the praise to Him and to Him alone.

**Verses 5-6. God predestinated us for adoption to Himself.** The second aspect of the blessings God's gives us is that He predestinated us for adoption to Himself. In other words, He made arrangements ahead of time for us to belong to His family. He made those arrangements also before He created the cosmos. In that simple statement, Paul boldly declared that we are destined for salvation in advance. Salvation is our destiny before we ever come into being. In fact, before God even made the universe, He already assumed responsibility for deciding who His people were going to be. Our choices and actions after we are born have no more to do with predetermining that we are His children than a person has anything to do with who his physical parents are, either before or after he is born.

The meaning of the word translated "predestined" is clear. It is a combination of *προ* (*pro*), which means "before" or "pre," and *ορίζω* (*orizō*), which means "to mark out," "to determine," or "to appoint." The combined word means "an appointment made in advance." Paul made three revealing statements with regard to the meaning of predestination.

First, Paul said God predestinated us "through Jesus Christ." He did not say we are predestinated through our beliefs or our works. He declared predestination to be a work of Christ, wholly independent of any belief or action on our part. Whatever that declaration does to a person's system of theology, the one who believes the Bible is truth

without any mixture of error must accept Paul's statement as it stands. The Father chooses His own through His Son Jesus Christ.

Second, Paul said God predestined us "according to His choice and will." He did not do it because of any choice or decision of any human person. Paul did not believe that God's decisions are dependent on what people choose or on what people do. He said God makes His own choices according to His own will and sticks with them. The plain words Paul used eliminate the idea that God predestinates on the basis of His advance knowledge of what people are going to do after they are born and during their lives. If He made His choices on the basis of foreknowledge, those choices would not be His choices. They would be people's choices that He bound Himself to accept. The inspired words of Scripture say that God predestined us "according to His choice and will," not according to each individual's choice known by Him in advance.

Third, Paul said God predestined us to belong to Him "to the praise of His glorious grace." All the praise can belong to Him only if His choice is His alone, uninfluenced by us or by any choice or action on our part. Paul added that our salvation is for the glory of His grace because "He favored us" with it. A favor means something unearned and undeserved. God's destining us for salvation in advance is a favor He grants that is totally independent of any belief or work on our part

Then Paul added that God grants us that favor "in the Beloved." Once again, he stated the essential point that God receives the glory because our salvation comes through what Jesus did, not through what we did or were going to do for ourselves.

Election, predestination, and grace are all concepts that raise problems for every systematic theologian who has ever tried to arrange them in a logical order. They have been the cause of endless debates among Christians through all the generations since Christ, and they have been the reason for deep and permanent divisions among churches and denominations. The problems, disagreements, and divisions arise from trying to determine how God's sovereign choice of people before the foundation of the cosmos can be reconciled with people's responsibility to make their own choices about sinning and about trusting Jesus for salvation. Paul did not deal with that issue in this passage. He did not even raise the question. However, he did make many statements that relate to that issue in his other writings. Because this passage does not deal with that question, it will not be discussed in these comments, which are written for the purpose of interpreting or explaining what is written in the text of Ephesians. However, because the question has aroused so much discussion through the years and is a live topic for debate today and because it is so vital for understanding the full scope of salvation, it is dealt with in the essay below.

Paul's one sentence that surveys the whole of God's plan of redemption from beginning to end is not finished. However, the statements he has made thus far raise stimulating questions that need to be considered before proceeding with a discuss of Paul's further statements about other aspects of God's blessings. The issue is, How do God's choices made before the foundation of the cosmos relate to people's responsibility to make the same choices for ourselves? Those relationships are considered in the following essay.

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 ESSAY ON

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD'S SOVEREIGN ELECTION AND PEOPLE'S FREE WILL**

Through all the years since Paul wrote Ephesians 1:4-7, Christians have struggled to explain how those verses can be reconciled with many of Paul's statements that seem to contrast sharply with them or even to contradict them. This essay will consider the contrasting statements and attempt to make peace between those contrasting statements.

**Paul taught that God elects people for salvation.** Ephesians 1:4-7, a passage that is discussed above, is the classic statement on election in the Bible. That passage makes it clear that Paul believed in and uncompromisingly taught election, predestination, and God's sovereign grace. Those verses are as strong a statement in favor of God's election of the saints as exists in all literature, in the Bible or out of the Bible. In whatever way a person may seek to fit those verses into a system of theology, if a person accepts them for what they actually say, it cannot be denied that they clearly support the doctrine of unconditional election.

**Paul taught that people are responsible to choose salvation for themselves.** In other passages of Scripture, Paul wrote just as forcefully that people must choose to trust Jesus by their own free will to be saved. Four of those passages are quoted below from the Holman Christian Standard Version of the Bible:

To Jewish Christians in Galatia, he wrote, *"We are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners'; yet we know that no one is justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ. And we have believed in Christ Jesus so that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no human being will be justified"* (Gal. 2:16).

When the Philippian jailor asked Paul what he needed to do to be saved, Paul did not give him a lecture on election. He said, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved"* (Acts 16:31).

When Paul spoke of Abraham's salvation in the Book of Romans, he said, *"But what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God and it was credited to him for righteousness"* (Rom. 4:3).

To Gentile Christians in Rome, he wrote, *"This is the message of faith that we proclaim: if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. With the heart one believes resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth one confesses, resulting in salvation. Now the Scripture says, 'No one who believes on Him will be put to shame . . .'"* (Rom 10:8b-11).

For certain, the Scripture gives just as much support to Paul's conviction that salvation comes by faith as it does to his conviction that salvation comes by election.

**Attempts to combine both views into one systematic theology.** Systematic theology is an attempt to combine all of God's revealed truth in one coordinated system. It is designed to give a logical explanation of how all of God's truth fits together in one consistent whole. Many approaches have been made to developing the right system for accomplishing that purpose. Perhaps the thorniest issue in attempting to develop a systematic theology is how to combine both election and free will into one consistent perspective. Trying to fit both God's sovereign election of people to salvation and peoples' free and independent choice of salvation into

one system of theology has been a perennial problem through all the years since Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians. It still is a problem no systematic theologian has ever been able to solve satisfactorily. Two major approaches have been made to reconciling both views into one theological viewpoint.

Some begin their system of theology about salvation with the principle of the free will of man. It is easy for them to declare that each person is responsible to choose Jesus for himself or herself and to find plenty of Scripture to support it. However, when they come to predestination, they cannot see how to reconcile people's free choices with the revelation that God already made His choice long before the cosmos was ever created. They seek to reconcile the two viewpoints by statements like "God predestinates everyone to salvation, but not everyone ratifies God's decision" or "God decided in advance He wanted us to be saved, but it is up to us to decide if it really happens." The problem with any such explanation is that it twists what the Scripture actually says. Paul said God predestines us "for adoption to Himself." The meaning is clear that God decides whom He will adopt into His family. Not everyone is adopted to be God's child, but Paul said those who are adopted are determined in advance by God Himself. If we want to accept that God inspired the words of the Scripture, we have to believe that He chose us for salvation before we were born. It is legitimate to begin a theological system with the freedom of people to choose or reject salvation for themselves, but it is dangerous to go on to say that our choice eliminates the freedom and independence of God's choice of us. To do so, it is necessary to leave out or ignore too much clear and specific Scriptures, including Ephesians 1:4-7.

On the other hand, others begin their system of theology about salvation with the principle of the sovereign choice of God. It is easy for them to declare that God decided in advance who will be saved, and they find plenty of Scripture to support that view. However, when they come to Scriptures that speak of a person's having to believe for himself to be saved, they have as much difficulty explaining those verses as those who stress people's free will have in explaining God's prior choices. They are forced into such explanations as, "A person without Jesus is dead in sin and a dead person cannot make choices, so he can choose Jesus only after God has converted him and made it possible for him to believe." The problem with such interpretations is that they explain away people's freedom to choose for themselves, which essentially turns a person into a robot instead of a human being. If we want to accept that God inspired the words of the Scripture, we have to believe that people have freedom to choose for themselves and therefore determine for themselves if they will accept salvation or not. It is legitimate to begin a theological system with the sovereignty of God, but it is dangerous to go on to say that God's choice of those He will adopt to belong to Him eliminates the freedom and independence of each individual to choose to trust Jesus or to reject Him for himself. To do so, it is necessary to leave out too much of the Scripture that calls on all people to decide to repent and trust Jesus for salvation.

It is expedient to consider two verses that often are used as proof that people cannot choose to trust God until God has given them that power. The first is found in Ephesians 2:1, which says, "***And you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you previously walked . . .***" (HCSB). Closely resembling that verse is Colossians 2:13, which says, "***And when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive with Him and forgave us all our trespasses***" (HCSB). Those verses are interpreted by many to mean that lost people are incapable of making moral choices because they are dead in sins. Those interpreters point out that a person who is physically dead is unconscious. Then they contend by comparison that a person who is dead in sins is unaware of moral choices and incapable of making a right moral choice, especially the moral choice of accepting Jesus. They press the meaning of "dead in sins" too far. "Dead in sins" certainly means that a lost person is incapable of having fellowship with God and Jesus. His sins stand in the way and prevent him from having a personal relationship to Jesus and the Father, but even a little observation reveals that lost people can and do make moral choices. Almost all lost people choose not to murder. Many choose not to commit adultery or lie, and most choose not to steal. Some choose to go to church regularly and have even been known to hold church leadership positions for years before they surrendered to Jesus for salvation. If they can make those moral choices, they certainly can make the choice to reject or accept Jesus. Lost people do not lose their ability to conceive of God or even believe that He does exist, though they

may have twisted ideas about what He is like. The definitely are able to understand that right and wrong do exist, and most spend considerable energy trying to decide for themselves what is wrong and what is right. Unfortunately, they usually fail miserably to be able to define right and wrong correctly. What they cannot do is have fellowship with Jesus and the Father, or even with the Holy Spirit, until they have chosen to accept Jesus. It is out of touch with reality to contend that the soul of a person who is dead in sins has no consciousness or awareness of moral values and is incapable of feeling the call of God on his life unless God first awakens his soul and makes it possible for him to choose to believe. According to that interpretation, God must convert a person before he can believe. In that case, when God enables him to believe his belief is not his own belief but a disposition God thrusts on some people whom He chooses to favor. If that were true, Paul should have said to the Philippian jailer, “You can be saved if God chooses to convert you. Try to believe in Jesus. If you can, we will know that God has saved you already.” Paul said no such thing. He said, “You believe, and you will be saved—and the same thing goes for your whole household.” That passage is only one of hundreds from Genesis through Revelation that call on people to choose, to believe, and to obey. It is a fallacy to cancel them all in order to uphold anyone’s humanly devised theology. Theology must be disciplined and corrected by the Bible. It is invalid to correct the Bible by our theology.

The second verse is John 6:44, which says, “*No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him . . .*” (HCSB). Many explain that verse to mean that it is impossible for a person to believe in Jesus until the Father pulls Him into Jesus. That view actually amounts to saying that God saves a person against that person’s will and so that person only begins to believe after the Father has dragged him in. The question is, Does God draw a person in and then that person believes in Jesus, or does a person believe in Jesus and then the Father draws Him into personal fellowship with Jesus? The second explanation is much more in touch with reality. Even after a person believes in Jesus, he still is not able to communicate intimately with Jesus until the Father forgives his sins and opens the way for him to experience the warm presence of Jesus in his heart. The process may occur almost simultaneously in a person’s heart, but the trust has to come first and then God draws him into fellowship with the Father. This verse certainly is not enough to cancel the hundreds of times that the Bible calls on people to exercise their wills and choose whether they will serve God or sin.

Even if we should argue that a person cannot make the decision to trust Jesus until God convicts him of his sins, that view does not cancel people’s free will. The Father does not draw people because people have no will of their own but because they do have a will of their own. When we have a friend who is struggling with the decision to trust Jesus, we know better than to try to force him to decide. Truly, many have made that effort through the years. Some in earlier ages actually imprisoned people, tortured people, and even killed people to force them to them to believe. Those efforts always were unsuccessful. They might force a person to say they believed to escape the torture, but they only made people more resistant and resentful than believing. We know that the only way to help a person believe is to witness to him and seek to persuade him. We do so, not because he has no will but because he does have a will. Because we know he has a need to decide for himself, we seek to show him what he should decide to believe; but he has to make the choice for himself. God is doing to the same thing when He draws people. He is not trying to take their will away but trying to get them to exercise their will to arrive at the right conclusion. The drawing of the Father is confirmation of people’s free will, not a denial of it.

Perhaps two other verses will assist in understanding a person’s drawing into Jesus, though at the same times they may make it more amazing and puzzling. John 12:32 says, “*As for Me, if I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all [people] to Myself*” (HCSB). John 14:6 says, “*No one comes to the Father except through Me*” (HCSB). In the first verse, Jesus draws people to Himself. In the second, Jesus draws people to the Father, instead of the Father’s drawing people to Jesus. Do those verses make the process of drawing into salvation seem to be confusing? They are irreconcilably confusing if we insist on explaining how they fit together rationally. The only way to reconcile them with a peaceful mind is to realize that breaking the power of sin over a person’s life and drawing that person into fellowship with God is another mysterious cooperative

work of the three Persons of the triune God. Each of the three Persons is totally like the other Two and is indivisibly joined with them. At the same time each is distinct from the other Two and able to be experienced individually. The cooperative work of the one Triune God is another of the amazing paradoxes of God. It is so great a mystery that it is totally beyond valid to use any aspect of it to try to cancel the many Scriptures that teach that each person can and must believe in Jesus for himself or herself if he or she is to have salvation.

God does not take away people's right and responsibility to choose that He gave to them at creation. The devil cannot take it away, and no person can cancel or escape that responsibility of his own choosing. Furthermore, no Scripture says that the sin of Adam or the fall of man took away the ability or the responsibility of each person to make moral choices for himself. To do so would take away human distinctiveness, reduce people to animals, make them unfit for having dominion over God's creation, and make them incapable of having fellowship with God. Furthermore, it would mean that God punishes people for choices over which they have no influence or responsibility. It destroys the justice of God as much as it destroys the dignity of people.

Regardless of which starting point a systematic theologian chooses when he builds his system, before he completes the whole structure, to be totally logical he must weaken or reject either election by God or the free will of people. Neither conclusion is valid if all the Scriptures on salvation are considered. Here is the unwelcome conclusion to which the insightful scholar must be driven: systematic theology is an inadequate approach to explaining the whole landscape of salvation. Systematizing God's truth has great value, but it has serious limitations because of the inadequacies of human wisdom, logic, and reason. It becomes necessary to recognize that God and the salvation God devised can never be made to fit into any system, no matter how elaborate that system might be. Some works of God are beyond rational explanation. They cannot be fitted into anyone's logical structure. The pieces of the jigsaw puzzle can never be matched into one beautiful scheme. Salvation has too many aspects on too many levels for even the wisest of theologians to arrange all of them into one well-coordinated diagram. Salvation, like so many other works of God, cannot be adequately explained by human reason. The best the greatest intellect and the most incisive visionary can do is observe the various aspects of salvation one at a time, admire them, believe them, and allow God the privilege of knowing how all the pieces fit perfectly together. If we seek to coordinate God's election and people's free will any other way, we destroy people's ability to believe or God's freedom to choose. It really is impossible to rationally decide how salvation can depend on two free choices, neither of which depends on the other. Awareness of that truth is just one of the reasons God tells us we must accept salvation by faith—not by works and not by reason, but by faith.

It is hard for intellectuals, accustomed to finding answers to the questions and riddles of life, to admit that their reasonings have limitations. They feel defeated as scholars if they have to say, "We do not know. We just must believe." If you are such a person, please allow me to offer one plea to you. Do not worship your intellect and your logic more than you honor God's Word. God gave us His Word to reveal truths we never could discover or even adequately explain for ourselves. We should thank Him for what He has revealed and praise Him for His determination not to leave us in doubt or in an unending search. He has given us the answers. When we can find no way to reconcile all the answers He has given, we should thank Him for His wisdom and for His patience with our limitations—and believe. Such an attitude is not unscholarly. It is faith.

**Salvation is a divine paradox.** The only way a person can accept the Scriptures on God's election that were written by Paul and the Scriptures on people's free will that were written by the same Paul is to conclude that it takes two choices to produce salvation. God must choose the person, and the person must choose God. God made His choices before the foundation of the world, and we make our choices on the day we decide to repent of our sins. It takes two free and independent choices to make salvation real. Paul himself asserted that truth in one of the most powerful verses in the Bible on salvation. It is found in this same book of Ephesians. He said, "*For by grace you are saved through faith . . .*" (Eph. 2:8-9, HCSB). Paul included both grace and faith in the same sentence. He included God's choice and people's choices in one statement. He did not

position one choice against the other. He said it requires both. One is as necessary as the other. We are saved by grace, and we are saved by faith. Grace and faith are not two ways to be saved. They are not two facets of salvation, one of which is dependent on the other. They are two independent sides to salvation, both of which must match each other to produce salvation.

The conclusion that salvation involves both God's choice of the person and the person's choice of God is not only Scriptural; it also is understandable, even if it is not logical. If either made the choice alone and then tried to force that choice on the other, a genuine relationship of love could never be the result. Each must choose the other voluntarily for a meaningful relationship to be established. The most satisfying aspect of salvation is that it provides a way for God and a person to have a friendly, loving, personal relationship. Such a relationship can exist only if both parties agree to enter into it and maintain it by commitment to each other. Therefore, unless both God and the person choose each other, their relationship is a burden instead of a joy and a sham instead of a blessing.

The problem with that point of view arises when we ask, What happens if one makes one decision and the other makes the opposite decision. Suppose God chooses a person and that person rejects God, what happens? Suppose a person chooses to trust God, but God rejects him, what is the result? The only answer to those questions is the illogical statement that it never happens. In God's great order, which is beyond our rational limits, the two choices never conflict. In some divine way that is beyond our understanding, the two choices always coincide. God does not force His decision on any person, and no person is able to force his decision on God. Yet the two decisions never conflict. The two choices are independent, but they are mutual. We each accept the other, or we reject the other. We make those choices because we belong together or we do not belong together. We want each other or we do not want each other. On the choice each makes, the other freely and fully agrees.

Accepting that viewpoint leads us to recognize that the doctrines of election by God and the free will of people form a paradox. A paradox consists of two statements that logically seem to be irreconcilable but both of which are true. Paradoxes are made known to us by revelations from God. People are mystified by paradoxes, but on the authority of God's Word we must have faith to believe them. The paradox of election and free will is just one of many mysterious workings of God that are beyond our full comprehension. Thank God we have a God that great!

Election by God and the free will of people is as much beyond human reason as these other well-known paradoxical statements:

God is Three.	God is One.
To Israel: You will possess the land forever.	I will cast you out of the land.
Jesus is fully God.	Jesus is fully man.
Jesus is a lion.	Jesus is a lamb.
Jesus: I am going away.	I am with you always.
Of Jesus: I am with you always.	He is coming again.
The Spirit indwells all believers.	The Spirit came on him.
Jesus to His disciples: Receive the Spirit.	If I do not go away, the Spirit will not come.
God so loved the world.	Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.

We cannot explain any of those paradoxes. We must accept them because God revealed them. All of those truths must be accepted on the authority of God's Word. The same is true of the paradoxical relationship of God's election and people's free will. The mystery of how we receive salvation is one of the paradoxes we must believe because God said it; and God does not lie.

The Biblical doctrine of salvation stands on two legs: election and free will. Try to build a doctrine of salvation on only one leg, and it will limp and fall. The Biblical doctrine of salvation also runs on two tracks simultaneously, like a railroad train. The two tracks must be parallel, and they must never cross or waver. Try to run the plan of salvation on only one track, and you will produce a collision or a collapse. Try to make the two tracks merge, and you produce bedlam. Salvation comes by God's election, and salvation comes by man's faith. Eliminate either, and you do not have Biblical salvation.

Ephesians 1:4-7 stresses the great and comforting doctrine of election. It is meant to glorify that doctrine and emphasize its importance. It is not meant to eliminate the contrasting doctrine of the people's free choice. Romans 10:8-11 stresses the awesome responsibility and opportunity offered to people by the doctrine of free will. It is meant to glorify that doctrine and to emphasize its importance. It is not meant to eliminate the contrasting doctrine of election. Only when we embrace both can we see the full extent of how salvation comes to us, even if we cannot understand it fully.

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- b. *In whom we have* [When all the blessings are paid for] (1:7)
- (1) *Redemption through His blood* (1:7b)
  - (2) *The forgiveness of trespasses according to the riches of His grace* (1:7c).

The second aspect of God's great blessings that Paul described was when the blessings were paid for. Anytime a person gives a meaningful gift to another person, it costs him something. David recognized that truth when he refused to accept the threshing floor of Arauna to build an altar on it and eventually the tabernacle itself. He knew that if he did not pay for it, it was not a meaningful gift. In fact, it was not a gift at all. The greatest of all gifts is salvation, and for it to be a true gift, it had to be paid for. Jesus paid that price. The blessings God chooses to give to His people are so great, they cost Him everything. Knowing the great value of the gift of salvation, God the Father and Jesus the Son deliberately planned together in advance for the price to be paid. The Father made the plan. The Son agreed to pay the price, and the contract was completed in advance. To pay the full price to purchase the blessings God planned for His people, Jesus gave up everything, including all of the following:

- (1) His place of authority in heaven,
- (2) His ownership of any earthly possessions,
- (3) His freedom,
- (4) His just reputation among people,
- (5) His righteous standing before God,
- (6) His escape from pain and suffering,
- (7) His life.

Jesus deserved to keep for Himself all of the blessings He gave up more than any other person who ever lived, but He willingly renounced them all so His people can have the blessings we do not deserve. The climax of all that He gave was when He laid down his head on his breast, and gave up His spirit of His own free will. No man took it from Him. He gave it all to pay the price for the sins we have committed. When He did so, He paid the full price that was required for sinful people to be redeemed from all our sins.

**Verse 7. Jesus gave us redemption through His blood.** Paul described the great transaction that purchased blessings for us by saying God redeemed us through the blood of Jesus. He redemption about which he was talking clearly was redemption from sin. Paul declared that redemption from sin is accomplished through Jesus' blood, which meant that He gave us His life and died to pay the price for our sins. Scripture declares that life is in the blood (Lev. 17:11). The more we learn about blood and the functioning of the human body, the more we understand that Scriptural declaration is true. So when he let his blood flow out of his body, he gave up his life. Through the sacrifice of his blood, he paid the price we owed for our sins. However, the payment of his human blood on the Cross was only part of the price He paid. He not only gave us his human life; he also gave up His divine life by allowing Himself to be separated from the Father

for the one and only time in all eternity. Separation from God is spiritual death, and Jesus felt the sting of that separation more than any other ever could, because only He could know the sweetness and value of fellowship with the Father that He had enjoyed for eternity. Even that precious closeness to the Father, He gave up to pay the price for our sins.

When Jesus gave up His lives in payment for our sins He took our penalties on Himself and gave to us His freedom in their place. Furthermore, He took our sinfulness upon Himself and clothed us with His holiness. He accomplished it all through His death on the Cross. Jesus' death on the Cross paid the price we sinners owe for our sins. The penalty we sinners owe for our sins is death. Jesus shed His blood and died physically and spiritually to pay the full price, so sinners can be redeemed. By that means we obtain forgiveness for our trespasses and covering from the consequences of our sins.

However, Jesus' even greater accomplishment that enables Him to apply to our lives the salvation He bought with His life is that He recovered from His awesome sacrifice through His resurrection

from the dead. In His resurrection He reclaimed the life that rightly belongs to Him, so that He can apply to us the gift He paid for.

Paul said all those blessings come to sinners through the "riches of His grace." Grace means granting favors a person does not earn and cannot deserve. Redemption from sin is a gift made possible by the grace of Jesus Christ and Him alone. His death to save people from sin is as much a work of His sovereign choice and grace as His electing sinners for salvation is a gift of His grace. It also is as much a gift of His grace as His predestining people to be His children. Salvation is God's work. To Him and to Him alone belongs all the glory.

The person who would turn His back on the Savior who paid such a price out of love and grace and choose sin instead definitely does not deserve salvation or the blessings Jesus bought for Him. He shuts himself out of the blessings, though they were provided for in a contract made by the Father and the Son before there ever was a physical thing in existence anywhere.

- c. ***Which He lavished on us*** [When the blessings will be completed] (1:8-14)
  - (1) ***Through all wisdom and understanding*** (1:8b-10)
    - (a) ***Making known to us the mystery of His will*** (1:9)
      - [1] ***According to His choice that He purposed in Himself*** (1:9b)
      - [2] ***For accomplishment in the fullness of the times*** (1:9c)
    - (b) ***To unite everything in Christ*** (1:10)
      - [1] ***Both things in heaven*** (1:10b)
      - [2] ***And things on earth*** (1:10c),
  - (2) [Which will include both Jews and Gentiles united as one] (1:11-14)
    - (a) ***By whom we also were chosen*** (1:11-12)
      - [1] ***Being predestined*** (1:11b-11d)
        - [a] ***According to the purpose of the One*** (1:11c)
        - [b] ***Who works out everything according to the decision of His will*** (1:11d)
      - [2] ***That*** (1:12)
        - [a] ***We might be to the praise of His glory*** (1:12b)
        - [b] ***The ones having first hoped in Christ*** (1:12c)

- (b) *By whom you also* (1:13-14)
  - [1] [Through] (1:13b-13c)
    - [a] *Having heard the Word of Truth, the gospel of your salvation* (1:13b),
    - [b] *And having believed in it* (1:13c),
  - [2] *You were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit* (1:13d-14),
    - [a] *Which is the down payment on our inheritance* (1:14a)
    - [b] *Until the redemption of the entitlement* (1:14b),
    - [c] *To the praise of His glory* (1:14c).

After discussing the wonder of how God began His blessings for us by choosing us out of love and grace and how God continued His blessings for us through Jesus' awesome sacrifice, Paul turned to discuss an even more extravagant wonder. He moved on to discuss when God's blessings will be completed. He said the climax of God's blessing will come at the End, when He will unite all things everywhere into one harmonious whole.

**Verses 8-10. He lavished His blessings on us when He made known to us that ultimately he will bring all things into harmonious unity through Christ.** The third topic through which Paul summarized the great spiritual blessings that Jesus gives is that we are able to know about the end result of salvation. Paul said God "lavished on us in all wisdom and understanding." KJV says, ". . . he abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence." The meaning is that God burst out of all bounds in bestowing His blessings by giving us wisdom to understand a mystery about salvation that surpasses even the initial wonder of God's choosing us for forgiveness from sin and even the continued wonder that Jesus made reconciliation possible through His blood. That extra lavish blessing is that He enables us to understand the final result of salvation, which is to bring all things into unity and harmony that will last forever. That understanding comes to us only by revelation from God.

By "mystery" Paul meant knowledge that people cannot gain through reason or investigation. It can be known only by revelation from God. Just as the way of salvation is known only by revelation from God, just so God's ultimate intention in providing salvation is a mystery known only by revelation from God. It is a wonder we could never

imagine or fathom on our own. It is a splendor beyond our wildest expectation. Yet, the same grace of God that gives us salvation opens our minds to understand the mystery of the end result toward which God is working through that salvation. After revealing His salvation to people, God became lavish in His blessings toward us by revealing the mystery of what He chooses to bring to pass at the End as a result of people's salvation. The end result is to end all conflict and bring unbroken unity and harmony to everything in the whole cosmos forever. Paul described three aspects of that breathtaking end result.

First, Paul described how the end result of God's blessings was determined. He said it was determined "according to His choice that He purposed in Himself." God's final goal in giving salvation to people is a wonder He God chose to do by Himself. It is a blessing He purposed in Himself alone. It is something God alone could devise and He alone can accomplish. It is so awesome that it could come be planned and accomplished by God alone.

Second, Paul described when the end result will take place. He said that great divine mystery was going to be accomplished "in the fullness of the times." It will take place when the time is right. It will come when all the cosmos is fully ready for it. It will be the final accomplishment of God's work through the ages. It will take place at the End. It will become reality only when God brings His work of the ages to a climax, and not before. It is not a pipe dream. It will come when all the various ways and means through which God has been working through the ages have come to maturity. It will come according to God's carefully designed plan, and it will come to pass on schedule. It will be

accomplished without fail in the fullness of the times.

Third, Paul explained what that end result will be. He said the ultimate goal and purpose of all of God's blessings is to bring all of God's people and all of God's created cosmos into one grand coordinated and harmonious whole without any discord anywhere. Each person's salvation is just one part of a great master plan. In the end, the culmination of God's work through all the ages will come to pass just like He planned it in the beginning. In the End, He will bring all saved and redeemed people and every created being and object in the whole cosmos into one happy union. Paul specifically stated that everything in heaven and everything on earth will be included in that unity. On that day, every person's salvation and the salvation of all the creation will be completed. Salvation will have reached its goal. That ultimate end of God's salvation is as great a wonder as the beginning of the world by God's creation, as great a wonder as God's choice of His own before He created the universe, and as great a wonder as Jesus' sacrifice of Himself to save the cosmos He created. It will be the fulfillment of all of God's desires and works since He looked out into nothing and brought the creation into beings.

This is the lavish wisdom and the revealed mystery of God's unlimited grace: The goal of salvation is ***"to unite all things in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth"*** (Eph. 1:10). In the end, all disharmony and conflict will end. Everything will work together in unison. Peace and prosperity will reign over all. Heaven and earth will join together in one great realm of loving, living, and serving at the feet of Jesus, who will rule over all under the authority of God the Father and in union with the Holy Spirit for the good of everyone. God will not rest until that fabulous goal becomes reality.

The great work of giving unity to all things was Paul's primary interest and concern when he wrote his letter to the Ephesians. He wanted the Ephesians to understand that great mystery, and he longed for their lives to be transformed and uplifted by it. God wants the same for each of us as we

study the breathtaking sweep of this marvelous book.

#### **Verses 11-14. Including Jews and Gentiles.**

Paul was especially eager for the Ephesians to know that the great planned unity of all things in Jesus will include both Jews and Gentiles. In the ultimate state of glory, there will be no division or conflict between them. Both will be one body in Christ.

He said "we" were the first to have hope in Christ. By "we" he meant the Jews. God did not choose to include the Jews first because He loved them more than He loved others, but because He intended to use them to carry the message to everyone else. For 2,000 years since the time of Abraham, God had been preparing the Jews to receive the message of salvation and to understand the universal harmony that salvation will eventually bring to the whole world through Jesus. Therefore, they were prepared to receive the message first and to believe it first. They were prepared to understand it in a way that others were not. When they finally understood it, they were able to explain it to others in a way the others could understand. God had predestined it that way according to His good purpose. His purpose was to use those who heard the message first to share it with all others, so everyone could know the truth and have an opportunity to be included in the ultimate triumph. Since God planned to use the Jews in that manner and the plan was being carried out in Paul's day, the Jew's witness to Jesus gave praise to God's glory. It showed that God is fully capable of carrying His spectacular plans to complete and uncompromised fulfillment.

Then Paul said "you also" were chosen to receive the same inheritance. According to God's plan, the same salvation God had given to the Jews was not declared to the Gentiles. God did not prepare a different salvation for the Gentiles. He opened the way for Gentiles to receive the same salvation the Jews received, and He called on the Jews who received it first to share it with Gentiles everywhere. Paul explained three aspects of the acceptance of the Gentiles into the same salvation. The three aspects are: the time, the method, and the result.

First, Paul explained the time when the Gentiles were included in salvation. He said they were received they heard the Word of Truth and believed it. When they heard the gospel, it became their gospel of salvation. It was not a different gospel, but it became personal to them when they heard it and believed it.

Second, he explained how they were included in salvation. He said they were sealed into salvation through the Holy Spirit, who is promised to all who believe in God's way of salvation. The presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives became their down payment on the full possession they were going to receive eventually. When they received the down payment, they became entitled to possess the promised blessings God has reserved for all those who trust in Him. That entitlement will be fulfilled at the same time that the Jews' entitlement will be dispensed to them. The Gentiles, right along with the Jews, were going to receive the fulfillment of those promises at the End. The Gentiles were going to share fully and equally in the peace and harmony God will bring to all things.

Third, he explained the end result of their being included in salvation. The final end of their salvation will be that they will join equally with the

Jews in bringing praise to God's glory. Together Gentiles and Jews will bring glory to God because both will be included in the final state of peace and harmony, according to God's Word and God's work.

By that means, Jews and Gentiles will become equal parts of the one great united cosmos at the End. The end result will accomplish the plan God had from the beginning. Understanding those wonders was the blessing Paul longed for the Ephesians to receive. When they would come to understand that blessing, they would give praise to God alongside the Jews. Their joint praise would give the blessing of all blessings to the heart of God. Their praise will bless the God who has giving such great blessings to them. The only greater blessing God will ever receive is when all has been fulfilled and He lives in perfect peace, harmony, and love will all His created cosmos forever.

Yet, this magnificent statement about salvation and the goal toward which it is working provided only the salutation for Paul's magnificent letter to the Ephesians. Further elaboration of the splendor of that truth occupies the remainder of the Book.