Ephesians 1:

* Introduction: Verses 1–2 introduce the epistle
* Praise: Verses 3–14 are Paul's thanksgivings and praises to God for the blessings he has given to the Ephesians
* Prayers: Verses 15–23 are Paul's prayers to God on behalf of the Ephesians

Chapter Commentary:

Chapter 1 includes a brief introduction (Ephesians 1:1–2) followed by two key sections. First, Paul describes the spiritual blessings which believers have in Christ (Ephesians 1:3–14). Second, he focuses on thanksgiving and prayer for his readers (Ephesians 1:15–23).

The introduction (Ephesians 1:1–2) offers Paul's standard greeting, beginning with the author and information about him. It also mentions his audience: the Ephesians and perhaps other churches in the area. This is followed by a greeting: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 1:2).

Chapter Summary:

The first chapter of Ephesians contains two main passages. The first describes the blessings Christians have been given as a result of our salvation through Christ. Paul explains these through praises directed to God the Father. The second section both commends the Ephesians for their reputation, and prays that Christ would bring them into an even fuller and more aware faith.

Chapter Context:

The first three chapters of Ephesians are doctrinal, while the last three are practical. Chapter 1 establishes Paul's view on the value of our salvation in Christ, and the blessings we obtain from it. He does this in the form of praise, directed at God, and describing in detail what it means to have an inheritance in heaven. Later chapters will build on these ideas as Paul connects who we are in Christ to how we should live as Christians.

Book Summary:

Ephesians follows a theme common in Paul's writings: connecting theory with practice. In this book, however, he goes into greater depth before making the transition. As a letter meant to be read by more than just the believers at Ephesus, this is an important look at how Christian belief should translate into Christian action. The first three chapters lay out spiritual ideas, the last three chapters show how these truths should be applied in the life of a mature believer. Paul focuses heavily on love, the unity of the Christian church, and the incredible value of our salvation through Christ.

#### 2. (1-2) Paul’s greeting to the Ephesians.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

a. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ: The opening of the letter is brief, without the more detailed greetings from Paul often found in his other letters.

b. To the saints who are in Ephesus: In a few ancient manuscripts there is a blank space instead of the words in Ephesus. Based partly on this, some believe that this letter was actually a circular letter written not to any one congregation, but meant to be passed on to many different congregations in different cities.

c. Grace to you and peace from God our Father: This greeting is typical of Paul. The apostle knew the essential place of grace and peace from God in the life of the believer, and He knew that receiving God’s grace comes *before* a walk in peace with Him.

### B. The work of the Triune God on behalf of the believer.

*In ancient Greek (the language Paul originally wrote in),*[*Ephesians 1:3*](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+1.3&t=NKJV)*through 1:14 form one long sentence. As an opera has an overture, setting the tone for all the melodies that will follow, so*[*Ephesians 1:3-14*](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+1.3-14&t=NKJV)*sets the tone for the rest of Ephesians.*

#### 1. (3-6) The work of God the *Father*.

Blessed *be*the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places*in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.

a. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: Paul called for a blessing upon the Father (in the sense of recognizing His glory and honor and goodness), because the Father has *already* blessed the believer with every spiritual blessing (who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing).

b. Who has blessed us: This blessing is ours. God’s resources are there for us always. This speaks of an attitude of certainty and assurance.

c. With every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ: This describes both the *kind* of blessings and the *location* of those blessings. These are spiritual blessings, which are far better than material blessings. These blessings are ours in the heavenly places in Christ, they are higher, better, and more secure than earthly blessings.

d. Just as He chose us in Him: Our possession of every spiritual blessing is as certain as our being chosen by Him, and chosen before the foundation of the world.

e. That we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: We are chosen not only for salvation, but also for *holiness*. Any understanding of God’s sovereign choosing that diminishes our personal responsibility for personal holiness and sanctification falls far short of the whole counsel of God.

f. Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself: This is the Father’s destiny for His chosen – that they would enjoy adoption as sons. God’s unfolding plan for us not only includes salvation and personal transformation, but also a warm, confident relationship with the Father.

g. To the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved: The relational aspect is emphasized again as Paul describes the status of accepted (*charito*, “highly favored” or “full of grace” as in [Luke 1:28](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+1.28&t=NKJV)) that is granted to every believer because of God’s grace.

i. Jesus was completely accepted by the Father. All His character, all His words, all His work was acceptable to God the Father. And now we are accepted in the Beloved.

#### 2. (7-8) The work of God the *Son*.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,

a. In Him we have redemption through His blood: The Him is the *Beloved* of [Ephesians 1:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+1.6&t=NKJV). In Him we have redemption and nowhere else. There is no possible redemption outside of Jesus and His redeeming blood.

i. Redemption always implies a price being paid for the freedom that is purchased. It uses the ancient Greek word *lootruo*, which means, “to liberate on the receipt of a ransom.” (Gaebelein) Here the price is His blood, showing that the blessing from the Father and the Son comes not only from a divine decree, but it also comes according to His righteousness and holiness. He cannot bless in opposition to His righteousness and holiness.

ii. Jesus does not redeem us by His sinless life or His moral example, but only by His death in our place – by His blood.

b. According to the riches of His grace: The redemption and forgiveness given to us comes according to the measure of the riches of His grace. It is not a “small” redemption or forgiveness won by Jesus on the cross. It is immense.

c. Which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence: Many think it is unwise of God to lavish such redemption and forgiveness on guilty sinners. But it was in all wisdom and prudence that He gave this to us.

#### 3. (9-12) The mystery of His will.

Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; in Him. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

a. Having made known to us the mystery of His will: Part of what belongs to us under the *riches of His grace*is the knowledge of the mystery of His will, God’s great plan and purpose which was once hidden but is now revealed to us in Jesus. Through the Apostle Paul, God called us to consider the greatness of God’s great plan for the ages and our place in that plan.

b. That… He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; in Him: God’s ultimate plan is to bring together – to ultimately resolve – all things in Christ, either through Jesus as a Savior or Jesus as a Judge; this will happen in the fullness of the times.

i. The word for gather together has the idea of “to unite” or “to sum up.” It was used for the process of adding up a column of figures and putting the sum up at the top. Paul’s idea is that God will make all things “add up” at the end, and right now He is in the process of coming to that final sum.

c. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance: For believers, Jesus is not a judge, but the One in whom we have an inheritance. Believers are predestined for this according to the counsel of His will – again, the reasons for His choosing reside in Him, not in us.

d. Being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will: We see three aspects of God’s plan working together. It begins with His purpose, then the counsel of His will, and finally results in His work. God made His plan carefully according to an eternal purpose, taking counsel within the Godhead, and then He works with all wisdom.

e. That we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory: God’s purpose in all this is so that those who have trusted Christ will exist to the praise of His glory. The goal of God’s ultimate plan is to glorify Him.

f. We who first trusted in Christ: This speaks of Jewish believers. The words *you also* in [Ephesians 1:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Ephesians+1.13&t=NKJV) speak of Gentile believers. God’s great plan has a place for both Jew and Gentile, and it brings them both together in Jesus.

4. (13-14) The work of the Holy Spirit.

In Him you also *trusted,*after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

a. In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth: God’s sovereign choice works, but it does not exclude human cooperation. These ones who were so sovereignly chosen were also the ones who trusted, heard the word of truth, and believed.

b. You were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise: Also essential in God’s work is the sealing work of the Holy Spirit. His presence in our lives acts as a seal which indicates ownership, and which is a guarantee of our inheritance.

i. “The seal is therefore the Holy Spirit Himself, and His presence in the believer denotes ownership and security. The sealing with the Spirit is not an emotional feeling or some mysterious inward experience.” (Gaebelein)

ii. The word guarantee (“down payment”) is used only in the New Testament of the Holy Spirit. He is our *only* down payment of coming glory; nothing else is provided – or *needed*.

c. Having believed, you were sealed: The sealing does not come *before* we believe, and those who demand some assurance from God before they will believe treat God as if His word could not be trusted.

i. “For sealing there are needed the softened wax; the imprint of the beloved face; the steady pressure. Would that the Spirit might impress the face of our dear Lord on our softened hearts, that they may keep it for evermore!” (Meyer)

d. Until the redemption of the purchased possession: We have this guarantee until we are “completely purchased” by God through resurrection and glorification – again, all to the praise of His glory*.*