

## GOSPEL GIFTS Ephesians 1:3-14

- **Illustration:** Birthday gifts – Legos, Tonka Toys, fishing pole and tackle box...Those were very special gifts that I still remember and occasionally still use. They made my birthday special and memorable.
- If you've trusted Christ as your Savior, then you also have a spiritual birthday. In fact, John 3 refers to the moment of your salvation as being "born again." And on that day, we also received many, many presents that are indeed very special.
- Read Ephesians 1:3
  - "All" = we are never lacking gifts from God—He's given us every gift we will ever need
  - "Spiritual" = given to us through the Holy Spirit—since He lives within you, you will never be without these gifts—they are always at your disposal
  - "In heavenly places" = they are stored for us in heaven, our true home, never to perish
  - "In Christ" = only those who are "in Christ," those who have been united to Him in saving faith, have had these presents bestowed upon them

### FROM GOD THE FATHER – ELECTION (vv. 4-6).

#### I. The timing of God's election was in eternity past.

##### **Explanation:**

- "Before the foundation of the world" – before time and space; before Genesis, we were on God's mind; before we even had an opportunity to prove ourselves worthy
- His choosing of us in eternity past guaranteed His commitment to us in the future, even if we proved ourselves unworthy. And indeed we have, yet His choosing remains.

##### **Illustration:**

- Elementary school recess = picking teams for 4-square, basketball, soccer, etc. – two team captains alternated opportunities to choose players for their team: they surveyed the options, chose who they wanted to be on their team (and usually it was someone who was a good athlete and would help them win), and passed over others
- Similarly, God has chosen us. However, it was not because of our inherent skill or goodness or because of our possession of some quality helpful to God that He chose us.

#### II. The reason for God's election was His own will.

##### **Explanation:**

- He chose us simply because it pleased Him to do so, simply because He wanted to.
- Election is all of God, none of us.

#### III. The motivation of God's election was His love.

##### **Explanation:**

- God did not choose us due to our skill or inherent goodness. Chapter 2 tells us that we were dead in sin, passionately pursuing the things of God's enemies, and storing up wrath for ourselves (vv. 1-3).
- Although nothing in us commended us to God, His love motivated Him to choose us. We didn't deserve His choosing; He simply chose us "in love."

#### IV. The purpose of God's election was our holiness.

##### **Explanation:**

- To make us "holy and without blame before Him." And because this was the purpose for which the Almighty God chose us, He can only succeed.
- Indeed, He has succeeded: the "Lamb without blemish and without spot" (I Peter 1:19) has, in what has been called the "Great Transaction," taken our sin upon Himself and freely given to us His perfect righteousness. "In Him" we have been made to be "the righteousness of God" (II Corinthians 5:21). While we continue to practically struggle with sin every day, our unchanging position before God is one of holiness—according to Colossians 2:10, we are "complete in Him."

- Eventually, this sanctifying purpose of God will climax in our freedom from even daily sin, for He will one day “present [us] to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that [we] should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:27).

#### **V. The result of God’s election was our adoption.**

##### **Explanation:**

- God chose you to be in His family. He chose to adopt you to be His child. See, you used to be “under the tyrant the Devil who was [your] slavemaster and who brought destruction. In contrast, [you now] have a new Father who is unselfish, loving, and caring and wants the very best for His sons & daughters” (Hoehner). Cf. 2:2-3
- What was the cost of our adoption? Did God have to sign some paperwork, write out a check, and travel halfway across the world to purchase us for adoption? NO, He adopted us “by Jesus Christ,” and verses 7 tells us that it was the death of Christ that purchased our sonship. The payment given by God to secure our adoption was His own self. That God would pay so much in order to adopt into His own family such wicked children as are we ought to solicit an eternal response of great praise from our hearts.

##### **Illustration:**

- Couple at TC that were adopting a special needs child from China. The mom was overwhelmed with gratitude to God and love for this child. She wanted the child to be her daughter, and despite her needs and without knowing her, she loved her immensely.
- Our God was infinitely more desirous of having us in His family. He was infinitely more full of joy in adopting us. And we, too, we are special needs children. There was absolutely nothing to commend us to God, and yet, like that mother, He loved us before we knew Him and He purposefully desired our sonship.

#### **VI. The goal of God’s election was His worship.**

##### **Explanation:**

- Paul concludes his musings on God’s selection by reminding us of the ultimate goal behind God’s working in this regard: it was “to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved [One].” God does all things to magnify His glory, and His choosing of us is no exception. God’s choosing of us was an act of great grace; indeed, according to another rendering of this text,” it required Him to “freely bestow” His grace upon us “in the Beloved One,” “in Christ”—and since we are always “in Christ,” we always have His grace.
- Such a gracious display can only cause those watching to praise Him! So, praise the Lord—in His great grace, He has chosen us!

##### **APPLICATION—FOCUS ON THE GOSPEL:**

- *The timing of God’s election was in eternity past.*
  - God is faithful; (1) therefore, I can bank on Him to fulfill His Word.
  - I mean more to Him than anything else, even His earthly creation; (2) thus, I always mean something to Someone! No need for gloom and feeling sorrow for myself.
- *The reason for God’s election was His own will & The motivation of God’s election was His love.*
  - He chose me in spite of me; (3) thus, no room for pride, only humble thanksgiving.
  - My choosing was not dependent upon my perfection. God did not chose me because of some previous goodness that He saw in me but that I have now marred. God chose me knowing that I would, for the rest of my life, struggle to return the love due to Him. He adopted me as His child knowing that I would often abuse His gospel by spurning Him, resisting His loving discipline, running away from home, and by my actions even consciously denying that He is your Father. God chose you from His sovereign will—because He wanted to—and because of His good pleasure toward me—He loved me with an everlasting love. (4) Therefore, don’t wallow in sin, guilt, or doubt.
- *The purpose of God’s election was our holiness.*
  - How many times have you struggled with sin and fallen to it? How many times have you echoed with Paul, “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death” (Romans 7:24)? While we continue to wrestle with powerful sin habits and to grieve God with ungodliness, (5) this passage gives us hope, reminding us that we stand “in Christ” complete and righteous, and encouraging us to look toward the future when, according to I John 3:2, “we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

- *The result of God's election was our adoption.*
  - Have you ever been disappointed when a job opportunity fell through? Have you been discouraged when a promotion you were expecting didn't work out? Perhaps you've even faced being laid off from your job. Some have gone through the emotional turmoil of a broken engagement or the heartache of a betrayal by a good friend. How can we bless God in those circumstances? By reminding ourselves that although our boss might not select us and our loved ones might reject us, God has already chosen us for Himself—what a promotion. **(6) Remember today that God still picked you to be His child; He will never disown you.**
  - Have you ever been rejected or forsaken by family or friends? Has your boss ever denied you a promotion or has your company laid you off? Has a parent passed off the scene? Do the doctors continue to withhold your name from the transplant waiting list? Is a spouse dying of cancer? Is a friend unfaithful and now distant? Is a listening ear far away? **(7) There is One to whom you can always turn.** "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up" (Psalm 27:10). God is your "Abba Father" (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6), your "Heavenly Daddy"; you are His son.
  - Regardless of the example that your earthly father may have set for you, envision the most ideal depiction of what a good father would be. Your Heavenly Daddy is so much better. He loves you unequally, cares for you perfectly out of the infinite and omnipotent resources of His being; He is always inclined unto your cry (Psalm 40:1), and He is intimately interested in you. **(8) God is a heavenly Daddy who listens and helps.** When you are anxious about how you are going to provide for your daily needs, you can ask your Daddy for financial aid. When you are disquieted and lonely, you can ask your Daddy to talk with you and encourage your soul, and you can share your tears and your secrets with Him. When you are weighed down under so many burdens that you feel you must surely give way, you can ask your Daddy to bear your burdens on His infinitely great shoulders. When you are oppressed by a feeling of shame and guilt and sinfulness so that you feel you must surely be rejected by God, you must remind yourself that God adopted you "according to the good pleasure of His will"—He wanted you to be His child, and He will never forsake you (Hebrews 13:5).
- *The goal of God's election was His worship.*
  - **(9) Worship:** at our wedding prayer: "May we never lose that breathless wonder that exclaims, 'Out of all this world, You have chosen me!'"
  - Praise Him for...
    - His blessing you with blessings that you already possess through His Spirit and that are located in your true home,
    - His choosing of you in eternity past out of the masses of humanity,
    - His commitment to creating holiness and blamelessness in you,
    - His adoption of you as His son in spite of yourself,
    - His love that was displayed in His great sacrificial payment to secure your adoption,
    - His unique relationship toward you as your Heavenly Daddy, and
    - His sovereign control in which he is kindly intentioned toward you.

**Explanation:**

"In Christ" is a key phrase in Ephesians, demonstrating that these gifts are a result of being united to Christ.

**I. In Christ, we have been released from sin, because of His payment.**

**Explanation:**

- Redemption is "release on receipt of ransom." The word has roots in the slave markets of the Roman Empire—in order to free a slave, a free citizen would first need to pay a certain ransom price in order to buy the slave for himself and then grant him freedom.
- Every person is in bondage—not a visible physical bondage to human masters, but a spiritual bondage to sin and its consequences. MacArthur notes, "Sin is man's captor and slave owner, and it demands a price for his release. Death is the price that had to be paid for man's redemption from sin."
- Christ shed "His blood" and died on the cross to take our death for us. His death was the ransom payment that He paid to sin to purchase us for Himself.

**II. In Christ, we have been forgiven, because of His sacrifice.**

**Explanation:**

- The passage tells us that in Christ we also have "forgiveness of sins." Originally, it was our iniquity that separated us from God, Isaiah 59:2 tells us. We had transgressed the law, and such sin is punished in hell (Romans 6:23; I John 3:4). But, when Christ redeemed us, He did not simply secure freedom from sin's tyranny; He also provided "forgiveness of sins" so that we could abide in God's holy presence. We have not just been set free from sin's tyranny only to wander about in a type of spiritual "No-Man's Land" still separated from God. No, Christ's redemption of us also included the positive aspect of canceling our sin debt and placing us in a peaceful relationship with God, our Father.
- At its root, "forgiveness" suggests a "sending away." This concept is again pictured beautifully in the Old Testament. On the Day of Atonement two goats would be selected for the worship. One would be sacrificed, but the other was treated differently. The High Priest would lay his hands upon the head of this second goat, called the scapegoat. In doing so, he symbolically laid the sins of the people of Israel upon the animal. The goat would then be taken away deep into the wilderness so that it could not find its way back to the camp. This pictured for the Israelites what God could do with their sins when they made sacrifices of atonement. God could "send away" the sin far from them. Although it was only a picture, in Christ it can become a reality.

**III. In Christ, we can know God, because of His gracious revelation.**

**Explanation:**

- Verses 7-8 reiterates the teaching of verse 6 that God has "abounded toward us" or lavished us with grace. This grace was specifically seen in His granting to us "all wisdom and prudence [insight]."
- Since you are God's child, He wants you to learn about Him and His plan. So, He has caused His wisdom and prudence to "abound" on your behalf. Such great wisdom from God will help you understand the mysteries of His Word, one of which, according to verse 10, is that at some point in the future, Christ will be all and everything will be fully subservient to Him. There will be no more division, no more rebellion, no more hatred; Christ will be over all and He will reign. Because He has given us wisdom and prudence we can both know these truths and live in light of them today.

**IV. In Christ, we have an inheritance from God, because of His plan.**

**Explanation:**

- In verse 10, Paul simply refers to a multi-faceted aspect of God's spiritual blessings to us as "an inheritance." This inheritance is the climax of our salvation, to be enjoyed in its entirety and fullness for all of eternity in heaven. Romans 8:18 tells us that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." From other passages of Scripture we have hints as to what is included in this inheritance: a home in heaven (John 14), crowns (II Timothy 4:8), the beauties of heaven (Revelation 21-22), eternal fellowship with God (Revelation 22:4), eternal provision (Revelation 22:2), and co-regency with God (Revelation 22:5) to name but a few.
- We have been predestined (or chosen) for this inheritance "according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." Because God's counsel never wavers and because He always fulfills His will, we can be assured that this inheritance is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and...fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (I Peter 1:4).

## V. In Christ, we have reason to worship, because of His hope.

### **Explanation:**

- Our hope in Christ is not a whim, but a certainty. Thus, there is reason to “be to the praise of His glory”!

### **APPLICATION—FOCUS ON THE GOSPEL:**

- Perhaps you wonder if redemption and forgiveness could really apply to you. After all, you say, “You don’t know what I’ve done.” Maybe you’re thinking, “I still struggle with sin so much and fall so often, there is no way that I could be included with those who have been redeemed and forgiven. I’m just too sinful still.” Well, this passage tells us that these gifts of redemption and forgiveness actually come from a storehouse known as “the riches of [Christ’s] grace.”
- Perhaps your life still looks like enslaved freedom—you’ve been released from sin, but still wallow in it. Romans 6 speaks to your need of “reckoning” these truths as true of you. In your mind/meditations and then in your life, consider the reality of your new state.
- Do you ever wonder what God’s will is concerning certain areas of life? Have you ever wondered what God’s thoughts were on certain issues in life? It was “[God’s] good pleasure” that caused Him to make His revelation known unto us. Because of Christ’s Gospel gifts, now you can know the mind of God.
- You might not possess a whole lot now. Perhaps you or your family has to deal with daily financial pressure, and you often are at a loss concerning how the next bill will be paid. Take encouragement today from these Gospel gifts that you have received the “unsearchable [unfathomable] riches of Christ” (Ephesians 3:8)—a rich inheritance indeed.

## FROM: GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT – SEALING (V. 13-14).

### I. The Spirit sealed us in security.

#### **Explanation:**

- Verse 13 teaches us that at salvation we were “sealed with [the] Holy Spirit of promise.” God did not seal our salvation with a signet pressed in wax; He sealed us with His own self through the Spirit. That seal can never be broken.
- One writer describes the significance of this picture of sealing. He states that it signifies (1) a *finished transaction*—our salvation has been completed by God, and there is nothing lacking; (2) *ownership and authenticity*—God purchased us to be His, and His Spirit living within us is proof that we are indeed His (cf. Romans 8:9); (3) *security and protection*—since we belong to God and have His Spirit’s sealing within us, we are safe and secure, knowing that our position in Christ can never be changed.

### II. The Spirit sealed us as a downpayment.

#### **Explanation:**

- Verse 14 tells us that God’s Spirit is also the “earnest [downpayment] of our inheritance.” We don’t use that word “earnest” in that sense anymore, so a better translation would be “downpayment” or “guarantee.”

#### **Illustration:**

- We understand the idea of a *downpayment*. If you want to purchase a car for \$25,000, you usually have to pay a downpayment of \$5,000. You pay this \$5,000 up front before you drive the car off the lot, and in doing so, you pledge yourself or guarantee to the dealership that you will pay the remaining \$20,000 on time according to the details outlined in the contract.

#### **Explanation:**

- Similarly, God has given us the Holy Spirit as a downpayment, guaranteeing to us that He will give us the remaining inheritance in the future. And if the Holy Spirit (i.e., God Himself living in us, empowering us and growing us into Christlikeness) is the downpayment, how great must be the rest of the inheritance!
- Furthermore, consider the special significance of the idea of a downpayment. When you give a car dealership a downpayment of \$5,000, they don’t have to wait until the entire amount for the car is in before they spend that \$5,000. They can spend it immediately.

### **III. The Spirit sealed us in anticipation.**

#### **Explanation:**

- “Until the redemption of the purchased possession” refers to the culmination of God's Gospel-work. In that day, our entire being will be redeemed from every element of sin. On that day, our inheritance will be complete.

### **IV. The Spirit sealed for worship.**

#### **Explanation:**

- Again, the result of this sealing should be our worship, for God's glory is magnified in His gracious salvation.

#### **APPLICATION—FOCUS ON THE GOSPEL:**

- Even though we are often “prone to wander, Lord I feel it; prone to leave the God I love,” God has put His seal upon us—a seal that never fades away; a seal that identifies us eternally as God's own possession.
- So, can you trust God? Can you trust Him to give you a home in heaven? Can you trust Him to complete the salvation He gave to you? Can you trust Him to give you eternal life after death? Can you trust the precious promises in His Word? ABSOLUTELY! He's pledged Himself to you, not with \$5,000, but with His Spirit.
- Finally, you can use your downpayment now. You don't have to wait—you can “spend the Spirit” now. See, we “spend the Spirit” as we “walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16), are “led of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:18), and are “filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18). This leads to greater Christlikeness, for II Corinthians 3:18 tells us... God uses His downpayment of the Spirit not to be a stagnant mass in our spiritual lives, but to be a sanctifying Worker making us more like the One He chose us to be like and for whom He adopted us. We can use this downpayment now! We can become more like Christ through the riches of this downpayment!

### **CONCLUSION**

- Three times in this passage, the author tells us what our response should be after considering our wonderful presents. The passage tells us that we should be “unto the praise of His glory” (v. 6, 12, 14). Let us praise our wonderful heavenly Daddy who “has blessed us with all these spiritual blessings [spiritual presents] in the heavenly places in Christ” (v. 3).