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# **Who Are We?**

## **Those Blessed With Every Spiritual Blessing**

### **EPHESIANS 1:3-8A**

### **Introduction**

1. Following the stoning of Stephen of which we read in Acts 7:59-60, the church begins to experience tremendous persecution.
2. As a result, everyone except the apostles were “scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria” (Acts 8:1).
3. Still, the gospel continued to be preached and the church continued to grow.
4. By the time you reach Acts 11:19, we find that those scattered because of this persecution had made their to the region of Phoenicia to the north west, the island of Cyprus in the eastern Mediterranean Sea and the city of Antioch some 190 miles north of Damascus.
5. The result of the preaching of the gospel in Antioch was that the man we know as Barnabas left Jerusalem and went there to encourage the new converts to remain true to the Lord (Acts 11:23).
6. Luke tells us that “considerable numbers were brought to the Lord” (Acts 11:24).
7. This caused Barnabas to leave and go in search of Saul, who we better know as Paul.
8. He found him and brought Saul to Antioch where the two men spent an entire year meeting with the church and teaching considerable numbers (Acts 11:26).
9. Luke adds in verse 26 that “the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”
10. By this time, the church has been in existence approximately ten years, but it is only now that people begin to call the disciples “Christians.”

11. But, who are these people, and who are we?
12. Here, in Paul's letter to the Christians in the city of Ephesus, he tells us.

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13. As we saw last week in his greeting to these disciples, Paul wrote, "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" (Ephesians 1:3; NASB95).
14. You and I, like the Ephesians before us, are people who God has blessed "with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."
15. How has God blessed us? What makes us special in His before Him?
16. Let's begin tonight to look a little deeper at what Paul goes on to say in the next four verses of this chapter about those things which set us apart and make us "a people for God's own possession" (1 Peter 2:9), as Peter describes us.

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## **I. God Chose Us**

"... just as He [God] chose us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him." (Ephesians 1:4, NASB95)

### **A. GOD CHOSE US IN CHRIST**

1. God chose us. He chose to save us in Christ.
2. We didn't go seeking for God, He came looking for us, "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).
3. There is no other way to God, but through Christ (John 14:6).

"Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." (John 14:6, NASB95)

4. In 1 John 4:9, the apostle John wrote, "In this is love, not that we loved God,

but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation [atoning sacrifice] for our sins” (1 John 4:9; NASB95).

5. Those of us who are Christians here tonight are God’s chosen ones, not because of anything special about us but because of His love for us.

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### **B. HE CHOSE US BEFORE HE CREATED ANYTHING**

1. When Paul tells us that God chose us “before the foundation of the world,” he means that His decision to save was made before time as we know it.
2. It wasn’t a last moment decision or an afterthought.
3. In Matthew 25, we find Jesus telling His disciples of His return in glory and His separation of the righteous from the unrighteous.
4. In verse 34, He tells them that He will say to those on His right, “Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34, NASB95).
5. Before God created the world as we now know it, He had already prepared His kingdom for those who came to His Son in obedient faith.
6. That should encourage each of us to know that, before created the heavens and the earth, He had already prepared His eternal kingdom for us in anticipation of all that was to come.

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### **C. HE CHOSE US FOR A PURPOSE**

1. That purpose was that “we would be holy and blameless before Him” (v. 4b).
2. In Ephesians 5:27, Paul writes of our Lord’s goal for His church, “that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.”
3. Jude said that God is “able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy” (Jude 24).

4. God calls us to be holy because He is holy (1 Peter 1:16).
5. This is why the apostle Peter calls us a “holy nation” (1 Peter 2:9).

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## **II. God Adopted Us**

“In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.” (Ephesians 1:4b–6, NASB95)

### **A. HE DID SO OUT OF LOVE**

1. Time and again throughout the New Testament we read of God’s love for us.
2. Jesus told Nicodemus that “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16).
3. The apostle Paul told the Christians in Rome that, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8, NASB95)
4. Here, in the next chapter of his letter to the Ephesians, Paul wrote “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),” (Ephesians 2:4–5, NASB95)

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### **B. HE ACCOMPLISHED IT THROUGH JESUS CHRIST**

1. Paul describes our adoption process in His letter to the churches of Galatia.

“But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” (Galatians 4:4–5, NASB95)

2. He goes on to tell us that it is because you and I are sons and daughters of God that He “has sent for the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” (Galatians 4:6).
3. As a result, we are now heirs of God, and as the apostle Peter pointed out in 1 Peter 1:4, there awaits us “an inheritance which is imperishable, and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.”

**Slide 8****C. HE DID SO IN KEEPING WITH HIS GOOD PLEASURE**

1. The NASB translates this as “the kind intention of His [God’s] will.”
2. Paul told the Philippians that “it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13).
3. Just as it is the pleasure of any of us who are fathers and mothers to see our children grow to become godly men and women, so it is God’s good pleasure to see His children grow in respect to their salvation (1 Peter 2:2).

**Slide 9****D. OUR ADOPTION IS TO RESULT IN “THE PRAISE OF THE GLORY OF HIS GRACE”**

1. “The glory of His grace” or “His glorious grace” is not something which God gives to us, but God’s giving of Himself.
2. It is His coming alongside us to embrace us and work for our benefit.
3. It is His invitation to us, who, because of our sin deserve death, to instead sit down with Him at His banquet table.

**Slide 10****III. He Redeemed Us**

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us.”  
(Ephesians 1:7–8a, NASB95)

## **A. THE PRICE OF OUR REDEMPTION WAS CHRIST’S BLOOD**

1. The word “redemption” occurs ten times in the New Testament.
  - a. Seven of those times are in Paul’s letters.
  - b. Three of them are here in Ephesians.
2. It indicates our release from the bondage of sin through the payment of a price, or as Paul calls it here, “the forgiveness of our trespasses.”
3. The price which God paid for our sins was the “blood” of His own son.
4. As Peter wrote in his first letter, “you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.” (1 Peter 1:18–19, NASB95)
5. In the last meeting which Paul had with the elders of this church, he told them that God had purchased the church “with His own blood” (Acts 20:28).

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6. How many times have you and I sung the words in that famous hymn by Fanny Crosby,

Redeemed — how I love to proclaim it!  
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;  
Redeemed through His infinite mercy,  
His child, and forever, I am.

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## **B. THIS TOO FLOWED OUT OF THE RICHES OF GOD’S GRACE**

1. Paul said that our redemption, our forgiveness is “according to the riches of His grace.”

2. It is out of His inexhaustible, unlimited storehouse that He gives this grace.
3. Many of our English translations (ESV, NASB95, NIV84, HCSB) say that He lavishes His grace on us.
4. The word "lavish" means to 'expend or bestow profusely', 'marked by excess.'
5. Grace is often defined as God's unmerited favor.
6. Imagine God giving to you that which you do not deserve — forgiveness — to the excess, beyond all that you could ask or imagine.

## **Conclusion**

1. Are you beginning to get a sense of who you are as a Christian.
  - a. God chose to save you in Christ.
  - b. He has also adopted you through His Son to Himself so that you can now call Him, "Father."
  - c. On top of all this, He has lavishly redeemed you, forgiven you of your sins according to the riches of His grace.
2. Is there any doubting that God loves you or that He wants you as His own?
3. Can you even imagine how much more He intends for you?
4. Our finite minds cannot begin to comprehend such a God.
5. Will you come to Him tonight?