

Ephesians 1:1 – 14

^{1:1} Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at *Ephesus** and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Chiastic Structure of Ephesians 1:3 – 14

^{1:3} **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,

⁴ just as **He chose us in him** before the foundation of the world,

that we would be holy and blameless before Him

in love ⁵**He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ** to Himself,

according to the kind intention of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory

of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the beloved

⁷ in him we have **redemption** through his blood,

the **forgiveness** of our trespasses, according to the riches

of His grace, ⁸ **which He lavished on us** in all wisdom and insight

⁹ He made known to us the mystery of **His will, according to His kind intention** which He purposed

in him ¹⁰ with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times,

that is, the summing up of **all things** in Christ,

things in the heavens and things on the earth

in him ¹¹ also we have obtained an inheritance,

having been **predestined** according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,

¹² to the end **that we** who were the first to hope in Christ **would be to the praise of His glory**

¹³ in him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--**having also believed, you were sealed in him with the Holy Spirit of promise,**

¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our **inheritance**, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the **praise of His glory.**

Thematic Summary of the Chiastic Outline

Blessed be God

He gave us every spiritual blessing

He chose us in Christ

That we would be holy and blameless

He predestined us to adoption

According to His kind intention

Grace freely bestowed

Redemption through his blood,

Forgiveness of our trespasses

Grace lavished on us

According to His kind intention

In him is an administration [household]

All things summed up in Christ,

Things in the heavens and things on the earth

In him we have an inheritance,

He predestined us according to His purpose

That we would be to the praise of His glory

We believed, are sealed in Christ with the Holy Spirit

He will give us an inheritance

Praise be to God

Historical and Cultural Background

- *Israel as Chosen People*: Paul uses the idiom of Israel’s origin story to indicate that believers in Christ are a renewed people of God, partnering with God.

Out of Slavery to Egypt	Out of Slavery to Sin
My firstborn son (Ex.4:22)	Adoption as sons (Eph.1:5)
Redemption through blood of passover lamb (Ex.12 – 14)	Redemption through his blood (Eph.1:7)
Into an inheritance: garden land (Ex.15)	Into an inheritance: new heavens, new earth (Eph.1:11, 14)

- *Jesus is the Chosen One, the Beloved*: The phrase ‘in the Beloved’ occurs in v.6. Notice that Matthew and Luke use the phrases ‘the beloved’ and ‘the chosen one’ as if they had the identical meaning.

A voice out of the cloud said,
 ‘This is *My beloved Son*, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to him!’ (Matthew 17:5)

Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying,
 ‘This is *My Son, My Chosen One*; listen to him!’ (Luke 9:35)

Israel failed to be the ‘chosen people’ of God. So Jesus came to be the ‘chosen one’ on behalf of Israel and all humanity.

- *Adoption as Sons*: This phrase in v.5 is drawn from a Jewish source but with significant Roman cultural echoes. In both contexts, adoption was not a practice done with children, but with adult men to give them a land inheritance (e.g. Gen.15:1).
 - *Jewish*: God called Israel ‘My firstborn son’ (Ex.4:22) because it was an idiom of God bestowing a land inheritance on Israel, like Adam in the garden.
 - *Roman*: For example, in 50 AD, Emperor Claudius adopted a young man to succeed him on the throne. That young man changed his name to Nero. Interestingly, Nero wanted to marry the biological daughter of Claudius, Octavia, who was already his legal sister. They were not blood relations, but by law they were brother and sister, and they could not get married. Nero had to get the Roman Senate to pass special legislation so he could marry her. That is how serious and life changing adoption was in terms of identity change.
- *Predestination*: ‘Such was the force of St. Augustine’s intellect that some of his ideas entered permanently into Western theology. The most obvious, perhaps, is that of ‘predestination,’ the idea that God from eternity elects some to save, while ‘reprobating’ the rest to damnation, which Augustine believed to be the teaching of St. Paul. Such an idea never really arose in the Eastern Christian world. The Latin word ‘praedestinare’ is a far stronger verb than the original Greek ‘proorizein,’ which really means little more than to ‘mark out in advance.’ [My note: *Augustine had not mastered Greek*] More importantly, Augustine’s interpretations of certain passages in Paul were quite novel... All Christians believe that we are born in sin – that is, enslaved to death, suffering corruption in our bodies, minds and desires, alienated from God – but only in the West did the idea arise that a newborn infant is somehow already guilty of transgression in God’s eyes. In part, this is because the Latin text of Romans 5:12 with which Augustine was familiar contained a mistranslation of the final clause of the verse, one that seemed to suggest that ‘in’ Adam ‘all sinned’. The actual Greek text, however, says nothing of the sort; it says either that as a result of death all sinned, or that because sin is general all things die; but it does not impute guilt to those who have not yet committed any evil.’¹

¹ David Bentley Hart, *The Story of Christianity: An Illustrated History of 2000 Years of the Christian Faith* (London: Quercus, 2012), p.77; see John Cassian’s critique of his contemporary, Augustine, in Owen Chadwick, *John Cassian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), ch.4, or John Cassian’s Conferences XIII; for a modern Eastern Orthodox critique of Augustine’s understanding of predestination and God’s will can be found here: <https://benedictseraphim.wordpress.com/2005/03/31/st-john-cassian-on-grace-and-free-will/>. Sadly, Luther and Calvin looked to Augustine for help with understanding predestination and God’s will.

Questions

Part One: Understanding Our Identity in Christ

1. Understand the chiasm. It's a W on its side. I used to read Ephesians 1:3 – 14 in a linear fashion, because in modern Western literature, you read left to right, top to bottom. And usually, what comes first is the main point, and qualifies everything that comes after it. But Ephesians is not modern Western literature. Writers and poets back in the day often spoke or wrote in a structure like this: a chiasm. In a chiasm, the first point matches the last point. The second point matches the second to last point, and so on, until you get to the center. The center is the main point. In this case, the center has two points side by side.
 - a. Now does this happen elsewhere in Scripture? Yes. Paul uses a double chiastic structure in 1 Corinthians 1:17 – 2:2.² Matthew's Gospel appears to be structured in the same chiastic way, with a double point at the center of Mt.12:46 – 13:58.³ And finally, Paul structures Ephesians 2:11 – 22 in a single pointed chiasm, so we can be confident that Paul wanted Ephesians to be poetic.
2. First find all occurrences of the phrase 'in Christ' or 'in him' or 'through Christ.' The phrase "in him" or "in Christ" or "in the Beloved" occurs 12 times (v.1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 10, 12, 13, 13) in the first 14 verses alone!
 - a. Illus: My son John was born in September 2000, after a marathon 55 hours of labor, 3 shifts of doctors, 2 hours of pushing, and a last minute C section. Obviously, Ming was exhausted, and I was probably the most tired I had ever been, so when the nurses started to lift John out, I wasn't sure how I would feel. I walked over to the table where the pediatrician was cleaning him, and the first thing I thought was, "Yup, he's got my nose." He was crying pretty loudly. Now some babies recognize their mommy and daddy's voices from the time they're in the womb. I guess that's what happened there, because when I started talking to him, he stopped crying. At that moment, I felt my heart sing. Now as I reflected on that episode, it hit me that part of the reason I had such strong feelings for my son is that for about eight years before, I had done ministry to at-risk kids. And what I've seen has broken my heart. Some had no dads. But even the ones who did didn't protect boundaries between all the children, so from oldest to youngest was a pecking order. Often they weren't planning for college or the future. When John was born, it felt like all my feelings for the at-risk kids I knew could finally be expressed. And I had this thought: To the extent that I can do things right as a dad by the Spirit of God, if only I could love each and every one of the kids I have ever known through my son John, that I could somehow bring them inside my family through John and that by loving John I could be loving them.
 - b. What I cannot do is exactly what God does. God already is a family in Himself. God the Father is Father to His one and only Son, Jesus, by the Spirit. And though you and I start off being outside of Him, and outside His family, He desires to bring inside His family by inviting us into Jesus. He says, 'Come to My Son, Jesus. Join your life to his, absolutely, with no holds barred.'
 - c. How would this *feel* for us? Any indications from this passage?
 - i. Adoption! God always wanted to adopt us into His triune life – to be loved by the Father by being drawn into the Son by the Spirit. From
 - ii. Paul also speaks of our 'adoption' in Romans 8:12 – 17 and Galatians 4:1 – 7, which are very important places in Paul's argumentation. It's very important that in Ephesians, we don't have the word 'justification' used at all, but instead 'adoption,' and that's the very first thing he talks about!
 - iii. How does adoption feel on a human level, especially from the standpoint of ancient/classical cultures? Like a huge public honor!
 - iv. How does Paul use the language from the origin story of Israel, the Passover and Exodus? God had 'adopted' Israel as a 'firstborn son' to give Israel the inheritance of the garden land. But now, that story seems to serve as a container. Jesus is the true Israel and we are placed 'in him.' So we are placed into the story of a renewed Israel
 - v. The early classical theologians spoke of Jesus this way: 'The Son of God became man so that we might be by grace what he is by nature, Son of God.'

² See Kenneth Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011). All of 1 Corinthians is chiastic, showing that Paul is a master at writing literature this way; see my outlines online at http://nagasawafamily.org/paul_1corinthians.chiastic.structure.mako.pdf.

³ See my paper, *The Chiastic Structure of Matthew's Gospel*, <http://nagasawafamily.org/matthew-chiasm.pdf>.

- vi. If you're from the Protestant tradition, this is from a well-known evangelical writer in America: 'It is a strange fact that the truth of adoption has been little regarded in Christian history. Apart from two last century books now scarcely known R.S. Candliss, *The Fatherhood of God*, R.A. Webb *The Reformed Doctrine of Adoption*, there is no evangelical writing on it, nor has there been any since the time of the Reformation any more than there was before. Luther's grasp adoption was as strong and clear as his grasp on justification, but his disciples held to the latter and made nothing of the former. The Puritan teaching on the Christian life, so strong in other ways, was notably deficient here, which is one reason why legalistic understandings easily arise. Perhaps the early and later Methodists like Billy Bray with his unforgettable approach to prayer ('I must talk to Father about this') came closest to the life of sonship as the New Testament depicts it. There is certainly more to make of adoption in Christian teaching today.' (quoted from C.Baxter Kruger, *Big Picture* lecture 1)
- vii. *When were we included in Christ? From before our own beginning. We were included in Christ before God even made us. Colossians 1:17 says that in him all things hold together. And Ephesians and Colossians are twin letters, probably written at the same time, and to be read together: Paul told the Colossians to expect a letter coming from Laodicea (Col.4:16). Most believe that the letter is what we now call Ephesians.*
 - 1. The NIV says, 'And you also were included in Christ when you heard...' (1:13). But the word 'included' is not in there!! (The NIV is biased towards penal substitution, in my opinion.)
 - 2. The NASB is to be preferred. You were sealed in him when you believed. You were already in him by virtue of creation, but believing sealed you in him.
- 3. So what is God's grace? Is God's grace just His response to our sin? No! God's grace is from the beginning and is independent of sin. Verse 6 comes before verse 7. He graciously made us and the whole creation IN THE SON. God is always gracious.
- 4. What is redemption, and why is blood tied to redemption and forgiveness? Is it because God the Father is BLOODTHIRSTY? Did he demand blood until Jesus gave it to him? No. It's because God is a BLOOD DONOR. God donates blood; He gives life.
 - a. Illus: That's why J.K. Rowling, who wrote Harry Potter with Christian imagery, tied blood to life. Unicorn blood gave life. Dragon blood healed Hagrid's face; it healed life. And human blood could carry love; it tied life to life. Rowling was working from the Old Testament which says that blood contains life and represents life. But it's everywhere in the Old Testament.
 - b. Blood in Scripture represents life (Lev.17:11). The Passover image is to walk through or INTO the life of another. A Jewish family put the blood of a lamb on the doorposts. So when they left Egypt and headed into the new garden land with God, they walked through or into the life of another. They took on a new identity, with a new inheritance.
 - c. Illus: How many of you read at least one article or listened to one news story last year about Ebola? In December of 2014, Time magazine named Ebola fighters the people of the year (<http://time.com/time-person-of-the-year-ebola-fighters-choice/>). Ebola makes your eyes bleed and your organs dissolve and your nurses afraid to go near you for fear of getting Ebola and your doctors despair for having no cure. One person who got Ebola said, 'It hurts like they are busting your head with an ax.' But one man named Foday Gallah, an ambulance driver, survived the sickness, almost miraculously so. So now, after he fought the disease, his blood carries an immunity. He says, 'He calls his immunity a holy gift. "I want to give my blood so a lot of people can be saved...I am going to fight Ebola with all of my might."' I think that's awesome what Foday Gallah is doing. I think it's even more awesome what Jesus is doing for you and me.
 - d. STATE: What was the problem with us? Human nature had been corrupted by Adam and Eve while they lived in the first garden land. Then God had called Israel as a chosen people to come out of Egypt into another garden land. They were supposed to be God's new humanity. But Israel messed up, too, because they had the same problem of the foreign power still in them. Jeremiah called it a deceitful heart (Jer.4:4; 17:1 – 10; 31:31 – 34). Ezekiel called it a heart of stone (Ezk.11:18; 36:26 – 36). There were other names for it, and God needed Israel to diagnose the disease and document it and detest it. So Micah the prophet said, 'Yes, You [Lord] will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea [not just the external enemy of the Egyptians, but the internal enemy of sin, into the depths of the sea]' (Mic.7:19). Because the problem was never just being

enslaved to Egypt. The problem was being enslaved to a foreign power inside you. You know that something is wrong inside you. You're drawn to things that are ridiculous. You know your sense of self has not been stable. You're not anchored in the goodness of God. So Jesus had to come be the CHOSEN ONE on behalf of Israel the 'chosen people.'

- e. How does Jesus give us forgiveness? Because what does God hold us responsible for? What exactly are we guilty of?
 - i. Breaking His laws? Well, yes, but it goes deeper. But His laws are good and meant to be helpful to us. When you go to the doctor and she gives you a diet and exercise regimen, and you don't keep it, does the doctor want to blow you away into smithereens? No!
 - ii. We have listened to the corruption of sin in us. The whispers and cravings and laziness of that thing in us that should not be there. God is a surgeon and He hates that thing! He wants us to willingly and gladly renounce it. Why? Because that is the source of our problem, the source of human evil in embodied form. So when we turn to Jesus, we renounce our sinfulness and embrace his perfected new humanity on our behalf, and we begin drawing new life from him by his Spirit. God forgives us for listening to the sin. It's a medical paradigm, not a legal-penal paradigm. And it goes to the heart of the matter.
5. Application: How might we remind ourselves of our new identity in God's family?
 - a. Every morning this week, when you wake up, look in the mirror and remind yourself that you are in Christ!
 - b. Recite this passage, reminding yourself of God's love for you and others.

Part Two: The Scope of God's Heart of Redemption

1. Understand the chiasm. It's a W on its side. I used to read Ephesians 1:3 – 14 in a linear fashion, because in modern Western literature, you read left to right, top to bottom. And usually, what comes first is the main point, and qualifies everything that comes after it. But Ephesians is not modern Western literature. Writers and poets back in the day often spoke or wrote in a structure like this: a chiasm. In a chiasm, the first point matches the last point. The second point matches the second to last point, and so on, until you get to the center. The center is the main point. In this case, the center has two points side by side.
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2. In the other center point, Paul says that Jesus is summing up, or re-heading, or recapitulating, all things. He is the starting point for a new humanity and new creation. What does Paul mean by 'all things' in v.10?
 - a. He really does mean ALL THINGS! Everyone! This is why I can say that God is inviting you and you and you. The chiasm means that the thought at the *center* – in this case, the double points of Jesus' redemption as summing up *all things in Christ* – interprets and explains the points on the outside. Therefore, God is summing up ('recapitulating') *all things*, including *all people*, 'in Christ' or 'under' Christ (v.10). PERIOD. FULL STOP. That is the point of v.10 which sits in the second point of the W. And when Paul talks about 'us,' or 'we,' and 'you' as already in God's family, that does not mean that other people are excluded or not invited. It just means they didn't happen to be part of Paul's immediate audience at the time, but they could be later! ALL THINGS IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH are affected by Jesus, and are invited by God through Jesus.
 - b. I'm going to quote from John Calvin's commentary on John's Gospel to show that God invites *every single person*. In John 3:17, John says Jesus came 'not...to condemn the world; but that through him the world might be saved.' Calvin says, 'The word 'world' is again repeated, that no man may think of himself wholly excluded... showing that he here includes *all men* in the word 'world' *instead of restricting it to comprise the elect alone.*'⁶ And on John 3:16, Calvin says, 'He

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⁶ John Calvin, *Commentary on John's Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1949) I, New Translation IV, p.75

has employed the universal term whosoever, both to invite all indiscriminately to partake of life, and to cut off every excuse from unbelievers... He invites *all men without exception* to the faith of Christ, which is nothing else than an entrance into life.⁷ Now that does not explain everything there is to explain about these words. If you want an even deeper and more thorough explanation, you can ask me later about Romans 9 – 11. But it does give me confidence that we can indeed say that God invites everyone into His family.

- c. Illus: So how do we feel about the Father, who was with Jesus on this incredible mission? Here's a distant parallel. This past summer, one of the big changes in my kids was that my son John, who is 14, started to really push himself physically. He wanted to go to the YMCA, so we would go as a family. He started to play a lot of basketball. He wanted to lift weights a little bit, so I've started teaching him. But he also would challenge his sister Zoe, who is 12. He would say to her, 'You're lazy. You're fat.' Now no 12 year old girl needs to be called that. So I sat him down and said, 'John, I'm glad you're pushing yourself hard. I'm glad that you can be tough with yourself. But Zoe is not lazy. I don't want her to be lifting weights; she'd too young. That's why she does the treadmill and situps. I'm her coach, not you. And she's not fat. Do not say that. You are trying to be motivating but you're being mean.' But he kept on doing that, saying that he wants her to challenge him. I said it two more times to him. I tried to help him understand that you and your sister have been friends, but at your ages you're starting to be different. But he kept on doing it. Finally, on the fourth time, I said, 'John, if you need your sister to compete with you, that is your weakness.' Notice what's going on. Am I *against* John? No, I'm for him. I'm *excluding* his sin. He finally got it. The next day, John went to the backyard to play basketball. He said to Zoe, 'Do you want to play?' Zoe said no. She has always been kind of uncoordinated and self-conscious. It's hard for Zoe to try new things when it comes to sports. John said, 'You know if you come to Boston Latin next year, you'll have gym, and they'll make you play basketball.' Zoe said okay. And she went out back and dribbled the ball and tried making baskets. The next day, before John went to school, I said to him, 'John, I'm really proud of you. I'm really glad you were able to encourage your sister and not make fun of her. And look at what happened. Zoe tried playing basketball. You know how hard it is for her to try things she knows she's not good at.'
3. What about the term 'predestined' in v.5 and v.11? What does it mean to be 'predestined'?
 - a. It's like the term 'chosen people' from Israel's history. Does it mean God was strongly excluding others? No! Other people could convert into Judaism. And Israel was meant to be a witness and a light (Dt.1). To be God's 'chosen people' or 'predestined people' is to be His partners on earth and in history. What He's doing, we partner with Him. That's what it means to be 'chosen people.'
 - b. In terms of where God is taking us, our *destination* is Jesus: 'All things are from him and through him and to him' (Rom.11:36; Eph.1:9 – 10; Col.1:16). Everyone will be resurrected and in that sense, share in the life of Jesus. To be with Christ and share in his resurrection body and eternal bodily life is not up to us. God will make it happen regardless of how we feel about it. In that way, God saves us everyone from *non-existence*. But how we experience that depends on each person's attitude towards Jesus. Christians are those who are willingly being conformed to the image of Christ (Rom.8:28 – 30).
 - c. God's choice to bless all people revolves around and is carried out *in Christ, the beloved* (v.6), which means *the chosen one*, who shares his inheritance and blessing with us. The idea that Israel was God's *chosen people* was narrowed over time such that the Messiah alone would faithfully represent Israel and be Israel, and therefore be the *chosen one*.
 - d. To see Jesus identified as *the chosen one*, observe how Matthew refers to Jesus as 'My beloved Son' at the transfiguration (Mt.17:5) whereas Luke uses the phrase 'My Chosen One,' also at the transfiguration (Lk.9:35). At the very least, then, we must conclude that Matthew and Luke believed those titles are interchangeable with respect to Jesus. Additionally, the Jewish rulers call Jesus 'the Chosen One' when they mock him (Lk.23:35), inadvertently testifying to the fact that Jews were comfortable calling the Messiah by that title. This strongly suggests that *beloved one*

⁷ Ibid, I, p.25, New Translation IV, p.32. In two other places, Calvin sees God inviting every single person to Himself. On John 1:29 'the Lamb...which taketh away the sin of the world' Calvin comments, 'And when he says the sin of the world he extends his favor indiscriminately to the whole human race.' (*Commentary on John's Gospel*, Eerdmans, 1949 I, p.64, New Translation IV, p.32). On Matthew 26:28 and Mark 14:24, 'blood... shed for many for the remission of sins,' Calvin explains, 'By the word 'many' He means not a part of the world only, but the whole human race.' (*Harmony II*, Eerdmans, 1949, p.214 and New Translation, III, p.139)

and *chosen one* are titles slightly different but basically interchangeable ways of referring to the Messiah. The quotation from Isaiah's Servant Song marking Jesus out as 'My Servant whom I have *chosen*, My *beloved* in whom my soul is well-pleased' (Mt.12:18) also ties together the titles of *chosen one* and *beloved one*. Implicitly, the pronouncement at Jesus' baptism from the Father that Jesus is the *beloved Son* (Mt.3:13 – 17; Lk.3:21 – 22) attests to Jesus being the *chosen one*. In any case, the Messiah is given titles that Israel as a whole shared as *the chosen people*. This attests to the Jewish view already present that the Messiah would represent Israel in himself.

- e. Illus: The letter called *1 Clement* (the *Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians*), dated to 94 AD uses this language. 'May God, who sees all things, and who is the Ruler of all spirits and the Lord of all flesh – who *chose* our Lord Jesus Christ and *us through Him* to be a peculiar people – grant to every soul that calls upon His glorious and holy Name, faith, fear, peace, patience, long-suffering, self-control, purity, and sobriety...' (1 Clement 58; cf. Titus 2:13 – 14) [Personal note: I wonder what Karl Barth thought of this? He said he had not found anything in church history on the doctrine of election which he was articulating, but 1 Clement seems to express the same idea he did.]
 - f. (optional) To become like him, to love him, and to experience him with joy requires our free choice: Because the Father does not coerce the Son, God does not coerce us: 'Just as the Father has loved me, I have also loved you' (Jn.15:8). Our freedom consists in the yielding of our nature to Jesus' Spirit, so he can draw us into Jesus, allow Jesus to share with us his divine nature (2 Pet.1:4), and correct the corruption in human nature we inherited from Adam. So, predestination (rightly defined) requires free will!
 - g. (optional) For some, by their own resistance, that destination will be torment – in effect, God says to them:
 - i. 'Let me kill the cancer' to someone who thinks the disease is normal
 - ii. 'I deny you that to which you're addicted' to someone addicted to something else
 - iii. 'I forgive you' to someone who believes they have not done anything wrong
 - iv. 'I love you' to someone who feels stalked and wants independence
 - h. So, other people are not 'unchosen' by God, and an inference to that effect has no textual basis here in 1:3 – 14. Therefore, Paul's references to 'us,' 'we,' and 'you' as being chosen by God, and predestined by God, do not qualify the 'all things' of v.9 – 10 which will be summed up in Christ. Jesus' humanity includes the humanity of everyone outside this room! They are invited. He calls them to himself.
 - i. Furthermore, in chiasmic structures, points are mirrored. The implications include:
 - i. *God's choice* ('He chose us in him' in v.4) is symmetrically arranged with *our choice* to believe in Christ ('having believed...you were sealed in him' in v.13). And God's initiative to *choose us in him* is mirrored with the believer being *sealed in him by the Spirit*. This affirms the position that the humanity of Christ is all-inclusive in its range and atoning effectiveness. Unbelief apparently results in the person trying to place themselves *outside* Christ. In what sense s/he might succeed in doing so is a secondary but important question. Answering that question takes us outside the text of Ephesians.
 - ii. God's predestination of believers through adoption (v.5) is symmetrically arranged with the inheritance God bestows (v.11), not to any statement of exclusion of others.
 - iii. Hence, the term 'predestination' here, as in Romans 8, refers to the *destination* of all things to be re-headed up under Jesus, and the inheritance of the new creation given first to Jesus; how we experience that is up to us
 - iv. See Appendix A for a brief church history of the doctrine of predestination. Leader: Consider printing that page out for people if you think it will be interesting.
4. Application: How do we share in the character of God's family?
- a. Being on mission! God's will is to gather up all things in Jesus.
 - i. Illus: Telling someone about Jesus, especially that Jesus includes her/him within himself.
 - ii. Illus: I was just talking with my new friend B. For a while, B felt totally unwanted. She had moved to Miami, Florida. But she had been strung out on crack cocaine for a year. She was in relationships with two guys who weren't great guys. But she started giving her life to Jesus, and felt in her heart that he was saying to leave where she was, and come back to Boston. She was surprised to feel like Jesus wanted her, after all she had done. So she did move back to Boston, dropped the cocaine habit without even getting

into a program, went back to school and got a job and now is excited about Jesus because she knows that he included her, is for her, and loves her.

- b. Being more like Christ! Right now, from just Eph.1:3 – 14, we can say that it means to be or become holy and blameless in Christ, and to be to the praise of His glory.
 - i. Illus: Telling about becoming more like Jesus in character and faithfulness
 - ii. Illus: Knowing what to resist – the corruption of sin in you. You know how you'd just be walking along on campus on a beautiful clear day, enjoying the sun, feeling great, and even letting your heart rise to meet God. And then, all of a sudden, some wicked thought comes into your mind. 'He got a higher grade than me. She's more dressed up than me. He's more popular with the girls than me. She's got a better boyfriend than me. He has more money than me.' What just happened there? When I said that your heart was rising to God, I meant that you were orbiting God like the planets orbit the sun. But you wanted to be the sun, and make everything else revolve around you. You just gave in to sin in you. That's the thing we act on that makes us resist God, His love, and His vision for His family. Then sinning becomes addictive. We like putting ourselves at the center of our own universe. But Jesus is the center, not us. We are called to wake up to that reality.
- c. Later in Ephesians, we will look at more practical ways in which we can participate.

Appendix A: Predestination in Church History

‘God made man *a free [agent]* from the beginning, possessing his own power, even as he does his own soul, to obey the behests of God voluntarily, and *not by compulsion of God*. For there is *no coercion* with God, but a good will [towards us] is present with Him continually. And therefore does He give good counsel to all. And in man, as well as in angels, He has placed the power of choice (for angels are rational beings), so that those who had yielded obedience might justly possess what is good, given indeed by God, but preserved by themselves... For *it is in man’s power to disobey God*, and to forfeit what is good... If then it were not in our power to do or not to do these things, what reason had the apostle, and much more the Lord Himself, to give us counsel to do some things, and to abstain from others? But because man is possessed of *free will* from the beginning, and God is possessed of free will, in whose likeness man was created, advice is always given to him to keep fast the good, which thing is done by means of obedience to God.’⁸

Lucidus, bishop of Verona in Italy (4th century) taught double predestination and Augustine of Hippo followed; the regional Council of Arle in 473 AD condemned it as a heresy. The second council of Orange in 529 AD condemned it as a heresy, and denied that Augustine’s theology taught it. Then, Gottsalk of Orbais (808 – 867 AD) taught it and various councils condemned it as a heresy: Quierzy (853 AD), Valence (855 AD), Savonnières (859 AD), Metz (863 AD, with Pope Nicholas I).

‘It was the widespread belief of [the classical and Eastern] Christian theologians that Islam represented an out-and-out determinism. They saw in it the teaching that “God does whatever he wishes, and he is the cause of everything, both good and evil.” Christians made him the cause only of good, Muslims the cause of evil as well. This meant, of course, that God must also be “the cause of sin” according to the teachings of “the godless Mohammed.” From its beginnings, Christian anti-Muslim polemic denounced this as a notion that made God unjust. But God was the just judge of both good and evil, rendering to each its proper due, and could not be either an unjust judge or the author of evil... The implication of the Muslim position was that, since there were some who were not saved, God either did not want to save them or was not able to save them. Both possibilities were blasphemous in Christian eyes. The Christian alternative to such determinism was to assert the universal salvific will of God, but also to assert free will and responsibility in man.’⁹

Domingo Banez (1528 – 1604 AD), a Spanish Dominican and Scholastic theologian, taught double predestination; he claimed to interpret Thomas Aquinas in this way (very disputed) but was influenced by Aristotle’s prime mover, Occam’s Razor, and interest in mechanical causality (‘voluntarism’). John Calvin (1509 – 1564 AD) and Theodore Beza (1519 – 1605 AD) also taught it in Geneva, Switzerland: ‘God *not only foresaw* the fall of the first man, and in him the ruin of his posterity; but also *at his own pleasure arranged it*.’ ‘Nothing is more absurd than to think anything at all is done but by the ordination of God... Every action and motion of every creature is *so governed* by the hidden counsel of God, that nothing can come to pass, but what was ordained by Him... The wills of men are *so governed by the will of God*, that they are carried on straight to the mark which He has fore-ordained.’ ‘But if He did not will it, we could not do it. I admit this... I concede more – that thieves and murderers, and other evil-doers, *are instruments of Divine Providence*, being employed by the Lord himself to execute the Judgments which he has resolved to inflict. But I deny that this forms any excuse for their misdeeds.’¹⁰ Today, John Piper says, ‘God does not merely passively permit such things by standing by and not stopping them. Rather, *he actively wills them* by ordaining them and then bringing them about, yet without himself thereby becoming the author of sin.’¹¹

⁸ Irenaeus (130 – 200 AD), *Against Heresies*, book 4, chapter 37, paragraphs 1 – 4, see the whole chapter; cf. 4.4.3; 4.39; 5:37

⁹ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, volume 2: The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600 – 1700)* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1974), p.234 – 5; see also my *Romans 9 – 11, Predestination and Free Will, the Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart, and Ongoing Outreach to the Jewish Community*, found here: http://nagasawafamily.org/paul_romans.09-11.hardening.ppts.pdf

¹⁰ John Calvin, *Institutes*, book 3, ch.23, section 7; book 1, ch.16, section 3; book 1, ch.17, section 5

¹¹ John Piper and Justin Taylor, editors, *Suffering and the Sovereignty of God* (Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL: 2006), p.35, footnote 7