

Ephesians 1:3-14

Ephesus was the “jewel of Asia,” the Roman province on the west coast of modern day Turkey. It has a large, inland harbor and was connected to the Aegean Sea by a several mile long channel. It was a city of 200,000 and was the center of commerce and government, and was the location of a temple to Artemis, the twin sister of Apollo and daughter of Zeus and Leto. The temple was a point of pride for the Ephesians as it was 225 ft wide, 425 ft long, making it the largest building in the Greek world and four times larger than the Parthenon. It was surrounded by 127 marble columns that stood 60 ft tall and had walls and a roof made of marble. It was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was staffed by priestesses who served as temple prostitutes and eunuch priests so that the lack of pregnancy among the clergy could highlight her role as the Virgin Huntress and the fertility goddess of the ancient world. Paul makes a lot of enemies during his time in Ephesus and, at one point, causes a riot among the silversmiths who are upset that he is costing them their livelihood as people convert to Christianity. It is in this city that Paul spent three years of his ministry and focused his efforts to spread the Gospel into Asia. He writes this letter around the year 60 while he is in Rome.

Read Ephesians 1:3-14

1. Verses 3-14 are one long sentence in Greek containing 204 words making it, by most accounts, the longest in the New Testament.
2. The phrase, “in Christ,” or its equivalent, occurs 12 times. Why is God’s choosing qualified in this way?
3. Predestination is the main focus of this portion of the text and is the main focus of the explanation given in the Formula of Concord which argues against Calvin’s teaching of double predestination. What would be the difference between predestination and foreknowledge?
4. What is God’s motivation for predestining us to be his people?
5. Why would God speak of our becoming his children as an adoption?
6. What does the phrase, “to the praise of his glorious grace,” say about our being chosen by in Christ?
7. Paul says in v. 7 “we have redemption.” This phrase was used at Paul’s time to define the ransom payment made to emancipate a slave. How does this relate to God choosing us in Christ?
8. How are we sealed with the promised Holy Spirit?
9. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in our Christian life?