

Ephesians

Ephesians 1:4 - Our Father's "wild" plan

In giving us a clear picture of why Jesus is so important to us, Paul zooms in on our amazing Father first, because it was he, the Father, who initiated the process of us humans being given "every spiritual blessing in Christ" (verse 3).

But what is the point of these spiritual blessings if we don't know what they are, or we don't know if we're experiencing them, or not? Why give us spiritual blessings if they aren't real? Can we **easily recognize** them, therefore?

Yes, we can recognize them, according to Paul in **Ephesians 1:4**, because "the Father chose us." And surely, being deliberately picked out by our amazing Father would have some sort of obvious and noticeable impact on us, right? How could we not know it? The Father, therefore, must have a way of communicating that to us.

Well, one obvious and easily recognizable way was finding ourselves being irresistibly drawn to him and to Scripture, and discovering at the same time that other people weren't. It was the same story in the book of Acts - and especially in the city of Ephesus, where for three months in **Acts 19:8** Paul "argued persuasively about the kingdom of God." But, **verse 9**, "some of them became obstinate; they **refused to believe** and publicly maligned the Way."

But why is that? Why do some respond favourably but others don't even want to listen and even fling out ridiculous accusations too? Well, back in **Acts 13:48**, "When the Gentiles heard this (that God was fulfilling all his promises in the resurrected Jesus), they were glad and honoured the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed." So they too were irresistibly drawn to what they were hearing, **because this is what they were "appointed" for**. So their response wasn't surprising, because in the Father's plan it was **meant** to happen.

The same thing happened in Corinth too, **Acts 18:5**, where "Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ," but (again) in **verse 6**, "the Jews **opposed** Paul and became abusive." So Paul left and went next door, **verses 7-8**, where "Crispus, the synagogue ruler (the top Jew) and his entire household **believed** in the Lord."

So here we have abusive Jews and Crispus' family all attending the same synagogue, but with very different responses. Was that their doing, or was it because, as God told Paul in **verse 10**, "I have many people in this city." Paul had no idea who they were, **but God did** because he'd chosen them.

No wonder, then, that Paul uses the Greek word *eklego* for describing the Father "choosing" us. It means selecting or **singling out a few from among the many**. And simple observation had shown Paul that the Father had to be singling people out, because why would people from the same city, same background - and even the same synagogue - respond so differently?

Some wonder why on earth we preach the gospel, then, when God has already picked out his chosen ones. But like Paul we have no idea who those chosen ones are. They're out there, just like we were. By what means, then, did our Father reach us? It may have been a bit of a roundabout route, like it was in Paul's day for the Gentiles starting off as pagan Gentiles, but by some means or other we got to hear the gospel and it caught our attention. So the gospel was out there, and God just made sure we got a whiff of it.

The purpose of preaching the gospel, then, is to reach those God has chosen. It's like waving a magnet over a bin full of metal to pick out just the bits made of iron. The gospel is like that too, it's like a magnet to some. It picks them out, **just as the Father planned**.

So here we are, the Father's chosen, not for anything we did or were, but to fulfill his plan to choose some now. For what purpose, though, did he only choose some now? According to Paul in **Ephesians 1:12**, it was to start a process with a group of people who would be "**the first to hope in Christ**." So the Father wasn't just choosing a few and no one else forever, he was simply singling out some to be **the first** - the first in line to hope in Christ.

But why is it so important for this singled out few to put their hope in Christ? Because it's in Christ that all the Father's plans come to fruition. That's why Paul added the words "in him" in **verse 4**, so that verse now becomes "For he (the Father) chose us **in him**," the "him" being Christ.

So the Father initiated the choosing of some to be the first in line - for one very important reason, to zero our attention on his Son. And in these two verses - 3 and 4 - we now see why. It's because everything the Father planned is being done in Christ. He planned spiritual blessings for us "in Christ" in verse 3, and in verse 4 he singled some out to **experience** those spiritual blessings "in Christ" as well.

But why didn't the Father do all these things for us by himself? Why land them all on his Son? Well, hopefully not sounding disrespectful, the Father's plan was wild. He wanted to create beings who could live forever at no risk to themselves, or to the planet, or to the heavenly realms, who would also be a source of eternal joy to himself, and they'd enjoy each other forever too. And if that wasn't challenging enough, he made it even more difficult for himself by making us physical and vulnerable. And yet he also gave us vulnerable beings the freedom to choose, which along with us being easily deceived by evil, would mean we'd make some really stupid and self-destructive decisions, and therefore be in constant need of rescuing and help.

But in his Son he could show the beauty of this plan, because the goal of it - as Jesus explained in **John 17:3** - is "that they (we) may know you (Father), the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." This is why the Father set things up the way he did. It would demonstrate just how amazing he and his Son are, not only in all the planning they did together but also in the working out of that plan together too. What we come to see, therefore, is the amazing relationship of love and trust the Father and his Son have in and for each other **that made such a wild plan possible.**

But why do we **need to see** this wonderful relationship between the Father and Son? Well, this is where the Father's wild plan gets even wilder, because the answer Jesus gives to that question in **verse 21** is "that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you." In other words, the relationship experienced by the Father and Son, **we can experience too.** Talk about spiritual blessings being easily recognizable, when **this one becomes real** to us. But this is what the Father chose us for, so that we come to know him and his Son through us experiencing what they experience.

But how on earth can physical beings like us "be one as the Father and Son are one," as Jesus said in **verse 22**? We understand this is **why** the Father chose us, yes, but **how** can the Father's love for his Son be in us so we can experience it too, as Jesus said in **verse 26**? It all seems so far fetched and way beyond our ability to grasp. Is this really what's happening to us, and if so how?

Jesus answers that question for us in the **last part of verse 26.** What seems wildly impossible to us is being made possible (and real) in Jesus' simple statement, "**that I myself may be in them.**" Because what Jesus does is live his Father's love for him in us, so we experience the Father's love like he does. Or as Jesus phrased it in **verse 23**, that one day "the world will know that you (Father) have loved them even as you have loved me." They will know.

And the Father chose some to be the first in line to know that - and know how it was made possible too. It's in his **Son** living his Father's love for him in us, so **we** know the love of the Father too. Which is why we put our hope in Christ, because this is what HE so deeply wants for us too, which he expressed in **verse 22** when he said, "I have given them the glory that you gave me," the "glory" being the Father's love that he's known forever (verse 24). Jesus wants us to know and experience that too.

And this, Paul writes in **Colossians 1:26**, is "the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints." This is what the Father chose us as "saints" for, because it's "To the saints," **verse 27**, that "God has chosen to make known the glorious riches of this mystery, which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory.**"

Well, we know from John 17 **what** that glory is, and we know from Ephesians 1:3 **where** to put our hope to experience it too: it's in Christ living his Father's love for him in us, so the Father becomes **our loving Father as well**. Which is what the Holy Spirit was given to us for, so we know and recognize "that we are God's children," **Romans 8:16**, and therefore he becomes OUR "Abba, Father" too, **verse 15**, just as he is to Jesus.

We're putting all this into the context of being able to recognize the "spiritual blessings" made possible for us in Christ. And at the top of Jesus' list of those blessings is knowing and experiencing the Father's love, because this is what the Father planned for us to know "before the creation of the world," **Ephesians 1:4**. And that means *forever*, just like Jesus has known his Father's love "before the creation of the world" meaning forever too (John 17:24). The Father has always loved him. Using the same phrase for us, then, it means he's always loved us too - and before we and this world of ours even existed.

The blessing Jesus would love us to have, therefore, is understanding that we are - and have always been - the loved children of God. The **depth** of that love then becomes apparent in this wild plan of our Father to make us physical, vulnerable and easily taken in by evil, but then in his Son make us "holy and blameless in his sight," in the last part of **Ephesians 1:4**.

"Holy and blameless" means we'll be just like our Father, so we can truly be his children. *Forever*, then, we can experience the immense spiritual blessings he's always had in mind for us. And somehow the Father figured all this out so there'd never be any risk of any of us misunderstanding or rejecting him, or any risk of evil getting to us, or any risk of us turning on each other like we do today. But it's **HOW** he figured this out that we see in the verses coming up, and how obvious it becomes for us **to love and trust his Son like he does**.