

Blessed Be the Father: Part 2 of 4
Flying through Ephesians

Ephesians 1:3ff.

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INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

R-1: Ephesians 1:3-14, the longest sentence in the Greek New Testament.

Paul urges believers to speak well of the Father, because of the praiseworthy work of the Father, Son, and Spirit in regard to our inheritance. Why is it important that it is one sentence? Paul speaks of the work of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in regard to our inheritance. He parallels their work on our behalf. By putting them together in a parallel construction within one sentence is a way of saying that they are all equals. That is, they are all God.

Other sentences in Ephesians referring to all the members of the Trinity:

1¹⁷that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him

2¹⁸For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

3¹⁴For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, ¹⁶that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷that Christ may dwell...

4⁴*There is* one body & one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, & through all, and in you all.

R-2: How do we know that Eph 1:3 is an exhortation, not a statement of fact?

Eph 1:3-3:21 form a section of the book of Ephesians:

| | |
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| I. | Ephesians 1:1-2: Salutation |
| II. | Ephesians 1:3-3:21: The Wealth which Belongs to Believers Ephesians 1:3 starts this section with Blessed <i>be</i> the Father. . . . Ephesians 3:21 closes this section with To Him (the Father) <i>be</i> glory. . . . |
| III. | Ephesians 4:1-6:20: How Believers Should Walk |
| IV. | Ephesians 6:1-21: Epilogue |

The phrase *to Him* in Eph 3:20 and 21 strongly suggests that the idea is *to Him be* (not *to Him is*).¹ Since this section begins and ends with constructions referring to speaking well of the Father, it makes sense for 1:3 to parallel 3:20-21. Thus, the New King James Version and New American Standard both are correct in supplying *be* in Ephesians 1:3 and 3:21.

R-3: Choosing was before He created the world (before the foundation establishment of the world)

R-4: God chose people that they would be holy and blameless before Him in love [phase 3] (1:4)

Eph 5:27 uses the underlined words in reference to phase 3. Eph 1:4 does **not** refer to phase 2. The NKJV punctuates 1:4-5 correctly. NASB mispunctuates, because NASB thinks that “we should be holy & blameless before Him in (human) love (for God)” would convert this into a phase 2 passage. Thus, they incorrectly understand it as “In (divine) love He predestined us.”

R-5: Choosing ≠ predestination, because 1:4-5 says He chose us, (with the result that) He predestined us

¹ Greek and Hebrew have many sentences that lack a verb. When Greek articles (“THE”) govern both an adjective and a noun, there is not an implicit verb. That is, if the Greek says “the man the good,” English will translate it “the good man.” When a Greek article governs only the noun (but not the adjective), English needs to add a verb. Thus, if the Greek says, “good the man,” English needs to add a verb: “the man *is* good.” In Ephesians 1:3; 3:20-21, the Greek has the latter construction, so English must add a verb to preserve the Greek idea. The remaining question is whether that verb should be: *be* or *is*. Ephesians 3:20 and 21 both contain the phrase *to Him*.

ELECTION IN EPHESIANS 1:4

1. Preliminary Issue: Defining We/Us and You in Ephesians

This is important because Eph 1:3–14 uses *we/us/our* 10× (1:3 *bis*, 4 *bis*, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12, 14), but only uses *you/your* twice (1:13 *bis*). Is this significant? Or, are they interchangeable?

Option 1: Inclusive *we* (*we* includes *you*)

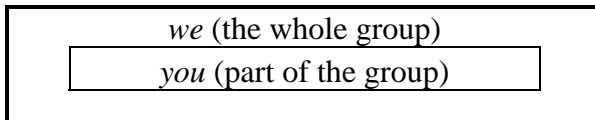
We are gathered at Bible study and *you* are seated [but *I* am standing]

Option 2: Exclusive *we* (*we* excludes *you*)

We want to surprise *you*.

We are gathered at Bible study and *you* are seated

We want to surprise *you*.



1A. Defining you in Ephesians

Eph 2¹¹Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—¹²that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise [e.g., promissory covenants], having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Eph 4¹⁷This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;

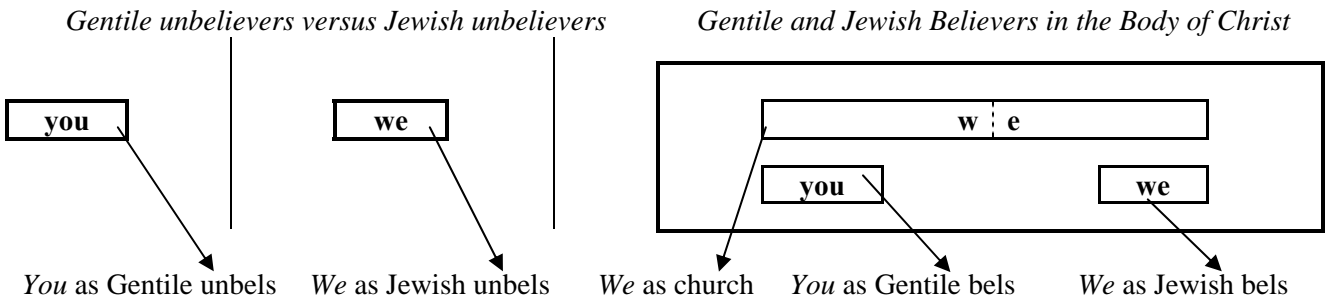
You is a term referring to the Gentile readers of Ephesians, but two options exist:

Does Paul use *you* for Gentiles in general? (Is it primarily a reference to Gentiles?)

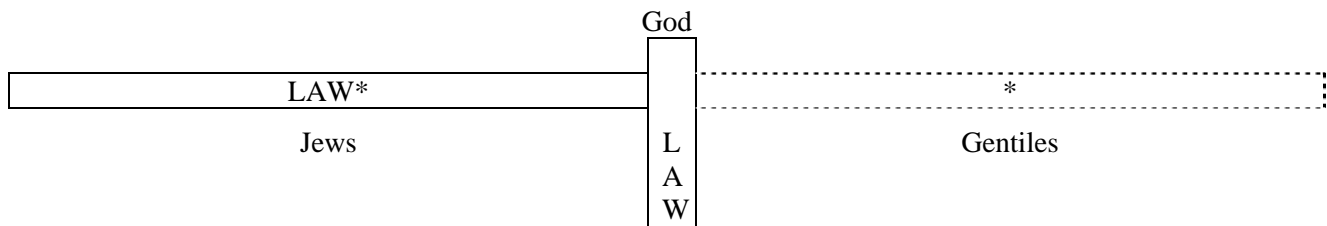
Does *you* stand for the Ephesians (who happen to be Gentile)? (Does *you* just mean readers?)

2A. Defining you in relation to us in Ephesians

Hypothesis: Before people believe in Christ, Paul uses *we* for Jews and *you* for Gentiles, but uses *we* and *you* for people in the Church. Cf. 1 Corinthians 10:32 Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God.



Eph 2¹⁴For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation [between Jews and Gentiles], ¹⁵having abolished in His flesh the enmity [between Jews and Gentiles], *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. ¹⁷And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off [Gentiles] and to those [us] who were near [Jews].² ¹⁸For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the [other] saints [e.g., Jewish saints] and members of the household of God, ²⁰having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*, ²¹in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²²in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.



The passage speaks of an enmity between two groups of people: Jews and Gentiles.
The source of the enmity was the Law.

The passage also speaks of an enmity between man and God.
The source (in part) of the enmity (at least for Jews) was the Law.

The cross of Christ resolves both the horizontal and vertical enmity.
Christ reconciles both groups to each other and to God in one body (the Church) through the cross.

**As a memory aid, the vertical & horizontal barriers are cross-shaped, but the Gentiles' barrier was apart from Law*

3A. Most dispensationalists agree that *we* means Jews and *you* means Jews (in chapter 2), but not all agree that *we* and *you* have these meanings in chapter 1.

Evidence that chapter 1 uses *you* for Gentiles and *we* for Jews occurs in chapters 1 and 3.

Eph 1¹²that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. ¹³In Him you also trusted, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

1. Who is it that first trusted in Christ? The Jews

Christ's public ministry (mainly to Jews) began in A.D. 29.

The crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension occurred in A.D. 33.

The Church began on Pentecost in A.D. 33. Many Jews believed in Christ

Cornelius (1st non-proselyte Church-Age Gentile) believed in A.D. 40–41.

² Some may be wondering about 2:17. During Christ's incarnation, He preached peace between families (Gentiles and Jews), whereas in the Church Age the message is peace within the family (the church).

2. It creates no problems to say that the Spirit seals Gentile believers and that He is the down payment of the inheritance for Jewish believers.

The difference between exclusive and non-exclusive language

3. Evidence from chapter 3: Paul says that he had already written to them concerning the mystery that Gentiles would be fellow heirs.

NKJ Ephesians 3¹For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—²if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you,³ how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (**as I have briefly written already, ⁴by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ**),⁵ which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: **that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel**,⁷ of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.

4. Paul wrote about this mystery prior to chapter 3 (specifically in chap 1)

Eph 1⁷In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace⁸ which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,⁹ **having made known to us THE MYSTERY of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, ¹⁰that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. ¹¹In Him also we have obtained an inheritance**, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,¹² that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.¹³ In Him **you also trusted**, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, **you were sealed** with the Holy Spirit of promise,¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

5. The simplest understanding of Paul's statements in chapter 3 that he had written earlier about the mystery of Gentiles and Jews being fellow heirs in the same body is that Chapter 1 says something about this same issue.
6. Taking you as Gentiles and we as Jews in chapter 1 allows Paul to have spoken of this mystery prior to chapter 3.
7. Some object that 20th century readers do not pick up on this, so it seems unnatural. However, that is irrelevant, because the issue is whether the Ephesians (with whom Paul had spent almost three years) would have understood. Ephesians 3:3–4 is a reminder to them, if they did not pick up on his use of *we* and *you*.

The Importance of Understanding We and You in chapter 1

1. Paul speaks of corporate entities in 1:3–14

We = Jews

You = Gentiles

The corporate group of the mystery is the Church
(Paul speaks of the Church having a role during the Kingdom)

2. Paul speaks of Jewish believers being chosen in Christ, but did not say anything about Gentile believers being chosen (us)
3. The simplest way to understand this is that Paul is speaking of corporate entities
4. Note that the choosing took place in Christ. Paul speaks of the entity of Jewish believers within the Church as being corporately chosen
5. By implication, the entity of Gentile believers is also chosen in Christ
6. Together, they become a new corporate entity, the Church

Conclusion and Application