**I. Author (1:1a)**

**II. Recipients (1:1b)**

The question of the recipients presents a significant textual variant. The phrase "in

Ephesus" (Eph 1:1) is missing in numerous early manuscripts. This, combined with the

general tone and lack of personal greetings (remember, Paul spent three years there),

suggests that Paul may have left the recipients blank so that the letter could be read in a

variety of churches in the region of Asia Minor (think seven churches of Revelation). The

matter is far from settled, however. To omit "in Ephesus" leaves an awkward grammatical

phrase. Also, there is no existing manuscript with any other location inserted. I would

affirm "in Ephesus" as original, although it is a close call. I would still see it as a letter Paul

wanted read in other area churches (Smyrna, Pergamum, Sardis, Colossae, Laodicea, etc.)

**III. Greeting (1:2)**

"Grace and peace" is Paul's customary greeting (see Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3;

Phil 1:2; 2 Thess 1:2; Phlm 3). This is Paul's prayer of blessing for God's grace. No single

term captures the heart of Paul's theology. The term *charis* appears 95 times in Paul's

letters; 12 times in Ephesians. Grace is God's unmerited love, mercy, and faithfulness in

providing salvation for sinners. But it is also God's ongoing love, mercy, and faithfulness

allowing his people to flourish throughout life. He also prays for God's peace to be upon

them. The term *eirēnē* occurs 8 times in Ephesians. Grace and peace are two of the most

significant blessings for those who are part of the people of God.

**Praise and Prayer (1:3-23)**

**I. Praise for Every Spiritual Blessing in Christ, Unto the Praise of His Glory (1:3-14)**

What is typically a thanksgiving section in Paul's letters begins here with a Jewish prayer of

praise/blessing known as a *berakah*, as in 2 Cor 1:3-7 (see 1 Kings 8:15-16, 56-61; 1 Peter

1:3-12). Paul opens with a full-throated expression of praise to God for His unfolding

drama of salvation, initiated before the foundation of the world. Verses 3-14 form a single

sentence in Greek, 202 Greek words, the 2nd longest sentence in the New Testament (Col

1:9-20 is 218 words). It is clear that Paul is straining the limits of grammar and syntax in

order to express appropriate praise to God for his glorious grace by which he has blessed

us with every spiritual blessing. Paul praises God for three specific blessings: election,

redemption, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The repetition of the phrase "unto the praise of

his glory" marks the conclusion of each subset.

A. Praise to God for His Gracious Election (1:3-6)

V. 4 indicates the specific basis why God must be praised: because he chose them.

o Election: He chose us in him before the creation of the world (1:4)

The language of election makes us a bit nervous. It should not! It means that

Paul, the audience, and all those who claimed the name of Christ ***were people***

***chosen by God***.

o Adoption: In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship (1:5)

Our status as adopted sons of God is often overlooked to the detriment of our

full understanding of God’s grace. While Paul alone raises the issue in the NT,

it is significant in his mind (see Gal 4:4-6 & Rom 8:14-17).

B. Praise to God for His Gracious Redemption (1:7-12)

o Redemption: A metaphor from slavery (1:7-8a)

In the death of Jesus, God worked to rescue his people, just as he did when he

rescued them from the Egyptians. The term "redemption" means "buying

back a slave or captive, i.e., making free by payment of a ransom." The term

only occurs 10x in the NT and 7 are in Ephesians.

o Revelation of the Mystery of His Will (Gentiles are fellow heirs with Israel)

(1:8b-10)For Paul, the mystery always refers to the hiddenness or secrecy of

God's redemptive plan, which had now been revealed in Christ (Eph 3:3-4, 9;

5:32; 6:19; 1 Cor 2:1, 7; Col 1:26-27, 2:2, 4:3).

o Inheritance: As adopted children (see 1:5), we have the pledge of an

inheritance presently and the assurance that it will be fully realized in the

future (Gal 4:4-6).

C. Praise to God for the Gift of the Spirit that Guarantees Our Inheritance

(1:13-14)

The promised Holy Spirit is the down payment/deposit on our inheritance. This was

God's absolute commitment to bring to completion the full inheritance, our

redemption, that he has already begun in us, a redemption that does not reach

fulfillment until the appearing of Jesus (see Phil 1:6).