

EPHESIANS 1

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Ephesians chapter 1 as we continue our study through the Word of God, and we begin this letter that Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus.

Let me start out by giving you the two main reasons Paul wrote this letter, and, as you will see, it is how the book is divided up.

In Ephesians chapter 1 through Ephesians chapter 3 we have ***THE POSITION OF THE CHRISTIAN***. In other words, Paul will spend three chapters dealing with doctrine, what we believe, all that we have in Christ.

From there, in Ephesians chapter 4 through Ephesians chapter 6 Paul will deal with ***THE PRACTICE OF THE CHRISTIAN***. And the idea here is now that we have the correct doctrine or teachings of God, we need to apply them to our lives, we need to live them out in what we do and what we say!

And this is key. Without Christian doctrine or teaching, you can't live as God wants you to live. Doctrine must always precede the things we do!

Think about the Sermon on the Mount. Before Jesus tells us what we are to do; our duties, responsibilities, and practices as we live out our Christian faith, He gives to us the BE-attitudes. You see, unless you are what God made you to be you will never be able to do all that He requires you to do. It is not the DO-attitudes!

So, Christian doctrine and then Christian living, so important for us to understand.

And, as we will see, Paul shows us the riches we have in Christ.

We have been ***adopted*** into the family of God.

We have been ***accepted*** in Christ.

We have *redemption*, the *forgiveness* of our sins through Christ.

We have the *wisdom* of God.

We have a Godly *inheritance*.

We have the *seal of the Holy Spirit* as a *guarantee* of our inheritance in Christ.

We have *abundant life*.

We have the *grace* of God.

We are *citizens of heaven*.

In short, we are rich in Christ, every spiritual blessing is at our disposal, we see these blessings in Ephesians chapters 1-3, and this section deals primarily with doctrine, as I have said.

Information is important and correct information in regard to our spiritual life is vital. But it does not end there with just information.

Thus, Paul shows us how we are to apply these things to our life, how we are to walk since we have been blessed with all these spiritual blessings!

So Paul speaks of our *unity* in Christ.

The use of our *spiritual gifts* in Christ.

Our *growth* in Christ.

Our *human relationships* as we are in Christ.

How we are to *work* in Christ.

Our *spiritual weapons* that we have in Christ.

In other words, as Paul said in Ephesians 4:1, **“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.”**

We will see these in Ephesians chapters 4-6, and this section deals primarily with the application of these things, how we are to walk in Christ.

Now just a little background on how the church was started there in Ephesus and what this city was all about.

If you remember from our study in Acts, Paul visited Ephesus on his second missionary journey for a short period of time and you can read of this in Acts 18:19-22.

Then, on Paul's third missionary journey he spent three years teaching them the Gospel of Jesus Christ as Acts 20:31 tells us. And you can read of some of these things Paul did and what he encountered during those three years in Acts chapter 19.

Ephesians is a group of letters known as the prison epistles, written while Paul was in prison in Rome in 60-62 A. D.

These prison epistles include *Ephesians*, *Philippians*, *Colossians* and *Philemon*.

Most scholars believe Paul was the author of this letter and only recently has there been any controversy over who wrote this epistle, which I don't believe has any real evidence to support their claim that it wasn't Paul.

It seems that this letter was written early on in his imprisonment, maybe in 60 A. D. and delivered by Tychicus according to Ephesians 6:21-22.

Tychicus also delivered Paul's letter to the Colossians as Colossians 4:7-9 tells us along with Onesimus, a slave of Philemon who escaped and was saved by Paul and returned to his master Philemon, a Christian who then released him.

Now a little about this city. The city of Ephesus was an important commercial center because of its harbor. And yes, Ephesus was some 3 miles inland from the sea and because of that many wonder how then could it be a seaport city. The reason is simple. You see, the broad mouth of the Cayster River allowed access and provided the greatest harbor in Asia Minor.

Also, there were four great trade routes that ran through Ephesus and thus, it was known as the gateway to Asia.

Thus, many people came and went from this city, which was the capital city of the Roman province of Asia. Ephesus was a free city or a self-governing city, within limits, and no Roman troops were garrisoned there.

The population of Ephesus was some 300,000 people, and it could be even higher. Some have estimated the population between 250,000 and 500,000 people.

The city of Ephesus had a theater that seated 25,000 people and boasted a library which contained 200,000 volumes (handwritten scrolls).

And besides its busy harbor and trade routes that ran through the city, people came to see one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the temple of Diana.

Diana, called by the Romans, and Artemis by the Greeks, was a fertility goddess and the worship of this goddess was centered around sexual promiscuity and prostitution.

The temple of Diana had some 1,000-temple priestesses, which were nothing more than prostitutes that would come out at night and sell themselves to support the temple. This cult was so big that the silversmiths made a great living by making little idols of Diana and selling them.

Not only do we see idolatry, sexual promiscuity going on but also witchcraft.

Like many or most of the societies of that time, everyone did what was right in their own eyes because there was no King, the Lord, on the throne of their hearts. Their lives were out of control because they did as they pleased and the Bible tells us that the heart of man is wicked and that is what will flow unless it is changed by the Lord, unless He rules and reigns in our life.

Thus, as Paul spent three years in Ephesus, lives were changed, so much so that in Acts 19:18-20 we are told, **“And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.”**

That is only something that God can do as He works on the inside of a person and that is then manifested in their lives. It is not fake or a façade, but it is real, and it is lasting!

Not only did they do that, but they were not buying their idols anymore which made the silversmiths mad, so much so that a riot almost broke out!

We are told in Acts chapter 19 starting in verse 24, **“For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship. Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, ‘Great is Diana of the Ephesians!’ So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul’s travel companions. And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater. Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for**

the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together. And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, and wanted to make his defense to the people. But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians!'” Acts 19:24-34.

What a change for the Ephesians, they found out that idols don't set them free, bring joy into their lives but a person who gives themselves to the Lord can have that freedom, that joy and what the Ephesians found out is still true today!

That a relationship with Jesus Christ, making Him your Lord and Savior is what really matters and once you have that, your relationship with your fellow man will be in line!

As you will see, this letter is very different from the ones that Paul wrote to the church in Corinth and the churches in Galatia. Those letters dealt with problems within the church, personal issues that needed to be corrected. And yes, they were tough, but it was exactly what was needed to correct those problems because if they were not corrected, things would only get worse, they would continue to deteriorate away from the Lord and what He desires of them.

Ephesians deals with truth, with doctrine in general and then the application of that doctrine, as you will see.

Warren Wiersbe summed it up for us like this. He wrote,

In every sense, Ephesians is Paul's greatest word on the church, teaching us what the church is in the mind of God, and what it ought to be in practice before the eyes of men. Paul's theme is Christ and the church, the eternal plan of God to gather together all things in Christ Jesus. The letter begins in eternity past and carries us to eternity future! We see the believer seated in the heavenlies, but also walking with Christ on earth and fighting against Satan. While Ephesians does not tell us all God wants us to know about the church, there is no part of the Bible that soars any higher in church doctrine or practical Christian living.

- Warren Wiersbe

In this letter to the Ephesians, Paul is going to take us to the mountain top you might say, showing us that we are a new creation in Christ, a new man, something that no one else can do. And, as you will see, the key is going to be *IN CHRIST!*

You see, Karl Marx wrote about a new man and a new society, but he saw man and society both in almost purely economic terms and offered only economic answers. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul also saw the new man and a new society, but he saw it all accomplished by the work of Jesus.

With that as our background for this letter, let's begin reading in Ephesians chapter 1, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we begin this section that deals with doctrine, correct information regarding the Lord and what we have in Christ. And, as you will see, this is very important for us to understand and apply to our lives.

EPHESIANS 1**VERSES 1-2**

As you can see, Paul's opening greeting is short and to the point, but it is typical of his greetings as he speaks of the grace of God or the unmerited favor of God upon our lives through Christ.

And since we have made peace with God through Jesus Christ, we can enjoy the peace of God in our lives no matter what may come our way or in spite of what comes our way.

You see, this peace is not based on outward circumstances but upon the inward reality of God being in control of our lives!

It has been said, to put this into perspective, ***“God in His mercy doesn't give me what I deserve, and God in His grace gives me what I don't deserve.”***

You see, we deserve death and He gives to us life. The end result of that is peace with God and with the brethren. It is a oneness that Paul is going to build upon in this epistle.

And please understand that Paul did not choose to be an apostle. You see, he tells us that he is an apostle by the will of God. It was not something that he manufactured.

I have seen people try to do that, be something God has not appointed them to be, and it is horrible.

It was not by the will of men who pushed him into that position, which I have also seen, and it doesn't work.

This was the will of God and Paul took those steps of faith.

You see, none of us are qualified but God who called you into a ministry is also the God who will empower you to fulfill that ministry!

Tragically today we see Christians walking aimlessly, not doing anything. They have no idea what direction they are moving and instead of being involved in the things of God, they are content doing nothing. Their mentality many times is *“When the Spirit moves so will I as long as it’s where I want to go, what I want to do!”*

That is how the world responds; but we are to pattern our life after Jesus who said, **“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”** Mark 10:45.

We are also called **“saints”** and that is confusing to people. In the Roman Catholic Church, a saint is someone who has died as a Catholic, done all kinds of good deeds. I think they have to have at least one or two miracles that are attributed to them. Then they vote to see if this person is qualified to be a saint and if so, they are saint so-and-so!

For us, as Christians, we are all saints, not because what we have done, but because of what God has done in our lives.

I like the way that Calvin put this into perspective for us. He wrote, *“No man is . . . a believer who is not also a saint; and, on the other hand, no man is a saint who is not a believer.”* And the key, as we will see, is the next point I want to make.

I want you to notice an important phrase or phrases that are tied together in this chapter. We see the phrase, **“In Him”** or **“In Christ”** or something similar in this chapter some eight times, and that is key. You see, that is really what this whole epistle is built upon and really the New Testament, being ***IN CHRIST JESUS!***

And what that means is that we are a member of His body, the body of Christ. If you are not in Christ you are not saved, obviously!

Warren Wiersbe summed it up like this as he wrote,

When the sinner trusts Christ as his Savior, he is taken out of “*the world*” and placed “*in Christ*.” The believer is in the world physically, but not of the world spiritually (John 17:14–16). Like a scuba diver, he exists in an alien environment because he possesses special equipment - in this case, the indwelling Holy Spirit of God. Every true believer possesses the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19–20), and it is through the Spirit’s power that the Christian is able to function in the world.

- Warren Wiersbe

Now as we move into verses 3-14 of Ephesians chapter 1, in the Greek this is one long sentence.

My English teacher would have called this a run-on, but Paul is making some powerful points here and he just keeps going, and going, and going! And I guess you can call it a praise song unto the Lord and really, the Holy Trinity; God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

In Ephesians 1:3-6 we see Paul declare the work of the Father in the *past*. ***We were chosen by the Father!***

Then, in Ephesians 1:7-12 we see Paul celebrate the work of the Son in the *present*. ***We were redeemed by the Son!***

And lastly, in Ephesians 1:13-14 we see Paul proclaim the work of the Holy Spirit in the *future*. ***We were sealed by the Spirit!***

So let’s read on and look at what God the Father has done in the past.

VERSES 3-6

Notice how Paul opens this section on God the Father. Paul says, “**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.**”

The Greek word for “**blessed**” is EULOGETOS, (yoo-log-ay-tos’) and it means, “to speak well of” and in the New Testament it is used or applied only to God.

It is from this word we get the English word *eulogy* from. And think about that for a minute. What is a eulogy? It is a message of praise and commendation; it is declaring the goodness of a person.

And what we see here is that He has blessed us, and our response is that we praise Him!

You see, we recognize all that God has done for us, His goodness, His kindness, all the spiritual blessings are ours, but there is a catch.

You see, unless you are *IN* Christ, none of these blessings are yours. And we have talked about this already, the key to all these blessings is being in Christ!

But keep in mind that Paul’s letter to the Ephesians takes us into the heavenly places to show us our resources in Christ and then starting in chapter 4 we are to take those spiritual resources and apply them to our lives, live what we believe, walk accordingly!

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

Many Christians continually ask God for what He has already given. They pray for Him to give them more love, although they should know that “the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Rom. 5:5).

They pray for peace, although Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you” (John 14:27).

They pray for happiness and joy, although Jesus said, “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full” (John 15:11).

They ask God for strength, although His Word tells them that they “can do all things through Him who strengthens” them (Phil. 4:13).

God’s “divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence” (2 Pet. 1:3).

It is not that God *will give* us but that He *has already given* us “everything pertaining to life and godliness.” He has blessed us already with every spiritual blessing. We are complete “in Him” (Col. 2:10).”

And I think perspective is so important. Let me explain it like this,

“I am so blessed,” Paul says from inside a Roman prison. “Oh, maybe not physically, maybe not materially - but spiritually, because the blessings found in Jesus Christ are spiritual blessings.

How the church in America needs to understand this. Many church meetings today sound like Amway conventions, with teachings based on Deuteronomy 28 about how to structure finances and how to manipulate the system spiritually in order to be blessed materially.

But those who teach such things fail to understand that all of the Old Testament truths dealing with physical, financial, or military blessings depict New Testament truths that are spiritual, eternal, and heavenly.

- Jon Courson’s Application Commentary – New Testament, p. 1225

How true that is. And please understand that I am not saying you can't pray for material things or that God does not supply our material needs. He does! But so often Christians today are focused on the material instead of the Spiritual, the temporal instead of the eternal!

Now here is a controversial verse. In Ephesians 1:4 Paul says that “**... He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world ...**”

Because of that some feel that we have no choice in the matter of our salvation. In other words, God has chosen some for heaven and some for Hell, He has created some people to be saved and others, no matter what they may do, they can never be saved!

What is the problem with that statement?

It is not Scriptural. God so loved the world and that does not mean just those who would get saved. He loves every single person on this planet, and they have a choice to make, to be *IN* Christ or not to be in Christ, or to be saved or not to be saved!

Then how can it say that He has chosen us?

Because God knows what we were going to do before we did it.

Let me explain it like this. That God in eternity past looked down into the future through His foreknowledge and He knew everyone who, through His grace, would respond in faith to His offer of salvation and receive the message of the gospel when presented to them. And, based on that foreknowledge He elected us to be His children and predetermined our destiny that we would spend eternity with Him in heaven.

And please understand that predestination applies only to saved people. Nowhere are we taught that God predestines people to be eternally condemned. If they are condemned, it is because of their refusal to trust Christ.

You see, it is election or predestination and the free will of man that go together. He knew what we would do and yet it was up to us to do it and everyone has a choice to make in this decision!

Spurgeon wrote, “We are not sitting here, and groaning, and crying, and fretting, and worrying, and questioning our own salvation. He has blessed us; and therefore we will bless him. If you think little of what God has done for you, you will do very little for him; but if you have a great notion of his great mercy to you, you will be greatly grateful to your gracious God.” Again, that is the correct perspective to have and it is so refreshing to rest in Him!

Also, God not only chose us for salvation but for holiness – to be holy and without blame before Him, we call it the sanctification process.

God is molding and shaping our lives down here to fit in up there and it is a lifelong process but in the end, as John tells us, **“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”** I John 3:1-3.

Also, in Ephesians 1:6 Paul says we are **“accepted in the beloved.”**

And the Greek word **“accepted”** is CHARITTO, (khar-ee'to'-o) and it means “highly favored” or “full of grace.”

That is what we have in Christ for Paul tells us that the key for this blessing of acceptance is being in the beloved or being in Christ!

It is as Jesus said in John 15:5-7, **“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.”**

And as you read all this here in these verses of Ephesians, you have to say that this is **“to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.”**

Ephesians 1:6.

Thus, Paul declares the work of God the Father in the past – ***WE ARE CHOSEN BY THE FATHER!***

VERSES 7-12

In these verses we see the work of the Son in the present, that we were redeemed by the Son!

And we can break these verses down like this. First of all, ***what Jesus did*** we see in Ephesians 1:7-10.

Understand that in the Roman Empire, not just in Rome, there were 60 million slaves. And these slaves were bought and sold like cars or furniture. They were a piece of property you might say!

And usually, in the center of the city was the place where these slaves were bought and sold.

And Paul tells us that **“... we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins ...”**

In this verse Paul used the Greek word, apolutrosis for “**redemption**”, and this word speaks of the purchase of a slave for the purpose of setting him free, totally free and never to be a slave again! That is what Christ has done for us, slaves to sin but now we have been set free in Christ!

You see, this was all done by the shed blood of Christ on the cross of Calvary. Peter put it like this, “**knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.**” I Peter 1:18-19.

I like the way that J. Vernon McGee summed this up for us. He wrote,

Forgiveness is not the act of an indulgent deity who is moved by sentiment to the exclusion of justice, righteousness, and holiness.

Forgiveness depends on the shedding of blood: it demands and depends on the payment of the penalty for sin.

Christ’s death and the shedding of His blood is the foundation for forgiveness and, without that, there could be no forgiveness.

I think here we need to learn the distinction between human forgiveness and divine forgiveness - they are not the same.

Human forgiveness is always based on the fact that a penalty is deserved and that the penalty is not imposed. It simply means that one wipes out the account.

God is holy and righteous. Therefore divine forgiveness is always based on the fact that there has been the execution of the penalty and the price has been paid.

Human forgiveness comes before the penalty is executed. Divine forgiveness depends upon the penalty being executed.

It is really too bad that this is something which has bogged down our entire legal system today. That is why we are living in a lawless nation where it is not even safe to be on the streets of our cities at night. There has been a confusion between human forgiveness and the righteousness of the law.

We are in trouble because of the leniency on the part of certain judges throughout our land. They sit on the bench and think they are being bighearted by letting the criminal go free.

My friend, the righteousness of the law demands that a penalty must be paid. I once heard a judge say, "If God can forgive, then I can forgive."

But God paid the penalty and then He forgave.

Is the judge on the bench willing to go and pay the penalty?

I don't think you have any right to take men out of death row unless you are willing to take their place, because a penalty must be executed."

- J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible Vol. 5, p. 220

That is a great point and it gives to us a picture of what God has done; He paid the penalty for our sins!

Again, in Christ we have "**redemption**" which conveys the idea of delivering a man from a situation in which he was totally powerless to liberate himself from or to release him from a penalty for which he could never pay. He has been set free in Christ!

Not only have we been redeemed by the blood of Christ, set free in Him, but we also have the "**forgiveness**" of our sins, APHESIS (af'-es-is) in the Greek.

It speaks of a dismissal or the canceling of our sins, something the animal sacrifices could never do, they were just a temporary covering for sins.

Paul put it this way in Hebrews 9:11-14, **“But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”**

What happened to our sins?

Paul tells us in Colossians 2:13-14, **“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”**

They were nailed to the cross with Christ and thus, as the Psalmist tells us, **“As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.”** Psalm 103:12.

And in Isaiah 43:25 we are told, **“I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.”**

And yet today, we see the blood atonement attacked. But why? Because the devil knows that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. And thus, many are gravitating to a works salvation in which no one will be saved by that!

And look at Ephesians 1:7 again. Paul tells us that the measure of our **forgiveness** is given in the words, **according to the riches of His grace.**

If we can measure **the riches of God's grace**, then we can measure how fully He has forgiven us. His **grace** is infinite! So is His **forgiveness**! Praise the Lord for this wonderful gift He has given to us!

In Ephesians 1:8 Paul speaks of wisdom and prudence or understanding. Think about that. When we are saved God opened our eyes and gave to us wisdom or intellectual knowledge and prudence or practical knowledge of the things of God, which we continue to grow in, not because we deserve it, but because of His rich grace that He bestows upon us!

Then Paul shows us how awesome God's plan is and what our place in that plan is.

Paul, in Ephesians 1:9, speaks of it being a "**mystery**" which was something that was once hidden but now has been revealed to God's people.

What is that mystery that Paul is speaking of?

That God is working to bring all things back into unity, beauty, all the wrongs will be righted, all matters resolved. He is speaking of the Kingdom Age!

Paul put it this way in Romans 8:18-22, "**For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.**"

So this is what Jesus has done for us!

But why did Jesus do it? Ephesians 1:11-12 tells us.

It can be summed up like this. Man is redeemed for the purpose of restoring the divine image marred by sin, which causes us to praise our God for what He has done!

You see, God's plan and now our place in that plan as we are in Christ is that "**we have obtained an inheritance**" which in the Greek is one word, KLERRO, (klay-ro'-o) and it is in the aorist passive indicative which basically means it is a future event that was so certain to happen that the Greeks spoke as if it had already occurred!

Thus, our salvation is certain, it can't be stolen away, lost, left and because of what God has done, we are to bring praise unto Him, it was what we were created for as Revelation 4:11 tells us, and this is from the King James Version, "**Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.**"

J. Vernon McGee put it like this,

God does not exist to satisfy the whim and wish of the believer. The believer exists for the glory of God.

When the believer is in the center of the will of God, he is living a life of fullness and of satisfaction and of joy. That will deliver you from the hands of psychologists, friend.

But when you are not in the will of God, there is trouble brewing for you. Living in God's will adds purpose and meaning to life: we are going to be for the praise of His glory. God will be able throughout the endless ages of eternity future to point to you and me and say, "Look there, they weren't worth saving but I loved them and I saved them."

That is the thing which gives worth and standing and dignity and purpose and joy and glory to life. We exist today to the praise of His glory and that is enough.

You see, the end result of our redemption can be seen in the life of the slave girl who was bought by the kind plantation owner and he set her free.

He told her, “I bought you to set you free.”

As she heard those words, she stood there stunned for a minute. Then she fell on her knees and said, “I will serve you forever!”

That is how we should respond to the Lord for all He has done, the blessings He has bestowed upon us in Christ Jesus, that He has set us free from our sins, we are no longer slaves to sin, we are free and we turn around and are bondslaves to Christ, serving Him out of love!

Thus, Paul celebrates the work of the Son in the present – ***WE WERE REDEEMED BY THE SON!***

VERSES 13-14

Here we see Paul proclaim the work of the Holy Spirit in the future – we were sealed by the Spirit!

Here is something that we are seeing more and more today. The emphasis upon the Spirit, feelings, emotions and the ignoring of the Word of God. They feel we don't need the Word of God; all we need is the Spirit within. God will guide us by the Spirit and our feelings!

But our feelings can deceive us! And, apart from the Word of God, what spirit is guiding us?

Look again at Ephesians 1:13 and notice what it says. They trusted in God after they heard the Word of God, not miracles, signs and wonders, not feelings, but the Word of God, which is living, which is powerful and which can transform our lives as we have all seen in our own lives!

How do we know we are saved?

Because God has given to us His Spirit not only showing us that we are saved but also, He is the guarantee that the Lord is coming to receive us into glory.

The word “**guarantee**” speaks of earnest money or a down payment made which will ensure that He is coming back for us!

That word can also speak of an engagement ring, which I like.

The Holy Spirit is our engagement ring given to us by Jesus and as He goes and prepares a mansion for us, a new home for our spirit and soul to dwell in, when He is ready, He will return for His bride, the church and we will forever be with Him!

Folks, you can take that to the bank, it is going to happen!

As one writer put it, “When the Holy Spirit seals believers, He marks them as God’s divine possessions, who from that moment on entirely and eternally belong to Him, The Spirit’s seal declares the transaction of salvation as divinely official and final.”

We are secure in Christ and the Holy Spirit guarantees that what the Lord has begun in us, He will complete, we will be with Him for eternity!

That is what Gaebelein wrote, “The seal is therefore the Holy Spirit Himself, and His presence in the believer denotes ownership and security. The sealing with the Spirit is not an emotional feeling or some mysterious inward experience.”

Exactly!

The proclamation of the work of the Holy Spirit in the future – ***WE ARE SEALED BY THE SPIRIT!***

VERSES 15-16

Notice that because of their faith in Jesus it was manifested in the love of the brethren. It is as Jesus said in John 13:34-35, “**A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.**”

But Paul realizes that this is a spiritual battle and he is therefore praying for them that they would continue in the faith with the fruit of the Spirit flowing from their lives – *LOVE!*

He is basically saying, “*Here is your position*” and now he prays, “*O God, help them to really understand and comprehend their position and their resources in Christ!*”

As we read on, we will see Paul share with the Ephesians some of the things he is praying for them.

What an encouragement this must have been for these dear saints and what an encouragement you are to me knowing that you are praying for me and I hope I encourage you knowing that I am praying for you!

And look at what Paul is praying for as we read on.

VERSE 17

Paul is praying that they would grow in wisdom and knowledge of Jesus! It is as Peter wrote, “**You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.**” II Peter 3:17-18.

To know God is so important and how do we accomplish that? Paul has told us, by being men and women of the Word!

J. Vernon McGee wrote,

When Dr. H. A. Ironside lived in Southern California as a young man and was preaching in this area, he would sometimes visit a wonderful man of God who had come from Northern Ireland because of his health. He had been greatly used of God in teaching the Word.

While Dr. Ironside would sit with him, he would open up the Scriptures in such an amazing way that Dr. Ironside one day asked him, “Where did you learn that?” “Well,” this man said, “I didn’t get it by going to seminary because I never went to seminary. I never learned it by going to college. No one particularly taught me. Rather I learned these things on my knees on the mud floor of a little sod cottage in the north of Ireland. There with my open Bible before me, I used to kneel for hours at a time and ask the Spirit of God to reveal Christ to my soul, and open the Word to my heart. He taught me more on my knees on that mud floor than I could have learned in all the seminaries and colleges of the world.

- J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible Vol. 5, pp. 227-228

And look at the specifics of this prayer for them as we read on here in Ephesians chapter 1.

VERSES 18-21

Remember what Paul prayed for back in Ephesians 1:17. That they would know God.

How important it is for us to understand that God is in control of our lives, that we understand God’s will for our lives – wisdom and revelation!

So the first thing Paul is praying for is that we may know God, intimately, deeply, not a superficial knowledge of God!

Secondly, Paul is praying that we may know the hope of His calling. That is, God has a specific calling for our lives that He wants us to fulfill. He wants us to understand the wonderful future He has promised to those He has called. You see, He has called us, and we must step forward. And in the end, the hope of His calling is our glorification as one day we will “**..be conformed to the image of His Son . . .**” Romans 8:29.

The third point of his prayer is that we may know His riches. Yes, eternal glory but also present riches in Christ, all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places are at our disposal!

The fourth point of Paul’s prayer is that we may know His power, that He is all-powerful, and we can rest in that, take comfort in that. Paul, in Philippians 3:10 tells us, “**that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.**” We tend to think of creation as God’s greatest work, but that was nothing. It was His resurrection that was God’s greatest demonstration of power and His love. If death did not conquer our Lord, then He will not let it conquer us!

What a wonderful prayer of knowing God and all that He has for us!

VERSES 22-23

As Paul concludes this chapter look at what he is saying.

Jesus is the head of the church and we, as believers, are His body.

Thus, if Jesus is not in control, then we are running around with our heads cut off!

Let us be guided by Him. What a great prayer for the church in Ephesus and for us as John MacArthur tells us, “The point of this great petition is that we might comprehend how secure we are in Christ and how unwavering and immutable is our hope of eternal inheritance. The power of glorification is invincible and is presently operative to bring us to glory.”

As I begin to close this evening, we have seen that the Father has placed His Son, Jesus Christ, in charge over all things. He is to be the head of the body of believers and if He is the head then that means there is a living connection between the head and the body. They need to work together with the body taking its direction from the control center, the brain, which is Jesus Christ.

If God has given us all things in Christ, then He has given us the power also.

We as Christians need to appropriate that power in our lives and instead of being a flicker of light for Christ, we should be a strong burning light to a world that is in darkness.

It is as Paul said, **“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.”** Ephesians 1:3.

May we not forget those blessings that God has for us!

Let me close with these words from Ray Stedman. He wrote,

Remember, the Bible is not just a history book about the past or a prophecy book about the future.

It isn’t just a self-help book of ethical guidelines and life principles.

It is, first and foremost, the revelation of the living God.

He gave us His Word in order that we might see Him, know Him, feel His love, discover His wisdom, draw upon His strength, and rely upon His power.

The purpose of the Bible is to introduce you in a personal way to the God of the universe, and His Son, Jesus Christ.

So, if your Bible study time is dull and dreary, take that as a hint and pray that it would come alive, so that you may truly know Jesus Christ.

- Ray Stedman