

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

OCTOBER 15TH - 16TH, 2022 // BOOK OF EPHESIANS

GREETINGS (EPHESIANS 1:1-2) WHO WROTE EPHESIANS?

Vs. 1 identifies the author as "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will..."

- Paul may have written this letter around the same time as he wrote Colossians and Philemon from prison, most likely in Rome.
- As an apostle, Paul was a specially gifted emissary from God, not because he chose to be, but because of God's will (Acts 26:17-18).

On Paul's 2nd missionary journey (A.D. 52), he visited Ephesus after leaving Corinth, and evidently planted a church there (Acts 18:19).

- On Paul's 3rd missionary journey (A.D. 54-56), he spent 2-3 years teaching in the city (Acts 19:8-10) and had to confront false doctrine, pagan practices, demonic activity, and even a riot (Acts 19:26-41).

WHO WERE THE "EPHESIANS"?

This letter is addressed to "the faithful saints in Christ Jesus at Ephesus..." (vs. 1b).

- It's possible that this letter was written to various churches in Asia Minor in the general vicinity of the city of Ephesus and would've circulated from church to church.
- Most scholars believe this is a "general epistle" written to mainly Gentile believers in Southwestern Asia Minor.

The city of Ephesus was a busy port city and was the 4th or 5th largest city in the world at that time.

- Ephesus was known for different forms of paganism (Roman emperor worship, Greek philosophy/mysticism, and the temple of the goddess Diana [or Artemis]).
- Spiritual warfare is a major theme of this letter for a very good reason (Ephesians 6:10-20).

WHAT IS EPHESIANS ABOUT?

About a decade after the church was started (A.D. 62), Paul wrote this letter of encouragement and instruction.

- The central message of the letter focuses on the importance of our Christian identity and unity within Christ's church through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Paul commends these believers for their faithfulness and extends to them the customary Christian blessing (vs. 2).

WHY STUDY EPHESIANS?

- It is so important for us to know and live out of our identity in Christ: So often, we fail to see ourselves correctly (Eph. 2:4-10).
- Unity within the church matters more than we think it does. So often in our pride, immaturity, and childishness, we forget God's call is for us to be united (Eph. 4:4).

BLESSINGS FROM THE FATHER (EPHESIANS 1:3-6)

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A "SAINT"?

The word simply means to be "set apart," and anyone who has experienced the new life that Jesus offers them through faith is now called a "saint" and has received "every spiritual blessing in the heavens with Christ" (vs. 3).

Every spiritual blessing we receive, we receive in Christ. God also wants to bless us with every spiritual blessing available to us. What are those spiritual blessings?

"FOR HE CHOSE US IN HIM, BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD..." (VS. 4)

The spiritual blessings we've received from God the Father begin with the fact that we, as His saints, were chosen by Him to be saved before we'd done anything or had been anything for God.

- The Father's love for us isn't because we've earned it—it's because He chose to set His love on us!

"...TO BE HOLY AND BLAMELESS IN LOVE" (VS. 4)

The goal of God choosing us is so we would be brought into conformity to Jesus and be holy and blameless like He is (Rom. 8:29-30).

- God the Father sees us as holy as His son is holy if we are united to Christ because of our faith in Him (2 Cor. 5:21).
- Now we have the responsibility of pursuing that holiness behaviorally and practically.

"HE PREDESTINED US TO BE ADOPTED AS SONS..." (VS. 5)

The word translated "predestined" is the Greek word *proorizo*, which carries the meaning of "determining beforehand," "ordaining," and "deciding ahead of time."

- So this verse tells us that God predetermined that you, as a believer, would be adopted into God's family as a son or daughter—you've been chosen by God.
- This doctrine has caused quite a bit of confusion for some believers.

There are a number of different interpretations concerning predestination/election, but it's an undeniable doctrine of Scripture (Eph. 1:11; 1 Thess. 1:4; Col. 3:12; 2 Pet. 1:10; Mark 13:20).

- God is completely sovereign in all things, but at the same time, our choices are meaningful, and our response to the invitation of the gospel matters.
- God predestines who will be saved, AND we must actively respond to Christ in order to be saved—both realities are equally true.

The Bible says we must respond to God, and all who believe in Jesus Christ will be saved (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 10:9-10). The Bible never describes God rejecting anyone who believes in Him or turning away anyone who is truly seeking Him (Deut. 4:29).

- Somehow, in the mystery of God, predestination works hand-in-hand with a person being drawn by God (John 6:44) and believing unto salvation (Rom. 1:16).

"...GLORIOUS GRACE THAT HE LAVISHED ON US IN THE BELOVED ONE..." (VS. 6)

- When we grasp the idea that God has saved us, chosen us, and adopted us as sons and daughters simply because of the "good pleasure of His will," it changes how we view this thing called grace.
- Grace truly is a glorious gift that's been lavished upon us by a loving Father.

BLESSINGS FROM THE SON (EPHESIANS 1:7-12)

The Bible teaches that God is one, yet has existed since the beginning of time as three distinct and equal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:22; John 15:26).

- Each person of the Triune Godhead has worked together to make possible our salvation, but each Person of the Trinity has a special ministry to perform in our lives.
- God the Father has blessed us, but what about God the Son (Jesus)?

REDEMPTION (VS. 7A)

To redeem means to "purchase and set free by paying a price," and it carries with it the idea of being released from slavery.

- Because Jesus paid a great price with His own blood, we are freed from sin: both the penalty of sin (death) and the enslaving power of sin.
- We are also freed from the law (Gal. 5:1), freed from the devil, and from the world (Col. 1:13-14).

FORGIVENESS (VS. 7B)

To forgive someone means that we give up the right to punish them for their wrongdoing.

- To trespass means to go where we are forbidden to go.
- The forbidden things we have done deserve the punishment of God, but because of Jesus' sacrifice in our place, we have been pardoned.
- This is according to the "riches of His grace."

THE REVELATION OF GOD'S WILL (VS. 8-10)

In Christ, God has made known to us the "mystery of His will."

- We are able to share in this secret that one day God will bring everything together in Christ.
- Sin has and currently is tearing everything in our universe apart, but in Christ, God will gather everything together in a glorious and perfect redemption.

AN INHERITANCE (VS. 11-12)

In Christ, we have been chosen and predestined according to God's plan to receive an inheritance.

- Some translations state that we've been made *into* an inheritance.
- Both are true: We are God's possession, and we will possess a glorious inheritance in full when we stand before God in Heaven.

BLESSINGS FROM THE SPIRIT (EPHESIANS 1:13-14)

"SEALED WITH THE PROMISED HOLY SPIRIT..." (VS. 13A)

In the ancient world, a seal indicated authority, authenticity, security, and ownership.

- God has sealed His children with the Holy Spirit as an indication of ownership and authenticity.
- What is the evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives?
- We know spiritual identity by "fruit" (Matt. 7:16-20). The Holy Spirit gives "fruit" (Gal. 5:22-23).

"WHEN YOU HEARD...AND WHEN YOU BELIEVED" (VS. 13B)

God's sovereignty never excludes humanity's personal responsibility in hearing and believing.

- The ones who were sovereignly chosen by God were also the ones who heard and believed!
- The Holy Spirit is the one who opens our ears and our hearts so that we can hear (John 16:8).
- The Holy Spirit gives us faith so we can believe the gospel (1 Cor. 2:14).

"THE DOWN PAYMENT OF OUR INHERITANCE..." (VS. 14)

When you make a major purchase, you often pay a down payment; you'll keep making payments on that item until it's finally paid off.

- When we're born again, we receive the Holy Spirit as a "down payment." One day (at the redemption of our possession), our final release from sin's influence will be total and complete and we'll step into perfection and glory.

"...UNTIL THE REDEMPTION OF THE POSSESSION" (VS. 14)

We live in the "now, but not yet."

- A spiritual deposit (the Holy Spirit) was made in our lives at salvation.
- Our journey of sanctification (being "set apart") should be marked by the Holy Spirit's influence and power growing in our lives as we learn to yield ourselves completely to Him.
- This won't be fully complete until the day we see God face to face with the "praise of His glory."

PRAYER FOR ENLIGHTENMENT (EPHESIANS 1:15-23)

Some Christians are content just to know a set of facts, theories, principles, and theological constructs about God.

- But Paul prays for his readers to have "the eyes of our hearts enlightened" so that we would know God: not just stuff about Him!
- "Revelation" (vs. 17) is God allowing us to have an experience of Him and His truth personally and intimately.

THAT WE MIGHT KNOW GOD (VS. 17B)

To know God personally is to experience salvation from Him through Jesus (John 17:3).

- To know God personally is to know Him increasingly in sanctification and discipleship (Phil. 3:10).
- Someday we'll know God perfectly in glorification (1 Cor. 13:9-12).
- As we follow God, we grow in knowing Him as savior, Lord, friend, Father, and shepherd.

THAT WE MIGHT KNOW GOD'S CALLING & RICHES (VS. 18)

God has called His saints out of darkness, spiritual death, and spiritual bondage into marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9).

- Because of this calling, we have hope for an amazing future full of the wealth of God's glorious inheritance for us.
- God's desire for us is to know this calling—we've been given more than the world can offer.

THAT WE MIGHT KNOW GOD'S POWER (VS. 19-23)

The power God demonstrated in raising Christ from the dead and placing Him above all creation is the same power He is exercising toward us to bring about the blessings which He has promised us.

- Because the church is "Christ's body" (vs. 23), Jesus fills us as His Church with His presence and blessings.

THIS WORLD OFFERS EARTHLY RICHES.

- Material possessions offer a sense of significance, security, and pleasure.
- Identity is achieved through accomplishment, performance, and applause.

God has Offered us True Riches.

- Significance, security, and true pleasure are eternal, spiritual blessings.
- Identity is a gift received through faith.

IF YOU'RE NOT A BELIEVER IN JESUS AND HAVE NEVER BEEN BORN AGAIN...

- Hear and believe the gospel!
- The Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit have offered you more spiritual riches than you could ever find in this life.
- If you have truly been born again...
- God wants you to know Him, who you are in Him, and just what He's done in your life!