

FROM DIANA TO CHRIST  
Ephesians 1:1, 2

Intro: The Apostle Paul was first in Ephesus on his second missionary journey. We read of his arrival there in Acts 18:19. He ministered there for just a brief time, and then left for Caesarea (Acts 18:21), and eventually returned to Antioch.

After Paul left Ephesus, Apollos came to Ephesus. The account of his ministry there is given in Acts 18:24-28. He is spoken of in Acts 18:24 as being "eloquent," and a man "mighty in the scriptures." However, there was a couple there named Aquila and Priscilla who were more mature in the faith than Apollos was, and Acts 18:26 tells us that "they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly."

The twenty-seventh verse of Acts 18 tells us that Apollos went on from Ephesus to Achaia, and that "the brethren" of Ephesus wrote to the disciples of Achaia "to receive him." So all of this means that there was a work of the Lord going on in Ephesus before Paul came there for his two-year visit on his third missionary journey, which is described in Acts 19. Acts 19:1 tells us that Paul found "certain disciples" when he got to Ephesus.

And so Paul did not found the church at Ephesus. Who did, we do not know. Paul did come very close to the believers there, and chapter 20, verses 16-38, tells of Paul's final farewell with the elders of Ephesus at Miletus.

It must have been about A.D. 54 that Paul was in Ephesus. He wrote the epistle to the Ephesians about nine years later, or about A.D. 63. He wrote it from Rome at the time he wrote Philippians, Philemon, and Colossians. These four epistles are known as Paul's Prison Epistles.

Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of Asia. Jewish believers had been dispersed to this area from Jerusalem. It was to these believers that Peter was to write his epistles. See "Asia" in 1 Pet. 1:1. And so it may have been through them that the church of Ephesus had its start.

Acts 19 tells us that "the temple of the great goddess Diana was there, and that the Gospel had made such an impact upon the city with many turning to Christ that the silversmiths who made the silver shrines with the image of Diana felt that their livelihood was being threatened by the Apostle Paul. Diana is supposed to have fallen to the earth from Jupiter (see Acts 19:35), her home was in Nature, and she was considered to be the mother of all living things. To signify this, the upper part of her body was covered with breasts.

Although her temple was in Ephesus, she was worshipped all over the world of that day by means of the shrines which were made and sold in Ephesus.

And so, when Paul wrote this epistle, he was writing to many who had come FROM DIANA TO CHRIST. And note from Acts 19:37 that the people had turned to Christ, not because Paul and his fellow-believers had blasphemed Diana, but because he had preached Christ.

This was the case of many who were saved under Paul's ministry. What he wrote of the Thessalonians could just as well have been written about many of the Ephesians:

. . . how ye turned to God from idols  
to serve the living and true God:  
and to wait for his Son from heaven,  
whom he raised from the dead,  
even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come  
(1 Thess. 1:9b, 10).

This should lead us to see that, if people are to be turned from idolatry and from all of their other sins, all it takes is the simple preaching of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Gospel of the grace of God!

One other word about the background of this Epistle before we look at the two introductory verses. It has to do with the words, "at Ephesus." Some of the ancient MSS do not have these words; others do. This has led to the idea that the epistle, while originally intended for Ephesus may not have been written just for the believers at Ephesus; it may have been a circular letter intended for more than one group of the Lord's people--perhaps like Peter's epistles, and even like the last book of the NT, the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. There is nothing in the epistle that would militate against that idea. And we should not be bothered by that idea because we know that, although this epistle was not written specifically to us, it is certainly for us. So it detracts nothing at all from the epistle to say that it was written with more than one city and one church in mind.

So we come to this epistle in which we see the glory and grandeur of the Gospel, realizing that there were both Jews and Gentiles in the Ephesian church, and that Paul was writing, as he always did, to establish believers in the truth of the Gospel, and exhorting them to live lives that would glorify God and Jesus Christ, their Lord.

Today we want to see how Paul began this epistle, which was probably the 10th of his epistles. We have first:

- I. HIS OWN IDENTIFICATION: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God" (Eph. 1:1a).

## A. "Paul."

It was customary in that day for the writer of the letter to put his name first, even before the name or names of those receiving the letter. And so it would not appear strange nor presumptuous to anyone to find the name of Paul appearing first.

We see it again in 3:1.

We do not know the reason for the change from Saul to Paul, but the change was introduced by Luke in Acts 13:9 when Paul and Barnabas set out on their first missionary journey. We do know that "Saul" is Jewish; "Paul" is Roman, or Gentile. Some believe that he had both names all of the time. Others think that he began to use the name, "Paul," because he was to be a missionary to the Gentiles. But, whatever the reason, it marks a change in his life, a change made by our Lord Jesus Christ, a change which was to be a keynote of Paul's ministry, that in Christ

There is neither Jew nor Greek,  
there is neither bond nor free,  
there is neither male nor female:

for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

Or, as he wrote to the Colossians, speaking of Christ,  
Where there is neither Greek nor Jew,  
circumcision nor uncircumcision,  
Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free:  
but Christ is all, and in all (Col. 3:11).

What a change Christ had made in Paul's life! He knew that he had no special claim on God because he was a Jew. Nor was it a detriment to be a Jew. God deals with all men in grace, and is never a respecter of any person.

But what else did he have to say about himself, and what did he mean by the following statements.

## B. "An apostle of Jesus Christ."

If anyone were to raise the question, What right did Paul have for writing this epistle?, here is the answer. He had his appointment from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself!

This was apparent from our Lord's words to Ananias when he was being sent by the Lord to see "Saul, of Tarsus," as he was called then. This is what the Lord said to Ananias,

Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me,

to bear my name before Gentiles, and kings,  
and the children of Israel (Acts 9:15).

Therefore, as an apostle, Paul wrote with the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ behind him. He wrote as a personal representative of Jesus Christ. And he was commissioned to speak and write on behalf of Jesus Christ--to tell others about the Lord, to glorify the Lord, to win people to the Lord, to build up believers in the Lord. There can be no greater calling than this! And here is a good place to mention the meaning of the name, "Paul." It means little. Paul did not make this statement in pride, but in the greatest humility, knowing that he, less than any other, deserved such an honor.

But to cap it all, Paul could add another part to his authority. It was this:

C. "By the will of God."

He had not chosen this place for himself. He had not been elected by the other apostles (although that would not necessarily have been wrong). **BUT IN A VERY SPECIAL SENSE PAUL WAS "AN APOSTLE . . . BY THE WILL OF GOD."**

Thus, not only had the Lord Jesus chosen him for this ministry, but it was all in accordance with the will of God the Father.

I believe it is Martyn Lloyd-Jones who pointed out (and undoubtedly others have done that same) that it was characteristic of Paul to bring his readers immediately to GOD. See also vv. 2, 3, and the verses which follow.

At this point we come to the second part of our text.

II. THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE RECIPIENTS: "To the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 1:1b).

A. "The saints which are at Ephesus."

There was a day when there were no saints in Ephesus. Then, by the grace of God, there were some saints. And then there were more saints, and more saints--until there were many saints.

What are saints?

Saints are the Lord's people. They are holy people. They are a people set apart by the Lord, from all other people, and for the Lord Himself. We are going to see that they are a people chosen by God. They are people who have been redeemed, forgiven. They are members of God's family. They may look like anyone else, but you soon find out that they are different in their hearts. They are saints.

And the same people are also called,

B. "Faithful in Christ Jesus."

As you might expect, the word "faithful" comes from the word, faith. And so this word suggests that these "saints" are believers. They believe in Jesus Christ, and they continue to believe in Jesus Christ. That is why they are called, "faithful." It is not something that is true of them today, but not tomorrow. They have believed, and they continue to believe. This is the evidence that they have really believed, that their profession of faith in Christ is genuine, real!

But "in Christ Jesus" does not just mean that they believe in Him, but it means that they are "faithful" because they are "in Christ Jesus." They may have their earthly home in Ephesus, or in some other city in Asia, but their spiritual home is "in Christ Jesus"--and that is a relationship that they could never lose.

So it is amazing to see what Paul had become, and it is just as amazing to see what those special people in Ephesus were. Have you joined them? I have! And I know that most of you have! Portland has its saints, and those who at the same time are "the faithful in Christ Jesus."

And we got into the family of God just like Paul and those Ephesians did--not because we deserved to get in, but because of Jesus Christ, and because of the grace of God manifested to us through Him. There is no other way to become a saint except through faith in Christ. He died that our sins might be forgiven. Oh, that you would seek the mercy of God this morning if you are not a Christian. Come to Christ. Believe in Him. He has promised that if we come, He will not turn us away.

Concl: I had hoped that I would at least get through the first two verses of this epistle today, but I see that there is not enough time for me to do that and still try to do justice to verse 2. So we will keep that until next week.

Verse 2 is Paul's first prayer for the Ephesians, and although it appears in almost this same form in all of his Epistles, yet that very fact indicates that it is too important for us to pass over it with just a comment or two. So we will begin there next week.

But will you go back over this first verse again soon, perhaps even some time today, thinking of the amazing work that God had done in Paul's heart, and in the hearts of many Ephesians. It is a work that still is going on today, a work of God, a work that was made possible by the sacrificial death of our Lord Jesus Christ. How wonderful it is, how amazing, that the Lord would include you and me in it! It is a work that we could never do for ourselves, and no one else except the Lord can do it for us. When that marvelous change takes place, the person in whom God has done the work can never be the same again. He may not be perfect, but he is going to be different. And the difference will be manifested by a continuing trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Make sure that you know the Lord. If you have questions or need further help in understanding the Gospel, please get in touch with me after the service, or there are people right near you who will be glad to talk with you. But this is a matter of the most urgent importance. You and I have no promise that we will have a tomorrow. We just have this very minute. There are no second possibilities after death. It is necessary to trust Christ now, in this life. If we die without Christ, we will be without Christ forever! I plead with you to come to Him now. He is the only One Who can save you. Forsake your sins, and put your faith in Christ.

PRAYER AND PRAISE  
Ephesians 1:2, 3

Intro: I want to encourage you to read Ephesians as often as you can. We have booklets prepared containing this epistle to make it easy for you to carry it with you, and read the epistle when you might have some spare time during the day. Or, you might want to set aside some time in the morning, or during your lunch hour, or in the evening at the dinner table (even once a week with the family), or just before you retire for the night. I am hopeful that many of you, perhaps most of you, will memorize the epistle. If you are faithful in reading it daily, you will memorize it by just doing that. Or you can set out to memorize it verse by verse, and chapter by chapter.

But do not just read it and memorize it. PRAY that the Holy Spirit will enable you and me to understand this epistle more than we ever have before. Ask the Holy Spirit to enable you to believe it, and to obey it. Let us approach our studies with a sense of our complete dependence upon the Holy Spirit. None of us can get the true spiritual meaning of the epistle unless the Holy Spirit give us understanding. He can make this the most delightful time of blessing we have ever had.

Some of you may remember when I have taught Ephesians before. I mentioned at that time what Dwight L. Moody said when he was asked what was the greatest spiritual experience of his life. He, as I think most of you know, was greatly used of God in the last century here in America and also overseas for the salvation of many, many people. But this was the answer he gave to that question: HIS GREATEST SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE WAS DURING THE MONTH WHEN HE READ THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS FORTY-SEVEN TIMES!

What blessings we miss because we do not read the Word of God more than we do! We find time to read other things. Or perhaps in this day it would be better to say that many people do not read anything, or if they do, what they read may be nothing more than trash. But even if your reading is the best of the world's literature (and there are many wonderful books in this world of ours), yet nothing will begin to compare with the Word of God, and in the Word, nothing is better than this epistle of Paul to the Ephesians.

A. T. Robertson wrote with his comments on this book that "Paul has written nothing more profound than chapter 1 to 3 of Ephesians." And another commentator (Stalker, quoted by Robertson, IV, 515) termed those chapters as "the profoundest thing ever written" (Ibid.).

So we have a great spiritual feast ahead of us. Let us pray

for eyes to see and ears to hear and hearts to understand the wonderful truths we will be considering together. So your part will be to pray and read, and to pray and memorize--and just keep that up as you are able to while we consider this great epistle of the NT.

The Epistle has two main divisions--and they are easy to remember:

- 1) The doctrinal section--chapters 1-3.
- 2) The practical section--chapters 4-6.

However, the last section, the practical, really has two parts:

- 1) Concerning our walk (3:1-6:9).
- 2) Concerning our warfare (6:10-20). The remainder is the conclusion.

And since the first 3 chapters tell us the the riches we have in Christ, one commentator has used the three words to describe the message of the book:

- 1) The wealth--in chapters 1-3.
- 2) The walk-- in chapters 4, 5, and 6 down through v. 9.
- 3) The warfare--in chapter 6:10 to the end.

I have found these three words very helpful in giving me a brief overview of the entire epistle. I hope it will help you especially in getting acquainted with the epistle.

You could also use the words (and this is my outline:

- 1) The creed.
- 2) The conduct.
- 3) The conflict.

But enough about reading and enough about outlines for now. We want to get to verses 2 and 3 of chapter 1.

Verse 2 is a prayer--an intercessory prayer. Verse 3 is also the beginning of a prayer (which goes all of the way down through the 14th verse), but a particular kind of prayer--praise to God. Verse 2 expresses what every child of God needs every day. Verse 3 expresses what every child of God needs to do ever day. Verse 2 tells what we need to receive from God; verse 3 tells us what we are to offer to God.

Let us look at:

#### I. THE PRAYER (Eph. 1:2).

This is the most repeated prayer in the NT. You will find it in one form or another 15 times in the NT, and several other times with just "grace" by itself, or "peace" by itself, or both with the addition of "mercy."



Many think of it only as a salutation, or a greeting. But if you think about it for a moment, you realize that it has to be a prayer.

Believers greeted each other this way. As in this epistle, it was used as a salutation in letters, and it was a part of the way people prayed for each other.

"Grace" and "peace" are not only two of the most used words in the Bible, but also two of the richest and most meaningful for us as the children of God. Regardless of who we are, how old we are, how mature or immature we are, regardless of what our circumstances may be, we all stand in daily need of "grace" and "peace"!

#### A. "Grace."

This word describes the basis on which we have been saved. Cf. Eph. 2:8, 9. It means that God, instead of giving us what we deserve, has given us what we could never deserve, or pay for. We deserve hell. He has given us forgiveness, eternal life, and the certain promise that some day we will be in heaven.

But "grace" also expresses our continuing need for the help of God--the undeserved, but much-needed help. Every day we need God's help in our lives, and we need it in many ways. We need "grace" to strengthen us when we are weak, to keep us faithful when we are ready to give up, to encourage us when we are depressed, to keep us content when we are tempted by the things of the world, to give us victory when we are tried by Satan, to make us obedient when we are rebellious in heart, to give us patience when we are suffering, to give us forgiveness when we have sinned, to enable us to die as the people of God when the hour of death comes. Have I missed anything? I am sure I have, but that will give you an idea at least of how much we need the grace of God. God by His grace does all of that, and more, for us.

But what about:

#### B. "Peace."

"Peace" results from "grace." "Peace" is inner quietness of heart. It means rest where there has been turmoil. It usually passes understanding (see Phil. 4:6) because we can have "peace" when according to our circumstances there is no reason why we should be at peace. None of us goes very far into our day before something happens to upset us.

We all need "grace," and we all need "peace"--ALWAYS!  
 Paul prayed for the Thessalonians:  
 Now the Lord of peace himself  
 give you peace always by all means.  
 The Lord be with you all (2 Thess. 3:16).

But where does this "grace" and "peace" come from?

C. The source: "from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

There is so much that could be said about these two phrases (repeat), but let me point out two things:

1. If our needed "grace" and "peace" are "from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ," we never need to worry about the source drying up! The supply is inexhaustible!
2. Notice the word, "our"--God is "our Father." This means that He loves me so much that He will never turn me down.

Do those of you who memorized the Sermon on the Mount remember what the Lord said about this?

Ask, and it shall be given you;  
 seek, and yet shall find;  
 knock, . . .

For every one that asketh receiveth;  
 and he that seeketh findeth,

. . .  
 Or what man is there of you,  
 whom if his son ask bread,  
 will he give him a stone?  
 Or if he ask a fish,  
 will he give him a serpent?

And then we come to this statement:

If ye then, being evil,  
 know how to give good gifts  
 unto your children,  
 How much more shall your Father  
 which is in heaven  
 give good things to them that ask him?  
 (Matt. 7:7-11).

When we need "grace," and when we need "peace,"  
 "our Father" will not turn us down.

But now let us look at:

II. THE PRAISE (Eph. 1:3).

"Our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" are continually giving us blessings, materially, physically, spiritually. What can we give to Them? We are utterly dependent upon Them, but they are not dependent upon us, or anyone else!

He blesses us with His gifts; we bless Him with our words, and with our lives.

Verse 2 has already given us two reasons for praising "God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ," but we are going to see many, many more in verses 4 through 14. But let us notice here the grand, general reason. It is not because of what They will do for us, but because of what they have already done! They have

blessed us with all spiritual blessings  
in heavenly places in Christ.

We bless them Who have blessed us. We have reasons, like everyone else, to bless God and Christ for our material blessings. For our physical blessings---for life itself. But only those of us who know God as our heavenly Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, can thank Them for the "spiritual blessings" that we now have "in heavenly places in Christ."

Notice here that Paul spoke of the Lord Jesus Christ as "our Lord Jesus Christ." "Our Father . . . our Lord Jesus Christ." What more could we ask.

What spiritual blessings do we have? We have them "all." What are they? We will see what some of them are in verses 4 through 14. But the point that Paul was making is that we have them, and we have them ALL. Nothing can be added; nothing needs to be added.

Why are they called "spiritual blessings"? And why did Paul say, "In heavenly places." And why did he say, "In Christ."

Let me try to answer those questions for you.

They are "spiritual blessings" for at least two reasons--maybe more:

- 1) They are ministered to us by the Holy Spirit. If it were not for the work of the Holy Spirit, we would not have any of them!
- 2) They are the blessings which have to do with our salvation. We are not talking about material blessings that we can see; we are talking about blessings which we cannot see, but which are more lasting than the blessings we can see. Pity the person who is happy that he has so much physically and materially, but has nothing spiritually.

What did Paul mean by in the heavenlies, or "in heavenly places"? (We have this four more times in the epistle: 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12.)

Expositors and commentators have expressed themselves in many different ways concerning the meaning of this expression, and probably none of us fully understand what it means. But let me tell you at least in part what I believe it means.

- 1) It speaks of the nature of these blessings; they are not earthly, but heavenly. They originated in heaven, not on earth.
- 2) They are secured for us in heaven. One OT verse which expresses the truth that we have here is Psa. 119:89:  
                                   Forever, O Lord,  
                                   thy word is settled in heaven.  
 Nothing that happens here on earth can endanger or rob us of those spiritual blessings that we have in Christ. They are secured for us in heaven. As Isaiah said, ". . . but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Isa. 40:8).
- 3) It speaks of the position that we have right now. Christ is in the heavenlies, and we are there in Him. God looks upon the work of salvation as already completed.

Finally, why "in Christ"?

"In heavenly places in Christ" go together. We would have none of these blessings if it were not for "our Lord Jesus Christ." He took your place, and mine. He died in our stead. He bore our sins. The victory that was His over sin and death and hell and the grace is our victory, too. And we are now "in Christ." God never sees us apart from Him. We could not put ourselves there. We do not fully understand what it means. But God put us there, and we will be there forever!

Concl: So you can see that Paul was not only blessing God for all that he had in Christ, but he was blessing God that those blessings were his "in Christ" FOREVER, and there was not, there is not, the slightest possibility that any child of God could ever lose them. They are secured for us in heaven in Christ.

But you might say, what are those blessings? We are going to be learning more about them in the weeks ahead, but let me answer your question by point ahead to just one verse: verse 7. Salvation includes many things, but one of them is the forgiveness of our sins. Do you have that? If not, you can have it by turning to Christ this morning, and trusting Him to save you. And there is no other way to be forgiven.

THE GOOD PLEASURE OF GOD'S WILL  
Ephesians 1:4-6

Intro: We come today to consider the first of the "spiritual blessings" which all Christians have in Christ. While Paul indicated that we all have "all" of the "spiritual blessings," yet he does not mention all of them here--just some of them. The epistle to the Ephesians would have been a much longer book if Paul had listed them all.

Remember that these are "spiritual blessings." He is not concerned here with the material blessings that the Lord gives us (such as our homes, our clothing, our food, and the earthly possessions that we have), nor the physical blessings (such as our health--the ability to think, see, hear, smell, talk, walk, work, etc.), but the "spiritual blessings." These are the most important of all blessings. They are the blessings that we will never lose. They are the blessings that are a part of our salvation. If you read down the list, you will see that Paul was speaking about election, sonship, redemption, the forgiveness of our sins, our inheritance, our perfection, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. We all have all of these, and, as I have said, this is not all that Paul could have mentioned. And they are ours because, and only because, of our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. The person who has just been saved has all that the most mature Christian has. The new-born child of God will not know them as well, nor enjoy them as much, as the mature saint, but both have the same "spiritual blessings . . . in Christ."

Now before we think about election, and then go on to sonship, I want to point out four things which I hope will help us since, when we talk about election, we are dealing with a subject about which there has always been a great deal of argument among the people of God.

Here are the four things:

- 1) Note that Paul mentioned these "blessings" in a passage which is devoted to praising God. Therefore, if you want to get the greatest benefit from knowing this doctrine, do not let it become with you a subject for controversy, but let it be high on your list for praise.
- 2) The importance of these blessings is seen in the fact that they come first and second on the list--election being first. I will point out why that is the case in just a moment.
- 3) These blessings are "according to the good pleasure of" God's "will." See v. 5b. If it is God's will, it has to be good, and it has to be right! So, although it might not be according to our thinking, it is the will of God. In other words, when we consider salvation, we must start with God.

- 4) The last thing is that this is all "to the praise of the glory of" God's "grace." See v. 6. This statement tells us two important things about salvation: one, that salvation is designed for the glory of God, and, two, that it is by grace—not merited in any way by any child of God.

I could have mentioned these things last (and I will emphasize them again), but I wanted you to see them first to disarm you in case you have been prejudiced against these truths. Let us look at these verse with open hearts.

The first thing that we have is:

I. THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION (Eph. 1:4).

This is the foundational truth of salvation: divine election. If we get this straight at the beginning, we will be off to a good start in understanding the whole doctrine of salvation.

Paul was teaching here that "before the foundation of the world," that is, before creation, before Adam and Eve were created, God sovereignly chose those who would be saved.

It was very necessary that God take an active role in the salvation of sinners because sin had rendered all men slaves to their sin and rebels against God. Paul was telling the Ephesian saints (and all other saints) that, as John Eadie has expressed it, "if God had not chosen them, they would never have chosen God" (p. 19).

God's choice of certain sinners to be saved necessarily involved all that was necessary to see that purpose fulfilled. Since men will not seek God, God seeks those whom He has appointed for salvation. He convicts them of their sin. He draws them by His grace. He regenerates them, and imparts to them the ability to believe in Christ.

God did not make His choice on the basis of merit. He did not make His choice on the basis of His ability to look ahead and know who would believe because no one would believe if it were not for the work of God in drawing sinners to Christ. Thus evangelism is not a work whereby we try to win as many people as we possibly can to Christ. Evangelism is the work of preaching the Gospel; it is in God's hands as to how and when and where and with whom His Word will be used in saving sinners. Long ago Isaiah gave the people of Judah a very important promise from God, and it still is true today. Listen to what God said to Isaiah:

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth;

it shall not return unto me void,  
 but it shall accomplish that which I please,  
 and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it  
 (Isa. 55:11).

Therefore, people who argue against election are arguing against the sovereignty of God in salvation. They are arguing against the total ruin of man by sin. They are saying that man's will is free, free to turn to God any time he decides to turn to God, instead of seeing that man has been hopelessly bound and depraved and blinded and at enmity with God.

Some say about this verse that Paul was just talking about the apostles when he wrote this because he said "we" and "us" until he got down to v. 13, and then he started to say "ye" and "your."

However, if that is true, then we have to give up, by the same argument sonship, redemption, forgiveness, and every other blessing mentioned in vv. 4-12. Would you agree with that?

Others say that the verse says that we are chosen to be "holy and without blame," but not chosen to be saved. But this does not settle anything. One writer has said that many who imagine that they have explained away a difficulty by denying one phase of the doctrine, have only achieved the feat of shifting that difficulty into another position (Eadie, p. 26).

This can be quickly seen when we realize that if God has chosen us to be "holy and without blame," and that certain ones are set apart for that purpose, how can that be apart from salvation. And is this not the whole purpose of salvation--that we would be like our Lord who is holy? So with an argument like that we are back where we were before.

In addition, this is not the only passage that speaks of election, relating it to salvation. Look, for example, at 2 Thess. 2:13, 14:

But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you,  
 brethren beloved of the Lord,  
 because God hath from the beginning  
 chosen you to salvation  
 through sanctification of the Spirit  
 and belief of the truth:  
 Whereunto he called you by our gospel,  
 to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I say very emphatically that no person can deny the doctrine of election unto salvation without denying a doctrine that is clearly taught in Scripture.

God had the right to do nothing about salvation, or He could provide salvation in whatever way was necessary. That is what He has done. Obviously there are problems to our way of thinking, but God does not think the way we do. And until we accept that fact we are going to be incline to reject any part of Scripture which does not agree with us.

I plead with you, dear Christian, do not reject this great truth. It is a truth, as I have already pointed out, which is the expression of God's good pleasure, and it is a truth designed to meet the needs of sinners and to glorify God. So let us fall before the Lord in adoration and praise that He has chosen us. You do not find people waiting at the doors of our churches, wanting to be saved. The Lord promised that anyone who desires to be saved can be saved, but whenever you find a person who wants to be saved, you can be sure that God has been working in his heart. And He savingly works only in the hearts of those who were "chosen" for salvation before the foundation of the world.

I repeat, let us follow the Apostle Paul in making this one of the greatest themes of our praise to God.

But let us go on to verse 5.

## II. SONSHIP (Eph. 1:5).

The expression used in the KJV is "the adoption of children." The NKJV is more accurate when it translates the Greek, "to adoption as sons." The NASB says the same. The NIV complicates the truth here by the translation, "to be adopted as his sons."

Let me ask those of you who are Christians a question: How did you get into the family of God--by adoption, or by birth? Is that question not answered by John 1:12, 13?

But as many as received him (Christ),  
to them gave he power to become  
the sons (Gk: children) of God,  
even to them that believe on his name:  
**which were born**, not of blood,  
nor of the will of the flesh,  
nor of the will of man,  
**but of God.**

There is nothing wrong with being adopted. If you have been adopted into a family, you certainly can praise the Lord for His goodness to you in giving you a family that will treat you and love you like their very own. You are their very own.



But Paul was not saying that we have been adopted into the family of God. He was making a special point here about the place of privilege that we all have in the family of God. It is this: We have been placed in the family of God with all of the rights and privileges of sons! As Paul pointed out so well in Galatians, we have a much more honored place in Christ today than the people of God had under the Law in the OT. And, while we have members in the family of God who are in all stages of maturity, yet as far as our privileges, our position, in the family of God, we all stand on the same ground. As family members, we are all SONS! Our responsibilities in the family of God may differ, but not our sonship!

Paul wrote in Rom. 8:15,

For ye have not received  
the spirit of bondage again to fear;  
but ye have received the Spirit of adoption,  
whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

The word for "adoption" in the Gk is the same that Paul used in Eph. 1:5. It should be translated, sonship. We have been born again by the Holy Spirit into the family of God.

Is this not amazing truth? God did not have to make us members of His family in order to take us to heaven. But this is what He did! And He did it for the same reason that He has chosen us to be saved: it was because of His great love for us. It was "according to the good pleasure of his will." Our salvation is not primarily the expression of our wills, but of God's will! He saved us because He loved us. He saved us because He wanted us. He sought us because it was His will to save us, and saving us He made us members of His family.

Before I close I must call your attention to two expressions in our text that are extremely important. Let us call them:

### III. TWO KEY EXPRESSIONS.

The first has to do:

#### A. With Christ.

It is stated in three different ways:

1. "In him" (v. 4).
2. "By Jesus Christ" (v. 5).
3. "In the beloved" (v. 6).

All of the blessings of salvation which you and I enjoy are our, and only ours, because of our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what Paul said in v. 3, and that is what he continued to emphasize in all three of the verses of our text today. We have all in Him; we have nothing apart from Him. We were chosen in Christ. We have become members of God's family by Jesus Christ.

And before I mention Christ as "the beloved" I must turn to that other expression that I mentioned:

B. "His grace" (v. 6).

Why do you and I as Christians have all of these spiritual blessings? Why were we chosen by God before the foundation of the world? Why can we rightly claim to be members of God's family--by birth? There is only one reason, and it is expressed in that little five-letter word: G-R-A-C-E.

And here is where we must refer to Christ, "the beloved" One. God has freely bestowed all of these blessing upon us "in the beloved." We do not get any of the credit at all.

Salvation is all of grace! There is no other way that God could have blessed us with salvation. We are just as undeserving as those who will never be saved. The difference is that God pre-determined, "predestined," that we would be His, and He has manifested His love and grace toward us, lavishing salvation upon us in Christ.

Concl: Augustus Toplady, an English clergyman who lived back in the 1700's, had a special gift for expressing in poetic form the great doctrines of Scripture. One of them which is in our hymnal, #95, expresses beautifully what I have been trying to teach you this morning. I want to close by reading the three stanzas of that hymn:

How vast the benefits divine  
Which we in Christ possess!  
We are redeemed from guilt and shame  
And called to holiness.  
But not for works which we have done,  
Or shall hereafter do,  
Hath God decreed on sinful men  
Salvation to bestow.

The glory, Lord, from first to last,  
Is due to thee alone;

Aught to ourselves we dare not take,  
 Or rob thee of thy crown.  
 Our glorious Surety undertook  
 To satisfy for man,  
 And grace was given us in him  
 Before the world began.

This is thy will, that in thy love  
 We ever should abide;  
 That earth and hell should not prevail  
 To turn thy word aside.  
 Not one of all the chosen race  
 But shall to heav'n attain,  
 Partake on earth the purposed grace  
 And then with Jesus reign.

You might be saying if Christ is not now your Saviour, "How can I know if I am one of the chosen ones?"

My answer to that is this: That is not your problem. If you are to be saved, you are going to be saved by putting your faith in Christ Who died for sinners. And the Lord promised that He would not turn away any who come to Him. If you trust in Christ today, you will be saved. I have no hesitation in preaching that "whosoever believeth in him" (Christ) will "not perish, but have everlasting life." But, as I preach that, I know that no one comes except those who have been drawn to Christ by the Father. The very fact that you are here today listening to these Gospel truths is evidence of the work of God in your heart. And so I say to you who are without Christ, "Come to Christ now. Turn to Him in your heart. Believe that He will save you if you trust in Him. And in the days ahead, as you learn more about salvation, you will see more clearly than ever that it was not you who sought the Lord, but He was seeking you, and calling you, and so you came to Him and trusted Him, and He saved you. Oh, come to Him now.

THE SONS OF GOD  
Ephesians 1:5, 6

Intro: Anyone who reads Ephesians, chapter 1, carefully and thoughtfully, should not be able to miss the fact that salvation is of the Lord. He is the One Who determined that there would be salvation. He is the One Who determined who would be saved. He is the One Who decreed the relationship that saved people would have to Himself. He is the One Who chose the Saviour, and who declared what the Saviour would have to do in order for the elect to be saved.

It is never to any man's credit that he is saved; it is all to the glory of God! Salvation is the expression of God's will. And, because salvation is all of God, it cannot fail. It is not possible that any who were chosen by God before the foundation of the world would fail to be saved. The Lord Jesus said,

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me;  
and him that cometh to me I will not cast out  
(John 6:37).

Those whom the Father has given to His Son are the elect. They will without a single exception come to Christ, and they are not saved until they do. And the eternal nature of our salvation is seen in the fact that our Lord promised that He will never cast them out. There will be times when every believer will sin and displease the Lord, but He will never cast away those who were chosen by the Father and drawn to Christ. While the death of Christ is of infinite value, when He died on the Cross, He died for the specific purpose of saving those who are the elect of God. We do not know who is going to be saved, and who is not. So we preach the Gospel to every creature, knowing that, as we do, the Lord will use His Word to bring His chosen ones to Himself. If you have trusted Christ as your Saviour, your election of God becomes evident by that expression of faith in Him.

So, regardless of the problems that stand in the way of getting the Gospel out to the world, we can be sure that the preaching of the Gospel will not fail. God will accomplish His purposes; we can be sure of that. And that should be one of greatest encouragements in telling others about the Lord Jesus Christ. God will not fail to accomplish what He determined to do before the foundation of the world.

Last Sunday we considered together that wonderful doctrine of election. That is what we have in verse 4. (Read.)

Today we go on to the doctrine of sonship in verses 5 and 6. It seems that the last words of verse 5, and all of verse 6 go with verse 4 as well as with the first part of verse 5. (Read.)

We have three things in these two verses:

- 1) The decree of God (v. 5a).
- 2) The nature of the decree (v. 5).
- 3) The purpose of the decree (v. 6).

I. THE DECREE OF GOD (Eph. 1:5a): "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself."

Why do I speak of this statement as THE DECREE OF GOD?

It is because of this verb, "having predestinated." The verb actually means to determine beforehand (EGT, Vol. III, p. 251). Many of the older translations, such as Wycliffe's and Tyndale's, used the word foreordained. So this is what was determined by God, decreed by God, before the foundation of the world.

What God decrees will inevitably come to pass. There is no possibility that His decrees will fail, or even that they will be changed. Paul was not writing here about something that was determined by the patriarchs, or by the great men of God in the OT, nor even by the OT prophets. This is not a truth that was determined by angels. This was determined by God Himself!

But now we need to ask, What was determined by Him?

And so my second point is:

II. THE NATURE OF THE DECREE OF GOD (Eph. 1:5).

When you read verse 5 with verse 4 you will see that this decree preceded the choice of those who were to be saved. He had predestined His people "unto the adoption of children," and then He chose those who would enjoy this unique relationship to God. The two doctrines of election and sonship were not established a long time apart (expressed in human terms), but when God ordered that there would be salvation, He, first of all, determined that salvation would include sonship, and this He did by His eternal, unchangeable decree. This shows us the nature, the essence of the decree.

Notice that I am using the word sonship instead of "the adoption of children."

The word that Paul used here means lit. son-placing. God decreed that those who were saved would be brought into His family as sons!

This idea may be a little difficult for you to grasp at the beginning if you have never considered the distinction

which the NT makes in some places between being a child of God, as compared with being a son of God.

All of us, when we were saved, were born into God's family as His children. As children we are to grow to maturity in Christ. But this is not what Paul was talking about in this passage. Instead, as the passage in Galatians 4 shows, the difference between being children and being sons is the difference between being in the family of God before Christ died as compared with being in the family of God after Christ died.

The difference can best be illustrated for us when we consider our own childhood, and compare that with the changes which took place when we were recognized by the law as being "of age." When I was a young man, you were legally "of age" when you were 21. When I reached that age I could vote. I could own property. I did not have to get my father's signature on a document to make it legal. I could inherit money. I was responsible for myself in the eyes of the law.

In Paul's day, even among the Gentiles, the time of transition from being a child to being a full-fledged son was set by the father. When a male child, in particular, reached that age, he could even claim his inheritance if his father was willing for him to have it. He did not have to wait until one or both of his parents died. So their system was different from ours, but the same idea was there.

Even today the Jews have their Bar Mitzvah. This is when a boy in a family has reached the age of responsibility, and he is no longer considered a child, but a son. This is what Paul had in mind in Galatians 4.

But Paul was using this truth in Galatians to emphasize another point of doctrine with which we need to be concerned about. Paul was saying that all of the people of God are in the family of God, whether they lived in OT times, or NT times. But those who lived under the Mosaic Law were never more than children as far as their privileges were concerned. It was not until Christ came and died that every person who was saved came into the family of God, not as minor children, but as full-fledged sons, with all of privileges which go with that position.

This does not mean that the people of God in the OT were any the less godly than the people of God have been since Christ died. In some instances they may have been more godly than we are. But they did not enjoy the privileges that we enjoy today.

One difference between then and now can be seen when we consider the subject of the priesthood. In the OT there were priests through whom the people were to approach God. Today we are all priests. The veil in the temple has been rent, and we enter into God's presence by this "new and living way" (Heb. 10:20).

Another difference between then and now is to be seen in the work of the Holy Spirit. There are certain works of the Holy Spirit that are mentioned in the NT that are never mentioned in the OT. According to our Lord's words in John 14 He indicated that under the Law the Holy Spirit had been "with" them; under grace He would be "in" them, and His indwelling would be permanent. You can see this in John 14, verses 16 and 17.

The salvation of the OT saints was the same salvation, but the fullness of that salvation was not experienced until after the death and resurrection of Christ. This was one of the strong arguments that Paul presented to the Galatian churches as a safeguard against going back to live under the Law. To do so would be like a son in a family after he has become "of age" wanting to go back home to live as "a minor" again. Only after the death of Christ could verse 3 of this first chapter of Ephesians have been written. That is the reason that Paul wrote here that our sonship was "by Jesus Christ to himself," that is, to God! (Repeat the verse.)

SO THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF ADOPTION DOES NOT MEAN THAT WE HAVE BEEN ADOPTED INTO THE FAMILY OF GOD. WE HAVE BEEN BORN INTO HIS FAMILY. WE HAVE GOD'S LIFE IN US. ADOPTION IS NOT ACTUALLY A GOOD WORD TO USE CONCERNING OUR PLACE IN THE FAMILY OF GOD. WE HAVE BEEN PUT INTO GOD'S FAMILY AS ADULT SONS, WITH ALL OF THE PRIVILEGES OF SONSHIP GIVEN TO US.

I hope this is clear to you. This is a very important point for each one of us to understand, especially because it seems that there are always those who are trying to bring us back under the Law.

One other thing needs to be said about THE NATURE OF THIS DECREE. It is that this was "according to the good pleasure of his will"—the will of God. God's decrees are, of course, the expression of His will, but it is interesting to see in this statement those words, "the good pleasure of his will."

"Good pleasure" is the translation of one word in the Greek. It is used three times in the Gospels (Matt. 11:26; Luke 2:14; 10:21), six times in Paul's epistles

(Rom. 10:1; Eph. 1:5, 9; Phil. 1:15; 2:13; 2 Thess. 1:11), and that is all. I am speaking now of the noun. The word as a verb is found several other times in the NT. Salmond pointed out (EGT, III, p. 252) that this is a distinctly Biblical word. It is not used in secular Greek. It speaks of that which delights the heart of God, that which gives Him the greatest pleasure, plus the fact that He could not really be satisfied in our salvation with anything less than this!

Perhaps as I have been speaking of the meaning of this word, your thoughts have gone to the words which the Father spoke from heaven when the Lord Jesus was baptized. He said,

This is my beloved Son,  
in whom I am well pleased (Matt. 3:17).

How amazing it is that God the Father would use words with the same root to describe His delight in His Son, and His delight in making us His sons! When you see this, you can understand in part why Paul would be praising God in this section for the spiritual blessings that we have in Christ. Sometime when you are inclined to be "down," let your heart meditate on those wonderful words, "the good pleasure of his will."

But let me go on to speak of my third point:

### III. THE PURPOSE OF THE DECREE (Eph. 1:6).

Of course it was God's purpose by this decree that we should be in His family as sons, but when I speak of THE PURPOSE I have in mind, the purpose that God had in this with respect to Himself.

There are some characteristics of verses 3 through 14 that are similar to the OT Psalms. Many, many times in the Psalms we are exhorted to bless, or to praise, God. And then the things for which we are to bless God are often mentioned in the Psalms--like Paul has done here.

But we also have noticed in reading the Psalms that they often have a refrain--just as we do in many of our hymns. Paul has a refrain in this passage that appears three times: in vv. 6, 12, 14.

All of the blessings that we have in Christ, blessings so marvelous that we can never understand them fully, blessings which we can never lose--all of them are ours because of the amazing grace of God. They cannot be purchased. We cannot earn them. There is not one of them that we deserve. But they are ours "to the praise of the glory of his grace." Grace means that God, instead of



giving us what we deserve, has given us what we could never deserve. We deserve judgment; He has forgiven us. We deserve to be cast forever from His presence; He has drawn us to Himself, and has made us His sons. And these are just the beginning of the blessings. How glorious is His grace! And we should never stop praising Him for all that He has done for us in Christ.

The last part of this sixth verse should read, "which he has freely bestowed upon us in the Beloved One." We do not have any of these "spiritual blessings" because of anything in ourselves; they are all ours forever because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us by His death and resurrection.

Concl: Could I close in any better way than to give you the words of that hymn written over 200 years ago by Philip Doddridge? Listen to what he wrote about the grace of God.

Grace! 'tis a charming sound,  
Harmonious to the ear;  
Heav'n with the echo shall resound,  
And all the earth shall hear.

Grace first contrived a way  
to save rebellious man,  
And all the steps that grace display  
Which drew the wondrous plan.

Grace taught my wond'ring feet  
To tread the heav'nly road  
And new supplies each hour I meet  
While pressing on to God.

Grace all the work shall crown  
Through everlasting days;  
It lays in heav'n the topmost stone,  
And well deserves the praise.

If you are without Christ today, grace means that you can be saved. Perhaps you would say, "But you do not know the awful things that I have done." I say to you, "I do not need to know them. God knows them. God knows that you have committed more sins than you think you have. He sees you utterly unworthy. But when you are talking about grace, you do not have to be concerned about merit. Come to Him. Trust in Him. There is no other Saviour. The blessings of salvation are yours as a gift because He paid the terrible price by His death to provide them for you. May God enable you to turn from your sins, and to turn to Christ before you leave here today."

REDEEMED AND FORGIVEN  
Ephesians 1:7

Intro: We have spent the last three Sundays considering the "spiritual blessings" that we have in Christ.

It is interesting to note the order in which the Apostle Paul listed the "blessings" that he mentioned here.

In verses 4-6 he went back "before the foundation of the world" to mention two things which God did before creation concerning our salvation:

- 1) He chose us in Christ for salvation, and that, in that salvation "we should be holy and without blame before him." That is the first thing that Paul mentioned.

The second is:

- 2) We were "predestinated" to be sons in the family of God.

Neither of these blessings are ours because we deserved them in any way, but they are ours because of the love of God, because of the grace of God, and because they are the expression of God's will. And these blessings, and "all" of the rest of them are for "the praise of the glory of his grace" which God has freely and abundantly bestowed upon us "in the beloved" One--our Lord Jesus Christ. We have "all" in Christ; we have nothing apart from Christ.

In our text for today Paul emphasized what we presently "have" in Christ. See verse 7. This does not mean that the other "blessings" are not ours now, but it does mean that, while we are going to enter more fully into the possession and enjoyment of some of the other blessings, the blessings mentioned in verse 7 are ours right to enjoy: "redemption" and "the forgiveness of sins."

So Paul mentioned first, the past. Secondly, the present. And then starting with verse 8 and going through verse 12 he spoke specifically about the future.

He was speaking of the future when he wrote in verse 10 about "the dispensation of the fulness of times," and then went on to speak of our "inheritance."

Finally, in verses 13 and 14, to show that our inheritance is absolutely secure, Paul mentioned the work of the Holy Spirit by Whom we have been "sealed" in Christ "until the redemption of the purchased possession." Paul came back to this in Eph. 4:30. (Read.)

I hope that that brief survey of these 12 verses from verse 3 to verse 14 will help you to see what the Apostle Paul was doing. I repeat what I have been saying since we started with verse 3, Paul was not trying to be exhaustive, that is, trying to mention everything that we have in Christ. No, he was being selective, beginning with the past, coming up to the present, looking ahead into the future, and then showing how the Holy Spirit has added His guarantee to the work of the Father and the work of the Son to strengthen our faith in believing that nothing can ever happen that would cause God's work of salvation to fail!

Now let us look today at THE PRESENT--not at what we are to do, but at what "we have."

Let me point out to you that in verse 7 we have a parallelism. A parallelism in literature, in writing, means that you have two statements side by side which resemble each other. They are similar. They both mean essentially the same thing, but they are expressed in different words to bring out separate ideas so that our understanding of the thought will be made clearer.

The first statement is: "In whom we have redemption through his blood."

The second and parallel statement is: "The forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace."

"In whom we have" goes with both statements. In Christ "we have" both "redemption" and "the forgiveness of sins." They are parallel expressions. They mean essentially the same thing. You cannot be redeemed without being forgiven.

In the same way, "through his blood" and "according to the riches of his grace" are parallel. Christ's blood and God's grace go hand in hand. We could never claim the blood of Christ apart from the grace of God, and, on the other hand, the grace of God is never offered to us except on the basis of the blood of Christ.

So Paul was telling the Ephesians that in and through Christ they had been redeemed. But he wanted them to understand that redemption meant that they had been totally and permanently forgiven of their sins through that redemption. If we are redeemed, we are forgiven. If we are forgiven, we are redeemed. It is very important to see the inseparable link between redemption and forgiveness.

Now let us look at verse 7 a little more closely.

First we have:

## I. A SPECIAL PERSON: "In whom."

I call your attention to the words, "In whom." To whom was Paul referring?

If you back up to verse 6, you will see at the end of that verse he had mentioned "the beloved." God has bestowed His grace upon us "in the beloved," that is, Christ.

In fact, if you go back to verses 5 and 4 and 3, you will see that all that God has done for us He has done for us in Christ. "All" of our "spiritual blessings" come to us "in Christ." And that means ALL! Even the "grace . . . and peace" Paul prayed for in verse 2 not only come "from God our Father," but also "from the Lord Jesus Christ."

Who is He?

He is "the beloved" One. He is the Son of God. He became God manifest in the flesh--the God-man. He is our Saviour. He is our Redeemer. He is our great High Priest. He is "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." He is our Lord.

Oh, how thankful we should be for Him! Let me repeat: Every spiritual blessing you and I have, we have in Christ and because of Christ and through Christ. We have "all" in Him. But without Him we would not have a single one of those blessings. If we are without Christ, we are without God, and if we are without God, we are without hope and still in our sins. You cannot worship God unless you worship Christ, and worship God through Christ. Do not let anyone talk to you about God unless at the same time they are referring all to the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is no one, absolutely no one, who can compare with Him. He is the most special Person!

## II. A PRESENT POSSESSION: "We have."

For Paul to be able to write this meant that he had complete assurance of his salvation. He did not say only that we will have, or we hope to have, or we may have, but he said, "We HAVE."

You and I came into the possession of these "spiritual gifts" when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle John said in 1 John 5:12, "He that hath the Son hath life . . ." Our Lord said in the words recorded for us in John 5:24,

Verily, verily, I say unto you,  
He that heareth my word,

and believeth on him that sent me,  
hath everlasting life,  
and shall not come into condemnation;  
but is **passed** from death unto life.

If you "have" Christ, you "have redemption through his blood"; if you "have" Christ, you "have . . . "the forgiveness of" your "sins." There is no better time nor place than here and now to make sure that Jesus Christ is your Saviour. If you wait until you die, you will have waited too long. Today is the day of salvation.

← III. A PRICELESS GIFT: "Redemption through his blood."

The Apostle Peter wrote in 1 Pet. 1:18, 19,  
Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed  
with corruptible things, as silver and gold,  
from your vain conversation received by tradition  
from your fathers;  
but with the precious blood of Christ,  
as of a lamb, without blemish and without spot.

Money could not buy what was purchased for us "with the precious blood of Christ." The price placed on our redemption by God the Father was "the precious blood of Christ." It was "precious blood" because it was His, but it was also "precious blood" because no other sacrifice would have been sufficient to purchase our redemption.

← What does "redemption" mean? It means deliverance--deliverance from sin's guilt and sin's penalty. One writer (Salmond in the EGT) has said that "redemption" is a word which pictures sin as slavery and sinners as slaves. Because we are sinners, we are under judgment. Our sins demand that we die. That is our judgment before God. No one will escape that judgment except those who have been redeemed through the blood of Christ, through the death of Christ, through the Cross of Christ.

What did we do to deserve it? Nothing. We do not deserve it, and we never could. How is it ours? As a gift from God--the most priceless gift in all of the world. All of the money in all of the world could not buy a single spiritual blessing for the best person alive.

Isaac Watts wrote that great old hymn,

Not all the blood of beasts  
On Jewish altars slain,  
Could give the guilty conscience peace,  
Or wash away the stain:

But Christ, the heav'nly Lamb  
Takes all our sins away,  
A sacrifice of nobler name  
And richer blood than they.

Believing, we rejoice  
To see the curse remove;  
We bless the Lamb with cheerful voice,  
And sing his bleeding love.

But there is one more thought in that word "redemption" that I want to point out to you before we go on. It is this: God has redeemed us through the blood of Christ not only from sin's penalty, but He has redeemed us for Himself.

Long ago, the Lord said to Israel through the prophet Isaiah, anticipating the work of redemption which His Son would accomplish on the Cross,  
Fear not: for I have redeemed thee,  
I have called thee by thy name;  
thou art mine (Isa. 43:1b).

And so by the redeeming work of Christ we belong to the Lord. And, because we are His, we are to do His will and to spend our lives seeking to glorify Him.

Make sure today that your faith is in God's Redeemer, and not in any other.

#### IV. AN UNBELIEVABLE TRUTH: "The forgiveness of sins."

I have told you before about the person who said that the sweetest word in any language is the word, forgiven, especially when we are forgiven by God!

There is no question about our guilt. We are not only sinners by nature, but we are sinners by choice. We have all sinned--many, many times; over and over again. We are guilty before God. We deserve hell, not heaven. But we are forgiven! How could that be? It is all because of the death of Christ.

What does it mean to be forgiven? It means that we are released from all the charges that are against us. God no longer has any case against those who are in Christ. Christ took our penalty upon Himself, paid our debt, and we have been set free.

The word that Paul used for "sins" here not the common word, but is used to describe a wide variety of sins--sins of failing to do the right thing (omission), as well as

deliberate sins. It is used of those times when a person falls from a high level to a low level--perhaps as David did. And so it seems that Paul was saying here that, regardless of the nature of the sin, there is forgiveness in Christ.

That sounds too good to be true, doesn't it? But it is true--so true it is hard for us to take it all in. We still feel that there is something that we ought to do. But the person who feels that way does not understand my last point:

V. THE BASIS OF IT ALL: "According to the riches of his grace."

Last Sunday we were talking about "the glory of his grace"; today we are talking about "the riches of his grace." When we are talking about salvation, we can never get away from that word, "grace."

Grace means that I have no part in it. I will only come to Christ when I am drawn by the Father. I must seek repentance from the Lord. I must seek faith from the Lord. If I can contribute one thing, then salvation is not really of grace. But it is of grace, and not only grace, but "according to the riches of his grace." It not only took grace to save us, but infinite grace! "Riches" means that God's grace is inexhaustible. This opens the door to the chiefest of sinners.

Concl: There is a message here for everyone of us. I am speaking today to just two classes of people--those who are redeemed, and those who are not.

If you are redeemed, you know that it was because you were chosen in Christ long before you ever thought of choosing Him. If He had not chosen you, you would never have chosen Him. But He did chose you, sent Christ to die for you, called you by His grace, and drew you to His Son, enabling you to trust Him as your Saviour. And He has kept you ever since--and will keep you for all eternity.

If you are not redeemed, let me ask you to believe that you are here today by the providence of God. He brought you. He wanted you to hear this message. He has promised to save those who come to Him through Christ. Turn to Christ today. Put your trust in Him. You have no promise that you will ever have another day in which to trust in Christ. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved. And then you, too, will begin to understand the marvelous grace of God, and you will join us in praising Him for His marvelous grace in redeeming you from all of yours sins. Christ is the only Way.

THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S WILL IN SALVATION  
Ephesians 1:8-10

Intro: Those of you who were here last Sunday morning will remember that I pointed out to you the past, present, and future aspects of salvation which Paul emphasized in this great passage dealing with our salvation: Eph. 1:3-14:

- 1) With respect to the past, we were chosen, and we were predestined to be sons in the family of God. We learn this in verses 3-6.
- 2) With respect to the present, Paul emphasized that we are redeemed, and, being redeemed, we have been forgiven of our sins. We see that in verse 7.
- 3) From verse 8 through verse 12 Paul was concerned with the future. We see in these verses what lies ahead for us as the people of God. I am going to deal with one of these today, and then with the second next Sunday, the Lord willing.

Before I mention what these are, let me point out, just to complete what Paul was saying in these verses, that in verses 13 and 14 we see the absolute certainty that all of this will take place because all believers have been sealed by the Holy Spirit in Christ.

All that is mentioned here is presently ours, but the future aspect of salvation remains to be enjoyed. Paul has been very strong, however, throughout the passage in saying that what we have in salvation is (1) according to the will of God, and (2) according to the purpose of God. See v. 5b, v. 9, v. 11. And we all should know that whatever is the will of God, and whatever is according to the purpose of God, most certainly will come to pass. Paul was dealing with the work of salvation which is the work of a sovereign, omnipotent, eternal God Who cannot and will not fail to accomplish all that He has determined to do. There is real assurance for us just in knowing this.

This brings us to our text for today: Eph. 1:8-10. We are looking into that which is yet to come as far as our salvation is concerned--"that in the dispensation of the fulness of times . . ." And remember that although this is yet future, it is as certain to be take place as anything that we have already learned about in this passage on salvation--and I say that because it is a part of the sovereign, eternal purpose of God in salvation.

So, for the moment we are going to be occupied with prophecy. And I would not be able to say what I am going to say this morning if it had not been revealed to Paul for Paul to include in this book of Holy Scripture. And I would go a step farther: Paul could not have written what he wrote here if it had not been divinely revealed to him. So we have before us,



in a very real sense, the whole doctrine of revelation. The Bible is a revelation from God. It contains truth that we would have no access to unless God had revealed it. No amount of research could have given it to us. Cf. 1 Cor. 2:9, 10. This is the unique thing about the Bible. It is the Word of God.

And so in dealing with prophetic truth, truth which has to do with the future of our salvation, Paul mentioned in verse 8 that we have received:

#### I. A TWOFOLD GIFT (Eph. 1:8).

I am dealing with verses 8 through 10 today as a unit, but keep in mind that from the beginning of verse 3 to the end of verse 14 we have one continuous statement regarding salvation. There may be a period at the end of v. 6, and another at the end of v. 12, but the same theme runs through all twelve verses--the theme of salvation!

But let me get back to v. 8. What is the twofold gift? It is the gift of "all wisdom and prudence."

The verse means that God has caused to abound toward us all wisdom and prudence. Paul was not talking about the wisdom and prudence of God, but the wisdom and prudence that God has given to us. Actually the word that is translated "prudence" is never used in Scripture of God. It is a gift which God bestows upon man--redeemed man. Notice the words, "toward us," i.e., toward us who are redeemed and forgiven, those of us who are sons of God, those of us who have been chosen by God for salvation. This is not a gift which all people have. It belongs only to the people of God, but be sure to notice that it belongs to all of the people of God. So all of us who know the Lord have this special TWOFOLD GIFT: "all wisdom and prudence.

What is the difference between "wisdom and prudence"?

"Wisdom" is the ability to understand the truth of God. As believers we have that capacity. Before we were saved, the Bible was a closed Book to us. Now we understand it. "All wisdom" does not mean that we know it all, but it does mean that we have the capacity to know it all. No part of the Word of God is withheld from us. That is why we need to read it all. We are continually learning, and will never be able to understand it all, but we have that capacity.

"Prudence," on the other hand, has to do with "the right use and application" (Trench, quoted in EGT, III, p. 258)

of the truth of God.

When we put these two together we see that God has made it possible for His people to understand the truth, and then to know how to live according to the truth. This is A **TWOFOLD GIFT** which we all have received by the grace of God (see v. 7), and God has given it to us in an abundant measure: "Wherein he hath abounded . . ." This means that this gift is not only enough for all that we will ever need, but more than enough! CONTRAST W/1 COR. 2:14.

Other passages teach us that it is the Holy Spirit Who actually uses this twofold gift to our advantage and blessing, but Paul was not concerned with the details here. He merely wanted to point out the fact that we have this twofold capacity.

Now let us go on note that Paul spoke of:

## II. "THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL" (Eph. 1:9).

This word "mystery" is a very important NT word. It occurs 28 times in the NT, and it extends from Matthew to the Book of the Revelation. In the book of Ephesians alone it is used 5 times: here, 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19. It is defined in Eph. 3:3, 5.

It does not mean something that we cannot understand, or even something that we have difficulty in understanding. There are times when we do struggle with the truth, but no part of Scripture is off limits for us.

No, the word "mystery" means something that God has not revealed before. God made His will known progressively throughout time. But now it has been completed. All that God intends to reveal, He has revealed. He has not contradicted anything He previously revealed; He has just completed it all.

According to v. 9, that which He revealed in the NT was not something additional that God planned later, but it was a part of His original plan, a part of His will, a part of His purpose which He had from the beginning, "purposed in" Christ, not "in himself."

This explains why you find truth about salvation in the NT that is not found in the OT. Much that we have in the NT was originally revealed in the OT, but not all. Some of the revelation had to await the coming of Christ. When He came, then that which had not been revealed could be revealed. God has made it known as He was pleased to make it known. The timing and the content were all "according

to his good pleasure." This is a very, very important point for us to understand about the Bible.

Now we are ready to ask the question, "What was that mystery that the Apostle Paul had in mind (because more than one truth in the NT is called a mystery)?" Verse 10 gives us our answer.

### III. ONE PURPOSE OF GOD IN SALVATION (Eph. 1:10).

I say "one purpose" because it is not the only purpose, as we will see even next week. But it is one, and a very important one.

Paul mentioned three things about this purpose:

- 1) The timing of the purpose: "In the dispensation of the fulness of times."
  - 2) The purpose itself: "He might gather together in one all things in Christ."
  - 3) The inclusiveness of the purpose: "All things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him."
- A. The timing of the purpose: "In the dispensation of the fulness of times."

When Paul wrote to the Galatians, he spoke of the first coming of Christ as being "the fulness of the time" (Gal. 4:4). Here in Eph. 1:10 Paul was speaking of the time when the Lord will come back--when all of "the times" will be completed, and He is ready to usher in the final phase of our salvation. It is called "the dispensation" because it marks the final arrangement that God has planned for His people, an arrangement that will characterize the eternal state as far as the people of God are concerned.

- B. The purpose itself: "That he might gather together in one . . ."

Cf. John 17:11b, 20-23. See also Eph. 4:1-6, 12-16. The same truth is in 1 Cor. 12:12-27.

Do we see this today? Far from it! The divisions in the body of Christ constitute a great scandal on earth, a gross misrepresentation of the work of God in the hearts of His people.

But we are to be working for it--not at the sacrifice of the truth, but within the bounds of the truth, and upon the foundation of the truth. There can be no other true unity, true oneness.

And now, although I may have already explained it, let me say just a word about:

- C. The inclusiveness of the purpose: "All things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him."

The key expressions as far as the extent of Paul's teaching here is concerned are the words "in Christ" and "in him" (at the end of the verse).

Paul was not speaking of a final universal salvation in which all people will be saved. Nor was he speaking of the removal of enmity among animals and the establishing of a new heaven and a new earth--as is predicted elsewhere in Scripture.

Paul had special reference to those who are "in Christ." And when he mentioned those who "are in heaven, and . . . on earth," it seems that he was speaking of "the whole family" of God. See Eph. 3:15.

Now remember, we are talking about the doctrine of salvation. How many doctrines of salvation are there in the Bible? JUST ONE! And that teaching is that, if a person is to be saved, he has to be "in Christ." Now that is a part of "the mystery" that was not so specifically stated in the OT, but it undoubtedly would include all of the OT saints, as well as the NT saints. Most of the Lord's people are now "in heaven." Some of us are still here "on earth." And there is terrible disunity among us--often great disunity in a particular local church. But we are to deplore that as being un-Christian. We are to work against it, not, as I have said, but forgetting the Word of God, but by teaching the Word of God "in love" so that together we "may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (Eph. 4:15). This does not mean that Israel and the Church are the same. But it does mean that there is but one family of God, and in the eternal state there will be but one people of God. And the ground of our unity will be the Saviour of all OT saints and the Saviour of all NT saints, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Concl: Now God has given us the ability to know this truth, and to live according to this truth. Therefore, we are to know it and to live it. You see, whenever you meet another Christian, you always feel a bond of fellowship together because of Christ. I am speaking about real Christians, not those who merely profess to be. This is evidence of the truth we are considering together today.

How are we to move in the direction of true, spiritual unity?

There is only one way, and Paul has explained that in the passage we have already read in Eph. 4. It is through the teaching of the Word, teaching it in love, helping the Lord's people to grow. The more we experience true spiritual growth through the Spirit-empowered teaching of the Word of God, the greater will be our unity here. There can be no real unity without the Word of God.

All attempts to unite professing Christians by love alone without the truth of the Word of God, are of the Devil, and will only result in greater divisions among the people of God.

How do we grow? We grow when we understand the truth, when we believe the truth, and when we obey the truth. That is the only way to unity. We will never reach it to the degree that we will all experience it when the Lord comes, as more than we will be individually perfect until the Lord comes. But that is the direction that we need to be going. May the Lord enable us to see great blessing in this direction, and may we pray continually that the Lord will enable us to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).

THE SUPREME INHERITANCE  
Ephesians 1:11, 12

Intro: From the third verse of this chapter to the fourteenth verse we have a hymn of praise to God. Paul's heart was obviously overflowing with thanksgiving to God for all of the blessings that were his because the Lord Jesus Christ was his Saviour. All believers can and should join with Paul in his praise to the Lord.

It was impossible for Paul (or anyone else) in the brief scope of these twelve verses to mention all of the blessings that we have through the saving grace of God, but we have seen that Paul was taking a look at the past, the present, and the future. Verses 4-6, remember, deal with what God did before the foundation of the world. Of course, all of salvation was planned then, but God determined before man was created who would be saved, and that they would become members of His family. Not all Christians believe that, but there it is in black and white.

Going on to verses 7 and 8 we have seen that salvation means that we have been redeemed, and that redemption carries with it "the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." We do not deserve to have our sins forgiven, but the death of Christ made that possible. And when God forgives our sins, He does something which we cannot do: He forgets them! It is no wonder that Paul's heart was lifted up in praise to God. This has to do with the present.

Verses 9 through 12 deal with the future when God will "gather together in one all things in Christ." That is the first thing that he emphasized concerning the future. The second point having to do with the future and eternity is in our text for today: verses 11, 12. And it has to do with OUR INHERITANCE.

It is reasonable that, if we are in the family of God, we would have an inheritance--and we do!

But there is a question as to the exact meaning of the expression, "in whom also we have obtained an inheritance." The language can mean either of two things:

- 1) It can mean, as the AV suggests, that we have an inheritance, or
- 2) It can mean that we are God's inheritance. The NASB gives the marginal reading, we "were made a heritage."

Actually the Scriptures teach both, and it does so in this chapter. See v. 14 for the first, and v. 18 for the second.

How are we to take it here when either one is a good possibility?

It seems to me that there is not the discrepancy that we might at first think, and so I am going to suggest that we can take it both ways! Our inheritance means that something is coming to us, and, in the process, God is claiming something for Himself. I think that you will see that as we examine these two verses.

Our inheritance is often spoken of in different ways. Sometimes we read that we are "heirs of God," which surely means among other things that God Himself is our inheritance. But then it can also mean heaven, as seems to be the thought that Peter gave to it in 1 Peter 1:3-5. The context always shows the particular emphasis that any writer or speaker in Scripture is giving to this term. But we certainly need to recognize that God has purpose that we should have an inheritance, and that the realization of our inheritance would, in turn, bring great honor to His holy Name.

Now let us look at verses 11 and 12.

We have two things here:

- 1) THE CERTAINTY OF OUR INHERITANCE, in v. 11.
- 2) THE NATURE OF OUR INHERITANCE--Paul's special emphasis in this passage (v. 12).

#### I. THE CERTAINTY OF OUR INHERITANCE (Eph. 1:11).

Paul used four very strong words here:

- 1) "Predestinated."
- 2) "Purpose."
- 3) "Counsel."
- 4) "Will."

All of these words have to do with God. It is He who has done the predestinating. It is His purpose, His counsel, His will. Any one of them would have indicated that this inheritance is absolutely certain. But to have all four words in this one verse shows that it is certain beyond any possibility that it could be otherwise. Heaven and earth may pass away, but God's word stands forever, absolutely certain.

This is one fact that makes this A SUPREME INHERITANCE. If we are talking about an earthly inheritance, we all know that many different things can happen so that the heirs will receive nothing. A man's business can fail. Or he can make the wrong investments. Or some unforeseen event can take place, and the inheritance can be all used up. You all have probably seen that bumper sticker, "We're spending our children's inheritance." So a lot of different things can happen to an inheritance. There are times when parents are unable to leave anything to their

children, and so there is no inheritance to be given.

But our heavenly inheritance is not like that. Nothing can possibly happen to do away with it. It was decreed by God in the planning of our salvation. That is the meaning of "predestinated." It is the plan which God deliberately resolved to carry out from the very beginning. That is the meaning of "purpose." "Counsel" means that this is something which God did deliberately and for specific reasons (see Salmond in the EGT, III, p. 264). "Will" marks the plan of God as absolute, unchangeable, irrevocable. God's will does not vacillate from one thing to another.

So you can see what a powerful statement this is. The believer could not stand on better ground. His hope is steadfast and sure. The purpose of God deliberately and carefully laid out have been decreed as the expression of His eternal and blessed will.

We as believers need to think more about God in connection with our salvation. To talk to some Christians you would think that God is making up His mind even now, and that He is just as surprised and pleased as we are when someone is saved. God is never surprised by anything. It is all according to His plan. He is pleased when people are saved, but He looks upon it as the further accomplishment of His will.

Think of Romans 8:28 in this connection.

And look at the end of Romans 11--verses 33-36. (Read.)

But there is one other point that I want to make before we leave verse 11 and go on to verse 12. It has to do with those words, "him who worketh all things."

When we talk about the sovereign, eternal purposes of God, we are not being fatalists. We are talking about the unceasing work of our mighty God by which He is seeing to it that His purposes are being accomplished. This is not chance. This is not luck. It is not right to say that things just happen to turn out as they do. GOD is at work!

It is not something which is dependent upon man. God may use us as His instruments, but the work is His. The power comes from Him. Without Him there would be no inheritance for anyone. And look again at those words, "all things." Everything that touches the lives of His people is so designed of God so as to serve the purposes of God. Some MSS of Rom. 8:28 say, "And we know that God worketh all



things . . ." What is the "good"? It is the accomplishment of His purpose. And what is His purpose? What in particular did Paul have in mind as He spoke here of our "inheritance"?

We see that in verse 12.

But what I want you to see before we get to THE NATURE OF OUR INHERITANCE is that this inheritance is secured by the decree of God, and by the sovereign working of God in each of our lives day after day.

## II. THE NATURE OF OUR INHERITANCE (Eph. 1:12).

Here it is stated specifically. This is the purpose of God in salvation. This is God plan for your life and mind. This is His will for us. This is what He is working on in each of our lives this very day:

That we should be to the praise of his glory,  
who first trusted in Christ.

You often hear some of the Lord's servants boasting about how much they do—how many sermons they preach, how many people are coming to hear them, how many people they are supposedly seeing saved, how much money they are taking in, what large churches they are building, how many books they have written.

It is never right for a servant of the Lord to boast. If God is blessing a man or a church, that is wonderful, but the glory belongs to the Lord. If a lot of people are truly being saved, we all should be thankful and praise God for what He is doing. If hundreds of people are coming to hear the Word preached, let us praise God.

However—however—are you listening? God is interested in our service, BUT THAT IS NOT THE THING THAT HE IS PRIMARILY INTERESTED IN. VERSE 12 TELLS US THAT THE MAIN THING GOD IS CONCERNED ABOUT IS WHAT WE ARE! The effectiveness of our lives is directly related to WHAT WE ARE. Do you understand that? God did not save us because he just wanted all of us to serve Him. As I have said, service is important, extremely important—true, Spirit-directed and Spirit-empowered service. But God did not save us because He wanted to see how much work we could get done. He saved us "that we should BE to the praise of his glory."

What is God's glory?

Let me answer that by reminding you of what the Apostle John said about our Lord Jesus Christ in John 1:14. Here are his words:

And the Word was made flesh,  
and dwelt among us,  
(and we behold his glory,  
the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,)  
full of grace and truth.

God's glory is God Himself, the manifestation of Who He is, the revelation of His glorious attributes. When the angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds announcing the birth of Jesus Christ, we read, "And the glory of the Lord shone round about them." They were exposed to one of those marvelous manifestations of the very presence of God.

So for us to "be to the praise of his glory" means that it is the purpose of God in salvation for us to be like God is! This is what God is doing in our lives. This is the main thing that He is concerned about. This is the work of sanctification which ultimately will lead to our glorification.

Paul stated it this way in 2 Cor. 3:18,  
But we all, with open face  
beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,  
are changed into the same image  
from glory to glory  
even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

In Phil. 3:20, 21 Paul wrote these words:  
For our citizenship is in heaven;  
from whence also we look for the Saviour,  
the Lord Jesus Christ:  
Who shall change our vile body,  
that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body,  
according to the working whereby he is able  
even to subdue all things unto himself.

It could not be stated any clearer than it is in the latter part of 1 John 3:2:

. . . we shall be like him (our Lord);  
for we shall see him as he is.

Why is all of this "to the praise of his glory"?

Let me briefly state 4 reasons:

- 1) First, because God will have done all that He planned to do in the lives of all of His people. He will have 100% success--not one instance of failure.
- 2) Second, because God will be the One Who does it. It is all because of His grace and power.
- 3) Third, because of the contrast from what we were when the Lord first saved us, and the unlikelihood that

- such a change could take place in us.
- 4) Fourth, because of the permanence of the work. None of the Lord's people will ever revert to what he or she was before.

Should we not do now what Paul was doing when he wrote this--blessing God?

Concl: Why did Paul speak of himself and others as having "first trusted in Christ"?

Actually the words "first trusted" are the translation of one word in the Greek, and it would be better to translate it, "first hoped in Christ." Were they the first ever to trust in Christ? Obviously not! He only meant that they had hoped in Christ before many of the Ephesians had hoped in Christ. And we know that there are more to follow! God's work is not done. There are still others who will believe, who will hope in Christ--not in themselves, not in politicians, not in chance nor in luck, but in Christ.

Is your hope in Christ today? There is no eternal inheritance in any other. All that God does for the salvation of sinners He has done in Christ. Come to Him right now. Believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, raised Him as evidence that what He did when He died on the Cross was sufficient for the salvation of every sinner who would ever come to Him and believe on Him. In Ephesians 2:12 Paul taught that to be "without Christ" is to have "no hope" and to be "without God." Believe in Him, trust Him as your Saviour, and then you will have a hope, and God, the only God, will be your God for all eternity.

AN UNLIMITED WARRANTY  
Ephesians 1:13, 14

Intro: We come today to the last point that Paul made in this passage concerning our salvation. He depicted the greatness of salvation by touching upon the past, the present, and the future. Finally, in these last two verses he was concerned to show the assurance, the peace, regarding salvation that the Lord has provided for us in what is called, the sealing with the Holy Spirit.

In considering these two verses we need to consider four things:

- 1) What is a seal, and how is it used in our text?
- 2) Who is sealed, and when?
- 3) Who seals us, and how?
- 4) What is its importance?

I. WHAT IS A SEAL, AND HOW IS THE WORD USED HERE IN OUR TEXT?

We are concerned about the meaning of seals as they are referred to in Scripture. J. H. Thayer, in his Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, lists four different uses of seals in the NT--and some of these apply to the OT. They are:

- 1) For security--as in case of the chief priests and elders when they sealed the tomb of the Lord Jesus. See Matt. 27:66. No one was to enter the tomb without their permission. In Rev. 20:3 we read of Satan being sealed after he was cast into the bottomless pit, a seal which would keep him there until the thousand years were over.
- 2) For secrecy--as in the case of the book with seven seals which no one could open except our Lord. Cf. Rev. 5, 6, and 8.
- 3) For marking, or identification. We read of the sealing of the 144,000 in Rev. 7. They were specifically marked as the servants of God. This was their identification.
- 4) In order to prove, or confirm, or attest something--putting it beyond any doubt.

Often a seal was a ring; sometimes the impression made by the ring was called a seal. But the seal was, and still is, very important--especially in governmental and other legal matters.

How was Paul using the word in our text?

It must be a combination of at least three of these uses.

It obviously identifies--identifies those who are the people of God. It confirms that they are the people of

God. And it secures the people of God in their relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

I will be coming back to these points later, but for now let me go on to my second point.

## II. WHO IS SEALED, AND WHEN?

This is answered for us in Eph. 1:13. (Read.) Paul was speaking to those who had "trusted" in Christ. (See the end of v. 12, and the help it gives us in identifying the One Paul was speaking of when he said twice (for emphasis) in v. 13, "In whom.")

The sealing comes after salvation, not before. And it comes to all who savingly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And note that salvation only comes after people have "heard the word of truth."

Two things are important in that statement, "after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation."

One is that Paul was indicating that no one is saved until they have heard "the word of truth." Cf. What Paul wrote in Rom. 10:13-17. Nobody is ever saved until they have "heard the word of truth." No one is saved apart from the word of God. In the words of the Apostle Peter, we are "born again . . . by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. 1:23).

The second thing to note is that it is not the sealing with the Holy Spirit that makes "the gospel of your salvation" "the word of truth." It is "the word of truth" absolutely and independently of everything else. The person who quibbles about whether or not the Gospel has to do with salvation from sin, or who quibbles about whether or not all of it is true, is not a Christian. The true Christian believes the truth; he trusts in Christ and in Christ alone for his salvation. He knows that he cannot be saved by anyone except Christ, and that Christ is his only hope for the forgiveness of his sins, his only hope that some day he will be in heaven with the Lord.

The original text reads like this:

In whom ye also,  
having heard the word of truth,  
the gospel of your salvation,  
in whom, having believed,  
ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise.

I repeat: "In whom" appears twice to emphasize that all believers, and only those who are believing in Christ, are sealed with the Holy Spirit. And they are sealed after they believe—not before—and immediately afterwards. It is not something that we are conscious of. It is not an experience that we are to seek. It is a work this is done to us and for us. We know that it has happened to us because the Word of God says so!

Now my third point:

### III. WHO SEALS US, AND HOW?

Look at the last part of Eph. 1:13. It says that "ye were sealed," indicating that we do not seal ourselves, but that we are sealed by someone else. And since we are "sealed WITH that holy Spirit of promise," we must take it as meaning that the Holy Spirit is the seal, but not the Sealer—not the one who does the sealing.

Let us look for some further help to 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22. These are important enough verses that I am going to ask you to turn to them and look at them as I read them.

Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ,  
and hath anointed us, is God;  
Who hath also sealed us,  
and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

HERE IS OUR ANSWER: GOD SEALS US, WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT, "IN CHRIST." GOD IS THE SEALER. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE SEAL. AND WE AS BELIEVERS ARE SEALED IN CHRIST--SEALED IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST SO THAT WE CAN NEVER GET OUT.

Now we are ready for my fourth and final point:

### IV. WHAT IS ITS IMPORTANCE?

Why did God seal us with the Holy Spirit in Christ, and why is it important for us as believers to know that we are sealed by God with the Holy Spirit in Christ?

Ephesians 1:14 gives us our answer. (Read.) Let us make sure that we understand each word in this verse.

Notice that Paul came back in this verse to "our inheritance." We saw last week what he had to say about our "inheritance in verses 11, 12. We saw that it was secured for us by the decree of God,  
by the purpose of God,  
by the counsel of God,  
and by the will of God.

That should surely be enough to show that our inheritance

is secure.

But now we see that the very presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives gives us added assurance and a greater sense of security. The Holy Spirit, a Member of the Godhead, a living Seal, is "the earnest of our inheritance."

What did Paul mean by that word "earnest"?

Basically it is a pledge. It was used in olden times where financial transactions were involved to refer to the payment of a certain amount of money as a pledge that the rest would be paid. If a person even today is making a purchase, but does not have the money on hand for the full payment, he puts down what we call earnest money to secure the purchase and as a pledge that the rest of the money will be forthcoming.

Now I want to be perfectly clear on this point because I do not want anyone to go away with the wrong idea in mind.

Paul was not saying that our salvation is not yet completely paid for! He was saying that you and I have not yet actually come into the possession of all that is involved in our salvation. We do not yet see in ourselves all that is included in our salvation.

What is our inheritance?

Verse 12 says that it is "that we should be to the praise of his glory." Remember the importance of that word, "be." We are not just going to give God glory, but we are going to be "to the praise of his glory."

When will that be? It will be when we are in heaven, finally conformed to the very likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But what is "the redemption of the purchased possession"? Did Paul not say in verse 7 that we already have "redemption"? Yes, he did. Well then, what does he mean by "the redemption of the purchased possession"?

In answering that question, let me ask you to turn, first of all, to Eph. 4:30.

What is the Holy Spirit doing in our lives as our seal? He is working to prepare us for "the day of redemption." That is the day when we will enter fully into all that God has provided for us in salvation--when we will be like the Lord.

But to see the extent of that likeness, see another verse: Rom. 8:23. But let me begin reading with verse 18 and continue on down through verse 30.

Verse 23 says that we will not fully possess our possessions in Christ until our bodies are changed and glorified! Cf. also Phil. 3:20, 21.

So, you see, God's way of giving us further assurance that we will eventually be transformed into the likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ, including our bodies, is by sealing us in Christ with the Holy Spirit. This is God's unlimited and irrevocable warranty in connection with our salvation.

Concl: These are days of limited warranties. You hear that a certain product has some fantastic kind of warranty, but when you read the "fine print," you find out that it is not as great as it sounded when you first heard of it. There are certain exclusions, and often major exclusions.

God's warranty for our salvation is not "limited"; it is unlimited! No true believer in Christ is excluded. No part of his salvation is excluded. God guarantees in His Word that all who are saved will be saved finally and completely. This is surely the greatest warranty that has ever been issued.

One local automobile salesman always says, to guarantee the truthfulness and the reliability of what he advertises, "My name is on it!" Well, I do not know exactly what that means, but I do know, as far as salvation is concerned, that God's Name is on it! I do know what that means! It means just what God has said. His Word is true. Cf. Phil. 1:6 and 1 Pet. 1:3-5. Note Paul's words in 2 Tim. 1:12.

Do you need assurance? Here it is! Don't look at yourself, nor at your experiences, if ye need assurance. Look to the Holy Spirit, and look to the Word of God—because you cannot really be looking to the Holy Spirit unless you are looking to the Word of God.

Paul said this in Rom. 8:16, 17,  
 The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit,  
 that we are the children of God.  
 And if children, then heirs;  
 heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;  
 if so be that we suffer with him,  
 that we may be also glorified together.

When our salvation is finally complete, when we are in heaven with all of the other people of God, then we will realize as never before that salvation is so completely a work of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, that it will all



be to the praise of God's glory, and no praise at all for us.

Oh, that we might realize in a deeper way than ever before what it means to be sealed by God with the Holy Spirit in Christ! Here is assurance. Here is peace. Here is true fellowship with God. And here we find the basis of true fellowship with each other in Christ. Since God has sealed us with the Holy Spirit in Christ, there is not the slightest possibility that we could ever get out of Christ. And if we cannot get out of Christ, then our salvation is secure for all eternity. Let us praise God that by His grace there is no question but that those who have trusted in the Lord will get to heaven, nor is there any question but that all who have trusted in Christ will become like Christ.

Cf. 2 Tim. 2:19,

Nevertheless the foundation of God stand sure,  
having this seal,  
The Lord knoweth them that are his.  
And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ  
depart from iniquity.

This is what the sealing of the Spirit means. The Lord has marked us as belonging to Himself by sealing us with the Holy Spirit, and the very presence of the Spirit of God in our lives is another incentive for us to live lives that are holy. The believer who is careless about sin will also be lacking in assurance.

If you are not a Christian, may I tell you that you also have a seal. So do those of us who are Christians. John the Baptist once said this, speaking of the testimony of our Lord:

He that hath received his testimony

hath set to his seal that God is true (John 3:33).

That is what you are doing when you believe in Christ for the salvation of your soul and the forgiveness of your sins. Have you done that? You either believe God's Word, or you do not believe it. Whether you believe it or not does not affect its truthfulness. It is "the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." But your failure to believe it will mean that you will die in your sins and spend eternity in hell.

The Apostle John wrote in 1 John 5:10b-12,

. . . he that believeth not God hath made him a liar;  
because he believeth not the record  
that God gave of his Son.

And this is the record,  
that God hath given to us eternal life,  
and this life is in his Son.

He that hath the Son hath life; . . .

May you be able to say with the Apostle Paul, "Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4) who denies "the record that God gave of his Son." Trust in Christ now, and be saved.

THE PEOPLE PAUL PRAYED FOR  
Ephesians 1:15, 16

Intro: If you are familiar with Paul's epistle to the Colossians, written by Paul from Rome at the same time, and very similar to the Ephesian epistle in many ways, you may have been struck with a unique difference between the two epistles when you come to verse 15 in the Ephesian letter. The difference is this: In the Colossian epistle Paul began with his recognition of their faith and love, followed by his prayer, and then went into a shorter statement of the Gospel, but in his Ephesians letter he began with his doxology for the Gospel, and then followed that with his prayer. Why is there this difference? His order in the Colossian epistle is certainly more normal. I have not found a commentary which deals with this difference.

We may not have the real answer to that question except for the fact that the Holy Spirit led him differently in writing the two letters. But let me guess as to what may have been his reason.

I would attribute it to a full heart. We should be ready to praise the Lord at any time, especially for His work for us in salvation, but we all know that there are times when our hearts are so full of thanksgiving to God for saving us that we have trouble containing ourselves! Paul was evidently experiencing a time like that. As we have seen, he briefly traced the whole work of salvation from beginning to end, and then showed how the work of the Holy Spirit gave us added reason for being sure that God would never go back on what He has done for us, nor could anything possibly happen to rob us of this greatest of all blessings. And so, as he began to write, his doxology just poured out of his heart and into his letter. May the Lord give all of us many times like that. The more we know about salvation, the more we will marvel at what God has done for us, and the greater our praise will be!

However, Paul cannot refrain from telling the Ephesians that he has been praying for them, and what his requests have been. We will come to the requests next Sunday, the Lord willing, but for today I want to take those two transitional verses, 15 and 16, because we have too much truth in them for us to pass over them lightly. Here Paul was really describing the people he prayed for. They, of course, were the people of God in Ephesus. They were "the saints which were at Ephesus," as he said in verse 1. They were "the faithful in Christ Jesus"-- also in verse 1. But Paul described them differently in verses 15 and 16, and this is what I want us to concentrate on today.

In verse 15 we have, Paul's description of a Christian. In verse 16 we see the way he prayed for them.

#### I. PAUL'S DESCRIPTION OF A CHRISTIAN (Eph. 1:15).

Paul did not call them Christians. I am using that title which is so common to all of us. And I am using it because I want you to compare it with your idea of what a Christian is so that you can compare it with the way Paul defined a Christian, a child of God, a saint. Paul said that a Christian is a person who is characterized by two things:

- 1) Faith in the Lord Jesus.
- 2) Love for all the saints.

You can immediately see that the first of these has to do with the Lord Jesus; the second has to do with "all" others who are in reality "saints." They are the true people of God. If these qualities are lacking in a person who claims to be a Christ, he (or she) is not a Christian! Or let me say this: If either one of these is missing in a professing Christian's life, that person is not a Christian! One has to do with the Lord; the other has to do with the people of God. A Christian is one who believes in the Lord Jesus, and he has a genuine love in his heart for the people of God.

When Paul said that he had "heard" of their faith, he did not mean that he was not personally acquainted with them. Acts 18:19-21 tells of his brief visit to Ephesus. He left Priscilla and Aquila there to minister, and Apollos also was there. Later, in Acts 20, we have the record of Paul's meeting with the Ephesian elders at Miletus. And so he had seen some of them, and had "heard" about many others as the work of the Lord had continued in that place.

Such a report never failed to move the heart of the Apostle Paul to pray for the Lord's people. By this report he knew that there had been an elect people in that city upon whose hearts God had moved, and ever after that they were on his heart for prayer.

But let us look briefly at these two essential characteristics of a Christian.

#### A. "Your faith in the Lord Jesus" (v. 15a).

This is a simple statement, but it is very profound and important in its meaning.

Paul had said that they had faith in v. 13. (Read.)

They were people who had believed in the Lord Jesus. We could punctuate it in this way, "in the Lord, Jesus"--a comma between "Lord" and "Jesus." Paul had been speaking of Him from the very beginning of this epistle. They were trusting in the Lord Jesus. They believed that He was the "Lord"--meaning that He was God, the Son. They also believed that He had truly become a man. He was "Jesus." They believed that He was God and man in one Person.

And they believed in his mission into the world. They believed in the meaning of His name, "Jesus"--Jehovah is the Saviour. They believed that He had come to "save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21b).

This was the Person they were trusting for the forgiveness of their sins. This is the One they were trusting for all that the word salvation means--past, present, and future! They obviously were at different stages of understanding, but they knew that they were saved by Christ alone, by virtue of His death on the Cross. They understood that it was completely undeserved, that it was by grace. Their faith was in Christ, and in Christ alone. They had turned from the worship of Diana to the Lord Jesus. Their faith was in Him as a Person, and in His work on their behalf.

You see, faith is accepting what the Bible says about the Lord Jesus, believing that He died for the sins of all who will believe in Him, and then trusting in Him alone.

Faith is a matter that transpires in the heart. We "believe in our hearts that God has raised him from the dead" (Rom. 10:9).

This leads me to the second thing that Paul said about a Christian. And this is very important, too. It is important and essential because it is one of the practical, outward evidences of the genuineness of our faith. Faith cannot be seen. As I have said, it is a matter of the heart. But the evidence of faith can be seen! And so we must say that a Christian is not only one who believes in the Lord, but he also manifests:

B. "Love unto all the saints" (v. 15b).

True faith in the Lord Jesus will always be accompanied with a love for all others who love the Lord Jesus.

The Apostle John wrote many years later, and we find

his words in 1 John 3:14,

We know that we have passed from death unto life,  
because we love the brethren.

He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.  
Passing from death to life is salvation. The  
"brethren" are those who also believe in the Lord  
Jesus. They are brothers and sisters in the family of  
God. And we will love them--love them more than we  
love the people of the world. We enjoy being with  
them. We want to help them in any way that we can.  
And this is something that can be seen! As I have  
said, wherever you find faith in the Lord Jesus, true  
faith in the Lord Jesus, you will always find a love  
for others, "all" others, who know the Lord Jesus as  
Saviour.

This is not the only mark of a Christian, but nothing  
precedes this, nor does anything surpass this.

Now I want you to think about these two points in  
connection with your own life. If you profess to be a  
Christian, is your faith in the Lord Jesus, without  
reservation, and without excluding anything that the  
Word of God teaches about Him?

And how do you feel about the Lord's people? I know  
that there are some of us who are not very lovable,  
but can you honestly say that you love coming to  
church because you love the people of God, and love to  
be with them?

There is so much that needs to be said about this, but  
I just do not have more time for it this morning. But  
remember, if you really trusting in the Lord Jesus,  
you will love the people of God, and, more than that,  
you are commanded to love the people of God. The Lord  
Jesus Himself said while He was still here on earth,  
while He was speaking to His disciples,

A new commandment I give unto you,  
that ye love one another;  
as I have loved you,  
that ye also love one another.

**By this shall all men know  
that ye are my disciples,  
if ye have love one to another (John 13:34, 35).**

These words of our Lord places the matter beyond all  
doubt. Besides, notice how many times Paul said the  
same thing in other epistles which he wrote.

Now we must go on to verse 16.

AND THESE CONTINUE  
ON DAY AFTER DAY.

## II. THE WAY PAUL PRAYED FOR THEM (Eph. 1:16).

Please notice, first of all, that he prayed for them. Do you—do you pray regularly and specifically for some of your fellow-believers, and more generally for the Lord's people throughout the world? If it were important to pray for the Lord's people in the first century, it is just as important to pray for the Lord's people today!

It seems that all it took to get the Apostle Paul praying for any group of the Lord's people was just to hear about them.

But let us notice how he prayed for them.

## A. With thanksgiving (v. 16a).

To whom do we give thanks? We give thanks to God. Why would Paul have done that in the case of the Ephesians? Because God was the One Who planned their salvation, He was the One Who chose them for salvation, He was the One Who had saved them, He was the One Who had sealed them in Christ, and He was the One Who was keeping them for all of the wonderful things that are ahead in heaven!

Paul did this without ceasing!

This does not mean that he did nothing but pray for them, but it means that he was continually thanking God that those particular Ephesians were numbered among the people of God.

We do not compliment people because they are Christians. We give thanks to God. If it had been up to them, they never would have turned to Christ. If God had given them what they deserve, He never would have saved them. But we thank God for His grace, His power, His faithfulness—and we need to be doing this continuously!

Perhaps we have a sample of Paul's prayer for the Ephesians in his letter to the Thessalonians where he wrote,

But we are bound to give thanks to God for you,  
brethren beloved of the Lord,  
because God hath from the beginning chosen you  
to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit  
and belief of the truth:  
Whereunto he called you by our gospel,  
to the obtaining of the glory  
of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 2:13, 14).

But what else did Paul do?

B. He made mention of them in his prayers (v. 16b).

Is this different from giving thanks for them? Yes, I believe it is. And I say that because Paul went on from this verse to tell them how he was praying for them in more specific terms. By making mention of them in his prayers Paul had reference to his intercession for them.

Next week, the Lord willing, we are going to begin considering Paul's prayer for the Ephesian saints. But just look at it for a moment. Mr. Mathison read it for us earlier. It is a very wonderful prayer—a prayer for greater knowledge, greater understanding, greater spiritual understanding. He was praying that they would know God in a greater way. You see, we never know as much as we can know and should know and need to know. We are never all that we should be and ought to be and can be—by the grace of God. And so this is why we are to pray for each other. We need to preach and teach, but preaching and teaching without praying will never be as effective as it can be if we pray. I need your prayers; you need my prayers; we all need each other's prayers. What blessings we miss because we do not pray more than we do. If this had such priority with Paul (with all that he was doing), then it should be exactly the same with us.

Concl: May I close today with a threefold appeal?

First, make sure that you know the Lord—that the primary characteristics of a child of God are in your heart and in your life.

Second, look for these characteristics in each other's lives, in the lives of your children, in the lives of your parents, in the lives of all who profess to be saved. It will help you to know how to pray for them.

Third and last: Please pray, and be faithful in prayer. Only the Lord can keep us praying. I can assure you that every possible obstacle will come along to keep you from praying. And when you start to pray regularly for people, you will see things in their lives that will make you wonder if it is all worthwhile. But it is! We know from the Word of God that it is! It is a sin for us not to be praying for each other.

If we follow the pattern of the Apostle Paul, we are going to be enriched in our own lives, and we are sure to see the blessing of God in the lives of those for whom we pray.

THE FIRST AND CONTINUING PRAYER REQUEST  
Ephesians 1:17, 18a

Intro: The world is full of people who cannot understand why anybody gets enthusiastic about the Bible. They do not understand a person who enjoys reading the Bible. They cannot understand why anyone would want to go to a church where all you hear is Bible teaching. Such things do not make sense to them.

They would consider Jeremiah very strange for saying,  
Thy words were found, and I did eat them;  
and thy word was unto me  
the joy and rejoicing of my heart:  
for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts  
(Jer. 15:16).

They would think the Psalmist somewhat deranged for saying,  
O how love I thy law!  
it is my meditation all the day (Psa. 119:97).

And Job certainly must have been in great need of help for him to have said,

Neither have I gone back  
from the commandment of his lips;  
I have esteemed (treasured up)  
the words of his (God's) mouth  
more than my necessary food (Job 23:12).

And why would the Apostle Paul put such a limitation on the ministry of Timothy by saying, "Preach the word," especially when he went on to add,

For the time will come  
when they will not endure sound doctrine;  
but after their own lusts  
shall they heap to themselves teachers,  
having itching ears;  
And they shall turn away their ears from the truth,  
and shall be turned unto fables (2 Tim. 4:2a, 3, 4,)?

And why would Paul tell Timothy that the Scriptures alone would fully equip him for the work of the ministry? Cf. 2 Tim. 3:16, 17.

The solution to all of this must be that these men, and countless others, have seen in the Bible, the Word of God, something which most people have not seen. Many people have laid down their lives rather than give up their Bibles. The Bible has been responsible for changing people's lives, strengthening them in times of trials, fortifying them against temptation, consoling them in times of sorrow. The Bible has accomplished things for people that no other book has ever been able to do!

Many of you listening to me today feel exactly like these men whom I have been quoting from the Bible. You love the Bible.



You love to read it. You are disappointed whenever you go to church and do not hear the Bible preached and explained. But others of you can see no point in the Word of God at all. How are we to account for the difference between us? I firmly stand on the side of those who love the Word, believe the Word--all of it, seek to obey the Word day by day, and consider it to be nothing less than the infallible Word of God. But how did we get this way?

Our text for today gives us our answer. This is something that God has done for us! (Read Eph. 1:17, 18a.) Therefore, it is not to our credit, but it is all to God's glory. If you love the Bible today, it is because God has done something for you to cause you to love it. If you can get along without the Bible (or you think you can), then you ought to be concerned about how this Book can mean to you what it has meant to countless millions of others down through history. You will love it, too, if God does for you what He has done for those who love it and would never want to be without it.

Now let us look at our text and see what it has to teach us.

The first thing we note is that our text contains the word of:

- I. PAUL'S PRAYER TO GOD: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory" (Eph. 1:17a).

Now there are some Christians who do not love the Word as much as they should. Perhaps there are some of you who are here this morning who have not been reading your Bible this week. Your conscience has bothered you about that, but you have excused yourself on the basis that you have been so busy that you have just not had time to read the Word. And your life has shown that evidence of the lack of the Word. You have been more concerned about yourself and how you can get what you want than you have been about what God wants in your life and how you can glorify Him.

What do you need?

You need someone to pray for you. You need someone to go the Lord seeking blessing in your life. It would help, too, if you would pray for yourself. But however this love for the Word comes to you, you need to know that it must come from God, and that God has ordained that it would come and continue to come BY PRAYER!

And Paul was very specific about the God to Whom he was praying. He was not just saying prayers. He was not just repeating words. He was speaking to a living, mighty, ever-present God Who is "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory"!

We are to come in prayer to none other than "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ." We come to the God from Whom the Lord Jesus Christ came. We come to the God who sent the Lord Jesus Christ into this world. We pray to the same God to Whom the Lord Jesus Christ prayed. We come to the God to Whom the Lord Jesus Christ submitted Himself completely, even to His death on the Cross. We come to the God to Whom the Lord Jesus Christ ascended, and from Whom He is coming back to this earth. He is the sovereign, almighty, eternal, unchanging, ever-present God--"The God of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Let that wonderful truth get into your heart. Think about it until the majesty of that statement overwhelms you with wonder and praise. This is the God to Whom Paul prayed for the Ephesians.

And He is also "the Father of glory"--the heavenly Father Who is characterized by glory. He is absolutely holy, glorious in His perfections! None can compare with Him. He is God, and there is no god except for Him! He is the One to Whom Paul went on behalf of the Ephesians. He sought God's help and God's blessing for them.

Now let us consider:

- II. THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH HE PRAYED: "That God . . . may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him" (Eph. 1:17b).

"That" means in order that. So Paul was not just praying to be praying, but he was praying because he wanted God to do something for the Ephesian Christians. And he went to the Lord believing that God would hear and answer. So he was expressing here his purpose in his prayer.

We need to see from this part of v. 17 who Paul had in mind.

Paul wanted God to give to the Ephesians "the spirit of wisdom and revelation." WHO or WHAT is this?

If we were to turn to Isaiah's prophecy, chapter 11, verse 2, we would see these words, speaking of Christ, the Messiah:

And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,  
the spirit of wisdom and understanding . . .

Isaiah was speaking of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Godhead, and the similarity of terms would justify us in saying that Paul was praying about the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the Ephesian believers. So Paul was asking God to do something for the Ephesians through the

Holy Spirit.

But what do "wisdom and revelation" mean?

This was the way in which Paul was referring to the Bible. It contains the "wisdom" of God, and it was given by "revelation." And it is the Holy Spirit Who was really the Author of Scripture. Peter declared in 2 Peter 1:21 that "holy men of God spake as they wee moved by the Holy Spirit." Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:16, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God . . ."

The Author of the Book is the best One to explain for us what it means. And since it is a Book of divine "wisdom," it is to be expected that we would not be able to understand it without the Holy Spirit to help us.

But now we need to ask, who was Paul referring to when he said, "in the knowledge of him"?

The context would show that he was still speaking about God, "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory."

Now this tells us something very, very important about the Bible—and people need to understand this if they are to understand and love the Word of God. I have said this many times, but I am glad to be able to repeat it again this morning. Here it is: Paul was saying here that the Bible has been given to us as a "revelation" from God through the Holy Spirit, but it is also a "revelation" of God. The Bible has come from God to tell us about God.

And as we read our Bibles we learn that the greatest portrait of God that we have in the Word of God is what we see in Christ. He is the final and fullest, the most complete revelation of God that has ever been given. But we would not be able to profit from that if we did not have the Bible. Christ has gone back to heaven, and so we are absolutely dependent upon what the Holy Spirit led men to write about God in the Scriptures as He is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I must point out that the word for "knowledge" that Paul used here was the Greek word meaning full knowledge.

Now let me tell you this: The one thing that gives us the greatest joy in reading the Bible is to see what it tells us about Christ, and thus we learn about God! None of us has learned it all. We need to keep learning. And as long as we live on this earth we will need to keep learning. We must never stop. That was the point that

Paul was making when he said in verse 16 that he unceasingly made mention of them in his prayers. If they ever learned it all, then he could stop praying. But as long as there was more for them to learn, and more for him to learn, he needed to keep praying--and so do we!

I am still not through with this point.

If Paul said in verse 13 that they had already been sealed with the Holy Spirit, meaning among other things that they had the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, then why did he say here that the Father would "give" them "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation." Why should God "give" the Holy Spirit when they already had Him? And does this mean that we have to pray for the Holy Spirit?

First, let me say that we do not have to pray for the Holy Spirit. He comes to indwell us the moment we are saved. But, secondly, it is important that the Father "give" Him to us daily to be our Teacher, our Guide into all truth, the One Who will show Christ to us as we spend time each day reading the Word, as well as whenever we hear the Word taught and preached. Paul was saying that this, in so many words: "I am praying that God will see to it that the Holy Spirit does for you what He was sent to do." This is the sense in which God gives the Spirit to us day by day.

I have one more point.

### III. THE NEED WE HAVE (Eph. 1:18a).

How does the Holy Spirit enable us to understand the Word of God? Here is our answer: "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened."

If "the eyes of your understanding" are to be "enlightened," this means that we must be given the ability to see, to understand, spiritual truth--the truth concerning God, the truth of the Word of God. You see, contrary to what a lot of people think, the problem is not with the Bible; the problem is with us. Sin has kept us from seeing the truth of God, and that is why people who are still spiritually blinded cannot understand the people who are able to see! Only God could give us our natural sight, and only God can give us our spiritual sight.

But let me tell you another thing about this first part of verse 18 which is as far as we will go today. The Greek word which is translated "understanding" is the Greek word for heart. Did you know that you understand with your heart, and that your heart has been given eyes? And do

you know that you will never love the Bible and its message until God enables you to see. And we need this ability every day.

The writer of the book of Hebrews had this in mind when he got to the latter part of chapter 5 where he introduced the subject of the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ--and he realized that he had a problem. It was not that he did not know his subject, nor that it was so difficult to understand. But it was that the people were in such a spiritual condition that they were not able to understand this truth! Cf. Heb. 5:11ff.

Concl: How is your spiritual sight today? Have you seen anything this morning? Have you learned anything that you did not know before? Could I sound this warning? Be careful that you are not missing the most important message you will ever need to hear because you cannot see the truth of God. Remember: the problem is not with the Word; the problem is with you, and with me--it is with us!

Let me close with this: Several years ago I was sobered with the thought that I may know some Christians, as well as other people who are not Christians, for whom no one is praying! I know that the Lord prays for all of His people. And I know that the Holy Spirit prays for all of us who are saved, too. But I also know that the Lord wants us to be praying for each other! And we need to be praying unceasingly for those we pray for. And this is how we need to be praying for them, asking "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory," to open the eyes of His people, and to keep them open so that they will love and obey the Word. But we need to pray for those who cannot see, and who have never seen, our glorious God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us not give up in our prayers. This is where we need to start and the way we need to continue as we go each day before the Lord pleading with Him that eyes will be opened, the eyes of people's hearts, so that they will see and love the Lord and His Word. We need to be able to see with our hearts what we have seen this morning with our physical eyes. May God grant it, and continue to grant it, for His own praise and glory!

OUR HOPE  
Ephesians 1:18

Intro: My text for this morning is that part of the 18th verse of Ephesians 1 which reads, "That ye may know what is the hope of his calling."

This is the first of three special prayer requests that Paul was praying regularly for the Ephesian believers. If this epistle were a circular letter, intended for several churches, then we must say that this was his request for all of them. Undoubtedly it was his request for all of the believers for whom he prayed.

The statement clearly has three parts:

- 1) Paul spoke of the necessity for them to know.
- 2) He was particularly concerned about the believer's hope.
- 3) The hope is the objective of "his calling," i.e., God's calling.

Let us look, first of all, at:

I. THE VERB, "KNOW."

If the Ephesians were to know something, then it means that Paul wanted them to learn this particular thing.

It almost goes without saying that the Church today, at least the visible church, the professing church, is not very interested in learning the truth of the Bible. There is not a very high priority put upon teaching. The pastor is cast more into the role of an entertainer, and his effectiveness is usually measured in terms of whether or not he is a good communicator. However, there are a lot of men who are called good communicators who are not teaching people much about the Word of God. Paul put a high priority on teaching, on learning, on learning the truth of the Word of God. It is impossible for us in one lifetime to know all that there is to know about the Bible. We can never exhaust it. In fact, we really do not know what we know as well as we ought to know it. In the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 8:2, we can all say with him,

And if any man think that he knoweth any thing,  
he knoweth nothing as he ought to know.

We ought to come to church because we want to learn. And we ought to come to Sunday School because we will be able to learn more than we can if we just come to church. We need to read our Bible during the week so we can learn. Learning the truth of the Word of God ought to have the greatest priority with each one of us.

Paul told Timothy,

And the things that thou has heard of me  
among many witnesses,  
the same commit thou to faithful men,  
who shall be able to teach others also  
(2 Tim. 2:2).

The Lord commissioned His disciples with these words:

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations . . .  
(Matt. 28:19a).

To be sure, the word "teach" means to make disciples of,  
but what is a disciples, but a learner?

One of the characteristics of "the servant of the Lord,"  
according to 2 Tim. 2:24, is that he is to be "apt to  
teach." This means not only that he is able and willing  
to teach, but that he is eager to teach.

The Lord Jesus Christ said from the Cross, "Father,  
forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke  
23:34). And along the same line, Paul wrote to the Corin-  
thians,

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery,  
even the hidden wisdom,  
which God ordained before the world unto our glory:  
Which none of the princes of this world knew:  
for had they known it,  
they would not have crucified the Lord of glory  
(1 Cor.. 2:7,8).

Their problem was ignorance, ignorance of the truth of  
God!

Peter's parting words in his second epistle were,

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge  
of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18a).

No book places a greater emphasis on the knowledge of God  
and of His Word than does the book of Proverbs in the OT.  
But it is all through the Bible. We can really say that,  
if the Lord had not wanted us to know His truth, the Bible  
would never have been written. The Bible itself stands as  
a lasting memorial to the fact that God has many things to  
teach us that we need to know. Let us never apologize for  
teaching the Word of God. It would be a grave sin if we  
did not teach the Word.

But let me briefly say three other things about this  
knowledge from our text.

A. This is why the Holy Spirit has been given to us--not  
the only reason, but surely one of the greatest  
reasons.

Have we not already learned this from v. 17? There the Holy Spirit was called "the spirit of wisdom and revelation." The Lord Jesus said that He would "guide you into all truth" (John 16:13)—not all kinds of truth, but into all of the truth of God!

Cf. 1 Cor. 2:9, 10. How do we learn? By what we see and hear and understand with our hearts. But the most intelligent person who ever lived (and I do not know who that was if we exclude the Lord Jesus Christ)—but the most intelligent person who ever lived is powerless to understand the truth of God if he does not have the Holy Spirit as his Teacher. The Holy Spirit has to reveal to us the meaning of what He revealed to the writers of Scripture so that they could write what they wrote!

Never forget this important truth. The Lord may use some man or woman to help us to understand the truth of the Word, but always, always the Spirit of God is using that person or we would learn nothing.

This leads me to the second thing that I want to say about learning the Word of God.

B. Paul taught us to pray that we would learn.

That is what he was doing—not just once in a while, but all of the time. He never stopped praying that the Holy Spirit would continually be teaching and teaching and teaching the Lord's people in Ephesus. We should never read our Bibles without praying that the Holy Spirit would show us what He wants us to know. We should never come to church to hear a Sunday School lesson or a sermon in any service without asking the Holy Spirit to teach us. We need to pray for each other this way. Pray right now, if you will, in the quietness of your own heart, that we all will be learning something from the Word today. Sometimes I see things as I am preaching that I never saw when I was preparing. What is happening when that takes place? The Holy Spirit is at His work which He loves to do: **TEACHING!**

One other thing before we go on to speak of "our hope."

C. Knowing here means to be able to understand things which people do not naturally understand—and to come under the power and influence of that truth.

The knowledge of the truth is life-changing. And this is the way that we know that we understand the truth



of the Word. If it leaves us the same as we were before, we have not gotten it. But if the Spirit of God is teaching us, our lives will reflect that we are learning the truth of God.

But now let me go on to the second main emphasis that we find in our text:

## II. WHAT IS OUR HOPE?

Paul spoke three times in this epistle about our hope. We have it here, in 2:12, and in 4:4.

Eph. 2:12 tells us that the person who is without Christ and without God is without hope. We are going to see that that is the worst possible condition for any person to be in.

Eph. 4:4 tells us that there is only one hope--not two, or three, or a dozen, or a hundred; just ONE! Only one hope!

In Rom. 8:24, 25 we read,

For we are saved by hope:  
but hope that is seen is not hope:  
for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?  
But if we hope for that we see not,  
then do we with patience wait for it.

And in 1 Cor. 15:19 he wrote,

If in this life only we have hope in Christ,  
we are of all men most miserable (i.e., most  
to be pitied).

So we can conclude from these verses that we have not realized our hope as yet, and that it will not be realized "in this life." Therefore, it is something that is coming in the future--when we are with the Lord.

By definition the Biblical word, hope, means a certain expectation of some future good. Something good is in store for us, something that is better than anything that we have ever had here in this life. And it is certain to come. There is no doubt about it. It is just as sure as any of the promises of God.

What is it?

Let John the Apostle answer that for us. We have these words in 1 John 3:2, 3:

Beloved, now are we the sons of God,  
and it doth not yet appear what we shall be:  
but we know that, when he shall appear,

we shall be like him;  
 for we shall see him as he is.  
 And every man that hath this hope in him  
 purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Notice three things that John said which bear out what I have already told you:

- A. It is certain: "We know . . . we shall be like him."
- B. It is future: "When he shall appear."

And this third point is what I want you to pay special attention to because it is related to what is involved in our knowing. Do you remember that I said that when we know something, really know it because the Spirit of God has taught it to us, then it is going to affect our lives!

- C. It has a present, practical effect upon us: "And every man that hath this hope in him, i.e. in Christ, purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

Our hope is that we are going to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not say that like this: "Oh, I hope some day I will be like the Lord." The word hope is given a higher and richer meaning in the Word of God. When Paul said that "we are saved by hope," he meant that, when the Lord first saves us, we are not then what we will eventually be. But God guarantees that we some day will be like the Lord. That is our hope, our "one hope," our only hope. Cf. Phil. 1:6. God guarantees success with every one of His children.

But now we come to the last expression. Our hope is the one and only hope of . . .

### III. "HIS CALLING."

What do these words mean?

In Eph. 4:1 we find these words:

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord,  
 beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation  
 wherewith ye are called.

How do you and I ever come to have such a hope—that we guilty, defiled, weak, rebellious sinners, would have such a destiny: to be made like the Lord Jesus Christ?

I will tell you how we came to this hope: **WE WERE CALLED TO IT!**

Who called us? God did! Why did He call us? Because before the foundation of the world He chose us to be His very own. Were we seeking Him? No! Did we want Him? No! But when He calls men or women or boys or girls to Himself, to Christ, to salvation, **THEY COME!**

And the purpose of His calling was not just to forgive our sins through the death of Christ. Nor was it just to take us to heaven. Nor was it just to bring us into His family--as wonderful as that it. But ultimately the real purpose of His calling was to make us like the Lord Jesus.

If you need further evidence of the truth of what I have been saying, let me read to you from Romans 8, verses 28-30:

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God,  
to them who are the called  
according to his purpose.

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, **them he also called:**  
**and whom he called,** them he also justified:  
and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Concl: "That ye may know what is the hope of his calling."  
Do you know it? Can the evidence that you know it be seen in your life? Do you want to be like the Lord Jesus? Are you living like you were expecting Him to come at any time?

You see, Paul believed (and he was right) that if people really know why they are saved, what their final destiny is, that, more than anything else will make them seek to live holy lives through the power of the same Holy Spirit Who caused them to understand this great and wonderful truth. Let us not pray for the Lord to come just to get us out of this evil world. We have a job to do here. But let us pray for His coming because we want to be with the Lord Jesus Christ, and we want to be like the Lord Jesus Christ, conformed to His holy image. This is why the Word is so important to us. This is why prayer is so important to us. And this is why our daily obedience to the Word of God is so important to us. We are bound for heaven and Christ and "to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 2:14b).

## GOD'S INHERITANCE

Ephesians 1:18

Intro: We come today to the second request in Paul's prayer.

Or perhaps it would be better to say that we come to the third request--the first one being the one mentioned in verse 17, but the answer to that request would make possible the answer to the three main requests in his prayer. If the people were not given "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation," it would be impossible for them to know:

- 1) The hope of God's calling,
- 2) The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and
- 3) The exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe.

So, whether you number it #2 or #2, we come today to the request stated at the end of verse 18,

. . . that ye may know . . .

what (are) the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.

So we have three things here related to the Lord:

- 1) His calling.
- 2) His inheritance.
- 3) His power.

All three of them have to do with the Lord, and all three have to do with us, the saints, those who believe in Christ.

Some say that this inheritance is really the saints' inheritance, and therefore they would make it almost equivalent to the preceding request: that they would "know . . . the hope of his calling."

Others say that "the hope" has to do with what the saints will experience internally in heaven, and that the "inheritance" has to do with what we will have externally in heaven, in all of the glory of the new order.

But I prefer to leave the request as it stands in the text.

It seems to me that when Paul was speaking of "the hope of his calling," he was speaking of what we will be when we get to heaven. But when he spoke of "his inheritance in the saints," he was speaking of what God will have when we are changed into the likeness of Christ, as we learned last week.

Perhaps it could be best explained, at least to begin with, if we look back at that expression which Paul used three times in his doxology at the beginning of this chapter.

Look, first of all, at vv. 5, 6, and note the expression, "to the praise of the glory of his grace."

Next, look at v. 12: "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ."

And finally, look at the last words of v. 14: ". . . unto the praise of his glory."

When we think of being in heaven, we need to think about two things, and I believe Paul has set these before us in these two requests:

- 1) We need to think of what it all is going to mean to us.
- 2) But we also need to think of what it is going to mean to the Lord.

The hymn writer, Gerhard Tersteegen, has caught the meaning in these words:

'Midst the darkness, storm, and sorrow  
 One bright gleam I see;  
 Well I know the blessed morrow  
 Christ will come for me.  
 Midst the light, and peace, and glory  
 Of the Father's home,  
 Christ for me is watching, waiting,  
 Waiting 'til I come.

Where no shade nor stain can enter,  
 Nor the gold be dim,  
 In that holiness unsullied,  
 I shall walk with Him.  
 Meet companion then for Jesus,  
 From Him, for Him, made--  
 Glory of God's grace for ever  
 There in me displayed.

He who in His hour of sorrow  
 Bore the curse alone;  
 I who through the lonely desert  
 Trod where He had gone;  
 He and I, in that bright glory,  
 One deep joy shall share--  
 Mine, to be for ever with Him;  
 His, that I am there.

When I was a child many years ago, we used to sing that old Gospel song,

O that will be glory for me, glory for me,  
 glory for me;  
 When by His grace I shall look on His face,  
 That will be glory, be glory for me.  
 One day the man who was then our music director asked us to  
 sing it another way. And this is the way he had us sing it:  
 O that will be glory for Him, glory for Him,  
 glory for Him;

When by His grace I shall look on His face,  
That will be glory, be glory for Him.

Which is right? Both are! It will mean glory for us, but it will also mean glory for Him! I believe that this is what Paul had in mind when he prayed, "That ye may know . . . what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints."

So let me emphasize with you that this is . . .

I. A TRUTH WE NEED TO KNOW.

- A. It will help us to endure and to understand our trials.

We spend more of our time thinking about what our trials mean to us, and practically no time thinking about what they mean to the Lord.

- B. It will make us more diligent in our pursuit of holiness.

- C. It will help us to accept the death of our loved ones.

Do you remember that our Lord prayed when he was here on earth that we would be with Him? Listen to these words from John 17:24:

Father, I will that they also,  
whom thou has given me,  
be with me where I am;  
that they may behold my glory,  
which thou hast given me:  
for thou lovedst me before the foundation  
of the world.

- D. It will help us to keep our own lives on course.

What the the grand purpose of our lives? Why are we here on earth? For just one reason. Paul expressed it in 1 Cor. 10:31:

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink,  
or whatsoever ye do,  
do all to the glory of God.

He said practically the same thing to the Colossian church:

And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily,  
as to the Lord, and not unto men  
(Col. 3:23).

How important it is that we know this! And only the Holy Spirit can really teach us what it means so that it will not only fill our minds with understanding, but it will

transform our lives with a constant desire to please the Lord in all that we are and in all that we do.

But there is another point here:

## II. THE RICHES OF THE GLORY OF HIS INHERITANCE.

We read in v. 7 of this chapter about "the riches of his grace," i.e., God's grace. Now we are thinking today about "the riches of the glory of his inheritance."

"Riches" always suggests the idea of sufficiency, or of abundance. God exercised a sufficient abundance of His grace to save each one of us. Salvation comes free to us, but the cost to God and to the Lord Jesus Christ was enormous! We cannot begin to calculate it.

Now what is the purpose of God in salvation?

I have been saying over and over again, and I hope you will never forget it. The purpose of God in salvation is for us to become like Christ. God could not have undertaken to do a greater work.

And we have learned that God will not, God cannot, possibly fail in that task which He has undertaken with each one of us. The work may sometimes seem to make no progress at all to us, but God is at work, and He will not give up on us.

Now when we stand before Him in that glorious day, He will not only take glory to Himself from us, from what He has done in our lives through the Lord Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit, but each one of us will display to His glory "the riches of the glory of his inheritance." Others will not have to look and look at us to find anything that resembles the Lord Jesus Christ because there will be an abundant evidence of what God has been doing in our hearts since the day we were saved.

We are God's inheritance, just as primarily He is our inheritance.

You know, Paul recorded for us in this epistle two prayers that he had been praying for the Ephesian believers, as well as for other believers, too. And Paul seems to have taken this request in the first prayer as his starting-point in his second prayer. Look at the prayer in chapter 3, beginning with v. 16 and going down through v. 19. (Read.)

What an amazing expression: "Filled with all the fulness

of God." That is "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

In that day God is going to be pre-eminently satisfied with what we are. Then He will find His delight in us as He also delights in His only begotten Son. I wish I could find the words to express what I see in those words. May the Holy Spirit enable all of us to see how unspeakably precious we are to God, how He delights in us now, and how He will delight even more when His work in us is finally completed.

Let me finish with a brief reference to the last two words of our text:

### III. "THE SAINTS."

Have you ever seen a saint? Who or what is a saint?

Paul used the word in v. 1. Evidently there were "saints" in Ephesus.

Let me tell you again what a saint is. A saint is by definition one who has been set apart. Set apart by whom and from what and for what? A saint is one who has been set apart FROM sin, and set apart FOR God! A saint is not only a godly person, but a person who belongs to God!

They are the people of the world in every generation whom God has personally and specifically chosen for Himself. He has called them to Himself by His grace, and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul mentioned the saints in Ephesians, not only in 1:1 and here in v. 18, but also in 1:15; 2:19; 3:8, 18; 4:12; 5:3; 6:18. They are mentioned in every chapter. This is the word that we ought to use instead of Christians because it might help us to remember Whose we are, why we are here, and of how delighted God is going to be when we are all with Him in heaven, in our glorified state, where we will be His inheritance.

What do we get out of salvation? We get God. What does He get? He gets us. He is our inheritance; we are His inheritance. MAKE SURE THAT YOU ARE ASKING THE HOLY SPIRIT TO MAKE YOU "KNOW" THESE GREAT TRUTHS!

Concl: In closing, let me give you a test by which you can test whether or not you are a saint.

Look at Eph. 1:15, the verse which led up to this prayer. And note especially the phrase, "your love unto all the saints."



Paul took this as evidence of their salvation. We are in a position to see now that this means loving the people whom God loves. Who are the saints? They are the people in whom God has a special interest. They are the people whom He loves in a special way. He has loved them from all eternity. And it is false to say that you love God if you do not love the people He loves: His saints.

And so this is a truth that should remind us, as we think of God's people as being His inheritance, that knowing this truth will make us love each other more, and with greater love there will be greater fellowship, and with greater fellowship among the saints there will be a stronger witness to this ungodly world in which we live.

I pray for you, and I hope you are praying for me, this prayer: that we may know "what (are) the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

THE SOVEREIGN POWER OF GOD  
Ephesians 1:19-23

Intro: In Paul's prayer we have seen that he prayed for the Ephesian saints that they would know:

- 1) The hope that God has for us, the purpose of His calling us into salvation.
  - 2) The inheritance that God has in us.
- And today we come to the third request, which has to do with:
- 3) God's power.

I do not know that I have mentioned this before, but I want to point out to you that there is a progression that is to be seen in these three requests, that is, one leads to another. When we see the nature of the first two requests, we are probably asking ourselves, how can such goals be reached? How can I ever expect to be like the Lord Jesus--which is "the hope of his calling"? And what prospect do I have that God will have in me an inheritance in whom He can delight?

These are good questions, and they need to be answered. That is why Paul was also praying that they would come to understand "what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe." You see, a Christian is not a self-made man, but a God-made man. And the only reason that we have any right to anticipate the fulfillment of the first two requests is because behind them, and underneath them, and all around them, we have the mighty, sovereign power of God. It is not our power, but His! We cannot do what needs to be done, but He can!

We have two things in this request:

- 1) The description of God's power. Paul called it, "the exceeding greatness of his power.
- 2) The three manifestations of God's power, which are these:
  - a) The resurrection of Christ.
  - b) The exaltation of Christ.
  - c) The headship of Christ over the Church.
 You can clearly see each of these in the text.

Now let us go the first:

I. THE DESCRIPTION OF GOD'S POWER (Eph. 1:19).

Paul used an amazing combination of Greek words in stating this request, and we need to understand each one in order to have in our minds the nature of the divine power of our God.

Remember that we must precede each request with the words in verse 18, "that ye may know." Paul felt that every

believer needed to understand:

- 1) What God's purpose was in saving us.
- 2) The delight that God will have in us when the work is finished.
- 3) The great power by which this work is to be accomplished.

But that is not all. The knowledge of divine truth, that is, the truth of the Word of God, always affects what we are and the way we live. If truth does not change us, then we do not really understand it. So Paul was not just interested in doctrinal purity (although he was very interested in that), but he was interested in practical holiness. To know the truth of God results in both of these.

So what words did Paul use to describe God's power?

A. "His power."

Paul had in mind here the power that is uniquely God's power. It is His. No one else has such power. And He is not dependent upon anyone or anything else outside of Himself for its exercise. It is the power inherent in God Himself.

To further describe it Paul used the words, "exceeding greatness." This means that it is impossible to measure the power of God. It is great beyond any calculation. It cannot be computed in any terms. And it is "exceeding" in its greatness because, when you compare it with any other power, or all other powers combined, the power of God is greater than any of them, and greater than all of them put together!

Among other things this means that there is no power that can possibly stand in the way to keep God from accomplishing what He intends to do. You and I cannot stand in the way. Our sinful natures cannot defeat God. The world cannot defeat Him. The Devil and all of the forces of hell cannot defeat Him. He is invincible, unconquerable, undefeatable, absolute in His mighty power. In other words, He is the omnipotent, sovereign, almighty God. I run out of words when I try to portray to you "the exceeding greatness of his power." But I hope that I have said enough so that you get some idea of what is involved in these words, "the exceeding greatness of his power."

But I am not through.

Notice that Paul said also, "to us-ward who believe."

We could change the arrangement of those words, and say simply, toward us who believe.

Those of us who believe are a part of that company whom God has called. We are God's inheritance. There will be others who will join us as God calls them. But we are the saints. This power of God in its exceeding greatness is "to us-ward."

The word I want you to notice here is the word, "to." What does it mean that God's power is "to" us, or toward us?

One meaning of this little preposition is that it speaks of something being for us, for our benefit, to the our advantage.

So what Paul was saying was that he was praying that we would understand that this mighty, glorious power of God, which is greater than any other power, and greater than all other powers combined, is being exercised each day for our advantage!

Can you think of anything more wonderful than that? That is why Paul could write Romans 8:28. And Romans 8:35-37. That is why Paul could write 1 Corinthians 15:57. That is why he could write Philippians 1:6. God's power is "to us-ward who believe. And since that is true, we know that we are going to be like Christ. We know that God is going to find complete delight in us His inheritance. The greatest power that has ever existed, or that ever will exist, is toward us, the power of God. Therefore, as fantastic as Paul's first two requests were, we can humbly say to the glory of God that they are not at all out of the question. In fact, since it is God's power, it is ridiculous to think that He could ever fail.

This is what Paul was praying about. Can you think of any requests that could possibly go beyond these?

But we are not through with our words describing God's power. Note also:

B. "The working."

This word is related to the first verb in the next verse: the word "wrought." We get our word energy from this Greek word. What does this add to the word picture that Paul has already given us of God's power?

Let me describe it this way.

It is possible that God possesses all of this power, and yet He is not exercising it. He is not doing anything. That is the way we sometimes feel about the Lord, don't we? We feel that God could help us, but we can't see that He is doing anything!

Do you know what is wrong? We are looking in the wrong place. This word tells us that God is at work, that He is always working. The energy, the force, of His power is being exercised on our behalf continually. The Lord may not be doing what we want Him to do, but He is doing what He wants to do, and that means that He is using our circumstances to make us more conscious of our need of Him, and He is using our circumstances to conform us more and more into what we eventually shall be: LIKE CHRIST!

Do you remember those words spoken by our Lord, and recorded for us in John 5:17, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work"? God's power is being exercised continually toward us, toward all of us, working to make us what He wants us to be.

So let us never say that God is doing nothing. His mighty power is always at work.

But now let us look at those two words:

C. "Mighty power."

We could translate them, the might of His power.

The word for power here is different from the word used by Paul in the first part of this 19th verse. It is a word which means, if we still need to be convinced, that God's power is, as one writer has described it, "abundantly effective in relation to an end to be gained, or dominion to be exercised" (Westcott, Ephesians, p. 25).

This means that God is capable to doing all that He has ordained to be done, and when we add the word "mighty" to the word "power" the combination tells us that God is able to do it totally, unconditionally, without any exceptions, and without any limitations. God does not need any help from men or angels or special circumstances. He is capable of doing the work by Himself. In fact, He is the only One Who can do it!

This does not mean that we have nothing to do, but it does mean that whatever we do to contribute to our sanctification is obviously the result of what God is doing in our hearts. This is what Paul said in Philippians 2:12, 13.

We have these same two words again in Eph. 6:10.

There is no other way for a believer to be strong except in the Lord. If the Lord leaves us to ourselves, we will fail every time. But when we are strong in Him, we cannot fail because He cannot fail.

In Paul's letter to the Colossians, he told them also how he was praying for them. And, among other things, he said that he was praying that they would increase "in the knowledge of God" so that they might be . . .

Strengthened with all might,  
**according to his glorious power**  
(or lit., the glory of his power),  
unto all patience and longsuffering  
with joyfulness (Col. 1:11).

What is one of the first things we need to learn about God? We need to learn about His power, His mighty power, His absolute power, His sufficient power, His sovereign power. We will never have any trouble believing the purposes of God as stated in the Word, however far beyond our reach they might appear to be, when once we begin to understand what a mighty God we have.

Concl; I am going to stop there for today. I trust that the Lord has been opening the eyes of your heart as we have been considering the mighty power of God, and that now you are able to see how God's hope for us and His inheritance in us can actually be attained.

Next Sunday morning, the Lord willing, we are going to be thinking about the resurrection of Christ—and thinking about it in connection with the power of God. I think it is safe to say that most people in the world do not believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ. And do you know why they do not believe it? It is because they do not know anything about the power of God. The greatest display of the power of God was seen in the resurrection, the exaltation, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in His appointment to be "head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

If you are struggling with the truth of the resurrection of Christ, this truth which is so basic to salvation that you

cannot deny it and rightfully claim to be a Christian--if you are struggling with it, then I ask you the question which the Apostle Paul asked King Agrippa:

Why should it be thought an incredible thing to you, that God should raise the dead? (Acts 26:8).

You see, Agrippa was like some of you may be: He knew nothing of the power of God.

For those of you who are without Christ, think of God's power in connection with your salvation. If you are away from the Lord, remember that you are dealing with a mighty God, and you are no match for Him. If you are discouraged because of your apparent little progress in the things of the Lord, let me encourage you this morning to remember that you are probably discouraged because God is humbling you until you realize that He alone can make you what you want to be, and what He wants you to be.

One song that the children of Israel were constantly singing in the OT was this song. They sang it for the first time when they had crossed the Red Sea.

The Lord is my strength, and my song,  
and he is become my salvation (Ex. 15:2a).

Unless the Lord is our strength, He will never be our song,  
and unless the Lord is our strength, He will never be our salvation.

He by himself hath sworn, I on his oath depend;  
I shall, on eagle's wings upborne, to heav'n ascend:  
I shall behold his face, I shall his pow'r adore,  
And sing the wonders of his grace for evermore.

GOD'S POWER DISPLAYED  
Ephesians 1:19-23

Intro: Last week we saw the description of God's power in verse 19 of Ephesians 1. We learned that God's power is possessed by God alone--and "by God" I mean, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each has divine power; each has the same power.

But we saw also that it is really indescribable. It is greater than any other single power in the universe; it is greater than all of those powers combined. It were possible for us to combine into one power, all of the power of angels, all of the power of Satan and the demons, all of the power of men and nations, all of the powers contained in nature itself, they would not be any match for the power of God. In fact, we know, do we not, that "there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. 13:1b). All of creation derives its power from God. Paul reminded the men of Athens that one of their poets recognized this when he wrote, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). When God withdraws His power from any created power, that power no longer exists. Therefore, any person who thinks that he can withstand God is a first class fool! God is the greatest of all powers and He is Himself the source of all power.

How can Paul help us to "know . . . the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe"?

He might have chosen creation as the greatest example of His great power. Surely that is awe-inspiring. God brought this vast universe into being with no raw material to begin with, and He did it simply by the word of His mouth. "He spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast" (Psa. 33:9). The Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans that in creation we understand God's "eternal power and Godhead" (Rom. 1:20b). But as great as His work in creation was, that was not His greatest work.

Let us look at another work: God's work in the incarnation of Christ.

It seems that that surely has to be a candidate for one of the greatest works of God--and it is! Quoting from Psalm 40 our Lord said to the Father, "A body hast thou prepared me" (Heb. 10:5b). But here Paul did not say anything about the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world.

Let us think for a moment about the power that God displays in the transformation of a sinner into a child of God. That is called in 2 Cor. 5:17, "a new creature," or better, a new



creation. That is beyond the realm of what we can do for ourselves. It is beyond the realm of human science. Only God can do such a work, but that is not mentioned here.

Perhaps we could mention the work of Christ when He comes to reign. He will subdue all nations. He will put an end to war. All men will recognize Him as King of kings, and Lord of lords.

How many world rulers have there been who have tried to conquer the world, and to subdue all men, but have failed. This surely would rate as one of the greatest things that God will ever do. But Paul did not mention the coming of Christ here, except possibly by implication.

I could mention God's miracles, Christ's miracles, the Holy Spirit's miracles--all of them far beyond what man could ever do. And yet not one of them is specifically mentioned here.

What did Paul mention?

He mentioned:

- 1) The resurrection of Christ.
- 2) The ascension of Christ.
- 3) The authority of Christ over the Church.

Some of the things which I mentioned previously are involved in these, but these are the three things which Paul mentioned specifically, things by which he expected that the Ephesian believers would come to understand the exceeding greatness of God's power.

Now keep in mind those important words which I called special attention to last week--the words, "to us-ward who believe," or as we would say it today, toward us who believe. And perhaps this explains why Paul did not mention creation, or some of those other manifestations of God's power which would have been more limited in their scope. Paul was speaking about the power of God and what God had done to carry forth the perfection of His people to its ultimate completion.

This morning I want you to think with me about THE POWER OF GOD DISPLAYED IN THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST. And let me say again so you will not forget it, this is God's power displayed IN OUR BEHALF in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Surely I will not have any argument from any of you that this rightfully has a place in which we see a supreme display of God's power. It is not wonder that so many people reject the truth of Christ's resurrection. There is nothing like it in all of human history, and it is a work that no one but God could have done.

Here Paul definitely says that it was God who raised Jesus

Christ from the dead. (Read vv. 19, 20a.) See also Rom. 6:4; 8:11.

Let us not be bothered by the verses which say that the Lord raised Himself from the dead (cf. John 10:17, 18), or that the Holy Spirit raised the Lord from the dead (cf. 1 Pet. 3:18). All Three Members of the Godhead were involved in the resurrection of Christ. It was an act of the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It was accomplished by that power of God which is called, exceedingly great!

Now, in speaking of the resurrection of Christ, I want to do it under three headings:

- 1) What it means, i.e., what are we talking about when we speak of Christ's resurrection?
- 2) What it required, or, why did it require the power of God?
- 3) What it accomplished. This is where we will be concerned with that little phrase, "to us-ward who believe."

#### I. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST: WHAT IT MEANS.

Come to the Tuesday Class when we start on September 20 and you will learn more about the resurrection of Christ as we consider the last two chapters of Luke's Gospel. But for this morning I want to be clear that when the Bible speaks of the resurrection of Christ, it means that Jesus Christ really, in a physical sense, died, and that when He was raised from the dead, it was a physical, bodily resurrection. There certainly were spiritual matters involved, but Jesus Christ came back to life from the dead! The Bible teaches just that. The idea that the resurrection of Christ was nothing more than a reference to the way that He lived on in the hearts of His followers, is a blatant denial of the plain teaching of Scripture. Jesus Christ really died, and He was really raised from the dead.

But there was one unique thing about His resurrection. He was not the first one to be raised from the dead, but He was the first One to be raised never to die again! Listen to Romans 6:9, 10:

Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead  
dieth no more;  
death hath no more dominion over him.  
For in that he died, he died unto sin once:  
but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

I hope that we all understand this. Even if you do not believe this, I want you to know that this is what the Bible teaches--a real, physical resurrection. Nothing else could satisfy God.

My second point:

II. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST: WHAT IT REQUIRED.

In short, it required a sovereign, divine power. The power of Rome was against it. The power of the Jews was against it. All of the forces of hell were arrayed in one mighty show of force to keep Jesus Christ in the grave.

But what a pathetic spectacle they give us, as though they could hinder the resurrection of Christ by sealing the tomb and setting a guard there to make sure that no one stole our Lord's body away.

However, while they were guarding the tomb, while the stone was still closing the entrance to the tomb, the Lord Jesus came out. Remember that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb, not to let the Lord out, but to let the disciples in!

You see, the death of Jesus Christ was not an ordinary death. It was an atoning death. It was a substitutionary death. Jesus Christ came to the earth to die for sinners. But His primary object in dying for them was to offer a sacrifice that would be acceptable to God. If this had not been accomplished, if God had not been fully satisfied with the death of Christ, the Lord would never have been raised. It goes without saying that only God can raise the dead. Man would like to do it, but never has been able to do it. Whenever people have been raised from the dead, whether by prophet or apostle, it has always and only been by the power of God. But that was true in a very special, a unique sense, in case of our Lord.

But let me go on to my last point:

III. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST: WHAT IT ACCOMPLISHED.

Remember we are relating this to that statement at the beginning of verse 19, "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe . . . which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." The question is this: What did God accomplish for us when He raised Jesus Christ from the dead? What did He do for us that was the result of the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

It would be impossible to do justice to this great and grand subject in the time that remains, but let me point out how the power of God was displayed for us in the resurrection of our Saviour.

- A. It means that Christ made full provision for our justification.

Cf. Rom. 4:25, referring to Christ, says that He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. How do we reconcile this with Rom. 5:9 which says that we are "justified by his blood," that is, by our Lord's work on the Cross? Also in Rom. 5:10 Paul said that "we are reconciled to God by the death of his Son."

We cannot preach the resurrection of Christ without preaching the death of Christ. But it is also true that the meaning of the resurrection of Christ is inseparable from His death.

The answer is this: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). The resurrection shows that that work was finished. That needs to be added to what Christ has done in dying for those for whom He died. God, by the resurrection of Christ, was bearing witness to the finished work of salvation. Therefore, every believer who understands the resurrection of Christ must have assurance of his salvation.

- B. By the resurrection of Christ we who are saved have present deliverance from the power of sin.

Cf. Rom. 6:4-12.

We are dead unto sin; we are alive unto God. These are the companion truths which God has provided for us by His mighty power through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What is the purpose of our salvation? It is that we would become like our Lord Jesus Christ. What keeps us from being like He is? Just one thing: SIN! In raising Christ from the dead, God made full provision for our deliverance from sin in raising Christ from the dead. He is our Helper, our Life, our Strength, our Deliverer. He could have been none of those to us if He had not been raised from the dead.

None of us can deliver ourselves from our sins. Only God can do that, and that is exactly what He has done!

But there is one other thing that I want to mention:

- C. The resurrection of Jesus Christ guarantees the resurrection of every believer.

Cf. Phil. 3:20, 21.

The reasoning runs like this: If God were able to resurrect the Lord from His death, doing the greater work, then He is certainly able to deliver us from death, to raise us from the dead.

Romans 6:5 says,

For if we have been planted together  
in the likeness of His death,  
we shall be also  
in the likeness of his resurrection.

Who will we be like when Christ comes? We will be like Him. And it makes no difference whether we die beforehand, or are still living when He comes back, the change will be just the same, and it will be for ever.

Concl: I am as sure as I can be that the main thought that Paul had in mind when he spoke of knowing the exceeding greatness of God's power when He raised Christ from the dead, was that we might experience the power of God in delivering us from our sins. Do you not think that Paul had this in mind when he wrote the Philippian epistle at the same time that he wrote to the Ephesians, and said,  
That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection,  
and the fellowship of his sufferings,  
being made conformable unto his death;  
If by any means I might attain  
unto the resurrection of the dead.

Let me remind you again what I have said several times about that word, "know." To "know" the greatness of God's power is not only the ability to describe something of its greatness, but it is to experience the greatness of that power in our lives every day. There is every reason why we should struggle with our sins, but there is no reason why you and I who know Christ should be defeated by our sins. The power of God which raised Christ is the power that is available for us that we might be able to live lives, not defeated by sin, but victorious over sin--and all "to the praise of the glory of his grace."

GOD'S POWER IN CHRIST'S EXALTATION  
Ephesians 1:19-23

Intro: We come to that part of Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1 where Paul said that God raised Christ from the dead . . .

And set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,  
Far above all principality, and power,  
and might, and dominion,  
and every name that is named, not only in this world,  
but also in that which is to come.

Thus, we are concerned with the ascension of Christ, and our Lord's present ministry in heaven. These, combined with the resurrection of Christ, make up His exaltation.

Isaiah, that great OT prophet, predicted this when he wrote of the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, " . . . he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high" (Isa. 52:13b).

Our Lord Jesus prayed about His exaltation in His prayer recorded for us in John 17. These were His words:

Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son,  
that thy Son also may glorify thee . . .  
And now, O Father,  
glorify thou me with thine own self  
with the glory which I had with thee  
before the world was (John 17:1b, 5).

Mark gave this account of the ascension of our Lord:  
So then after the Lord had spoken unto them,  
He was received up into heaven,  
and sat on the right hand of God (Mark 16:19).

Luke stated it like this in his Gospel:  
And it came to pass, while he blessed them,  
he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven  
(Luke 24:51).

And Luke wrote this in the book of Acts:  
And when he had spoken these things,  
while they beheld, he was taken up;  
and a cloud received him from their sight.  
And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven  
as he went up, behold, two men stood by them  
in white apparel; Which also said,  
Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?  
this same Jesus shall so come in like manner  
as ye have seen him go into heaven (Acts 1:9-11).

After Paul had spoken to the Philippians about the death of Christ in his epistle to them, he said, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him . . ." (Phil. 2:9a). And even in the fourth chapter of Ephesians, and verse 8, we have another

reference to the ascension of Christ in these words, quoting from Psalm 68:18,

When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive,  
and gave gifts unto men.

So the ascension, the glorification, the exaltation of Christ, is clearly taught and well-supported in Scripture.

Think of the miracle of it all.

We live in what has been called the space age, but no man can do even today what our Lord did almost 2,000 years ago. He ascended into heaven, through the farthest reaches of this universe, without a space suit, without a space capsule, without a ground crew to monitor His flight. Dressed in clothes like He wore while living in this world, He ascended back into heaven.

Paul, writing to Timothy said in his first epistle,  
And without controversy,  
great is the mystery of godliness:  
He who was manifested in the flesh,  
justified in the Spirit, seen of angels,  
preached unto the Gentiles,  
believed on in the world,  
received up into glory.

The ascension of Christ is an essential part of the Christian faith.

And that we might know something of how glorious His ascension was, Paul said here in our text that it was . . .  
Far above all principality, and power, and might,  
and dominion, and every name that is named,  
not only in this world,  
but also in that which is to come.

What was Paul talking about here? Let us examine his words closely.

We have five words here, all of which are expressive of authority and power. They are:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) "All principality."</li> <li>2) "And power."</li> <li>3) "And might."</li> <li>4) "And dominion."</li> <li>5) "And every name that is named, not only in this world (or age), but also in that which is to come."</li> </ol> | } SEE THESE FIRST TWO WORDS IN EPH 6:12 -<br>THERE, IN A BAD SENSE; HERE, BOTH GOOD + BAD.<br>THERE, DEMONIC; HERE, HUMAN AND ANGELIC<br>(INCLUDING DEMONIC). |
|--|---|

The word "all" goes with all of these words. And so Paul was saying that there is no exception to the declaration that he was making concerning the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- 1) "Principality" -- a word which speaks of anyone who holds

the first place in power. Bishop Moule used the words, "every government" (p. 50). And it can mean earthly as well as heavenly, demonic as well as that of the good angels.

- 2) "Power" is the Greek word for authority. This word speaks of sovereignty because it means the freedom to exercise the power that has been delegated to anyone.
- 3) "Might" is power which one holds because of who he is. Again, keep in mind that Paul was speaking not only of human, earthly powers, but of heavenly powers--good and bad.
- 4) "Dominion" is lit., lordship, perhaps referring to the extent of a person's or angel's power, since we think of the leader of a great nation as being more influential than the ruler of a small nation.
- 5) "Every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is come." Sometimes individual people have power and authority which goes beyond the power they hold by reason of their position. That is, they have power over other powers. They rule over other rulers. The Pharaohs had this. The Caesars had this. Hitler had this. There are many illustrations.

We have a situation here that is similar to that which we had in verse 19 when we were talking about the power of God, only there we were thinking about the power of God as it is in Himself. Here we are speaking of the power of God manifested in the resurrection and exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ in comparison with all of the other powers of the universe, whether human, or angelic, or demonic. This verse would have to be considered as among the greatest statements in Scripture of the absolute sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ over all men and angels, however, great they might be, not only for the time then present, but for all future time, INCLUDING ALL OF ETERNITY. None is greater than our Lord now, and no one ever will be! This is what Paul was speaking about!

There is no nation, or group of nations, no individual human being or group of human beings, no angel or group of angels, not even the Devil himself and all of the forces of hell, which can even begin to compare in their power with the power of the Lord Jesus Christ! He is "far above" any one of them; He is far above all of them put together.

This is what the Lord had in mind when He spoke those words in Matthew 28:18, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Think about this great statement, and meditate



upon these words until your heart is overwhelmed with the glory of them, with the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. What did Paul write in Phil. 2:9-11? "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him . . ." (Quote the whole passage.)

And this Lord Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8).

Now, before I close, let me ask and answer two questions, and I can only touch upon them, and perhaps not even answer them fully.

The first is: WHAT IS JESUS CHRIST DOING AT THE FATHER'S RIGHT HAND? The second is: WHAT SHOULD THIS GREAT TRUTH MEAN TO YOU AND TO ME AS THE LORD'S PEOPLE?

I. WHAT IS JESUS CHRIST DOING NOW AT THE FATHER'S RIGHT HAND?

A. He is there as our Paraclete and as our Intercessor.

On this point I would call your attention to two passages: Hebrews 7:25 and 1 John 2:1. This gives a further guarantee to our salvation. He prays for us. He intercedes for us. His pleads our cause.

B. He is there giving gifts to His Church.

Let me save this until next week when we will be talking about Christ as the Head of the Church. But the Scripture, which I have already called to your attention, is Eph. 4:8.

C. He is there preparing a place for you and me.

Cf. John 14:1-3.

The fourth and last thing I will mention is this:

D. He is there "expecting."

The passage that I have reference to is Hebrews 10:12, 13:

But this man, after he had offered  
one sacrifice for sins for ever,  
sat down on the right hand of God;  
From henceforth expecting  
till his enemies be made his footstool.

This is what the Father has promised Him according to Psalm 110:1. It may not seem like that will ever be, but it is just as sure as any other promise that the

Father has made. He made this promise to His Son, and that day is coming when our Lord will be displayed in all of His glory, and will reign as King of kings, and Lord of lords. He is waiting for that, anticipating that, "expecting" that! And so should you and I be looking forward to that. The nations may rage now against God. It looked to them like they had gotten the victory over God's Son. But what they did in crucifying Him only was to lead, in the providence of God, to the greatest display of God's power that the world has ever been conscious of when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15b).

Now I come to the second and last question:

II. WHAT SHOULD THIS GREAT TRUTH MEAN TO YOU AND TO ME AS THE PEOPLE OF GOD?

This is a question which I cannot answer fully this morning, and perhaps I do not know enough to give a complete answer. I can certainly say this: It ought to mean everything to us.

The book of Hebrews is built around this truth of the ascension of Christ, and His present ministry for us at the Father's right hand. Read these verses at your first opportunity: Heb. 1:1-3; 8:1; 10:12, 13; 12:1, 2.

But let me answer my question from another passage in the books of Hebrews: Heb. 4:14-16.

Seeing then that we have a great high priest,  
that is passed into (through) the heavens,  
Jesus the Son of God,  
let us hold fast our profession.  
For we have not an high priest  
which cannot be touched  
with the feeling of our infirmities;  
but was in all point tempted like as we are,  
yet without sin.  
Let us therefore come boldly  
unto the throne of grace,  
that we may obtain mercy,  
and find grace to help in time of need.

I trust that all of us who know the Lord are praying. We certainly need to pray, to pray continually, and to pray fervently, and to pray with great expectation. What is it that gives us our greatest assurance in prayer? It is this: our Lord Jesus Christ is at the right hand of the Father, His place of exaltation, and He is there as our

Great High Priest. We come to the Father in His Name Who is greater than all of the other great powers of the universe combined. And what we need, He can and will provide. This is just one thing, but a very important thing, that the truth of Christ's exaltation should mean to us.

Concl: Let me close with the words of a hymn (#128, verses 3 and 4):

Jesus, hail! enthroned in glory,  
There for ever to abide;  
All the heav'nly hosts adore thee,  
Seated at thy Father's side:  
There for sinners thou art pleading;  
There thou dost our place prepare;  
Ever for us interceding,  
Till in glory we appear.

Worship, honor, pow'r, and blessing  
Thou art worthy to receive:  
Loudest praises without ceasing,  
Meet it is for us to give.  
Help, ye bright angelic spirits,  
Bring your sweetest, noblest lays;  
Help to sing our Saviour's merits,  
Help to chant Immanuel's praise.

CHRIST, THE EXALTED HEAD OF THE CHURCH  
Ephesians 1:19-23

Intro: We are coming to the third way in which God displayed His power. God not only raised the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and exalted Him to His right hand, but He appointed our Lord as "Head over all things to the Church." We see this in verses 22 and 23 of Paul's prayer in chapter 1 of Ephesians.

And so, at this point in the Epistle, Paul introduced that which was to be what we can identify as the prominent theme of this epistle: the Church.

It was mentioned for the first time here, twice in chapter 3, and six times in chapter 5--making a total of nine times.

Cf. Eph. 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 32.

But when we add to that Paul's references to the other term which he used here as a synonym for the Church, "his body," we have many more references which need to be included.

They are found once in chapter 1, once in chapter 2, four times in chapter 4, and three times in chapter 5--making a total of nine times. And so we have the word "church" nine times, and the word "body" nine times--making a total of eighteen times that both words are used.

Cf. Eph. 1:23; 2:16; 4:4, 12, 16 (2x); 5:23, 28, 30.

If you mark your Bible, it would be good to mark the verses where these two words are used. It will help you to remember that this was really the theme of Paul's letter to the Ephesians: the Church, the Body of Christ.

Now we need to make sure that we all understand what we are talking about when we speak of "the church, which is his body." Therefore, let us, first of all, discuss:

## I. THE CHURCH.

### A. The meaning of the word.

The literal meaning of the word is, called out. Those who are make up the church are called out. But this raises the question, Who does the calling, and if the called ones are called out from something, and to something, what are they called from, and what are they called to?

The NT epistles have a great deal to say about the

calling which God issues to His people, much more than we could possibly cover in one message. But let me summarize briefly what the NT teaches about the calling.

True Christians are the called ones. God has called us, as Peter said in his first epistle, "out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:9). By that he meant that, in saving us, God has called us out of the world and its sin, and He has called us into the "marvelous light" of His salvation in which we see things as they really are. It means that a true Christian cannot go on living like he lived before he became a Christian. We must assume that a person whose life has not been changed has not been called--at least, not yet! The true believer has been called to Christ. He belongs to the Lord, and, as such, he is a part of that group of called out ones, the Church.

Paul mentioned our calling only twice in this epistle to the Ephesians, and both references are found in the 4th chapter. See verses 1 and 4. (Read.)

It is very important for every true child of God to know this. The church is called to Christ to live a life that is different from the world, a life of separation from sin, a life of holiness, a life that shows that we are new creatures in Christ. So often we are concerned only about when the Church began, and how long it is going to be in this world, that we forget what the Church is. Paul was actually describing what the Church is when he wrote the words that we find in Romans 12:2. He said

And be not conformed to this world:  
but be ye transformed  
by the renewing of your mind,  
that ye may prove what is that good,  
and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

But let us look also at the synonym for the Church:

B. "His body," i.e., the body of Christ.

In the Scripture reading from 1 Corinthians 12 we see that the Church is called the Body of Christ to show us the intimate relationship that we who are true Christians have to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are as closely related to Christ as our bodies are related to our heads. You see in our text, that Christ is the Head of the Church. We will come to that in a moment. But for now just notice how Paul, speaking

by the Holy Spirit, likened the Church to the human body with all of its members. God has given each one of us the body that we have, and every member of our bodies is important. Together the members of the body, along with the head, form an amazing unity. The members of our bodies work in cooperation with each other, and in support of each other. And our bodies receive their directions from our heads. I do not have to be any more detailed than that. I think that we can all see the point that the Apostle Paul was making. To be members of the Body of Christ is to be a part of the most intimate relationship and fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ that there can possibly be. We are a part of Him; He is a part of us. He is in us, and we are in Him.

How amazing this is! It is so wonderful that we need to meditate a great deal on it before the truth of it begins to become clear to us. But, once it does, life for us never can be the same again.

Bishop Moule, in his commentary on Ephesians, has this to say:

Yes, this is here given as the final glory of the infinitely exalted Christ. Angels and archangels are subject unto him. But believing men are joined to Him, with a union such that He and they, by this same messenger of His, are called elsewhere (1 Cor. xii. 12) one "Christ" (p. 59).

I am not overlooking the question as to when the Church began, and how long the Church will be here. We, quite obviously, are going to be dealing with this subject a great deal in this epistle. But let me simply say here that I believe the Church began on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, and that it will be here until the Lord comes to take us away. And I believe that it began on the Day of Pentecost because, as we heard from 1 Corinthians 12:13, we are baptized by the Spirit into the Body of Christ, and there is no occasion in Scripture of the baptism of the Spirit until Acts 2.

But let me leave that part of our subject for the time being, and go on to my second point. It is:

## II. CHRIST, THE HEAD OF THE BODY.

What does it mean that He is the Head of the Body?

First, notice that it was by the power of God that He was given this position, and it is by the power of God that

He continues in this position. God is the One Who made Him to be the Head of the Body. He was not elected by the Apostles, nor by some assembly of the early Church. He was given that place by the Father. And it required the same power that raised Christ from the dead, the same power by which He was exalted to sit at the right hand of the Father. We are dealing with a subject now which required omnipotence! Please do not forget that. It will keep you from treating this subject lightly. It is a subject of tremendous importance.

In this epistle to the Ephesians Paul referred to Christ as the Head of the Church three times: cf. Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23.

But what does Christ's Headship mean?

Notice carefully what Paul said here in verse 23. He said that Christ is "the head over all things to the church."

If you will think about that for a moment, you will see that Paul was saying two things:

- 1) That our Lord is "the head over all things."
- 2) And that He holds this relationship with respect to the Church.

Let me explain what I believe that means.

It speaks of the absolute sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ. This confirms what he had just said in the latter part of v. 20 and in v. 21.

Just as the Lord is sovereign over men and angels and all of the powers of heaven and earth, so He is sovereign over the Church. The Church is to live for Him. The Church is to do His will. The Church exists for His glory. To say that Christ is the Head of the Church is the equivalent of saying that He is the Lord of the Church. The Church takes its directions from the Lord. The Church may have its leaders, but Christ is the Leader of the leaders. The Church may have its pastors, but Christ is the Supreme Pastor, the Pastor over all of the lesser pastors. The pastor is a shepherd to a part of the flock; the Lord Jesus is the Chief Shepherd. The highest authority in the NT Church is the risen, exalted, glorified Son of God. None is greater than He.

But the second part of this Headship is that Christ is Head "over all things to the Church." This means that as "all things, whatever they may be, affect the Church, Jesus Christ is continually exercising His power on

behalf of the Church. This applies to all circumstances, whatever they may be--trials, defeats, wars, famine, disease, any and everything that touches our lives in any way, the Lord Jesus Christ is continually exercising His power so that nothing can stand in the way of His purposes being fulfilled in and by and through His Church.

The Lord was saying essentially this when He commended Peter for his great confession. He said,  
 Thou art Petros,  
 and upon this Petra I will build my church,  
 and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it  
 (Matt. 16:18).

As you and I are here today, Jesus Christ is still the Person that Peter said He was: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." He is the One with sovereign authority over us and for us. He will see to it that we do what He has ordained to be done, and He will see to it that nothing stands in our way. Instead, the fiercest opposition will only serve His purposes. That was true in the death of Christ; it will be true whatever may happen to us.

But I have one more point which I must make. Let me call it:

### III. THE THIRD TITLE OF THE CHURCH.

Paul has called the company of God's people, the Church. He has also called us, the Body of Christ. Now Paul adds a third title, as glorious as the others, and just as surprising as the others. He calls us, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

In Eph. 4:10 Paul was speaking of Christ when he said,  
 He that descended is the same also that ascended  
 far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.

How can we be "the fulness of him that filleth all in all"? Christ is not only omnipotent, but He is omnipresent! Here is something that defies explanation, and it defies full understanding. We can only stand in awe at the greatness, the majesty, the transcendent glory of our Saviour--in a body, and yet the heavens of the heavens cannot contain Him.

I repeat: How can we be the fulness of such a Person as the Son of God, our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ? Surely it does not mean that He needs us to complete Himself! No, it does not mean that. But it does mean that, because of what He has done for us, and because of



the relationship we have to Him (He is the Head; we are His body), it is His purpose that through His Church His perfections should be manifested on the earth! This means that in the assembling of the people of God in local churches, a part of the whole body of Christ, the very presence of God should be manifested, His power and glory should be displayed through His people.

The Church is called "the fulness of him" because "it holds or contains the fulness of Christ" (Eadie, p. 113).

Listen to the way Paul expressed it to the Colossian church:

For in him (Christ) dwelleth  
all of the fulness of the Godhead bodily.  
And ye are complete (made full) in him,  
which is the head of all principality and power  
(Col. 1:9, 10).

The Apostle John wrote in John 1:16, "And of his fulness have all we received," and so we are his fulness, as Eadie says (p. 113).

Look at the purpose of Paul's second prayer for the Ephesians in Eph. 3:19b-21).

Concl: We would not dare to say such a thing about the Church, of which all of us who are saved are a part, if it were not written in the Word. But it is! And, therefore, we must believe it, and seek to understand more about it, and to pray that it will be realized in our lives, and especially in our fellowship together.

Do you remember that our Lord said,  
For where two or three are gathered together  
in my name,  
there am I in the midst of them (Matt. 19:20).

This is a subject so great that none of us can expect to comprehend it fully in this life. But we need to seek to understand it more than we do, and to pray that it may be realized in our fellowship together.

But let me say that we have two things at hand that will help us:

- 1) One is a greater comprehension of the resurrection and the ascension of Christ, and the place that He holds over the Church. This includes our personal and corporate submission to His authority over us as our Head.
- 2) The second thing that we have at hand to help is this epistle to the Ephesians. I can guarantee that, if we diligently seek to understand this epistle under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we will know more about what

it means that we are the fulness of Christ, and how we manifest more of that fulness to each other and to the world.

Therefore, will you be faithful in reading this epistle over and over until its truth becomes clearer to your own heart? And will you pray for me as I speak each Sunday morning that the Lord will teach me so that I can teach you? There are greater things ahead of us as a church than we have ever realized. Let us pray that we will not miss what the Lord has for us, but that we will live like we ought to live as a called out people who are so united to Christ as His Body that His fulness is displayed through the channel of our lives.