

EPHESIANS - Introduction

October 12, 2002

The book of Acts tells us that the Apostle Paul first visited Ephesus on his second missionary journey. See Acts 18:19-21. He returned there on his third missionary journey. For this read Acts 20:17-38. But he wrote to the Ephesian church later from his imprisonment in Rome. This was one of the so-called *Prison Epistles* which were Philippians, Philemon, Colossians and Ephesians. This was very likely in the early 60's A.D., probably 62 or 63.

It is very similar to the Colossian epistle, but not as polemical (argumentative and defensive) as Colossians which was concerned with the Gnostic heresies.

Ephesus was a very important center, and became the capital of the Roman province of Asia, headed by a governor. This is the territory that is occupied today by Turkey.

During Paul's days the work in Ephesus was thriving, but it was the center of worship for the goddess Diana. But when we come to our Lord's letter to the Ephesians in Revelation 2:1-7, the decline and ultimate end of the church in Ephesus did not come primarily from doctrinal error (although that was involved), but through a growing lack of love for the Lord Jesus Christ. This ought to be a solemn warning to us because it undoubtedly has been the cause of the destruction of many churches throughout the history of the church. It is possible for churches to be doctrinal sound, but spiritually dying.

A lot has been written about Ephesus in the commentaries, but I am going to leave in introduction at this point to go on to the exposition of the epistle.

The first point in the outline is:

I. The Apostle Paul's greeting (Eph. 1:1-2).

1:1 The Apostle Paul's name originally was Saul, Saul of Tarsus. See Acts 13:19 for the last time in Scripture he was referred to as Saul. See also Acts 9:11. We don't really know what his name was change, or who changed it – just that it was changed. Saul was a Jewish name; Paul, a Roman. Paul means "little." It was not uncommon for men to change their names in those days, but why it was changed with Paul remains unknown. One thing we can say is that it marked a real change in his life.

"An apostle of Jesus Christ" – Although he had not been with the original twelve, yet he was an apostle, one of the qualifications being that he had to be a man who had seen the Lord. After the Lord returned to Jerusalem after he had been in Damascus, the believers in Jerusalem knew about him and were suspicious of him. But it was Barnabas who assured them about the change that had taken place in Saul's life. And we read this in Acts 9:27:

27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

Later when Paul was writing to the Corinthians where his apostleship had been questioned, we read that the Paul Lord said this which we find in 1 Corinthians 9:1-2:

1 Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?

2 If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.

Now when Paul claimed to be an apostle, he was boasting about it. He was expressing the authority that he had received from the Lord to write what he had written in his letter to them in Ephesus, and which was to be circulated among the neighboring churches which explains why the words “at Ephesus” are not found in some of the MSS of this epistle. It contained a special revelation given to Paul which needed divine authority for it to be received. And his authority was twofold:

- 1) “Of Jesus Christ” through Whom he had been chosen and called.
- 2) “By the will of God.”

He had been commissioned by God to be a personal representative of “Jesus Christ.” There can be no higher credentials than these.

But to whom was Paul called to be “an apostle.” It was “to the saints which are at Ephesus.” Now we know that the emphasis here is not upon Ephesus. If that were the case, then the epistle would only be of historic value to us, and not for our personal attention as to what we are to believe, and how we are to live. Generally the people of God today are called Christians. And that is a good name. But “Christian” or “Christians” are mentioned only three times in the NT, *but according to the concordance in my computer, the people of God are called “saints” sixty-two times in the NT.* What are saints? First of all, they are people. Secondly, they are special people especially to God. That are holy people. The word “holy” basically means a separated people. They are people who have been set apart for God, people who have experienced the transforming power of the God in their lives, people who have been saved from the penalty of their sins by faith in the death of Jesus Christ, and people who have been saved from the power and dominion of sin. Are they perfect? No, but by the grace of God they are headed for perfection. And this epistle is one of sixty-six documents in the Bible which have been given to us by the Holy Spirit to tell us what we need to know and to believe, and how we are to live, if we are to be saints not only in name, but in fact. And we are called saints in the Bible because that is what we are now, but God’s work in us, while it is guaranteed, will not be completed until we see the Lord. See 1 John 3:1-3; Romans 8:28-30. *And we have the same wonderful truth right here in Ephesians 1 – in verses 3 through 14.*

But the Apostle Paul not only called the people of God “saints,” but he called them “faithful in Christ Jesus.” Well, faithful people are people who believe what they are supposed to believe, and who do what they are supposed to do. Where do we learn what we are supposed to believe? We learn it in the Bible. Where do we learn what we are supposed to do, or, to put it another way, where do we learn how we are supposed to learn? We find these instructions, actually, commandments, in the same place – in the Bible. Then the Bible becomes a very, very important book to us, doesn’t it? It certainly is! But those of us who know the Lord have to confess that we are not always faithful. We want to be, but we often fail. But here the Apostle Paul states a truth which brings holiness and faithfulness into the realm of possibility for us. And they are the words “in Christ Jesus.” What do they mean?

They mean that when we were saved, when we trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, the Lord Jesus came to live in us. And this is the way God the Father sees us; we are “in Christ Jesus,” and Jesus Christ is in us! We can believe that we can be holy here on earth, and that we can be faithful to God here on earth, because the Lord is our life. Now I don’t want to be mistaken on these points. We are never going to be perfect in this life, but by trusting the Lord Who has not only come to live with us, but in us, as we grow in our knowledge of the Word of God, and in our knowledge of the Son of God, even though we often fail, yet the Lord Jesus is going to see to it that day by day we are becoming more holy and more faithful.

Now God saved Saul of Tarsus, and made him Paul the Apostle, not only to give us this good news that we have in verse 1, but the Lord Jesus gave this same good news to Paul for himself, as well as for us. Isn’t wonderful to see how much the Spirit of God has packed into this one verse! We need to talk about these things, and make sure that other Christians know about all of this too. But before I go on with you to verse 2 of

Ephesians 1, I want to ask you to turn with me to another letter that Paul wrote from prison at the same time that he wrote Ephesians. You will find it in your Bible just after Ephesians; it is the book of Philippians. It, too, was written while Paul was in prison in Rome. It is a very happy letter. Even though Paul was under arrest and didn't know how all of that was going to turn out, he wrote to the church in Philippi telling them that they ought to be rejoicing all of the time.

But before I show you what I want to read to you, I want to tell you a little bit about Paul before he became a Christian. He was a Jew and he knew a lot about what was written in the OT, but he had the idea that if you were a Jew, that gave you a better chance with God than you would if you were a Gentile. And he also had the idea that most Jewish people had, that getting right with God depended not upon what God would do for him, but what he needed to do for God. And so he had devoted his life to punishing Gentile Christians as well as any Jews who had become Christians. But as he was going from Jerusalem up north to Damascus, he had papers from Jewish leaders making it legal for him to bring Christians back to Jerusalem in chains for no other crime than that they were trusting in Jesus Christ.

But then the Lord appeared to him in a very miraculous way, and his heart was completely changed! He saw that he had been on the wrong track all of his life. He had even watched coats of a group of Jews while they stoned Stephen to death. But the Lord Jesus Christ showed him that a right relationship with God is not based upon we do for Him, but what God and Jesus Christ do for us. And right away his OT came to life to him, and he began to preach what he had previously tried to destroy. He suddenly realized that the Jesus he had hated was actually the Messiah that the Jews were looking for, and he began to preach the faith which he once hoped to destroy completely.

Now I want you to see what he wrote to the church at Philippi about his change. Turn to the third chapter of Philippians. In verse 3 we read how the Lord had changed him. Then in verse 4 he begins to tell how he used to glory in who he was, and what he had done UNTIL Jesus Christ met him on the road to Damascus and changed him completely. (Read down through verse 14 if time permits.)

But now let us look at the last part of his greeting in verse 2 of Ephesians 1.

1:2 What did Paul need, and what do you and I need, in order to become more saintly, more holy, and more faithful? We need "grace," and we need "peace." Where do we find them? They are gifts, daily gifts, "from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." Now when Paul said, "our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, he was saying that you are going to find "grace . . . peace" from the same Persons that I find them. "From God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." If holiness and faithfulness were to come from us, we would never make it! But they don't come from us; they come from God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and may I add, from the Holy Spirit.

We are saved by grace. Paul is going to remind us of this when we get to chapter 2, verses 8 and 9. (Quote.) This means that instead of giving us what we deserve, the Members of the Godhead give us what we don't deserve. We deserve death, eternal death. We deserve hell. But instead by grace we through faith in Jesus Christ and His death on the Cross, get life, eternal life. But after we are saved we continue to need the grace of God and the peace of God. Grace not only means undeserved favor, but it means power, the power to transform a hopeless sinner into a holy saint. After Paul became a child of God through faith in Christ, he realized how weak and helpless he was in himself. But he also realized that God's strength is made perfect in our weakness. You and I need the grace of God today as much as we ever have. And the wonderful thing about God's grace and God's peace is that they are both inexhaustible!

Now the verses that immediately follow, show us that the riches we have in Christ, make it absolutely certain

that the work God started for us before the foundation of the world, before creation, is most certainly going to be fulfilled because, while we have responsibilities in the Christ life, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are united in assuring us that our salvation will be completed, and to them belongs all of the glory.

October 18, 2010

Bishop Moule of England, whose name you may hear many times as we go through this epistle of Paul to the Ephesians, imagined that when the reading this epistle for the first time to the saints at Ephesus, paused after he completed reading the first two verses (or what to us are the first two verses), so amazed was he at the amazing truth contained in those verses. Maybe they had heard them before, or words like them, but as we saw last week they contain words of truth which go far beyond what those “saints” (as Paul called them) could possibly have imaged when they heard the truth of the Gospel for the first time. In these two short verses God is mentioned twice, the Lord Jesus is mentioned twice, and they were referred to by two words which they would know that they could only claim by the grace of God, “saints” and “faithful.” And they knew that Paul’s words were true because they had come to him from “Paul” who was “an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps we need to take a fresh look at these words because they all apply to those of us who know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour. They are worth our meditation until something of the majesty and glory of such words, fill our hearts with amazement as well. They all knew too well that they had not deserved such words, nor even then did they deserve such words. They knew what they were before they had heard and believed the Gospel. It all seemed too good to be true, and yet every word of it was true, and for us as the people of God, they are true words today. The only difference for us is Ephesus has to be changed to Portland (or wherever it is that we live), and the language and date are different, too. But the “saints” of God from that day to this have been blessed by these very same words.

But now we want to go on to verse three, and this introduces the first major section of Paul’s letter. I have called it in my outline:

II. God glorified in our salvation (Eph. 1:3-14).

1:3 As we go on to verse 3 we find even more reasons why it begins with the word, “Blessed.” This is a word not only of thanksgiving, but also of worship. It is a word which recognizes the grace of God because as Paul continued, in speaking of our salvation, he does not say one word about what we have done for it, or what we need to do. It all has to do with what God has done for us in Christ. In the second chapter of Ephesians, verses 8 and 9, Paul in speaking of our salvation says that it is “not of yourselves,” meaning we are totally without merit (but according to the first three verses of chapter two, we have much demerit). So God alone is to be thanked, God alone is to be worshiped, God alone is to be glorified. But Christ is to be glorified also because the blessing have come to us from God through Christ. This same Greek word (Εὐλογητός) is found in 2 Corinthians 1:3 and 1 Peter 1:3. In Ephesians it is for past blessings. In 2 Corinthians for present blessings. In 1 Peter for future blessings. We need not only to preach the Gospel every day to ourselves, but also, and I am sure that Dr. Jerry Bridges will agree with me with I repeat him in that, if I go on to say that every time we preach to ourselves, or even think of it, we need to thank the Lord in a loving attitude of worship for saving us in such an abundant way. Most of us get behind in thanking people for what they do for us, but we are far behind usually in praising God for our salvation.

Dr. Chafer in his excellent little commentary on Ephesians said in connection with the verse that here the Apostle Paul gave us God’s full name. God’s full name is “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And, of course, the full name of our Savior is “the Lord Jesus Christ.” And it is truly amazing, isn’t it, that in

verse 2 Paul spoke of God as “our Father, and here in verse 3, of the Lord Jesus as “our Lord Jesus Christ. We shouldn’t let these expression go without our special attention. People can glibly say, “God bless America,” but we know in many cases that they are not talking about “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But why was Paul worshiping and praising God here? It was because He has blessed us with “all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” Actually if your Bible uses italics to show words that are not actually in the Greek or Hebrews texts, but have been added by the translators to make the meaning clearer. So “heavenly places” really should read, in the heavenlies, or in heavenly realms. God blesses every one with earthly or physical blessings. We couldn’t live without those blessing, could we? But heavenly blessings or spiritual blessings are only for those of us who are “saints.” And please note that we *all* have *all* of them!!! The Christian life does not consist in seeking more blessings, but it is a life in which we are learning what we have, what God has done for us and continues to do for us, and then how to use them.

In recent years I have heard much about the second blessing. Some Christian people used to ask other Christians if they have the second blessing. We ought always to answer, “Yes.” But why stop with two? Go on to two, and three, and four, and as high as you want to go, because you have them all. They are not numbered, and you and I may get to heaven and find out then that we had blessings that we never knew that we had. That is why we all need to be reading our Bibles. That is where we find out what we have as the saints of God.

I think I have told some of you about a young man who came over to live in Canada, and he attended the church that I was pastor of in Vancouver, B.C. back in the late 40's and early 50's. He hadn't been a Christian until he came over to Canada, and that is where he was saved. He came over to our house one time that I will never forget. He rang our doorbell, and when I went to the door, there he stood with an open Bible in his hand. And the first thing that he said was to tell me something that he had learned from his Bible very recently. And after telling me what it was, he asked me, “Pastor, did you know that?” I wish I could remember what it was, but what was happening to him? He was starting to learn about some of the blessings that he had as a Christian, but no one had ever told him what he had. But he was really excited.

I remember the time in my life when I started to pay attention to the blessings I have, and always have had, since the day I was saved. Look upon your Bible as you would a treasure chest which someone delivered to your house with many costly jewels in it, and you are going through it day after day to find out what you have.

This expression appears four other times in Ephesians. Look with me at Ephesians 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; and 6:12 as I read them. (Read.)

One of the greatest blessing that we have as “saints” is mentioned here in the last two words of Ephesians 1:3. And this a bundle of blessings. I am referring to the words, “in Christ.” These are two of the most important words that you and I will set our eyes on in the NT - “in Christ.” That is where our blessings are. That is where the heavenlies are, “in Christ.” The Lord spoke of this to His disciples while He was here on earth, and just shortly before He was crucified. In John 14:19 and 20 we read these words:

19 Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

20 At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

What this means is that the Lord Jesus is in the Father, and we are in the Lord Jesus, and the Lord Jesus is in us. This is one of those profound spiritual truths which we must believe, and yet which we have difficulty in explaining. One major difference between a Christian and a non-Christian is that the Christian has Christ living in him, but a non-Christian does not. The Apostle John described a Christian, a saint, in these words:

10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.

11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.
12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life (1 John 5:10-12).

Let me give you another verse: Galatians 2:20:

20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Then just another familiar passage: Colossians 3:1-4:

1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

If you really know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, He lives in you. On the other hand, you may call yourself a Christian, but if Christ is not in you, you are not a child of God.

“In Christ,” or, “in Him” – look for it in Ephesians, and look for it also in 1 John.

In the KJV, verses 3-14 are one long sentence. This shows, and I believe rightly, that this is one continuous, closely related subject. Verse 3 tells us that God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ. And what a precious truth this is. But how did this come about? Was it originally your idea and mine? Did we approach God and ask Him for all of these spiritual blessings? Did we take the first step toward God, or did He take the first step toward us? Look at verse 4.

1:4 “According as He (the Father) hath chosen us.” So all of the blessings mentioned in verses 3 through 14 were not your idea, nor were they mine, but they were God’s! We didn’t choose Him; He chose us! And when did He do this? Was it when I first heard the Gospel, or when I decided that I wanted to be saved? Neither! Now most people struggle with this great truth, but here it is, as we sometimes express it, *in black and white*. You can read this for yourself, and I can read it for myself. Now don’t be like a lot of true Christians, they decide what they are going to believe in the Bible, and what they are not going to believe. So they decide to reject this.

Now I think that we all agreed from verse 3 that the blessings that the saints have in Christ were not given because they deserved such blessings, not because they worked for them. And I can add that we didn’t buy them. They are not for sale. And if they were, you and I couldn’t afford them even if we were the richest people in the world. Isaiah said long ago that they were not for money or price. But according to God’s Word God gave the gift of salvation, freely, all by grace. Remember Ephesians 2:8 and 9. And Ephesians 2:5 tells us that we were “dead in sins,” dead in our relationship with God, unable to do anything about it, and, more than that, we wouldn’t have done anything about it if we could. God was not in all of our thoughts. So God planned salvation, but, more than that, He sovereignly decided who He was going to save. And when did He do that? Our verse here tells us that God made His choices “before the foundation of the world.” When was that? That was before creation. Yes, the Bible teaches us that the world came into existence by the creative power of God. And let me add that He did it in six twenty-four hour days. The Bible tells us that in the very beginning of the Bible.

Now God wasn’t obligated to save any of us. He had the sovereign right to save man from the penalty and power of his sin, but He also had the right not to save anyone, OR He had the right to save those whom He chose to save. And that is exactly what He did.

Let me give you some other passages that deal with this subject of election. I love it because I know that if the Lord had not chosen me, I would never have chosen Him, and I wouldn't be standing before you today teaching the Bible. Neither would I have any hope that when I die, or when the Lord comes, that I would go to heaven.

Please turn with me to 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, and follow in your Bible as I read:

13 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:

14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You see, there was a time when you were concerned about your relationship with the Lord, and you thought that it was on your own that you were seeking the Lord. But then you learned from the Bible that the Lord had been seeking you before you sought Him, and that you came to the Lord because He called you by the Gospel, and you came! If it had been otherwise, then you would have had something to brag about. But Ephesians 2:8 and 9 was ordered in a way "lest any man should boast." God gets all of the glory. You and I don't get any of the glory.

Then turn with me to Romans 8 before. Most Christians know Romans 8:28 by heart. I never memorized it by myself; I learned Romans 8:28 just by hearing so many other Christians quote it. John 3:16 is another verse which most Christians know, and they learned it by hearing others quote it. It wasn't that way with me. My parents kind of adopted an older lady and we called her Grandma. She told me when I was just learning to read that if I memorized John 3:16, she would give me a New Testament. I got to work right away learning it, said it to her, and got my New Testament. Well, let's get back Romans 8:28.

Romans 8:28 tells us that the "good" that God works out has to do with our salvation. You follow in your Bible and let's see how Romans 8:28 has to do with our salvation, not just when we come to the Lord, but all through the rest of our lives. Notice what Paul wrote out in these verses. We can always get a better idea of the meaning of any verse if we read the verses around it – either what led up to the verse, or the verses that follow – or both!

28 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.

29 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.

30 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.

31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us (Rom. 8:28-34).

Just look at all of the blessings in this passage that we have, not the least of which is the wonderful assurance that the Lord Jesus is praying for us. And Hebrews 7:25 says that this is one of several reasons why, if we are truly saved, we can never be lost again.

25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

But now one thing remains in Eph. 1:4 which we cannot overlook without missing another blessing.

Why did the Lord choose us, and why did He save us? "That we should be holy and without blame before

Him. Now to be “holy” is to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. And it is to be like God. To be “without blame” is to be free from the possibility that any charges can be laid against us. God chose us in eternity past. He called us to Himself, and saved us. All through our lives He is making us holy, not perfectly holy in this life, but growing daily more and more in the holiness of Christ. This is when we will be glorified. The Apostle John was anticipating this when he wrote the first three verses of 1 John 3:

1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons (τέκνα) of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

2 Beloved, now are we the sons (τέκνα) 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.

3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure (1 John 3:1-3).

My Greek teacher in seminary told us that τέκνον means *born ones*, *i.e.*, children with the same father and mother.

October 25, 2010

1:5 The word that the Apostle Paul used here is different from what we had in verse three, but they are very close in meaning. God has “chosen . . . before . . .” Here Paul said that we, the saints of God, were “predestinated us,” the “pre-“ meaning *before*, attached to the Greek verb ὀρίζω, which means to determine, to decide, to ordain, to destine, having the idea of settling something, ahead of time. And the “before the foundation of the world” in verse 4, would put this also before creation!

Now the people who have trouble with election and predestination have trouble with the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. They may say that they believe that God is sovereign in everything, but they want to bring man’s will into salvation. And so they don’t believe in the sovereignty of God in salvation.

But why should that be a problem. Salvation was not man’s idea. It was not some man, or even an angel, who suggested that God plan to save sinners from their condemnation. The whole idea of salvation was God’s, and He had it all planned before He had creation anything. Not only did not did not man plan salvation, but there is not record that God called man into council to ask him how men should be saved. As I have said many times before, God would have been perfectly righteous if He had done nothing about man’s salvation. After all, after man sinned, why did God not wipe out all of creation, and start all over again. But here is another idea. If God had wanted to, He could have decided to saved everyone. But it is clear from everyday life, and from history, that He has not done that. But the fact that God determined to save some people, but not all, many well-thinking people want to bring man into the counsels of God to save God’s reputation for being a righteous God.

We need to ask ourselves the question, “If God had not chosen us, and predestinated us, to salvation, how many of us do you think would be saved this morning?” None, absolutely none! The Lord Jesus Himself said, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). And then a little later in that same chapter our Lord said this, “No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:44). In John 17 as the Lord prayed to the Father, He said, “I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy Word” (John 17:6). On what basis could the Lord Jesus have said to the Father, “Thine they were” before He said, “And Thou gavest them Me.” It was because the Father had given them to His Son “before the foundation of the world.” I am not surprised, but I am always grieved, when professing Christians go away mad when we talk about election and predestination. The disciples who first heard the Lord say those words that we find in John 6, along with what He said again in John 6 beginning with verse 63 where we read, “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.” But then He said unto that group of disciples: “But there are some of you that believe not.” Then the Apostle John added these words: “For Jesus knew from

the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him (John 6:64).

But then we read these ominous words in John 6:66: “From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.” They went away, and they never came back. Could disciples lose their salvation? Certainly not ! But they could be disciples without being saved. Can church members be lost? Not if they are really saved. But they can be church members, even pastors, without being saved. A Christian can be disturbed when he hears this teaching because the church today does not do much teaching. But if you are really saved, a true Christian will say, a saint will say, “I never heard this before, but it is in the Bible, and even the Lord Jesus talked about it, so I am going to stand by the Word of God until the Lord makes it all clear to me.”

Notice these words are all introduced in verse 3 of our chapter with the words, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ.” That is the response that we will all have in our hearts when the Lord makes it clear to us that *our salvation is all of God*. “We love Him; because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). This is why Paul wrote Ephesians 2:8-10.

Amazing grace—how sweet the sound— that saved a wretch like me!
I was once lost, but now am found— was blind but now I see.

This same verb that the Apostle Paul used here is also found in the following verses:

1) Acts 4:28 – reading verse 27 with it:

27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done (Acts 4:27-28).

2) Romans 8:29-30:

29 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.

30 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.

3) And after Ephesians 1:5, then on down in Ephesians 1:11, and reading verse 12 with it:

11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

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

If any of you have questions about this, I hope you will come and talk to me about them. But now back to Ephesians 1:5.

Now for what was it that God predestinated us? He “predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself.” Here we have a very interesting, and a very wonderful word. It was a favorite word of the Apostle Paul. He used it in Romans 8:15 and 23; 9:4; Gal. 4:5; and here in Ephesians 1:5.

Now often when you read about adoption in the Bible, it is interpreted as being our kind of adoption. That is, by nature we are not the children of God, so through we are adopted by God into His family, just like a man and his wife find out that they are not able to have children, and so they look to adopt a child. And they do! Now that child is not related to that couple by blood, but through the adoption process that child is taken into the home of that couple, given the couple’s name, and grows up calling the husband, Daddy, and the wife, Mother. They are adoptive parents. And that is a wonderful thing when it takes place. Tragically we have so many illegitimate children in our day that adoption is far more common that it should be. But if a mother for any reason cannot keep her child, she will put him or her up for adoption. We have an adopted granddaughter in our family, and we all love her like she was born into our family. It is often a critical time in a child’s life when

she learns that he or she is adopted.

Now the question that we face in Scripture as we come to this word is, are we the children of God by adoption? Am I, are you, in that sense, the adopted children of God? And the answer to that question is, No! Turn with me to John 1:11 through 13. (Read.) Now when you take the “not” and “nor” phrases out of this verse, you can see that what the Apostle John tells us is that we are “born , , , of God.”

When Nicodemus came to Jesus, a visit we read about in John 3, he was probably one of the best men morally that the Lord had contact with while he was here on earth. He was not only a Jew, but he was a Pharisee, and a ruler of the Pharisees. God had opened his eyes to see that there was something very special about Jesus. He told the Lord that he knew at least that God was with Him, because he said, “No man can do the miracles that Thou doest except God be with him.” The Lord Jesus obviously knew that God was working in Nicodemus’ heart, and so right away the Lord said to him, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” And later in the conversation the Lord said to him with “verily, verily” again, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus must have been a man with a lot of knowledge of Scripture, but the Lord was telling him that he needed a second birth before he could understand the truth that he needed to know about a living relationship with God.

Six times in 1 John (twice in one verse) the Apostle John tells us how we can tell we are “born of God.” See 1 John 3:9 (2x); 4:7; 5:1, 14, 18. So we who have been born again, have been born of God, and we are in the family of God by this new birth, this birth from above, this birth of God. We were given physical life by our parents. We are given spiritual life from God. It is a struggle in the flesh to live the Christian life, but it is totally impossible without this new birth. The Apostle Peter knew this truth very well. In his first epistle he wrote in 1 Peter 1:23, “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” And then along the same line he wrote in the following chapter, in 1 Peter 2:2-3,

- 2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:
- 3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

So we are the children of God by a new birth. What did Paul mean, then, by “the adoption of children.” Actually a better translation would be “the adoption of sons.” And a still better translation would be “a placing of sons.” This is difficult for us to understand but God has brought us into His family with all of the rights of sonship.

Now all of us have to grow as babes in Christ when we are saved. But the difference since the Lord Jesus Christ died and rose again, is that we have resources in Christ that were not available to the people of God before the work of Christ was completed. As we learned in verse 3, now we have been “blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ.” It is the difference between living under the Law, and now living under grace. Galatians 4:1-7 give the explanation of what sonship means. Verse 7 probably should read at the end of the verse, “an heir of God,,” or as the NASB renders it, “an heir through God.”

October 26, 2010

Now all of this is “by Jesus Christ to Himself.” John Eadie explained it this way:

Not simply for Christ’s sake, but by means of His mediation, since but for Him the family had never been constituted. God’s Son was the “firstborn” of the vast household, and fraternal relation to Him is filial relation to God (p. 32).

This is completely in harmony with Romans 8:28-30:

28 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.

29 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.

30 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.

And to add to the certainty of these glorious truths, the Apostle Paul added, “according to the good pleasure of His will.” This means that what God did in salvation, He did according to His sovereign will, and it is always His will which gives Him the greatest pleasure or He would not have ordained salvation as He did. In Romans 12:1 and 2 the Apostle Paul called the will of God “good, and acceptable, and perfect.” And this is primarily what it is to God, or He would never have done it, never have ordained it. And we prove it by doing what God tells us what to do. There is no instance in which we can improve upon the will of God, whatever the circumstances might be.

But the Apostle is not finished speaking of our salvation. He continued in verse 6.

1:6 In verses 5 and 6 we have the Greek preposition, “unto” (εἰς), used three times, but it is only translated that way the first time. So verses 5 and 6 could be translated like this:

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

6 Unto the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.

The first points out the object of our predestination – to be brought into the family of God as sons. The second shows the connection between our predestination and God. And the third shows the ultimate purpose of our redemption – that it all should be “to the praise of the glory of His grace.”

So the ultimate purpose of our salvation is praise for God’s glory, because of the exercise of His grace. There is absolutely no reason why God should save us. Salvation is all of grace, the undeserved favor of God. And, as Jerry Bridges has reminded us, grace means that instead of giving us what we deserve, He gives us what we could never deserve. It is by grace that we have been rendered gracious in God’s sight. And this is through “the Beloved.” And who is this? It is God’s Name for His Son: “This is my Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17), the One in Whom God finds all of His delight. God has ordained our salvation so that His Son will not only be glorified, exalted, and praised, but that all of the glory will go to Him. And so I can add that none of the glory comes to us. It was not because we were worthy of such a gift, nor even more worthy than anyone else, saved or unsaved. It was because we were completely unworthy that it was necessary for God to send His Son in the world, to die for our sins, that we can rejoice in this wonderful salvation that we have. “To God be the glory, great things He hath done.” And the Apostle Paul’s description of our salvation continues in verse 7.

1:7 “In Whom,” *i.e.*, in Christ, “we have redemption.” It is not primarily “through Him” that we have redemption (although that is also true), but “in Him,” in union with Him that we have this marvelous redemption. Christ not only died for us on the Cross, *but we died in Him*. This subject of our union with Christ is basic to our understanding of the Gospel, and it is certainly one of the major emphases of this epistle, if not *the major emphasis*. It surely is unmistakably strongly evident.

We have had it already in Ephesians. In verse 1 the Apostle Paul addressed them as “the faithful in Christ Jesus.” And in verse 3 we are told that God has “blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” In verse 4 God “hath chosen us in Him.” In verse 6 we are “accepted in the Beloved.” And here in verse 7 we are told that “in Whom, *i.e.*, in Christ we have our acceptance with God. It is also on account of

Him, or because of Him, but those expressions are not the same as saying that we are in Him, in Christ. We were placed in Christ at the Cross, and that is where we are now, and always will be. We now are in Him. And now we “have redemption.”

This word “redemption” always speaks of the payment of a price, a ransom. To whom is this ransom paid. It was paid to God. We read this in Hebrews 9:13-14:

13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

November 1, 2010

Being redeemed, “we have redemption.” But not through any work we have done, and not because of any merit we have with God – because we have none! We “have redemption through His blood,” the blood of Christ, which, in turn, means *by the death of Christ*. This was the price of our redemption because it had to be a redemption that satisfied the righteousness of God. “The wages of sin is death,” and so it was only through One Who paid that price that sinners could be redeemed and declared justified before God. God set the penalty for sin, and it was by the grace of God that He Himself laid that penalty upon His Son that we might be forgiven.

I have heard it illustrated by the case of a Judge who one day had his son brought before him for having broken some law of the land in some way. The Judge announced the penalty that his son had to pay. But after declaring what the penalty was, the Judge left his bench, went down to the clerk of the court, paid the penalty for his son, so that his son could go free. But even this is an insufficient illustration because it was when we were enemies of God, that Christ died for us.

Apart from the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is no hope for the forgiveness of any sinner, whether great or small, whether our sins are many, or few.

When God saves sinners who deserve eternal judgment, but instead are redeemed, and forgiven, that is not only grace, but “the riches of His grace,” God’s grace. It is no wonder that the Apostle Paul began this part of the epistle like he did in verse 3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .” The “riches” of God’s grace in our salvation is seen in the fact that God gave none other than *His Son* to be our Redeemer.

“Riches” was a favorite word of the Apostle Paul in speaking of salvation. In Romans 2:4 we read of “the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering.” In Romans 9:23, “the riches of His glory.” In Romans 11:33, “the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.” Here in Ephesians 1:18, in his prayer, Paul spoke of “the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” In Ephesians 2:7, “the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” In Ephesians 3:8, “the unsearchable riches of Christ.” In Ephesians 3:16, again, “the riches of His glory.” And so on in Philippians 4:19; Colossians 1:27; 2:2. “Riches” mean valuable, fulness and abundance, inexhaustible.

1:8 This verse continues the thought of verse 7. Still speaking of “the riches of His grace,” which He either lavished upon us, or cause to be lavished upon us (by Christ). This verse could be translated either way. “In all wisdom and prudence” means, as Bishop Moule said, that God “enabled us to understand His redeeming purpose, to feel His heart of mercy, to approve and to concur with His redeeming plan” (p. 32). And then the Apostle’s thought continues on into verse 9.

1:9 One very important thing that the Apostle Paul was doing here in Ephesians, was to get the Ephesian believers acquainted with some of the great words of the Bible, and, in some cases, words which apply especially to the NT. (Review what they are.)

Here we come to the first of six times that the Apostle Paul uses the very important word, “mystery,” in Ephesians. See also 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19. The definition of a mystery in the NT is given to us in Ephesians 3:5. See another definition in Romans 16:25-27. It is a word akin to a revelation, which is true of all the Bible, but a revelation which God revealed at a later time than the Old Testament. A revelation is truth that we could never have discovered for ourselves. It is completely beyond the realm of scientific research. It is a category all by itself. The whole Bible is a revelation from God. Many of the events of the Bible are history, but the meaning of it all is a closed book except to believers who have the Holy Spirit to teach them.

However, when God gave the revelation of the OT, He did not reveal all that He intended to reveal. He kept some back for later revelations to complete the revelation of God. Basically “the mystery” has to do with the full revelation of the Gospel (which we are here studying in Ephesians, *and* what Paul will also get to as we move on in reading this epistle). And that has to do with two great truths: first, the full revelation of the Gospel, and, second, the revelation of the Church, the Body of Christ. Regarding the latter, Israel does not become the Church, neither does the Church replace Israel. They are two parts of the eternal purposes of God. And it was the Apostle Paul who was saved and appointed to deal specifically with both of these truths. Much of the Gospel is in the OT, but not in the fulness that we have it in the NT epistles. It seems that God waited until after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ which was the major turning point in the history of the whole world.

“The mystery of His (God’s) will” was hitherto unrevealed aspects of God’s purpose. And you can that the coming of Christ was essential to both of these revelations. It was in Christ that both of these were to be fulfilled. It was according to God’s good pleasure which He (God) had purposed, not “in Himself,” as rendered by the KJV, but “in Him,” that is, *in Christ*. “The mystery of His will” is Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ, that everything was to be “in Him.” And this is why God waited until after Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension, before giving the fullest revelation of the Gospel. That is why the little preposition “in” is so important and so unique showing the full relationship between Christ and the Gospel. The people who were saved in the OT, were saved in the coming Redeemer; we today who are saved are saved in the Redeemer Who has come. There has never been but one Savior. But now Paul was saying that believers are “in Him,” *in Christ*, united to Christ in an eternal union.

1:10 Now in dealing with this verse let me say that one of our problems in interpreting Scripture is that we often try to make it say too much. I have often wished that some place in Scripture the Lord had given us what some have called, the plan of the ages. By that I mean, that He would have listed some place in the Word all that is going to happen from the time that the Lord Jesus was here on earth until the establishing of the new heaven and the new earth, which is most fully described in the last two chapters of the book the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Even a lot of controversy has arisen over that book. Some say most of it is history, but it is my belief that most of it is yet to come since the world has never yet experienced the kind of terrible judgments that are predicted in that book.

And then there is another point that we need to make in any passage of Scripture. It is this: to whom was any part of Scripture that we are reading or studying, written? All Scripture is *for* us (we can be sure of that), but not all of Scripture was written *to* us.

Now how would we answer the question regarding Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians, To whom was it primarily

written. And, as we come to this word *mystery* Paul was telling the believers in the early Church about the Church. It was a part of God's plan which He had not revealed before. The Ephesians were a part of that plan, and so it applied to them and to all who would live until the Lord had completed His work in the Church.

Perhaps you remember from your study of 1 Thessalonians that those believers in that part of the Church, the body of Christ, had wondered, apparently like most believers who were saved immediately after the ascension of the Lord, what had happened to those believers who were dying. They thought that the Lord Jesus was going to return immediately, during their lifetime. And it was in 1 Thessalonians that Paul gave the Church those wonderful words which are in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. They fit right in with what the Lord had told His disciples in the Upper Room in the first few verses of John 14, but he had not said anything at that time as to when He was coming back, just that He was coming back *to receive them unto Himself so that they could be where He was!* But He did not say that it would be as long as it has been. Here it is 2010 and thousands upon thousands of believers have died, and the Lord has not come yet. So in 1 Thessalonians the Spirit of God revealed through Paul about what would happen to believers who died before the Lord returned, as well as what would happen to believers who were living at that time. But Paul himself did not know when that would be.

Now 1 Thessalonians was the first epistle written by Paul, and so we can assume, I think, that the Ephesian believers knew what Paul had written to the believers in Thessalonica. Perhaps this may not have been true of all of them. But the Church had that information in 1 Thessalonians.

It is clear as we read the epistles of the NT that the NT Church was to always be in a state of readiness for the return of the Lord. This was to be their hope, their comfort (which means encouragement as well). As time went on, those unbelievers who were skeptical that such an event would ever take place, tried to torment the Church with the idea that such a hope was a false hope. Today after more than two thousand years believers are still looking for the Lord, expecting Him to come at any moment which I believe we have to recognize is added proof that our hope is not in vain in the Lord. But I would remind you that more than looking for an event, we are looking for a Person. We are looking for the Lord Jesus Christ. We are going to be with Him forever after He comes, and we are going to be where He is, in heaven where our citizenship is according to Philippians 3:20 and 21. This is what we can call, and do call, the rapture of the Church. And it seems clear from the NT epistles that this is the next major prophetic event that is to take place. When He does return, all who are in the Church will be changed to be like the Lord. And this is to be one of our greatest incentives to be like the Lord. See 1 John 3:1-3. The Great Tribulation will follow, and as we learn from the book of the Revelation, our Lord will return, and we with Him to reign for a thousand years on the earth during which time Satan will be bound. Afterwards he will be released for a time, will stir up the nations against the Lord, and then cast forever into the lake of fire which has especially been prepared for the Devil and his angels. And then the earth will be destroyed, and there will then be "a new heaven and a new earth" for the saints of all ages.

Now not every child of God believes what I have just related to you. The Church today is greatly divided over what is going to take place in the future. Many believe that God is finished with Israel and that the Church is going through half of the Tribulation, or all of it. And that when Christ comes, He will set up His kingdom on earth, and the eternal state, the new heaven and the new earth, will begin. Many of the details that we would like to know have not been revealed. But what is very clear in Scripture is that we all need to be looking for the Lord. And we all need to recognize that God has not revealed everything to us. And what He has revealed we tend to see "through a glass darkly." Even the Apostle Paul said this about himself as we learn from 1 Corinthians 13:9-13:

9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

I believe that the next major event to take place in the plan of God is the rapture of the Church. I do not believe that the Church will go through the Great Tribulation, for one reason, because the Tribulation is called in Jeremiah 30:7, “the time of Jacob’s trouble.” It is to bring Israel as a nation back to the Lord before the Lord comes back to the earth to reign as is predicted in many OT Scriptures. We in the Church, the body of Christ, may experience sufferings before the Lord comes, but not any part of the Great Tribulation.

Now let us go back to verse 10 in Ephesians 1.

We learned from verse 9 that Paul was talking about a mystery, truth which had not been revealed before, and yet a part of God’s plan from before the foundation of the world. But here the Apostle Paul brought in the expression, “the dispensation of the fulness of times.” The word “dispensation” is a word formed from the Greek word for *a steward*. A steward in Bible times was most often a slave (but not always) to whom the head of a house or the owner of a business would entrust his affairs usually when the head of the house or the owner of a business was going to be away. The steward was responsible to take care of the home or business until the master returned, and he was responsible to carry on in a way that was pleasing to his master. Paul used this term, “dispensation,” with respect to his own ministry. Let me read to you what he said about himself in 1 Corinthians 9:16-17:

16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.

Although he did not mention “dispensation” or “stewardship” in 1 Corinthians 9:16-17, yet this is what he was speaking about:

16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.

In Paul’s case he was under divine orders not only to preach the Gospel, but not to charge for his preaching.

But perhaps one of the best passages regarding Paul is in 1 Corinthians 4:1-2:

1 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

And when Paul wrote his last letter to be included in the Bible, he said,

6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

Paul was about to complete his stewardship. And in the beginning of that chapter the Apostle Paul gave a charge to Timothy which essentially was Timothy’s stewardship, his dispensation. In Titus 1:7, the Apostle in giving the qualification for bishops, or elders, said, “For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God ...”

Now usually a steward was appointed for a particular time, so it is proper to refer to a dispensation as a period of time. The steward was in charge of the family or business while the husband or owner of the business was away. But this is a very important point: the steward was primarily responsible to the master in either case to

run the home or business exactly as the master had directed him. And the master would reward, or judge, the steward as to how well his instructions had been carried out. So it is not going beyond the idea of a dispensation being a *period of time*.

Now the Apostle Paul tells us here in verse 10 of Ephesians 1 about “the dispensation of the fulness of times.” This means that the time is coming when the times of God’s purposes will come to an end. “The fulness of times” surely points to when the times of human history will come to an end. There had to be a change in God’s dealing with man as he was created as compared with after he sinned. There was a big change when God called Abraham, promised to make him a nation, and to give him a land, and to bless the whole human race through him. Another change took place when God gave the Law to Moses with the Tabernacle plans, and later gave the plans for the Temple to David, which was built by Solomon. And then we come to the time when the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was on earth as a Man until He was arrested, crucified, raised from the dead, ascended back to the Father where He has been seated ever since at the Father’s right hand. What I am saying is that one period has been followed by another, each one introducing certain condition which had not prevailed before, and all finally coming to “the dispensation of the fulness of times (pl.) and the outworking of God’s plan from the very beginning of time, and all of it foreordained before the foundation of the world. Some-where in the past someone made the quaint, but true remark, that “history is His story.” That is what it is, the working out of the eternal purposes of God. And there is hope throughout all of it, while at the same time we see the repeated failure of men, and many, many times, opposition to the plans and purposes of God. So every believer is in some way a dispensationalist. The Bible does not teach many ways of salvation. There is no way for anyone to be saved except through Christ, and only through Him. It is alarming to hear professing Christ-ians who should know better say that there might be some other way. There could not be a worst heresy. God has never relinquished His control on His world. It may seem like He has at times, but everything is on His schedule, and the next event will be the sound of the trumpet when “the dead in Christ shall arise, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. See 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. And when Paul spoke of this glorious event in 1 Corinthians 15, he began by talking about the Lord’s coming with the words, “Behold I show you a mystery.” What a glorious stewardship was committed to the Apostle Paul to be the one who was the first to tell the Church and the whole world that Jesus is coming back for us, and we need to be in a constant state of readiness for our departure into heaven. And those who have died before us waiting for Him are going to take the lead before us going into heaven.

When did the Lord Jesus Christ come the first time, this is how the Apostle Paul described it to the Galatians churches. You will find this in Galatians 4. Please turn and follow as I read the first seven verses when he, speaking as a Jew, was telling the Galatians that they were not to go back under the Law since the times had changed since Christ had come:

1 Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;

2 But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.

3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:

4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ (Gal. 4:1-7).

Make not mistake about it, God is working out His purposes in the world, and that some day that purpose, which obviously has many phases to it, will be completed. But speaking to the church, the local church, in

Ephesus, and probably the surrounding churches where the Gospel had gone and people had been saved, Paul speaking to the church about the Church, says that all who are “in Christ,” will be gathered together in one, both those who are in heaven, that is, those believers who have died, and those who are on earth, that is, those who will leave until the Lord’s return, will be “gathered together” – ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι (a very long word in the Greek, and used only one other time in the NT – see Romans 13:9 where it has to do with condensing the various commandments of the Law into one commandment) – that is, concerning the various ways in which true believers have been divided, all of us will be brought together in perfect agreement, total oneness. And this was on our Lord’s heart as He prayed the prayer that is recorded for us in John 17. See John 17:11-23.

Our divisions in the professing church, grieve our Lord (and we can be sure that they grieve the Father too). And they confuse the world, too. The hymn, *Onward, Christian Soldiers*, is partly right, and partly wrong. When it says, “we are not divided, all one body we,” practically it is wrong, because we are divided with many different divisions. But actually we are not divided. And when the Lord has completed His work in us, then it will be apparent that we are all one in Christ, “one in doctrine,” and “one in purity,” one in holiness of life. This will be a great reality which will make heaven, heaven. Many in the professing church, but certainly not those who are truly saved, seek to establish oneness in the church by agreeing to dismiss those truths on which we disagree. The end of that road is dismissing truth altogether. That is the ultimate of heresy. Oneness in Christ is doctrinal unity (the truth of Scripture), and practical unity in seeking by God’s grace the holiness of Christ. “We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

November 8, 2010 (I also revised much on verse 10 on this day.)

1:11 Now, in addition to everything else, every other blessing that we have in Christ, we learn that in Christ we also have an inheritance. What is it? Are you going to get more than I do? Or are we all going to get the same? Does it have anything to do with the places that the Lord has gone to prepare for us? Can we know ahead of time what our inheritance is, or will be?

What is an inheritance? It is, first of all, a gift, usually money, which is given by a parent to his children upon his decease. But actually a person can appoint anyone he wants to, to receive an inheritance. In Hebrews 9:15-17 we are told about and inheritance:

15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

16 For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

17 For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

But there evidently was a variation from this in NT times because you remember what the prodigal son said to his father according to Luke 15:11-12 according to one of our Lord’s parables:

11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:

12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

So we should not be surprised at Paul’s words in verse 11 where he said, “We have received an inheritance.” Our inheritance comes to us from God but it is in Christ because it was by the death of Christ that our inheritance from God was secured for us. And since the Apostle Paul is reviewing in our chapter the blessings that we have in Christ, this is one of the blessings. We have our inheritance. But as we are going to learn, it is secured for us, but we do not have full possession of it yet. Before I point out what it is, let us notice the times that the Apostle Paul spoke of riches in Ephesians, spiritual riches that belong to every child of God. See

Ephesians 1:7, 18; 2:7; 3:8, 16. And you all probably remember the riches referred to in Philippians 4:19.

So what is our inheritance? It is our salvation with the emphasis primarily on God's purpose in saving us. What is that purpose? It is to make us like Christ. That transformation begins the moment we are saved, and it will be completed when we see the Lord. It seems to me after looking over the remaining verses of Paul's introduction (down through verse 14) that they all are speaking of our inheritance.

The Apostle Peter spoke of our salvation in a passage that begins just like Paul began this passage in Ephesians. I am referring to the word in Ephesians 1:3, "Blessed . . ." Here are Peter's words found in 1 Peter 1:3-5:

- 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
 4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,
 5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

As we go on to verse 12 the Apostle can't keep the secret from us any longer. There he tells us what our inheritance is.

1:12 It is "that we should be to the praise of His glory." And I want you to look back to see the purpose God has in electing us, in choosing us for salvation. Notice in Ephesians 3 we are told that God's purpose in our election to salvation was "that we should be holy and without blame before Him," that is before God. So our inheritance has to do with God's primary purpose in salvation – not to save us from hell (although that is a major part), nor just to take us to heaven (although that is a major part of our hope). But our inheritance is that we are predestinated to be conformed to Christ.

In Romans 8:30 Paul tells us a little more about our predestination than he does here, or at least it is consistent with what we are told here in verse 12. Listen and I will read it to you:

- 30 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.

But let me give you another passage which tells us the same thing. Listen to Romans 8:16-17:

- 16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:
 17 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.

What does it mean that we will be glorified? It means that we will be like our Lord. This is also what we learn from Philippians 3:20-21:

- 20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:
 21 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.

When will He do this? Let's ask the Apostle John the answer to that question. We find it in 1 John 3:2-3:

- 2 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.

But let me add:

- 3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

While we are here on earth we are to be growing in the Lord. When we see Him when He comes, suddenly the work of salvation will be finished, and we will be like the Lord, glorified, make like Him.

"Who first trusted in Christ" – It seems clear as we read on into verse 13 that Paul was speaking of himself, and probably Tychicus (see 6:21-22) and possibly other co-workers who were with him, but then in verse 13 he

said, “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation.” That seems to clear up the difficulty perfectly.

But let us go on to verse 13.

1:13 It helps us to understand why we can’t lose the glorification that is our inheritance in Christ. We were saved and secured in our salvation the very moment we believed the truth the Gospel. At that very moment we were sealed by the Holy Spirit. The sealing is the mark of ownership and of security. And more on this is given in verse 14.

1:14 The sealing of the Spirit is “the earnest of our inheritance.” If you are buying a home, or a car, or anything that costs more than you have money to pay for it all at once, you make a down payment on your purchase. This is called earnest money. If you default on your purchase, you lose your earnest money. So no one who knows what he is doing would put money down on the purchase, would give the seller the earnest money if he did not intend to go ahead with the purchase. In the case of the Holy Spirit, He not only secures the deal, but it a part of our salvation – one of the blessings of Ephesians 1:3.

For God to seal our salvation by giving us the Holy Spirit the moment we are saved, is God’s assurance to us that he will not default on our salvation. I feel sure that you have noticed in your reading of Ephesians that the sealing of the Spirit, is referred to again in Ephesians. See Ephesians 4:30. And see also 2 Cor 1:21-22

21 Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God;

22 Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

Notice how the Apostle Paul closed verse 14 and this first major section of the epistle: “. . . until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His (God’s) glory.” What is the purchased possession? You are. I am. Here, the Church is. But eventually all believers will be show eternally the glorious evidences of salvation.

Before we go on to the prayer at the end of the chapter 1, I want to follow and expand the suggestions of Dr. Sidlow Baxter in summarizing the main points of Paul’s praise:

- 1) Adoration in v. 3.
- 2) Election in v. 4.
- 3) Predestination in vv. 5-6
- 4) Redemption in v. 7.
- 5) Revelation in vv. 8-10.
- 6) Inheritance in vv. 11-12.
- 7) Sealed by the Spirit in vv. 13-14.

In vv.15-23 the prayer is for Illumination. This is the third part of chapter 1, and III. in the outline.

November 22, 2010

III. Prayer #1 – Paul’s prayer for their understanding of salvation (Eph. 1:15-23).

The Bible is a revelation from God. Much of it is history. Nevertheless what God has included in His Word, although it can be confirmed by history, yet it requires the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit for us to understand its place in the Word of God. Much that we find in Scripture is not found any place else in all of human literature, and it is clear that that requires the illuminating, enlightening, teaching of the Holy Spirit. From

passages which are the most familiar to us, the Holy Spirit will often open our hearts to aspects of divine truth that we have never understood. That is one reason why we all should reading and re-reading what we have read before, and studying and re-studying what we have studied before. That is one reason I never teach any portion of Scripture using only those notes which I have used before. To do that assumes that I have already gotten out of the Scripture I am teaching, all that is possible to get out of it. I may look at what I have taught before, but I always hope and pray that any passage of Scripture will become clearer and dearer the more we go over it. When I taught at Multnomah quite often we faculty members used to discuss how we could maintain our delight in the Word of God so that it would not become cold and so the students would sense from our teaching how delighted we were with the Word of God. It used to be said of some teaching that it was to pass information from the teacher's notes to the student notebook without going through the brain of either one of them. That can be true of any teaching, but it is especially tragic when that happens to Bible teaching. Sometimes words which just seem to be preparing the way for other words, are passed over without our giving them the thought and prayer that would yield to us rich truths which could have a real effect on the way we live. Such are the words we find in verses 15 and 16. Actually the two verses belong to each other as making one statement which. In turn, lead to the rest of the words which we find in this prayer. Let us look at them now.

1:15 The word “wherefore” ties what we are about to read with what we have just read. We have just been through some wonderful teaching in the first fourteen verses of this epistle. But it has been deep teaching, much deeper than you will hear in many churches today. It did something to the Apostle Paul to be able to teach what we find in the verses which we have just covered. You can be sure that he didn't do this kind of teaching when he was a Pharisee. He wasn't capable to teaching those great truths of salvation because he didn't know the Lord in those days, and so he didn't have the capacity to understand such truth. But even after he met the Lord on the road to Damascus, he didn't learned them overnight. Paul's case was a little different from our because he had not only been called to salvation, but he had also been called to be an apostle (as he mentioned in verse 1). As such, he was one of several men whom God used to give us the New Testament. Paul had to learn for himself what the Spirit of God directed him to write. And he knew that this learning for him came in direct answer to prayer. So, when he wrote it out for the Ephesian Christians, and others who would read it too, he was moved in his heart to pray for them.

There were two things that the Apostle Paul had heard about them that encouraged him to write to them. He heard about their “faith in the Lord Jesus.” And he had also heard about their “love unto all the saints.” These are two evidences to look for when anyone professes to be a Christian. We have been learning this in 1 John, haven't we. The Apostle John said that if you profess to be a Christian, but you don't love the people of God, you simply are not telling the truth. He stated it this way in 1John 5:1,

1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

The first without the second is not complete. If we truly have trusted in Christ and love him, then we are going to love others who have also trusted in the Savior.

But going back to Ephesians, how did Paul complete in verse 16 what he started to say in verse 15?

1:16 He said two things, and they both have to do with prayer.

First, he did not congratulate them for being so wise in trusting Christ. He did not say, “I give thanks to you,” but I “give thanks for you” – and there is a lot of difference between those two statements. I am going to be speaking about this, the Lord willing, on Thursday. We are certainly to be thankful to people, Christian or non-Christian, when they say nice things about us, or do nice things for us. We might even thank the person who told us about Christ, *but when we give thanks for our salvation, the thanks always and only belongs to the*

Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Anybody can tell us about salvation, but only God can save us! This is the second time in this chapter that the Apostle Paul has spoken of true Christians as “saints.” Remember that this means that true Christians are a people *set apart exclusively for the Lord*, and so *from the world, which results in a holy character and holy living.* To be “set apart” speaks of our election unto salvation. This does not mean that we are going to love all of the people of God in the same way, but it means that we are going to love them. And the more we seek to love those we find not so lovely, the greater our love for them will become. This is also what the Apostle John was speaking about when he wrote in 1 John 4:12, “No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.” Remember that the phrase, “the love of God,” generally refers in the NT to God’s love for us. It is that which is “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5). The more we love each other in the Lord, the greater will be our love for each other.

Now if you and I love each other, we are going to do what? We are going to pray for each other. We all need the Lord’s blessing in answer to prayer. But what are we going to pray about as we pray for each other? Should we pray about material needs? Absolutely. Those cares abound in these days, don’t they? Should we pray about physical needs? I certainly hope so, because we all have them, and we hear about more physical problems all of the time, don’t we? Yes, the epistles of James and John teach us to pray for the sick. Do you think that the Apostle Paul prayed about material needs? Of course he did. His epistle to the Philippians was actually a thank you letter to the church for a gift that they had sent to him for his own material needs. He prayed for all of these things like we do. But he also prayed for things that we may seldom pray for. *Paul prayed for the spiritual needs of the believers at Ephesus (and elsewhere).* Actually he was praying that they would be able to understand what he had just written to them. His prayer really begins in verse 17, doesn’t it?

1:17 In prayer we are talking to God, and we need always to remember this. Even when we pray in a prayer meeting, we are not to pray to be “seen of men”(Matt. 6:5), but we are to pray to be heard by God. In Psalm 4:1 we read that this is how David prayed on that occasion:

1 Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

I believe that the best way to learn to pray is by noticing the prayers that are recorded for us in the Bible, and then pray like the people of God prayed in the past. The prayers of Paul in his epistles are rich in the lessons they teach us about prayer.

To whom did Paul pray? He prayed to “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory.” There are many gods (spelled with a small “g”), but it would clear the air if we really identified the true God as He is, “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is the full title of Jesus of Nazareth because it combines both His Deity and His humanity. We pray to the same God that the Lord Jesus Christ prayed to when He was here on earth. In fact, it is His Name in which we are to come to God in prayer. The access we have to God is only through the Lord Jesus Christ. There are many things that I admire about Dr. Paul Felix, but two things especially. Usually when he leads in prayer, he says, “Let’s pray together.” And the other thing is the way he repeats over and over the full name of the Lord Jesus Christ, not just when he is praying, but when he is preaching. I would imagine if we asked him where he learned to use the full name and title of our Lord, I know that he would say, “From the Apostle Paul, because that is what the Apostle Paul did. The Apostle didn’t do it all of the time, but he did it many, many times.

But what did Paul mean by calling God, “the Father of glory”? I don’t know all that the Apostle meant, but I am convinced that a part of what He meant was the source of all true glory is God. Many of you have heard me say more than once probably that “the glory of God, is God.” He is the Source, the Origin, and, I would add, the Dispenser of all true glory. God’s glory consists of His attributes and works – His holiness, His wisdom,

His power, His righteousness, His mercy and His grace, His love, His will, His faithfulness, His eternity, and so on and on. Creation itself displays the glory of God in the marvelous works of the Almighty God..

So the Apostle Paul was addressing Himself to the God of the universe, the God of salvation, the God to Whom nothing is impossible, but as we learn from here in Ephesians, the One Who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. And his request has to do with another Member of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. Paul's words, "May give unto you," do not mean that they did not possess the Holy Spirit, but that the Holy Spirit would carry out His ministry to them in teaching them not only what the Lord said, but what He meant.

When the Lord spoke to His disciples in the Upper Room, and then on the way to the Garden of Gethseman, He had many things to say to them about the Holy Spirit. One of them which applies here is found in John 14:26:

26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

What the Spirit teach us is "wisdom," the wisdom of God which is not given to the world, but to the Lord's people, and it is given by revelation. God reveals what man could never attain in any other way. It is "too high" for the natural mind. God revealed it to the writers of Scripture, but what they wrote has to be revealed to those who read it. And the Spirit does both of these works. But it is not for the world. And it is all centered in and focused upon "Him," a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. Again speaking of the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus said this, found in John 16:14-15:

14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

There is nothing that the Holy Spirit loves to do more than to show us Christ, and the things of Christ, in the Word. And there is no other way that the written Word can be understood. The word that the Apostle John used here for knowledge, is not just basic, or simple, knowledge, but it is a full knowledge. And it must mean since we cannot fully know all thing until we are with the Lord, that the Holy Spirit will teach and teach us all are lives, but we are not prepared in this life to full know truth that is in exhaustible. So we are to keep learning and learning about Christ all of our lives here on earth. We will never know all that can be known about our Lord until we see Him face to face. "Now we know in part," but how indescribably the "part" is because it has to do with Christ.

But how does the Holy Spirit prepare us to receive the truth concerning Christ, and what is He concerned that we should know about Christ? The answers to these questions are in verse 18.

1:18 What does this mean? "The eyes of your mind being enlightened . . ." The Greek actually says, "The eyes of your heart being enlightened." The KJ translators evidently thought that the Apostle Paul was speaking of the mind. But what men attribute to the mind, the Bible attributes to the heart. Paul meant that the Holy Spirit sheds light upon the truth, enabling us to understand the things of God. "Being enlightened" means that something has been done for us in the past, and the effect of it continues into the present and beyond. God has cause the light to shine into our hearts so that our blindness has been turned to sight! And only the Holy Spirit can do that. And as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit Paul was praying that the Ephesian saints (and the same truth applies to us today who are saints. What does the Holy Spirit want us to know in our hearts where the knowledge of Christ will have a transforming effect upon our live – always for the better! Three truths:

1) "What is the hope of His calling.

2) "What (are) the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

And the third point takes on down to the end of chapter 1, beginning with verse 19.

3) "What is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward (toward us) who believe . . . (vv. 19-23).

Let us begin with “the hope of His calling” in verse 18. Now let us keep in mind that we are talking here about the work of the Holy Spirit.

Basically what the word “hope” mean? The dictionary defines “hope” as the desire of something that we want to obtain, or even expect to obtain. Or it could be the desire of some event we want to see take place. Since we are not omnipotent, we can’t guarantee most of our hopes. Dwight and Nancy called us several weeks ago and told us that they would like to visit us on Thanksgiving week. That immediately aroused in our hearts the hope that they would be able to do that. It was made stronger because we knew that Dwight and Nancy did not make their plans on the spur of the moment. So on the Monday before Thanksgiving they arrived, and we were all very happy that our hope became a reality.

Sometimes in the Bible the word “hope” is used this way. For example in Philippians 2 beginning with verse 19, Paul mentioned his plan to send Timothy to them in Philippi. But in verses 23 and 24 he said this:

23 Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.

24 But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.

Paul *hoped* to send Timothy to Philippi, but he wasn’t certain yet because he didn’t know what was going to happen to him. In verse 24 he could have used the word *hope* again because he was trusting the Lord that he would be able to go to Philippi also. Most things that we would like to do, or places we would like to go, or people we want to see, are *our* hopes which may or may not take place. But the hopes that God has, and which He gives to us are totally different from what we express as our hopes, unless we are speaking about God’s hopes for us.

Now God has scattered throughout His Word many promises. And we know that God has never failed to keep any promise that He has ever made. He is in absolute control over all things, and so we can confidently hope in whatever He promises to do. His promise becomes the basis of our hope. And the fact that it is a promise from God, or even a statement of anything that He intends to do, gives certainty to that hope. And remember, one of the characteristics of a hope is that it is something that we want, or something that the Lord want us to look upon as being desirable to us. And then, when our hope is realized, when it becomes a reality, we don’t hope for it anymore. When Dwight and Nancy arrived, we didn’t hope any more that they would come. Our hope was realized.

There is an interesting passage in the book of Romans which deals with this word *hope*. It is in chapter 8, and it goes down to verse 30. Please turn to that passage and follow in your Bibles as I read what the Apostle Paul wrote. (Read Romans 8:18-30, commenting on it as I read.)

What, primarily, did God have in mind when He called us to Christ?

The word “hope” in the Bible often means what we usually mean when we use the word hope. When we say that we hope it won’t rain, we mean that that is our desire, but we have no way of being sure that either it won’t rain, or that we can keep it from raining – especially in Washington or Oregon! But in the passage before us it has just the opposite meaning. It means a purpose which is not presently fulfilled, but that we know that it will without any doubt be fulfilled at some future time. The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is called a “blessed hope,” a happy prospect that is just as certain to take place as anything that has already happened.

Now the hope that we are talking about here in Ephesians 1:18 is a hope that God has, but it is also is what He wants us to make as our hope. “The hope of his calling” means the purpose that God had in mind when He called us to Christ for salvation. And so it is a purpose which He is going to make sure that it does happen. From your reading of Ephesians you have probably seen that the word “hope” is used two other times in this Epistle. The first one has to do with people who do not know the Lord, and who go out of this life without ever

trusting Christ as their Savior. Look with me at Ephesians 2:11 and 12. (Read). Remember our definition of the word “hope.” It is something that is future, something desirable, and something certain. Now “no hope” means that the unsaved have absolutely nothing desirable which is to come, and that that which no one would ever want, is absolutely certain to what they will experience. The future for the unsaved is hell, eternal hell, and there is no question but that it is ahead for them. The only way that any person can escape the eternal sufferings of hell, is by turning in faith to the crucified and risen Savior Who died to change the destiny of those who trust the Savior. To have “no hope,” and to die “without God in this world” means that nothing pleasurable lies ahead for them *ever!*

The third time that Paul used this word in Ephesians is in chapter 4, verse 4. (Read.) And here Paul said, speaking of the saints, that “ye are called in one hope of your calling.” This means that every true believer in Christ is going to experience the same “hope.” God does not have one hope for men, and another hope for women. He does not have one hope for a Jew and another for a Gentile. He does not have one hope for a Baptist and another hope for a Presbyterian. He does not have one hope for an American who turns to Christ, and another for a Muslim who turns to Christ. All who are “called” by God to faith in Christ have the same glorious hope. There is only one hope. It starts with justification, moves on to sanctification, and ends with glorification! But what specifically does this mean.

Now God has several reasons for saving us. One is so that He can take us to heaven. We might think that this is what our hope is. We are going to heaven, but that is not the main purpose. Another purpose is to keep us from going to hell. How thankful we can be for that! We are not going to go to hell. We can be sure of that. Another purpose that the Lord has in saving us is to give us happiness and peace right now here on earth. Now there is a lot of unhappiness in this world. There are troubles of all kinds. And many things get worse, not better. But we would all agree that salvation has brought us joys and blessing which we could not have had if the Lord had not saved us. All of these may be related to our hope, but in and of themselves they are not our hope. Let me be more specific about our hope., and what it actually is.

I hope you remember two times in chapter 1 where the Apostle Paul used the phrase, “that we should be.” You find it in verse 4, and you find it again in verse 12. (Read both of these verses.) It is apparent from these two verses that salvation has something, in fact, very much, to do with what God wants us to be! He wants us to be holy according to verse 4, and He wants us to be to the praise of His glory in verse 12. Now to be both of these mean the same. God has saved us to change us from what we have been into what He wants us to be. What could that be?

We have already seen in Romans 8:29, haven’t we, that we have been “predestined to be conformed to image of His Son,” the Lord Jesus Christ. And God works all things together for good because He uses all of the experiences of our lives – the trials and testings, the godly people that we meet, the knowledge of Christ that we learn from the Word – everything, to make us gradually, but most certainly, to be like Christ.

But if we still need further proof of our calling (and I don’t see how we could), let us go to 1 John, chapter 3, and look at the first three verses. What do they teach us? Let us see.

1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God (some MSS read, “and such we are”): therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew Him not.

2 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.

3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Notice the words, “this hope.” Is it uncertain in the case of any child of God? The words of John in verse 2 are very positive, very certain: “We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” This is our hope, a hope

that is guaranteed by the work of Christ, and by the work of the Holy Spirit, and by the declared purpose of God as revealed in His Word. To God alone be the glory. As I have said before, and it cannot be said too often, none of us would ever have thought of designing salvation like this – that every true child of God should by the hope given to us by God, some day, when we see the Lord, be made like Him.

Well, what does this mean? Well, the Apostle John said in verse 2 that “it doth not yet appear what we shall be.” So I am not going to claim that I know something that the Apostle John did not know. But in these verses he has given us some idea of what it will be like to be like the Lord John. It means that we will have a body like His glorious body. See Philippians 3:20-21. It means that from that moment on we will be sinless. It means that we will be able to live lives of perfect obedience to God. It means that death will be a thing of the past forever. We live eternally. We will never be Deity, but we will be like Him. And I am sure that we will learn much, much more when we get to glory.

Let me remind you of something you all know, and that is that this truth we a part of Paul’s prayer for the people of God in Ephesus, and from there to believers everywhere and for all time. It is appropriate for us to pray this prayer for ourselves, as well as for other believers we pray for. And in verse 18 where Paul was praying that God would give them “a spirit,” as it is translated in the KJV, and all but the NIV of the translations that I have, if spirit is not a reference to the Holy Spirit, what follows in verse 18 and on into verse 19 surely describes the work of the Holy Spirit. He is our divinely appointed Teacher, and His greatest delight, as these verses show, is to teach us of Christ.

Yesterday in our church Bible reading calendar, the NT reading was 2 Peter 1. And I had forgotten how often Peter mentioned “knowledge.” And he made it clear that he was referring to the knowledge of God and of Christ. Peter ended that epistle by telling the people to whom he was writing to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Spiritual growth comes through our growing in the knowledge of Christ. The Bible tells us many, many things, but basic to all the knowledge of Scripture, is the reality and depth to which we know God and Christ, and even the Holy Spirit. And this prayer is to that point.

But let us go on with the prayer. What is the second thing that we are to know? “What (*are*, understood) the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints” (Eph. 1:18b). Now this is not our inheritance in God, but God’s inheritance in us. Here again is another aspect of our salvation which we would never have considered. Hebrews 1:2 tells us that God has appointed His Son to be “heir of all things.” This goes back to God’s purpose in creation, not only for His Son, but for Himself. As we see very briefly the universe in which the glory of God was reflected as it never has been since the fall of the human race into sin, and such as we see just the human family today, if there is a single human leader on earth who is concerned about God’s glory on and in the earth, I haven’t heard about him, but God’s purposes, while being universally ignored by men because the natural man has no conception that God has any interest in the earth, or that God has purposes which He intends to fulfill. And God’s purposes are centered in His people, the people He has chosen for Himself, and which will finally be displayed forever in the new heaven and new earth, which is the eternal state.

This is what the Apostle Paul was talking about in 1 Corinthians 15. Please turn to that chapter, and follow me as I begin reading at verse 20 and reading on down to verse 28:

20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.

28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15:20-28).

This is God's inheritance, when all of His original purpose will find their fulfillment which was determined by God before creation, and which have been secured by the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Righteousness will be everywhere. The glory of God will be seen everywhere, but especially in the bodies and lives of those who have been redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ. There will be a fulness ("riches") and glory (the presence of all the Members of the God) such as never has been seen before even by the eyes of the redeemed.

This is a request for the people of God to keep their eyes upon what God is doing in the world even when things seem to be going just like the Devil and the forces of evil intend to take us all. Instead, the truth is that God is going to claim His inheritance in His people as the basis of the regeneration of the world. So the glory does not go to the saints, but to the God Who has made them saints.

Now on to verse 19 where we come to the third "what" of Paul's prayer.

1:19 Every child of God, if he is to accept by faith the burden of Paul's first two requests, must be focused upon the power of God, not upon the power of the people of God. What did Paul say was the greatest display of the power of God? It was not when He created the heavens and the earth (although the power of God in creation went beyond the greatest conception of God's power that the mind of man is able to take in.

Nor was God's power amply displayed in the days of Noah when God destroyed all but eight people living on the earth because of God was judging the greatness of all men upon the face of the whole earth. Nor was God power fully displayed when He humbled the nation Israel by His judgments, and finally drowning Pharaoh and his whole army in the Red Sea. And coupled with that was the destruction of the Canaanite nations, people more numerous than the Israelites, and more power. But they were no match for the Lord God of Israel. And then remember Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Or think of the power of God displayed in the miracles performed by our Lord Jesus Christ – the blind were given sight, the deaf were made to hear, the crippled walked, the lepers were cleansed, and the dead were raised – all testimonies to the incredible power of God.

All of these were great far beyond the ability of men. But the greatest display of the power of God, called, "the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power." When was it, the greatest demonstration of the power of God? Verse 20 tells us.

1:20 It was that mighty power "which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places," or simply, *in the heavenlies*. It had to be the greatest display of divine power when we consider the reason for His death, the burden that was placed upon Him by the Father, and what it means that He tasted death to the full providing full salvation for all of the saints in all generations from the beginning of time, to the end of time. Others were raised from the dead before our Lord Jesus Christ, but He was raised so completely that death no longer has dominion over Him. No wonder we sing of "God, the Omnipotent." The Devil was soundly defeated at the Cross, and the eternal judgment of all of the wicked was sealed when our Lord was raised from the dead. But He was not only raised never to be touched by death again, but He ascended back to the Father, and ever since has been seated at the Father's right hand where He ever lives to pray for His own.

The Ephesians needed to know how Paul prayed for them, and how they could pray for Him, and how they could pray for themselves, and how they could pray for each other. And not only needed to pray, but must pray.

But we see in detail how the resurrection affected all powers among men and angels.

1:21 In my teaching of some of Paul's epistles, I have had the privilege of quoting Dr. John Eadie, who was a leader and great Bible teacher in Scotland. He was born in 1810, and died 1872 when he was just 62 years old. He did not write on all of Paul's epistles, but he did write on Ephesians. And I want to read to you what he had to say about the last three verses of Ephesians. He felt that it did not serve much of a purpose to try to define the terms that Paul used in this verse because it would be impossible to distinguish in a meaning way the one from the other. But this is what he did say which is very, very valuable: This is what he wrote:

The clauses to the end of the chapter (from verse 21) explain and illustrate . . . the session at the right hand of God. These various (titles) are used as the abstract for the concrete, as if for sweeping significance (that is, to include every authority among men and angels). *The highest position in creation is (far) beneath Christ* (italics mine). Some of the beings that occupy those stations have specific and appropriate names, but not only above these, but above every conceivable office and being, Jesus is immeasurably exalted. There is no exception. He has no equal and no superior, not simply among those whose titles we are so far acquainted, but in the wide universe there is no name so high as His, among all its spheres, there is no renown that matches His. These principalities stand around and beneath the throne, but Jesus sits at (the right hand of the Father) (Eadie, John, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, p. 100).

This includes not only all leaders from the past, but those in various places of authority in the present, and all that will ever take any office in the future, "not only in this age, but also in that which is to come." It includes all world leaders, all national leaders, all state leaders, all county leaders, all city leaders. All leaders of whatever may be independent of all of these groups. We could also say of political parties and politicians. Men revel in their authority, but in comparison with the Lord Jesus Christ, they are nothing, powerless, here today and gone tomorrow. Some of our Lord's last words on earth were, "All power (authority) is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). Who gave it to Him? The Father did, and He said this as our resurrected Lord.

These verses ought to remind us of Paul's words in his letter to the church at Philippi when he wrote of the humiliation and glory of Christ in Phil 2:5-11

- 5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:
- 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:
- 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:
- 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.
- 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:
- 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;
- 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

1:22 The Lord is not yet reigning, but He has absolute sovereignty. God has "put all things under His feet," and now in this verse, and speaking directly to the Ephesian believers who as a local church were a part of the larger body of Christ, the Church, the Lord Jesus was "the head." Just as our heads exercise control over

our physical bodies, so Christ in living union with His people, who make up the Church, the body of Christ, is the Head of the Church. He, His will, and His Word, has the sole and absolute authority over the Church.

1:23 The Church finds its fulness, reaches its greatest usefulness, and brings the greatest glory to Christ and to God, by living in union with Christ, drawing all its wisdom, power, and usefulness from its relationship to Christ. And so what Christ is to the world, He also is to His Church. Apart from Christ, the Church is totally without power, and without power it is useless. In Christ is resurrection power which operates in the Church, and through the Church out into the world.