

**THE DOXOLOGY CONTINUES**

Ephesians 1:5-8

**Intro:** I hope that you all are reading Ephesians at least once a week.

Don't read it just to get through it, but read it after you have asked the Lord to bless your reading. Read it prayerfully and thoughtfully, seeking to get the message of the book in your own mind and heart. While it was originally written for the church at Ephesus, yet it very likely was a circular letter, that is, a letter that was to circulate among several churches in the same vicinity of Ephesus. But the message of the Bible is timeless. It is never out-of-date. Paul wrote it under the direction of the Holy Spirit, and it has been preserved for us, along with all of the other books of the Bible because it is needed just as much by Christians today as it was when it was first written.

This is the reason that I have suggested that you read it like it was written to you! In a very real sense it is for all who are "saints" and who are "faithful in Christ Jesus." All who are trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior, and who manifest that by a living, continual faith in God and in His Son, Jesus Christ, can take this letter as written to them, and for them. A true Christian is a saint. This auditorium is full of saints today. We are not the only saints in this world. They are scattered through every nation. As those who have trusted Christ for salvation, we have been set apart for God, and God's purpose in saving us is that we might become like God, and like the Lord Jesus – like Them in character and manner of life. We are not perfect yet, but someday we are going to be. As the Apostle John wrote many years after Paul wrote Ephesians, "we know that, when He [Christ] shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). In the meantime, Paul expressed in 2 Corinthians 3:18 what is going on now in the lives of all of us who know the Lord. Listen to what Paul wrote:

18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass [a mirror] the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18).

*We are not yet completely changed, but we are being changed from one degree of glory to a higher degree of glory, and it is the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, who is making the change in our lives as we look into the Word day after day (the Word is the mirror), reading it, believing it, and obeying it. We don't read the Word just to be able to say that we have read it. We read it looking for our Lord, and praying that what we see in Him will be reflected in our lives by the Holy Spirit.*

So, that is the reason we all need to be reading the Word every day, and as often every day as we can. I am sure that there will be differences among us when we get to heaven, but basically we are all going to be like our Lord Jesus Christ. People who knew my Dad used to say to me, “Dwight, the older you get, the more you look like your Dad.” That never made me mad. In fact, I took it as a compliment. Actually I think that my brother, Bryce, who was here last Sunday, looks more like our Dad than I do. But I wanted to be more like my Dad in other ways as well. I couldn’t have had a better example. But nobody as ever said to me, “Dwight, you are looking more like the Lord every day.” And I don’t think that I have ever said that to anyone else. But I have thought many times as I have watched you, and listened to you talk, that that is just like the Lord Jesus must be, not perfectly, but we are all headed in that direction. The Apostle Paul said in Romans 8:29 that we have been predestinated “to be conformed to the image of His [God’s] Son.”

This is what Paul said, as we saw last Sunday in Ephesians 1:4 is the object of our election. Look at that verse with me again. (Read.) “That we should be holy and without blame before Him.” Before whom? Before “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is one thing for us to live before each other as people who want to please God. But Paul was talking about a day that we will appear before GOD as “holy and without blame.” I am not prepared for that day, but I know, and you should know too, that that day is coming. Paul told the Philippian saints that he was “confident,” “that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6). That ought to make us say, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

By the way, I learned something new this week about the word “blessed” that the Apostle Paul used in verse 3 of Ephesians 1. There are two words in Greek for “blessed” in which a person is being honored. The word that Paul used here is used in the NT for God alone. The other word is used for men, or women, when some special honor is being conferred upon them. Elizabeth used this second word when she said to Mary in Luke 1:42, “Blessed art thou among women.” She was saying that God had blessed her in a special way for which all should honor her, that she would give birth to the Christ child. This was a special honor for which she should be recognized by the people of God. But it was limited to that single event. But when Paul used the other word in Ephesians 1:3 he was saying that God is to be honored for everything that He is, and everything that He does. In this text Paul was saying that God was to be honored

especially for His work in our salvation, *but also in everything that He has ever done, or will do. We can honor Him, and should, for His work in creation. We can honor Him for His dealings with each one of us in our lives, because His work is always perfect and worthy of our utmost praise.*

We are in the football season, and already there is talk of certain players who probably will be candidates for the Heisman trophy. I have heard that a certain football player from the University of Arkansas is a likely candidate. And whoever gets it will receive a great honor. But we know that certain trophy winners in the past have not continued to live up to that honor. So a person can be honored for one thing, but not for everything. Elisabeth was not saying that Mary was God. She was saying that God, in singling her out to be the mother of our Lord according to the flesh, God had conferred a great honor upon her. Now we know that Mary did not disgrace herself in any way either before or after our Lord was born, but she still did not deserve the “blessed” which Paul used of God. One commentator has described the word which Paul used in praising God as the absolute perfection of “the intrinsic character” of God. No situation can ever arise with God that He is not worthy of our loving adoration and praise.

But there is a phrase that we are going to find several times in Ephesians which I want to call your attention to. It appears first at the end of verse 3. And I am speaking of the words “in heavenly places.” God has “blessed us with all spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ.” Some translations have rendered it simply, “in the heavenlies,” which is really a better translation.

You will find this expression again in Ephesians 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12. It is obviously a very important point for us to understand as we look at the truth of Ephesians.

Ephesians 1:3 indicates that the blessings we have in our salvation, are only given to us in Christ in the heavenlies where He is, and that they are kept for us in Christ. Remember 2 Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.” To be a saint, to be a child of God, you have to be in Christ. He took our place on the Cross. He died for our sins. We have no merit of our own with God. All that we have which gives us acceptance with God is what we have in Christ. This is the Gospel. At

the end of 2 Corinthians 5, in verse 21 we read this:

21 For He [God] hath made Him [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin [Christ]; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him [Christ].

The only righteousness we have is the righteousness of Christ. The righteousness we have in Christ. Every Christian needs to learn early that the prepositions *with*, *in*, and *for* are very important in understanding the Gospel. We have the spiritual blessings, all that there are and all that we will ever need, “in Christ.”

But when Paul prayed for the Ephesian saints, according to his prayer in the latter part of chapter 1, he had this to say about where Christ is now. Look with me at verses 19, 20, and 21 here in Ephesians 1. This is the third of three requests that Paul prayed in that prayer:

19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,  
20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,  
21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come (Eph. 1:19-21).

So we know where Christ is. He is at the right hand of God “in the heavenly places,” or *in the heavenlies*.

But now I want you to go with me to the third time this expression is found in Ephesians to see another great truth which one of Paul’s descriptions in this epistle of what we were before we were saved. Look with me at Ephesians 2:4-7:

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,  
5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)  
6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:  
7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

So when Christ was raised from the dead, we were raised together with Him, and He was seated at the Father’s right hand, He, probably God, “made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” We know that we are not in heaven yet, but in Christ Jesus who is seated in heavenly places, we are seated, notice, “together . . . **in** Christ Jesus.”

God never considers us apart from Christ. You and I should be thankful that this truth was a part of Paul's prayer for the Ephesians. We need to make it our prayer for ourselves and for each other because this has to do with spiritual truth which goes beyond what we have yet experienced, but it is more real, actually, than the fact that you and I are here this morning. We are temporal and surrounded by the temporal. Paul was talking about eternal truth, the truth that has to do with the culmination of our salvation.

Dr. J. Sidlow Baxter, a Scotch Bible teacher, a man which many of us have had the privilege of hearing on more than one occasion, makes a statement about all of this that I found helpful, and I pass it on to you with the hope that it will be helpful to you. Dr. Baxter said this:

Over against flesh-bound affections we now find: "*And made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*" (v. 6). Our eyes are opened to heavenly realities, and our minds moved by heavenly desires, and our hearts satisfied with heavenly joys. That is where we are *now* in the sense of spiritual privilege. We ought to be living there daily in spiritual experience (Baxter, J. Sidlow, *Explore the Book*, Vol. 6, p. 172).

As the Apostle Paul indicated in his prayer when he mentioned this great truth of our being seated together with Christ now in the heavenlies, only God can enable us now to enjoy the truth concerning where we are in Christ. We are in Him now where the Father sees us at His own right hand, and this makes it absolutely certain that the day is coming when we will be there in joyful reality. He is our representative now to guarantee that the day is coming when we will really be there.

But now in the time that remains let me get started on one or two verses farther in our text adding another of the spiritual blessings to those which Paul has already mentioned. I am thinking now of verses 5 and 6. I know that I can't get finished with them, but I want to get started.

Let me say to begin with in looking into these two verses, 5 and 6, that one of the greatest blessing of salvation is, as these verses tell us, God by the way of salvation, has brought us into His family. When the Apostle John wrote his epistles, as far as we understand he was the last living apostle, was in his late eighties or early nineties, and he had never gotten over the fact that he was a child of the living God. I am sure that most of you know the verses that I have in mind. They are found in 1 John 3:1-3. Let me read them to you in case some of you are not familiar with them, or maybe don't know what they are by the references. But I feel sure that you will

remember them when you hear them. Hee they are:

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).

We don't spend enough time thinking about this, do we? When you list all of the terms that are used in the Bible to describe what we all are by nature, it is even more amazing that God would have anything to do with us. Paul said in Ephesians 2:2 that we were "children of disobedience," and in the next verse he said that we "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others," or like everyone else. In Romans 5 Paul said that we were ungodly, sinners, enemies of God. Isaiah 53:6 says that we were like sheep who had gone astray. The sins that are linked to us in the Bible would make not make anyone to want to have anything to do with us unless they were just like us. But to think of all that the Lord Jesus went through to bring us into the family of God, not as we were, but cleansed and forgiven, as God's dear children, the only possibility that God would do such a thing, is traceable to His love for us in spite of what we were, and His grace which could not leave us in our sins to suffer the consequences for all eternity.

But the big question is, How did we get into the family of God? Our text says that we were "predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will." But is this what the Lord Jesus told Nicodemus? Absolutely not! He said, "Ye must be born again," or a better translation would be, Ye must be born from above. And you will remember that the Lord expressed surprise that Nicodemus, a leader in Israel, did not know about the new birth. Paul called a child of God "a new creature," or a new creation, indicating that it would just as impossible for a man to save himself as it would be for him to create life out of some lifeless substance.

Furthermore, the KJ translation of "sons" in 1 John 3 is not correct. The Lord used the word τέκνα which speaks of true, genuine offspring. My Greek professor in seminary said that τέκνον means *a born one, one born to his own parents*. Now the question is, Why does Paul call it an adop-

tion?

The answer to that question I will need to give next week. But for the present let me quote Dr. Sidlow Baxter again who said in his commentary on Ephesians that “the Greek word here rendered “adoption” does not mean adoption in our modern Western sense, *i.e.*, the taking of an orphan to be one’s own child. Rather it has to do with the change that comes about in the child of a family when he moves from being a child in the family to being a son. And this is all explained for us in Paul’s letter to the Galatian churches, and compares a child of God under the law as compared to the change that took place in the family of God following the death and resurrection of Christ. This is one of the benefits that come to the people of God following the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If time permits, read and explain Galatians 3:22-4:7.

Everyone saved in the OT was saved by faith in a coming Redeemer. But they were like children under a disciplinarian. After Christ came, all children were advanced to full sonship, indwelt by the Spirit, and baptized into the body of Christ, calling God our Father, and having access to His presence without the need for a priesthood (since all of us are priests). Distinguish between τέκνον and υἱός.

This truth is distinct from the need that we all have to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Go back to Ephesians 1:5 and 6 to emphasize the basis upon which we enjoy the full privileges of the sons of God.