The Church: God’s Family, Chosen for Blessing

Sermon Series: Ephesians: Your Life in the Family of God

Ephesians 1: 1-14

Paul’s letter to the Ephesians is different compared to many of the other New Testament letters he wrote. Like Romans, Ephesians was not written so much to address problems in a particular church; more so, it was written to explain some of the great themes and doctrines of Christianity for the whole or universal church.

- Ephesians has been called “the Queen of the Epistles,” “the quintessence of Paulinism,” “the divinest composition of man” and even “the Waterloo of commentators.” Some say that Ephesians reads “like a commentary on the Pauline letters” and probably it has been best termed “the crown of Paulinism.” “It sums up in large measure the leading themes of the Pauline writings... But it does more than that; it carries the thought of the earlier letters forward to a new stage.”

Charles Spurgeon said “The Epistle to the Ephesians is a complete Body of Divinity. In the first chapter you have the doctrines of the gospel; in the next, you have the experience of the Christians; and before the Epistle is finished, you have the precepts of the Christian faith. Whosoever would see Christianity in one treatise, let him ‘read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest’ the Epistle to the Ephesians.”

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

Paul is IN PRISON! In looking at the great, majestic themes of Ephesians, it is important to remember that Paul wrote this letter from prison.

Eph 1:1-2 “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Ephesus was an important city to Paul.

- the space of three complete years – a unique length of stationary work for him

– as the apostolic pastor.

- separation’ of the disciples from the Synagogue to a distinct place of teaching and no doubt of worship, ‘the school of one Tyrannus,’ the lecture-hall, we may suppose, of a friendly professor in what we may call the Ephesian University.

Paul’s Intention – to circulate among Christians as a great statement of God’s eternal plan, worked out in the church and in individual Christian lives

In ancient Greek (the language Paul originally wrote in), Ephesians 1:3 through Ephesians 1:14 form one long sentence. As an opera has an overture, setting the tone for all the melodies that will follow, so Ephesians 1:3-14 sets the tone for the rest of Ephesians.

1. **We See The Work of God the Father in the Church**

(Eph 1:3-6) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.

  **- God has blessed us: This blessing is ours. God’s resources are there for us always. This speaks of an attitude of certainty and assurance.**

Spurgeon wrote - “We are not sitting here, and groaning, and crying, and fretting, and worrying, and questioning our own salvation. He has blessed us; and therefore we will bless him. If you think little of what God has done for you, you will do very little for him; but if you have a great notion of his great mercy to you, you will be greatly grateful to your gracious God.”

**- God has blessed us and that means the Blessing is for all!**

 The “us” includes both Jews and Gentiles in the church at Ephesus and beyond. It was important to point out that these blessings are for both Jewish and Gentile believers. First century Jews had a strong sense of being blessed, called, and predestined. Paul showed that these things are now given to Christians, be they Jew or Gentile.

**- God Has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ!**

This describes both the kind of blessings and the location of those blessings. These are spiritual blessings, which are far better than material blessings. These blessings are ours in the heavenly places in Christ, they are higher, better, and more secure than earthly blessings.

Spurgeon said “Our thanks are due to God for all temporal blessings; they are more than we deserve. But our thanks ought to go to God in thunders of hallelujahs for spiritual blessings. A new heart is better than a new coat. To feed on Christ is better than to have the best earthly food. To be an heir of God is better than being the heir of the greatest nobleman. To have God for our portion is blessed, infinitely more blessed than to own broad acres of land. God hath blessed us with spiritual blessings. These are the rarest, the richest, the most enduring of all blessings; they are priceless in value.”

What does it mean for every spiritual blessing.

· This means that every blessing we receive, we receive in Christ.

· This means that God wants to bless us with every blessing available to us.

- Our possession of every spiritual blessing is as certain as our being chosen by Him, and chosen before the foundation of the world.

Humanity has been chosen by God, and they are chosen before they have done anything or have been anything for God. Now in trying to reconcile human responsibility with divine sovereignty the purpose of light is not to cast shadows but to guide our steps. The light of God’s selection gives us assurance to the permanence of His plan and His love towards us.

**- God has blessed us by His choosing is according to the good pleasure of His will**

John Calvin said - “For if we are chosen in Christ, it is outside ourselves. It is not from the sight of our deserving, but because our heavenly Father has engrafted us, through the blessing of adoption, into the Body of Christ. In short, the name of Christ excludes all merit, and everything which men have of themselves.”

 **- God has blessed us so that we should be holy and with blame before Him in Love**

- We are chosen for holiness.

Any understanding of God’s sovereign choosing that diminishes our personal responsibility for personal holiness and sanctification falls far short of the whole counsel of God.

 **- God has blessed us so that he might adopt us as sons and daughters.**

- This is the Father’s destiny for humanity – that they would enjoy adoption as sons. God’s unfolding plan for us not only includes salvation and personal transformation, but also a warm, confident relationship with the Father.

In Paul’s time In Roman law, William Barclay - “When the adoption was complete it was complete indeed. The person who had been adopted had all the rights of a legitimate son in his new family and completely lost all rights in his old family. In the eyes of the law he was a new person. So new was he that even all debts and obligations connected with his previous family were abolished as if they had never existed.”

Greek word here is “huiothesia” - Arno Gaebelein: “Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are not adopted into the family of God; they are born into the family. The Greek has only one word ‘Sonplace.’ We are placed into the position of Sons.”

**- God has blessed us by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved**

The relational aspect is emphasized again as Paul describes the status of accepted Greek “chariot”, “highly favored” or “full of grace”

Jesus was completely accepted by the Father. All His character, all His words, all His work was acceptable to God the Father. And now we are accepted in the Beloved.

2. **We see the work of God, the Son in the church.**

Eph 1:7-8 “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence”

**- In Jesus Christ the church has redemption through His blood**

- In Him we have redemption and nowhere else. There is no possible redemption outside of Jesus and His redeeming blood.

- Redemption always implies a price being paid for the freedom that is purchased. It uses the ancient Greek word “lootruo”, which means, “to liberate on the receipt of a ransom.”

Spurgeon said: “Observe, it is not redemption through his power, it is through his blood. It is not redemption through his love, it is through his blood.”

**- In Jesus Christ the church has access to the riches of God’s grace**

We don’t have a “small” redemption or forgiveness won by Jesus on the cross. It is immense.

- **In Jesus Christ the church has been made to abound in all wisdom and prudence**

3. **We see the work of God in the church by the revelation of the mystery of His will.**

Eph 1:9-12- Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; in Him. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

**- For the church god has made known to us the mystery of His will**

 Part of what belongs to us under the riches of His grace is the knowledge of the mystery of His will, God’s great plan and purpose which was once hidden but is now revealed to us in Jesus.

**- This idea reflects a plan or a strategy.**

**Predestination is not Predeterminism. A plan or strategy that God has for all humanity!**

What plan –

- **a plan to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; in Him**

 God’s ultimate plan is to bring together – to ultimately resolve – all things in Christ, either through Jesus as a Savior or Jesus as a Judge

The Greek word for gather together has the idea of “to unite” or “to sum up.” It was used for the process of adding up a column of figures and putting the sum up at the top. Paul’s idea is that God will make all things “add up” at the end, and right now He is in the process of coming to that final sum.

Francis Foulkes - “It is a heresy of our times to divide life into sacred and secular.”

**- a plan by which we have obtained an inheritance**

 For believers, Jesus is not a judge, but the One in whom we have an inheritance.

**-a plan by which we are to be used to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will**

We see three aspects of God’s plan working together.

1. It begins with His purpose, 2. then the counsel of His will, and 3. finally results in His work.

**- a plan by which we are to glorify HIM!!!**

- God’s purpose in all this is so that those who have trusted Christ will exist to the praise of His glory. The goal of God’s ultimate plan is to glorify Him.

4. **We see the work of God in the church in the work of the Holy Spirit.**

Eph 1:13-14 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

**- It is the Holy Spirit that brings revelation but we must decide to follow**

 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth: God’s sovereign choice works, but it does not exclude human cooperation.

**- It is the Holy Spirit that seals us as a of promise but we must decide to continue.**

 Also essential in God’s work is the sealing work of the Holy Spirit. His presence in our lives acts as a seal which indicates ownership, and which is a guarantee of our inheritance. The word guarantee (“down payment”) is used only in the New Testament of the Holy Spirit. He is our only down payment of coming glory; nothing else is provided – or needed.

**- It is the Holy Spirit that does the sealing but we must decide to surrender**

The sealing does not come before we believe, and those who demand some assurance from God before they will believe treat God as if His word could not be trusted.

**- It is the Holy Spirit that is ours until the redemption of the purchased possession**

We have this guarantee until we are “completely purchased” by God through resurrection and glorification – again, all to the praise of His glory.

Question? Do you have every spiritual blessing? Do you see the work of God in You? Are you sealed with the Holy Spirit? Have you the revelation of Holy Spirit in your life?