

Text: Ephesians 1:3-14

Theme: Spiritual Blessings in Christ

Title: Gathered Together in One

Introduction

As most Christians who have been saved for any length of time know, the book of Ephesians is a letter that was written by the Apostle Paul to the church that was established by the Lord through his ministry. The truth is that Paul spent a good bit of time in the city of Ephesians, up to three years. His son in the faith and fellow missionary was left in leadership of the church as its pastor where he remained for many years, possibly up to his death. The city of Ephesus was one of the most important cities of the Roman Empire with an estimated population of around 250,000 making it the 3rd or 4th largest city in the Roman Empire. When Paul went there it was around 1000 years old. It had become the center of the worship of the goddess Diana, called the mother of the gods, with a magnificent marble temple. It also became the center of the production of images of Diana. Therefore, the coming of the Gospel became a major threat to the established pagan worship. The manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit in the preaching, both in Ephesus and in the cities around Asia Minor, and the conversion of many people caused a decline in the purchase of images of Diana. The craftsmen of the sculpturing of the images led by Demetrius became angry at the negative financial effects of these conversions and rose up in a chaotic riot hoping to kill the Christians. It was only through the persuasion of the city clerk that the riot was ceased, and the lives of the believers saved. We have this story recorded in Acts 19:21-41.

Spiritually, the church in Ephesus became very important both in the ministry of Paul and in the subsequent growth of the work of Christ throughout the known world. The first of the seven letters written to the churches in Asia Minor recorded in the book of the Revelation was to the church in Ephesus indicating its importance even in the end of the first

century. Historically, we know that John went to Ephesus after his exile to the Island of Patmos where he wrote the book of the Revelation.

All of this historical information helps us to understand why the letter was written. The church in Ephesus had a very special place in the heart of Paul and the Lord Jesus Christ. For Paul, he had lived and worked with those believers for around three years confronting one of the most powerful religious systems of his day. He had seen God work in marvelous ways converting people from worshipping Diana to serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of the size, location and importance in the empire, Paul was desirous to do whatever possible to maintain the testimony of the church. For the Lord, this church was important in its direct confrontation with the worship of Diana and its impact upon the entire Asia Minor region. Those believers were in a spiritual battle and needed encouragement and motivation to continue the struggle for God. That is exactly what this book does. It encourages by explaining what the Lord has done and is doing for those who believe in Jesus Christ. The book gives instruction on how believers are to live the new life in Christ. It ends with instructions and promises related to the spiritual battle.

The purpose of this message is to encourage those who have been saved by explaining what the God has and is doing for His children. When we realize all that God has done for us and is providing for us, it gives hope and motivation to obey His commands, even in the middle of difficult circumstances or facing the most aggressive and hateful adversary. It is especially interesting to see that this is how Paul begins his letter to the Ephesians, that is, encouragement. He calls them “Spiritual Blessings in Heavenly Places”. A direct translation is “Spiritual Blessings in Heavens”. The word “heavens” is referring to all that belongs to what is heavenly such as the Person, Plans, Practice, Promises, and Provisions of God. All a result of God’s grace (1:2). All centered and provided in Christ Jesus (1:3).

Let us look at three truths about these blessings:

1. The Purpose of these Spiritual Blessings
2. The Products of these Spiritual Blessings
3. The Promises of these Spiritual Blessings

First, let us see

- I. The Purpose of the Spiritual Blessings: Ephesians 1:4-6
 - A. Make us holy and blameless: our character in Christ.
 - 1. Holy is the positive description of our character: separated to righteousness and purity.
 - a. This is the supreme attribute of God.
 - b. In Isaiah's vision, the seraphim declared God to be thrice holy (Isaiah 6:3).
 - c. The primary requirement to any relationship with God.
 - (1) All through the Bible, people, things and days are called holy.
 - (2) They were not perfect or sinful, but were positioned or placed to be used only for the Lord.
 - (3) In Christ, the believer is not only separated to serve just God, but is positioned in Jesus Christ who is perfectly holy (pure) making a relationship with God possible.
 - 2. Blameless is the negative description of our character: without spot or corruption.
 - a. The righteousness of Christ is imputed (accounted) to the believer (1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 4:5).
 - b. When God looks upon a believer, He sees the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ.
 - c. He can do this because Jesus has already paid the penalty of all the sins of the believer: past, present and future.
 - B. Become children by adoption: our relationship in Christ
 - 1. This adoption is the result of receiving Christ as Savior (John 1:12).
 - 2. John says in his first epistle that those in Christ are called the sons of God (1 John 5:1-2).
 - 3. Made to be heirs by the justification of grace (Titus 3:7).

- 4. God has given us a new nature (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10).
 - 5. The new nature is divine in character (2 Peter 1:4).
 - C. Praise and glorify the grace of God: our manifestation of grace
 - 1. The grace of God is glorious.
 - 2. Meaning of "Grace":
 - a. Simple way to remember: God's Riches At Christ's Expense.
 - b. Grace is the foundation of the plan of salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9).
 - c. Grace is the source of the capacity to live the Christian life (2 Corinthians 12:9 - "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.")
 - 3. Hymn: Grace Greater Than All Our Sin

Next, let us see

- II. The Products of the Spiritual Blessings: Ephesians 1:7-9
 - A. Made us acceptable: gracious approval = worthiness
 - 1. Rather than condemned, declared righteous.
 - 2. God not only changes the appearance, He changes the character.
 - B. Redemption by the blood of Jesus Christ: purchase = value
 - 1. No longer a child of disobedience and wrath under the power of the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2-3).
 - 2. From being a servant of sin to being a servant of God enabled to serve in righteousness producing fruit unto holiness (Romans 6).
 - C. Forgiveness of our sins: reconciliation = union
 - 1. Sin is the cause of separation from God (Romans 3:23)
 - 2. Christ carried our sins on the cross paying the punishment, thus, removing the barrier of sin between the believer in Christ and God.

3. The removal of the sinners trespasses allows reconciliation or restoration of relationship (2 Corinthians 5:18)
- D. Wisdom: foundational knowledge = absolutes
1. Notice the word “ALL”.
 2. The word “abounded” means to superabound, be in excess, be over and above the necessary.
 3. This is God’s wisdom which is perfectly correct and therefore the absolute standard for all reasoning.
- E. Prudence: prudent discernment = analyzed sensibly
1. God created man with a mind to be able to take information and reason it out.
 2. Wisdom says that whatever God says or does is perfectly correct, and prudence analyzes all the information about a subject within that perfectly correct foundation.
 3. Example: The very physical structure of a man and a woman (observation and understanding) verify the perfectly correct declaration by God that the marital relation is to be between one man and one woman.
 4. Even salvation is based upon intellectual analysis:
 - a. Knowledge of what sin is and its consequences: death (Romans 6:23).
 - b. Knowledge of who and what Jesus Christ is and did to make salvation possible.
 - c. Knowledge that God offers this salvation to any sinner who recognizes his sinful condition, turns from it and believes and receives Jesus Christ as Savior.
 - d. By the way, it is very prudent to act upon God’s wisdom in providing such a plan because there is no other way to deal with the problem of sin.

Finally, let us see

III. The Promises fo the Spiritual Blessings: Ephesians 1:10-14

- A. All things will be gathered together in one: unity.
1. There will not be any more division between men and God: “both which are in heaven, and which are on earth”.
 2. There will not be any more division between men and God: those who are saved will be gathered together in Christ.
- B. There awaits an inheritance: recognition.
1. All those who are saved from all times will be recognized as God’s children.
 2. The inheritance includes the authority to rule and reign with Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:5-6)
- C. God will be glorified in us: exaltation
1. Because of the manifestation of His love in mercy and grace.
 2. Because of the manifestation of His sovereign authority and power.
- D. We are sealed by the Holy Spirit: guarantee.
1. The habitation of the Holy Spirit in every believer is proof of God’s ownership.
 2. The working of the Holy Spirit in the purification of the believer is proof of God’s valuing of the believer.
 3. Empowering of the believer by the Holy Spirit is proof of God’s relationship to the believer.

Conclusion

There is no other religion on the face of the earth that can proclaim the truths listed in these verses we have examined. The reason is that they cannot offer any of these things. Since their entire foundation is based upon the works of man, there is no basis for such promises as these. The very rejection of who God is by denial of existence or invention of the human imagination is the first impediment. Even if men believed in the God of the Bible, man's very character makes it impossible to attain these promises by his own efforts because they require both perfection and power infinite power. Only God through His Son Jesus Christ could provide these spiritual blessings that are part of the heavenly Person and all heavenly things. Let us remember that because these blessings are heavenly, they are eternal. What we have here in this life on earth is finite ending when we take our last breath. What God has done in and for us through the Lord Jesus Christ is above and beyond all aspects of time and location.

In light of this, it is easy to understand why Paul's letter to the church that was in the middle of a society and culture that knew nothing about God and Jesus Christ, and really did not want to know, started by giving words of encouragement reminding them of all that God had done for them. He continues in the next chapter describing their position from which they were taken and to where they are because of the work of Christ. Then with that base, Paul challenges them concerning the work that God has placed before them. In other words, Paul is saying that in spite of the immense and difficult task, God gave them all they need to accomplish His work.

We live in difficult days, and it is easy to begin wondering if we can do anything, and if the effort is worth it. I say to you that because of what God did through Jesus Christ in your life and mine, He can do it in the lives of others. I say to you that it is worth the effort. Not just because of the things that await those who have been faithful, but the conversion of one soul is a thrilling moment. It is also the very reason for which Christ left heaven to come to die on a cross, spend three days in a tomb, and then

walk out victorious over sin and death.

Another great hymn is Victory in Jesus. Listen to the words of this song.

I heard an old, old story how a Savior came from glory,
How He gave His life on Calvary to save a wretch like me;
I heard about His groaning, of His precious blood's atoning,
Then I repented of my sins and won the victory

Chorus

O victory in Jesus, my Savior, forever!
He sought me and bought me with His redeeming blood;
He loved me ere I knew Him, and all my love is due Him.
He plunged me to victory beneath the cleansing flood

Verse 2

I heard about His healing, of His cleansing pow'r revealing
How He made the lame to walk again and caused the blind to see;
And then I cried, "Dear Jesus, come and heal my broken spirit,"
And some sweet day I'll sing up there the song of victory.

Chorus

O victory in Jesus, my Savior, forever!
He sought me and bought me with His redeeming blood;
He loved me ere I knew Him, and all my love is due Him.
He plunged me to victory beneath the cleansing flood

Verse 3

I heard about a mansion He has built for me in glory,
And I heard about the streets of gold beyond the crystal sea;
About the angels singing and the old redemption story,
And some sweet day I'll sing up there the song of victory.

Chorus

O victory in Jesus, my Savior, forever!

He sought me and bought me with His redeeming blood;

He loved me ere I knew Him, and all my love is due Him.

He plunged me to victory beneath the cleansing flood

1 Corinthians 1:30

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption

2 Corinthians 5:21

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Romans 4:5

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

John 1:12

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name

1 John 5:1-2

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. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

Titus 3:7

That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

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.

Ephesians 2:10

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

2 Peter 1:4

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

2 Corinthians 12:9

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Ephesians 2:2-3

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

Romans 3:23

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

2 Corinthians 5:18

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Revelation 1:5-6

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, 6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Grace Greater Than All Our Sin

Marvelous grace of our loving Lord
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt
Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured
There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt
Grace, grace, God's grace
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within
Grace, grace, God's grace
Grace that is greater than all our sin
Dark is the stain that we cannot hide
What can avail to wash it away?
Look, there is flowing a crimson tide
Whiter than snow you may be today
Grace, grace, God's grace
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within
Grace, grace, God's grace
Grace that is greater than all our sin
Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace
Freely bestowed on all who believe
All who are longing to see His face
Will you this moment His grace receive?
Grace, grace, God's grace (marvelous grace, infinite grace)
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within
Grace, grace, God's grace (marvelous grace, infinite grace)
Grace that is greater than all our sin