

WHAT'S IN THE WARRANTY • POSITION IN CHRIST



WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

READ EPHESIANS 1:1-14

In the case of a death, someone inherits all that belonged to the person who passed away. In placing our faith into Christ's death for our sin, we inherited all of the blessings that were the privileged possession of the Son, as we ourselves have been adopted and made sons and daughters of God. This passage uncovers the great riches that are now ours because we belong to Christ.

Ephesians 1:3

This section of Scripture begins with the words that God "has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ." The next 11 verses go on to describe what these great blessings are. It's much like being at the reading of a will, knowing we are the sole heirs of an estate. What is to follow is a description of the inheritance we have just received. Growing in Christian maturity, in many ways, is the exploring and deepening in our understanding and experience of these truths. But they are ours the moment we trust Christ.

Ephesians 1:4

As Jesus existed before the creation of the world, so even then God knew that we would one day be included and bound to His Son. In the Old Testament, it was the Jews who were "chosen" as God's people. Paul here uses the same word to show that now, anyone who is in Christ has this status. Paul writes this to communicate what a special and unique position they have, as well as us, as God's chosen people. When coupled with the word "predestined," something more is communicated: that it is God who chose us, not simply we who choose Him. Our births were not an accidental conception, but had been planned in the mind of God before the creation of the world.

Ephesians 1:5-8

Here begins the great list of what we have inherited. First, God himself has adopted us into his family. Second, he has made us sons and daughters. In Roman law, an adopted son enjoyed the same status and position as a real son. While many people might refer to God as Father, this is only really true of those who have received Christ. This adoption speaks not only of privilege but also of the security of our salvation. While there are many things we can do to hinder our fellowship with God, we cannot change our relationship. We will always be children of God by virtue of our birth into His family.

WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?

The moment we trusted Christ we received, or inherited, a great deal of spiritual riches and blessings. This passage, and study, surveys the great riches we now have because we are in Christ.

Next, we have redemption. To redeem someone was to purchase them out of slavery. God has purchased us “through His (Jesus’) blood” from slavery to sin and spiritual death. The result of this payment is that we have “forgiveness of sin.”

In the original language, Greek, this whole section is one run-on sentence. As a result, we can fail to stop and absorb the full impact of each of these truths. The study asks the member to pause and personalize each of these great truths.

Ephesians 1:9-12

To the non-Christian, the meaning of human life and human history are unknowable: Why we are here, where we came from, and where we are going are profound mysteries. To the Christian, God has disclosed two incredible mysteries. The first mystery is the meaning and purpose of our own lives. In Ephesians 1:12, it says that we “might be (live) for the praise of his glory.” This phrase is repeated several times in the passage so that we don’t miss it. Christians know their ultimate purpose and meaning in the universe is to bring praise and glory to God. The second mystery is that the Christian knows the ultimate meaning of history. It is the story of God’s plan of salvation, which came clearly to light in the appearance of Jesus. Furthermore, we know where history is headed. All things are in the process of coming under the kingship of Jesus. This will only be fully realized when Christ returns.

God’s universal purpose to bring all things together under Christ, becomes a second great purpose for which the Christian lives: that is, to extend God’s kingdom on this earth and speed history to its fulfillment. Evangelism, prayer, and discipleship are crucial to this end.

Ephesians 1:13-14

In verse 13, Paul underscores the foundational truth that all of these things became true, and are only true, when we trust Christ for our salvation.

The passage says that we are “sealed” in the Holy Spirit. The “seal” had several uses in the ancient world, two of which are very instructive as to what Paul meant in using the word. A seal was affixed to a document to guarantee its authenticity, and it was attached to goods in transit to guarantee protection. The Holy Spirit is the seal of the authenticity of our faith and a seal of protection, declaring we are God’s personal and private possession.

In this last section, Paul addresses the security and assurance the Christian has that these things will all come to pass in their fullness. That security is connected to the indwelling Spirit of God, that acts as a down payment, assuring that the fullness of all of these truths will assuredly come to pass.

This study is accompanied by an article. Take the time to read it.

WHAT IF THERE'S A PROBLEM?

An issue that has divided Christians throughout church history is raised in this study. The passage states very clearly that God chose and predestined us to be “saved.” The question that is raised is this: how is this compatible with the human freedom we have to choose to receive God’s grace? Christians will fall into one of three camps on this issue.

Some hold, that as it relates to salvation, human freedom plays little to no role at all. Others hold that God’s choosing and predestining are really based on God’s prior knowledge of what people would freely choose, thus emphasizing human free will. The third group is known as “compatibilists.” They say that both are true, either by promoting a theory of how both can be true, or by simply abdicating taking a stand on the issue by saying that human minds can’t grasp the answer.

It’s important to keep from getting bogged down on this issue and miss the other critical truths contained in the passage. Paul wrote the words to encourage us and not to divide us.

POSITION IN CHRIST • PG 3

WHAT'S YOUR POINT?

There are three big ideas in this study.

1. That you would better understand the great blessings you have in Christ.
2. That you would see God's ultimate plan in human history (that you are the focal point of it), and see how you can be involved in God's plan by expanding His kingdom here on earth.
3. That you would see that your ultimate purpose in life, in everything that you do, is to bring praise and glory to God, and specifically consider, the different areas of your life, how you are, or aren't currently doing this.

MEMORY VERSE

Ephesians 1:13-14

"...You were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance. ..."

WHAT ARE THE ANSWERS?

1. Take time to fill in the chart.
2. This is meant to be an encouragement. It is also meant to convey that the status of "chosen" no longer refers to the Jews, but to any and all that place their faith in Christ.
3. Take time to look up and personalize the verses that deal with: adoption, sonship, redemption, and forgiveness of sin.
4. To redeem someone was to purchase them out of slavery. God has purchased us "through His (Jesus') blood" from slavery to sin and spiritual death.
5. It is the story of God's plan of salvation, which came clearly to light in the appearance of Jesus. Furthermore, we know where history is headed. All things are in the process of coming under the kingship of Jesus. A Muslim would see Mohammed as the center of history.
6. Write out when and how you came to Christ.
7. A seal was affixed to a document to guarantee its authenticity, and it was attached to goods in transit to guarantee protection.
8. Jot down your thoughts.
9. We can be involved in God's plan by expanding His kingdom on the earth, through activities such as prayer, godly living, compassionate service, discipleship, and evangelism
10. To glorify and praise God in all that we do.

In the same way, the Holy Spirit in our lives is the promise that we really are saved, and will always be safe. Since our salvation is a gift, based entirely on Jesus' righteousness and not on our own, there is nothing we can do that would "unseal" us.

WHAT'S IN THE WARRANTY? • EPHESIANS 1:1-14

Read Ephesians 1:1-14

1. This passage demonstrates the distinct roles the persons of the Trinity played in our salvation. Describe their differing roles:

Father

Son

Holy Spirit

2. Read verses 4-5. The idea of being “chosen” or predestined is a strong theme in this passage. What is Paul’s reason for telling us this?

3. Read verses 4-9. List the blessings that are ours in Christ, by Christ replacing “us” with me.

Verse 4:

Verse 5:

Verse 7:

4. What does it mean to say that “we have redemption?”

5. Read verses 9-10. There are many different ideas today on the meaning of human history and where mankind is going in the future. From these verses, what is the Christian view of human history? How would that differ from an Atheist or Muslim view of human history?

6. Read verse 13. Can you remember the day or time when all these things became true for you?
7. In verses 13-14, we read that all of these blessings are secure because we have been “sealed” with the Holy Spirit. What do you think it means to be “sealed?” Can you become unsealed?
8. Of all the great truths found in this passage, what means the most to you?
9. In all that God has done for us, He is motivated by love (vs. 4), and His great purpose is to bring all things on earth under Christ (vv.9-10). How can we play a roll in God’s great purpose?
10. From reading this passage, what is our great purpose and motivation in life as Christians? (Hint: look for the phrase repeated throughout the passage.)

11. Look at the following list and record how you have begun living for His glory and praise in these areas:

Relationships

Work

Dating

Sports

Free Time/Weekends

School Major

Memory Verse

Ephesians 1:13-14 “...You were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance. ...”

THE HOLINESS OF CHRIST • JERRY BRIDGES

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Before speaking further of holiness in ourselves, it is well that we also consider the holiness of Christ. We need this, first of all, to be firmly grounded in our security in Christ. As we study more fully the implications of “Be holy because I am holy,” we will see more of our own sinfulness. We will see the wickedness and deceitfulness of our hearts, and how far we miss the mark of God’s perfect holiness. As this happens, the true Christian will in his heart flee for refuge in Christ. It is important, therefore, that we understand the righteousness of Christ, and the fact that His righteousness is credited to us.

On numerous occasions the Scriptures testify that Jesus during His time on earth lived a perfectly holy life. He is described as “without sin” (Hebrews 4:15); as One who “committed no sin” (1 Peter 2:22); and as “Him who had no sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21). The Apostle John stated, “In Him is no sin” (1 John 3:5). The Old Testament describes Him prophetically as “the Righteous One” (Isaiah 53:11), and as One who “loved righteousness and hated wickedness” (Psalm 45:7). These statements, taken from six different writers of Scripture, show that the sinlessness of Jesus Christ is the universal teaching of the Bible.

Even more compelling, however, is Jesus’ own testimony concerning Himself. On one occasion He looked the Pharisees squarely in the eye and asked, “Can any of you prove Me guilty of sin?” (John 8:46). As someone has observed, it was not their failure to answer His question that is so significant, but the fact He dared to ask it. Here was Jesus in direct confrontation with people who hated Him. He had just told them they were of their father the devil, and that they wanted to carry out his desires. Surely if any people had a reason to point out to Him some careless act of His or some flaw of His character, they would. Furthermore, Jesus asked this question in the presence of His disciples, who lived with Him continuously and had ample opportunity to observe any inconsistencies. Yet Jesus dared to ask the question because He knew there was only one answer. He was without sin.

But the holiness of Jesus was more than simply the absence of actual sin. It was also a perfect conformity to the will of His Father. He stated that He came down from heaven “not to do My own will but to do the will of Him who sent Me” (John 6:38). On another occasion, He said, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me” (John 4:34). Perhaps His highest testimony to His positive holiness was His statement, “I always do what pleases Him” (John 8:29).

Such a positive declaration must include not only His actions but also His attitudes and motives. It is possible for us to do the right action from a wrong motive, but this does not please God. Holiness has to do with more than mere acts. Our motives must be holy, that is, arising from a desire to do something simply because it is the will of God. Our thoughts should be holy, since they are known to God even before they are formed in our minds. Jesus Christ perfectly met these standards, and He did it for us. He was born into this world subject to the law of God that He might fulfill it on our behalf (Galatians 4:4,5).

Whenever we seriously contemplate the holiness of God, our natural reaction is to say with Isaiah, “Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (Isaiah 6:5).

A serious view of the holiness of God—His own moral perfection and infinite hatred of sin—will leave us, as it did Isaiah, seeing with utter dismay our own lack of holiness. His moral purity serves to magnify our impurity.

Therefore, it is important that we receive the same assurance that Isaiah received: “Behold . . . your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is forgiven” (Isaiah 6:7). It is not only at the initial point of salvation that we need this assurance. In fact, the more we

grow in holiness, the more we need assurance that the perfect righteousness of Christ is credited to us. This is true because a part of growing in holiness is the Holy Spirit's making us aware of our need of holiness. As we see this need, it is well for us to always keep in mind the righteousness of Jesus Christ on our behalf, and the fact that "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The truth of our acceptance by God through the righteousness of Christ may seem so elementary that you wonder why it is stressed here. It is because we need to dwell on it to thwart the attacks of Satan. The Holy Spirit makes us more aware of our lack of holiness to stimulate us to deeper yearning and striving for holiness. But Satan will attempt to use the Holy Spirit's work to discourage us.

One of Satan's attacks is to try to convince you that you are not a genuine Christian after all. He will say something like, "A true Christian wouldn't think the evil thoughts you've been thinking today." Now it may be that six months ago Satan would not have come to you with such a suggestion because you were not troubled about your thoughts. But now that the Holy Spirit has begun to reveal how sinful your thoughts of lust and resentment and pride really are, you may begin to have doubts about your salvation.

A number of years ago, God was allowing me to go through some deep inner struggles to teach me something of the sinfulness of my heart. During this time I was leading a weekly Bible study at a military base about an hour's drive from where I lived. Every Monday night as I left the fellowship of that Bible study and started my lonely drive home, Satan would begin to attack me: "How can anyone who is having the struggles you are having be a Christian?" he would ask. I began to fight him by resorting to an old Gospel hymn which begins,

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee;
O Lamb of God, I come."

I would sing through that hymn, and by the time I finished I would be praising God for His salvation given freely to me through Jesus Christ.

You, too, if you diligently pursue holiness, must often flee to the Rock of your salvation. You flee there, not to be saved again, but to confirm in your heart that you are saved through His righteousness alone. You begin to identify with Paul when he said, "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst" (1 Timothy 1:15). It is at this point that Christ's holy life lived on your behalf becomes so important to you.

A second reason we need to consider the holiness of Christ is because His life is meant to be an example of holiness for us. Peter told us that Christ left an example for us to follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21). Peter spoke particularly of Christ's suffering without retaliation, but in the following verse he said also that Christ committed no sin. Paul urged us to be imitators of God (Ephesians 5:1), and also said, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Clearly then, the sinless, holy life of Jesus Christ is meant to be an example for us. Consider then His statement, "I always do what pleases Him." Do we dare take that as our personal goal in life? Are we truly willing to scrutinize all our activities, all our goals and plans, and all of our impulsive actions in the light of this statement: "I am doing this to please God"?

If we ask that question honestly, we will begin to squirm a bit. We know we do some things, good things in themselves, to gain admiration for ourselves rather than glory for God. We do other things strictly for our own pleasure, without any regard for the glory of God.

What is my reaction when the neighborhood bully pesters my little boy? Usually my initial reaction comes from a spirit of retaliation till the Holy Spirit reminds me of the example of Jesus. How do we view those who do not show love for us? Do we see them as persons for whom Christ died or as persons who make our lives difficult?

I recall an unpleasant business encounter once with a person who later became a Christian through another's witness. When I learned of this, I was deeply chagrined to reflect on the fact that I had never once thought of him as a person for whom Christ died, but only as someone with whom I had an unpleasant experience. We need to learn to follow the example of Christ, who was moved with compassion for sinners and who could pray for them even as they nailed Him to the cross on Calvary.

In the words of nineteenth-century Scottish theologian John Brown, “Holiness does not consist in mystic speculations, enthusiastic fervours, or uncommanded austerities; it consists in thinking as God thinks, and willing as God wills.” Neither does holiness mean, as is so often thought, adhering to a list of “do’s and don’ts,” mostly don’ts. When Christ came into the world, He said, “I have come to do Your will, O God” (Hebrews 10:7). This is the example we are to follow. In all of our thoughts, all of our actions, in every part of our character, the ruling principle that motivates and guides us should be the desire to follow Christ in doing the will of the Father. This is the high road we must follow in the pursuit of holiness.