

## The PATH, February 23-March 1, 2020

Theme: This week we will begin studying the book of Ephesians. Someone once said that the question when we approach Ephesians is not so much what we will do with this book, but the question is what will this book do for us. It is a powerful testimony of the grace and power of God. The book has a two fold focus, and it is Jesus and the church. Paul wants us to see how the grace of God changes and empowers the church to be the light of the world in the midst of a crushing darkness.

### **Monday - Ephesians 1:7**

This first part of the book of Ephesians is a song that was sung in the early church. Verses 7 and 8 have been called the doxology of that song. These verses form a beautiful picture of what our salvation means in the present day. Paul is letting his readers know that salvation is not just something for the future but it is also for the here and now. Yes it gives us the promise of heaven but it also secures for us a radically different life today. Through Jesus we have redemption. The word redemption means that we are ransomed, that we are delivered. Jesus has purchased us out of slavery, He has delivered us. The question that arises is what has He delivered us from? Certainly He has delivered us from hell, and from death but He has also delivered us from our sins and from the selfishness of our hearts. In other words He has purchased us out of slavery and He has changed us. Obviously that transformation is not instantaneous but it is a process, in which He is transforming us on a daily basis. This changes how we live in the here and now and of course it gives us hope for the future as well. This is such an amazing thought that we are told in the Bible that angels long to look into the glory of salvation, and it is something that will cause us to join together with the angels in praise to the Father. This too is cause for great celebration, and that is why it is so prominent in Paul's song of praise. In fact, it is such a source of cosmic wonder that in eternity men and angels will join together to sing a new song, as Revelation records:

And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" (Rev. 5)

Because of our salvation we have the promise of heaven to look forward to, and in heaven we will lift up our voices and praise the God of our salvation. But why wait until then, why not praise Him today, why not lift up your voices in praise. After all the Bible says "let the redeemed of the Lord say so". Let us praise Him for redeeming us after all He is truly worthy of our praise.

### **Tuesday - Ephesians 1:7**

Forrest Gump famously referred to something that went together like "Peas and carrots", well Paul here lets us know that our redemption goes hand in hand with forgiveness. We are not only redeemed but we are forgiven of our sins.

Paul knows that he is still a sinner, as he refers to himself as the “chief of sinners” but he knows that he is forgiven. The great philosopher Seneca referred to himself as a “man not to be tolerated.” He was profoundly aware of the guilt of his sin. He went on to say that what people need “is a hand to lift them up.” He knew that he and that in reality all people needed forgiveness. When we are forgiven, our sins are washed away and our guilt can also be taken away.

One of the men who was a leader in Nazi Germany, Albert Speer once said that nothing could take away his guilt. He plead guilty to war crimes and served a 20 year sentence. After he got out of prison he continued to search for ways to squash his guilt. He wrote books, he did good works, he tried every way that he could. Yet he still was covered in guilt. He even said there is nothing I can do to take my guilt away.

He was a right there was nothing he could do to take away his guilt. There is someone who can take it away however. Jesus Christ went to the cross and shed His blood so that our sins can be forgiven, so that we can be redeemed and so that our guilt can be taken away. He can forgive even the most heinous sin. That is the goodness of God.

Rejoice today in the assurance that if you are a child of God your sins are forgiven. If you have never turned from your sins and ran to Jesus why not make it right today?

### **Wednesday - Ephesians 1:7-8**

How are we forgiven? How are we redeemed? Paul leaves no stone unturned as he lets us know that we are forgiven “through the riches of His grace.” The only way that we can be forgiven of our sins and be redeemed is through the grace of God that was gloriously displayed on the cross of Calvary.

This is something that we need to continually remind ourselves of as it is something that the Scripture repeatedly points to. John Calvin said, in preaching on this very text in Geneva in 1558, “God puts our sins out of his remembrance and drowns them in the depths of the sea, and, moreover, receives the payment that was offered him in the person of his only Son.”

The Scriptures sing in glorious harmony about the fullness of forgiveness:

...as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103:12)

“I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you.” (Isaiah 44:22)

“For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” (Jeremiah 31:34b)

You will... hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. (Micah 7:19)

[At the Last Supper, Jesus commanded his own to drink, saying] “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matthew 26:28)

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

This is the beauty of the Gospel. We are redeemed and we are forgiven, not by what we can do or what we have done, but by the riches of the grace of God.

### **Thursday - Ephesians 1:8**

God's grace also gives us wisdom and understanding. In other words His grace and the fact that He has saved us helps us make sense of life.

Discernment. Paul's final thought regarding our present blessings is that our redemption brings spiritual discernment—"wisdom and understanding." Our English text here leads us to think that in God's own wisdom and understanding he decided to lavish us. That is not the idea at all. What is meant is that along with "redemption" and "forgiveness" and "grace" he has given us "wisdom and understanding." His goodness helps us make sense of life.

Every person looks at life through a lens or a worldview. It is the starting point in which we filter our experiences and ideas. Through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross we are given the wisdom and understanding to make sense of life. We don't look at life through the lens of materialism or worldliness. We don't examine life through selfishness or any of the systems of the world. We look at life through the beauty of the Gospel. Life makes sense only through Jesus and His great love for us.

### **Friday - Ephesians 1:9-10**

We are told here that one day all things will be brought together through the headship of Christ. In other words history is moving towards a goal and that goal is the new heaven and the new earth, with Jesus at the head. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and we will forever worship Him.

Because of that we don't live with pessimism but with a hope that one day history will culminate in a glorious reality and all things will make sense. As believers, we know this to be true. We do not share the pessimism and despair of the world, like that of G. N. Clark in his inaugural lecture at Cambridge when he said, "There is no secret and no plan in history to be discovered. I do not believe that any future consumption could make sense of the irrationalities of preceding ages." But the redeemed know otherwise. History is going somewhere. All will make sense when everything is brought under the headship of Christ. As the Bible says "therefore comfort one another with these words."