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Doctrinal Truth and Purity	Relationships
Unity of Love in the church	The Warfare of the Church



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Dr. Steve Combs

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The Book of Ephesians

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SAMPLE

PAGES

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The Book of Ephesians

by

Dr. Steve Combs

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A photo of the old Roman Theater in Ephesus
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the Authorized Version (the King James Bible)

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INTRODUCTION TO EPHESIANS

PAUL'S LETTERS COVER A VAST FIELD of doctrine, life, and ministry. The Book of Romans gives the fullest explanation of our salvation and Galatians contrasts the grace of God with the Law. 1 Corinthians deals with some of the most difficult practical challenges faced by the church. In 2 Corinthians, we find the heart of the pastor who has a struggling church. First Thessalonians is probably the best book for a new Christian, because it was written to recent converts, reminding them of the initial teaching they received. The Book of 2 Thessalonians concentrates on the second coming. 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are books written to advise young pastors and missionaries. Paul wrote Philippians and Colossians at the same time as Ephesians, when he was in prison in Rome in Acts 28. Philippians speaks of dedication to Christ, firm faithfulness in any circumstance, and interpersonal relationships. Colossians expounds on the deity of Christ, relationships, cults, and the Christian life.¹ The Book of Philemon, also written from prison in Rome, was a personal letter to Philemon.

The Book of Ephesians is the greatest book in the New Testament on the doctrine of the church. All the other books have some truth about the church and the life of a Christian, but the Book of Ephesians specifically explains the origin, nature and unity of the church. Nowhere else will you find such a rich depth of truth about the church. The theme of the book is that the church is one body in Christ. The Church is not two bodies, Jewish and Gentile, but one body in Christ. It is not multiple bodies, but *one body in Christ*.

Chapter one talks about the blessings of every believer in Christ. In this dispensation, the Jews no longer have a privileged place in the blessings of God. Gentile believers stand on an even footing with them, being equally blessed in Christ. Chapter two and three explain the spiritual nature and unity of the church. Chapter four describes the walk of the church; its doctrinal unity, gifts, ministries, and relationships. Chapter five outlines the necessity of holiness in the church, including being filled with the Spirit and its results. Finally, chapter six continues the results of Spirit filling and finishes the epistle by describing the warfare of the church and how to gain victory over Satan.

The Book of Ephesians is a very challenging book. It is also a book that reveals a lot of truths that can enable us to live successful and godly Christian lives. I have found it to be challenging and helpful personally. While I submit to all its truths, I do not profess to have perfectly implemented all its truths, but, as Paul said, "I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12). It is my desire to apply these truths to my life along with you.

In Paul's Day, the city of Ephesus was the fourth largest city of the Roman world, after Rome, Alexandria in Egypt, and Antioch in Syria. It boasted about 300,000 inhabitants. Ephesus was the capital of the Province of Asia. It was situated on the western coast of what is now Turkey. The city had a harbor and was a busy commercial center. Entertainment was important to the people of Ephesus with ceremonies and parades on the beautiful main street of the city (pictured on the cover), which led from the Temple of Diana to the harbor. There were plays, musical performances, and reading of poetry. The great theater of Ephesus (also pictured on the cover) measured 495 feet in diameter and held an estimated 25,000 people. The uproar surrounding Paul's ministry mentioned in Acts 19:23-41 took place in the theater. Ephesus was a center for the worship of

the female deity known as Diana to the Romans and Artemas to the Greeks. The temple of Diana was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The sale of statues of Diana was an important part of the economy of Ephesus. The silversmiths, who made the idols, caused the uproar of Acts 19, because the preaching of the gospel was hurting their business.²

Paul visited the city of Ephesus several times. The first time was after his ministry to Corinth in Acts 18. Arriving in Ephesus, he took just enough time to preach to the Jews, then he left Aquila and Priscilla there, and sailed into Syria (Acts 18:18-22). After his visit to Antioch, he returned to Ephesus where he had a fruitful three-year ministry (Acts 19). Toward the end of his three-year ministry, the silversmiths raised the famous uproar to stop Paul's preaching. They were unsuccessful. Afterward, Paul departed on a preaching tour of Macedonia and Greece. Finally, he returned to the vicinity of Ephesus on his way back to Syria at the end of his third missionary journey. However, he did not go all the way to Ephesus, but to the nearby city of Miletus. From there, he called the elders of Ephesus and they came to him in Miletus. He gave them his farewell address, being convinced that he would not see them again (Acts 20:17-38).

Three final considerations remain before launching into the body of Ephesians. First, I have chosen to base this exposition on the King James Version of the Holy Bible. It is necessary to mention this, because there can be only one final authority when seeking the truth. Since there are textual issues that cause other versions to conflict with the KJV at various places and many of those conflicts are based on conflicting Greek texts (the UBS Text or the Received Text or the Majority Text), a decision must be made as to which English Version and which Greek text will be relied on as the truth and as the Word of God. An example of these differences is in Romans 8:1. The last half of the verse as it is in the KJV is missing in nearly all modern versions.

After many years of study in manuscript evidence, Greek, English, and history, I am convinced that the KJV is the most correct and exact English Version available and the Received text is the right Greek New Testament. I have never found an error in the KJV and I never expect to find one. Therefore, I accept the King James Version as the Word of God without error in the English language. For this reason, this exposition will be based on the wording of the KJV.

Second, at times, I may draw illustrations and definitions from the Greek Received Text, from which the KJV was translated. Some may object to this. I think, however, that their objection is because many have made references to the Greek and Hebrew texts to prove that the KJV is translated incorrectly. That is not what I do. I use this text to confirm, defend, and explain the King James as it is translated.

Finally, there is the matter of repetition. The reader will find that I have repeated some truths, principles, and verses in various places. The reason for this is two-fold. First, the same verses and principles apply in more than one place in Ephesians. Rather than make the reader refer to other parts of the commentary, I have repeated some things mentioned before. Second, repetition is one of the keys of learning. The more you hear or read something the easier it is to remember.

Paul's Introduction to Ephesians

Ephesians begins:

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

2 Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. (Eph. 1:1, 2)

Paul identified himself as an apostle, one who is called and sent forth with the gospel. Paul often said that

God called him to be an apostle and his apostleship was according to the will of God and the commandment of God (1 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1).

The English word *apostle* is a word brought into the English language from Greek. Its use in English has come to be limited to "a disciple of Christ commissioned to preach the gospel" and applied only to a few specifically mentioned individuals in the New Testament, particularly, Paul and the twelve who followed Jesus. However, the use of the term in the Greek world of New Testament times was not limited to this strict application. The term means "a delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders." ³ It is applied to messengers sent by others, such as Epaphroditus in Philippians 2:25, where the word "messenger" is translated from the Greek "apostolos." In the case of those specifically God called apostles, the word means the same. It is *one sent forth by Christ to declare the Word of God*. However, in the church *Apostle* is a specific office and ministry.

There are more apostles in the New Testament than the twelve and Paul. The qualifications listed in Acts 1:21-22 for an apostle to replace Judas did not hold true for Paul, so they are not the universal qualifications of an apostle. The other apostles include James, the Lord's brother (Gal. 1:18-19) and Barnabas (Acts 14:14). The "we ... as the apostles of Christ" in 1 Thess. 2:6 certainly includes Timothy and Silas. Apollos was an apostle (1Cor. 4:6-9) and, possibly, also Andronicus and Junias (Romans 16:7). Some have equated an apostle with a missionary. There is a similarity in that an apostle went out to places other than his home town to preach the gospel. However, there is also a difference. Apostles in New Testament times were able to exercise sign gifts, such as healing and miracles (2 Cor. 12:12) to confirm the preached Word. These signs faded out after the New Testament was written.

As an apostle, God separated Paul to the gospel (Rom. 1:1) and specifically sent him to the Gentiles (Rom.

11:13; 1 Tim. 2:7), although he had a ministry to the Jews also (Rom. 1:16). Paul felt that he was not fit to be called an apostle and he was the least of the apostles, because he had persecuted the church (1 Cor. 15:9). Yet, when defending his ministry, he was willing to acknowledge that he was not less than any of the other apostles (2 Cor. 11:15). However, at the same time, he acknowledged that all he was and all he had accomplished was by the grace of God (1 Cor. 15:10). Paul's entire life was centered on one object and one alone. He expressed it this way: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).

The Christians in Ephesus were called "saints" and "faithful." These are both designations for the same group of people, but these designations are not limited to the Christians in Ephesus. God calls *them* saints and faithful so that all the rest of us will know that this is our identity too (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1). It applies to all Christians. We are all *saints*.

The words *sanctified* and *saints* come from the same Greek word, *agiazō*, which means *holy*. A *saint* is a *holy one* and to be *sanctified* is to be *made holy*. 1 Cor. 1:2 uses the verb form of the Greek word and it is translated *sanctified*. Even though a saint is a person who is holy in God's eyes, it certainly doesn't mean that we are sinless and perfect. When a person believes the gospel, God sanctifies him in the sense that he is separated as a special possession of God. This is initial sanctification. After this, we progressively become increasingly separated from sin in our practical living. Some day, when Christ returns, we will be sinless (1 John 3:1-3; Romans 8:28-30), but in this life we struggle to live an obedient life separated from sin.

In the beginning of the Christian life, salvation is by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9), justification is by grace through faith (Rom. 4), and our initial *sanctification* is by grace. This is evident from the example of the Corinthian church. The Corinthian Christians were carnal (1 Cor. 3:1-4),

there were contentions and divisions among them (1 Cor. 1:10-13), there was fornication and pride among them (1 Cor. 5:1-6), there was selfishness and lack of love among them (1 Cor. 11:17-22). Despite all this and more, the Lord inspired Paul to address 1 Corinthians to "the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are *sanctified* in Christ Jesus, called to be *saints*."

Upon trusting Christ, we are holy, sanctified because of two things. First, we are set apart from the world to God as His possession. To sanctify is "to separate from profane things and dedicate to God ... consecrate things to God ... dedicate people to God ... free from the guilt of." ⁴ God has set us apart as His special people (Titus 2:14). We belong to Him. We no longer belong to ourselves; He has purchased us with the blood of Christ (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Second, we are *justified*. When we put faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, God counts us to be righteous. Romans four explains this and cites Abraham as the prime example. "*Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness*" (Rom. 4:3). Paul explains Abraham's faith:

20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;
21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.
22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.
23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;
24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;
25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification (Rom. 4:20-25).

Salvation and sanctification that come to us when we trust in Christ never changes or goes away. We always hold

the position of "sanctified in Christ Jesus." However, as we grow in Christ, our practice, actions, attitudes, thoughts, and activities must progressively become more sanctified, that is, separated from sin. As Peter wrote:

13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. (1 Peter 1:13-16)

The Ephesian Christians are also called "faithful in Christ Jesus." The word "faithful" (Greek *pistos*) is used in the New Testament in two ways: "to be trusted, reliable" and "believing, trusting, relying."⁵ It is the latter sense that is meant in Ephesians 1:1. The Christians in Ephesus were *holy* because Christ had bought them by His blood and *justified* them by faith and they were *faithful* in that they continued in their trust and faith in Christ.

One of the most important things to notice about these initial verses is that the Book of Ephesians is not meant to be restricted to the Ephesian church only. Ephesians is the only book that fully explains what Paul calls the "mystery," the fact that all saved Jews and Gentiles have been gathered together into one body in Christ. The mystery is mentioned in Colossians, but little detail is given there. The truth explained in this current study applies to everyone who is in Christ. Those "in Christ" are not classed into various groups. We are all *one* in Christ (Jn. 17:21). As we will see, the key phrase in the Book of Ephesians is *in Christ*.

Paul wishes them grace and peace. The grace of God, the undeserved free mercy and loving kindness of God,

comes to us, who are saved, for two purposes. Grace is that which saves us when we trust in Christ (Eph. 2:8; 5:2). We are saved by grace and we are justified by His grace (Rom. 3:24). However, the grace meant in this verse is grace that helps in daily living and in facing the challenges of life (2 Cor. 12:4-10). "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). The Bible says God is a very present help in time of trouble (Ps. 46:1). Our entire lives as Christians are lived by grace (2 Cor. 1:12), so we must always rely on God, not ourselves: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor. 3:5). "For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee" (Ps. 84:11-12).

Two types of peace are relevant to a Christian. The first is *peace with God*. This requires faith in the Lord Jesus, His death and resurrection (Rom. 5:1-2). The result is forgiveness of sin, justification, reconciliation with God, and peace with Him. We were once rebels at war with God, but now we are forgiven and accepted with Him.

The second type of peace (and the one in view here) is *inner peace of heart and mind*. This is a treasure of great value. Everyone seeks it. God's peace gives us relief from guilt, worry, and stress. It gives us strength to face pressure, problems, and trouble. It is a supernatural peace that defies understanding. Peace of heart is obtained through trust in God. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" (Is. 26:3). We can express faith in prayer by looking to God for the fulfillment of our needs and, with thanksgiving, making request to Him for everything that concerns us. Philippians 4:6-10 gives us the Biblical formula for peace of heart and mind.

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

We can make a list of the steps we need to take from these verses:

1. "Be careful for nothing." To be *careful* means to be full of care or to worry. We are not to worry. Therefore, don't focus on the problems. Focus on the God who has the solutions and the strength needed. *"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God"* (Heb. 12:2).

2. Go to God boldly and talk to Him about your problems and needs. Make your requests known to Him. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Mt. 7:7); "ye have not, because ye ask not" (James 4:2).

3. At the same time, be thankful. This requires that you focus on your blessings. The Bible says that we are to be thankful during every occurrence, good or bad, *“In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you”* (1 Thess. 5:18). The Bible doesn't stop there. It says to give *“thanks always for all things unto God”* (see Ephesians 5:20 and comments). Not only are we to give thanks no matter what kind of problem is going on, but we are to *thank God for the problem*. Remember, *“all things work together for good to them that love God”* (Rom. 8:28).

4. Continual peace can come from following up prayer with fixing our minds on God, heaven, positive, and helpful things (Col. 3:1-3; Phil 4:8-9).

5. Follow God. Paul was an example of this (v.9).

The greeting in verses one and two is typical of Paul's letters. The greeting itself is gracious. We generally have lost sight of this kind of gracious approach to correspondence. But, some still use it. Recently, a dearly beloved brother and pastor in Togo, West Africa began his email by saying, “Warm greetings from my family and the brethren in the name of our glorious Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”⁶ Perhaps, we should consider doing more of this.

CHAPTER ONE

BLESSINGS IN HEAVENLY PLACES IN CHRIST

Ephesians 1:3-23

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: (Eph. 3:3)

THE WORD “BLESSED” IS AN OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD word. Perhaps this is because the word “happy” is often used in connection with it, especially in Webster’s dictionary. “Blessed” does not always mean “happy.” Easton’s Bible Dictionary gives four definitions:

- (1.) God blesses his people when he bestows on them some gift temporal or spiritual (Gen. 1:22; Gen. 24:35; Job 42:12; Ps. 45:2; Ps. 104:24, Ps. 104:35).
- (2.) We bless God when we praise Him or thank Him for a benefit He has bestowed or a work He has done (Ps. 103:1, Ps. 103:2; Ps. 145:1, Ps. 145:2).
- (3.) A man blesses himself when he invokes God’s blessing (Is. 65:16) or rejoices in God’s goodness to him (Deut. 29:19; Ps.49:18).
- (4.) One blesses another when he expresses good wishes (or gives good gifts-author) or offers prayer to God for his welfare (Gen. 24:60; Gen. 31:55; 1Sam. 2:20).⁷

The second definition applies to “Blessed be God” and the first definition applies to “blessed us.”

The blessings, spoken of in Ephesians chapter one, are *spiritual* blessings, not material. Someday, after Jesus comes again we will have material blessings, such as, a new body (Phil. 3:20-21) and heavenly homes (John 14:1-2). The blessings of Ephesians 1 are spoken of as past tense, “God ... hath blessed us.” That is, they are already given and secure. We already have them. They are also said to be “in Christ” and “in heavenly places.” Therefore, we must get *in Christ* to get them; that is, we must get saved.

Heavenly places are just that, places in Heaven. It has often been pointed out that the KJV translators supplied the word “places,” therefore the translation should be “in the heavenlies,” as if the Bible is pointing to some indistinct, undefined spiritual sphere that we cannot quite understand.

At best, this criticism is amateurish interpretation and translating. The Greek word for “heavenly” is *epouranios*. It is a neuter plural adjective. As elementary Greek students know, a Greek adjective modifies a noun or a pronoun, as adjectives do in English. The Greek sentence has *no expressed* noun or pronoun for this adjective to modify. Therefore, a noun is implied by the gender and number of the word, neuter plural. As a result, a noun can *accurately* be supplied in the English translation. Since the Greek word is neuter one cannot supply the word “women” or the word “men.” The Greek word is neuter and plural, therefore, the correct word to supply can only be *places or things*. Only the word “places” fits the context.

So how is it that our spiritual blessings have come to us in heavenly places in Christ? What does this mean? And, how is it that we have received the blessing already, even though we are on earth, rather than in heaven? Believe it or not, these are simple questions to answer. However, the answer is not easy to believe, or to understand. The answer to all these questions is in chapter two verses five and six: It is

because God “hath raised us up together, and **made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.**” Though alive on earth, God has made believers to sit together with other believers in heaven in Christ. Some people find this hard to swallow. Here is the Biblical logic. When you trust in Christ and are saved, God puts you spiritually *into* Jesus Christ (John 17:21; Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 3:28). We are completely united with Him. Every believer, whether alive or dead, is *in Christ* and Christ is now in heaven, seated at the right hand of the Father (Eph. 1:20). So, it follows that all believers are also seated in heavenly places *in Christ*. You are saved, you are in Christ, Christ is seated in heaven, therefore, you are seated in heaven and you are partakers of the spiritual blessings in Christ in heavenly places.

It is evident, by the nature of the blessings, that they have an effect and application to our lives on earth.

What are the blessings? They are in verses four through fourteen and can be listed as follows.

- 1) Chosen before the foundation of the World to be holy (1:4)
- 2) Predestinated to the adoption of children (1:5)
- 3) Accepted in the beloved (1:6)
- 4) Redemption (1:7)
- 5) The forgiveness of sins (1:7)
- 6) Abundant grace (1:8)
- 7) The revelation of the mystery (1:9)
- 8) Gathered in Christ (1:10)
- 9) Predestinated to an inheritance (1:11)
- 10) The privilege of being destined to bring God glory (1:12)
- 11) The privilege of having heard the gospel of our salvation (1:13)
- 12) Sealed by the Holy Spirit (1:13)
- 13) Given the earnest of the Spirit (1:14)

14) The promise of the redemption of the purchased possession (1:14).

Some say these blessings are given according to God's will with no influence from man. God's will is spoken of as if it is some arbitrary thing on God's part. Verse five says, "Having predestinated us ... according to the good pleasure of his will." John Gill explains verse five this way:

The will of God is the rule of all his actions, and of all his acts of grace and goodness; and the good pleasure of it appears in the predestination of men to grace and glory: and from hence it is manifest, that foreseen faith, holiness, and good works, are excluded from being the moving cases of predestinating grace; and that it is wholly to be resolved into the good will and pleasure of God. ⁸

This is a statement like many that teachers make about God's will. The Lord's will is spoken of as if it is based on nothing more than God's whims. God certainly does all things according to the good pleasure of His will (v. 5) and according to His good pleasure (v. 9) and according to His purpose (v. 11) and after the counsel of His own will (v. 11). God certainly did not consult man when he laid out His purposes and plans for the universe. However, His will is based on a great deal more than just His "pleasure" and He has revealed what that is. His will is based on His wisdom and prudence (v. 8) and His grace (v. 7) and His purpose that is obviously wise and well thought-out (v. 9, 11). His will agrees with all that He is in His nature and person.

The wonderful thing is that God has revealed His wisdom, will, and purpose. If we believe God's will is based on His own wise counsel, then we should accept that wise counsel wherever we find it in the Scriptures and whatever the Scriptures say it is. This is true *even if we find that God*

has decided to do or not do certain things depending on the response of man to His commands. He has clearly done so in some cases, since God tells man *if you do this, I will do that* (e.g. Deut. 28).

All the blessings in our list are connected. In fact, they each flow out of the previous one. This is clear from the connecting words used. For example, the blessings of verse three are “according as” God has chosen us in verse four. Then God chose us to holiness (v. 4) “having” predestinated us (v. 5). The predestination of verse five flows out of the choice of verse four. These connections continue all through the section. Let us take each one.

Chosen in Him and Predestinated to Adoption

4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will (Eph. 1:4-5)

At this point I will say very little about “election,” God’s choice of us in Christ. I will take up the subject in detail in chapter two. For now, let it stand that God chose us in Christ and predestinated us before the foundation of the world for certain purposes. Those purposes are that we will be holy and without blame before Him in love and that we will obtain the adoption of children.

Accepted in the Beloved

To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. (Eph. 1:6)

The “beloved” here is the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the One of whom the Father said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mt. 3:17). Jesus Christ is the creator and sustainer of the universe (Col. 1:16-17), the

image of God (Col. 1:15), and the One in whom all fullness dwells (Col. 1:19). He died for us (Rom. 5:8) and redeemed us by His blood (Col. 1:14) and rose from the dead (Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:1-4). He took sinners like us (Rom. 5:8), who were dead spiritually in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1), alienated and enemies separated from God (Col. 1:21), having no hope (Eph. 2:12), and reconciled us to God by His grace through faith (Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:18; Col. 1:21). We are now fully and completely without conditions *accepted* by the Lord Jesus Christ, who is not only beloved of the Father, but also the One who is beloved by the church.

Grace is the cause of God's acceptance. Grace is God's loving-favor which He bestows on people, who in no way deserve it. We are completely undeserving and unworthy, yet God loved us so much, that He gave His only begotten Son to pay for the sins of a world of wretched hopeless sinners (John 3:16). The election and predestination of verses four and five are also results of God's grace. All God does for us is a matter of grace, because we do not deserve any of it. The blessings of God's grace cause praise to God for that grace.

Redemption and the Forgiveness of Sins

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace (Eph. 1:7).

In Christ we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins. The word redemption here is from the Greek word *apolutrosis*. It means freedom, deliverance, or forgiveness gained from the payment of a ransom.⁹ All our lives, we have been in bondage to sin, the flesh and Satan, the god of this world (Eph. 2:1-3). Now the Lord Jesus Himself has paid the price of our forgiveness. That price was the blood of Christ.

Redemption not only means the price paid, but also the deliverance it purchased. Forgiveness is that deliverance.

So, redemption comes inseparably with forgiveness. Redemption goes beyond forgiveness and extends to the deliverance of the body from corruption, as mentioned in 1 John 3 and Philipians 3:20-21. We will look at the redemption of the body further under Ephesians 1:14.

The Abundance of His Grace

7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; (Eph. 1:7-8).

The grace of God is a blessing all by itself. It is the substance from which all other blessings flow. The grace of God is tied inseparably with His love. The Bible says, God is love (1 John 4:8). It is by grace and love that Christ died for us, that He obtained redemption for us, that we are justified, and that we are eternally saved. Grace gave us the Word of God, which can build us up and give us an inheritance among the saints (Acts 20:32). It is by grace that God calls us to service (Rom. 1:5). Grace is the source of our spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:6). Boldness and wisdom come through grace (Rom. 15:15; 1 Cor. 3:10). Whatever we are and whatever we do that pleases God is by grace (1 Cor. 15:10). Godly conduct is by the grace of God (2 Cor. 1:12). Grace enables us to unselfishly give to meet the needs of others (2 Cor. 8:1-2, 7). God's grace is enough to meet the needs of all our weaknesses (2 Cor. 12:1-9). Since God meets all our needs by grace (Heb. 4:16), grace is with us all day every day, abundant and free.

The Revelation of the Mystery and the Gathering in Christ

9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: (Eph. 1:9-10).

The blessings here are two-fold. First, the mystery, which has been hidden all through Old Testament times (Eph. 3:5), has been revealed to us and, second, there is a blessed gathering of all things in Christ. The consensus of many commentators seems to be that the dispensation of the fullness of times is the millennial reign of Christ. I disagree. The dispensation is an inseparable part of the mystery and the mystery is what the Book of Ephesians is all about. I believe the dispensation of the fullness of times is our current dispensation of the church. It is a time when all things (believing people) are gathered together in one body in Christ, whether they are Jew or Gentile. The Bible only speaks of one group as being "in Christ" and that is the church. The Old Testament saints are never said to be "in Christ." Neither are the millennial saints said to be "in Christ" at any time. God has given this privilege to the church alone. The mystery is explained in Ephesians chapters two and three. The mention of this mystery here is an introduction to the topic that lies at the heart of the Book of Ephesians, the church, the body of Christ. We will look at the dispensation of the fullness of times in more detail in chapter three of this commentary.

Predestined to an inheritance

11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. (Eph. 1:11-12).

We have already mentioned predestination, so the additional blessing here is that we are *heirs of God*. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the

children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. 8:16-17). It's no wonder the Lord also says, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

We will be "to the praise of His glory." God will be glorified in us. All the blessings of chapter one will abound to the glory of God. In verse twelve, it is the fact that God has graciously bestowed on us a heavenly inheritance and predestinated us to it that brings Him glory. In verse six, election and predestination give glory to God. The gift of the earnest of the Spirit (verse 14) results in the praise of God's glory. Paul's prayer in chapter three closes with the request that the church will give Him glory through all ages. It is a privilege to give God glory. Our ultimate purpose as Christians is to glorify God in all we do. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).

As His children, we are heirs of God (v. 17). The Lord Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, has an inheritance from God the Father. We will share in that inheritance and, so, are joint-heirs with Christ. The inheritance relates to the end of the church age and the beginning of the Millennium, when Christ will reign for one thousand years (Rev. 20:1-6). Christ illustrated His inheritance in His parable of the nobleman in Luke 19:12-27. A nobleman went into a far country to receive a kingdom, as Christ has now ascended into heaven and is awaiting His second coming. The nobleman returned and received the Kingdom. The Bible tells us that when Christ returns after the Great Tribulation, he will rule the earth (Mt. 24:21; Luke 1:33; Mt. 25:31; 19:15). After the nobleman had become the king, he called his ten servants, to whom he had given ten pounds, when he went into the far country. He judged them as to how well they had traded and gained profit on the money. In our case, we will be judged as to how well

we have served Him with the abilities and opportunities He has given us (Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10). The servant who had gained ten pounds received authority over ten cities. The servant who had gained five pounds received authority over five cities. However, the servant who had received one pound and had gained none, because he was too timid to try, received no authority and the pound he had was taken and given to him who had gained ten pounds. The servants were all granted the privilege of sharing in the inherited kingdom of the nobleman. They became joint-heirs with him. If we please Him in our service, we will also receive the blessing of ruling with Christ in His Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 1:6; 2:27; Rev. 5:10; Rev. 20:1-6).

Romans 8:17 adds "if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." The verse seems to be telling us that our inheritance depends on whether we suffer with Christ or not. What seems clear from cross references is that ruling with Christ depends on suffering. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us" (2 Tim. 2:12).

This verse says that if we deny Christ in our lives here, he will deny us. It is not that He will disown us or deny knowing us. That would leave us out of His kingdom altogether. Verse thirteen says that even if we do not believe Him, He will abide faithful. He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:13) and we are part of Him (Eph. 5:30). So, it must be that He will deny us the privilege of reigning with Him. I suspect that those of us who do not reign with Him will be priests for Him, since Rev. 5:10 says, "And hast made us unto our God *kings and priests*: and we shall reign on the earth."

Nevertheless, you can be encouraged about this. It is not hard to come by opportunities to suffer with Christ. We do not have to suffer with the same severity Paul did. He was whipped, stoned, starved, imprisoned, shipwrecked, in peril, and in need (2 Cor. 11:23-28). No, the truth is "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim.

3:12). It may only be a sneer here or a snicker there or a snide remark, but it is suffering with Christ. Others may think it strange you do not do what they do and say ugly things about you behind your back (1 Pet. 4:4). In fact, the process of seeking to live godly has its own variety of suffering. Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Deny yourself; die to yourself. To deny yourself your own pleasure and to discipline your own behavior doesn't necessarily *feel* good. In fact, it hurts sometimes. All you must do is commit yourself to obey God with all your heart and tell others about Him and you will experience some measure of suffering.

There are things that await us that are unconditional. First, we will have a new body that is like the Lord's body. Philippians 3:20-21 describes this new body, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." His body could eat but did not need to (John 21:9-12), was heavenly flesh (1 Cor. 15:39-49), would never die, was forever perfectly healthy, youthful, energetic (1 Cor. 15:42-43), could pass through walls (John 20:19, 26), and could appear or disappear at will (Luke 24:31), yet it was a physical body, a body of flesh and bone (1 Cor. 15:39-41). We all will have this type of body. When we get this body, it is referred to as the "redemption of the body" (Rom. 8:23) and the "redemption of the purchased possession" (Eph. 1:14).

Jesus also promised us, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2). The Lord has prepared a home in heaven for us. Our homes are in God's city, New Jerusalem, near the throne of God. New Jerusalem is described in Revelation twenty-one. Its size has been estimated at fifteen hundred miles in length and breadth and

height. It will have a wall with foundations made of precious jewels, twelve gates of pearl, and a street of pure gold (Rev. 21:12-21). It is a glorious bright happy place of no death, sorrow, tears, weakness, pain, crime, conflict, or disease (Rev. 21:4). We will have a new body, a new home, and riches built up by our years of serving the Lord (Mt. 6:19-21). We have much to look forward to, much awaiting us beyond this life. Remember:

1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. (Col. 3:1-4).

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:17). Suffering takes on a whole new perspective when viewed in comparison to what God has for us in the future. The future will be glorious for all of us, without exception. God has great beauty, happiness, and wonder in store for us. There will also be great glory revealed through us. We will be the display of the glory of God’s grace (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). The wonder and beauty of what God has done for us will be seen and glory will be given to God. We, new creatures in Christ created for God’s glory (2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Cor. 10:31), will be able to glorify Him throughout eternity. In 2011, I lost a friend to complications of cancer. The day he died he told a mutual friend, “This is what I’ve lived my whole life for!”

The Gospel of Our Salvation

12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise (Eph. 1:12-13).

These verses mention two groups, those “who first trusted in Christ” (v. 12) and those who “also trusted.” Those “who first trusted in Christ” is a group who trusted Christ before the Ephesian Christians. Paul himself was part of that group (notice the “we” in the early part of verse 12). Since Paul was a Jew and spent a lot of effort in Chapters two and three to show that saved Jews and Gentiles are now equal in Christ and are both part of the body of Christ, the first group certainly refers to saved Jews. He says that those Jews who first trusted in Christ are to the praise of God’s glory. Now the Ephesians, who were mostly gentiles, have trusted Christ and they also are to the praise of God’s glory.

The Ephesians trusted Christ “after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.” God has commanded the Church to preach the gospel to every man, woman, and child on the planet in every generation (Mark 16:15). 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 defines the gospel in this way: 1) Christ died for our sins, 2) He was buried, 3) He rose physically from the dead, and 4) we must believe it to be saved. The message of the gospel is the total foundation on which our salvation rests. The gospel is considered the word of truth because it comes from “the God of truth, who cannot lie; and because of the concern which Christ has in it, who is truth itself, and was the author, subject, and preacher of it, and who confirmed it by his miracles, and his death; and on account of the Spirit of God, the dictator of it, and who leads into all truths ...”¹⁰

Sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13)

... in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise (Eph. 1:13).