

**Ephesians**  
**October 23, 2022**

**Open with Prayer**

**INTRO TO EPHESIANS:**

Paul wrote this letter from prison to believers in Ephesus approximately AD 60-61 nearly 10 years later since his last missionary journey to Ephesus. This strategic city was the commercial center of Asia minor and also famous especially for its magnificent temple of Diana or Artemis, a structure considered to be one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Paul wanted to share with these believers the great truths the Lord had taught him about Christ and the church.

***The overall theme of Ephesians is the church as a living organism.*** Paul will give us the vision of the church of which Christ is the Head. But today, we start with chapter 1. Paul starts with the key spiritual blessings we have received from God the Father, then God the Son, and then the Holy Spirit. Let's begin.

**BOOK:**

**1** Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful (or believers how are) in Christ Jesus: <sup>2</sup> Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

***Spiritual Blessings in Christ***

<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup> For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup> he (or sight in love) predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace <sup>8</sup> that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. <sup>9</sup> And he (or us) made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, <sup>10</sup> to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

<sup>11</sup> In him we were also chosen (or made heirs), having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, <sup>12</sup> in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup> And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup> who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

***Thanksgiving and Prayer***

<sup>15</sup> For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, <sup>16</sup> I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. <sup>17</sup> I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit (or sight in love) of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. <sup>18</sup> I pray also that the

eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,<sup>19</sup> and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength,<sup>20</sup> which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,<sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.<sup>22</sup> And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,<sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

**Process Observations/Questions:**

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

**LOOK:**

you and I, with all God's people, have been the focus of His concern from before the Creation of the universe! Each person of the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—has been involved in bringing us the grace in which we now stand. In view of all this, there is *no way* that a Christian can see himself or herself as insignificant, unimportant, or ineffectual. The focused energies of God have been spent on our redemption because in Christ we are significant to Him. We are important. And, with God's Spirit present in us, we have the power to live "to the praise of His glory"

**Close in Prayer**

## **Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

**Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 2, pp. 8-17)*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

### **The Author (Eph. 1:1a)**

Some names in history we identify immediately, and “Paul” is one of them. His name was originally “Saul” (Acts 7:58); and, since he was from the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:5), it is likely he was named after the first king of Israel (1 Sam. 9). Unlike his namesake, however, Saul of Tarsus was obedient, and faithfully served God. As a devoted rabbi, Saul became the leader of the antichristian movement in Jerusalem (Acts 9:1–2; Gal. 1:13–14). But in the midst of this activity, Saul was “arrested” by Jesus Christ and was converted (Acts 9:3ff; 26).

Saul of Tarsus became Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). While he was ministering in the church of Antioch, he was called by the Spirit to take the Gospel to the Gentiles, and he obeyed (Acts 13:1–3). The Book of Acts records three missionary journeys that took Paul throughout the Roman Empire in one of the greatest evangelistic endeavors in church history. About the year 53, Paul first ministered in Ephesus but did not remain there (Acts 18:19–21). Two years later, while on his third journey, Paul stayed in Ephesus for at least two years and saw that whole vast area evangelized (Acts 19:1–20). During these years, he founded a strong church in the city that was dedicated to the worship of the goddess Diana. For a description of Paul’s ministry in Ephesus, read Acts 20, and for an explanation of the opposition to Paul’s ministry there, read Acts 19:21–41.

It was nearly ten years later when Paul wrote to his beloved friends in Ephesus. Paul was a prisoner in Rome (Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20), and he wanted to share with these believers the great truths the Lord had taught him about Christ and the church. Compare Ephesians 6:21–22 with Colossians 4:7–9 and Philemon to get a better understanding of the historical background. Onesimus, a slave, ran away from Philemon, his master, who lived at Colosse. While in Rome, Onesimus met Paul and was converted. Tychicus, one of the pastors of the church at Colossae, which may have met in Philemon’s house, was also in Rome to discuss some problems with Paul. So Paul took advantage of the presence of these two men to send three letters to his friends: the Epistle to the Ephesians, the Epistle to the Colossians, and the Epistle to Philemon. At the same time, he sent Onesimus back to his master.

So, the letter was written from Rome about the year A.D. 62. Though Paul was on trial for his life, he was concerned about the spiritual needs of the churches he had founded. As an *apostle*, “one sent with a commission,” he had an obligation to teach them the Word of God and to seek to build them up in the faith (Eph. 4:11–12).

### **The Assembly (Eph. 1:1b–2)**

Are you surprised to find Paul addressing his letter to *saints*? After all, saints are dead people who have achieved such spiritual eminence that they have been given that special title, *saints*. Or are they?

No word in the New Testament has suffered more than this word *saint*. Even the dictionary defines a *saint* as a “person officially recognized for holiness of life.” Who makes this official recognition? Usually some religious body, and the process by which a person becomes a saint is technically known as *canonization*. The deceased person’s life is examined carefully to see whether he qualifies for sainthood. If the candidate’s character and conduct are found to be above

reproach, if he has been responsible for working at least two miracles, then he is qualified to be made a saint.

As interesting as this procedure is, we do not find it authorized in the Bible. Nine times in this brief letter, Paul addresses his readers as saints (Eph. 1:1, 15, 18; 2:19; 3:8, 18; 4:12; 5:3; 6:18). These saints were alive, not dead, though once they had been “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1–3). And it is clear that they had never performed any miracles, though they had *experienced* a miracle by trusting Christ as Saviour (Eph. 2:4–10). The word *saint* is simply one of the many terms used in the New Testament to describe “one who has trusted Jesus Christ as Saviour.” The person is “alive,” not only physically, but also spiritually (Eph. 2:1). You will find Christians called *disciples* (Acts 9:1, 10, 19, 25–26, 36, 38), *people of the Way* (Acts 9:2) and *saints* (Acts 9:13, 32, 41).

The word *saint* means “one who has been set apart.” It is related to the word *sanctified*, which means “set apart.” When the sinner trusts Christ as his Savior, he is taken out of “the world” and placed “in Christ.” The believer is *in* the world physically, but not *of* the world spiritually (John 17:14–16). Like a scuba diver, he exists in an alien environment because he possesses special equipment—in this case, the indwelling Holy Spirit of God. Every true believer possesses the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19–20), and it is through the Spirit’s power that the Christian is able to function in the world.

Now for the important question: How did these people at Ephesus become saints? The answer is found in two words: “faithful” and “grace” (Eph. 1:1–2). When Paul addresses his letter to the “saints ... and faithful in Christ Jesus” he is not addressing two different groups of people. The word *faithful* carries the meaning of “believers in Christ Jesus.” These people were not saved by living faithful lives; rather they put their faith in Christ and were saved. This is clear from Ephesians 1:12–14, 19.

The word *grace* is used twelve times in Ephesians and refers to “the kindness of God toward undeserving people.” Grace and mercy often are found together in the Bible, and they certainly belong together in the experience of salvation. *Grace* and *faith* go together, because the only way to experience grace and salvation is through faith (Eph. 2:8–9).

The phrase “in Christ Jesus” is used twenty-seven times in this letter! It describes the spiritual position of the believer: he is identified with Christ, he is in Christ, and therefore is able to draw on the wealth of Christ for his own daily living.

### **The Aim (Eph. 1:3)**

Each book in the Bible has its own special theme and message, even though it may deal with many different topics. Genesis is the book of *beginnings*; Matthew is the book of the *kingdom*; Galatians is the book of *liberty*. Ephesians 1:3 states its theme: *the Christian’s riches in Christ*.

***The source of our blessings.*** “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” God the Father has made us rich in Jesus Christ! When you were born again into God’s family, you were born rich. Through Christ, you share in the riches of God’s grace (Eph. 1:7; 2:7), God’s glory (Eph. 1:18; 3:16), God’s mercy (Eph. 2:4), and “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph. 3:8). Our Heavenly Father is not poor; He is rich—and He has made us rich in His Son.

J. Paul Getty, one of the richest men in the world, was worth an estimated \$1.3 billion. The weekly income of some of the “oil sheiks” runs into the millions. Yet all of this wealth is but “pennies” when compared with the spiritual wealth we have in Christ. In this letter, Paul explains to us what these riches are and how we may draw on them for effective Christian living.

***The scope of our blessings.*** We have “all spiritual blessings.” This can be translated “all the blessings of the Spirit,” referring to the Holy Spirit of God. In the Old Testament, God promised His earthly people, Israel, material blessings as a reward for their obedience (Deut. 28:1–13). Today, He promises to supply all our needs “according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19), but He does not promise to shield us from either poverty or pain. The Father has given us every blessing of the Spirit, everything we need for a successful, satisfying Christian life. *The spiritual is far more important than the material.*

The Holy Spirit is mentioned many times in this letter, because He is the one who channels our riches to us from the Father, through the Son. Not to know and depend on the Holy Spirit’s provision is to live a life of spiritual poverty. No wonder Paul began his Ephesian ministry asking some professed Christians if they really knew the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1–7). We might ask professed Christians today, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? If the answer is no, then you are not saved.” “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Rom. 8:9). Unless you have the *witness* of the Spirit (Rom. 8:15–16), you cannot draw on the *wealth* of the Spirit.

***The sphere of our blessings.*** Our blessings are “in heavenly places in Christ.” Perhaps a clearer translation would be “in the heavenlies in Christ.” The unsaved person is interested primarily in *earthlies*, because this is where he lives. Jesus called them “the children of this world” (Luke 16:8). The Christian’s life is centered in *heaven*. His citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20); his name is written in heaven (Luke 10:20); his Father is in heaven; and his attention and affection ought to be centered on the things of heaven (Col. 3:1ff). Evangelist D.L. Moody used to warn about people who were so “heavenly minded they were no earthly good,” but that is not what Paul is describing. “The heavenlies” (literal translation) describes that place where Jesus Christ is right now (Eph. 1:2) and where the believer is seated with Him (Eph. 2:6). The battles we fight are not with flesh and blood on earth, but with satanic powers “in the heavenlies” (Eph. 6:12).

The Christian really operates in two spheres: the human and the divine, the visible and the invisible. Physically, he is on the earth in a human body, but spiritually he is seated with Christ in the heavenly sphere—and it is this heavenly sphere that provides the power and direction for the earthly walk. The President of the United States is not always seated at his desk in the White House, but that executive chair represents the sphere of his life and power. No matter where he is, he is the President, because only he has the privilege of sitting at that desk. Likewise with the Christian: no matter where he may be on this earth, he is seated in the heavenlies with Jesus Christ, and this is the basis of his life and power.

When she was young, Victoria was shielded from the fact that she would be the next ruling monarch of England lest this knowledge spoil her. When her teacher finally did let her discover for herself that she would one day be Queen of England, Victoria’s response was, “Then I will be good!” Her life would be controlled by her position. No matter where she was, Victoria was governed by the fact that she sat on the throne of England.

The fact that Paul is writing about wealth would be significant to his readers, because Ephesus was considered the bank of Asia. One of the seven wonders of the world, the great temple of Diana, was in Ephesus, and was not only a center for idolatrous worship, but also a depository for wealth. Some of the greatest art treasures of the ancient world were housed in this magnificent building. In this letter, Paul will compare the church of Jesus Christ to a temple and will explain the great wealth that Christ has in His church. Paul has already used the word *riches*; but you may want to check other “financial” words such as *inheritance* (Eph. 1:11, 14, 18; 5:5) and *fullness*, or *filled* (Eph. 1:10, 23; 3:19; 4:10, 13; 5:18). Paul is saying to us, “BE RICH!”

## The Analysis

Paul's letter to the Ephesians is as carefully structured as that great temple of Diana, and it contains greater beauty and wealth! We *inherit* the wealth by faith and invest the wealth by works. Without this balance, our spiritual riches do us no good.

### HOW RICH YOU ARE!

*Ephesians 1:4–14*

One of the funniest cartoons I ever saw showed a pompous lawyer reading a client's last will and testament to a group of greedy relatives. The caption read: "I, John Jones, being of sound mind and body, *spent it all!*"

When Jesus Christ wrote His last will and testament for His church, He made it possible for us to share His spiritual riches. Instead of spending it all, Jesus Christ paid it all. His death on the cross and His resurrection make possible our salvation.

He wrote us into His will, then He died so the will would be in force. Then He arose again that He might become the heavenly Advocate (lawyer) to make sure the terms of the will were correctly followed!

In this long sentence, Paul names just a few of the blessings that make up our spiritual wealth.

### Blessings from God the Father (Eph. 1:4–6)

***He has chosen us (v. 4).*** This is the marvelous doctrine of *election*, a doctrine that has confused some and confounded others. A seminary professor once said to me, "Try to explain election and you may lose your mind. But try to explain it away and you may lose your soul!" That salvation begins with God, and not with man, all Christians will agree. "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you" (John 15:16). The lost sinner, left to his own ways, does not seek God (Rom. 3:10–11); God in His love seeks the sinner (Luke 19:10).

Note that God chose us even before He created the universe, so that our salvation is wholly of His grace and not on the basis of anything we ourselves have done. He chose us *in Christ*, not in ourselves. And He chose us for a purpose: to be holy and without blame. In the Bible, election is always *unto* something. It is a privilege that carries a great responsibility.

Does the sinner respond to God's grace against his own will? No, he responds because God's grace makes him willing to respond. The mystery of divine sovereignty and human responsibility will never be solved in this life. Both are taught in the Bible (John 6:37). Both are true, and both are essential.

You will note that all three Persons in the Godhead are involved in our salvation (see also 1 Peter 1:3). As far as God the Father is concerned, you were saved when He chose you in Christ in eternity past. But that alone did not save you. As far as God the Son is concerned, you were saved when He died for you on the cross. As far as God the Spirit is concerned, you were saved when you yielded to His conviction and received Christ as your Saviour. What began in eternity past was fulfilled in time present, and will continue for all eternity!

***He has adopted us (v. 5).*** Here we meet that misunderstood word *predestination*. This word, as it is used in the Bible, refers *primarily* to what God does for saved people. Nowhere in the Bible are we taught that people are predestined to hell, because this word refers only to God's people. The word simply means "to ordain beforehand, to predetermine." Election seems to refer to *people*, while predestination refers to *purposes*. The events connected with the crucifixion of Christ were

predestined (Acts 4:25–28). God has predestined our adoption (Eph 1:5), and our conformity to Christ (Rom. 8:29–30), as well as our future inheritance (Eph. 1:11).

*Adoption* has a dual meaning, both present and future. You do not get into God’s family by adoption. You get into His family by regeneration, the new birth (John 3:1–18; 1 Peter 1:22–25). Adoption is the act of God by which He gives His “born ones” an adult standing in the family. Why does He do this? So that we might *immediately* begin to claim our inheritance and enjoy our spiritual wealth! A baby cannot legally use this inheritance (Gal. 4:1–7), but an adult son can—and should! This means that you do not have to wait until you are an old saint before you can claim your riches in Christ.

The *future* aspect of adoption is found in Romans 8:22–23, the glorified body we will have when Jesus returns. We already have our adult standing before God, but the world cannot see this. When Christ returns, this “private adoption” will be made public for everyone to see!

***He has accepted us (v. 6).*** We cannot make ourselves acceptable to God; but He, by His grace, makes us accepted in Christ. This is our eternal position which will never change. Some translations read “which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved” (NASB). Or, “He has *be-graced* [literal translation] us in the Beloved.” The idea is the same. Because of God’s grace in Christ, we are accepted before Him. Paul wrote *Philemon* to encourage him to accept his runaway slave, Onesimus, using the same argument. “If he owes you anything, I will pay it. Receive him as you would receive me” (Phile. 17–19, paraphrased). The parallel is easy to see.

### **Blessings from God the Son (Eph. 1:7–12)**

We should not think that each Person of the Godhead works independently, because they all worked together to make possible our salvation. But each Person has a special ministry to perform, a special “spiritual deposit” to make in our lives.

***He has redeemed us (v. 7a).*** To *redeem* means “to purchase and set free by paying a price.” There were 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire, and often they were bought and sold like pieces of furniture. But a man could purchase a slave and set him free, and this is what Jesus did for us. The price was His own blood (1 Peter 1:18ff). This means that we are free from the Law (Gal. 5:1), free from slavery to sin (Rom. 6), as well as free from the power of Satan and the world (Gal. 1:4; Col. 1:13–14). If we were slaves, we would be poor, but because we are sons, we are rich!

***He has forgiven us (v. 7b).*** The word *forgive* means “to carry away.” This reminds us of the ritual on the Jewish Day of Atonement when the high priest sent the scapegoat into the wilderness (Lev. 16). First the priest killed one of the two goats and sprinkled its blood before God on the mercy seat. Then he confessed Israel’s sins over the live goat, and had the goat taken into the wilderness to be lost. Christ died to carry away our sins so they might never again be seen (Ps. 103:12; John 1:29). No written accusation stands against us because our sins have been taken away! Sin made us poor, but grace makes us rich.

***He has revealed God’s will to us (vv. 8–10).*** This letter has much to say about God’s plan for His people, a plan that was not fully understood even in Paul’s day. The word *mystery* has nothing to do with things eerie. It means a “sacred secret, once hidden but now revealed to God’s people.” We believers are a part of God’s “inner circle.” We are able to share in the secret that God will one day unite everything in Christ. Ever since sin came into the world, things have been falling apart. First, man was separated from God (Gen. 3). Then man was separated from man, as Cain killed Abel (Gen. 4). People tried to maintain a kind of unity by building the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11), but God judged them and scattered them across the world. God called Abraham and put a

difference between the Jew and the Gentile, a difference that was maintained until Christ's death on the cross. Sin is tearing everything apart, but in Christ, God will gather everything together in the culmination of the ages. We are a part of this great eternal program.

***He has made us an inheritance (vv. 11–12).*** The *King James Version* reads, “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance,” but “in whom also we were made an inheritance” is also a possible translation. Both are true and the one includes the other. In Christ we *have* a wonderful inheritance (1 Peter 1:1–4), and in Christ we *are* an inheritance. We are valuable to Him. Think of the price God paid to purchase us and make us part of His inheritance! God the Son is the Father's love gift to us; and we are the Father's love gift to His Son. Read John 17 and note how many times Christ calls us “those whom Thou hast given Me.” The church is Christ's body (Eph. 1:22–23), building (Eph. 2:19–22), and bride (Eph. 5:22–23); Christ's future inheritance is wrapped up in His church. We are “joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17), which means that He cannot claim His inheritance apart from us!

### **Blessings from God the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13–14)**

We move now from eternity past (Eph. 1:4–6), and history past (Eph. 1:7–12), to the immediate experience of the Ephesian Christians. The Holy Spirit had worked in their lives, and they knew it.

***He has sealed us (v. 13).*** The entire process of salvation is given in this verse, so we had better examine it carefully. It tells how the sinner becomes a saint. First, he hears the Gospel of salvation. This is the good news that Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose again (1 Cor. 15:1ff). The Ephesians were Gentiles, and the Gospel came “to the Jew first” (Rom. 1:16). But Paul, a Jew, brought the Gospel to the Gentiles as he shared the Word of God with them.

The Ephesians “heard the Gospel” and discovered it was for them—“your salvation” (Eph. 1:13). Even though the Bible teaches election, it also announces, “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). A soul-winner does not discuss election with unsaved people, because it is a family secret that belongs to the saints. He simply announces the truth of the Gospel and invites men to trust Christ, and the Holy Spirit does the rest. D.L. Moody used to pray, “Lord, save the elect—and then elect some more!” The same God who ordains the end, the salvation of souls, also ordains the means to the end, the preaching of the Gospel in the power of the Spirit.

Having heard the Word, the Ephesians believed; and it is this faith that brought salvation (Eph. 2:8–9). This pattern follows what Paul writes in Romans 10:13–15, so read that passage carefully. It is God's plan for evangelism. When the Ephesians believed, they were “sealed with the Spirit.” “After that ye believed” should read “*when* ye believed.” You receive the Spirit immediately on trusting Christ. This is not an experience subsequent to conversion. (Read Acts 10:34–48.)

What is the significance of this sealing of the Holy Spirit? For one thing, it speaks of a *finished transaction*. Even today, when important legal documents are processed, they are stamped with the official seal to signify the completion of the transaction. This sealing also implies *ownership*: God has put his seal on us because He has purchased us to be His own (1 Cor. 6:19–20). It also means *security and protection*. The Roman seal on the tomb of Jesus carried this meaning (Matt. 27:62–66). So, the believer belongs to God, and is safe and protected because he is a part of a finished transaction. According to John 14:16–17, the Holy Spirit abides with the believer forever. It is possible for us to grieve the Spirit and thereby lose the blessings of His ministry (Eph. 4:30). But He doesn't leave us.

Another use for the seal is as a mark of *authenticity*. Just as a signature on a letter attests to the genuineness of the document, so the presence of the Spirit proves the believer is genuine. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Rom. 8:9). It is not simply our lip profession, our religious activity, or our good works, but the witness of the Spirit that makes our profession authentic.

***He has given us an earnest (v. 14).*** *Earnest* is a fascinating word! In Paul’s day, it meant “the down payment to guarantee the final purchase of some commodity or piece of property.” Even today you will hear a real estate agent talk about earnest money. The Holy Spirit is God’s first installment to guarantee to His children that He will finish His work and eventually bring them to glory. The “redemption of the purchased possession” refers to the redemption of the body at the return of Christ (Rom. 8:18–23; 1 John 3:1–3). “Redemption” is experienced in three stages:

- *We have been redeemed* through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:7).
- *We are being redeemed* as the Spirit works in our lives to make us more like Christ (Rom. 8:1–4).
- *We shall be redeemed* when Christ returns, and we become like Him.

But the word translated *earnest* also means “engagement ring.” In Greece today you would find this word being used that way. But, after all, isn’t an engagement ring an assurance—a guarantee—that the promises made will be kept? Our relationship to God through Christ is not simply a *commercial* one, but also a personal experience of love. He is the Bridegroom, and His church is the bride. We know that He will come and claim His bride because He has given us His promise and His Spirit as the “engagement ring.” What greater assurance could we want?

We have examined a number of basic Bible doctrines in this chapter, all on the theme of our riches in Christ. It would be profitable for us to review what these verses teach us.

1. *True riches come from God.* It is a source of great encouragement to know that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all working on my behalf to make me rich. God not only gives us “richly all things to enjoy” (1 Tim. 6:17), but He gives us *eternal* riches without which all other wealth is valueless.

A distraught wife sought out a Christian marriage counselor and told her sad story of a marriage about to dissolve. “But we have so much!” she kept saying. “Look at this diamond ring on my finger. Why, it’s worth thousands! We have an expensive mansion in an exclusive area. We have three cars, and even a cabin in the mountains. Why, we have everything money can buy!”

The counselor replied: “It’s good to have the things money can buy provided you don’t lose the things money can’t buy. What good is an expensive house if there’s no home? Or an expensive ring if there’s no love?”

In Christ, you and I have “what money can’t buy,” and these spiritual riches open up to us all the wealth of God’s vast creation. We enjoy the gifts because we know and love the Giver.

2. *All of these riches come by God’s grace and for God’s glory.* Did you notice that after each of the main sections in Ephesians 1:4–14, Paul has added the purpose behind these gifts? Why has God the Father chosen us, adopted us, and accepted us? “To the praise of the glory of His grace” (Eph. 1:6). Why has the Son redeemed us, forgiven us, revealed God’s will to us, and made us part of God’s inheritance? “That we should be to the praise of His glory” (Eph. 1:12). Why has God the Spirit sealed us and become the guarantee of our future blessing? “Unto the praise of His glory” (Eph. 1:14).

We often have the idea that God saves sinners mainly because He pities them, or wants to rescue them from eternal judgment, but God’s main purpose is that He might be glorified. His

creation reveals His wisdom and power, but His church reveals His love and grace. You cannot deserve or earn these spiritual riches; you can only receive them by grace, through faith.

3. *These riches are only the beginning!* There is always more spiritual wealth to claim from the Lord as we walk with Him. The Bible is our guidebook; the Holy Spirit is our Teacher. As we search the Word of God, we discover more and more of the riches we have in Christ. These riches were planned by the Father, purchased by the Son, and presented by the Spirit. There is really no need for us to live in poverty when all of God's wealth is at our disposal!

My friend was discussing money matters with his wife and neither of them realized that their little son was listening. Finally, the boy broke in with the suggestion, "Why don't you just write one of those pieces of paper?" Junior did not understand that it was necessary to have money in the bank to back up "those pieces of paper." But we never face that problem when it comes to our spiritual wealth.

A little devotional book by Charles Spurgeon is entitled *A Checkbook on the Bank of Faith*. A promise from the Bible was given for each day of the year, along with a short devotional message. The author described each promise as being as good as money in the bank to anyone who would claim it by faith, as a person would write a check against his bank account. By faith we can claim God's promises and draw on His limitless wealth to meet every need we may face.

### *Ephesians 1:15-23*

On January 6, 1822, the wife of a poor German pastor had a son, never dreaming that he would one day achieve world renown and great wealth. When Heinrich Schliemann was seven years old, a picture of ancient Troy in flames captured his imagination. Contrary to what many people believed, Heinrich argued that Homer's great poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, were based on historic facts and he set out to prove it. In 1873, he uncovered the ancient site of Troy, along with some fabulous treasure which he smuggled out of the country, much to the anger of the Turkish government. Schliemann became a famous, wealthy man because he dared to believe an ancient record and act on his faith.

We discovered that we were "born rich" when we trusted Christ. But this is not enough, for we must grow in our understanding of our riches if we are ever going to use them to the glory of God. Too many Christians have never "read the bank book" to find out the vast spiritual wealth that God has put to their account through Jesus Christ. They are like the late newspaper publisher, William Randolph Hearst, who invested a fortune collecting art treasures from around the world. One day Mr. Hearst found a description of some valuable items that he felt he must own, so he sent his agent abroad to find them. After months of searching, the agent reported that he had finally found the treasures. They were in Mr. Hearst's warehouse. Hearst had been searching frantically for treasures he already owned! Had he read the catalog of his treasures, he would have saved himself a great deal of money and trouble.

Paul desired the Ephesian Christians to understand what great wealth they had in Christ. Paul knew of their faith and love, and in this he rejoiced. The Christian life has two dimensions: faith toward God and love toward men, and you cannot separate the two. But Paul knew that faith and love were just the beginning. The Ephesians needed to know much more. This is why he prayed for them, and for us.

In the prison prayers of Paul (Eph. 1:15-23; 3:14-21; Phil. 1:9-11; Col. 1:9-12), we discover the blessings he wanted his converts to enjoy. In none of these prayers does Paul request material things. His emphasis is on spiritual perception and real Christian character. He does not ask God

to give them what they do not have, but rather prays that God will reveal to them what they already have.

Before we study Paul's four requests in this "prayer for enlightenment," we must notice two facts. First, enlightenment comes from the Holy Spirit. He is the "Spirit of wisdom and revelation" (Isa. 11:2; John 14:25–26; 16:12–14). With his natural mind, man cannot understand the things of God. He needs the Spirit to enlighten him (1 Cor. 2:9–16). The Holy Spirit reveals truth to us from the Word, and then gives us the wisdom to understand and apply it. He also gives us the power—the enablement—to practice the truth (Eph. 3:14–21).

Second, this enlightenment comes to the heart of the believer (Eph. 1:18). Literally this verse reads, "The eyes of your heart being enlightened." We think of the heart as the emotional part of man, but in the Bible, the heart means the inner man, and includes the emotions, the mind, and the will. The inner man, the heart, has spiritual faculties that parallel the physical senses. The inner man can *see* (Ps. 119:18; John 3:3), *hear* (Matt. 13:9; Heb. 5:11), *taste* (Ps. 34:8; 1 Peter 2:3), *smell* (Phil. 4:18; 2 Cor. 2:14), and *touch* (Acts 17:27). This is what Jesus meant when He said of the people: "They seeing see not, and hearing they hear not" (Matt. 13:13). The inability to see and understand spiritual things is not the fault of the intelligence but of the heart. The eyes of the heart must be opened by the Spirit of God.

### **That They Might Know God (Eph. 1:17b)**

This, of course, is the highest knowledge possible. The *atheist* claims there is no God for us to know, and the *agnostic* states that if there is a God we cannot know Him. But Paul has met God in the person of Jesus Christ, and he knows that a man really cannot understand much of anything else without a knowledge of God.

This willful ignorance of God led mankind into corruption and condemnation. In Romans 1:18ff, Paul describes the stages in man's devolution: from willful ignorance of God to idolatry (substituting a lie for the truth) to immorality and indecency. Where does it begin? It begins with an unwillingness to know God as Creator, Sustainer, Governor, Savior, and Judge.

The believer must grow in his knowledge of God. To know God personally is salvation (John 17:3). To know Him increasingly is sanctification (Phil. 3:10). To know Him perfectly is glorification (1 Cor. 13:9–12). Since we are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26–28), the better we know God, the better we know ourselves and each other. It is not enough to know God only as Savior. We must get to know Him as Father, Friend, Guide, and the better we know Him, the more satisfying our spiritual lives will be.

A believer said to me one day after a Bible lesson, "I'm sure glad I came! You gave me two good verses to use on my wicked neighbor!" Surely there are times when we use God's Word as a sword to defeat the enemy, but that is not the primary purpose behind the writing of the Bible. As the familiar hymn puts it: "Beyond the sacred page / I seek Thee, Lord. / My spirit pants for Thee / O living Word."

### **That We Might Know God's Calling (Eph. 1:18a)**

The word *called* is an important word in the Christian's vocabulary. The word *church* is a combination of two Greek words that mean "called out." Paul never tired of testifying that God called him "by His grace" (Gal. 1:15); and he reminded Timothy that the believer has a "holy calling" (2 Tim. 1:9). We have been "called out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9)

and have even been “called to glory” (1 Peter 5:10). God calls us by His grace and not because of any merit that we may possess.

Paul wants us to understand the hope that is ours because of this calling (Eph. 4:4). Some callings offer no hope, but the calling we have in Christ assures us of a delightful future. Keep in mind that the word *hope* in the Bible does not mean “hope so,” like a child hoping for a doll or a bike at Christmas. The word carries with it “assurance for the future.” The believer’s hope is, of course, the return of Jesus Christ for His church (1 Thess. 4:13–18; 1 John 3:1–3). When we were lost, we were “without hope” (Eph. 2:12); but in Jesus Christ, we have a “living hope” (1 Peter 1:3) that encourages us day by day.

Dr. Kenneth Chafin, a well-known Baptist author, tells about the pastor and deacon who were visiting prospective members and drove up to a beautiful suburban home surrounded by a velvet lawn and gorgeous landscaping. Two expensive cars stood in the driveway, and through the picture window, the men saw their prospect, lounging in an easy chair and watching color TV. The deacon turned to his pastor and said, “What kind of good news do we have for *him*?”

How prone we are to confuse prices and values. Ephesus was a wealthy city. It boasted the temple of Diana, one of the wonders of the ancient world. Today, Ephesus is an archeologist’s paradise, but all of its wealth and splendor are gone. But the Christians who once lived there are today in heaven, enjoying the glory of God!

The hope that belongs to our calling should be a dynamic force in our lives, encouraging us to be pure (1 John 2:28–3:3), obedient (Heb. 13:17), and faithful (Luke 12:42–48). The fact that we shall one day see Christ and be like Him should motivate us to live like Christ today.

### **That We Might Know God’s Riches (Eph. 1:18b)**

This phrase does not refer to our inheritance in Christ (Eph. 1:11), but His inheritance in us. This is an amazing truth—that God should look on us as a part of His great wealth! Just as a man’s wealth brings glory to his name, so God will get glory from the church because of what He has invested in us. When Jesus Christ returns, we shall be “to the praise of the glory of His grace” (Eph. 1:6).

God deals with us on the basis of our future, not our past. He said to cowardly Gideon, “The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor” (Judg. 6:12). Jesus said to Andrew’s brother, “Thou art Simon ... thou shalt be called Cephas [a stone]” (John 1:42).

Gideon did become a mighty man of valor, and Simon did become Peter, a rock. We Christians live in the future tense, our lives controlled by what we shall be when Christ returns. Because we are God’s inheritance, we live to please and glorify Him.

This truth suggests to us that Christ will not enter into His promised glory until the church is there to share it with Him. He prayed for this before He died, and this prayer will be answered (John 17:24). Christ will be glorified in us (2 Thes. 1:10), and we will be glorified in Him (Col. 3:4). Knowing this should lead the believer into a life of dedication and devotion to the Lord.

### **That We Might Know God’s Power (Eph. 1:19–23)**

By making us His inheritance, God has shown His love. By promising us a wonderful future, He has encouraged our hope. Paul offered something to challenge our faith: “the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe” (Eph. 1:19). So tremendous is this truth that Paul enlisted many different words from the Greek vocabulary to get his point across: *dunamis*—“power” as in dynamo and dynamite; *energeia*—“working” as in energy; *kratos*—“mighty”; *ischus*—“power.”

Ephesians 1:19 can be translated, “What is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the operation of the might of His strength.” He is talking about divine dynamic, eternal energy, available to us!

After all, what good is it to have wealth if you are too weak to use it? Or if you are so afraid of robbers that you cannot really enjoy it? John D. Rockefeller was the world’s first billionaire. It is said that for many years, he lived on crackers and milk because of stomach troubles caused by worrying about his wealth. He rarely had a good night’s sleep, and guards stood constantly at his door. Wealthy—but miserable! When he began to share his wealth with others in great philanthropic endeavors, his health improved considerably, and he lived to be an old man.

We Christians need power for several reasons. To begin with, by nature we are too weak to appreciate and appropriate this wealth, and to use it as it should be used. “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41). To turn this vast spiritual wealth over to a mere human being, living by human wisdom and strength, would be like handing an atomic bomb to a two-year-old. God’s power enables us to use God’s wealth.

But there is a second reason why we need God’s power. There are enemies who want to rob us of our wealth (Eph. 1:21; 6:11–12). We could never defeat these spiritual foes in our own power, but we can through the Spirit’s power. Paul wants us to know the greatness of God’s power so that we will not fail to use our wealth, and so that the enemy will not deprive us of our wealth.

The power is seen in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, people measured God’s power by His creation (Isa. 40:12–27) or by His miracle at the Exodus of Israel from Egypt (Jer. 16:14). But today, we measure God’s power by the miracle of Christ’s resurrection. Much more was involved than merely raising Him from the dead, for Christ also ascended to heaven and sat down in the place of authority at the right hand of God. He is not only Savior; He is also Sovereign (Acts 2:25–36). No authority or power, human or in the spirit world, is greater than that of Jesus Christ, the exalted Son of God. He is “far above all,” and no future enemy can overcome Him, because He has been exalted “far above all” powers.

But how does this apply to you and me today? In Ephesians 1:22–23, Paul explains the practical application. Because we are believers, we are in the church, which is Christ’s body—and He is the Head. This means that there is a living connection between you and Christ. Physically speaking, the head controls the body and keeps the body functioning properly. Injure certain parts of the brain and you handicap or paralyze corresponding parts of the body. Christ is our spiritual Head. Through the Spirit, we are united to Him as the members of His body. This means that we share His resurrection, ascension, and exaltation. (Paul will amplify this later.) We too are seated, in the heavenlies (Eph. 2:6), and all things are under our feet.

No wonder Paul wants us to know “the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward”! Apart from this power, we cannot draw on our great wealth in Christ.

I recall going to the hospital with one of our church members to try to get her husband to sign a paper that would authorize her to draw on his private checking account so she could pay his bills. The man was so weak he could not sign the paper. She finally had to get witnesses to verify his “X” on the document. His weakness nearly deprived her of his wealth.

The power of the Holy Spirit, through the resurrected, ascended Christ, is available to all Christians—by faith. His power is to “us-ward who believe” (Eph. 1:19). It is grace that supplies the wealth, but it is faith that lays hold of the wealth. We are saved “by grace, through faith” (Eph. 2:8–9), and we live “by grace,” through faith (1 Cor. 15:10).

In the four Gospels, we see God’s power at work in the ministry of Jesus Christ, but in the Book of Acts, we see that same power at work in ordinary men and women, members of the body

of Christ. What a transformation took place in Peter's life between the end of the Gospels and the beginning of Acts. What made the difference? The resurrection power of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8).

The greatest power shortage today is not in our generators or our gas tanks. It is in our personal lives. Will Paul's prayer be answered in your life? Will you, starting today, begin to know by experience God—God's calling—God's riches—and God's power?

***Hoehner, H. W. (1985). Ephesians. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, pp. 615-621) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books***

## I. The Calling of the Church (chaps. 1–3)

All knowledge may be divided into two categories: pure or theoretical knowledge and applied or practical knowledge. In most of his letters Paul begins with pure or doctrinal knowledge and ends with applied or practical knowledge. In this epistle the first three chapters deal with doctrine (the calling of the church) and the last three chapters with application (the conduct of the church).

### A. Prologue (1:1–2).

1:1. **Paul** was made **an apostle of Christ Jesus** through God's **will** or decision. It was not his own choosing or plan. Thus he had God's authority behind him. As an apostle Paul was commissioned and sent by God with the gospel message.

The letter is addressed **to the saints** who resided **in Ephesus**. "Saints" (*hagiois*, "holy ones") are those set apart for God's use. They are a part of the universal church by virtue of their salvation in Christ. The words "in Ephesus" are omitted by some early manuscripts (see "Destination" under *Introduction*), but strong external and internal evidence support their inclusion. If this epistle were a circular letter, it seems that Ephesus, such a strategic city in Asia Minor, would have certainly received it first. **The faithful in Christ Jesus** further defines the "saints" and could be rendered "that is, the believers in Christ Jesus." These saints were in Christ Jesus, not in Adam or the goddess Artemis of Ephesus. While believers have geographical locations (e.g., "Ephesus"), spiritually they are positioned "in Christ" (cf. "in Christ at Colosse" in Col. 1:2). Paul used "in Christ Jesus," "in Christ," or "in Him" quite frequently. In Ephesians 1:1–14 the phrase occurs nine times! Christians have their very life in Christ.

1:2. Paul's extension of **grace** (*charis*) **and peace** is different from the normal Greek letters which had only "greetings" or "greeting" (*chairein*; e.g., the apocryphal 1 Maccabees 10:18, 25; thousands of ancient papyri letters; and Acts 15:23; 23:26; James 1:1). "Grace" expresses God's steadfast love toward man and "peace" shows the relational state as a result of that grace. Paul opened his letter to the church at Ephesus with greetings to the believers there, expressing his wish that God's grace and peace be with them. (See the chart "Paul's Introductions to His Epistles" at Rom. 1:1–7.)

### B. Praise for God's planned spiritual blessings (1:3–14)

Paul now moved from his general greeting to the saints at Ephesus to an expanded discussion of the reason God is to be praised—because of the spiritual blessings He has planned for believers in Christ.

In the Greek text, 1:3–14 is one sentence, which is considered by some scholars to be the most cumbersome sentence in the Greek language! In fact, Ephesians has eight lengthy sentences (1:3–14, 15–23; 2:1–7; 3:1–13, 14–19; 4:1–7, 11–16; 6:14–20). However, it is common even today for prayers and doxologies to be lengthy.

## 1. THE PROVISION OF SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS (1:3)

1:3. Paul stated that God is to **be** blessed or praised. The word for **praise** is *eulogētos*, from a verb that means “to speak well of.” In the New Testament it is applied only to God (Mark 14:61; Luke 1:68; Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 2 Cor. 1:3; 11:31; 1 Peter 1:3), whereas in the Septuagint it is sometimes applied to man (Gen. 26:29; Deut. 7:14; Ruth 2:20). The praise should be given **to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**. In Ephesians 1:2 God is the Father of believers; here in verse 3 God is the Father of Christ (cf. v. 17; cf. similar wording in Rom. 15:6; 2 Cor. 1:3; 1 Peter 1:3). In Ephesians 1:2 the first Person of the Trinity belongs to believers, suggested by the word “our.” Here in verse 3 the pronoun “our” shows that believers belong to Christ, the second Person of the Godhead. Since He is the Son of God and believers are connected with Him, they are also related to the Father.

This God who is to be praised is the One **who has blessed us**. This is a verbal form (*ho eulogēsas*) of the adjective “praise” (*eulogētos*), at the beginning of the verse. The verb means “to speak well of, eulogize, extol”; here it means “to benefit, prosper.” This word is not used in classical Greek literature. For example, Zeus is not said to have bestowed any specific act of blessing on anyone. Rather he is said to have caused good luck or good fortune. However, the verb *eulogeō* is used over 400 times in the Old Testament, indicating that God bestows benefits to His children in every Age. Mary was said to be “blessed” among women and to be bearing the “blessed” Child (Luke 1:42).

Paul’s use of the past tense participle “has blessed” points to this blessing or prospering of believers as having occurred in eternity past. With what are believers blessed? **With every spiritual blessing** (in the Gr., this phrase precedes the words “in the heavenly realms”). “Every spiritual blessing” (*eulogia*) refers to every spiritual enrichment needed for the spiritual life. Since these benefits have already been bestowed on believers, they should not ask for them but rather appropriate them by faith. Similarly Joshua was not to ask for land since God had already promised it to him (Josh. 1:3–4). But he was to enter into the enjoyment of that provision.

The manner or sphere of this enrichment is **in Christ**. The place of these “blessings” is **in the heavenly realms**, as opposed to the earthly realm of the Ephesian goddess Artemis. Thus these blessings are spiritual not material, heavenly not earthly, eternal not temporal (2 Cor. 4:18; Col. 3:1–4). Five times Paul used the phrase “in the heavenly realms”: in Ephesians 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12.

Ephesians 1:3 tells much about God’s blessings on believers: (a) *when*: eternity past; (b) *with what*: every spiritual blessing; (c) *where*: in the heavenly realms; (d) *how*: in Christ.

## 2. THE BASIS OF SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS (1:4–14)

Paul continued his discussion of believers’ spiritual blessings by showing that they are based on the work of the three Persons of the Trinity: the *selection* of the Father (vv. 4–6), the *sacrifice* of the Son (vv. 7–12), and the *seal* of the Spirit (vv. 13–14).

a. *God's election for Himself (1:4–6).*

1:4. The apostle first told when God's work of election took place: **before the Creation of the world**. The word **for** at the beginning of this verse is not as literal a translation of the Greek adverb *kathōs* as "even as" (ASV, RSV) or "just as" (NASB). "As" suggests that the way God blesses believers (v. 3) is through the threefold work of the Trinity. But the adverb can also have a causal sense, and may be rendered "since," "because," or "insofar as" (cf. 4:32). The idea is that spiritual blessings (1:3) for believers are *because of* or on the basis of the work of the Trinity: God blesses believers because of the Father's electing, the Son's dying, and the Spirit's sealing. Both concepts seem to be included: spiritual blessings are the work of the three Persons of the Trinity, and the work of the Trinity is the basis of all a believer's spiritual blessings.

Spiritual blessings begin with and are based on election (**He chose us**), of which God is the subject and believers are the object. Election is God's sovereign work of choosing some to believe (cf. Rom. 8:30; Eph. 1:11; 1 Thes. 1:4; 2 Thes. 2:13; Titus 1:1). Salvation is God's doing, not man's (Eph. 2:8–9). Though it is an act of grace (Rom. 11:5–6; 2 Tim. 1:9), based on His will (Eph. 1:5, 9, 11), a person is responsible to believe (v. 13). "God chose you to be saved ... through belief in the truth" (2 Thes. 2:13).

**In Him** indicates the sphere (cf. "in Christ" in Eph. 1:3) of election, as He is the Head and Representative of spiritual humanity (vv. 10, 22; Col. 1:18). The time of election is in eternity past, and the purpose of election is that believers will **be holy and blameless in His sight** for eternity. What God has begun in the past will be accomplished and completed in the future. Christians are "holy" (*hagious*; cf. *hagiois*, "saints," Eph. 1:1), that is, set apart to God, which is the purpose of His electing grace. In addition, the purpose of His election is to make Christians "blameless." This word *amōmous*, "without blemish," is used eight times in the New Testament (v. 4; 5:27; Phil. 2:15; Col. 1:22; Heb. 9:14; 1 Peter 1:19; 2 Peter 3:14; Rev. 14:5). In the Septuagint it is used of sacrificial animals; only those without blemish could be offered to God.

What does the phrase **in love** modify? Some agree with the NIV that it modifies the word "predestined" (Eph. 1:5). If so, then God's love is seen in predestination. More likely, it modifies the words "to be holy and blameless in His sight" for these reasons: (1) In this context the modifying phrases always follow the action words (vv. 3–4, 6, 8–10). (2) The other five occurrences of "in love" in Ephesians (3:17; 4:2, 15–16; 5:2 ["of love"]) refer to human love rather than divine love. (3) Love fits well with holiness and blamelessness, for this would denote a balance between holiness and love. God is love and believers, because of God's electing love, should manifest love with holiness.

1:5. The cause of election is God's predestination of believers unto sonship (cf. "predestined" in v. 11). **Predestined** is from *proorisas*, "marked out beforehand." Thus, the emphasis of predestination is more on the *what* than the *who* in that the believers' predetermined destiny is their being **adopted as full-fledged sons** of God **through Jesus Christ**, the Agent of the adoption. The concept of adoption is also found in Romans 8:15 (NIV), 23; Galatians 4:4–7. In adoption a son is brought into a family and is given the same rights as a child who is born into that family.

In this context it seems that predestination logically precedes election: after God looked forward to the glorious destiny of adopting believers into His family, He looked down on sinful humanity and chose believers (cf. Rom. 8:30 where "predestined" precedes "called," which refers to His efficacious saving). All this was done **in accordance with His pleasure** (cf. Eph. 1:9) **and will** (cf. vv. 1, 9, 11), that is, He delighted to impart His spiritual benefits to His children.

1:6. The ultimate goal of God's election is that believers will be **to the praise of His glorious grace**. A similar expression of praise is also given after the description of the work of the Son (v. 12) and of the Spirit (v. 14). "His glorious grace" (undeserved favor; cf. v. 7) had been **freely given us**. The words "freely given" translate the verb *echaritōsen*, from the noun "grace" (*charis*). The verb form is used only one other time in the New Testament (Luke 1:28, where Mary is said to be "highly favored"). Literally, Ephesians 1:6a might be rendered "to the praise of His glorious grace which He 'graced' to us." Since salvation is all of God's grace, Christians certainly ought to praise Him for it! And that is why they were chosen: to give Him praise (cf. "Praise be to ... God," v. 3). **In the One He loves** stresses the manifestation of God's love to His Son (cf. "the Son He loves," Col. 1:13). This reference to Christ also furnishes the transition to the second Person of the Trinity discussed in Ephesians 1:7–12.

God the Father loves His Son; and believers, being in the Son, are also the object of God's love.

*b. God's redemption in Christ (1:7–12).*

1:7. **Redemption** (*apolytrōsin*) denotes release or deliverance from a state of slavery (cf. Col. 1:14). The idea of release is seen in some of the other verses where this Greek word appears (Luke 21:28; Rom. 3:24; 8:23; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:7, 14; 4:30; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:15; 11:35). (See the chart "New Testament Words for Redemption" at Mark 10:45.) This redemption is from sin (Heb. 9:15), and thus this work of Christ delivers believers from slavery to sin. This is further defined by **the forgiveness of sins** (cf. Eph. 4:32; Col. 1:14), which is the immediate result of a believer's release from sin's hold. (The word for "sins" is *paraptōma*, lit., "false steps or transgressions," also used in Rom. 4:25; 5:16–17, 20; Eph. 2:1, 5, and elsewhere.) God could not treat sin lightly for it required the sacrifice of blood (cf. Heb. 9:22).

The means of redemption is the sacrificial substitutionary death of Christ (**through His blood**; cf. Eph. 2:13; 1 Peter 1:19), which completely satisfied God's justice (Rom. 3:24–25). This was accomplished **in accordance with the riches of God's grace** (cf. Eph. 1:6; 2:7). The cost of Christ's blood is the measure of the wealth of God's unmerited favor to every believer. It was accomplished not "out of" but "according to" (*kata*) the wealth of His grace (cf. Phil. 4:19). Six times in Ephesians Paul referred to God's riches (1:7, 18; 2:4, 7; 3:8, 16).

1:8–10. God's grace is given to enable believers to understand His will. God gives them **wisdom** (*sophia*; cf. v. 17; 3:10; Col. 1:9, 28; 2:3, 23; 3:16; 4:5), objective insight into the true nature of God's revelation, **and understanding** (*phronēsei*), the subjective apprehension of it. So believers are able to grasp something of the divine purpose of the ages and to see its relevance in the present time. This is accomplished because God **made known to us the mystery of His will** (cf. "will" in Eph 1:1, 5, 11). "Mystery" is a previously hidden truth unveiled by God's revelation (cf. Rom. 16:25; see Matt. 13:11 for a list of "mysteries" in the NT). This mystery (unveiled truth) is God's **good pleasure** (cf. Eph. 1:5) to purpose **in Christ to bring all things in heaven and on earth** under His headship in the consummation of time. The words **to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment** are literally, "unto the dispensation of the fullness of the times." The "dispensation" (*oikonomia*) is an arrangement or administration. This dispensation is the millennial kingdom when "the times" in God's purposes will be completed (fulfilled), and all things both spiritual and material will be under Christ and His rule (cf. 1 Cor. 15:27; Col. 1:20).

The words "bring all things ... together under one Head" translate one Greek word (which occurs elsewhere in the NT only in Rom. 13:9), to speak of summing up all the commandments

under love. In the Millennium everything will be restored and brought together under Christ, the **one Head**. This does not suggest that everyone will be saved; instead, sin's disorder will be removed and universal peace will be established (Isa. 2:2–4; 11:1–10).

1:11–12. As a result of the spiritual blessing of insight into the mystery of God's will (vv. 8–10) Paul discussed the Jewish believers' inclusion in Christ. The **we** in verse 11 seems to be a distinct group from the anonymous "we/us" in verses 3–10. This is supported by two facts: (1) verse 11 includes the word **also** and (2) verse 13 changes to "you also," which refers to Gentile believers. Though both Jews and Gentiles participate in God's blessings, the Jews were called first (cf. Acts 3:26; Rom. 1:16).

In Ephesians 1:11 **chosen** (*eklērothēmen*) is not the same word used in verse 4 (*exelexato*). The word in verse 11 (used only here in the NT) means "to cast a lot" or to "appoint or obtain by lot." In this context it is best rendered "to be chosen, appointed, or destined." Jewish believers were chosen because they were predestined. But this predestination is not a matter of whim or caprice on God's part; it is **according to the plan** (*prothesin*, "purpose"; cf. Rom. 8:28; 9:11; Eph. 3:11) **of God, who works out everything in conformity with the purpose** (*boulēn*, "counsel or deliberation") **of His will** (*thelēmatos*; cf. 1:5, 9). The combination of these words—*prothesin*, *boulēn*, *thelēmatos*—gives a forceful emphasis of God's sovereignty for including the Jewish believers in the church, which is headed up by Christ. The purpose of God's choice of the Jewish believers is that they **might be for the praise of His glory**, which parallels verse 6. The words "for the praise of His glory" serve as a refrain used after a description of the work of each Person of the Trinity (cf. vv. 6, 14). The relative clause, **who were the first to hope in Christ**, further substantiates that verses 11–12 refer to Jewish believers as opposed to Gentile believers because the Jews did precede the Gentiles chronologically in the faith (Acts 1:8; 13:46; 28:25–28; Rom. 1:16 [see comments there]; 2:9–10).

Christ has set the sinner free from his sin and has revealed His will that all things will be headed up in Christ at the end of the ages, including the Jewish believers who first trusted in Him.

### c. God's seal with the Spirit (1:13–14)

God's spiritual blessings for believers are based not only on the sovereign election of the Father (vv. 3–6) and the redemptive work of the Son (vv. 7–12), but also on the seal of the Holy Spirit.

1:13–14a. **And you also** refers to the Gentiles in contrast with the Jews (cf. comments on vv. 11–12). **When they heard the Word of truth** (cf. Col. 1:5; 2 Tim. 2:15; James 1:18) which is further described as **the gospel of your salvation**, and **believed**, they **were** sealed with **the promised Holy Spirit**. The KJV says that the sealing occurs "after" the hearing and believing, thus connoting a second work of grace. This is wrong, for believers are sealed at the moment they hear and believe.

The last part of verse 13 is literally, "They were sealed in Him [Christ] with the Holy Spirit of promise." The word "seal" indicates security (Matt. 27:66; Eph. 4:30), authentication and approval (John 6:27), certification of genuineness (John 3:33), and identification of ownership (2 Cor. 1:22; Rev. 7:2; 9:4). God is the One who seals, Christ is the sphere in which the **seal** is done, and the Holy Spirit is the instrument of the seal. "The promised Holy Spirit" refers to Christ's promise to His disciples that He would send the Spirit (Luke 24:49; John 14:16; 15:26; 16:13; Acts 1:5).

The Holy Spirit who seals **is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance**. The “deposit” is more than a pledge which could be returned; it is a down payment with a guarantee of more to come (cf. “the firstfruits of the Spirit,” Rom. 8:23). “A deposit guaranteeing” translates the Greek *arrabōn* (used elsewhere in the NT only in 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5). It guarantees believers’ “inheritance” of salvation and heaven (cf. 1 Peter 1:4). (See comments on “inheritance” in Eph. 1:18.) In essence, the “deposit” of the Holy Spirit is a little bit of heaven in believers’ lives with a guarantee of much more yet to come.

1:14b. The believer is sealed with the Holy Spirit **until the redemption** (*apolytrōsin*; see the chart “New Testament Words for Redemption” at Mark 10:45) **of those who are God’s possession**. This redemption is not release from the guilt of sin; that was spoken of in Ephesians 1:7 and the believer is already “God’s possession.” Instead, this is the believer’s ultimate, final release from the presence of sin (cf. Rom. 8:23b; Phil. 3:20–21). The Greek word for “possession” (*peripoiēsis*) is also used in 1 Thessalonians 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:14; Hebrews 10:39 (see comments there); and 1 Peter 2:9. Again the doxological refrain, **to the praise of His glory**, is repeated here as it was after the description of the work of the Father (Eph. 1:6) and of the Son (v. 12).

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C. *Prayer for wisdom and revelation (1:15–23).*

1. COMMENDATION (1:15)

1:15. Because of (**For this reason**) the believers’ acquisition of every spiritual blessing—including election, predestination, adoption, grace, redemption, forgiveness, wisdom, understanding, knowledge of the mystery of His will, the sealing of the Holy Spirit, and inheritance—Paul now prayed that his readers might know God personally and intimately. Verses 15–23 are one sentence in the Greek, as are verses 3–14.

Paul **heard** of the Ephesians’ **faith** in Christ, their vertical relationship, **and their love for all the saints**, their horizontal relationship (cf. Col. 1:4; 2 Thess. 1:3). A proper relationship with God should lead to a proper relationship with other Christians. Interestingly Paul wrote about “love with faith” in Ephesians 6:23.

2. SUPPLICATION (1:16–23)

a. *The request for wisdom and revelation (1:16–18a).*

1:16. Because of the Ephesians’ faith and love, Paul continued to give **thanks for them** (cf. Rom. 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:4; Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:3) and to make requests for them (cf. Phil. 1:4; Col. 1:9; 1 Thess. 1:3).

1:17. The NIV begins a new sentence here, but this verse is actually a continuation of verse 16. Paul addressed his request to **the God of our Lord Jesus Christ** (cf. v. 3), **the glorious Father**, that is, the Father to whom all glory belongs (cf. “the God of glory” in Acts 7:2 and “the Lord of glory” in 1 Cor. 2:8). The content of Paul’s request is that God **may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation**. Though the NIV translators interpret “Spirit” (*pneuma*) as referring to the Holy Spirit, it is better to see it as disposition or attitude because of the two genitives following it (“of wisdom and [of] revelation”; cf. “a gentle spirit” in 1 Cor. 4:21). On the other hand, one cannot obtain a spirit or attitude of wisdom and revelation apart from the Holy Spirit. As Isaiah wrote, “The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him [Messiah]—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord” (Isa. 11:2). “Wisdom” (*sophia*; cf. Eph. 1:8; 3:10) gives insight into the true nature of things, and “revelation” is the unveiling of the object discussed, namely, God Himself. The purpose in having this wisdom and revelation is **that you may know Him, God, better**. The Greek is the phrase, “in knowing of Him.” This knowing (*epignōsei*) refers not to abstract knowledge of God or objective facts about Him, but knowing Him personally and intimately (cf. “knowledge,” *epignōseōs*, in 4:13). It includes an intimate awareness of God’s character and will. Philosophy says, “Know thyself,” whereas Christianity says, “Know God through Jesus Christ.”

1:18a. The NEB, NASB, and NIV state another request: **I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened**. However, this is not a new sentence in Greek. It seems to be parenthetical, as in the KJV, ASV, and RSV. In other words, Paul had prayed (v. 17) that they

might have true spiritual insight into God, and then he included the phrase, “having the eyes of your heart enlightened” (RSV). Paul’s request for them to know God was within proper bounds because their hearts had *been* enlightened (the Gr. Perfect tense) indicates past action with continuing results), as discussed in verses 3–14, especially 7–9. In the Bible the “heart” is the center of one’s personality.

*b. The reason for wisdom and revelation (1:18b–23)*

Having prayed (vv. 16–17) that they might know God personally, Paul now gave the reason: “that you may know” three facts, which are spelled out in verses 18b–23 (the first is in v. 18b, the second in v. 18c, and the third in vv. 19–23). The word “know” (*eidēnai*, v. 18) is factual knowledge—much as a general needs to know the facts about his equipment and men before he goes to battle.

1:18b. The first fact to be ascertained pertains to the past. A believer’s present **hope** has its source in the past when he was **called** (cf. Rom. 1:6; 8:30; Eph. 4:1, 4; 2 Tim. 1:9) to salvation. “Hope” in Scripture is the absolute certainty of a believer’s victory in God (cf. Rom. 8:23–24; Eph. 4:4; Col. 1:5; 1 Thess. 1:3; 1 Peter 3:15).

1:18c. The second fact Paul wanted his readers to know refers to the future: **the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints**. At the time of the resurrection of believers (“saints” are those set apart by God to God; cf. v. 1) God will inherit those whom He has purchased at a great price according to the riches of His grace (v. 7). This is the second of six times in Ephesians in which Paul referred to “riches” (1:7, 18; 2:4, 7; 3:8, 16). In 1:14 Paul wrote that the Christians’ “inheritance” is their final redemption from the presence of sin. Here in verse 18 he wrote about *God’s* inheritance, the saints themselves! Because of the “glorious grace” (v. 6) of “the glorious Father” (v. 17), He will receive “His glorious inheritance” (v. 18).

1:19–23. The third fact Paul wanted believers to know pertains to the present time: **His incomparably great power for us who believe**. The word “power” (*dynamis*; cf. 3:20) means a spiritually dynamic and living force. This power of God is directed toward believers. Paul then used three additional words to describe God’s power. It is according to **the working** (*energeian*, “energetic power,” from which comes the English “energy”) **of the might** (*kratous*, “power that overcomes resistance,” as in Christ’s miracles; this word is used only of God, never of believers) of God’s inherent **strength** (*ischyos*) **which He** provides (cf. 6:10; 1 Peter 4:11). This magnificent accumulation of words for power underscores the magnitude of God’s “great power” available to Christians.

Then Paul mentioned three manifestations of God’s power which are seen in Christ (Eph. 1:20–23). First, this energetic power was **exerted** (*enērgēken*) **in Christ when God raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms**. God’s energetic power which resurrected and exalted Christ in the past (cf. Rom. 8:34; Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22) is the same power available to believers in the present (cf. Phil. 3:10). What an amazing source of spiritual vitality, power, and strength for living the Christian life! (cf. Col. 1:11) Christ’s Ascension to the right hand of God involves His being exalted **above** every order of authority (cf. Col. 1:16), human and superhuman (cf. Phil. 2:8–11), whether present (**in the present Age**) or future (**the Age to come**; cf. 1 Cor. 15:23–28). The words **rule and authority, power and dominion** may refer primarily to angelic beings (cf. Rom. 8:38; Eph. 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:15; Titus 3:1).

A second manifestation of God’s power in Christ is seen in His placing **all things under** Christ’s **feet**. Whereas Adam lost his headship over Creation when he sinned, Christ was made

Head over all Creation (cf. Eph. 1:10). This will be fully realized in the future (Ps. 8:6; 1 Cor. 15:27; Heb. 2:6–8).

The third manifestation of God’s power in Christ is His appointment of Christ as **Head over ... the church**. Though the final manifestation of Christ’s headship over all Creation will be in the future, He is now Head over the fellowship of believers. He is also called the church’s “Head” in Ephesians 4:15; 5:23; and Colossians 1:18. Though the church is implied in Ephesians 1:10, it is specifically mentioned for the first time in Ephesians in verse 22b. The church is **His body** (v. 23; cf. 4:4, 15–16; Col. 1:18). His body, the universal church consisting of all believers, is **the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way**. The meaning of this description of His body is difficult to determine. The verb “fills” can be taken passively, meaning that Christ, the Head of the body, *is filled by* the church. That is, as the church grows it completes Christ. However, it is better to understand the word “fills” as in the Greek middle voice: Christ, the Head of the body, *fills (for Himself)* the church with blessings. The verse could then be rendered, “which is His body, which is being filled by the One who fills all things with all things (blessings).” This interpretation is preferred for these reasons: (1) Nowhere else does the New Testament state that Christ finds fullness from the church. (2) This view fits the context well because the Persons of the Godhead are completing the actions (cf. Eph. 1:10). (3) This view correlates well with 4:10–11 which speaks of Christ giving all things (“the whole universe” is lit., “all things”), namely, gifted people to the church.

This ends Paul’s prayer. After demonstrating that believers have all spiritual blessings (1:3–14), Paul prayed that believers would come to know God intimately (v. 17) in order that they might know three facts: (1) the *past* call of salvation that produced hope (v. 18), (2) the *future* inheritance that God has in His saints (v. 18), and (3) the *present* power of God that is available to believers, which (a) was manifested in the past in Christ’s resurrection and Ascension, (b) will be manifested in the future in Christ’s headship over Creation, and (c) is presently manifested in Christ’s headship over the church.

***Dockery, D. S. (1998). The Pauline Letters. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (pp. 576–577). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.***

## **INTRODUCTION (1:1–2)**

Paul identified himself by name and calling. He offered greetings in the manner common to the Pauline letters. Absent is the usual mention of Paul’s companions.

## **GOD’S PURPOSE (1:3–14)**

Paul offered praise to God for his glorious blessings in Christ. This section is one long sentence in the original text made up of carefully balanced clauses. This extended benediction surveys the redemptive activity of the Triune God. Some have seen here a hymn of three stanzas of uneven length. Each stanza concludes with a reference to the praise of God’s glorious grace. The theme of this section is God’s eternal purpose in history.

Paul theologized about God’s purposes. In Christ, God “chose us ... before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.” The spiritual blessings granted to believers are the work of the Trinity: the Father’s electing, the Son’s redemptive work, and the Spirit’s sealing. God now has made known His purposes, has forgiven our sins, and granted hope to His own.

God the Father loves His Son, and believers who have been redeemed by the Son are also the object of God's love.

### **GOD'S POWER (1:15–23)**

The entire letter was written within a framework of prayer. This section is an extended prayer. Paul prayed that his readers would have the spiritual insight to perceive the truth that is hidden in God. It can be unlocked only in the experience of life and fellowship with Him. The prayer issues from his opening section, constituting a request that believers may appropriate all that is contained in that beautifully rich sentence.

Paul's prayer began with thanksgiving for their faith and love. In 1:17–23 he made four requests for them: (1) to know and experience God; (2) to know the hope of His calling; (3) to know of His glorious inheritance; and (4) to know of His great power. Paul expounded on this great power available to believers exhibited in Christ's resurrection, ascension, rule, and headship.

***Richards, L. O. (1987). The Teacher's Commentary (pp. 913–915). Victor Books.***

### **Overview**

Ephesians was written by Paul to a congregation established on one of Paul's later missionary journeys (Acts 19). It was written from Rome, probably in A.D. 62 or 63.

The theme of Ephesians is the church as a living organism, the actual body of the living Christ. It is a key book for understanding our personal relationship with Jesus, and how to live with our fellow Christians in a nurturing, ministering relationship.

Ephesus was "the" religious center of the province of Asia. The great temple of Artemis there drew tourists and worshipers and served as a giant bank from which cities and nations as well as individuals applied for loans. This highly successful institutionalized religion is the backdrop against which Paul gives us a vision of the church of Jesus Christ. This church is no institution: it is a body, a family, a holy but living temple. It reveals a glory in the living personalities of its members which far outshines the glory of the stone temple of Ephesus, even though that temple was four times the size of the Parthenon of Athens.

This book is an important one for Christians to study today. It helps us not to think of our own churches in institutional terms—as buildings and programs and activities alone. It helps us to see ourselves, and one another, as living expressions of a Christ who still expresses His glory in human lives.

### **Commentary**

When we skim the first two chapters of Ephesians, one brief paragraph stands out. In it, Paul expressed a prayer for the assembled believers in Ephesus. When we read that prayer today, we see again the theme of knowing Christ personally, and the desire for a daily experience of the divine power. We become aware that Paul included *us* in his sweeping request that all God's people might experience Him as present, filling "everything in every way" (Eph. 1:23). Look at that prayer now and visualize Paul praying for you and those you teach.

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and His incomparably great

power for us who believe. That power is like the working of His mighty strength, which He exerted in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be Head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.  
Ephesians 1:17–23

### ***Link to Life: Youth / Adult***

*Ephesians contains two powerful prayers that Paul prayed for young believers. This is one; the other is in 3:14–21.*

*Ask each group member to silently read one or both of these prayers. Say: “Imagine that Paul, or a parent or spouse or close friend is praying that prayer for you now. Which part of the prayer is most important to you, personally?”*

*After group members have read the prayer and marked the most important parts, share. Which part seemed most important to each person, and why?*

*Then point out that during the study of Ephesians each will learn truths that will help that prayer be answered in his or her life.*

### **Grasping the Hope**

Helen hung up the telephone. “O Lord,” she whispered, “give me strength.”

Lucille, an older friend from her Thursday evening Bible study, had asked for Helen’s help. “You’re the only person I know who cares,” Lucille had said. “I can talk to you.”

Last week their study group had met at Lucille’s home, and Helen had stayed after the others left. She’d listened as Lucille, a divorced woman with two grown sons, told of her husband’s unfaithfulness and desertion. She shared how her sons blamed her; she described her loneliness and her struggle to get in touch with God. In tears, Lucille said how grateful she was for Helen. Helen really seemed to care.

But caring wasn’t easy. Helen had grown up believing she was inadequate and unable to love. Her sense of inadequacy had led to a series of choices that turned her away from others. Now, at 37, it was almost impossible for Helen to reach out.

It had been easier that night after the Bible study. She was already at Lucille’s house. No choices had to be made. There was no time to think about a coming confrontation; no time to worry about what she’d say or do. No time to feel the tension grow and the perspiration come cold and clammy. But to choose to visit Lucille, to get into the car and drive the dozen miles across town to where she lived, that would take time. As the days passed, as fear gripped her each time she thought of Lucille, the strength never seemed to come.

How different Helen’s hesitation is from Paul’s prayer. Helen asked for strength. Paul asked that you and I might *grasp the power that is ours*. Helen was asking for something she already possessed! Having failed to grasp the hope of Christ’s calling, she was living in unnecessary defeat.

Paul’s vision of the present power of Jesus is one of the most striking emphases of this Christological epistle. Even the word “hope” takes on special meaning in the New Testament. We say, “I hope,” and mean “I would like, but am uncertain about.” New Testament hope has no note of uncertainty. It is a term of *expectancy*. “Hope in God” (Ps. 42:11) is a call to an active faith which *expects God to act*. Paul’s prayer is that you and I might grasp all that we confidently

expect, as God's new people. For we are a people in whom God's own incomparably great power is even now at work!

If the "working of His mighty strength" is available to us now, how inappropriate are the desperate, hopeless prayers we so often utter. How tragic Helen's cry, begging for a power to act that has been her heritage ever since she was "included in Christ."

And how important these first chapters of Ephesians, for they help Helen—and us—realize just who we are as a people of God through Jesus Christ.

### **An Overview: Ephesians 1–2**

There is nothing more influential in shaping our actions than our self-image. That is, how we see ourselves, how we feel about ourselves. A person who sees himself as capable will act confidently. A person who sees himself as weak, and unable, is all too likely to refuse to try.

In our spiritual experience too our image of who we are plays a significant role. And it is to just this issue that the first two chapters of Ephesians are addressed. They help us to develop a vital, correct sense of our identity in Christ. They help us understand who we really are as Jesus' people, and thus help free us from our bondage to old frustrations and inability.

*The Godhead (Eph. 1:3–14).* In these powerful verses Paul drew past, present, and future together. He looked at the work of each of the Persons of the Godhead as it relates to you and me. God the Father, in eternity past, chose us in Christ to be holy and blameless. He predestined us to be adopted as sons, pouring out His grace on us in Christ. God the Son, in history past, redeemed us through His blood, bringing us forgiveness and lavishing on us gifts of wisdom and understanding. Even now we are "included in Christ," and looking forward to the complete fulfillment of God's plan and the glory that fulfillment holds for us. Now too we have been sealed by God's gift of the Holy Spirit, the living guarantee of our inheritance to come.

What stunning truths! Somehow you and I, with all God's people, have been the focus of His concern from before the Creation of the universe! Each person of the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—has been involved in bringing us the grace in which we now stand. In view of all this, there is *no way* that a Christian can see himself or herself as insignificant, unimportant, or ineffectual. The focused energies of God have been spent on our redemption because in Christ we are significant to Him. We are important. And, with God's Spirit present in us, we have the power to live "to the praise of His glory" (v. 14).

*Prayer (Eph. 1:15–23).* Paul desired, then, that we might enjoy a full experience of our position in Christ. We have a new identity now—we are "saints" and we experience "His incomparably great power for us who believe." And it is *His* power: the power of a Jesus who is now raised from the dead, seated at the Father's "right hand" (the ancient place of authority), far above every competing natural or supernatural authority. Perhaps most significantly, Jesus is Head "over everything for the church, which is His body." This theme, that we are members of a living organism over which Christ is the living Head, is a theme Paul picked up in later chapters of this powerful little book.

**The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Ephesians 1). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.**