

LECTURES ON EPHESIANS

by

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CHAPTER TWO

THE CHURCH, THE BODY—ITS TRIUNE CREATOR Ephesians 1:4-23

IN EPHESIANS 1:4 the great mystery begins to unfold. Before we begin the study of this first great division of the Epistle, let us glance at the chart, noting the five main parts of the book:

1. *The Church, the Body—Its Triune Creator.*

In which we see that God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit had a part in the creation of the mystical Body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. *The Church, the Body—Its Twofold Construction.*

Wherein we see that this Body is composed of strange material —saved Jews and saved Gentiles, who were, before the Spirit of God touched them; dead in trespasses and sins.

3. *The Church, the Body—Its Present Purpose.*

In which we as believers are taught that the Body of Christ is the habitation of God and the temple of the Holy Ghost during this age.

4. *The Church, the Body—Its Mystery and Glory.*

Revealing that the church was a mystery, hidden in the past ages, is revealed in the present age, and will be glorified in the future ages.

5. *The Church, the Body—Its Walk and Warfare.*

In which we see that this Body has certain responsibilities and that it must necessarily be engaged in warfare with the powers of darkness while here on earth. The Epistle closes with Paul's greeting to the saints at Ephesus and with a benediction.

Before we enter into the detailed study of what each member of the Godhead has done in bringing into existence the church, let us read verses 4-14 in order that we might obtain a view of what the Triune God, the three Persons of the Trinity, has done.

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: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself; 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: 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: 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, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:4-14).

We see immediately that each member of the Godhead has done three things.

- Through the Father we were “**chosen,**” “**predestinated,**” and “**accepted.**”
- Through the Son we have “**redemption and the forgiveness of sins,**” and an “**inheritance.**”
- By the Holy Spirit we are “**quicken,**” “**sealed,**” and given an “**earnest.**”

After the Apostle Paul reviewed the work of the Godhead in behalf of the Body of Christ, he prayed that the Ephesians might have minds illuminated by the Holy Spirit, in order that they might grasp the truth of this revelation.

Now let us go back and get a detailed account of what each member of the Godhead did.

In verses 4-6 we see the work of the Father which is threefold.

I. THE WORK OF THE FATHER

(1) “*Chosen in him before the foundation of the world.*”

Here we have God’s sovereign choice of us. How far back did He make this choice? “**Before the foundation of the world**” was laid. The church was not an afterthought with God. My name, your name, and the name of every believer living since Pentecost was upon His heart before He brought a star into its place, or before the planets were started whirling in their orbits.

In Genesis 1:1 we read about the creation: “**In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.**” This revelation of the creation of the heaven and the earth is great, indeed, and often-times we wonder how many years in the past this was performed. Some scientists have placed the age of the earth at 100,000,000 years. Be that as it may, Ephesians presents a revelation that antedates the foundation of the world. “**Chosen in him before the foundation of the world.**”

This is a great revelation, the greatest, indeed, that God has made known; He therefore desires that we should believe it.

You see, God foreknew everything.

In Acts 15:18 we read: “**Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.**” There are no surprises with God; He is omniscient. He knew that Lucifer, before his creation, would become Satan. He foreknew every member of the human race. He looked through the ages, before an angel was brought into existence, and knew that Louis T. Talbot, and you, my brother, would live now. Even before Adam and Eve were placed in the garden, He knew that they would be ruined by sin. This knowledge staggers us, but it is true nevertheless. And foreknowing the advent of sin, God planned to reveal His grace before He began to create.

God has always been a God of grace, and, foreseeing that sin would enter this world, He planned man’s redemption.

More than this, He planned also for a Body composed of saved Jews and saved Gentiles, which would be joined with His own Son in resurrection glory, which would possess His life, be indwelt by His Spirit, and share His glory.

This “blueprint” of the church was drawn before the foundation of the world. As we think on these things we cry with the Psalmist, “**Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it**” (Psalm 139:6). But while we cannot attain unto it, we can believe it, and see in the revelation a display of the grace and wisdom of God.

Note that from verse 5 you and I were not chosen on the basis of human merit or human accomplishment, but solely “**according to the good pleasure of his will.**” In other words, there was nothing in our character which could be a contributing cause toward our election, other than that He loves mankind.

This act of God, the election of you and me in the past eternity, was on the basis of what Christ would accomplish in time at Calvary. A holy and a just God could not realize this plan in any other way.

He chose us in His Son. Why? Because His Son had in eternity given Himself in solemn covenant for the work of redemption. Judgments had to be met, law had to be satisfied, penalties had to be paid. All of these things the holiness of God required. The Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity, entered into a solemn covenant with the Father concerning the redemptive work on Calvary, which formed a basis and gave a means whereby God could show His grace and love. That is why reference is made to Christ in Revelation 13:8 as “**the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.**”

The Lord Jesus Christ referred to this covenant with the Father when He said in John 17:1: “**Father, the hour is come.**”

How often the Lord said during His earthly ministry, “**Mine hour is not yet come,**” but when the cross loomed before Him, He said, “**Father, the hour is come.**” How evident it was to me Son that the Father would understand what He meant.

Our Lord did not say, “I have met with unforeseen difficulties. Things have arisen about which we have not planned.”

No! He said, “*That plan about which we talked away back in that hour in the past eternity, that hour for the fulfilling of the plan is come—the hour in which my mediatorial work for man is to be completed, is come.*”

In the light of these things, how majestic are the words under consideration: “**Chosen in him before the foundation of the world.**”

This little sentence teaches the doctrine of “**election.**” Many people stumble before this great truth taught in the Word of God. However, it is one of the most precious and comforting secrets God has given to His children. It is a family secret, not for the unconverted people, but for the members of the household of faith in order that they might know something of the power and glory of God.

On earth we hear the gospel message. “**Whosoever will may come.**” When we pass through the gates of heaven, whether at the coming of the Lord or when we die, we shall see as it were on the other side of the gates of glory these words: “**Chosen in him before the foundation of the world.**”

The Bible teaches both the sovereignty of God and the free will of man. These two doctrines may not seem to harmonize on this earth, but when we are in the glory we shall see how they dovetail one with the other.

It is also well to remember that the doctrine of election has nothing to do with unconverted people. *God has never elected anyone to be lost.*

His message to everyone is, “**Come and take of the water of life freely.**” If a man dies in his sin, it is because he has chosen so to do. No man will ever be able to excuse himself at the great white throne on the basis that he was not among the elect. The doctrine of “election” is a family secret which has to do with the members of the household of faith.

What was God’s eternal purpose in choosing us? The answer is found in verse 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.**”

Think of it, Beloved! This choice of God declares that poor sinners who believe on the name of His Son should be holy, and without blame.

- The purpose then of the thought of God, the Father, for all eternity was that we should be holy.
- The purpose of God, the Son, in dying on the cross and rising triumphantly from the grave was that we should be holy.
- The purpose of the Holy Spirit’s descent on the day of Pentecost and baptizing all believers into the one Body was that we should be holy.

The plan of the Godhead was that sinners saved by grace should be partakers of the divine nature, thus becoming capable of communion and fellowship with God. Not only this, but He purposed that we should possess a nature to which no blame could be attached. Surely nothing but the atoning work of the Son of God could ever cause that purpose and plan of God to be realized. So completely does the blood of Jesus cleanse from sin that God's "blueprint" or pattern for us will be accomplished; through the eternal ages we shall be holy and blameless.

More than this is included in God's plan, for Paul continues by saying in verse 4 that we should be "**holy and without blame before him.**"

It has always been God's desire to have man in His presence in order that He might enjoy him. The presence of the angels only did not and has not satisfied the heart of God; His heart cries out for the love and fellowship of man. So we find from Genesis to Revelation that God's great desire is to surround Himself with men, to be in their midst, and to have them on the most intimate terms with Himself. He could not, however, have this fellowship with men whose sins still covered them. Were they ever to be in His presence, they had to be before Him "**holy and without blame.**"

This, however, was not sufficient, for Paul in the same verse says, that we shall be "**holy and without blame before him in love.**" In heaven we shall see a God whose love is as deep as the sea and as high as the heaven—this love He has bestowed upon us. My friends, what a wonderful God is ours

Let us now look at verse 5 for the second thing accomplished by the Father: "**Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.**"

(2) "Predestination" is another precious word in Scripture so little understood.

This word carries us a little deeper into the plans of God for His children. The word means, "*to mark out beforehand.*" Read verse 5 again substituting these words for "**predestination**": "*Having marked us out beforehand unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ.*" This means that in the past eternity God marked us for placement in His own family. Wonderful grace!

Dr. H. A. Ironside puts it this way, "Suppose that God, while planning the church, had said, 'I am going to show My grace and the exceeding riches of My love. I shall make fallen and sinful men, derelicts, drunkards, thieves, though they may be, into as beautiful creatures as the angels are. Everyone of those men who will accept My Son will be as beautiful as the angels, even as beautiful as Michael and Gabriel, and even as glorious as Lucifer was before his fall.' This would have been wonderful, indeed, but God goes farther than that and says, 'I shall make redeemed men greater than all of the angelic hosts. I shall mark out a greater place for them than that held by the tallest angel who stands before My throne. I shall mark them out unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ.'"

Brethren, we have been given the place of sonship. We have been made members of God's household, "**heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.**"

God, the Father, has picked us up, marked us to be like His Son, and has seated us in Him in the heavenly places. Could God do more than this for man?

Why has God, the Father, done this for us? Did He choose us, and mark us unto the adoption of children because of our worthiness, or because of our good works? No, indeed, He did all of these things, as verse 5 shows, “**According to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace.**”

(3) “*He hath made us accepted in the beloved!*”

The closing words of verse 6 reveal the third thing which the Father has done. The Father planned in the drawing of the “blueprint” of the church on “**having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved**” (Ephesians 1:5,6).

Who is the “**beloved**”? He is Christ How extremely precious is this statement. We are accepted in Him who is beloved of the Father. If we are accepted in Him, then all of His worthiness, loveliness, and righteousness are imputed to us, and as He is, so are we before the Father. We cannot possibly be accepted in ourselves, nor in any other person, hut only in Christ can we be accepted before a holy God.

This closes the Father’s part in the creation of the church. His three accomplishments take us back into the past eternity. In view of all of this great plan, were every reader gathered together while reading and studying, we would unite in singing: Grace,

‘tis a charming sound,
Harmonious to the ear:
Heaven with the echo will resound,
And all the earth shall hear.

My friend, are you catching the wonder of God’s great provision, plan, and purpose?

II. THE WORK OF THE SON

- In eternity the Father planned and purposed.
- In time the Son provided and purchased.

The Son purchased at Calvary what God, the Father, had planned in eternity.

Three things the Son does:

(1) In verse 7 we read, “**In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.**”

Redemption is one of the great words of the Bible.

It means to buy back, to repurchase by paying a price. By nature, the material for the church, the Body, was in the “slave market”—the slave market of sin. Jesus Christ came to meet the demand of justice, pay the penalty involved, and satisfy the law. That is what our Lord did. He made it possible for God’s eternal plan to be realized.

This brings to our mind the question: Who was responsible for the death of Christ? Were the Jews? Was Pilate? Looking beyond these, let us see what Peter meant when he said, “**Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain**” (Acts 2:23).

When Christ died on Calvary, He executed the solemn covenant which He had made with the Father in eternity when He was with the Father. The Son had said, “*I will make it possible for this eternal plan to be put into execution, and, Father, I will allow the iniquity of man to be laid on Me.*” And, so, according to the prophecy of Isaiah 53:6: “**The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.**”

Calvary formed the basis for the forgiveness of sins.

This incident took place when Mr. Moody was conducting a great campaign in England.

Traveling to a meeting in his buggy, he noticed a young man driving in front of him. He had seen the same young man every morning at church, so he asked his driving companion, “Who is that young man?”

Thus he answered, “Do you see that beautiful castle on the hill with all of the spacious grazing ground around it? That estate belonged to that young man’s father, who lost all of his possessions because he gambled and drank. He died, and his wife, left penniless, went to the poorhouse. This son, however, was very precocious. He determined to work and in time buy back that estate, and in a most wonderful way he succeeded. He purchased the place and took his mother home. He is a Christian man and is now on his way to attend the meeting which you are to conduct.”

This illustration aptly fits the redemption story.

Our great, great, great grandfather, Adam, lost our estates, and we were lost with them, but Christ, the Redeemer, came to buy back that which was lost. The redemption price was His blood shed at Calvary. “**For the wages of sin is death**”; only by dying could Christ save.

And why did Christ leave His place in the glory to do this for us?

Because of our worthiness? Because He saw anything in us to justify such action? No, indeed.

The procuring cause was the same as that which formed the basis for all God, the Father, did. Verse 7 gives the reason: He hath done these things “**according to the riches of his grace.**”

(2) *“Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: 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”* (vv. 9, 10) shows the second thing which the Son has done.

In these verses we are taught that the Son has revealed to us the mystery of God’s will and purpose because we have been made members of His Body and members of the household of God; consequently, we have entered into a knowledge of God’s plan. In a very definite way the church is associated with that purpose. Since we have been made members of the Body of Christ and have this new position and endowment, He takes us into the intimate counsel of the Father.

Let us look at these words carefully. We are taught that He has **“made known unto us the mystery of his will . . . 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.”**

The word, **“dispensation,”** is the same as our word, *“administration.”*

In the United States we have different kinds of administrations. Sometimes we have a conservative administration; sometimes a liberal; sometimes a Republican; sometimes a Democratic administration.

The past dispensations of God’s dealings with man are:

- the dispensation of innocence;
- the dispensation of conscience;
- the dispensation of human government;
- the dispensation of law.
- The dispensation of grace, or the church dispensation, is the one in which we are living at present.
- The dispensation of the fulness of times is future, commencing when this present church dispensation ends and our Lord returns to the earth, not only to occupy the throne of David, but also to be King of kings and Lord of lords.

In that day, **“He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto to the ends of the earth”** (Psalm 72:8).

That is when the reconciliation of things in heaven and things on earth will take place. All of these things will culminate in Christ’s supreme authority. It is interesting to note that things **“under the earth”** are not mentioned. Restitutionalists claim that during Christ’s reign, things under the earth as well as things on the earth and in heaven will be reconciled in Christ, and that even the devil will be saved. There is no portion of Scripture to support such teaching.

It is true that in writing to the Philippians the Apostle Paul says, **“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth”** (Philippians 2:10).

Paul in this writes about an entirely different matter. Even lost men will recognize the authority of the Son of God, but this does not include them in the reconciliation of things. There are many Scriptures which make clear the destiny of unbelievers, people who die outside of Christ. So when Paul speaks of the dispensation of the fulness of times, when all things will be headed in Christ, only things in heaven and things on earth are mentioned. Christ in that day will be King of kings and Lord of lords, and the church will be with Him sharing His glory.

Christ, in that day, will be the absolute Head or Ruler of the world.

In the course of history, we have seen the attempts of men toward the realization of world dominion: Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander the Great, the Caesars, Napoleon Bonaparte, Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin, etc., and we may prepare ourselves for other attempts, for the Antichrist has yet to arise. But God has His marked Man into whose hand will be placed all authority, to whom a Name has been given, a Name that is above every name.

“Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does His successive journeys run;
His kingdom spread from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.”

(3) *The third thing that the Son reveals is that in Him “**We have obtained an inheritance.**”*

This inheritance is described by Peter as being “**incorruptible, and undefiled, that fadeth not away,**” and is reserved in heaven for us. It is described as the “**unsearchable riches**” of Christ which are ours. It is Christ’s inheritance as the glorified Man in which you and I are to and do share. This inheritance comprises the unsearchable riches of Christ which were His as the result of His work at Calvary. He was as rich as God, and in this view of Him nothing could be added to His riches, but, as man, He acquired riches which will rest upon His brow throughout eternity.

By way of illustration, let us look at a mighty prince possessing riches, titles, and estates.

These exist for him because of “who he is,” because of his birth. He is called to war and, by conquest, wins added possessions of wealth and glory. These become his reason of what he has done. Christ possesses riches and glory by reason of who He is—the Son of the eternal God. In His essential Godhead glory, no person can have a part. But, as a man in this world, He won honors, glory, and riches. In these we can and will share, and in them we find an inheritance.

The Apostle Paul concluded the discussion of the threefold work of the Son by reminding us again that our works and personal worthiness do not enter into the Son’s plans any more than they enter into the Father’s.

Thus, we read the conclusion in Ephesians 1:11,12: “**According to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.**”

III. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The inspired apostle now introduces the work of the third Person of the Trinity in connection with the creation of the Body. This revelation begins with Ephesians 1:13.

- The Father planned and purposed;
- The Son provided and purchased;
- The Holy Spirit applied and persuaded.

As we consider the work of the third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, we find three things emphasized: The quickening; the sealing and the earnest.

(1) *The quickening of the Holy Spirit.*

Let us look at verse 13: **“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation”** meaning the Word of God concerned with the crucified, buried, risen Christ, the chosen instrument by which the Holy Spirit brings men to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

He takes the message concerning Christ’s redemption to the slave market where sinners are, makes known to the sinners the gospel of freedom, and assists them, through faith in the One who shed His blood, to believe and be saved.

The Holy Spirit stands beside the sinner when he listens to the preaching of the **“Gospel of salvation”**; He takes the Word proclaimed, and applies it to the heart and conscience of the listening sinner. How grieved the Holy Spirit must be when He enters a church desirous of applying the Word of God to sinners, and finds the preacher giving a discourse about buttercups, daisies, human literature, man’s accomplishments and other things which He cannot use to save men. Only through the Word of God does the Spirit move and touch the hearts of unbelievers.

“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

There is too little of the Word of God proclaimed today.

We need a revival of the preaching of the Word. To any minister who may be reading, let me say that the devil does not care what you preach, as long as you do not preach Christ. You may preach temperance, social schemes, abolition of war; you may preach many good, uplifting things. If, however, you are not preaching Christ crucified, Christ risen, and Christ coming again, Satan is laughing at you, minister of the gospel, for he knows that your ministry is and will be a complete failure. Only the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ stirs souls to the deepest depths and liberates them from the darkness of nature into the light of the resurrection of Christ.

(2) *The sealing of the Holy Spirit.*

After he believer is quickened through the hearing of the Word of God, he is sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. The seal is a mark of ownership. We become God's property when we accept Christ, and God marks us out as His own.

I come from a great sheep country where ranchers mark sheep which they purchase in order that other owners will know to whom they belong. Some of the marks resemble a circle; some, the form of a number; and still others, initials. God has placed, the mark of ownership upon us; we are sealed with a seal, that of a living Person, the Holy Spirit, who takes up His abode in my heart, in your heart, in every believer's heart. In Galatians 4:6 Paul says, "**And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.**"

The Holy Spirit is called the spirit of "**promise,**" not only because God promised Him, but because He is a promise of better things. In connection with the sealing of a believer.

Dr. Haldeman told this beautiful story:

In one of England's great fairs there hung a beautiful vase. It was partially wrapped, in order that it might not be chipped or broken. There was a seal on it, indicating that it had been purchased by an Oriental prince. It was on display only a little while. When the fair was over, it was sent to Calcutta, India, to the prince who had bought it. There the wrapping was taken off, and all could see its beauty.

Because we have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, my friend, we have been purchased by a Prince. The world cannot see what we really look like, because we are all dressed in mortality.

"It doth not yet appear what we shall be" (I John 3:2).

But we shall be "unwrapped" one day, when mortality has "**put on immortality,**" when the Prince who bought us with His own precious blood has taken us to be with Himself. And in the meanwhile, He has put His seal upon us, so that everyone will know that we belong to Him.

(3) *The giving of the earnest by the Holy Spirit.*

The third thing which the Holy Spirit does is to become the "**earnest of our inheritance.**"

An "**earnest**" is a "*down payment.*" When you buy a house, the down payment which you make is the "**earnest**" of more to come. It is a pledge of good faith. The Holy Spirit is the "**earnest of our inheritance**"; He is the pledge assuring us that someday God will bring us into full possession of all that He has planned.

This is the significance of verse 14, "**Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.**"

What does this mean? The "**purchased possession**" is our inheritance.

Because it has been fully paid for, it is called the purchased possession. But this verse not only speaks of our purchased possession but also of the redemption of Our purchased possession. The purchased price was, of course, the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ; the redemption of the purchased possession will be accomplished by His power, when He returns in glory.

We shall see, when we come to study Ephesians 6 that our inheritance is not only in the heavenlies but in this sphere now in the grasp of Satan and all his hosts. **“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places”** (Ephesians 6:12).

Satan is not in hell; he is operating on the earth, in Los Angeles, in New York—everywhere. He has the seat of authority in the heavenlies, but, thank God, he will be cast out of that sphere when the day of Christ’s power begins. Revelation 12:7 describes that day:

“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels.”

Then we read in I Thessalonians 4:16: **“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.”**

Being caught up into the air, we shall rise into that sphere of which Satan is the prince; consequently there will be a conflict. Michael and his hosts will meet the dragon and his hosts, and the latter will be cast into the earth, which event will begin the tribulation.

In that day our inheritance will be redeemed—redeemed by the power of Christ. We shall then have more than the earnest of our inheritance. We shall enter into the enjoyment of the full purchase.

And why has the Holy Ghost quickened, sealed, and given Himself as the earnest—for any good that He sees in us? No, indeed, but for the same reason that caused God, the Father, to act **“unto the praise of His glory.”**

Let us review for the moment the work of the Godhead.

- In the past eternity, the Father planned our redemption;
- In time, the Son of God, having entered into a solemn covenant with the Father, purchased our redemption at the price of His own blood;
- Then on the day Pentecost the Holy Spirit came, applying these wonderful truths to the hearts and the consciences of men through the proclamation of the Word of God.

When people believe, the Spirit quickens them, seals them, and marks them, signifying that they are God’s property. All of this shows the exceeding riches of God’s grace.

IV. PRAYER FOR ENLIGHTENMENT

Having unfolded the first division of this Epistle—The Church, the Body—Its Threefold Creator—the Apostle Paul, before continuing with the revelation, prayed that the Holy Spirit might give to the Ephesian believers enlightenment concerning the great truths which he was unfolding before them. We find this prayer recorded in Ephesians 1:15-23.

Let us consider the comprehensiveness of this prayer. Paul says in verse 15, “**Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.**”

From these words we learn that the Ephesian believers had made progress in the Christian faith to such an extent that their Christian graces had reached the ears of the Apostle Paul whereupon he was able to commend them for their “**faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints.**”

What a blessed thing it is when these two virtues are found together in a life—faith in Christ, and love for the brethren. Much of their strength in the faith was undoubtedly due to the fact that Paul had continually carried them on his heart and had mentioned them before God’s throne in his prayers.

Paul was an outstanding man of prayer; the spirit of prayer breathes throughout his epistles because he was utterly dependent upon the One who had saved him. His Christian life began with prayer. When the Lord commissioned Ananias to go to Saul and lay hands upon him in order that he might receive his sight, Ananias demurred because he had known that Saul of Tarsus was a persecutor of God’s people. But upon the assurance that a great change had taken place in Saul’s life, “**for, behold, he prayeth,**” Ananias obeyed. To Ananias this was evidence that a work of grace had been accomplished in Saul’s heart. Going with confidence, Ananias could say, “**Brother Saul.**” And the evidence that Paul had become a new creature in Christ Jesus was the fact that he prayed.

A number of years ago I was given the privilege of leading a saloon keeper to a knowledge of Christ. He had lived a terrible life, became ill, and at that time he was led to the Lord. He lived four or five months after he professed to be saved during which time I wondered if his profession of Christ was real; therefore I asked the Lord to give me a token. When on my way home one noon from my office, I walked along the street on which he lived. As I approached his home, I saw him sitting by the sidewalk in an arm chair, his old mother having assisted him to dress and be thus seated. As people passed him, I noted that he gave them tracts. This put joy in my own heart. Seeing me, he called me to him, and said, “Mr. Talbot, I wish you would teach me to pray. I am a child of God now. God is my Father, and I want to know how to approach Him, how to talk to Him.”

The Lord had indeed answered my prayer concerning him and at once the words spoken about Saul of Tarsus came to my mind, “**Behold, he prayeth.**” A new life received in regeneration expresses itself in prayer. In his prayers, therefore, Paul thanks God for the progress which the Ephesians had made in spiritual things, progress in two ways: First, their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, their love for all the saints.

Undoubtedly there were in the church at Ephesus some believers who were unlovable, just as there are some believers today whom one finds difficulty in loving. But when the risen Christ sheds abroad His love in a heart, that love, in turn, is shed abroad upon all believers and even the unlovable can be loved in Christ. How much the average church lacks this love today! There are many people who are grounded in the faith, even call themselves “Fundamentalists,” but who do not seem to know anything about the milk of kindness, or to possess real love for their fellow brethren, such as the Ephesians possessed. So Paul thanked God for these graces.

Further, the prayer is addressed to the “**God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory**” (v. 17).

God is addressed as the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, because we are to think of Him as He is disclosed to us in the Person of His Son. Men have never been able to imagine what God is like. When they have tried to do so, they have changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image like unto corruptible man, birds, beasts, and creeping things. Study the religions of the heathen; look at their idols, the visible manifestations of their thoughts of God. By them He is made a horrible being, one to be shunned, to be feared, never to be loved.

The only true revelation of God by which He may be known is the revelation of God in Christ. Christ is the image of the Father’s Person; He is the likeness of God Himself. When Philip said to Christ, “**Show us the Father,**” the Lord answered “**He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.**” The teaching of the Word of God to us is that we are to think of God as He has been manifested to us in the person of His Son.

In connection with this thought, John 1:18 is very significant. “**No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.**” For this cause God is addressed in the Epistle as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. If you want to know who God is, and what God is like, study the Gospels, looking at the Lord Jesus Christ, hearing His words. When you see Him, then you will see God. There is no other way of knowing God.

The next thing to note in this prayer is that Paul prays. “**The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory.**” God is addressed as the “**Father of glory.**” All glory comes from God and all of the glory which Jesus, the Man, possessed, was given Him by the Father. Now He has been crowned with glory and honor and is seated at the right hand of the Father. One day the church will share in this glory.

Proceeding with the prayer, we read that Paul prayed that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ “**May give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened.**”

In that request Paul did not mean that they were, or we are, to receive the Holy Spirit in a second way, but rather that the Holy Spirit, already indwelling every believer, might reveal Himself as the spirit of wisdom and understanding.

There is nothing which the Holy Spirit delights more to do than to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us. He came into the world for this purpose, desiring to take a believer into the treasure house of the written Word and give him understanding and wisdom in the things pertaining to God and to His Christ. He does this by shedding His light upon the written Word as we read and study it. The natural man cannot hear the voice of God in the Bible because he is not acquainted with the Author, nor can the child of God understand it if he leans upon his own understanding and wisdom.

The Bible is a spiritually-discerned book. It is only as the Holy Spirit operates in our spirits giving wisdom and understanding that our hearts can be warmed by its glorious truths. Oh, for more Bibles interpenetrated by the light and the heat which comes from the Holy Spirit! Apart from such illumination this Book, the Bible, is the most uninteresting book in the world.

After Paul prayed that God would give the Ephesians wisdom, he mentioned three definite petitions for them to know (vv. 18, 19).

1. **“The hope of his calling.”**
2. **“The riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.”**
3. **“The exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward.”**

First, he prayed that they might know **“The hope of his calling.”**

What was this hope to which he referred? It was infinitely more than the knowledge of having sins forgiven, of being saved. You may enjoy that knowledge, yet be ignorant with regard to what Paul meant. The **“hope of his calling”** is found in: **“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”** (v. 4). God’s purpose in choosing us was for this, and all of the powers of the Godhead have, and are, and will be exercised in order that that plan might be realized. Paul presented this same **“hope of his calling”** to the Roman Christians, when he wrote in Romans 8:29: **“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”**

This hope was and is not only to be in His presence, and to be one with Him, but also to be like Him. One of the most wonderful statements in the Word of God is found in the closing chapter of the book of Revelation: **“And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads”** (Revelation 22:4).

My brother, something of the **“hope of his calling”** should be realized in your life and mine every day. There should be a desire in our hearts that our daily walk should be conformed and made more and more like unto our standing before God—the purpose which God had in Himself when He chose us in the past eternity.

Paul prayed that the Ephesians might obtain a glimpse of His high and holy calling. Of course this calling will not be fully realized until Christ returns and changes these bodies, making them **“like unto his glorious body.”** In that day we shall not only see Him, but we shall also bear the image of the heavenly, thus becoming like Him.

He prayed, secondly, that they might know **“The riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.”**

What is the meaning of these words? The believer’s inheritance is Christ, but from these words we learn that Christ’s inheritance is His people, the church which He purchased with His own blood, from which should ascend to Him adoration, praise, and glory.

These words remind us of the parable of the **“merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it”** (Matthew 13:45,46). The merchant man is Christ. The pearl of great price is the church once buried in the sea of sin in the midst of the waters of nations, peoples, languages and tongues. The church is the fulness of Him that filleth all in all, and one day He will be glorified in us. My friends, is the Lord receiving any returns from you as a result of His great investment in you?

Dr. A. B. Simpson tells the story of a young woman who gave this testimony before her death.

The last New Year’s Eve of her life she had been greatly exercised about not being useful enough, though her life had been literally filled with service. After hours of agonizing prayer, she said that she told the Lord that she would try to do better in the coming year. She, therefore, determined to take another engagement in a mission school though that did not seem to rest her troubled soul, and she still felt that the Lord was grieved with her. Waiting before Him for understanding, He seemed to say to her, **“My child, I do not want you to do more work for me; I want you to love Me more.”** Needless to say, the last months of her life were enriched with a beauty and a glory before unknown. This is what the Lord says to each one of us; it is the return of His inheritance which He desires above everything else.

Paul prayed, thirdly, that the Ephesians might know:

“The exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead.”

It is worthy of notice that when God speaks of the greatness of His power, He does not refer to His power which brought the universe into existence, great as that was, but rather to the power which was manifested in raising the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. The resurrection of Christ was and our resurrection with Him will be the greatest demonstration of power which the universe has ever known or ever will know.

And the wonder of wonders is that this exceeding greatness of power is at your disposal and my disposal. Surely, in view of these resources which are ours, and which are accessible to us, we shall never again excuse ourselves for living defeated lives. Since the world began there has never been a time when we, a collective church, and individual Christians, have needed power as we do today.

We need power to meet the temptations and the trials which confront us every day that we live. We possess no power of our own; all power belongs to God.

How few Christians really believe that today. How many plans are considered, and how many schemes are made for the benefit of the church and the world, and the Lord Jesus Christ is not included nor does He have anything to do with them. He is not first consulted as to whether they are His plans and schemes. It is little wonder that they come to naught.

The early believers realized that they had no power of their own; they cast themselves upon the bountiful supply of God's power; the consequence—the church grew by leaps and bounds. Three thousand men cried out for mercy in the streets in one day; they were added to the church, and shortly after that, five thousand more were added. Why? Because they appropriated the exceeding greatness of God's power, demonstrated in the resurrection of Christ, and placed at their disposal.

The one thing which the church needs today is, not more ministers and colleges (we have far too many of them); we need Christ, revealed to our hearts as the power of God. The exceeding greatness of God's power is realized as we live in touch with the Son of God. When that takes place, we shall see souls saved, believers added (shall I say multitudes?) to the church of God.

When we walk in communion with God, individually and collectively, then we shall know that power. When God speaks of this power "**to us-ward**," He means that we who have been regenerated have this power put at our disposal in order that we might live victorious lives. Victorious living is not to be had, as some would teach, through one definite experience, but rather through a moment-by-moment trusting in a moment-by-moment Saviour for moment-by-moment power. It is as Brother Ironside has said, "God does not make us into storage batteries, and He does not give power at the beginning of each month, or week, or even day. It is a moment-by-moment contact in communion with our God."

When we are in communion, we find operating in our lives the exceeding greatness of His power, "**Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all**" (Ephesians 1:20-23).

The expressions, dominion, might, and power, evidently refer to the myriads of angelic beings who stand in the presence of God. Some of these are angels, some cherubim, some seraphim, and some archangels.

God has raised Christ and caused Him to be seated above all of them and, in so doing, it is Christ as a Man that is in view. Of course, as God, He was, is, and always will be above all. But God hath done these things for Him as a Man. As a Man, He came into the world living in the center of the will of God, never exercising power in His own behalf. He had power to turn stones into bread, but went hungry forty days. He had tears and compassion for others, but no tears or pity for Himself. As the Son of Man, He made His home in the center of God's will.

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name” (Philippians 2:9) **“Not only in this world, but also in that which is to come”** (Ephesians 1:21).

The word, **“world”** means, *“age,”* the sentence then reading, *“not only in this age, but also in that which is to come.”* The age to come will be the millennial age, or the dispensation of the fulness of times, when all things will be gathered together in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in the earth. We read in verse 22 that He **“Hath put all things under his feet.”** Those words are prophetic. They are not fulfilled at present; however, they will be in the dispensation of the fulness of time.

In Hebrews 2:8 we read: **“Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.”** But now we see Christ with the eye of faith, seated at the right hand of God, **“Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion,”** and this is evidence that one day He will take the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. Then the statement in verse 22 will be fulfilled; all things will be placed under His feet, even death itself.

“And gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

The church is the Body of Christ through which He is manifesting Himself to the world in this age. One day this Body will be glorified with a Head—the Head of all things to the church being Christ the Lord. We should not refer to Christ as our “elder brother.” He, in grace, calls us brethren; we are to look up and call Him, **“Lord,”** for He is head over all things to the church.

During this age Christ is manifesting Himself to the world through His body, the church. What grace that men and women, Jew and Gentile, once lost, sinful, deserving God’s wrath, should compose that organism called His Body, through which He manifests Himself to the world. The only part of Christ that the world can now see is His Body, a miracle of grace. The world does not see Him now, for He is in glory; the world sees the Body. It is as though I were to cover my head; only that which could be seen would be my body. In like manner is Christ, the Head, veiled, and we, His Body, have the privilege of manifesting His Being down here on earth.

My friends, what impression of Christ are you, a part of His Body, giving the world? What a petition for prayer! Let us desire to seek God’s face, and yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit in order that we, like the Ephesians, might know, first, **“The hope of His calling”**; secondly, **“The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints;”** and thirdly, **“The exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward.”** May God grant this enlightenment to the readers who become seekers.

~ end of chapter 2 ~

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