

(Through the Bible) Ephesians 1

by Chuck Smith

In this sermon, Chuck Smith emphasizes the importance of understanding one's calling by God's will and the spiritual blessings that come from being in Christ.

Duration: 1:16:52

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Ephesians 1:3-4, Ephesians 2:10, Ephesians 3:20, Ephesians 4:30, Jude 1:24

Topics: "Spiritual Blessings", "Faith Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the spiritual blessings that believers have in Jesus Christ. He emphasizes that the church often emphasizes what believers should be doing for God, but the Bible actually emphasizes what God has done for them. The preacher spends the first three chapters of Ephesians enumerating these spiritual blessings, highlighting the richness and blessings of being a child of God. He also emphasizes that as believers grow strong and healthy in their faith, they will naturally become witnesses and share the love of Christ with others, leading to the growth and blessing of the church.

Transcript

Let's turn in our Bibles to Ephesians. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God. Now, if you were writing this epistle, take out the name Paul, insert your name, and then whatever it is that you are.

Jim, a servant, a service station attendant by the will of God. John, a foundry worker by the will of God. You see, not all are called to be apostles.

Not all are called to be pastors. Not all are called to be preachers. Also, it is a mistake to try to be something that God hasn't called you to be.

Something that God hasn't equipped you for. I really do not like the phrase, oh, he's following the highest calling of God. He's gone into the ministry.

The ministry is not the highest calling of God. Oh, he's following the highest calling of God. He's a missionary.

That's not the highest calling of God. Whatever God has called you to be and equipped you to be is God's highest calling for your life, and you don't need to feel like a second-rate heavenly citizen just because you have a job at a service station, or you're a secretary, or you're blessed of God with the privilege of being a

housewife. Whatever it is that God has called you to be is the highest calling of God for your life, and we should be enjoying rather than feeling guilty.

Oh my, you know, I'm not in the ministry. I should be in the ministry. I have to work, you know, at this job and all.

Hey, be grateful that God has spared you a lot of the pain and the deprivation and the grief that ministers often have to go through. So, Paul is just declaring his own calling. What I am, I am by the will of God.

That's what's important. You see, for many years, I had a difficult problem because I sought to be Chuck the Evangelist by the will of God. But I wasn't.

God never did call me to be an evangelist. And my endeavor to be an evangelist was totally futile, frustrating, defeating. It wasn't until I decided to kick the mold of the denomination that I was in, which held up evangelist as the highest calling.

And just be what God had equipped me to be and ordained me to be Chuck, a pastor teacher by the will of God, that I began to experience a real fulfillment in my ministry. Up until then, the ministry was hard. It was a grind.

It was a push. I was trying to be something God didn't make me. And you know, that's the hardest thing in the world to try to be something God didn't make you.

The Bible says, make your calling and election sure. Know what you are by the will of God. Because if you are what you are by the will of God, then you have pleasure in what you are and in what you're doing.

And when your work becomes your pleasure, then you're a happy person. I always encourage young people to find something you really enjoy doing and learn how to make a living from it. Because when your work is your pleasure, then you're a happy person.

If your work is a grind, then you're going to be a miserable person because you've got to figure probably a third of your life is going to be spent on the job. And if it's just a grind and a push and you think, oh, I have to go to work today. Oh, I'll be glad when five o'clock.

Man, you're just grinding at it constantly. Paul, an apostle by the will of God. To the saints, which are at Ephesus, you say, well, that lets me out.

The only part that lets you out is the of Ephesus. It's a tragedy, really, that the church decided to saint certain people for special honors. We make him a saint.

The church never made anybody a saint. The Lord creates the saints, not the church. And as far as the Lord is concerned, you're all saints if you love him and follow him.

It's not a special category for super dupers. It's just a common title for those who love the Lord and believe in him. Saint Charles.

I'll accept that title. But if that bothers you, Paul goes ahead and includes you in the rest of it there to the faithful in Christ Jesus. So this letter is to you in this first verse.

He introduces really sort of the underlying tone of the whole epistle. And it's in the words in Christ Jesus. So as you go through this epistle, it will be helpful if you will take your pen and you'll underline all of the things that you have that God has done for you in Christ, through Christ.

And you'll find the phrases in him, by whom, in whom, through whom, through him. And all of these things that you are and have through and in Jesus Christ. And you'll find this reoccurring throughout the entire epistle.

And so this almost becomes the key word that will unlock the epistle as he tells you all that you are, all that God has done for you, all that God is going to do for you, all that God wants to do for you in Christ Jesus. So do underline as you go through and it will help it to be drawn back to your memory. Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace, coupled together over and over throughout the New Testament. Always in this order for you cannot know the peace of God until you first experience the grace of God. For years I went in my Christian experience without really knowing the peace of God in my heart.

Because I was under a work relationship with God. Trying so hard and I never had peace. I really never had assurance of my salvation until I discovered the grace of God.

And in the discovery of the grace of God. I then had assurance of my salvation. And I experienced the peace of God and it was glorious.

And that's, I think, probably one of the reasons why I emphasize the grace of God so much in my ministry is that brought such a depth of peace and blessing to my own life to experience it after serving the Lord for years. From the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, a lot of people think that's first, middle, and last name.

Not so. His name is Jesus. It's the Greek for the Hebrew Yahshua.

The Hebrew name Yahshua is a name which means or is a contraction of Jehovah is salvation. One of the compound names of Jehovah, Yahshua. The Greek name is Jesus.

And they were instructed to call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins. The Lord is salvation. Call him Yahshua for he shall save his people from their sins.

The word Christ is the Hebrew word Messiah. And it tells his mission. He is God's promised savior, the anointed one, the Messiah.

And Lord is his title. Now, our problem is, is that we use it as his name rather than a title. And thus, we use it loosely and oftentimes in vain.

Many people take the name of the Lord in vain. Because they use the term Lord as a title, I mean, as a name rather than a title. It signifies my relationship with him.

If he is Lord, then I am the douloi. I am the slave. I am the bond slave.

And it is important that I establish this relationship with him as Lord and servant. Jesus said, why do you call me Lord, Lord and yet you don't do the things I command you? That's inconsistency. And yet how inconsistent people are calling him Lord and yet not obeying his commands.

And so, it's important that we realize that this is a title, not a name. And that we come into that relationship with him as Lord. For if thou shalt confess with thy mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

For with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Confessing what? Jesus is Lord. But it can't be an empty confession because many will come in that day saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

And he'll say, hey, I never knew you. What do you mean Lord, Lord? You never served me. Oh, but I called you Lord all my life.

Yes, but you never served me. Title, relationship. Don't take it lightly or loosely.

Now, Paul gets immediately into the issues that he wants to talk to them about. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. And there you have it, in Christ.

Notice, first of all, that he is thanking God for the spiritual blessings. There's an awful lot, in fact, too much talk today about material blessings. And those that are going out around advocating how that every saint of God should experience all kinds of material blessings and the testimonies are of the material blessings.

Sometimes I don't know if I'm in an Amway meeting or a church service. As people testify of the material blessings, Paul is thanking God for the spiritual blessings. And when you hear a person giving thanks to God, note what he's thanking God for, because it can surely indicate the person's place spiritually.

If a person is really walking after the Spirit and interested in things of the Spirit, he's going to be thanking God for the spiritual blessings. But if a person is a materialist and is very interested in the material things, he's going to be talking always about the material blessings. But beware of those, the Bible said, who declare that godliness is a way to material prosperity.

From such, he says, turn away. He's thanking God for spiritual blessings. And he's going to spend the first three chapters of Ephesians sort of enumerating these spiritual blessings that we have in and through Jesus Christ.

He's going to tell you for three chapters now what God has done for you. I think that one of the greatest problems in the church today arises from the fact that in the church, we're always hearing what we ought to be doing for God. I grew up on that kind of a diet.

Every service that I attended, it seems, I was being told what I ought to be doing for God. And I wasn't doing what I ought to be doing for God. And I was very miserable and I felt convicted constantly, because I was failing.

I ought to be doing more for God. I ought to be doing this for God and the other thing for God. All I ought to be doing for God.

And many things I wanted to do, but I just was weak. I ought to be praying more. And so I'd go down on Sunday night and I'd pray and say, God, I'm going to pray more this week, but I didn't.

Then I'd feel guilty next Sunday night. I had to go back and repent for not praying more last week. And this next week I'll do it, Lord.

But every Sunday night was repentance for my failures this past week. I ought to be reading the Bible more. God, I'm going to read the Bible more, but I didn't.

I wanted to. I ought to be witnessing more, but I didn't. I was always feeling guilty because I was failing to be or to do all that I ought to be doing for God.

Half the problem is I didn't know how. For years in my ministry, I followed the pattern that I knew by growing up. And I was telling the people constantly what they ought to be doing for God.

First many years of my ministry, I was always half mad with the people, because I wanted to be an evangelist, because that's what the denomination recognized. I wanted to see souls saved because the first thing I had to report on my reports every month were how many people were saved this month. It's terrible to put zeros in there.

The hierarchy, the bishops will never recognize you unless you have converts. And so I had prepared some of the most fantastic evangelistic sermons. I mean they could convince the hardest sinner that he ought to commit his life to Jesus Christ.

And I go to church all supercharged with this powerful dynamic message. I mean no sinner can reject this message. And I get to church and I look around and there wouldn't be a sinner in the house.

I knew everybody by first name. What are you going to do? No sinner is to preach this powerful message to. Can't change my message now.

I don't have anything else to preach. I have to preach this powerful salvation message to all these saints. That's frustrating.

And I let my frustrations be known by laying it on the saints. I put a little addendums to my message of how they had so failed God. If they were doing what they should be doing this church would be full of people tonight.

Sinners to hear the gospel message. You should have your neighbors with you this evening. I really laid it on the poor saints and their heads would go down, down, down.

I was laying the lash across their back beating them. Total failures in their Christian walk. I've got to preach this powerful salvation message to saints.

That's not fair. So I developed a congregation of frustrated guilt-ridden saints. And I make my appeal to re-consecrate your life to Jesus.

At least I can get people forward you know. Oh God bless. And you notice I dedicated my last book to those people.

Way back when. Those blessed saints that endured my whippings every Sunday. And came back for more.

That's the surprising thing. And as their head would go down and they'd feel guilty. Yes I have failed God.

Oh God I'm so sorry. Lord I should be doing more for you. I know I'd be doing but God I don't know how.

This dumb pastor isn't teaching me anything besides salvation you know. It was really my fault. I never took them beyond salvation.

I never brought them into the walk in the Spirit. Into the life of the Spirit. Into growth and maturity in the Word.

One day God changed my ministry. I became a pastor teacher. Got rid of my evangelistic sermons.

And started to feed His sheep. To make them strong. It was a dramatic change of my own ministry.

As I quit beating the sheep. And started feeding the sheep. The sheep started getting strong.

They started getting healthy. And you know what happened? As they got strong and healthy they started to reproduce. They now had something to share with their neighbors.

Christ became their life. Witnessing wasn't something that they were doing anymore. It was something that they were.

Their lives changed by the Word of God and the power of the Spirit. They became witnesses. And the effect of it.

Was that their witness began to go out throughout the neighborhood. And their neighbors began to come and be saved. And the church began to be blessed and grow.

The church has been emphasizing much too long what you ought to be doing for God. The Bible doesn't emphasize that. The Bible emphasizes what God has done for you.

Thanks be unto God who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings. And He takes three chapters now to tell you all that God has done for you. And it is not until He has told you for three chapters what God has done for you.

That He turns around then and says now walk worthy. Of this glorious calling. He doesn't tell you what you ought to be doing for God.

Until first of all establishing for you what God has done for you. And that is the proper order because you can't. You can't be what you ought to be.

Without that which God has already done for us. In other words God's work has to be first in my life. And in the New Testament the order is always that way.

You'll never find a reversed order. Before what you should be doing for God is always what God has done for you. Thank God Peter said.

That we have been born again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible undefiled that fades not away. That is reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God.

All of this is what God has done for you. Thanks be unto God. We've been born again.

To this living hope. Because Jesus rose from the dead. We have an inheritance incorruptible undefiled.

Fades not away. That's all God. What God's done for you.

Reserved in heaven for you. Who are kept by the power of God. It's God that is keeping you.

You say well don't I have anything to do. Yeah. He adds through faith.

Just believe it. That's all. It's all he requires.

For you to believe that work that he has done for you. And so we've sought to follow the New Testament pattern. Declaring the glorious works of God.

In our behalf. Blessed be the God and Father. Who has blessed us with all these spiritual blessings.

In these heavenlies. In Christ Jesus. Starting off now.

According as he hath chosen us in him. God chose me. That thrills me.

Used to scare me. I used to argue against that. That isn't fair that God should choose.

I didn't like the doctrine of divine election. I don't know why I didn't. In as much as he elected me.

But somehow my rational mind was wrestling with that. I'm glad that God gave me the choice. I appreciate this capacity of choice.

I recognize the awesome responsibility that goes with it. But I'm glad that God gave me the opportunity to choose the one. That I was going to spend the rest of my life with.

I'd have just hated to have someone dumped on me. I appreciate that choice. But I would deny God that same right.

God you don't have a right to choose who you want to spend eternity with. According he has chosen us. It's interesting that Paul has that at the top of his list.

And I think it's appropriate. The top of our list should be the fact that God chose us. What a blessing.

What a glorious blessing. That God should choose me to spend eternity with him. Now the amazing thing is when God chose me.

And this gives us a little clue into the whole thing. Chosen us in him before the foundation of the world. Now God didn't choose me after I decided to clean up my act and live for him.

God didn't say oh alright I'll choose him. God chose me before the foundations of the world. Now that gives you the key into God's choices.

Having chosen me before the foundations of the world. Indicates that he chose me according to his foreknowledge. Because God knows all things.

He will never learn anything new. If he can learn anything new then he doesn't know all things. James said, known unto him are all things from the beginning.

So it is according to his foreknowledge because he knew in advance. He chose me on the basis of his foreknowledge. Now this is where we have difficulty with the concept of the foreknowledge of God and

predestination and election and chosen in him.

We have problems because we can't think with that capacity or with that advantage. I don't even know if you have to think when you have that advantage. You know everything.

And on the basis of what God knew from the beginning he made his choices. Now imagine if you had that kind of capacity. That you knew everything in advance before it ever happened.

You knew exactly how it was going to turn out. You could sure go back and improve your lot, couldn't you? I've made some choices in my life that I was sorry that I made afterwards. I've made some poor decisions in my life.

I sold too quickly. I bought at the wrong time. Oh, if I only had foreknowledge when I made my decisions, I wouldn't have chosen the losers.

That would be sort of stupid to choose losers, wouldn't it? If you knew in advance. If you knew who was going to win the ball game. Or better yet, if you could go to the racetracks with this kind of knowledge.

Imagine what you could do. Having foreknowledge, knowing every horse, what he was going to do in that race. And you go to the racetrack with this kind of knowledge.

Now, if you could, do you think you'd go there and pick out a ticket of losers? I don't know what you do at racetracks. Would you pick out a bunch of losers? You'd be stupid if you did. Of course you wouldn't.

You'd pick the winners because you know in advance who's going to win the race. What the outcome is going to be. And so you'd make your choices predicated on what the outcome is.

Because you already know in advance what it's going to be. That's just using your head. Now, that's what thrills me about God choosing me.

Because he don't choose no losers. God's only chosen winners. And by virtue of the fact that I've been chosen, that ensures that I'm going to win.

Chosen in him before the foundations of the world. I derive tremendous comfort from that. You may say, well, that isn't fair that God can choose.

Because if he chooses who's going to be saved, then he's also chosen who's going to be lost. It doesn't say that, does it? You're adding to the scripture. Well, that's a natural assumption.

Not necessarily. The fact that God foreknows those that are going to be saved. And chooses them.

Does not preclude any man from coming. Because the scripture says, whosoever will may come and drink of the water of life freely. And not one person has ever come to God and been turned back by God.

God said, well, let me see. I'm sorry, your name's not on the list. Too bad.

You seem like a very nice fellow. I would like to save you, but there was a slip up in the record someplace. I guess you just can't make it, you know.

Predestination, divine election, never precludes any man. You say, but I don't think that I like that God can make these choices. Because what if he didn't choose me? Well, how do you know he didn't choose you?

Well, I'm not a Christian.

Well, why aren't you a Christian? Well, I don't want to be. Well, then maybe he didn't choose you and it's sort of sad. But you can find out whether or not he chose you by just accepting Jesus Christ.

And you'll discover he chose you before the foundation of the world. You see, if there's any question in it, you can answer the question tonight. You can just say, Lord, come into my life.

I'm going to be a Christian. I'm going to follow Jesus Christ. And you'll discover, the minute you do, that God chose you from the foundation of the world.

You say, oh, I've been waiting for this. Great to have you on board. Come on in.

And then he'll show you, look, I chose you. Here you are. I knew exactly the time, the whole situation.

Here it is. You were chosen before the foundation of the world. Yeah, but what if I don't want to come? Well, then again, as I said, it's tough.

But you can't blame God. Because God has opened the door to you. And God has given you the opportunity.

And God has called you to come. So though God has chosen those, still he has left the door open so that it becomes your choice also. Though God already knows the choice you're going to make.

But you're the one that makes the choice. But God, in all of his wisdom, knows the choices each person is going to make. But he doesn't make the choice for you.

He only knows in advance that what you're going to choose. We were chosen before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. Oh, God help me.

We've got two chapters going. I'm just plotting. But every verse just opens up such a new rich dimension.

It's hard to just pass over it. What has God chosen for you? That you should stand before him holy and without blame. In Jude, we read, Now unto him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

One of these days, my name is going to be called. And I'm going to stand out. And God's going to look at me.

Jesus is going to step up and say, Father, one of mine. In Christ, holy, without blame. He's innocent, Father.

He's without blame. He's faultless. He's going to present me faultless.

How? Because he's going to present me in him. It is in Christ that I have this standing before God of faultless, without blame, holy. That isn't me.

That isn't my works. That isn't my efforts. That's the way God is going to receive me in Christ Jesus.

That's the way Jesus is going to present me to the Father. For he has taken all of my blame. He has taken all of my sin.

And he's paid the price and the penalty. And he's going to present me in his righteousness. For God made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God through him.

Having predestinated us, God's predestined plan for our lives, that we should be adopted as his children. You know, as we were going through Romans, we pointed out the fact that we have been adopted as the sons of God. Jesus is the only begotten Son of God.

But God has predestined that we should become the adopted children by Christ Jesus. According to the good pleasure of his will. Now, this is a phrase you're going to find repeated, and it's an important phrase to understand.

The good pleasure of his will. In Revelation 4.11, the elders declare to God, Thou art worthy to receive glory and honor, for thou has created all things, and for your good pleasure they are and were created. The good pleasure of his will.

God has chosen you. God has predestined you to be his children, that he might receive pleasure from your willful obedience to his will. That you might be faithful, obedient children, in which the Father can take pride.

You remember when Job was there, accusing before God the saints. Remember in the book of Job, the sons of God were presenting themselves to God. Satan also came with them.

God said, Hey, where have you been, man? He said, I've been cruising around the world. Oh, hey, did you notice that one fellow Job? Hey, good man, isn't he? Perfect, upright, he loves good, he hates evil. Oh yeah, I've noticed that guy.

But you've put a hedge around him. I can't get close to him. And, you know, you've so blessed that guy.

He's so wealthy. Who wouldn't serve you, give him all that kind of stuff? Anybody would serve you. He doesn't really love you, he just loves the perks he's receiving.

You let me at that guy. I can make him curse you to your face. God said, well, have a go at it, but don't touch his life.

And how Job went through the stripping process. Family, possessions, friends. And it came another time when the sons of God were presenting themselves to God.

Satan also came with him. God said, hey, where have you been? Going up and down the earth to him, throw through it. Oh, have you seen my servant Job? God's rubbing him in now.

Because after Satan stripped him of everything, he lay on the ground naked, destitute. And he said, naked, I came into the world naked. I'm going out.

The Lord gives, the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. And all these things he did not curse God or charge God foolishly.

Now God's rubbing him in. Notice my servant Job, good man, loves good, hates evil, you know. My boy.

God was proud. Taking pleasure. And that's what God desires to do in your life, to take pleasure for your love and your obedience to Him according to the good pleasure of His will.

To the praise of the glory of His grace, that God might receive praise and glory because of His grace, wherein He hath made us, and the next blessing, accepted in the Beloved. God has accepted me in Christ. Now I have no acceptance before God in myself.

I can't go up and say, hey God, I'm Chuck Smith. Here's my card. I want in.

I want you to accept me, God. Because I already tried. I have no acceptance in myself.

I am only accepted in Christ. Accepted in the Beloved. And when I stand before God, I'll stand before Him in Christ and as such will be accepted in the Beloved.

In whom we have redemption through His blood. So the next blessing, in whom, in Christ, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace. I almost spoke on this subject this morning.

I'm going to just bypass the temptation to speak on it tonight. In whom we have redemption through His blood. The idea of redemption is that of purchasing something back.

The idea here is to purchase a slave off the market who cannot pay his debts. He's been sold into slavery because of his inability to pay his debts. And someone now has come along and paid his debt for him, has redeemed him.

I owed a debt I could not pay. I was sold into the slavery of sin. But Jesus paid the debt that I owed.

And He redeemed me from the slavery to the life of the flesh that I might become a child of God, forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ. Oh, how glorious. The forgiveness of my sins according to the riches of His grace, wherein He has abounded, that is, His grace has 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 has purposed in Himself.

Again, the good pleasure of God, the purposes of God. And in this He has made known unto us the mystery of His will. What is it? That Christ in you is your hope of glory.

That in the dispensation of the fullness of times, that is, when the whole cycle is complete and the history of man is concluded, that He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, which are on the earth, even in Him. God's intention of bringing the whole universe together again into obedience and in subjection to Jesus Christ. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

There was only one government in the universe. It was the government of God, the government of light and life. And every creature within the universe that was created by God was in harmony with God, in subjection to God.

And there was a beautiful, glorious universe of light and life. But one day, one of God's glorious creatures that was perfect in beauty and perfect in wisdom and perfect in all of His ways, decided that He was going to be equal with God. He was going to exalt Himself above the other angels and was going to be as God.

And with that rebellion against the will of God, there came a second government in the universe, Satan as its head, the government of death and darkness, a government that is in antagonism to the first government, in rebellion against the first government, and thus the beginning of this struggle within the universe of the good against the evil. And we have come into time, born on this planet Earth, which

happens to be sort of the center of the conflict. And we are born into a spiritual conflict.

And even within us, we experience the conflict of the good that I would, I often do not do, and that which I would not, I find myself doing. And I find myself in this conflict of good and evil. And I look around at this weary world and I see it in this conflict.

And I see the tragic byproducts of the conflict. I see the suffering. I see the wars.

I see the struggles, all resulting because of the initial rebellion against God. And man caught up in that rebellion and not living as God would have him to live upon the world. For as we sang, love, love, this is your call.

Love your neighbor as yourself. This is God's command. It's God's call to us.

But men aren't living by that standard. And thus the conflict and thus the miseries of the world around us. It could all be solved if we just start living as God asked us to live.

But one day, thank God one day, Satan is to be cast into Gehenna. And all of those that have chosen to rebel with him, they'll be cast into outer darkness, beyond the furthest galaxy, out into the abysmal darkness beyond the light of any of the universe. Loving darkness rather than light, God accommodates them into the eternal darkness forever.

And within this universe of God once more, there will be just one government. And God will gather together in the fullness of times all things into Christ and all now in subject to His authority, living in a world, in a universe of peace and glory, all in harmony now with Him, all in sync with Him once more. What a glorious universe that's going to be.

You know, this world wouldn't be a bad place if it weren't for sin. I've seen some really beautiful places. If it weren't for man's corrupting of this planet, it has really some gloriously beautiful places to see.

I've been skin diving in some fabulously beautiful places, just enchanted by the coral, by the various fish and all. And then I see some beer can. And I think, what a tragedy.

Out here in the Pacific, some inconsiderate person just polluting, trashing. Man has the capacity of trashing everything it seems. How glorious to live in a world that will all be in subjection to Jesus Christ when in the fullness of time, the cycle is complete and God brings it all back together in one, even in Him, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, phased not away, reserved in heaven for you.

If we are children of God, then we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. And it is through Jesus Christ that I have become an heir to the glorious eternal kingdom of God and to the riches of that kingdom. They are mine.

And I shall enjoy them world without end in whom also we have this glorious inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will. God doesn't have to ask counsel or advice of anybody. He does it all according to His own will.

His purpose is which He has purposed. They shall come to pass. They shall stand.

God's purposes cannot be defeated. That which God has purposed shall be. Thank God His purpose that I should share with Him in that glorious kingdom.

Oh, thank God for His purposes. The eternal purposes of God which He has purposed in Himself after the counsel of His own will that we should be to the praise of His glory because of our trust in Jesus Christ. When you trust in His Son Jesus, God just says, oh, look at them.

Look at the trust they have. Now many times this trust is tested. Am I going to trust in Jesus when things go bad? Do I only trust in Him when things are rosy and things are going great? Oh, man, life is sweet.

Life is wonderful. Oh, Lord, I trust You for everything. But do I trust Him when it gets tough? Do I trust Him only when I can understand what He's doing? Can I trust Him when I don't understand? Now, many times God places me in situations that I don't understand to see if my trust is really genuine.

And as I trust in Him in those dark places, in the places of suffering, in the places of questions, when I trust Him in those places, actually it brings greater praise to His grace than when I only trust Him in the good times. My trust in Jesus, in whom you also trusted after you heard the Word of Truth, the Gospel of your salvation, in whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. Now, Ephesus was a major seaport in which the goods were coming from the eastern part of the world.

And the merchants from Rome would go to Ephesus to the large markets there, the wholesale markets, and they would purchase these goods coming from the east. And then they would crate them, and then they would put their seal on the crate. The wax, and each one had their ring, their signet ring, and they would press their ring into the wax.

It was the sealing of the merchandise. They would put it on the ships, and then the ships would sail to Puteoli, which was the port for Rome in those days. And when the merchandise arrived in Puteoli, the merchant's servants that were there would go through the goods as they were unloaded, and they'd say, there, there, there, and they would pick out the merchandise that was sealed with their master's seal.

It was the sign of ownership. That's mine. That belongs to me.

That's mine. It has my seal on it. It was the sign of ownership.

God has purchased you after you believed in Jesus, after you trusted Him, and He went one step further. He put on me His seal of ownership. I tell you, that makes you feel secure.

That God has sealed me. I'm His. I belong to God.

I've got the seal of God upon my life. His Holy Spirit, which He has given to me. It's God's seal of ownership.

In whom we have been sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. Or it is the down payment.

I put an ad in the paper. I'm going to sell my car. You come along and you say, I like that car.

I want to buy it. I have to go to the bank and get the money. I say, you really want to buy it? Yes, I want to buy it, but I have to go to the bank and get the money.

Well, then give me a deposit. Oh no, no, I'll buy it. Just take my word for it.

No, no. I want a deposit because someone might come along in five minutes and offer me cash and have the cash on hand and I don't want to be holding the car for you because you may change your mind on the way to the bank or the bank may not give you the money, you see. And here I might turn away a valid buyer trying to hold the thing for you.

So I want a deposit. If you want me to hold this car for you, I want a deposit. You give me the deposit and the car is yours.

The deposit is what they call earnest money, which means I am really earnest to buy it. I am earnest in my intent to buy your car or you're showing that you're earnest in your intent to buy my car as this case happened to turn out. The deposit, it indicates that you are intending to go ahead and complete the purchase.

Now, God has placed His deposit on me. He has purchased me. I've been redeemed through Jesus Christ.

He has sealed me, put His mark of ownership upon me and He's paid the down payment, the deposit. Until that day when He takes me into His glorious kingdom and the redemption is complete. You see, this body is not yet redeemed.

I have a redeemed spirit living in a corrupted body. This body is decaying. It's going to pieces.

But I have a redeemed spirit and I'm waiting for the redemption of the body. That is, the new body that I have, the building of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. And therein, when I enter into that new body and am in the presence of the Lord, my redemption at that point will be complete.

So, in the meantime, that God might show to you that He is earnest and sincere about His purpose in redeeming you, He gives to you the deposit, the down payment of the Holy Spirit, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession under the praise of His glory. One day God's going to complete this transaction of my salvation when I am there with Him in His glorious kingdom. Wherefore, I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love unto all of the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.

This is the first of the two prayers that Paul has prayed for the Ephesians. And the one thing that I like about Paul's prayers are the directness of his prayers and the thing that I think is a weakness in prayer many times is the lack of directness in prayer. I think that so often we are praying for things that are actually symptoms rather than getting to the heart of the matter.

Here is John. He's having a terrible drinking problem. He's become an alcoholic.

Oh, God, help John not to drink anymore. It's destroying his life. He's going down the tubes.

He's drinking. God, help him not to drink anymore. So, John becomes a sober sinner rather than a drunk sinner.

What has he gained? Outside of sobriety. His real need is salvation. You see, we're praying for the symptoms.

If you went to a doctor who only treated your symptoms, he'd be a quack. Doctor, I have this dizziness and these reoccurring headaches. The pressure seems to build up.

Well, here, take some aspirin. Two months later, Doctor, the aspirin just isn't doing it. The pressure seems to be greater and I'm having these dizzy spells and I'm blacking out.

Well, here, I'll give you some Demerol. You need something more powerful. And if he only went ahead treating the symptoms while you have a tumor developing in the brain and creating pressure and all, he's a quack.

But so often as we are praying in situations, we're praying only for the symptoms. We're not getting at the heart. And I think it's important in prayer to come directly to the real heart.

Because as we pray for symptoms, we're so often just praying that God will correct the symptom without really getting at the cause. Like this fellow that every Saturday night at the testimony meeting was talking about how he became entangled in the web of sin this week. And oh, I was determined to live for Jesus, but sin began to weave its web and I got all entangled in the web of sin and I fell again.

But oh, I come tonight to repent. I want God's help. And every Saturday night, same testimony.

Caught in the web and it entangled me and I fell again and all. Until finally one night, as the guy was giving his testimony, another fellow sitting by said, oh, God, kill the spider. That's getting to the heart of the issue.

We deal so often in just the peripheral issues rather than coming to the heart of the problem. Paul in his prayers, he comes right down to the heart of the issue. And that's why I love Paul's prayers.

What is he praying for them? First of all, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. One of the most important things that any of us can possess is the true knowledge of God. There is so much false concepts concerning God.

You cannot know God by searching. That's what the friend Eliphaz said to Job. Who by searching can find out God? You can't.

God has revealed Himself and it is only by revelation that you can really know God. And it is only as the Spirit opens your heart to the revelation that you can really understand God. You cannot in your intellectual quest come to an understanding of God.

It takes a revelation by the Spirit of God. No man can come to the Father except the Spirit draw him. No man can really understand the Father.

The natural man cannot understand the things of the Spirit. Neither can he know them. They are spiritually discerned.

God is the Spirit. They that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth. That's an impossibility for the natural man.

It takes the Spirit working in my heart, the Spirit of revelation in the wisdom and in the knowledge, the understanding of God. And Paul is praying that God might reveal Himself to them by the Holy Spirit. That's the only help and the only hope I have of ever knowing God is through revelation of the Spirit.

That the eyes of your understanding, once I've come to understand God, being enlightened, that then I might know what is the hope of His calling. Remember the first thing that Paul was excited about. He was chosen in Him.

Oh, if you only knew what the hope is for those that God has called to be His children. You would never, never, never have a problem with death again. You'd never have a fear of death.

You would never grieve for a child of God who died if you only knew what is the hope of our calling. We have such peculiar concepts of death. Oh, what a shame.

He was so young. He had everything going for him. His whole life in front of him.

What a tragedy that he was snuffed out so early. That's because you don't know the hope of the calling of the believer. Tragedy for us maybe because we're going to miss Him, but not a tragedy for Him.

He's there in the presence of the Lord. He doesn't have to go through all the hell and the suffering on this earth. Your life on this earth is all of the hell you're ever going to know.

For those that aren't saved, their life on this earth is all of the heaven they're going to ever know if you only knew what was the hope of your calling. If you only knew what God has in store for His children. If you only knew the glory that awaits us as children of God.

You see, it would correct the false attitude that we have towards the world and the things of the world. Now, rather than Paul saying, Oh God, they're getting so embroiled in the worldly things. Help them to begin to have a distaste and all for those things.

No, he just prays at the heart of the issue. They don't know what God is preparing for them. They're discouraged because they've lost sight of the glory that God is going to reveal in them.

And so he gets right to the heart of the issue. God, enlighten them as to the hope of their calling. Let them know, God, what You've got in store for them.

They won't become discouraged anymore, Lord. They only know the glorious things that await them when they get to the end of the road. Alexander the Great was going over the Himalayas as he was moving to conquer India, having conquered the Persian Empire and all of its wealth.

And he saw this one young fellow whose horse was heavy laden and the horse was weakening under the load and beginning to sort of stumble along and he was doing his best to help the horse and finally the horse just collapsed. And so this young boy took the load that was on the horse, put it on his shoulders and he began to strain and struggle with that load. And Alexander the Great became curious.

What in the world does he have in those sacks that he is trying so hard to carry them on? Why doesn't he just leave them along the path? And he went up to him and he said, young man, what in the world do you have in those sacks that you're trying so hard to get to camp with them? And he looked at him and he said, sir, I bear in these sacks the treasures of Alexander the Great. Alexander shook his head and he says, when we make camp, take them to your tent. They now belong to you.

Don't you know they got a lot lighter? All of a sudden it wasn't nearly as heavy. Oh, it's mine! Wow! The Lord says, hey, when we make camp, it's all yours. The hope of your calling, the glorious eternal riches of God's kingdom.

When I realize what God has waiting for me, I'll tell you, it gives me the strength, the energies, the courage, all that I need to go on if you only knew the hope of your calling. If you knew what were the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. Now, this is interesting.

Watch out. Now, careful. He's not talking about your inheritance here.

Now he's talking about his inheritance and this to me is a mystery. What he's saying is if you only knew how much God treasured you. I've never thought much of that.

I've thought a lot about my treasures in God. But God treasures me? You remember Jesus said the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man going through a field and discovering a treasure? Now when you interpret that parable, the treasure turns out to be you. And the person who gave everything to buy the field, the world, in order to obtain the treasure was Jesus.

He values you so highly that He gave His life to redeem you, to purchase you. You are His treasure. Peter said we are His peculiar treasure.

God's treasure. If you only knew how much God treasured you, you'd never treat yourself cheaply again. You'd never look down at yourself again.

Hey, I'm God's treasure. I'm God's inheritance. God values me.

God treasures me. Glory. Personally, I don't think he's getting much of a deal, but I like it that he likes it.

The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. And then if you only knew the tremendous power that God has made available to you in your life. What is the exceeding greatness of His power to us who believe.

According to the work of that mighty power, if you only knew the resources that are available to you as a child of God. The resources of God are now yours. The strength of God.

The peace of God. They all become yours. These glorious resources.

Oh God, help them to realize the resources that they have if they'll just call upon you. That power that is available to them. That same power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand.

That same power of the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is the power of the Spirit that dwells in you and is going to make alive our mortal bodies by His dwelling in us. If you only knew the exceeding greatness of the power of the Spirit of God. It has set Christ in the heavenly places far above all principality and power and might and dominion.

These are rankings of the spirit beings in the universe. Christ is far above all of these spiritual beings. Far above every principality, power, might, dominion and every name that is named.

Not only in this world, but in the one to come. That place and position that God has given to Jesus Christ. As we come into Philipians, we'll find that God has also highly exalted Him, given Him a name which is above every name.

That at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord to the glory of God the Father. He has seated Him there in the heavenly places far above. A name above every name that is named.

And He has put all things under His feet. The authority, the power that He has given to Jesus to reign. And He gave Him to be the head over all things to the church.

So Christ, the head of the body of the church. Every month at our church board meeting, we begin the meeting with an acknowledgement that Jesus is the head of the body of the church. We're not there to conduct the business as we see fit.

We're there to get the mind of the Lord that He might direct the activities of the church. We're not there to govern the church. We're there to listen to Him, to find out what He wants done.

And we seek His counsel and we seek His advice. For He is the head of all things to the church, which is His body. The fullness of Him that fills all in all.

I'm not going to try chapter 2. I'm just going to go home and have spiritual indigestion all week. I hope you do. I hope you burp in these scriptures all week long.

God will just bring back to your heart and your mind what you are to Him. How valuable you are to Him. How important you are to Him.

How much He loves you. How much He's made available to you. How much He's done for you.

Just because He loves you with such exceeding great love. And that you might just trust in Him so completely and so fully that God will just take pleasure and glory in your trust in Him and receive praise and glory because of your total trust in His wisdom as you commit your life into His hands. I pray that this will be one of the richest weeks you've ever had in your walk with Jesus Christ.

That you'll come to a new appreciation of the Holy Spirit and His work within your life. That sealing you. God owns you.

That awareness. I'm His property. I'm not my own to do with me what I want to do with me.

I've been bought with a price. There's been a deposit paid. And I'm waiting for Him to redeem that which He purchased.

Oh, how rich and blessed you are to be a child of God. Nothing in the world can compare with it. The riches of loving Christ Jesus.

Far greater than gold or wealth untold. Those riches that are yours in Him. I feel like David when he said, And Lord, what shall I say to these things? I'm speechless, God.

How can I respond to God when I see that all that God has done for me? How do you respond to something like this? How do you say thank you for these kind of things? Just, thanks God, appreciate that. Sounds really too trite. How can I do less than give Him my best and live for Him completely after all He's done for me? The natural response is just that total, here it is Lord, take it.

I give it to you in the hope of the calling. The riches of the eternal kingdom of God that are mine. When you have completed your redemptive process.

God bless you. Anoint you with His Spirit. Fill you with His love.

Crown you with His glory. In Jesus' name.

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