

Day 161, Ephesians 1

by David Servant

The sermon explores the spiritual blessings we have through Jesus and Paul's prayer for the Ephesian believers to know Jesus better.

Scripture: Ephesians 1:4-5, Ephesians 1:7, Ephesians 1:9, Ephesians 1:14, Ephesians 1:17, Ephesians 1:21

Topics: "Spiritual Blessings", "Holy Living"

Description

David Servant preaches on Paul's letter to the Ephesian believers, emphasizing the spiritual blessings we have through Jesus and the importance of living a holy and blameless life. Paul highlights that God chose us based on our faith in Christ before the foundation of the world, with the intention that we would be holy. Through Jesus, we are predestined to be adopted as God's children, redeemed, and forgiven of our sins. Jesus is the center of God's future plans, and believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of our future inheritance.

Transcript

We're back into our chronological study, now around AD 61, the time when Paul penned his letter to the Ephesian believers while he was incarcerated in Rome (or perhaps Caesarea). Along with Colossians, Philippians and Philemon, the book of Ephesians is one of Paul's so-called "prison epistles," a designation which I consider to be slightly misleading. They are better described as Paul's "house arrest" letters (Acts 28:30-31).

You will recall that Paul was God's human instrument to plant His church in Ephesus, and his Spirit-empowered ministry caused quite a stir during his three-year sojourn there, culminating with a riot of thousands of Ephesians chanting for two hours in the city amphitheater, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" (Acts 19:1-41). Paul wrote this letter about seven years after that event.

This first chapter begins with lots of good information about what God has done for us through Jesus. Take note how many times you can find expressions such as, "in Christ," "in Him," "through Jesus Christ," "in the beloved," and "through His blood." There are quite a few. They are all connected to many "spiritual blessings" that are ours through Jesus.

Those spiritual blessings started long ago. Paul wrote that we were chosen (in Christ) "before the foundation of the world" (1:4). As I have written before in this daily devotional when we've come across scriptures about our being chosen, God's choosing was not arbitrary or "unconditional," but conditional. He

chose people based on their faith in Christ. Obviously, possessing foreknowledge, that is something God could do even before we were born. Most importantly, however, notice that God's great intention from before the foundation of the world was that "we would be holy and blameless before Him" (1:4). Paul was surely speaking, not of some kind of alleged "legal" holiness and blamelessness that would be bestowed on us by virtue of Jesus' sacrifice, but rather of a genuine and practical holiness and blamelessness that would characterize our lifestyles, all because of Christ.

Not only were we chosen before the world was created, but we were also predestined to be adopted as God's children through Jesus (1:5-6). Jesus' sacrifice is what made possible our redemption (1:7), a word that speaks of a ransom being paid for the release of a prisoner, and also the forgiveness of our sins (1:8). Every future plan that God has for heaven and earth revolves around Jesus, who will one day rule the whole world, His inheritance, and with whom we will rule and reign, as He shares His inheritance with us (1:9-11)! Finally, through Jesus, God sealed us with the Holy Spirit, His mark upon us, who is not only our helper, but also a down payment from God of our future inheritance (1:14).

Obviously, the church Paul founded in Ephesus had continued to grow numerically over the years, and there would have been many believers in Ephesus who would have never seen his face. Paul, of course, kept abreast of the ongoing revival in Ephesus through his extensive network (1:15), and he continually thanked God for what was happening there, and also prayed that He would grant the believers "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ" (1:17). Paul lists in 1:18-19 three specific prayer requests that he offered to that end. Those are three good prayers to pray for yourself as well as other believers. Note that they all revolved around knowing Jesus better, prayers that are a definite step above, "God please give me a better-paying job so I can afford the payments on my new hot tub!"

In keeping with those prayers for the Ephesian believers to know Jesus better, Paul reminds them of some facts about Jesus to help them know what is most important about Him, namely that He is absolute Lord. Jesus is at God's right hand, "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come" (1:21). Everything is under His feet, and He is head of the church (1:22). This describes, not American Jesus, but Bible Jesus, Lord Jesus!

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