

# (Ephesians) Ephesians 1:1-17

by Zac Poonen

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*God's primary purpose in life is to bring glory to Himself, not to bless man, and He has chosen believers before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him.*

**Duration:** 1:01:03

**Scripture:** Psalm 103:7, Psalm 119:11, Daniel 11:32, Matthew 7:24-27, Ephesians 1:3-14

**Topics:** "Christian Living", "Gods Power"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on Ephesians chapter one to three as the foundation of the Christian life. The main theme is the summing up of all things in Christ, which is God's ultimate goal. The speaker emphasizes the importance of having a clear and pure heart in order to understand the truths revealed in these chapters. The three things that believers should seek to understand are the hope of God's calling, the inheritance that God has in them, and the surpassing greatness of God's power available to believers.

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## Transcript

We'll turn today to Ephesians chapter 1, Paul's letter to the Christians at Ephesus chapter 1. This is, we could say, one of the most spiritual letters of the Apostle Paul in the entire New Testament. It reveals some of the greatest truths that were revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. And it is obviously written to a church that Paul considered spiritually minded, a mature church.

You remember when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he said, I cannot write to you as I would write to mature people, I have to write to you as babes, because you are fleshly, there's quarreling and jealousy in your midst, and I could not feed you with meat, but only with milk. But when we come to Ephesians, we're dealing with solid meat. And solid meat is not something we can just swallow.

We've got to chew on it, digest it, and receive it inside. Let me first mention some important words that come in Ephesians. The word in occurs 89 times.

In Christ is one of the great themes of Ephesians. Just like in Colossians, you have Christ in you. In Ephesians, it is you in Christ.

And that phrase in occurs 89 times. The word grace occurs 13 times. The word spiritual occurs 13 times.

The word heavenlies occurs 5 times. The word mystery occurs 5 times. The word body occurs 8 times.

And the word walk also occurs 8 times. So these are some of the important words of Ephesians. In Christ, grace, spiritual, body of Christ, walk, walk meaning our walk in the Lord.

Heavenlies, what happens in the heavenlies. And mystery. Mystery meaning something that God reveals only to the wholehearted.

So, that we could say sums up the theme of this letter of Paul to the Ephesians. It has two sections neatly divided, more neatly divided than any of Paul's letters. The first three are doctrinal, the first three chapters.

And the last three chapters are practical. And if you read the first three chapters, you don't find a single exhortation or command telling us what to do. In all those three chapters.

That's very interesting. Because a lot of Christians can never preach without giving people commandments. Telling people what to do.

But Paul could write three full chapters telling us what God did for us in Christ. Before telling us in the next three chapters what we should do in the power of the Holy Spirit for God. This is the basis.

We could say chapters 1 to 3 are the foundation. And chapters 4 to 6 are the superstructure. Now, when we try to build a superstructure of a building without laying a foundation.

That building is going to collapse one day. Just like Jesus spoke about the man who built his house on sand. He didn't have a foundation.

So, I find that a lot of Christians have problems in their Christian life. Sometimes many years later. Because they have not laid a proper foundation right at the beginning.

The foundation of Ephesians chapters 1 to 3. So, this is so, so very, very important. That I would encourage you to study through this passage carefully. These three chapters.

So that you can have a good foundation in your life. Paul calls himself an apostle of Jesus Christ. He wasn't boasting.

He was just stating a fact. It was necessary in those days for apostles to identify themselves. Because the New Testament was not written.

And therefore, Paul had to establish his authority. So that when he wrote a letter, the people would accept that as scripture. There are apostles in the world today.

Christ has given apostles to the church. We read in Ephesians 4. But today, people don't have to call themselves apostles. Because there is no need for us to establish our authority.

If we are apostles, it will be manifested in our ministry. But in Paul's case, it was necessary, as I said, to establish his authority to write scripture. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, not of his own choice.

He did not himself decide to be an apostle. None of us can decide that we are going to be this or we are going to be that. We have to accept whatever God calls us to be.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus, who are faithful in Christ Jesus. Now, today the word saint has got a very different meaning from the way Paul used it in

Ephesians 1. Today, when you talk about a saint, you think of the ones who were canonized by the Roman Catholic Church or by other churches. Or we think of someone who is a very holy, godly man whom you call a saint.

But it is not used in that way in Ephesians 1. Every single believer is referred to when Paul calls the people in Ephesus saints, the Christians in Ephesus saints. That means those who are sanctified. And sanctified only means set apart.

Set apart from the world. The day you were born again, Christ pulled you out of the world and took you out of the old Adamic tree and affixed you to himself. It was a transplantation from one tree into another.

And at that moment, you were set apart from the world, the devil, so that you could belong to Christ. And that is all that it means when a person is called a saint. One who is set apart for God.

One who now belongs to God, whereas formerly he belonged to the world and the devil. That is all that word means. The saints in Ephesus who are faithful in Christ Jesus.

Here were a group of saints who were not only born again, but who were faithful to the Lord. And like most of Paul's writings, or in fact almost all of them, he begins with a prayer that God would give grace to them. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

He begins with this specially New Testament word, grace, which was a word he loved so much because Paul was the greatest exponent of the gospel of the grace of God. That grace that enables us to have sin under our feet. Sin shall not rule over you when you are under grace, Romans 6.14. That grace Paul speaks of here.

And peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. One God, but he is referring to two of those persons here. Verse 3, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now there are some group of people who call themselves Christians today, who say that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are just one person and their name is Lord Jesus Christ. Lord referring to Father, Jesus to the Son and Christ to the Holy Spirit. Well, I would say to such people, then who is this person mentioned here in verse 3? The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That must be some type of grandfather. But that's not true. God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ means a separate person from the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the second person of the Trinity, and the Holy Spirit who is the third person of the Trinity.

Three persons, one God. We cannot explain that, just like a dog cannot explain multiplication. That's not surprising.

One into one into one is one. Try and explain that to a dog. Well, we can't understand either that one person plus one person plus one person in the Trinity is one God.

But it's true. Our mind is far inferior to God's. Far more than a dog's is to ours.

So, I'm not surprised that I can't figure out and explain the Trinity, but I believe it because it's true. God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

This is a fantastic verse. Spiritual blessings means blessings of the Holy Spirit. There are a lot of people seeking the blessings of the Holy Spirit today.

That's a good thing. Spiritual blessings as opposed to material blessings. A lot of people are seeking for the Holy Spirit's power to seek for material blessings.

It's a contradiction. The Holy Spirit has come to give us spiritual blessings. And it doesn't say here that God has blessed us with every material blessing in earthly places.

That's not what it says. And yet, that's what a lot of people think that Christianity is all about. But here it says so clearly, spiritual blessing in heavenly places, in Christ.

Now, in the Old Testament, it was different. It was material blessing in earthly places, in Moses. That's the Old Testament.

But here it is spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ. It's not on earth. God hasn't promised to bless us on earth.

That He does as a bonus. Seek the kingdom of God first and all these earthly things will be added to you. But that's not the main thing.

In the Old Testament, they sought these earthly things. Today, God's blessed us with every single blessing of the Holy Spirit. It's all put to our account.

You don't have to ask God for it. You just claim it in Jesus' name and take it. And God will give it to you.

Because it's already in your account. It's been put to your name. Blessed us with every blessing of the Holy Spirit.

What do you need? Do you need to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Go right ahead. Do you want the Holy Spirit to give you power to be a witness for Christ? Do you want the Holy Spirit to give you gifts to serve Him? Do you want the Holy Spirit to give you boldness? Do you want the Holy Spirit to give you grace, peace, joy, whatever it is? It's yours. In the heavenly places.

In Christ. I can't get it on my own. It's because Jesus has purchased it for me.

It's there in Christ for me. In the heavenlies. All I need to do is come to God and ask Him.

And say, Lord, this thing, that is mine. I need this right now. I need this virtue of Christ in my life.

I've already been blessed with it because I'm in Christ. Please give it to me, this blessing and power of the Holy Spirit, that I might live on earth as an overcomer and glorify you all the days of my life. Let's turn today to Ephesians, and chapter 1, and verse 4. Last week we were looking at verse 3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

And if you notice carefully, in verses 3 to 6, he is referring to the blessing that the Father has given us. And verses 7 to 12, he is referring to what we have in Christ. And verses 13 and 14, he is referring to the sealing of the Holy Spirit in whom we have the pledge of our inheritance.

So there we have, in those verses from 3 to 14, a reference to the whole Trinity working on our behalf. I mentioned last week that the first three chapters were doctrinal. There's no exhortation here.

There's nothing here that we are told to do. We are told of what God has already done for us. That is always God's way.

Whenever God does something, He does His work first, and then brings man into it. When God made Adam, He had already made the world in which Adam was to live, the earth and the heavens, and even the garden. And then He brought Adam into it.

And so it is with God working with us in Christ. He's done everything in Christ for us. Now, we've just got to enter in to everything that God has done, just like Adam could enter in, in Genesis chapter 2, to the blessing and benefit of everything God had done in Genesis chapter 1. So, here's another lovely verse in verse 4. Before I get there, I just want to repeat one last thing, which I said last time, that these blessings are in the heavenly places.

In other words, it's only if I take my position in Christ in the heavenlies, seeking the kingdom of heaven and not seeking earthly things first, that God can give me these blessings. God cannot give me these blessings if, like that rich young ruler who came to Christ, my heart is attached to the things of this earth. These blessings are in heavenly places.

I am not, as a disciple of Jesus, I'm not supposed to be seeking after earthly comfort, gain, prosperity, even physical health is not primary in the New Testament. It's a secondary bonus thing that God throws in for those who seek God's kingdom first. So, that's something I want to emphasize.

Every blessing of the Holy Spirit is promised to those who accept their place in Christ in the heavenlies. In fact, in Ephesians 2.6, it says there that God has seated us in Christ in the heavenlies. And that's the position from which we're supposed to live.

Now, even John the Baptist, the greatest prophet in the Old Testament time period, could not get there. None of the prophets. This is something possible for us only in Christ.

Our privileges are tremendous, but most Christians don't live according to their privileges. They live substandard lives mainly because they haven't understood, or they haven't believed what God has done for them, as mentioned here in Ephesians chapters 1 to 3. It says here in verse 4 that God chose us in Christ. Again, that phrase, in Christ.

In verse 3, in Christ. In verse 4, before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him. Now, many people think of this word, God's election or choosing us, or predestination as something which is something that sends us to heaven or to hell, irrespective of how we live.

That means it's not a question of our choice. God has chosen us to go to heaven or hell. That's a lie.

Nowhere in the Bible does it say God predestines anybody to go to heaven or to hell. What it says here, if you read carefully, is that God predestines us to the adoption as sons in verse 5. Before that, His choosing us is not to go to heaven or to hell at all. It is to be holy.

He predestined us, we read in Romans 8.29, to be conformed to the image of His Son. He predestined us, we read in Ephesians 1.5, to become His sons. He chose us before the foundation of the world, we read in

Ephesians 1.4, to be holy before Him and blameless before Him.

Not before men, but before Him. That's very important. A lot of people seek to be holy and blameless before men.

That's not why God called us. You can forget about what man thinks about your holiness and your blamelessness. God says He wants you to be holy and blameless before Him.

That's why He chose you. He didn't even choose you to go and preach the gospel. That was secondary.

He chose you, first of all, to be holy. Nowhere in the Bible does it say God chose His children to be His servants. Or He chose His children to be His witnesses, first of all.

No. Being a witness for Christ flows out of that primary calling with which God has called us to be holy and blameless before Him. And it's because a lot of people haven't seen the wonderful truths in these verses that they go off on a tangent, ignoring the primary purpose with which God chose them.

So please remember this. God chose you to be holy and blameless before Him. Secondly, notice here also when He actually chose you.

It says here He chose you before the foundation of the world. That means long ages before the worlds were created, before there was any devil, before there was any angels, before there was a Lucifer, long millions of years before Adam, when way back in eternity, when only God existed, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That's all.

In that time, if you can let your mind go back to that time, in that time, if you could look into God's mind, you'd see some names there. And you know who those names were? Mine and yours. If you're a child of God, He chose you before the foundation of the world.

That's why I'm not an afterthought with God. And if you're a child of God, neither are you. We were chosen.

That's what gives us security. I'm not a digit in some computer floating around this world. I'm chosen by God before the worlds were created.

And that's what gives me security and a sense of dignity and purpose in this world. And it's when you lose that, that you get discouraged, and the devil can sit on top of your head and make your life miserable. So don't ever lose the sense of your calling, that God chose you before the foundation of the world, in Christ.

He didn't choose you and me because of what we were, but because He knew that way down somewhere in our life we would accept Christ. And God knew that. And He placed us in Christ long before the ages were created.

Wonderful verse. And then it goes on to say, having chosen us like this, the next thing He did, in love, everything God does is in love. The last two words of verse four are an introduction to verse five, actually.

In love, He predestined us. Predestined us means He determined a destination for us. You get into a train and you got a destination.

When you're in that train, you know where you're going. There may be a lot of stations on the way, but you know what your final destination is. The Christian life is like that.

There are a lot of wonderful experiences we have along the way, like many wayside railway stations, but none of these is our destination. God may use you, bless you, give you supernatural gifts, wonderful spiritual experiences, fellowship and so many things, but these are all wayside stations. Do you know what your destination is? To be a son.

Not a child. There's a difference between a child and a son. A son of God through Jesus Christ.

Just like Jesus Himself, except for the fact that Jesus Christ is God. But in Jesus' position as a man, the way He lived on earth, that is the way God looks at us. The Bible says in John 17, 23, the Father loves us as much as He loved Jesus.

My position is unique. Your position, dear brother, sister, is unique. You may be poor, you may be despised by the world, but in Christ your position is unique.

Predestined to be a son of God, the crown prince of heaven. This is our calling. And again, this has nothing to do with anything in us.

He chose us, predestined us, according to the kind intention of His will. It was all His good pleasure. Adoption here means to be placed as sons.

Adoption, used in Ephesians 1, verse 5, does not mean adoption as we know it in the world today. Today, when you adopt a child, you are taking a child whom you did not produce. That is not your child from your body.

You picked that child up from an orphanage or somewhere else and adopted him or her into your family as your child. There is no physical connection between you and that child. Your blood does not flow in its veins.

But here, adoption means something very different. God did not adopt you and me. We were born into His family by the Holy Spirit.

But the word adoption is a word which comes from the tradition of those times, the first century, where in the Roman society, when a child came of age, at a certain age, maybe it was around 12 years old, they would have a ceremony and place him now as an heir. In Galatians 4, it speaks about children who are not heirs and sons who are heirs. That is the difference.

It says a child, if he is not an heir, he is not going to get any benefit. But an heir in Christ, this is God's will for us, to be a son, an heir in Christ. This is the kind intention of God's will for every one of us, that we might live before Him, that we might represent Him on earth.

That is God's will for us. Today we turn to Ephesians 1, verse 6. This is the concluding verse of the blessings that we were considering in our last session, that God the Father, verse 3 onwards, has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ, chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, verse 4, chose us that we should be holy before Him, in blameless, verse 4, in love predestined us to the adoption as sons, verse 5. Now, the purpose of all this, now this is where it concludes, the purpose of all this is not primarily that we should be blessed. You know, when man is self-centered, he reads

scripture as though everything is primarily that God should bless man.

Now, if you get the idea that God's primary purpose in life is to bless man, you got it all wrong. Jesus taught us to pray, Our Father who art in heaven, not bless me, but hallowed be thy name. And when we've got that right, we've got the Christian life properly centered.

So here it says, God did all these wonderful things to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the beloved. So the ultimate purpose of everything is that God may be glorified. Now, that's not because God is selfish.

That's for the salvation of created beings. If any created being gets any glory to himself, he's going to destroy himself. You need to understand this, that getting glory to yourself is the equivalent of drinking poison.

It'll kill you. Any created being, when Lucifer tried to get glory to himself, he became a devil. And if an angel became a devil seeking glory for himself, you can become like a devil too, when you seek that.

Our salvation as created beings is to make sure that no matter what we accomplish, or what gifts God has given us, or what ways in which God has made us unique and different and better than other people, or even better than other Christians, the glory goes 100% to Him. Be careful about that, and God will commit His power to you all your days. It's when people begin to touch His glory and take some of it to themselves, that God withdraws His presence and His anointing from their lives, and also, they destroy themselves.

So, here we see, God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. We say, wonderful. But hang on, that's for the praise of the glory of His grace.

Primarily. That means, every blessing I get of the Holy Spirit must be used for His glory. And not just for me to show off to other people what God's given me.

He chose me that I should be holy and blameless before Him, and when I do become holy and blameless before Him, I'm supposed to glorify Him again. And so we see here, everything is to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. Now, in the King James Version, it says here, He has made us accepted in the Beloved, which is a beautiful expression, that in Christ, He has made us accepted.

We are accepted by the Father in Christ. He has made us accepted. And it says here, in the NASB, He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, will He not also freely with Him give us all things? So we see here, everything is to the praise of the glory of His grace. Now, you find the same thing repeated again in verse 12, that we are to be the praise of His glory. And again in verse 14, to the praise of His glory.

The first part to the Father, the second to the Son, and third to the Holy Spirit. Verses 3-6 refer to what the Father has done, verses 7-12 to what the Son has done, verses 13-14 to what the Holy Spirit does. But all three are to the praise of God's glory, not for ourselves.

Then verse 7, in Christ, I was talking about the Beloved Christ in whom we are accepted, we have redemption. Redemption means we are loosed, or purchased, through His blood. The blood of Christ releases us, looses us, sets us free, purchases us, it's all involved in that word, through Christ's blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses.

That's the first thing we all need that God gives us in Christ. According to the riches of His grace. This is not because we deserve it.

The only thing we all deserve is hell. But God gives us forgiveness according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight, He made known to us the mystery of His will.

What has He lavished upon us? The riches of His grace. Grace is a word which includes all of God's power to give us, like it says in Ephesians 1.3, every spiritual blessing in heavenly places. And all these riches have been lavished.

You know, there is a richness about God. There is no stinginess or miserliness in God's pouring out His blessings upon us. He doesn't give us drops.

He gives us a downpour, showers of blessing, waterfalls of grace. That's all implied in that word riches and lavished. You don't have to go to... When you go to God, you are not going to someone who is miserly and stingy, but one who wants to lavish the riches of His grace on you.

Unless we believe that, it will be difficult for us to go to God in prayer. He lavished upon us. And then it says here, in all wisdom and insight, He made known to us the mystery of His will.

Now, Paul speaks a lot about this mystery. And here is the first occurrence of that. A mystery is a secret that cannot be known apart from divine revelation.

There is a verse in Psalm 25, 14 which says, The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him. There are some things God shouts openly. There are some things He whispers into the ears of the God-fearing.

Those are the mysteries, the secrets. The secret of godliness, for example. The mystery of how iniquity, sin works in the world.

The Bible speaks about the mystery of iniquity. The Bible speaks about the mystery Babylon. These are not obvious.

Forgiveness of sins is not a mystery. It's openly proclaimed. But there are certain things the Bible calls a mystery.

It's in the Scriptures, but even a lot of Christians haven't seen it who have seen forgiveness of sins. The baptism and fullness of the Holy Spirit, that's not a mystery. It's open.

But here it speaks about something which is a mystery. And He explains it later on in the letter. We'll just note it here, that He has made known to us the mystery of His will.

Jesus once told His disciples, I don't call you servants anymore, but I call you friends because I have revealed everything that the Father told me to you. We don't tell servants everything. We tell friends everything.

And He has made known to us these secrets of His will, of His great purpose for us. Again, that was according to His kind intention which He purposed in Christ. And listen to this.

It's a pretty long sentence, but if you begin to think of it, you'll understand it. With a view to an administration, verse 10, suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ. So, God made known to us the mystery of His will with a view to... Here was His purpose, that when the time was right, He is going to gather us all together from wherever we are, in heaven or earth, and sum up everything in Christ.

Now, the Living Bible paraphrases, He understands us so well, and He knows what is best for us at all times. That's a lovely expression. How well He understands us and knows what is best for us at all times.

If you believe that, you'd never have a complaint in your life. And His ultimate goal is to sum up everything in Christ. Do you know that everything that is in this world outside of Christ is finally going to be destroyed? Any work that you do which is outside of Christ, well, it may last a long time, but it will finally be destroyed because this verse says everything is going to be finally summed up in Christ.

So, only the things in Christ, labor for the Lord in Christ, will remain. Labor for the Lord to make money will not remain. Labor for the Lord to get glory and honor for yourself will not remain.

The fellow who you preach to may be saved, but you'll get no credit for it because you didn't do it with a good motive. But labor which is in Christ will remain. Everything is done in Christ.

And that's why we need to walk in humility and brokenness before God, seeking to be filled with the Holy Spirit at all times, that all that we do will be in Christ. That we'll never do anything which we cannot do in fellowship with Christ. For example, that you don't want to even watch a TV program which you cannot watch along with Jesus Christ.

If you feel that Christ would not watch that program, turn it off. Because that's the only thing that's going to remain. If you're serious about living a life with eternity's values in view, you better recognize this.

God's going to sum up everything in Christ, things in heaven, and things on the earth. And when He withholds something for us, it's like it says here, He understands and knows what is best for us at all times. And then it goes on to say, in Him, verse 11, last part of verse 10, verse 11, we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined, there you come to that word again, having been predestined, according to His purpose, who works all things after the counsel of His will.

We have obtained an inheritance in Christ. So, God has prepared an inheritance for us. It's not on earth, but it's in heaven.

And He has predestined us according to the purpose of His will. And He works all things after the counsel of His will. You know, God is the one who is doing the work.

And if I only cooperate with Him, that work will be completed in me. God wants to sanctify us entirely, spirit, soul, and body. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 It says in verse 24, Faithful is he who calls you, he'll do it.

But God can do that only if I permit Him. It says here, He works all things after the counsel of His will. But do you think that's automatic? It's automatic as far as the planets are concerned.

They obey God automatically. But it's not automatic as far as you and I are concerned, because you and I have to cooperate with God in that. Lord, I want to cooperate with You in Your work, as You seek to work every single thing exactly according to the counsel of Your will.

Why, to the end, that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. Again, to the praise of His glory. Nothing for ourselves.

Today we turn to Ephesians and chapter 1 and verse 13. We were looking at what God has done for us as Father and as Son. And now, verse 13, the Holy Spirit.

In Christ, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise. The apostles were very eager to ensure that everyone who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ also received the Holy Spirit and was filled with Him. This is a very important part of the gospel that they preached.

In Acts of the Apostles chapter 2 and verse 38, the way the gospel was preached the very first time on the day of Pentecost, it was like this. Peter said in Acts 2.38, Repent, each of you, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. For what? First of all, the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

So, there are three things mentioned in that verse which were the three initial foundations for every Christian. Forgiveness of sins, water baptism, and the gift of the Holy Spirit or being baptized in the Holy Spirit. So, that is what he is referring to here.

The gift of the Holy Spirit in verse 13. After listening to the message of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. So, the Holy Spirit is called here the Holy Spirit of promise because He was promised in the Old Testament.

Joel 2.28 onwards it says, in the last days, I'll pour out my Spirit on all flesh. And Peter said, on the day of Pentecost, that verse was fulfilled. The Spirit was poured out on all flesh.

And we read here that this Holy Spirit of promise came as a seal. Now, a seal is something that marks you out as belonging to someone. It's something that marks you out as a possession of some particular person.

Like timber that was cut further up a river and floated down the river. Before they floated it down, they put a seal on it when the tree was cut down as to whom it belonged to. So that when miles down the river they pick it up, they know who this particular tree trunk belongs to.

In the same way when that's how it was done in those parts in Europe, around the Mediterranean Sea, where there were those rivers and where timber was cut down. And in the same way, Jesus, when He called us, He chose us and we surrendered our life to Him. The Holy Spirit is a seal marking us out as God's own property.

We float around the world, but we're marked out as God's own property because we have the seal of the Holy Spirit upon us. Recognize your value. You're not like the other people in the world.

And also it goes on to say that this Holy Spirit has been given to us as a pledge or a down payment of that inheritance that we're going to get. Now what is the inheritance we're going to get? Well, I hope you know

we're not going to get property in heaven. We're going to get the nature of Jesus.

That's our inheritance. And I'm not interested in property in heaven. I'm interested in becoming like Christ.

That is the greatest wealth God can ever give us. Our inheritance is that one day, when we see Jesus face to face, we will be like Him. We will be conformed to His likeness.

Totally. And how do I know that? Well, here is a down payment God's given me. He's given me the Holy Spirit who has already begun to start that work.

He's already begun that work of making me a little bit like Jesus. Controlling my tongue. Controlling my eyes.

Controlling my passions. Making me love my enemies which I couldn't do before. Making me bless those who curse me which I couldn't do before.

I say, boy, the Holy Spirit's given me a down payment already. One day I'll be able to do it in fullness. But I can do a little bit of it already.

I can already manifest a little bit of the Spirit of Christ. Have you got that experience? That's how you know the Holy Spirit's in you. That you got a down payment of the inheritance.

It's like if somebody is promised to buy a certain piece of property from you. He puts down a down payment of, say, 10% and says, well, in six months' time or three months' time, I'll pay the rest and buy the property from you. And here's my guarantee.

Now, 10% can be a lot of money when it comes to real estate. And nobody would put that down unless they are serious about buying that property. So, this is the proof that God's serious about us and giving us our inheritance.

He's given us the Holy Spirit, a down payment of the full inheritance. We can't experience everything that we can experience with the Spirit's working in us, which we will experience fully in heaven, but we can have a taste of it. A taste, the Hebrew 6 says, a taste of the powers of the age to come.

That's what God gives us in the Holy Spirit. We can't have perfect health on this earth, but we can have a taste of that perfect health we will experience one day. And that's what we call healing.

We can't have that perfect praise that they have in heaven, but we can have a taste of that type of praise and worship even here on earth. We can have a taste of everything that's going to be happening in heaven one day. We can have it in fullness only that day, but a 1%, like a little teaspoon of that ocean that we are going to swim in one day, a little teaspoon of that we can taste right now in every area because of the Holy Spirit who is the down payment, who is the pledge of our inheritance with a view to the redemption of God's own possession.

Let me read this to you in the Living Bible. God's Holy Spirit's presence within us is God's guarantee that He really will give us all that He has promised. And the Spirit's seal upon us means that God has already purchased us.

And He guarantees to bring us to Himself. And this is just one more reason for us to praise our glorious God. This too is for the praise of His glory.

So even this, you know, that the Holy Spirit makes us partake of God's nature a little bit even right now, that's for the praise of His glory. So we saw that three times in this passage, to the praise of His glory in verse 6, to the Father, and verse 12, to the Son, and here in verse 14, to the Holy Spirit. Now we move on to the second section of this chapter, beginning at verse 15.

Here we read, for this reason, Paul says, since God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have done these wonderful things for us, when I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I never stopped giving thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers. So what does he say? He says, I heard of two things in you folks there in the church in Ephesus. One, your faith in the Lord Jesus.

And second, the other side of the same coin, linked to it, your love for all the saints. Now I believe these are two things which are fundamental in the Christian life. There's a verse in Galatians 5 which says, circumcision is nothing, uncircumcision is nothing, but only faith, which works through love.

We can say, everything else is nothing, but faith which works through love is fundamental. So what are the things that should be primary in our life? Faith in Christ Jesus. Verse 5, in the Lord Jesus.

Faith that He loves me, He cares for me, He will protect me, He will never leave me, He will never forsake me, He will stand by me through thick and thin, He will see me through any trial, temptation, anything. He is on my side against the devil. Even when I have failed, He will never let me down.

Even if I reach rock bottom, He will still love me. Faith in the Lord Jesus. That's faith.

He knows every detail of what's happening to me, He works everything together for my good. He will never allow me to be tested beyond my ability. Since He has given Himself to me, He will give everything else.

He will provide all my need according to His riches in glory. Faith. That's faith.

He will give me power to overcome sin. He will put the devil under my feet. That's faith.

Along with that, love for all the saints, not just for those few saints who sit in my little group or in my little denomination, but love for all the saints. Now, that's a very difficult thing. With great effort, you may be able to love the people in your own little group, but if you want to love all the saints, I tell you, you need to be filled with the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts.

So, faith in the Lord Jesus and love for all the saints. Paul heard about this. And it's a wonderful thing.

If other people hear about us too, that we have faith in the Lord Jesus and love for all the saints. And he says, because I heard this, I don't cease to give thanks for you making mention of you in my prayers. There are two things that Paul did for the Christians in Ephesus.

He prayed for them and he gave thanks for them. Two good habits to practice in relation to other believers. Lord, we want to pray for these people.

We can't pray for all the believers in the world. We can't pray for all the saints in the world. But the few whom God gives you a burden for, certainly your own family first, for whom God has given you responsibility, and others who are close to your heart, whom God places upon your heart, that you carry them before the Lord in prayer and give thanks for them.

Many of us pray for other believers. Very few give thanks for other believers. Paul did both.

He says, I give thanks for you while making mention of you in my prayers. That's how we lived and that's how we are to live too. Let's turn today to Ephesians 1, verse 17.

Now, here we read the prayer of the Apostle Paul. Verses 17 to 23 is one of the most spiritual prayers you can ever read in the whole Bible. There are two prayers the Apostle Paul mentioned in Ephesians.

One is here, Ephesians 1, verse 17 to 23. He tells us exactly, specifically what he prayed for the Ephesian Christians. And the other is from chapter 3, verse 14 to 21.

In the first one, he prays that the Ephesian Christians will have the wisdom and revelation of the Holy Spirit. And the second prayer, he prays that they will have the power of the Holy Spirit to show forth the love of Christ. So the first prayer refers to an inner knowledge.

And the second prayer in Ephesians 3 refers to an outworking that comes out of that inner revelation. Two wonderful prayers. It's good for us to study them in detail.

Ephesians 1, verse 17. His first prayer is that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. Now, every word here is so rich.

We need to think about this. God is called here the Father of glory. And He prays that this Father of glory will give to us a spirit of wisdom and revelation and knowledge of Him.

He goes on to say how we should know the hope of His calling. And the point of it is that this Father who dwells in this tremendous glory, which He did not even share with the angels, He wants to communicate that glory to us, His children in Christ. Amazing! It's unbelievable.

If it were not in the Bible, we could not even dream of it. That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you revelation on this fact. Wisdom and revelation.

The spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God. Just think of that expression. The spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God.

These are some of the most important things that Christians need to experience in these days. All through the Holy Spirit. Number one, wisdom.

Wisdom is more than knowledge. Wisdom is how to apply knowledge. Wisdom is to know how to handle a particular situation, what to do when you are facing a particular problem.

Wisdom, to know how to walk, how to conduct yourself. That's wisdom. The spirit of wisdom God gives us so that we don't act like fools on the earth.

We act wisely. Revelation refers to God opening up the mysteries of Scripture to our minds and our hearts that we begin to see things in Scripture which ordinary people just don't see. God, the Holy Spirit, gives us revelation into the inner meaning of Scripture and also gives us wisdom in our daily life.

Tells us how we are to live on this earth. He gives us wisdom and revelation. He also gives us the knowledge of the Father.

He reveals to us what God is like. What Christ would do in a particular situation. That's how He shows us Jesus Christ.

And He doesn't show that to everybody. He shows it only to those who are eager to know. If you are eager in a particular situation to know what would Jesus do in this situation, the Holy Spirit will show it to you.

But if you are not so keen on knowing what Jesus would do in that situation, the Holy Spirit won't show it to you. It's that simple. And that's why a lot of believers never see what the Lord wants them to do.

And there are a few who see it very clearly. Why the difference? Because some are eager. And some are not.

Some thirst for this revelation and cry out to God for it. They cry out for wisdom. Like it says in the book of Proverbs, they hunger and thirst for wisdom.

And they seek for wisdom as they seek for hidden treasures and for gold and silver. And they find it. So, the Holy Spirit gives that wisdom to them.

So, the Holy Spirit is called here the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the knowledge of God. All our earthly life can fulfill God's purpose in a wonderful, perfect way only if we know Him. There's a lot of difference between knowing about God and knowing God.

Just like there's a lot of difference between knowing about the president of a country and knowing the president of that country personally. You can know about a king and not know the king. You can know about Jesus and not know Jesus.

You can know about God the Father and yet not know Him as a Father. The Holy Spirit has come to give us the knowledge of God. It says when the Spirit of God comes within us, He cries out, Abba! Father! It's the Holy Spirit that makes me aware of the fact that I have a Father in heaven.

That God is a loving Father. You can hear any amount of teaching on it, but it's the Holy Spirit alone who can reveal to you and give you that knowledge of God as a good, loving, kind God who gives you commands for your good. A lot of people think that God's commands are so burdensome.

That's because they don't know God. If you knew God, you'd discover that God's commands are not a burden at all. They're all for your good.

So this is what we need to seek for. Paul says, I pray. I do not cease to pray that God will give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation and the knowledge of Him.

So if Paul prayed so much for the Ephesians in this particular matter, don't you think it's a good idea if you and I pray for ourselves at least? Lord, give me the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Yourself. I want that in my life because that's going to be the foundation for my life, to know You. And from my knowledge of You, I can go forth to serving You.

The Bible says in Daniel chapter 11 and verse 32, speaking about the last days, it says there that the people who know their God will be strong and do exploits and do wonderful things for God. It flows out of a knowledge of God. There's a verse also in Psalm 103 which says, it's a very interesting verse, it says in Psalm 103 verse 7 that God made known His actions, His external actions to the children of Israel, but He made known His ways to Moses.

So, God revealed His inner ways and purposes and reasons for doing things to Moses, but all the rest of the children of Israel, all they saw were God's actions. And there's a lot of difference between God's ways

and God's actions. God doesn't reveal His ways to everybody.

He reveals His actions to a lot of people. Even to unbelievers can see the miracles of God. And when a believer is more interested in seeing God's external actions than knowing His ways, you know where that believer stands.

He's a pretty immature believer. Like the children of Israel were in the wilderness. God revealed His ways only to Moses.

So, that's why the knowledge of God is so important. Jesus said in John 17, 3 this is eternal life that they might know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. How would you define eternal life? Do you think eternal life means a life that never ends? No.

Jesus said eternal life is to know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. So, the whole purpose of eternal life where God communicates His life to us eternal means something that has no beginning and has no end. It's referring to the life of God.

And when that life is communicated to us it gives us a knowledge of God. And that's the greatest thing of all to know God. Make that the passion and the pursuit of your life.

To know God personally intimately. And the Holy Spirit has come for that purpose. And Paul prayed for that.

You can't have it without praying for it. And he goes on to say I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened. Again, the Holy Spirit enlightens or gives revelation to our heart.

Now, there's a lot of difference between knowing something in our mind and knowing something in our heart. Heart refers to the deepest part of man, his spirit. And I can know something in my mind and yet not know it in my heart.

Paul is not praying that I might understand this by study. Paul doesn't say to the Ephesians, now read what I've written about ten times and you'll understand it. Now, you can say that about a chemistry book or a physics book, perhaps.

Or a history book. But you can't say that about scripture. You can read it a hundred times and you may not understand it.

This is not being written for the mind, it's being written for the heart. You remember what David said in Psalm 119? Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee. So, it's when God's word is in my heart that I'm protected from sin.

God's word in my mind only makes me know as much of the Bible as the devil does. He's got all of God's word in his mind. But here it speaks that the eyes of our heart may be enlightened.

So, concentrate on your heart, brother and sister. See that your heart is clear, clean, pure. Then you can understand things there which other people in the world can never understand.

He says, I pray that when your heart is enlightened, you will understand three things. The hope of God calling you, why in the world God called you, that's the first thing you need to know. And secondly, not your inheritance in heaven in Christ, that we already considered in verse 11.

This is the reverse of that. And it's an amazing truth. The inheritance that God has in you.

God's getting an inheritance in you. And thirdly, the tremendous power, the surpassing greatness, verse 19, of the power of God that is available to all who believe. God wants every one of us to know these three things.

And this is what we should be praying for, that God will give us such a revelation in our hearts.

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