

An Explication of Ephesians 1

By Bishop-Elect Derrick E. Day

Introduction

In the epistle of Ephesians, the Apostle Paul is writing to the Church at Ephesus regarding the believer's position; that is that if the believer is in Christ, he is seated in heavenly places with Him and, therefore, all principalities and powers are under the believer's feet because they are under Christ's (1:22).

The book of Ephesians is rich in its illustrations of the Body of Christ, the duties of believers, and the Governmental offices of the church. Chapter one, which is the focus of this essay, deals with many of the concepts of life in Christ and, as a precursor to the remainder of the letter, is equally rich, conceptually speaking. For the purposes of this discussion, I will focus on choice and predestination, redemption and acceptance, revelation, inheritance, and protection.

Choice and Predestination

Following his introduction, Paul proceeds to inform the Church of God's choosing and predestinating (v. 4 and 5). This is concept made complex, theologically, as it is frequently touted to support the doctrine of election. However, it is very simple once understood. In verse 4, Paul indicates to the reader that God has chosen us "from the foundation of the world." Indeed, God has chosen to save all but all do not accept His salvation. This is easily reconciled in John 3:16, where the beloved Apostle writes "For God so loved the *world...*" (emphasis mine), not the believer or the elect – as some suppose – but all men. Verse 5 speaks of predestination of adoption. Again, this is easily misconstrued by doctrinal distortion: Paul is simply conveying to the reader that God has a purpose and a plan for all men. I Peter 3:9 puts it thusly:

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness: but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

God makes it abundantly clear throughout His Word that He desires that all accept His salvation through Jesus even though many reject it. These verses support the understanding of God's overarching plan insofar as the salvation of man is concerned.

Redemption and Acceptance

Through sin, man created a condition whereby God had to create a chasm between His Holy Self and fallen man to keep Him from destroying the very being created in His own image and likeness. Because man was sinful and could no longer stand in the presence of a Holy God, he was – for all practical purposes – rejected. However God's plan of the ages was already in motion. In the fullness of time, He sent His only begotten Son into the world to save *that* which was lost – the Kingdom of God and the original dominion of man – thereby restoring man into right relationship and fellowship with God.

Verse 7 indicates "we have redemption through the blood" of Jesus Christ. That word "redemption" is neither a religious nor a theological term, rather, it is a *financial* term. Reconciliation is a term used when an asset that had been "off the books" in accounting terms has been restored. Romans 3:25 calls the

sacrifice of Jesus on the cross a propitiation for our sins. In other words, Jesus' blood was the payment required to purchase man back from sin. When man sinned, he fell from liberty in God into bondage to the world's (satan's) system. Through the redemption by the blood of Jesus, our sins are forgiven – that means the sin debt is cancelled for all who believe on the Name of Jesus. Because we are redeemed, we are set free from the curse of sin, restored into right standing with the Father and, instead of living in rejection, are now “accepted in the beloved” (verse 6). Simply put, this means we have access to the throne of Grace (Hebrews 4:16) and because we are made the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:21), we are now in right-standing or acceptable in God's sight. This imputed righteousness cannot be attained through religion but only through a personal relationship with God through the person of Jesus Christ.

Revelation and Inheritance

In verse 8, Paul explains how God has “abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence.” Here the Apostle is speaking of the revelation of God's will to the believer by the Holy Spirit. God has given us access to all wisdom and, moreover, he provided us with prudence – which is the practical application of wisdom. The believer is promised the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16, Philippians 2:5), which is a promise of access to the unsearchable riches of the wisdom of God. Now, does this suggest that we know what God knows? Heaven forbid! What it does suggest is that, by asking (James 1:5), the believer will receive the wisdom of God pertaining to any situation he or she may face.

In verse 9, Paul speaks of God “having made known the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in himself.” It is clear that God wishes to make His will known to the His saints (Ephesians 5:17) because it is by understanding His will that we are able to walk in His precepts. Many folks will say, religiously, “you cannot understand the will of God.” This is borne of a lack of understanding. God makes His will known through His Word and by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. His will is only hidden from unbelievers because they have no relationship with Him and, therefore cannot receive a revelation from Him.

It is important to understand this because it is by wisdom that we glean truth from verse 10 the revelation of the fullness of time when He gathers together all things in Christ. The fullness of time was manifest when God wrapped His Word in flesh in the person of Jesus (John 1:1, Galatians 4:4) and the time of gathering commenced when Jesus began His earthly ministry.

Verse 18 reveals that when the eyes of our enlightenment – that is, our spiritual eyes – are opened, we will know the hope of his calling – or our divine purpose. Once the believer has his eyes opened, he can now receive his divine assignment, which will lead him into his divine destiny. Purpose, assignment, and destiny are the result of revelation truth – truth that only comes from abiding in the Lord and His Word abiding in us.

Revelation is important because without understanding the vastness of our inheritance in Christ, we are apt to squander it, much like the Prodigal Son in Luke 15.

Saints of God do, indeed, have an inheritance (verse 11)! And notice, the text does not refer to future tense but *past* tense. When Jesus gave up His earthly life, He gave us the promise of the Comforter; the Holy Spirit. That same Holy Spirit, according to verse 14, is the *earnest* of our inheritance. Note, again, that this is a financial term referring to “pledge” or “deposit,” which the purchaser remits to indicate sincere intent. This is why most real estate transactions begin with an “earnest money” payment. This means that our salvation and the receipt of the Holy Spirit are the glorious beginning of incalculable blessings for us from our Heavenly Father. This inheritance is understood in the Greek word “sozo,” which has a four-fold meaning:

- Salvation from sin
- Deliverance from demonic oppression
- Bodily health and healing
- Material blessing

The believer has more than just the promise of a joyous afterlife; there is the promise of abundant life in the here-and-now (John 10:10)! We are joint heirs with Jesus and heirs to the promises of Abraham!

Protection and Placement

Paul also refers to our protection in Christ. Verse 13 says we are “sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” Think of this in terms of a brand new hardwood floor. Once the planks have been cut to fit the dimensions of the room, they are then sanded smooth – but they aren’t ready to be walked upon. Once the craftsman is satisfied with the smoothness of the flooring – which reveals its natural beauty, he then seals it with a finishing agent. This finishing agent not only seals the floor against impact and the elements of its environment, it also magnifies the beauty within! The Holy Spirit magnifies the Christ in us and puts it on display for the world to see.

Another example is, when a car engine is assembled, seals are strategically placed in areas subject to internal and external stresses. These seals have the critical function of keeping the lubrication inside the engine. The Holy Spirit is also represented by oil – once you receive Him, you are sealed to keep Him inside you! Therefore, the Holy Spirit keeps what is deposited within you in you and protects you to keep the world outside from getting in you!

Because we are protected, we are also properly placed. God, in His infinite wisdom, seated His only begotten Son at His right hand in heaven when He raised Jesus from the dead. But, before Jesus left the earth, He instructed us to abide in Him and His Word to abide in us. As we are in Christ, we are seated with Him in heavenly places and that which is under His feet (verse 22) is, in turn, under our feet. That is good news! Everything we think is hanging over our head is, in reality, under our feet.

This protection, or sealing, is tied back to the earnest deposit made for our redemption in the person of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 1:22). We are sealed against the wickedness of the world and the wiles of the devil. The new birth causes not only eternal life, but also a change in citizenship. The saint of God is a citizen of a higher nation. This higher nation also has not only a superior economy, but also a superior fighting force. We are in the world but not of the world, therefore when the devil rushes in, God has already raised up a standard against him in the person of Jesus! Jesus has been raised above every

government and every power on earth (verse 20) and we've been given power of attorney to speak His Holy Name to anything that is not in alignment with the Word of God.

God has chosen to channel His power through those who believe (verse 19). Indeed the same power that raised Jesus from the dead dwells in us (Romans 8:11). He has promised that He will do exceeding abundantly above all we could ever ask or think, according to the power that works *in us* (Ephesians 3:20).

Conclusion

Ephesians 1 is filled with wonderful explanations of the believer's placement, protection, inheritance, revelation, acceptance, and redemption. All of these are manifestations of the new birth and are promises to the citizen of the Kingdom of God. Moreover, our sins are forgiven by the finished work of Jesus on the cross. The Apostle Paul's introduction to the church at Ephesus is a powerful prelude to one of the most instructional books of the Bible. It is the contention of this author that, if the believer internalizes and acts upon what God is revealing through Paul, he or she will take big steps toward what God has purposed and planned for them.

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