

PREVIEW OF EPHESIANS

The Book of Ephesians lies especially close to the heart of believing Gentiles. Although they were once “strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world,” they are now incorporated with the believing Jews as “fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” This epistle highlights the privileges and the responsibilities of the New Testament church. In contrast to many of the other epistles, Ephesians contains no words of rebuke or correction. Rather, believers who already were enjoying “all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” are encouraged to appreciate and to appropriate “the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

The theme of this great epistle is the church, the body of Christ. Colossians, a companion epistle, focuses on Christ, the Head of the church. In Ephesians 1-3, Paul paints a panoramic view of the New Testament church as the fulfillment of God’s eternal purposes. Significantly, the tone of these chapters is not didactic but inspirational. The important key word riches focuses the attention on the spiritual possession of the believers. Paul writes of “the [exceeding] riches of his grace” (1:7; 2:7), “the riches of . . . glory” (1:18; 3:16), and “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (3:8). These chapters breathe a heavenly atmosphere, as revealed by the repetition of “in [the] heavenly places” (1:13, 20; 2:6; 3:10). The repetition of together further emphasizes the great privilege of those who are gathered “together in one . . . in Christ” (1:10; also see 2:5-6, 22). Chapters 4-6 translate the heavenly atmosphere of lofty spiritual possessions into practical instructions for a holy earthly walk. Significantly, these chapters contain numerous imperative verbs. The important key word walk focuses attention on the daily conduct of the believers. Christians are called to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith [they] are called” (4:1), to “walk not as other Gentiles walk” (4:17), to “walk in love” (5:2), to “walk as children of light” (5:8), and to “walk circumspectly” (5:15). The closing note of the epistle calls the believer to strength and faithfulness in the great battle of life. The church can fill her lofty calling and enjoy the spiritual blessings only as she overcomes spiritual wickedness “in the power of [the Lord’s] might.” The believer can walk worthy of his vocation only as he is clad in “the whole armour of God.”

Chosen in Christ**Lesson Scope:** [Ephesians 1](#)

References in brackets relate to Lesson Scope unless noted otherwise

Lesson Focus

Ephesus was a centre of idol worship and an important city in the Roman Empire. Paul had spent more time at Ephesus than in any other city on his missionary journeys, preaching the Gospel. He desired that the Gospel would prevail, and that Ephesus would be an influence for the truth. Approximately five years had passed since he had parted from the Ephesian elders (Acts 20). He rejoiced and gave thanks for the reports he had heard of them (1:15-16) and desired that they could experience the fullness of God's blessing. This letter is addressed to "the faithful in Christ Jesus" (1:1). We also live in a wicked world. Only by God's help can we "be holy and without blame before him" (1:4). God designed the New Testament church "before the foundation of the world." Those who identify with Christ and His church enjoy "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

The first chapter of Ephesians is a spiritual mind stretch in which the apostle Paul tries to help us comprehend our blessings in Christ. We all need to count our blessings at times to inspire our souls, even in the natural duties of life. How much more in the spiritual realms of the soul. Read the lesson scope several times and try to catch Paul's enthusiasm as he marvels at God's grace and forgiveness, the inheritance of the saints, and other marvels of God's perfect plan of salvation for mankind.

Lesson Aim:

To evaluate the privileged position of the New Testament church.

Theme Verse:

[2 Thessalonians 2:13](#). But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

Lesson Text:

Accepted

Ephesians 1:1-6^(KJV) Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

² Grace *be* to you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: ⁴ According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

⁵ Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶ To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Redeemed

Ephesians 1:7-14^(KJV) In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; ⁸ Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; ⁹ Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: ¹⁰ That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him: ¹¹ In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: ¹² That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. ¹³ In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Enlightened

Ephesians 1:15-23^(KJV) Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, ¹⁶ Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; ¹⁷ 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: ¹⁸ The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe,

according to the working of his mighty power, ²⁰ Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*, ²¹ Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: ²² And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, ²³ Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Questions for Study

Accepted

1. What attributes of God are revealed in His provision of salvation?
2. What actions on the part of a believer make him “accepted in the beloved”?

Redeemed

3. Name the steps that lead the sinner to find redemption in Christ.
4. What does the gathering “together in one all things in Christ” refer to?
5. In What way can the Christian be “to the praise of his glory”?
6. What does it mean to be sealed by the Holy Spirit?

Enlightened

7. Describe the position that God has given to Jesus Christ.
8. What does the enlightened Christian understand now that was previously darkness?

Analysing the Passage

Predestinated (1:5,11) in the Greek means “beforehand, to mark out definitely, determine.” Predestination means God has set the boundaries beforehand that distinguish a person as one of His children. This refers more to how one is saved than to who is saved. “Whosoever believeth in [Jesus]” can be born again (John 3:16).

The mystery (1:9) refers not to the mysterious but to that which cannot be naturally understood without divine revelation. God had not previously revealed that the Gentiles could be saved without keeping the Jewish Law.

Dispensation (1:10) refers not to a period of time but signifies a particular arrangement ordained by the providence of Almighty God. It is the plan by which God has provided salvation for a lost world. All believers are gathered into one church with Jesus as Head.

Sealed (1:13) refers to a stamp or signet. Being sealed with the Holy Spirit indicates ownership, security, and destination. The destination is the promise (1:13) and the day of redemption (4:30).

Principles and Applications

Accepted

1. God has chosen and blessed the church with all spiritual blessings (1:3-4). “Many are called, but few are chosen.” Those who are chosen are those whose fruits bear witness that they are the children of God. To them the church is a foretaste of “heavenly places.” There they find acceptance, love, and a place of service.
2. God has predetermined that we can be adopted and become children of God (1:5-6). God worked through Jesus Christ a plan to bring “many sons unto glory.” It is only through the will of God and the grace of God that any man can become one of the children of God. Men and women from every blood and nation can become part of God’s church.

Redeemed

3. Man is redeemed through the shed blood of Jesus Christ (1:7-8). God’s abounding wisdom has provided the only way for man to overcome his bent to do evil. As he views his crucified Saviour, he falls on his face and seeks forgiveness for past sins and grace to live in victory.
4. God has revealed His mystery in giving all men equal privileges of being chosen in Christ to salvation (1:9-10). The bringing in of the Gentiles was a spiritual mystery to the believing Jews. Today we also marvel at God’s great plan that brings together His church from all comers of the earth and heaven.
5. God has designed that Christians are to receive an inheritance (1:11-12). The Christian’s inheritance is not earthly but heavenly. This inheritance is worked out according to “the counsel of his own will” and has to do with us bringing praise to His glory in a land of eternal glory. Glory to His name!
6. God has given the Holy Spirit as a down payment (or earnest) of the future redemption of both body and soul (1:13-14). The Christian’s heavenly inheritance waits for life beyond this life, but there is given to the Christian the stamp of God’s ownership. Can those around us see that we have the Spirit of God?

Enlightened

7. God gives wisdom and enlightenment through the exercise of faith and prayer (1:15-19). The Christian, who has his sight set on eternal values, understands things the carnal man cannot perceive—the origin of man, the end of life, and life beyond this life. Carnal man in his darkened state has a distorted view of spiritual things.

8. The same power that raised Christ enables the church to be victorious (1:19-22). God planned that the Christian on earth can experience God's power to live above sin. Have you received the help of His power "to us-ward who believe" to find victory in your life?

9. The church experiences complete fullness now with Christ as the Head (1:22-23). Without the Head there is no life and no direction. Without the members there is no body. "The church . . . is his body, the fulness of him that fills all in all." What a privilege to be a part of this glorious mystery!

Important Teachings

1. God has chosen and blessed the church with all spiritual blessings (1:3-4).

2. God has predetermined that we can be adopted and become children of God (1:5-6).

3. Man is redeemed through the shed blood of Jesus Christ (1:7-8).

4. God has revealed His mystery in giving all men equal privileges of salvation (1:9-10).

5. God has designed that Christians are to receive an inheritance (1:11-12).

6. God has given the Holy Spirit as a down payment (or earnest) of the future redemption of both body and soul (1:13-14).

7. God gives wisdom and enlightenment through the exercise of faith and prayer (1:15-19).

8. The same power that raised Christ enables the church to be victorious (1:19-22).

9. The church experiences complete fullness now with Christ as the Head (1:22-23).

Answers to Questions

1. What attributes of God are revealed in His provision of salvation? God's predestination shows His omniscience. His love is seen in the giving of His Son. The riches of His grace and His forgiveness are extended to man. His sovereignty and omnipotence overshadow all.

2. What actions on the part of a believer make him "accepted in the beloved"? We are "accepted in the beloved" when we have received of His grace and are bringing glory to Jesus Christ and His church. We will have fervent love for our brethren and be united with them in faith and practice.

3. Name the steps that lead the sinner to find redemption in Christ. He must understand why Christ needed to shed His blood to atone for sin. He must acknowledge personal sin and the need for forgiveness. He must have faith in the atoning Work of Christ. Finally, he must repent and surrender to the lordship of Christ.

4. What does the gathering "together in one all things in Christ" refer to? It refers to the gathering in of the church at Christ's second coming. At that time, the saints on earth will join with the redeemed of all ages in eternal glory.

5. In what way can the Christian be "to the praise of his glory"? When We experience "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace," we become a testimony to God's wonderful grace. An ongoing life of victory attests to His power. And finally, in heaven we will be a part of the redeemed of all ages who will sing of His glory eternally.

6. What does it mean to be sealed by the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is given to believers as a gift to benefit them in their new walk as children of God. The Holy Spirit gives the believer the power to overcome sin and live-in victory. Having the Holy Spirit gives a mark (seal) of identity that denotes that the believer belongs to God. The presence of the Holy Spirit is a down payment, or earnest, (1:14) toward a future inheritance to be given to the believer.

7. Describe the position that God has given to Jesus Christ. Jesus is given a place in heaven at God's right hand. God has also given Jesus dominion over the powers of the spirit world and over every man on earth. God has given Him to be the Head over all things in the church.

8. What does the enlightened Christian understand now that was previously darkness? The “hope of his calling.” “The riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.” “The exceeding greatness-of his power.” The origin of man. The end of life and what lies beyond this life and much deeper Bible truth.

Summarizing the Lesson

Paul could write on the subject of spiritual blessings because he knew what he had been delivered from. He also knew the change that took place in his life when he allowed God to lead him. And he knew God’s plan for the Jew and how a new dispensation had been brought in through Jesus Christ. We want to have a renewed appreciation for what God has provided for us through Jesus Christ. There is a younger generation who must be taught about God’s wonderful plan.

Research Guide.

1. Study thoroughly the subject of predestination. It is imperative that we understand this terminology as the Scriptures use it and avoid all Calvinistic heresy. "
2. Seek to understand the New Testament use of adoption. This is best accomplished by looking at adoption practices of that time, not at present-day practices.