



EPHESIANS 1: 11 - 23

Background

We continue our series of studies on the letter of Ephesians, from verses 11 to 23 which begins to look at God's purpose and power.

The Message

Verse 11

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the Jewish nation were the chosen people of God. Here we begin to realize how this is now a designation that is in part transferred from the Jews to Christians (read the Book of Ruth if you want some insight into this). It is only in relationship to Christ that there is a meaningful future destiny, since Christ is the centre of God's plan. The literal sense of being chosen in verse 11 is that of a heritage or a private possession - an inheritance. We have said elsewhere in our studies how divine election is a constant theme in Paul's letters (cf Romans 8:29-33; 9:6-26; 11:5,7,28; 16:13; Colossians 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Titus 1:1).

Verse 12

Like the first believers, our response upon the realization of our heritage should be to set our trust in Christ, living so that we might be to the praise of His glory. The glory of God is His own purpose, and it should be ours in all that we do. Isn't it incredible to think that we are heirs in Christ, and have the privilege and opportunity to glorify God?

Verses 13-14

Paul continues by saying that like the first believers the Ephesians should:

- i. Hear the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation.
- ii. Believe in Jesus Christ.
- iii. Recognise that they have been marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit.

We too must follow Paul's instruction and guidance, since his words are equally applicable to us today as believers.

The seal of the Holy Spirit denotes ownership, and shows:

- i. The pledge of our inheritance.
- ii. Our redemption as God's own people.



Our possession of the Holy Spirit is not only evidence of our present salvation, but is also a pledge of our future inheritance - and not only a pledge but also the down payment on that inheritance, paid for in full by the blood of Jesus Christ. (See also Romans 8:23).

How can we respond except in praise of His glory?

Verses 15-19

Paul commends the Ephesians because of their faith in the Lord Jesus and their love towards all the saints. Their faith and love had obviously made a huge impact, and Paul had heard about it. It is because of this that Paul did not cease to give thanks for them in prayer. It is good to have faith and love, but Paul prayed specifically that God would build upon that faith and love by giving to them “*a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him*”. In our other studies we have looked at faith, hope and love. In these verses we again encounter them, and realize how fundamentally important and foundational they are. To summarise:

- i. Paul had heard of the faith and love of the Ephesians (v15).
- ii. This inspires Paul to give thanks for them and pray without ceasing (v16).
- iii. However, Paul encourages the Ephesians to build on that faith and love (v17).
- iv. Paul prays that the Ephesians will have a spirit of wisdom and revelation (v17).

This reveals the basic direction and the vision that Paul had for the Ephesians. It is important to see in this that Paul constantly encouraged the Ephesians to grow but never left them isolated, supporting them in powerful and unceasing prayer. Likewise we should encourage each other to grow, and support one another in prayer.

In verse 18 we see why this is so important, both to Paul and the spiritual maturity and growth of the Ephesians. It is the combination of faith, love, wisdom and revelation that will:

- i. Enlighten the eyes of their hearts.
- ii. So that they may know the hope to which they have been called.
- iii. So that they may also know the riches of “*the surpassing greatness of His power toward us, the ones believing*”- (v19).

All of which is a result of, or “*according to the working of His mighty strength*” (v19).

Verses 20-23

The whole focus is now on the things of God, and we shift from Paul’s vision to God’s much wider vision:

- i. It was God’s mighty strength that “*worked in Christ in raising Him from the dead*” (v20).
- ii. It was God’s mighty strength that “*seated Him at His right hand in heavenly*



regions”(v20).

We see the significance of this in the remaining verses (v21-v23).

We are given a glimpse of heaven in which we see:

- i. God’s authority over **ALL** things.
- ii. God’s relationship with His church.

Questions

1. It is a constant challenge to us all to become aware of God’s purpose and power. We are often so buffeted by our experiences in the world. Spend a few moments reflecting on these verses and identify any that speak to you in particular.
2. What do you think it means to have “*a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him*”?
3. How might this be applied in your life?