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EPHESIANS 1:1-14

We begin a short study today in the book of *Ephesians*. I'm excited about it. And as we always like to do...let's set a little background and history for this book.

The writer was the Apostle Paul, and we see that in the very first verse. The letter was written around 62 A.D. to the church at Ephesus.

Ephesus was a church in Asia Minor in a region that is present day Turkey. Ephesus was at the very heart of the Roman Empire and it was second only to the city of Rome in that day. Ephesus was truly one of the great cities of the world, and it contained one of the seven wonders of the world...

The Temple of Diana was the largest Greek temple ever built. It was 4 times larger than the Parthenon. Inside this beautiful temple was the idol statue of Diana.

A flourishing trade was carried on in the city. Silversmiths manufactured silver shrines or models of the temple. Everyone who visited Ephesus took home one of these souvenirs. And we know from the book of *Acts* that these statues were a very lucrative business in Ephesus.

It was to this idolatrous city that Paul came, determined to preach the Lord Jesus Christ.

Remember that Paul was called by God as the apostle to the Gentiles, but he also knew that ***“the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”***

And because of this, Paul did what he always did...he went first to the synagogue there and preached to the Jews...and he spoke there for three months (*Acts 19:8*) ***“reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.”***

After three months, Paul met with opposition from the Jews and he left the synogogue, but he remained in Ephesus and continued teaching there for two full years!

And *Acts 19* tells us that during these two years ***“all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.”***

The people of Ephesus heard more Bible teaching from Paul than any other people and many Bible scholars believe the gospel was more effective in that area than in any other place and at any time in the history of the world.

We're going to see great spiritual truths in this book. And in seeing great spiritual truths, we're going to understand how spiritual these folks were. I mean, Paul would not have written great spiritual truths that were beyond their ability to understand.

Paul knew the depth of the commitment to the Lord Jesus of these people and he knew the teachable spirits of these people.

Paul knew, even in this pagan city of Ephesus, where worship of idols and commerce in idols flourished, that God could and had done a mighty work!

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And let me just say this here...

The Bible is such a wonderful book...so rich...so full of great truths God wants us to know! We may not understand completely everything it contains, but that should never stop us from searching and digging.

God has told us His word won't return void. And I believe that God honors diligent study. I believe if you have a **little** hunger for God's word, He'll give you a **deeper** hunger.

I don't believe God is pleased with a "surface," "hit or miss," "catch as catch can" reading of His dear word. I believe when we consider God's word more than our necessary food, we'll truly be fed by it!

So, I said that to simply say this...I want to encourage you to study **Ephesians...diligently and seriously with commitment.**

Paul wrote this book to reveal to the Ephesians who they really were in Christ Jesus and the riches that were theirs in Christ Jesus.

And he would have us know the same thing. God has called us to be His children and He has special riches and blessings for us and He wants us to know what they are!

By the way...let me say one more thing about this letter. Paul was in a Roman prison when he wrote it. And even though Paul was on trial for his life, he was concerned about the spiritual needs of all the churches he had founded.

So, with that in mind...let's get right to it...

Ephesians 1:1-2...

Paul was an **apostle**... **"one sent with a commission"...**

There are no apostles today as there were in the New Testament. Not only were the apostles in the New Testament days "sent ones", but they also

- 1) had received their commission directly from Jesus
- 2) had seen the Savior after His resurrection
- 3) had the authority to work miracles
- 4) had founded churches
- 5)

And those who call themselves "apostles" today are not like the apostles of the New Testament...

Paul wrote to the "saints" at Ephesus. Does it surprise you that Paul addresses these folks as "saints"? After all, aren't saints dead folks who have achieved the spiritual honor of "sainthood"?

No! Saints are believers in Christ. These are not dead folks...Paul is writing to folks who are alive...not only physically but spiritually! A saint is someone who is **"set apart unto God."**

They're called **"faithful"** in **verse 1**, but they didn't become saints by living faithful lives. They became saints by being saved by grace through faith.

By the way, do you see the authority by which Paul writes?

This passage of Scripture is not just a lot of words. It is laid out according to a definite plan.

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Verses 3-6 describe the **will of the Father...**

Verses 7-12 describe the **work of the Son...**

Verses 13-14 describe the **witness of the Spirit...**

The Will of the Father...

Verse 3...

This verse states the theme of **Ephesians**... "The Christian's riches in Christ."

Our Heavenly Father is not poor. He is rich and He has made **us** rich in His Son. And in this letter, Paul explains to us what these riches **are** and how we can draw on them for our everyday Christian walk.

Now, this is not the "health and wealth" doctrine that we hear so much about today.

I mean, can you imagine Paul, a prisoner in a Roman jail, having had his earthly possessions taken away from him, and as we see in some of his other epistles having to ask someone to bring him his cloak and parchments and suffering from some sort of thorn in the flesh that **may have been** and **most likely was** physical...can you imagine this man preaching that God wants every believer to wealthy and healthy?

NO! These are **spiritual** blessings. In the Old Testament as we saw in **Deuteronomy**, God promised His people, Israel, material and physical blessings as a reward for their obedience.

Today, He promises to supply all our needs **"according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."** But He doesn't promise to shield us from poverty and He doesn't promise to shield us from pain.

Our blessings are **"in the heavenly places in Christ."**

The Christian life is centered in **heaven**.

Our citizenship is in **heaven**.

Our names are written in **heaven**...and our attention and affection ought to be centered on the things of **heaven**.

Verses 4-6...

In these three verses, we see that we're **chosen**, we're **adopted** and we're **accepted**.

Let's look first at the word **"chose"**, and let's say right here that we aren't going to settle this today. **I mean, the sovereignty of God and the free will of man have been baffling learned theologians for centuries...**

But let's not just skim over this as though it's not there either.

Salvation begins with God and not with man.

Jesus said, **"You have not chosen Me, I have chosen you."** **John 15:16**

Romans 3 tells us *the lost sinner, left to his own ways, does not seek God.*

Jesus also said *He had come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

So, **salvation begins with God and not with man.**

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The story is told of a young black man who desired membership in a conservative church. This particular church held an examination session for potential new members and as the deacons were examining this young man, they asked him how he got saved. And he said, "I did my part and God did His part."

Well, the deacons thought they had him, so they asked him what **his** part **was** and what was **God's** part.

The young man said, ***"My part was the sinning. I ran from God as fast as these rebellious legs would take me and my sinful heart would lead me. I ran from God! But, you know, He done took out after me 'til He done run me down."***

And that's good theology!

***"Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God.
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood."***

And this passage also tells us that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. This speaks again of His **grace**. We didn't do anything to earn it...it's all of His grace.

Now, I believe this is where the problem comes in. We don't understand how He can choose us before the foundation of the world, do we?

But, we need to remember that we are creatures of time. God inhabits eternity. We express our mode of being in three tenses of time... "I was," "I am," "I will be." God expresses His mode of being in the eternal present... "I am," "I am," "I am."

We are finite! God is infinite! We live in the here and now, and can deal with only one thing at a time. Life is presented to us in tiny little packages. We can anticipate the future and recall the past, but we live in this moment we call the present.

In God's mind, however, the past, present and future are swallowed up in the all-embracing present.

Dr. John Phillips says it this way...

"Thus when we read that we were chosen in Him "before the foundation of the world," we must realize that the Holy Spirit has stated the issue from our perspective. Since God lives in the present tense, there is to Him no time difference between the moment He chose me and the moment I chose Him. The perception of time difference is ours alone. From the standpoint of God's eternal present tense, both acts are simultaneous. That explanation does not, however, lessen the mystery of God's grace."

Spurgeon said, ***"If God hadn't chosen me before the foundation of the world, He wouldn't choose me now!"***

But where does that leave the free will of man? I mean, does God just reach down and save some people even if they don't want to be saved? What part does man play?

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I don't believe God chooses some for salvation and some for damnation. God says He isn't **"willing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."**

God said He **"so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him shall have eternal life."**

Jesus said, **"Come unto Me, all you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest..."**

And we could cite many more Scriptures to prove this.

Paul has already said the Ephesians had been faithful in Christ Jesus. For them to be faithful in Christ Jesus,

they had at some point in time **put their faith and trust in Him.**

At some point in time they had **come to repentance.**

At some point in time they had **believed in Jesus.**

So, do I believe in the sovereignty of God **or** the free will of man? The answer is YES! Both exist! Both are taught in the Bible. Both are true, and both are essential. It is not intellectual suicide to believe them both...And I believe when we get to heaven and **only** when we get to heaven will we understand it all.

Let me tell you what Warren Wiersbe says:

"All three Persons in the Godhead are involved in our salvation

As far as God the Father is concerned, you were saved when He chose you in Christ in eternity past.

As far as God the Son is concerned, you were saved when He died for you on the cross.

As far as God the Spirit is concerned, you were saved when you yielded to His conviction and received Christ as your Savior.

What began in eternity past was fulfilled in time present, and will continue for all eternity!"

Well, we could discuss this until this time next year, but we need to go on...and maybe we can come back to this subject next week, but let's go on, or we'll never get through today...

Before we go on to our being adopted, let's notice that we were chosen that we should be **"holy and blameless before Him."**

When I see passages like this, I want to say **"WHO...ME? Surely God isn't looking at me and calling me 'holy and blameless.'" But, He is!!! My sin has been paid for at Calvary. When God saved me, Jesus took on my **unrighteousness** and I took on His **righteousness**...so I stand before God as holy and blameless as the Lord Jesus Christ stands before Him... **That's simply another thing we cannot understand, isn't it?****

Not only are we **chosen**, we are **adopted**.

Don't let the word "predestined" upset you. This word is not used in connection with the lost. No one is ever predestined to be lost. God hasn't predestined some for heaven and some for hell...but God **has** predestined all believers to adoption as sons through Christ Jesus.

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We don't get **into** God's family by adoption. We get **into** God's family by the new birth. But adoption is the act of God by which He gives us **adult standing** in the family so that we might immediately begin to claim our inheritance and enjoy our spiritual wealth.

This simply means we're not to stay new born babes. We're not to stay children. God doesn't want us to forever be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. We're to grow up and mature!

We're chosen, we're adopted, and we're also accepted! I love the **King James...**
"accepted in the Beloved."

Because of God's grace in Christ Jesus, we are accepted before Him! It will always be an incredibly amazing thing to me that I am accepted before the Almighty God of this universe!

Well, in **verses 3-6**, we've seen the will of the Father. Now, let's see
The Work of the Son

Verses 7-12...

Each Person of the Godhead has a special ministry to perform. Let's look at what Jesus has done for us...

He has redeemed us... verse 7...

There were 6 million slaves in the Roman Empire, and often they were bought and sold like pieces of furniture. But, a man could purchase a slave and set him free...and this is exactly what Jesus did for us. And the price was His own blood. We are

Free from the Law,
Free from the slavery to sin,
Free from the power of Satan and the world.

Not only has He redeemed us,

He has forgiven us...verse 7...

The word "forgive" means "to carry away"...

This reminds us of the ritual on the Jewish Day of Atonement when the high priest sent the scapegoat into the wilderness. First the priest killed one of the two goats and sprinkled its blood before God on the Mercy Seat.

Then he confessed Israel's sins over the live goat, and had the goat taken into the wilderness to be lost. Christ died to carry away our sins so they might never again be seen!

All our sins have been forgiven. No accusation can stand against us before God because our sins have been taken away!

To forgive means to give up the right to punish someone for their transgression. We may say that we have forgiven someone, but we'll never forget it. Have you ever said that? Well, praise God, He forgives us and chooses to remember our sin no more against us!

He has revealed God's will to us...verses 8-10...

This letter has much to say about God's plan for His people. The word "mystery" simply means "a sacred secret, once hidden but now revealed to God's people."

"...the summing up of all things in Christ."

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One day God will unite everything in Christ Jesus. Ever since sin came into the world, things have been falling apart. First, man was separated from God. Then, man was separated from man. There was a difference between Jew and Gentile that was maintained until Christ's death on the Cross.

Satan has attempted to tear everything apart, but in Christ, God will gather everything together and we are a part of this!

He has made us an inheritance...verses 11-12...

My Bible reads "we have **obtained** an inheritance"...but another translation is "in whom also **we were made** an inheritance..."

Both are true. In Christ we **have** an inheritance.
And in Christ we **are** an inheritance.

We are valuable to Him! Think of the price He paid to purchase us and make us part of His inheritance.

We are "**joint-heirs with Christ**", which means Jesus cannot claim **His** inheritance apart from our claiming **ours**!

We've seen the **will of the Father**, and the **work of the Son**, let's look at

The Witness of the Spirit...verses 13-14...

The Holy Spirit is the **proof of our faith**. He seals us...not to escape life's perils and persecutions, but **He seals us against any possibility of losing our salvation**.

The Holy Spirit also is the **pledge of our future**. How many of you have ever bought a house? How many of you have had to put earnest money down? WHY?

To show you were earnest about buying it. It showed you really meant business and you weren't going to back out halfway through the deal, didn't it?

The Holy Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance as Christians. God has given us the Holy Spirit as evidence that He's not going to back out...He means business and there is much more to come!

Let me close quickly by offering you **three basic truths** we've seen in these verses...

1) True riches come from God.

In Christ, you and I have "what money can't buy." We don't have to believe in the health and wealth garbage. We have much more than that...we have what money can't buy.

God has given us richly all things to enjoy!

2) All these riches come by God's grace and for God's glory.

Did you notice that after each of the main sections of today's passage Paul has added the purpose behind these gifts?

Why has God the Father chosen us and adopted us and accepted us in the Beloved?

"...to the praise of the glory of His grace"...1:6

Why has the son redeemed us, forgiven us, revealed God's will to us and made us part of God's inheritance?

"...that we should be to the praise of His glory"...1:12

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Why has God the Spirit sealed us and become the earnest and guarantee of our future blessing?

"...unto the praise of His glory..." 1:14

GOD SAVES US SO **HE** CAN BE GLORIFIED!!!

Not only do true riches come from God and all these riches come by God's grace and for God's glory...but...

3) *These riches are only the beginning!*

And that's what we will see as we go through this book...

There is always more spiritual wealth to claim from the Lord as we walk with Him.

The Bible is our guidebook; the Holy Spirit is our Teacher.

As we search the Word of God, we discover more and more of the riches we have in Christ. These riches

were **planned by the Father...**
and **purchased by the Son...**
and **presented by the Spirit..**

There is really no need for us to live in poverty when all of God's wealth is at our disposal! By faith God wants us to claim His promises and draw on His limitless wealth to meet every need we may have. Let's learn to do that from our study of the book of *Ephesians!*