

"Christian: Do You Know Who You Are?" Part 2

Open Your Eyes • Ephesians 1

I INTRODUCTION

A. *Skid Row*

1. We lived in the suburbs of Chicago for a few years when I was growing up
2. And every so often, we'd go to the City to shop or see a show
3. Occasionally, my Dad would drive us through Chicago's Skid Row district
 - a. it was a seamy side of town
 - b. the buildings were dilapidated
 - c. and it was not uncommon to see men lying on the sidewalks; passed out from drugs or drink
4. Being a young boy, and never having seen that before, it ripped my heart out to see such poverty and destruction
5. A man who had been a drunkard there on Chicago's Skid Row for years went to a mission one night
 - a. he heard the gospel message, ate the meal, and then climbed into the small cot they provided
 - b. that night was his last on earth; he died, poverty stricken and friendless
 - c. what he didn't know was that he had an inheritance of over \$4 million waiting for him in England
 - d. the authorities had been looking for him but were unable to find him because he had no address
 - e. here was a man who had all the material wealth he could want, but he lived and died in wrenching poverty
6. In this sense he was just like many Christians who live in spiritual poverty because they are not fully aware of their vast wealth in Christ

B. *Our Study*

1. Look at Ephesians 1:3
2. We have been blessed with *every* spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ
3. Paul's whole hope and prayer is that the Ephesians might come to understand what and who they were by virtue of their faith in Christ
4. In vs. 17 & 18, Paul tells them what he was praying for them: He says he was praying . . .

{17} that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,

{18} the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

5. Paul wanted this group of believers who were doing so well in their walk with

the Lord to go deeper in both their knowledge of God and of who they were "In Christ"

C. In Christ

1. The key to this knowledge is found in that one short phrase, "in Christ"
 2. 42 times it is used in this letter! = In Christ, in Jesus, in the Lord, in Him
 3. Faith in Christ not only results in His indwelling us by the Holy Spirit,
 4. It also means that we are IN Him
 5. And the first half of this wonderful letter is Paul's explanation and description of what it means to be IN CHRIST
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6. We looked at vs. 1-4 last week
 - a. we saw that in Christ we are *saints*
 - b. that we *blessed* with every spiritual blessing
 - c. and that we are *chosen*
 7. Let's pick it up at v. 3 today and then continue on from where we left off . . .

II. TEXT

A. Predestined to Adoption

{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,**

{4} **just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,**

{5} **having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,**

1. Of all the relationships we may have, none are as intimate as those of family
2. It's no coincidence that salvation is so often spoken of in familial terms
3. God is our Heavenly Father - and we are His sons and daughters, which makes us spiritual brothers and sisters
4. But there is far more to what Paul is saying here than we might grasp in a casual reading
5. You see, as always, we need to ask; "What would this have meant to the people it was first addressed to? What did this mean to the Ephesians?"
6. While the Jews didn't practice adoption, it was *well known* in the Roman world
7. But Roman adoption was not at all like our practice of adoption today
 - a. parents today want to adopt a child as young as possible - preferably, as soon as it is born
 - b. Roman adoption was not done to gain an *infant* - it was done to gain a *heir!*
8. Wealthy Romans would adopt a son because they were *childless*; and they didn't want their estate to be left to someone else
9. They wanted it to stay in the family
10. So, if they had no heir, no family, they would adopt a son and *make* him part of the family
11. Consequently, they picked a young *man* who had proven himself *worthy*
12. When Paul says that "in Christ" we've been predestined to adoption as sons, it

- is with this imagery
- a. and the word "sons" is key
 - b. some translations render this as "children" but it should be "sons"
 - c. God has not adopted a nursery full of babies just to have a big family
 - d. it's more that He has adopted us for the purpose of making us His heirs and of passing on to us position and favor
 - e. this adoption speaks of *maturity*, not infancy
13. If you pass down the street and see a sign that says, "O'Hare and Sons Bakery" you know it is a family owned and operated business where O'Hare and his sons work side by side
- a. you've never seen a sign that says, "O'Hare & Children"
 - b. that's precisely the idea here
14. God is indeed making a family of His redeemed
- a. but the aim and end is *full grown* sons and daughters
 - b. not a spiritual nursery full of squealing, spoiled, snot nosed brats
15. Romans 8:29 says

For whom [God] foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

16. This is what we are *predestined* for
- a. I know it is a well worn cliché but may we hear it with new understanding and insight today
 - b. God loves us and has a wonderful plan for our lives - what is that plan?
 - c. to be mature sons and daughters who bear the family name of God

B. Accepted In The Beloved

1. Next Paul says . . .

{6} to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.

2. Paul overflows with praise as he considers the grace of God and what it has done for us
3. And what has it done? It has made us to be "Accepted"
4. Oh friends, this is holy ground we tread now - maybe we should take off our shoes!
5. When Gabriel came to Mary to announce to her that she would bear the Messiah, he said,

"Rejoice, *highly favored one*, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"
{Luke 1:28}

- a. this phrase, *highly favored one*, is used in only one other place in the Bible
 - b. right here in Ephesians 1:6
 - c. it's translated as the word "accepted"
6. God honored Mary with special honor - and it's right to esteem her as special
7. But God has bestowed the *same* honor on us who believe in Christ
- a. just as Mary was privileged to bear Christ - so are we by the Spirit
 - b. and that is why *we* are highly favored as well
 - c. we are accepted because Christ dwells in us

8. If we could have our eyes opened to this truth, if we could get our hands around it, how it would change our lives!
 9. Let me ask you - how much of your time and energy is given to the pursuit of being accepted by others?
 - a. this is an especially pertinent question for you young people; junior and senior high students
 - b. but it also applies to those of us adults who live in the competitive business world
 - c. or who have friends and peers who are constantly one-upping each other
 10. You see, the love and acceptance of this world is always *conditional*
 - a. you have to fit in to the status quo
 - b. you have to wear the right clothes, drive the right car, live in the right neighborhood
 - c. you have to share the same opinions, or in some cases, *sins*, or you aren't accepted
 11. Lucy was a good worker at her job
 - a. she always had her work done on time and well
 - b. she was cheerful and prompt and her supervisor loved her and gave her good reviews
 - c. but Lucy wasn't really very well liked by her peers because while she worked diligently, they were slackers
 - d. and her excellence made their output look less than desirable
 - e. they tried to get Lucy to slow down and slack off, but she refused
 - f. in Lucy's mind, it was better to please her supervisor and gain her acceptance, than to slack off and curry the favor of her lazy peers
 12. Now, here's the difference between you and Lucy: You cannot gain the favor and acceptance of God by being good and working hard - God's Favor IS ALREADY YOURS IN CHRIST!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
 13. Look at it again . . .
- {6} to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.**
- a. our acceptance is a matter of God's grace, not our performance
 - b. it is unmerited, unearned
14. Because of Christ, God accepts you!
 15. If we could get a hold of this truth - it would set us free from being mere man-pleasers
 - a. if we could get our hands and hearts around it, it would free us from the fear of others
 - b. it would liberate us from a life of one-upmanship
 16. God accepts us in Christ!
 17. Some of you here this morning have been trapped in a vicious race for acceptance
 - a. growing up, your parents love and acceptance was conditioned on your performance
 - b. good grades, good at sports, your appearance
 - c. and no matter what you did, it seems it was never good enough

- d. or maybe it wasn't your parents but a marriage - where you as a husband or wife, could never quite earn the love and respect of your mate
 - e. and so now, life is given to appeasing others, of living for their approval
 - f. when you are around others you feel compelled to be funny, or pretty, or smart, or successful - because you crave acceptance
18. Friend - Jesus came to set you free from this compulsion for acceptance
19. And freedom comes when you learn to rest in God's grace and rejoice in your acceptance by Him

C. Redeemed & Forgiven

{7} In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace

{8} which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,

1. In Christ we have *redemption*
2. There are three different Greek words translated as "redemption" in the NT
3. The one used here means to be loosed from something - to be freed
4. Again, this is a word that would have been well understood by the people of Paul's day
5. You see, the Roman empire had some 6 millions slaves
 - a. encountering slaves was a daily occurrence for most city folk
 - b. and the redemption of slaves was something everyone knew about, though it was a fairly rare occurrence
 - c. slaves were always hoping for freedom, and occasionally, one would attain it
 - d. one of the more common ways a slave could gain his or her freedom was when their master would give the slave an incentive that if they worked real hard and were faithful, he would give them a small wage, or allow them time to pursue their own side work that might earn some extra income they could then set aside
 - e. over time, if they could save enough, they could then purchase their freedom
 - f. the money was put on deposit at one of the local temples
 - g. on the day when the full amount had been gathered, the slave and master would come together to the temple, and the slave would be symbolically 'sold' to the god of the temple
 - h. the receipt of this transaction was engraved on the wall of the shrine
 - i. to this day, the ruins of these ancient temples bear the names of the slaves who were set free by this ritual
6. This is the idea behind Paul's use of the word "redemption" here
7. We who were the slaves of sin and death have been redeemed and set free
8. But notice how this redemption was secured - not by our scraping together enough good works that we saved ourselves!
9. We were redeemed by Jesus' blood
10. Though it was extremely rare - sometimes a gracious master would pay the temple *himself* and set a slave free
11. Jesus did that for us - and the redemption price was His blood

- a. God did not just wave His hand over us and say, "You're free."
 - b. a *price* was paid to ransom you from slavery
 - c. and the price was the precious blood of Christ
12. If you're not a believer in Christ, don't think that you will gain heaven simply because you're a good person and God is too kindly to judge
- a. your sin, however slight in your eyes, is a grave issue with God
 - b. it is nothing less than cosmic treason
 - c. God does not just wink your sins away - they must be paid for
 - d. either YOU must pay for them - or you can place your trust in Christ that HE paid for them on the cross
 - e. either, or - there is no third way!
13. For those of us who trust Christ, just as the ancient slave who had been set free could point to an inscription in a temple as the proof or receipt of his freedom - so we can point to the cross as the proof of our freedom
- a. when the enemy seeks to deceive us and tell us we are still his slaves, we point him to the cross
 - b. when old habits and temptations seek to wrap us in their deadly grip, we take them to Calvary's tree
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14. There's even more in v. 7: As well as redemption, we have *forgiveness of sins*
15. While we were *slaves* of sin and death; were *debtors* to God
16. *Redemption* frees us from slavery, *forgiveness* pays our debt!
17. If you've ever been in deep debt, you know the terrible feeling it produces
- a. there's a sense of hopelessness
 - b. sometimes it seems there is an actual physical weight pressing down on you
18. Scripture tells us that before we trust in Christ, we are spiritually bankrupt - worse than that, we are dead in trespasses and sins
19. Now the thing about a dead person is this;
- a. they can't work; they're dead
 - b. and if they can't work, they can't earn
 - c. and if they can't earn, they can't pay their debts
20. So what we could not do for ourselves - God did for us; He discharged our debt of sin
21. What sins? All of them - past, present, and future!
22. When we place our trust in Christ, God says that *sin* will no longer be the issue between us
23. Faith in Jesus makes *grace* the issue between you and God
24. Notice the last part of v. 7 . . .
- {7} In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace**
25. Redemption and forgiveness are not something God gives reluctantly
26. He is no miser; Rather, He is lavish with His forgiveness
27. Now, how much grace does God have? An infinite supply!
28. Note that Paul says God gives grace *according* to his riches, not *out* of His riches
- a. seemingly, a subtle difference - till you know the words he employs here

- b. if you go to a millionaire and ask for him or her to give to some worthy cause,
 - c. and they write a check for \$10 - they are giving *out* of their wealth
 - d. but if they write a check for \$250,000, they are giving *according* to their wealth
 - e. see the difference?
29. Paul says that the measure of grace we've received isn't merely *out* of God's riches in grace, but *according* to them

III. CONCLUSION

A. *Riches*

1. 5 times, Paul uses the word "riches" in Ephesians
2. This letter is his counterpart to the promise of Jesus, "I have come that you might have life, and that you might have it to abundance."
3. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul is simply describing what that abundance means
4. May the Holy Spirit who inspired Paul to *write*, inspire us to *receive*
5. May our eyes be opened that we might know what is the hope of His calling
6. Adopted, Accepted, Redeemed, Forgiven
7. All according to the riches of God's grace

B. *More To Follow*

1. Sam Duncannon worked in a rescue mission in Glasgow, Scotland years ago
2. He was forever trying to find ways to cheer the drab existence of the destitute men who made their way through the mission
3. One of his favorite pursuits was to take pictures out of magazines, make simple frames for them, and attach a verse to give them away as presents
4. His favorite picture was of Niagara Falls - but he was never able to find a verse that seemed to fit the picture, so he held on to it
5. Then DL Moody came to town to hold a crusade
6. Moody's song leader was Ira Sankey. And one night at the crusade, Sankey sang a solo that gave Sam the verse he was looking for . . .
7. The words of that song went . . .

Have you on the Lord believed?
 Still there's more to follow;
 Of His grace have you received?
 Still there's more to follow.
 O the grace the Father shows!
 Still there's more to follow.
 Freely He His grace bestows,
 Still there's more to follow.
 More and more, more and more,
 Always more to follow.
 O His matchless, boundless love!
 Still there's more to follow.

8. As if last week's and today's passages weren't enough - still there's more to follow in the rest of this chapter - so we'll pick it up at this point in two weeks!