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The Sonship Life Study Guide

The Book of Ephesians

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The Book of Ephesians
Introduction #1
Session One A: Defending the Book of Ephesians

Ephesians is a prison epistle. By that we mean that Paul wrote the letter while he was in prison at Rome. Initially, seven of Paul's thirteen books were credited with being written while he was in prison. These books are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon.

In 1792, the first doubt was cast on the authorship of Ephesians. The claim was that Ephesians was not written by Paul and since that time, a number of scholars have joined the chorus of doubters. Not only do they think that Paul was not its author, but it wasn't even written in his lifetime. Altogether, four books are now recognized by some scholars as being written after Paul's death. These books are Ephesians, 1&2 Timothy and Titus. Over the last thirty years (1991), the scholars have been split about 50/50 on the issue of Paul writing all thirteen books of the New Testament (NT) which bear his name.

Attack on the book of Ephesians

Of course, MBI's position is that Paul wrote all thirteen books from Romans to Philemon. I do not think that is a surprise to anyone listening right now. For a couple of reasons, I considered not mentioning this at all. Firstly, because Paul's authorship is not an issue for those who are following along in the education. Also, we have a limited number of sessions to go through the book of Ephesians in this initial pass through the book, and I want to get into the doctrine as soon as possible.

Nevertheless, I have decided to include a brief defense of Paul's authorship of Ephesians here at the outset of our study. Why? Firstly, because ignoring the issue looks like we are either unaware of the issue or that we do not have an answer for it. One of the categories of Satan's works of darkness is to attack the divine institution of the word of God. Therefore, I think we must defend the book.

Secondly, ignoring these kinds of attacks is how the church (and theology departments in universities) became marginalized in the past. So, let's not repeat that same mistake.

Thirdly, we need to be equipped to give some kind of answer so that we might persuade others and have confidence in our faith. So, I would like to equip us to answer the attack against Ephesians, and at the same time, bolster our confidence in God's word by providing evidence for why we believe what we believe. So, put this under the heading of "loving God with all our mind."

Let me say from the outset that there is much written on this issue, it would take months to cover it all in detail. In the context of this study, we can only cover it in a summary-type fashion. If, when we are finished, you would like a more comprehensive understanding of all the issues involved, then I would point you to Harold Hoehner's commentary *Ephesians – An Exegetical Commentary*. It is the best defense of Paul's authorship of Ephesians that I am aware of. Even if you don't commit the arguments to memory, it would be a great resource for reference in your library and it is worth the price of the volume for this issue alone. (Amazon/ around \$35-\$40)

The main issue against the book of Ephesians is that Paul is not its author. Instead, it was supposedly written by someone who used Paul's letter to the Colossians as a template and then forged Paul's name to it. If that is the case, then do realize what that means? If true, then Ephesians has been mistakenly included in the canon of scripture, and that is why some scholars conclude that it is not inspired scripture.

To get started, let me set the stage. While we do not have the original writing of any of the NT books, some of the very earliest copies of any NT book are fragments of the book of Ephesians. Keep in mind what we learned in the School of Theology course, "*The Bible*;" how that God preserved His word through the multiplicity of copies. Additionally, early

writers quoted from Ephesians and these are the earliest quotes of any NT book.¹

So, what about the issue of Paul's authorship? The belief and understanding that Paul was the author of Ephesians was widespread and strong in the early church. The first objection to Paul being the author of Ephesians was lodged in 1792 by an English clergyman named Evanson. His objection was made on the basis of Ephesians 1:15-16.

Ephesians 1:15 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;

Evanson deemed it inconsistent that Paul claims to have "heard of your faith" when according to the book of Acts, Paul spent over two years at Ephesus.

In the early 1800's another attack came from a man named Usteri on the basis that Ephesians was so similar to Colossians. Seeing that almost no one contested Colossians being written by Paul, Usteri viewed Ephesians as a forgery.

A third objection was made shortly after that on the basis that Ephesians contained: 1) many parenthetic and secondary clauses, and 2) no new thoughts.

A number of scholars began to think that Ephesians was written sometime in the 2nd century. In his book *The Churches the Apostles Left Behind*², Brown states "A fair estimate might be that at the present moment, about 80% of critical scholarship holds that Paul did not write Ephesians."

¹ I really want to give you some information about manuscript evidence, but time in this study does not permit. Please refer to the first two sessions on How to Study the Bible. Please read through these on your own, as I think it will be beneficial.

² Raymond E. Brown, *The Churches the Apostles Left Behind* (New York; Paulist; Longdon: Geoggreys Chapman, 1984) 47; idem, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 630.

This, as it turns out, is not true. In his commentary on Ephesians, Harold W. Hoehner has gathered the evidence showing Brown's statement to be untrue. In his book, he lists by name, all the known scholars from 1519 all the way to 2001, along with their stance on Pauline authorship; including when they changed their minds (if they did).

Surveying almost 300 scholars by the years when they studied, Hoehner demonstrates that from 1519-2001, 39% of all the scholars were against Pauline authorship of Ephesians, 7% were uncertain and 54% were in favor of Paul writing Ephesians.³

Just as Brown tried to win the argument based on most scholars rejecting Paul as the author of Ephesians, which turns out to be untrue, neither can we prove Paul is Ephesian's author simply by having the majority of scholars concur. So, what we will do is take each reason for objecting to Paul's authorship and answer it – briefly.⁴

Reasons for Rejecting Pauline Authorship⁵

1. The Impersonal Nature of Ephesians
2. Language and Style
3. Literary Relationships
4. Pseudonymity
5. Theological Distinctions
 - Soteriology (salvation)
 - Ecclesiology (the church)
 - Eschatology (Future events)
6. Historical Considerations

Let's move through each one of these by identifying the objection, giving examples of each objection and then the answers to the objections.

³ These charts on on pp. 19-20, Harold W. Hoehner, Ephesians, Baker Publishing, 2002.

⁴ For a fuller treatment, please see Harold W. Hoehner's commentary of Ephesians.

⁵ We will reserve comment to the six major objections, although there are others

Objection: The Impersonal Nature of the Book of Ephesians

Explanation: Paul obviously knew the Ephesians very well since he first arrived at the end of his 2nd apostolic journey in the summer of 52 A.D. He ministered in the synagogue briefly and then departed for Jerusalem, leaving Aquila and Priscilla at Ephesus.

Acts 18:18 And Paul *after this* tarried *there* yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn *his* head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow. ¹⁹ And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. ²⁰ When they desired *him* to tarry longer time with them, he consented not; ²¹ But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.

Paul returns in 53 A.D. and spends three years in Ephesus on his 3rd apostolic journey. Paul leaves in the spring of 56 A.D.

Acts 19:1 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,

The next year, in the spring of 57 A.D., Paul visits the church elders of the Ephesus church at Miletus on his way to Jerusalem from Corinth.

Acts 20:16 For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost. ¹⁷ And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.

The problem is that as well as Paul obviously knew the saints at Ephesus, why would he say...

Ephesians 1:15 Wherefore I also, **after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus**, and love unto all the saints,

...that he “heard of their faith?” Wouldn’t he have witnessed it firsthand? With that in mind, the objectors then find it curious that there are no greetings to individuals in the church at Ephesus as in the letter to the Romans where many of them are called by name and greeted. This is what is meant by Ephesians being impersonal, which is unlike Paul, and the conclusion being that an imposter wrote Ephesians.

Answer: Paul does not give personal greetings in 2 Corinthians, Galatians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, and Philipppians. Paul was in Corinth for 18 months and several months in Galatia, but no greetings, and there is no objection to Paul’s authorship of those epistles. No, greetings do not mean an imposter has written the book. Paul sends lots of greetings in his Romans epistle, yet Paul had never yet visited the churches at Roman.

Answer: By the time Paul writes Ephesians, he has not been there for 5-6 years. No doubt, there had been new believers added of whom Paul was not familiar, and so he could have “heard” of their faith. As for those he did know already, he could have heard of their continuance in the faith.

Answer: The fact that Paul shares his prayers for them and asks for their prayers for himself indicates some familiarity with the saints at Ephesus, so the letter is not completely impersonal.

These objections do not prove Paul is not the author of Ephesians. It seems that the better Paul knew a church, the fewer personal greetings were included. Perhaps the greetings were to strengthen his credibility, authority and apostleship by connecting with various saints individually. If that is the case, then personal greetings are most needed in places he has not yet been (like Rome) and least needed in places that knew him well (like Ephesus).

The Book of Ephesians
Introduction #1 (cont.)
Session One B: Dealing with Objections

Objection: Language and Style

Explanation: Scholars think Ephesians cannot be written by Paul because it has too many unique words; words not used by Paul in his other epistles. (“This doesn’t sound/read like Paul”)

Answer: Ephesians has 2,429 words with a total vocabulary of 530 words. 41 of those words are used only in Ephesians. Eighty-four of those words are not used elsewhere by Paul but are used by other NT authors. Let’s compare this to a book of about the same size which is not contested as to Paul’s authorship; the book of Galatians. Galatians 2,220 words with a vocabulary of 526 words. Galatians has 35 unique words and 90 words not used in Paul’s other epistles but are used by other NT writers.

	<u>Ephesians</u>	<u>Galatians</u>
Total vocabulary:	2429	2220
Unique words:	41	35
Unique to Paul:	84	90

The numbers are almost identical, even though Galatians is about 10% shorter in length. If this does not disprove Galatians’ authorship, why should it disprove Ephesians? It doesn’t. Plus, the sample is too small to use statistical analysis to disprove Paul’s authorship. You would need at least 10,000 words to properly do the comparison and Paul’s longest

letter (Romans is only 7094; 1 Corinthians has 6807, 2 Corinthians has 4448 and Ephesians has 2429).⁶

Objection: Literary Relationships

Explanation: Most particularly, the relationship between Ephesians and Colossians suggests that Ephesians was copied from Colossians by someone other than Paul.

Statistically, 27% of Ephesians is parallel to Colossians while 34% of the shorter Colossians is parallel to Ephesians.

Number of words shared between Eph and Col: 246 out of 2429 in Ephesians and 1574 in Colossians. This includes the multiple use of conjunctions (and, etc.) pronouns (he, they, etc.) prepositions (of, by, etc.) and proper names (God, Christ, etc.).

Answer: It seems like one argument is that Ephesians is too different, and now it is too much alike. While it is true that there is much parallel word and phrase use between Colossians and Ephesians, the same is true in the gospels and also in 2 Peter and Jude.

On the other hand, Colossians has 38 unique words and 69 unique to Paul and not to other NT writers, while Ephesians has 41 unique words and 84 unique to Paul. The greatest linkage of words used exactly in the two epistles is only 7 words long and that only happens 3 times. There are 2 instances of 5 consecutive words. There is 1 instance of 29 consecutive words. But given the thematic parallels between the books, does not indicate imposter, but rather connection between the books. But, even

⁶ G. Udny Yule, *The Statistical Study of Literary Vocabulary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1944), 2, 281.

the objectors do admit that between the books there is “no indication of a rigid or mechanical copying.”⁷

Lastly, sometimes a word is used in both books, but each use has a different meaning or application. These objections do not prove Paul did not write Ephesians.

Objection: Pseudonymity

Explanation: This is an objection that comes out of the previous argument; if Paul did not write Ephesians, then who did? Their conjectures: a disciple of Paul, a secretary familiar with Paul’s thinking, a Gentile convert, and Jewish Christians with some official standing; Tychicus, Onesimus, or an unknown writer collected Paul’s writings, after he was dead, and composed Ephesians as an introduction to the collection.

Answer: there were many pseudepigraphical works in Judaism such as the book of Enoch, but they were composed centuries after those named in their works and were never accepted as canonical by the Jews. But it is hard to imagine that those who knew Paul would have accepted a counterfeit work so closely after his death. Further, most pseudepigraphical works are apocalyptic and epistolary in form. Ephesians is an epistle.

Lastly, if Paul were already dead, why include information about what was going on with him?

Ephesians 6:21-22 But that ye also may know my affairs, *and* how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make

⁷ Milton, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, 57-58. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 33.

known to you all things: Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and *that* he might comfort your hearts.

This would be easily disproved if it was an intentional deception and the whole point of masquerading as Paul would be defeated. For those living at the time, the many copies of Ephesians that had circulated would testify to everyone in the early church that Paul was the author and Ephesians was not written after his death by an imposter. That is why no one ever objected to Ephesians until 1600 years after Paul was dead.

Objection: Theological Distinctions

Explanation: Soteriology - Some scholars believe, as Kummel wrote, “the theology of Ephesians makes the Pauline composition of the letter completely impossible.” There are three main theological areas in which Ephesians is attacked: soteriology (the doctrine of salvation), ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church) and eschatology (the doctrine of future events).

Their problem with the doctrine of salvation in Ephesians is they do not think Ephesians mentions the Cross enough; it spends too much time talking about the resurrection, exaltation and Christ’s “cosmic lordship” to be written by Paul. They think there is too little about reconciliation.

Answer: this same formula is also present in 1 Corinthians and Philippians, but these are not contested books.

Explanation: Soteriology – Some scholars also believe that Ephesians contradicts Romans, which they do think Paul wrote. In what way do they contradict? Here is their argument: Ephesians contradicts Romans with regard to the Law of Moses. Romans says that Paul’s message does not void the Law...

Romans 3:30 Seeing *it is* one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. ³¹ **Do we then make void the law** through faith? **God forbid: yea, we establish the law.**

...but then Ephesians says that Christ has nullified the Law.

Ephesians 2:14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; ¹⁵ **Having abolished** in his flesh the enmity, *even the law of commandments contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace;

Answer: Without reading the context, this certainly looks like a contradiction. But when we read the context, we find that both of these things are true at the same time. How can that be? How can the law be in effect and not in effect at the same time? How can the law be *established* and *abolished* at the same time?

This is solved by understanding that these books, in these contexts, are talking about two different kinds of people. For the lost, the law is still in effect to show unbelievers they are sinners and need to come to God by faith. (This is how the law is used “lawfully.”)

1 Timothy 1:8 But we know that the law *is* good, if a man use it lawfully; ⁹Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, ¹⁰For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;

But the law is nullified for believers.

Romans 7:4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. ⁵ For

when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. ⁶ But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter.

The law has come to an end for those who believe.

Romans 10:4 For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to **every one that believeth**.

Objection: Ecclesiology – the problem here is that Paul uses the same Greek word to talk about local churches in some of his other epistles, but in Ephesians, he uses the word to refer to the entire body of Christ (what they call the universal church).

1 Corinthians 1:2 Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:

Add to this the fact that when Paul writes about the Spirit giving spiritual gifts to members of the body of Christ, there is nothing he says which makes us think that was limited to one local church.

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; ²⁶ That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

If this is only the local church (seeing the word is singular) then which local church is Christ going to present to Himself? The singular is because the church is being referred to corporately.

Objection: Eschatology – The complaint is that since Paul's early ministry anticipated the Lord's return, but in Ephesians, this seems to have faded into the background with the focus in Ephesians being that of our relationship to Christ in

the heavenlies and the maturity of the believer. They say that Ephesians has given up hope in a catching away and now Ephesians...

Ephesians 2:5 Even when we were dead in sins, **hath quickened us together with Christ**, (by grace ye are saved;)

...says that instead of a catching away, that has been replaced with us being quickened together with Christ. They then couple this with Ephesians 1:10...

Ephesians 1:10 That in the dispensation of the fulness 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:

...and declare this is present realization.

Answer: Do you see the problem? Ephesians 1:10 is talking about the whole creation coming under the headship of Christ, but the whole creation has not yet attained unto this status! This is a yet future event which in no way cancels out the Blessed Hope.

Conclusion: Paul's authorship of Ephesians was widely attested in the early church and with the earliest evidence of any NT book. The objections are recent (the last 2 centuries) and do not prove Paul is not the author of Ephesians. By these objections, it would be very difficult to disprove Paul wrote Ephesians.

For those of you who would like a more in depth look at the issue of Paul's authorship of Ephesians, I have already given you a wonderful reference work which answers every objection and thoroughly footnoted.

Our main goal, in this work, is not the debating of authorship or any of the other studies which are about the "things" in Ephesians, or analytics of the book. Our goal is to understand each form of doctrine with a view toward perfecting our edification.

Finally, you will notice that we are going to be moving at a much more rapid pace than we did in Romans. Our goal in doing so is to take an initial pass through of all of the doctrine from Romans to 2 Thessalonians, laying down the doctrines meant to transform us in at least a rudimentary form.

We will cover them to the extent they can work in us (when properly responded to) and conform us to the image of Christ. However, we will not run through every reference available, we will not flesh out every detail, and we cannot take the time to be repetitive. You can do as much of that on your own as you desire.

Therefore, everything written and said is meant to be concise and to the point. **Warning:** You really will need both the written notes and the audio/video. Because we have an economy to our study, there will be things written in the notes that I may not cover in the audio/video. When that happens, I will refer you to the notes.

However, it is not my intention for the notes to be a transcript of the video. As each session takes place, there are times when I see that something additional is needed which I did not anticipate when writing the notes. Therefore, I may mention something in the audio/video that is not in the notes. I will attempt to call your attention to those times when we cover things that are not contained in the notes.

The Book of Ephesians

Introduction #2

Session Two: Introducing the City of Ephesus

The Geography of Ephesus



We are looking at a map of modern day Turkey.

Ephesus today is only a tourist destination.



We are now looking at a map with the more familiar names we see in the scriptures.

Ephesus was located on the western coast of the Aegean Sea. The nation of Israel sits south, on the far eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea.

Ephesus to:

- Smyrna – 49 miles (79 kilometers) – 2 days walk
- Pergamum – 115 miles (185 kilometers) – 4.5 days walk
- Thyatira – 103 miles (166 kilometers) – 4 day walk
- Sardis – 94 miles (151 kilometers) 4 day walk
- Philadelphia – 90 miles (144 kilometers) 4 day walk
- Laodicea – 119 miles (191 kilometers) 5 day walk
- Colossae – 128 miles (205 kilometers) 5 day walk



The stars represent the seven churches of Revelation. This area is known as Asia Minor.

Paul visited Ephesus twice and his letter to the church at Ephesus was written while he was in prison at Rome, somewhere around 60-61 A.D.

Ephesus was the second largest city of the Roman Empire. It was one of the most important Greek cities and the most important trading hub of the Mediterranean. For centuries, the city served as a crossroads between the East and West. We will talk more about this as we set the stage for the culture that was in place at Ephesus at the time Paul carried his gospel to them.

The City of Ephesus



Paul visited Ephesus twice; once, briefly, on his 2nd journey and again, for about three years, on his 3rd journey. This was the longest stay at any one place in any of his journeys.



(Map courtesy of conforming to Jesus.com)

Why would Paul stay so long in Ephesus? Paul says that one of the reasons for such a long stay in Ephesus on his 3rd journey was because of opportunity.

1 Corinthians 16:8 But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. ⁹ **For a great door and effectual is opened unto me,** and *there are* many adversaries.

As it turns out, the first three months found Paul ministering in the synagogue. After that, two more years in the school lecture hall of Tyrannus and then “a while” longer as recorded in Acts 19:8, 10, 22. These opportunities did not come without opposition.

1 Corinthians 16:8 But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. ⁹ For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and ***there are* many adversaries.**

1 Corinthians 15:32 If after the manner of men **I have fought with beasts at Ephesus**, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.

We will talk about that one in our study on 1 Corinthians. The point I want to make in bringing it up is to say that even with an “open door of opportunity,” does not imply that ministry will not be difficult or there will not be opposition. In fact, to the contrary, an open door may be met with increased opposition and attacks.

Ephesus was a difficult area to carry on ministry. How so?

Firstly, because of the size of the city. Look at the map and locate Ephesus; it is in modern-day western Turkey. Ephesus was a port city and at the time of Paul, it was perhaps the fourth or fifth largest city in the world and the second largest in the Roman Empire. It housed a large amphitheater seating around 25,000 people. This theater is mentioned in connection with Paul several times in Scripture.

The great theatre of Ephesus was one of the first structures excavated by archaeologists before the First World War. In the 1970s and 1990s, the cavea (the seating section) was completely excavated and restored.

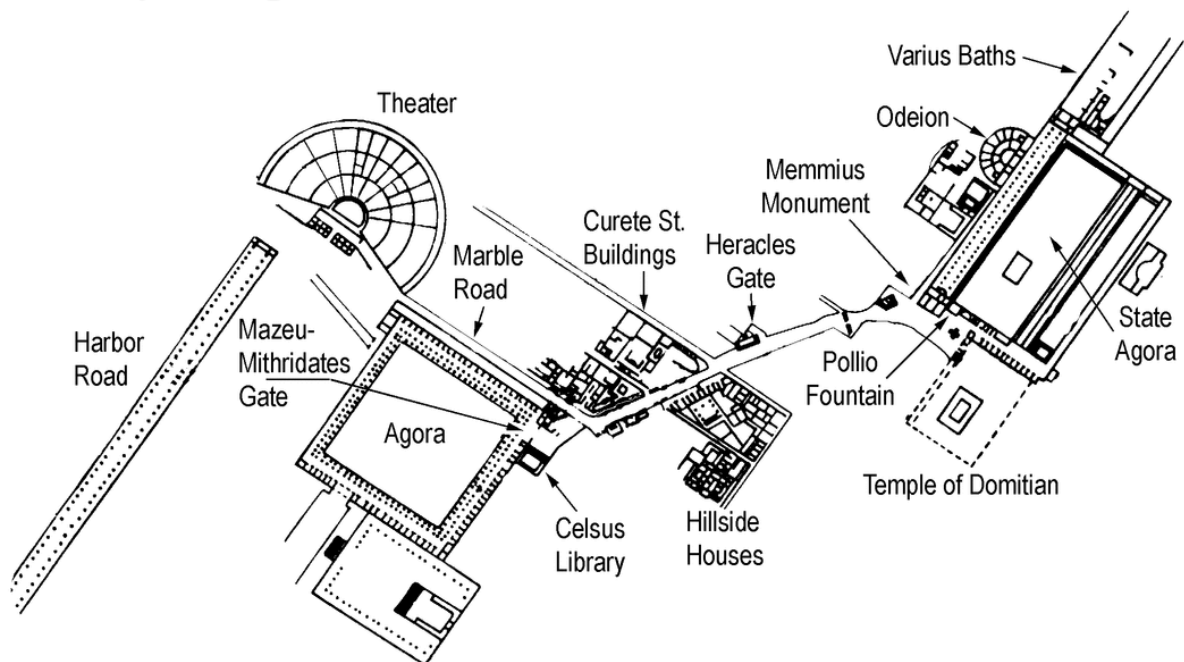


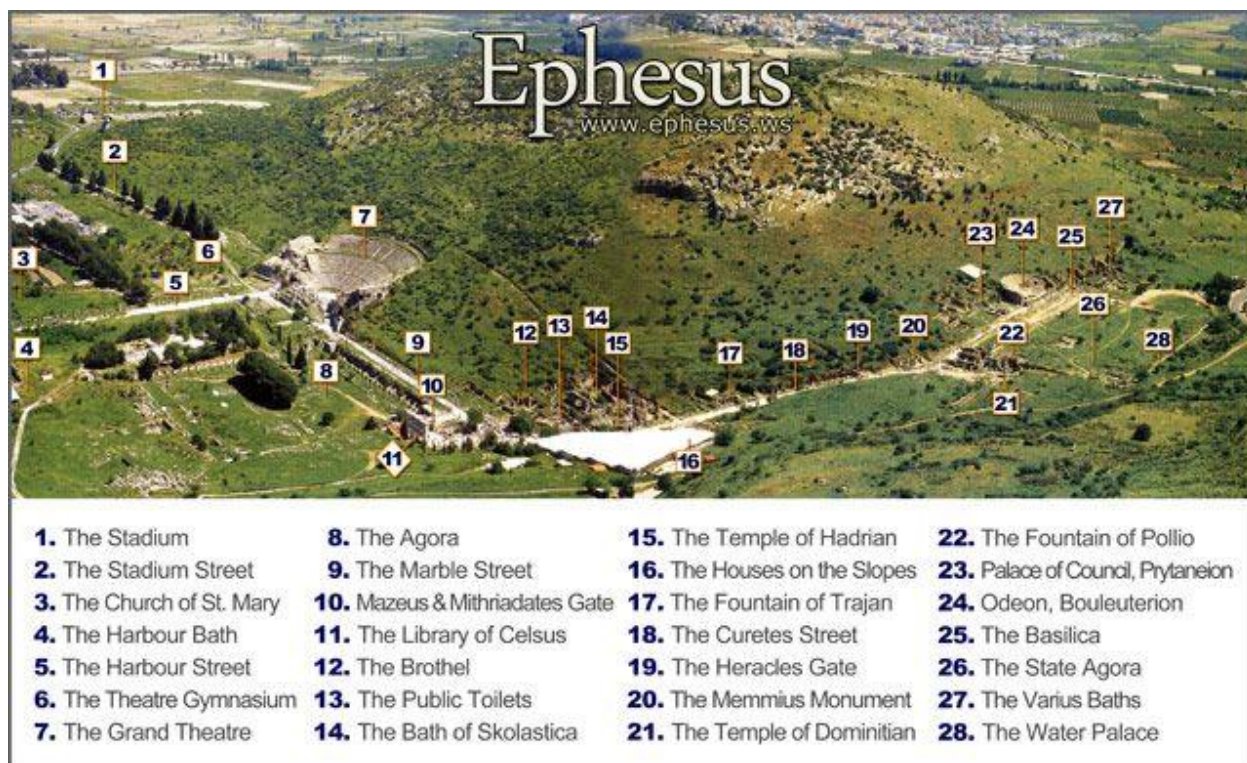
The city of Ephesus also hosted athletic events similar to the Olympics. Ephesus sat at the intersection of four major roads in Asia Minor.

The settlement history in Ephesus can be traced from the seventh millennium BCE. However, its most famous site – the Temple of Artemis (Greek) or Diana (Roman) – was constructed in the sixth century B.C.

Here is a map with a layout of the city in Paul's day and then a map of what it looks like today.

The City of Ephesus





The point here is that the size of the city alone is enough to overwhelm a missionary.

Another reason ministry was difficult in Ephesus was because of the entrenched and diverse paganism in Ephesus. Add to the idolatry of the city the fact that the culture of Ephesus was steeped in materialism and carnality. There was cult present which deified the Roman Emperor. Caesar Augustus was spoken of as the “Savior.”⁸ His birth was hailed as “the beginning of good tidings to the world” and the calendar was adjusted in light of his birth.⁹ Does that sound like a conflict with the gospel of Christ? To this day, the statue of the Roman Emperor Trajan can be seen among the ruins in Ephesus. This statue has Trajan with his foot on the world, presenting him as a god. Again, this is reminiscent of Paul’s declaration that all things will be brought under the feet of Jesus Christ. The thing that put Christians at odds here is that when a Christian said “Jesus is Lord,” he was saying that “Caesar is not.”

⁸ Tony Merida, *Ephesians*, pg. 9

⁹ Thielman, *Ephesians*, 21

Ephesus was also the headquarters for the worship of Diana (Roman) or Artemis (Greek). The Temple of Diana is one of the Seven Wonders of the World. The temple was twice the size of any other Greek temple and four times larger than the Parthenon. It had 127 columns which were 18.3 metres (60 ft) high and 1.2 metres (4 ft) in diameter. It took workers 120 years to finish the temple.

Background on the Book of Ephesians

Lastly, as we prepare to begin the study in earnest, let me give you an outline for the book of Ephesians which will guide us in our study.

Transition from Romans to Ephesians

Having given the Romans a written record of the foundational doctrine in the initial stage of their edification, Paul writes to them at the end of his epistle of the next level of doctrine which he intends to teach them. He calls this...

Romans 15:29 And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in **the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.**

That is Paul's intent, to come to them with doctrine which pertains to the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. When we think of the gospel, we are not always meant to limit our thinking to the forgiveness of sins which is ours when we trust Jesus Christ as our all-sufficient Savior.

Even though Paul has written his longest letter in laying the foundation for their edification (Romans), Paul knows there is more for them to learn and he intends on teaching them the doctrines which concern the fulness of their edification. These doctrines will provide for the fullness of our edification too.

As God superintends the layout of Paul's epistles in His word, Ephesians is the book which reveals the next set of doctrines which advance our edification; the perfecting of our godliness in all its component parts; the book of Ephesians.

In the book of Ephesians, Paul sets forth the fullness of the blessings of the gospel of Christ. Having begun our godly edification in the book of Romans, the doctrines contained in the book of Ephesians provide for our edificational advancement; producing in us a perfected godliness.

The structure of the book has been laid out in any number of ways:

Alliteration: the wealth (1-3), the walk (4-5), and the warfare (6:10f).¹⁰

One of the most recognizable ways to structure the book of Ephesians was by a Chinese Christian, Watchman Nee (English name). His structure for the book of Ephesians: Sit (1-3), walk (4-5), stand (6:10f).



Watchman Nee (Nee Shu-tsu) was born in 1905 in the city of Yantai, Shandong, China, to a Southern Baptist family. He became a Christian in 1925 after hearing the preaching of an evangelist named Peace Wang. Evangelism increased in China following the Boxer Rebellion and the martyrdom of many Christians in China. In the 1920's many high school and college students became instrumental in the spread of the gospel; Nee was one of these students.

As a teacher, preacher and writer Nee's work spread across the world. Probably the best known book of Watchman Nee's is *The Normal Christian Life*. The believers' experience of the death and resurrection of Christ is the base and touchstone of a normal Christian life, and the issue of living a normal Christian life is the church as the Body of Christ, which has both a universal and a local expression. Watchman Nee realized that we, as believers, have been crucified with Christ and that the normal Christian experience involves Christ living in us through our experience of bearing the cross in our practical human situations (Gal. 2:20).

Watchman Nee realized that being a Christian is altogether a matter of knowing and experiencing God's divine life in Christ. Through his experience of the resurrection life of the indwelling Christ, Watchman Nee was able to bear the cross and to participate in the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death (Phil. 3:10). You can tell much about Nee's ministry by his book titles: *Changed into His Likeness*, *The Spiritual Man*, *A Living Sacrifice*, *The Breaking of the Outer Man*, *The Mystery of Christ*.

¹⁰ Ruth Paxson (1889-1949) was a Bible teacher, missionary to China and author. Best known for her book, *Life on the Highest Plane*, Moody Publishers 1928

While these ways of dividing up the book are not wrong, or bad in any way, I am going to present a structure for the book of Ephesians that I think is more in keeping with the pattern for edification we learned back in Romans.

The book of Ephesians is divided into three basic parts. Each part concerns a component of godliness in two dimensions. The first is the doctrine that produces an advancement of our godliness, the next level of edification which is meant to bring us unto a perfect man. In that sense, Ephesians is the perfecting of our godliness.

The second dimension has to do with the specific attacks of the Policy of Evil (PoE) to prevent the perfecting of each component of our godliness. All three components come under attack by phase one of the policy of evil (PoE).

The phase one attack is to corrupt the message. Therefore, there will be an attempt to corrupt the message, in three different ways, so we are not perfected in godliness. *(May want to mark it in your Bible)*

- **1:1-3:21 – doctrine to perfect our godly thinking & the PoE's phase one attacks designed to obstruct it**
 - 1:1-23 – our vocation in the heavenly places
 - 2:1-22 – the fulness of God's grace that makes us fit for our heavenly vocation
 - 3:1-21 – the advanced tactics of phase 1 of the PoE

If the PoE is successful in this first component, then there will be no advancement of our edification, no perfecting of the saints.

- **4:1-5:17 – doctrine to perfect our godly living & the PoE's phase one attacks designed to stop it**

If the PoE is successful in this second component, again, there will be no perfecting of our edification.

- **5:18-6:24 – doctrine to perfect our godly labor & the PoE's phase one attacks designed to corrupt it**

The Book of Ephesians

Introduction #3

Session Three: Paul's Introduction – Ephesians 1:1-2

The Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians is one of the Captivity Epistles, along with Philippians, Colossians, Second Timothy, and Philemon. Ephesians 6:20 refers to his being an ambassador in bonds. The letter was written from his imprisonment in Rome in 62-63 A.D. Paul visits the city of Ephesus twice. Paul visited Ephesus in Asia Minor with Priscilla and Aquila on his second apostolic journey. Paul leaves them at Ephesus and continues back to Jerusalem.¹¹

Chronology of Paul's Letters and Apostolic Journeys

Year A.D.	Major Event	Acts	Period	Letters
31	Conversion, Damascus, Arabia	9	3 yrs. – Arabia	
34	Jerusalem, Tarsus, Syria, Cilicia			
43-44	Antioch, Jerusalem	11	1 year-Antioch	
45-46	1 st Journey & Antioch	13-14		Galatians
48	Jerusalem Council & Antioch	15		
49-50	2 nd Journey	16-18	18 mos. – Corinth	1&2 Thess.
50-51	Antioch			
51-54	3 rd Journey	19-21	3 yrs. – Ephesus	1&2 Cor/Romans
54	Jerusalem Arrest	22-23		
54-56	Caesarea Prisoner	24-26	2 yrs.	
56-57	Journey to Rome	27-28		
58-62	Rome House Arrest	28	4 yrs.	Eph/Col/Phil/ 1 Tim/Titus/Philemon
62-65	Paul's 4 th Journey?			
65-67	Paul's 2 nd Imprisonment/Execution		2 yrs.	2 Timothy

To begin, let us produce a summary statement for the entire book of Ephesians.

¹¹ I refer you to the maps of Paul's apostolic journeys in session 3.

Summary Statement for the book of Ephesians: Ephesians reveals God the Father's plan, purpose and destiny for the body of Christ, and His plan to exalt His Son over the entire creation.

Now, having produced the edificational breakdown of the book of Ephesians in the previous session, let's finish our introduction of the book by looking at Paul's introduction.

Ephesians 1:1-2 – Paul's Introduction

Like all of Paul's epistles, the book of Ephesians carries an introduction which contains elements common to all of Paul's books.

- Paul introduces himself as the author

Ephesians 1:1 **PAUL**...

- Paul gives the authority for his writing

Ephesians 1:1 **PAUL, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God**...

- Paul identifies the people he is writing to

Ephesians 1:1 **PAUL, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus**...

The audience for this epistle is the saints which are at Ephesus.

What does the Bible mean when it uses the word "saints?" Saints means "holy ones, those set apart and consecrated." As Paul said in Romans 1:7, the members of the body of Christ are "called to be saints" in the practical living of their lives (functionally true as we are edified unto godliness) while at the same time, as Paul says in Ephesians 1:1, we "are saints" in our standing before God (positionally true as a result of our being in Christ.)

Like in other cities, the saints at Ephesus met in homes and there were probably several smaller assemblies spread across the city. There is some debate among the scholars about Paul writing this epistle to the Ephesians because some of the manuscripts that have been discovered (Dead Sea Scrolls) since the Authorized

Version (AV) was translated do not include the words “which are at Ephesus.” From this the scholars deduce that this epistle was meant to be copied and distributed to all the churches. But that was supposed to happen with all of Paul’s inspired writings; copied and distributed by those with the gift of an apostle in the early church. While I believe we may have confidence in the Masoretic Text (MT) which does include “which are at Ephesus,” that does not negate that Paul intended for other churches to also possess the letter. Of course, he did.

One of the reasons that I believe the MT to be correct is because there is a progressive order to the doctrine. Romans is foundational in establishing the saints in the faith; the initial stage of our edification and Paul says as much in the Romans epistle. Once that doctrine has edified an assembly to be simple sons, then the next doctrinal advancement would be found in Ephesians where we are taught the fulness of the blessings of the gospel of Christ.

While it is God’s intention for every assembly to finish the Romans doctrine and go on to the Ephesians doctrine, when Paul wrote and sent the letter of Ephesians, the timing of the letter was perfect for the Ephesians. By identifying the letter as to the saints in Ephesus, then any other assembly would not automatically (and perhaps erroneously) consider this to be written to them, even though they are not yet advanced to the Ephesians level of their education/edification.

In other words, some things are said to the Ephesians concerning their advancement in the doctrine, which would not necessarily be the case for another group of assemblies in a different place. When this epistle is copied and carried to Corinth or Galatia, for example, instead of assuming this was specifically tailored for them, they would see it was addressed to the Ephesians and recognize that this is indicative of their advancement in the doctrine and not theirs. Perhaps knowing about the Ephesians would encourage them to finish their establishment doctrine in Romans. It is God’s hope that every assembly will eventually be ready for the Ephesians doctrine and it was copied and distributed with that in mind.

Now, let's return to the main point, Paul is writing to the saints at Ephesus, but there is more to identify his audience.

Ephesians 1:1 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...**

The saints at Ephesus have been faithful. In what way? They are faithful in that they have been true to the Romans doctrine; something which could not be said of every church Paul wrote to.

What does it mean to be true to the Romans doctrine? How can we know if we are being "the faithful in Christ Jesus?" Is this a general statement or does Paul have something specific in mind? I believe he has some very specific things in mind. So, what are those things? By the way, what I am about to give you can serve as a sort of checklist to ascertain if you are ready for the book of Ephesians.

When Paul says these people are the faithful in Christ Jesus:

- **Justification:** It means these people understand about their justification (that is to say, they know the components of it) and they are actively living out of it. They understand what the gospel is; faith in the finished work of Christ as sufficient to satisfy God's justice against us. They know they are saved by grace through faith without works of any kind, at any time.
- **Sanctification:** They know the components of their new identity in Christ in connection with their Sanctification and are living out of them. It means they know how to deal with the habits of sin in their flesh by the first two components of their sanctification. They also know how to live out of grace and not the law; operating out of the sanctification that was given to them when they trusted Jesus Christ. They know the purpose of their adoption and they have said "yes" to the offer of it. They know the three-fold commitment of honest attendance, interactive learning, and top priority. They also know of their joint-heir inheritance and the importance of suffering with Christ. They know they are to face the sufferings of this present time by understanding what those sufferings are, and how to deal with them so that, through that process, they are conformed to the image of God's Son. They know they will never please God by the efforts of their

flesh, but only by Christ in us. They are bringing their function as saints up to the level of their position as saints.

- **Establishment:** It means they have been established by:
 - knowing some things about their future;
 - the bondage of corruption
 - the redemption of their body
 - the restoration of the creature
 - a furtherance of their prayer life to the practical outworking of their edification and they know how to engage in that kind of prayer. They have begun to pray with the understanding of adult sons and daughters, who are capable of intelligently laboring with God in what He is doing, and not just praying as children with a wish list.
 - an understanding of the sufferings of Christ. They are aware of the PoE that is working in this world, and how it will turn its attention against them as they advance in the doctrine, as they increasingly hinder what Satan is doing in this world. They also have complete confidence that as they engage in the battle and endure the various sufferings, they will be more than conquerors.
- **Dispensational Change:** They know how to rightly divide the word of truth. They know about the dispensational change and how that affects their everyday lives, which informs their understanding of what God is doing today (or not doing) and why He is doing it (or not).
- **Love for God:** They have been engaged in increasing their love for God by appreciating, valuing and esteeming the mercies of God, making them ready for the education proper which will conform them to Christ's image.
- **Love for Neighbor:** They have the five core features of godly love working in them to an increasing extent. They also have the two non-core features of godly love working in them with the ability to discern when to employ them. Effectively, they have all four sonship decision-making skills being put into practice which makes them simple sons who are ready for the Ephesians doctrine.

So, when Paul says they are saints and “the faithful” he doesn’t just mean they come to church every Sunday, but he has some specific things in mind that indicate they have been faithful to the doctrine up to this point.

- Paul gives his customized greeting

Ephesians 1:1 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.**

“Grace and peace” is Paul’s adaptation of the world’s greetings. In Paul’s day, the usual Greek greeting was “Rejoice” which is from the Greek word “chaire.” The regular Jewish greeting was “Peace” which is from the Hebrew word “shalom.”

What Paul does is replaces “Rejoice” (chaire) with a similar sounding, but far richer word “Grace” (charis), and then combines it with the Hebrew greeting and comes up with the compound “Grace and Peace” greeting.

We need to step aside for a moment and talk about this issue of “peace.” If we are going to get the full impact of Paul’s greeting of “grace and peace,” then we must realize the fullness of what is in the word. Peace is much more than “cessation of war” or “a period of rest and quiet.” It does mean these things in the world, but in the Bible, there is more to it than that. The fullness of peace is “union after separation, a bringing together, a reconciliation after a quarrel.”

The idea is summed up perfectly back in the OT where we see the “peace offering.” There is a joining of those who were at odds, which is more than simply putting down their weapons. We are going to see this idea fleshed out in Ephesians 2.

Ephesians 2:14 For **he is our peace**, who hath **made both one**, and hath **broken down the middle wall of partition *between us***; ¹⁵ Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for **to make in himself of twain one new man**, so **making peace**; ¹⁶ And that he might **reconcile both** unto God in **one body** by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

Can you see how that peace comes from unity (made both one, and breaking down the wall between us)? The second component of peace is when God brings together those which were separated (of twain one new man) for what purpose – peace! And lastly, we see the issue of reconciliation (reconcile both, in one body).

By one Spirit, two parties which were separated have been brought together, the wall of partition is gone, and their unity is in Him!

And since the “grace” and “peace” are “from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the greeting is not about how they are to feel (Rejoice, etc.) but rather what God is doing toward them (Grace, peace). In God’s dealings, the grace of God comes first and then, as it fills our lives, it brings peace; reconciliation, union and wholeness. Paul’s greeting probably caught on and it was so different in that it enabled people to bask in the goodness of what God has done and is doing even when the world around them was falling apart. Grace and peace are available to all through Jesus Christ.

Why do we need grace and peace? Firstly, because mankind is naturally in a state of enmity against God. He is separated from God and alienated in his mind from God.

Colossians 1:21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled

Secondly, we need grace and peace because man is also in a state of enmity against himself. He fights against God who is outside of him, but he also fights a war within himself. While a lost man will not believe what I have just said, he is in a state of internal conflict and he doesn’t know why. He thinks he can be happy whatever he does (if He can rid himself of God) but he has a conscience. He can silence God and other people but not his conscience.

We know why this is the case: mankind was made in such a way that he can only be at peace within himself when he is at peace with God. This man has no real peace, not with God or himself. And this inner conflict makes him to be adversarial to everyone else. Sin makes us self-centered and egotistical.

As D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, “..he wants to be a god, but so does everyone else...and so, there is war among the gods.”

We claim we are right and everyone else is wrong. The result is confusion, discord and unhappiness between men. No wonder Paul prays we may have peace.

God gives man a moral code and he rejects it. God establishes human government to keep sin within bounds, but man constantly fights against the order imposed on him. God gives him the Bible and he scoffs at it. Man deserves every punishment coming to him, but God sends the gospel and that is where “grace” comes in. In spite of everything, God still offers him unmerited favor, an underserving love.

These words, grace and peace must go together for there is no peace without grace. But by grace, a man can have peace with God (Romans 5:1), with himself and with his fellow man. Upon believing the gospel, a man is changed and those he formerly hated, he now sees as a victim of sin and Satan. Knowing the grace of God in himself which produces inner peace, his former enemy is now someone for whom he prays. He carries out the doctrine not to return evil for evil but to love his enemy. He has a new thinking that desires to be reconciled, at peace.

Lastly, we have the “peace of God” which is in us, which means that no matter what is happening around you, that peace of God within you “keeps your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Not only has God given you peace, He has provided for the preservation of peace. We are furnished with and defended by a power which and a Person who, will keep you at peace. And this kind of peace is also the result of the grace of God.

So, which of these are we to have in mind when we hear “grace to you and peace from God our Father?” All of them! But, depending on what you are going through, one of these may have more meaning to your heart at that particular time.

The Book of Ephesians
Ephesians 1:3-14
Session Four-A: Our Spiritual Blessings

Summary Statement for the book of Ephesians: Ephesians reveals God the Father's plan, purpose and destiny for the body of Christ and His plan to exalt His Son over the entire creation.

Summary Statement for Ephesians 1:3-14: Our wealth in Christ according to the riches of God's grace and the revelation of the mystery of His will.

Edificational Intent: Ephesians 1:3-14 - Our Godly Thinking Pertaining to Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ

When we talk about the "fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ" we are picking up on Paul's terminology back in Romans 15, which is a phrase that describes Ephesians doctrine.

Romans 15:29 And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in **the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.**

After a two-verse introduction, the remainder of the passage (Ephesians 1:3-14) pertains to some of the spiritual blessings that are ours in Christ. These constitute "the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ." When Paul writes the word "gospel," do not confine this to the death, burial and resurrection or just things like being forgiven. Paul means this phrase in a much broader sense. The blessings of the gospel turn out to be the spiritual blessings that are ours because we trusted Christ and as a result, have been placed "in Him." From that point of salvation onward, we are identified with Jesus Christ. As a result, there are a number of spiritual blessings that are ours.

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ:

Before we look at these blessings individually, let me make a couple of comments about them:

- Every member of the body of Christ receives all of them
 - Everyone who has put their faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross automatically receives all of these blessings, whether you know about them or not
- All of these blessings are unconditional
 - There is no conditional “if” as in Israel’s program
 - If you are saved, you are in Christ
 - If you are in Christ, you get all of the spiritual blessings because that is where they are; in Him
 - God’s blessings to the believer under grace are unconditional because they do not depend upon us, but only on the finished work of Christ who provides them and God the Father who gives them
- These Blessings are complete
 - We have been blessed with ALL spiritual blessings; nothing is missing or left out
 - In Christ we have been given everything we need in order to fulfill God’s purposes in us
- These Blessings are spiritual
 - Unlike many of Israel’s material blessings, today under grace God is providing blessings for the inner man (soul and spirit)

In Ephesians 1:3, Paul says that we have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. Then, he goes on to enumerate some of those blessings:

- 1) chosen *to be holy and without blame* (vs. 4)
- 2) predestinated *adoption* (vs. 5)
- 3) accepted *in Christ* (vs. 6)
- 4) redemption (vs. 7)
- 5) abundance of wisdom (vs. 8-9)
- 6) inheritance (vs. 11)
- 7) sealed *with the Spirit* (vs. 13)

As you read through the first sub-part of the godly thinking portion of the passage (vv. 3-14), did you notice anything unusual? Did it occur to you that these twelve verses are made up of only three sentences; three long sentences? There is a lot packed in each of these sentences.

Things these three sentences have in common:

- All three sentences are speaking to the same audience (the corporate body of Christ)
- All three sentences are describing the riches of God's grace in accordance with the mystery

But did you notice anything about these sentences that separates them from each other? What is the critical difference between them? Let me give you a hint: compare vv. 3,7 and 13.

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ:

Ephesians 1:7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

Ephesians 1:13 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,

The first sentence (vv. 3-6) is about the unsearchable riches which are ours from God the Father. The second sentence (vv. 7-12) is about the unsearchable riches which are ours from the Son. The third sentence (vv. 13-14) is about the unsearchable riches which are ours from the Spirit.

What does that tell us? It tells us the entire Godhead is involved in the revelation of our riches in the mystery, which is exactly what we are told in Colossians.

Colossians 2:2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of **the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;**

One last thing to notice in three sentences is a particular phrase they all have in common: “to the praise of His glory.” The first time (vs. 6) it is for the Father’s grace to us. The second time (vs. 12) it is in relation to our inheritance. The third time (vs. 14) it is for our future redemption.

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ:

Who is Paul addressing? The “us” refers to the church, the body of Christ.

Why is Paul telling us about these spiritual blessings? He tells us because unless we were told about them, we would never know we had them.

Why do we need to know about them?

1. These blessings are going to add to the “mercies of God” which are meant to cause our love for God to increase and abound by demonstrating how good God has been to us.
2. Knowing about these spiritual blessings are meant to encourage us by revealing the glory of what it means to be in Christ.
3. This knowledge of our spiritual blessings also works to inform us about things that are waiting for us in the future.
4. Understanding about these spiritual blessings reveals more about who we are in Christ, so that we might live accordingly.

5. This knowledge is part of our edification; part of the doctrine that works to conform us to the image of Christ.
6. Knowing about our spiritual blessings gives us an understanding of our spiritual fitness in Christ and, at the same time, sets the stage for our instruction in godly living.

What can I say to set our proper thinking about these blessings? How about this: these blessings represent the greatest wealth in the universe as far as God is concerned. These are things that cannot be purchased with silver or gold. They cannot be gotten any other way than by being produced by God Himself and then given to us as a free gift of grace.

We received all these blessings the moment we trusted Christ as our Savior. The fulness of some of these are waiting for us, but they are as sure as if we have them already. An example of this would be the fulness of adoption which comes at the redemption of our body. Others of these blessings we already have the full expression of, such as being sealed with the Spirit.

Primarily, Israel's blessings were physical in nature, but ours are spiritual. Since our future is in the heavens, God is not working on our outer man or in our physical circumstances, for those things will pass away. God is working on our inner man, which is why it seems to some that God is being silent. He is not.

Much of the work that God is doing is "in" us. That is, we are edified unto godliness; we are being conformed to the image of Christ. Although this is a supernatural work that takes place in our soul and spirit through God's word and His Spirit, there is no outward miracle for anyone to see.

The other part of the work that God is doing today in this DoGG is to work "through" us. That is to say, to have the life of His Son being lived in us on a moment by moment basis. Again, this is a work that begins in us and works its

way out in our daily conduct. Therefore, God intends to live and work in and through the lives of the members of the body of Christ. This requires no outward signs or wonders; no walking on water or miraculous healings. It is simply the process of edification taking place as we respond properly to God's word and the leading of His Spirit.

All of this is to say, God is not being silent. The outward work of visible miracles is not God's greatest work, it is the transforming work (edification) that takes place within us that makes us into the godly creatures we were created to be.

Chosen

Ephesians 1:4 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**:

We are chosen "in Him," that is to say, "in Christ." Verse 4 says that those who are "in Christ" have been chosen (before the foundation of the world) to something. What did God chose for those who would be in Christ? He chose for them to "be holy and without blame before Him." (He did not chose them to be saved, read the verse.)

So what does it mean to "be holy and without blame before him in love" and why should we care about it? First of all, this phrase "to be holy and without blame" is referring to a three-part process whereby we are being perfected in holiness. Or to say it another way, Paul is describing the process of our sanctification! In order for us to be holy and without blame in the heavenly places, other parts of the process had to take place beforehand.

Part One: When we were justified unto eternal life (JUEL), God declared us righteous by imputing the perfect righteousness of His Son to us, making us positionally righteous in our standing (identity) before Him. That saved us from

the penalty of sin. This is the part of our sanctification that took place at the moment of salvation.

Part Two: Each day, as we allow the life of Christ to be lived in and through us, we are being “set apart” (holy!) from *the power of sin*! This is the part of our sanctification that is presently at work, every day. This is what we call “practical sanctification.” This is when the life of Christ is made manifest in these mortal bodies. This happens as we live out of the doctrine instead of the best efforts of our flesh.

Part Three: Eventually, when we go to be with the Lord in death or the Blessed Hope, we will be “set apart” from the presence of sin! That will make all the difference for us in what kind of life we will have in eternity. This is the part of our sanctification which will complete the process of our sanctification that delivers us from every aspect of sin.

“Being holy and without blame before Him in love” is a spiritual blessing that sets us completely free from every aspect of sin so that we can live unto God without having to deal with the sin issue! How wonderful is that?!

The Book of Ephesians
Ephesians 1:3-14
Session Four-B: Our Spiritual Blessings, cont.

Adoption

Ephesians 1:5 **Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children** by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

Before we survey this spiritual blessing, let me make a couple of points about predestination, foreknowledge and election.

Foreknowledge: God knows all things which are real and possible. Just because God knows what can possible happen does not mean He has ordained it to take place. (See 1 Sam. 23:11-13)

Predestination: God's determination that something will take place, and therefore it must. For example, every member of the body of Christ will be given "the adoption of children by Jesus Christ." The scripture does not teach that is predestinating anyone to be saved. Predestination has to do with what God has determined to do for/with the saved. Therefore, predestination is not a justification issue, but a sanctification/exaltation issue.

Election: a deliberate choice between alternatives. What God chose before the foundation of the world is that there would be a body of Christ. That is the "vehicle" so to speak.¹² It was the body of Christ that was chosen, not each individual in that body. Christ is the "elect" (Isaiah 42:1), Israel is the "elect" in Him (Isaiah 45:4), and the body of Christ is "elect" in Him (1 Corinthians 12:12, 27; Colossians 3:12). It is always "in Christ." We are elect because we are in Christ who is the Elect.

This spiritual blessing is that everyone who puts their trust in Christ as their all-sufficient Savior will be adopted. Predestination is not God's choice of who He

¹² See Reservoir of Knowledge #1: The Two Buses for a fuller discussion of predestination and election.

will save, but it is God's set of plans concerning what He will do for all who are saved.

Adoption supposes a number of elements, not all of which are understood by believers today. Yes, adoption would mean that you are part of the family of God. That is pretty good, in and of itself. In Paul's day, Roman families actually adopted their own children. To neglect adopting one's own children was tantamount to disinheriting them. In connection with our justification, our adoption assures us that we are part of the family of God. It also implies our relationship with each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. Again, these elements of our adoption are in connection with our justification.

Adoption goes beyond justification to having a part in our sanctification. In order to understand what Paul is saying, we need to understand something about adoption in Jewish society.

In Jewish society, the adoption was for placing a son or daughter as a legal part of the family business. It was an invitation for the Father to train a son or daughter to labor with Him in the Father's business. So, what is Paul saying? Back in Romans 8, Paul referred to us being given the Spirit of adoption in connection with our sanctification; an offer to be educated in our Father's business.

Here in Ephesians, both elements are present with regard to adoption. Every member of the body of Christ is made a part of God's family, and is offered the opportunity to be a part of the Father's business. But no matter how a son or daughter responds to the offer to work with their heavenly Father, every member of the body of Christ is adopted, without exception.

Acceptance

Ephesians 1:6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us **accepted in the beloved**.⁷ In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

It is by God's grace that He has made us accepted in the beloved. Before we address the "accepted" part of the verse, let us identify the phrase "in the beloved." The "beloved" is a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is a title which God Himself gave to His Son.

Matthew 3:17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

We are made accepted in the Beloved. God could have used any number of descriptors in Ephesians 1:6. He could have said we are accepted in the Righteous One or the Holy One. He could have referred to the blood of Christ or His meritorious work to speak of our acceptance. Although all of these are true of the Lord Jesus, by not using these descriptors, God is pointing us to something else when He uses the term Beloved. This term, "beloved" hearkens us back to eternity past and tells us we are accepted in the person of the Son before He became a man. I am not saying the Cross wasn't necessary, it was. I am saying that the Son was beloved to the Father before His incarnation. And we are accepted in Him!

Many believers today are unaware they are accepted in the Son. They think they are accepted on the basis of their prayers, their good works, their faith or their merits. But here is the truth: believers are accepted according to the measure of the Father's everlasting love for His Son! How much do you think the Father loves the Son? The answer to that will tell you something about how accepted you are!

Another thing to notice is that we are not said to be acceptable, it says we are accepted. Acceptable is something we are working toward in our sanctification, but in the meantime, we are accepted in Christ. Think about the greatness of this and let it fill your soul.

Ephesians 1:6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

It is God's grace that allows us to be in Christ and being in Christ makes us acceptable to God. Stop and think about where we would be without grace, without being in Christ. Even if we desired to be righteous, we would have run after self-righteousness which would have produced pride and willfulness.

This acceptance is ours solely by the work of God. "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved;" that is the Father's work. It was the Father who thought of and designed this mercy, and then carried out every necessary thing to bring it to reality.

So, what does it mean to be "accepted?" Firstly, it means that our persons are accepted; we ourselves are pleasing to God. He now looks upon us with pleasure. Secondly, acceptance means we have access to Him. We may come to God whenever we choose and He will meet with us, no exceptions.

No matter what things may befall us, we are accepted in the beloved. It is always so. We are accepted in the beloved when we are happy or sad, when we are hurt or well, in every circumstance of life, this fact, this mercy, never changes.

It was in his kindness toward us that God decided to form the body of Christ to live in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. This is part of the exceeding riches of His grace!

Ephesians 2:7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

To extol the greatness of this blessing just think about this, God, before the foundation of the world, freely determined within Himself to admit Gentiles into His Kingdom, for the manifestation of His grace to all the world; and He does this for the sake of His beloved Son.

Being accepted in the beloved is more than just a feeling that God has for us or about us. The Father's acceptance of us in His Son gives rise to something God does for us; He justifies us unto eternal life. Our being made acceptable in the beloved includes our justification.

And this provides the perfect segue into the next spiritual blessing; Redemption.

Redemption

Before we read the verses, take note that vs. 6 ends with a period. This long sentence from vs. 3 to vs. 6 has been about what the Father has done, with this last blessing being that He has made us accepted in the beloved. Now, look how vs. 7 starts out assuming you know that the Son is the beloved of vs. 6.

Ephesians 1:6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. ⁷ **In whom we have redemption through his blood**, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

Did you also catch the progression from being made accepted in the beloved to the Son providing redemption and forgiveness of sins? That is why I said that our acceptance includes justification.

Before we hone in on the blessing of redemption, I want to use this particular blessing to pick back up the acceptance issue. We have often heard preachers urging people to “accept Christ.” While that terminology is not technically correct, I understand what they are saying. But taking the words at face value, the issue is not whether we accept Christ’s work, but does God accept Christ’s work? The fact is, God did accept the work of Christ on the Cross and on that basis we can be saved by grace through faith.

When we trust Christ as Savior, we are placed in Christ and we get everything in Him. We are accepted in the beloved and we are JUEL.

In vs. 7, Paul highlights two words; redemption and forgiveness. Redemption means “to set free through the payment of a ransom.” Sin held the entire human race hostage because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Through the redemption, we are made free from the bondage of sin and its consequences.

Forgiveness is the second word in the text. Forgiveness means, “a letting go, or sending away.”

Our redemption is found in the blood of Christ. That made the price of redemption very high. I know you already know about this. In fact, we are so familiar with the story of redemption that, if we are not careful, we will take it for granted and miss the glory of it.

Ephesians 1:⁷ In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, **according to the riches of his grace;**

Redemption and forgiveness in this DoGG are offered according to the riches of His grace.

Abundance of Wisdom

Ephesians 1:8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

The “wherein” refers us back to the “riches of His grace.” When Paul writes “in all wisdom and prudence” he does not mean by “all wisdom” that there is no fact you do not know. This is all part of a context, a single sentence, that continues on in vs. 9. So let’s put them together to get a sense of what Paul means. By the way, “prudence” means “forseeing evil and avoiding it.”

Ephesians 1:8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; ⁹Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

How, exactly, has God abounded toward us in all wisdom? By making known to us the mystery of His will. When Paul uses the word “mystery” he is not talking about something so puzzling you can’t figure it out or understand it. He means something that was originally hidden but is now revealed. God’s hidden wisdom has a lot of parts to it.

The mystery of God’s will includes the fact that God purposed in Himself to form another group of people to live in the heavenly places; the body of Christ. God kept that secret so that Satan would not prevent the crucifixion of Jesus (1 Corinthians 2:6-8). This mystery has now been revealed by Paul.

So, what exactly does this mystery entail? He tells us in the next verse.

Ephesians 1:8 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 fulness 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:

There is debate among scholars about what the dispensation of the fulness of times is, and when it takes place. Mostly, it is either considered to be the millennial kingdom or a special age that follows after the kingdom. A few think it is referring to this present dispensation of Gentile grace.

I believe this is referring to a time when there is a new earth and a new heavens, a time following the completion of Israel's program, a time after the judgment seat of Christ and the placement of the members of the body of Christ in their positions in the heavenly places, after the last great battle and the great white throne judgment, after Christ has delivered up the kingdom to His Father and has put down all rule and authority and power (1 Corinthians 15:24), and He has assumed His position as the head of the body in the heavenly places. In this dispensation of the fulness of times, God will gather together into one kingdom the two realms of believers in heaven and in earth. Everyone in that kingdom are "in Christ" but the earthly believers are not in the body of Christ. Then, the Redeemer will rule the kingdom of God.

This is what is meant by verse 10.

Ephesians 1:10 That in the dispensation of the fulness 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:

But don't miss the point here. Out of the riches of his grace, an abundance of wisdom and prudence have been given to us as we are made to know the mystery of God's will. And how do we know that? By the scriptures of our apostle.

But the sentence doesn't stop there, but it introduces what I consider to be our next spiritual blessing.

Inheritance

Ephesians 1:11 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:

Because this inheritance has already been obtained, this is referring to the heir of God inheritance. As we have covered before, Romans 8 speaks of a two-fold inheritance.

Romans 8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: ¹⁷ And if children, then heirs; **heirs of God**, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.

If we take this as a description of the inheritance, then every member of the body of Christ inherits God Himself! Talk about a big inheritance!

The second inheritance, the joint-heir with Christ inheritance, is conditional. Not conditional upon suffering, else the verse would end with "if so be that we suffer." The condition is on how we suffer, that is qualified by "if so be that we suffer with Him." The with Him is the key. But this is not the inheritance that Ephesians 1:7 has in view. There, Paul is talking about the inheritance that every member of the body of Christ receives because they are "in Christ."

Ephesians 1:12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

The end result of all the blessings we obtain in Christ is that we may set forth His glorious grace toward us. God's glory is manifested by the exercise of His gracious attributes of mercy, loving kindness, and forgiveness. For all the wonderful things done for us, we should extol God's grace and be to the praise of His glory.

Sealed

Ephesians 1:13 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,**

The sealing of the Spirit takes place immediately after we believe on Christ. What is this “sealing” for? The result of being sealed with the holy Spirit is that our salvation is secure. And how is this done? By sealing every member of the body of Christ “in Christ.” We get everything because we are in Christ. The sealing ministry of the Spirit ensures we remain in Christ, making every spiritual blessing secure and permanent.

Ephesians 1:14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Just to put vs. 14 in a single thought, the sealing of the Spirit is the assurance (down payment/earnest) of our inheritance until the redemption of our body. And all of that will also resound the praise of His glory. The day of the redemption of our bodies is at the Blessed Hope when death will be swallowed up in victory (1 Cor 15:54). The glory of all this will go to God, not us.

Let us rejoice in; love God for; and be thankful for all these spiritual blessings. They are not the last ones we will see, but we will see more as we continue through the book of Ephesians.

Before we move on, let me remind you that these are things that are supposed to set our godly thinking regarding the fulness of the blessings of the gospel of Christ.

The Book of Ephesians

Ephesians 1:15-23

Session Five-A: Paul's Prayer for Spiritual Perception

The title for this session is my summary statement for this passage. The last section in chapter one runs from vs. 15 to vs. 23, and it is all one single sentence, with many parts to it. It begins with praise for the evidence of grace working in the lives of the Ephesians.

Ephesians 1:15 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;

Paul heard of new believers in Ephesus and how the doctrine had already begun to generate godly love in them. He expresses his thankfulness for two important characteristics: 1) their faith in the Lord Jesus, and 2) their love unto all the saints, which served as evidence of their faith. One quick point, Paul says their love “unto” all the saints, not “for” all the saints. Is there a difference? Maybe. The “unto” seems to indicate demonstrations of their love, while “for” tends to limit the love to a feeling. When you have love “unto” someone, it seems to indicate an action which is more than just a feeling. If this is the case, then Paul is commending their acts of godly love and charity for other saints.

Paul is thanking God for the Ephesian assembly and knowing how the Corinthians had been unduly impressed by worldly human wisdom and the Galatians deceived into thinking they could lead a godly life by keeping the law, Paul prays for the Ephesians to have some spiritual enlightenment so they could understand the things he has been writing to them about (such as: the mystery of God's will) and so that they can stand strong in faith.

Ephesians 1:15 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;**

What motivates us to pray for someone? It usually comes from something we have heard. Perhaps they have a need of some kind. Maybe they are going through a difficult situation. For Paul, the catalyst for his prayer was something good he heard about the Ephesian assembly. How often do we pray for those for whom things are going well? Evidently our prayers are not meant to focus on the negative, but also on the positive, as in this case, the advancement of the assembly. That tendency to only pray for those negative situations reveals the limited way in which we view prayer.

However, it is a sign of mature prayer to spend time thanking God for those who are succeeding in their sonship life and to desire for them to continue on and increase in their understanding. Paul is doing that, but even more than that, he is “making mention” of them in his prayers. For some he is calling them by name before the Lord and talking to God about what he has heard about them. That is relationship prayer! Paul talks to God like a real Father!

What does Paul pray for the Ephesians about?

Ephesians 1:16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

The first thing is that Paul gives thanks to God for the Ephesians. He “makes mention of them” to God in his prayers. And then, he lets them know, 1) he has been praying for them, and 2) what he has been praying for them.

This is relationship prayer in that Paul is not talking to God as though God, in his omniscience, already knows everything. He is talking to God about those things which he has heard of the Ephesians, their faithfulness and love for each other.

Ephesians 1:17 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:

Paul’s prayer is that God the Father may give unto the Ephesians the spirit (note: small case “s”) of wisdom and revelation (here comes the key part) in the

knowledge of Him. So, Paul is not asking God to give them the Spirit, but to give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation. By “revelation” Paul is not asking God to reveal something new to them, but he is using the word “revelation” in the sense of illumination.

Ephesians 1:17 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:**

What does Paul mean when he says “in the knowledge of him?” It means that he wants them to have wisdom and illumination regarding the knowledge of God their Father. Paul wants their knowledge of God to increase.

What does Knowing God involve? It is more than knowing facts about God (He is omniscient, eternal, etc.). For example, I may know a lot about Martin Luther, but that does not mean I know him. Facts are helpful, but they are not enough. Knowing God involves spending time with Him (in prayer) and being purposeful in a relationship with Him as our Father. Two big ways you get to know anyone is to spend time with them and talk with them. The same goes for God.

This involves a mutual exchange and mutual knowledge. Tell God things about you as though He does not know. There is a sense in which we know God through Jesus Christ (the Father sent the Son, etc.), but we really need to know Him for ourselves. Like the Lord Jesus’ prayers, our prayers need to be directed toward our Father.

Do we need God to open the eyes of our understanding? If so, why do we need that? The first reason we need God the Father to open the eyes of our understanding is so we might know Him better. When we get to Colossians you will see a similar prayer where Paul asks God to give them wisdom so they may “continue in the knowledge of God.”

Colossians 1:10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and **increasing in the knowledge of God;**

Looking back at Ephesians 1:17, we have a statement of what Paul has been praying. Paul has been praying for God to give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation “in the knowledge of him.”

Ephesians 1:16 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:

Why? Because the more they know God the Father, the more understanding they will have.

Ephesians 1:18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened...

And why does anyone need the eyes of their understanding enlightened? Verse 17 gives us that purpose or reason.

Ephesians 1:18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; **that** ye may know...

Are you following? “That” introduces a purpose statement. The more you know God, the more your understanding will be enlightened. And once your understanding is enlightened, you can know...what?

Ephesians 1:18 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,

Paul prays for them to know God to the extent that they know three issues:

1. The hope of the Father’s calling
2. The riches of the glory of the Father’s inheritance in the saints
3. The exceeding greatness of the Father’s power to us-ward

Verses 18-19 are talking about what the Father has done: His calling, His inheritance and His power. But, at the same time, all three of these involve us in some way.

It is **His calling**, but that calling has a hope **for us**.

It is **His inheritance**, but that inheritance is **in us**.

It is **His power**, but that power is **to us**-ward.

Paul wanted the Ephesians to know something they previously did not know. He wants them, through knowing more about God, to discover three specific things.

What is the hope of the Father's calling? In the New Testament (NT), hope has the elements of expectation, a trust in God, and the patient waiting for the outworking of God's plan. So, when God called us (to salvation) there was a hope, a confident expectation, connected to that calling.

What is the Father's calling? If we search the scripture, we come up with a list of things that we are called to. For example, we are called to be saints, called unto liberty, called to peace, etc.

To me, there is a reason why Paul would not specify which calling, or which hope he had in mind. When Paul said that he wanted the Ephesians to discover the hope of His calling, I think the point here is more general: hope is the absolute certainty that God will make true what He has promised. And every "call" of God has a "hope" that is produced by that calling!

For example, the call to prepare for a heavenly vocation carries the hope of reigning with Christ.

The call to holiness carries the hope of being conformed to His image.

The call to suffering carries the hope of the glory which shall be revealed in us.

The call to engage the adversary carries the hope of being more than conquerors.

The call to salvation carries the hope of eternal life.

Do you get the idea? Paul has no particular call in mind. No matter what the call, our hope is sure. There is a place in our relationship with our heavenly Father where no matter what our Father calls us to do or be, we have absolute certainty that God will make true what He has promised in relation to that call.

That is the first thing to discover as we cultivate this relationship with God our Father.

Ephesians 1:18 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,**

The second issue that we come to understand through the development of our relationship with our heavenly Father is that 1) God has an inheritance to give, and 2) there are glorious riches in His inheritance.

There are two ideas about vs. 18. One of them says that “we are His inheritance.” This comes from understanding the last phrase “in the saints” in a certain way.

There are many who are opposed to this idea. The short explanation of their objection is this: Everything is already Gods therefore He has/needs no inheritance. He already owns it all.

I think there are some problems with this reasoning. For one, there are verses that indicate that God will receive an inheritance.

Psalm 82:8 Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.

Exodus 34:9 And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it *is* a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and **take us for thine inheritance.**

Deuteronomy 9:29 Yet **they are thy people and thine inheritance,** which thou broughtest out by thy mighty power and by thy stretched out arm.

1 Samuel 10:1 Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured *it* upon his head, and kissed him, and said, *Is it* not because the LORD hath anointed thee *to be* captain **over his inheritance**?

1 Kings 8:53 For thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth, ***to be* thine inheritance**, as thou spakest by the hand of Moses thy servant, when thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord GOD.

Psalms 33:12 Blessed *is* the nation whose God *is* the LORD; *and* the people *whom* he hath chosen for **his own inheritance**.

Psalms 78:62 He gave his people over also unto the sword; and **was wroth with his inheritance**.

Psalms 78:71 From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and **Israel his inheritance**.

Psalms 94:14 For the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake **his inheritance**.

Isaiah 19:25 Whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and **Israel mine inheritance**.

We could have listed more, but you get the point; Israel is God's inheritance. But do these verses nullify the idea that God owns everything and therefore needs no inheritance? Not really. Why not? Because when we talk about God having an inheritance, it carries a different meaning than when we talk about us having an inheritance.

When we get an inheritance from the Lord, it is understood in this meaning: OED – inheritance: **2b. figurative**. Any property, quality, or immaterial possession inherited from ancestors or previous generations;

In this case, our inheritance is not from our earthly parents or ancestors, but it is passed down to us from our heavenly Father.

But when the Bible talks about God having an inheritance, it is not talking about someone prior to Him handing something down to Him, but it is understood in a different meaning: OED – inheritance: **1a.** A coming into, or taking, possession of something, as one's birthright; possession, ownership; right of possession.

Do you see the difference in meanings? Israel is God's inheritance, not in that it gets passed down to Him, but it is His inheritance in the sense that He is the rightful owner; He has right of possession; it belongs to Him. And why does it belong to Him? Because He created it! It was His when He created the nation from Abram and Sarah and therefore it is His inheritance (possession by ownership).

The problem is we only define inheritance one way, and that will lead to error. Now that we have differentiated the two meanings of inheritance, we need to decide which one is being used in Ephesians 1:18.

In order to help us with this task, let me show you all the references that are germane to inheritance in the NT. Firstly, we have two examples from the book of Acts. Both of these instances are about us getting an inheritance, not being God's inheritance.

Acts 20:32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to **give you an inheritance** among all them which are sanctified.

Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and **inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith** that is in me.

Did you notice the wording? Luke did not write “and inheritance **to** them which are sanctified...” He wrote “among them” which is very close to “in them” or “in the saints” which is what Ephesians 1:18 says.

Now, let's look at Paul's epistles.

The following uses of “inherit” have to do with not inheriting the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; 15:50), so they are not germane to our topic. Galatians 3:18; 5:21 are also not germane.

Ephesians 1:11 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:

This one is about us receiving an inheritance, not us being the inheritance.

Ephesians 1:14 Which is **the earnest of our inheritance** until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Again, it is about our inheritance.

Ephesians 1:18 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,

Ephesians 5:5 is another verse about who is not going to have any inheritance in the kingdom of God; not germane to the topic.

Colossians 1:12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath **made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance** of the saints in light:

Since we are the partakers of the inheritance, it is our inheritance from the Lord, not us being the inheritance.

Colossians 3:24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

This is the last reference (in the KJ Bible) in all of Paul’s epistles for either of the words, “inherit” or “inheritance.” The Colossians 3:24 verse is about us receiving the reward of the inheritance, not us being the reward of the inheritance.

So, the only verse in your Bible which can be seen to say that we (the members of the body of Christ) are God's inheritance is Ephesians 1:18. But, I will take issue with that interpretation.

Honestly, if you want to think this is about us being God's inheritance, I am not going to make a big deal out of it.

If you recall, I started out by saying you can interpret that phrase "in the saints" in two different ways. I have already given you the first way: that we are His inheritance. But, there is a second way to understand the verse.

The second way to see Ephesians 1:18 is to interpret "in the saints" differently. This second way of looking at the verse essentially says that there are glorious riches to God's inheritance in the saints. While it does not say "to the saints" which would make this interpretation clear, keep in mind that none of these three items include the preposition "to." "The hope of His calling" is not a calling for God to do something so He can have hope. His calling is to the saints, and the hope of that calling is a hope for the saints.

If we remain consistent with the way we are looking at these issues, the "glorious riches of His inheritance" is not an inheritance that God is getting, but it is an inheritance "among the saints" or "in the saints." If we make this about our inheritance, it makes sense that Paul would want us to know about the glorious riches of the inheritance that we saints are going to receive.

And even though we are not yet to vs. 19, when Paul writes "the exceeding greatness of His power to usward," the power is God's but it is not for Him, it is for us. His calling and its hope are for us, the glorious riches of His inheritance are for us, and the exceeding greatness of His power is for us. If we suddenly change the glorious riches of inheritance to be for God and not us, then we have interpreted the second issue in contradiction to the first and third.

I tend to look at these three things that Paul is praying for the Ephesians to understand all have to do with something that is God's. For example, it is "His

calling, His inheritance and His power.” But none of them are for Him to receive; they are for us to receive from Him.

Ephesians 1:18 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,

It seems incongruous to think the calling is God’s call to us and the power is God’s power to us, but the inheritance is not His inheritance to us, but ours to Him. This all depends upon which definition of “inheritance” you think is Paul’s meaning. If you think this is about you being God’s inheritance, then okay. If you think it is about God’s inheritance to us (just like His call is to us and His power is to us) then okay, that’s what I think too. But you need to be persuaded in your own mind. (By the way, I used to think vs. 18 was about us being God’s inheritance, but I have changed my mind.)

Now, I do think that God will be glorified in His saints, by their practical sanctification, but I really think this is about three things God has done for us, not two things for us and one for Himself.

This second issue of “the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” seems to pile one superlative on top of another. What is greater than glory? But Paul says, “the riches of the glory...” I think this is referring to the transcendent glory that goes beyond even our imaginations.

Paul is praying that we would, and I think he means it this way, progressively understand all three issues in vv. 18-19. I do not think the eyes of your understanding get opened in an instant and now you know it all. I think our understanding builds and increases over time. For example, I think many of us know something about the hope of our calling; that is to say, we have a level of confidence that whatever we are called to, whatever we told (say for instance, that we will receive a glorified body) our Father can make that happen. We are confident we will get that body.

But there may be another calling (say for instance, our call to endure the sufferings of Christ) that we may not yet possess the same level of confidence that we have in the Blessed Hope. We may trust that we can endure some things, yet when we think about all the policy of evil (PoE) can do to us we may wonder how we will do under the advanced attacks. Even then, we are not doubting God; but we are doubting us. But we forget that it is not what we can do, but rather what Christ can do in us.

What we will discover is that our trust and confidence in those kinds of callings will grow and increase over time. So, when Paul says he prays we will understand “the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,” I think this also is a gradual understanding that increases over time as we learn more and experience more.

In a nutshell, Paul is praying that we understand the incredible glory of God’s inheritance to us. And the aspects of that “glory” are manifold. By that I mean that there are many aspects to His inheritance. And Paul calls that “the riches of the glory” which indicates that nothing in the creation is more glorious than to be an heir of God.

When Paul talks about the “riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,” he is talking about the glorious wealth of the inheritance that shall be ours. This is not wealth as in the material world, for we will have no need of that kind of wealth, but, for lack of a better term, it is spiritual wealth. In other words, as an heir of God there will be a spiritual abundance – an infinitude of spiritual wealth which is inexhaustible.

The Book of Ephesians

Ephesians 1:15-23

Session Five-B: Paul's Prayer for Spiritual Perception, cont.

Ephesians 1:19 And **what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe**, according to the working of his mighty power,

The third issue is the “exceeding greatness of His power.” This power is detailed in the remaining verses of the chapter, so let’s read them.

Ephesians 1:19 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.

You can see how vv. 20-23 are a commentary on vs. 19.

There is a note in the Scofield Reference Bible that says concerning vv. 18-19, “The prayer for knowledge and power.” This suggests that Paul is praying for the Ephesians to have certain knowledge and that they may have power.

I do not think this is quite right. I do not think Paul is praying for them to have power or for God to give them power. I think he is praying for them to understand the power of God that is already working in them. Those are two different things. The emphasis is on understanding the power that is already in us.

Some may argue with this by referring to Ephesians 3:16.

Ephesians 3:16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

But the strengthening is not a power that comes from without, it is a power that works from within, in our inner man.

The power that Paul refers to in vs. 19 is the same power by which God raised His Son from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places! That is the power Paul prays to be known and understood. It is the power we are meant to live out of.

So, what is Paul wanting us to know, what are we supposed to understand? By the first of these three issues Paul is telling us that the hope of our calling is grounded in the character of God Himself. That is how sure it is and that means we can trust Him absolutely. And if we can settle that trust issue, then whatever God calls us to be or do, we can give ourselves to it completely without holding back. We will have no fear because we understand all the possible aspects of our surrender to His will.

Then, Paul prays for us to understand the transcendent glory for which we are destined, both in this life as we are conformed to the image of God's Son and the life which is to come in the heavenly places. If we can begin to see beyond our physical sight, if we can see things which are invisible, if we can see what is waiting for us, if we can comprehend the rich glory of His inheritance, if we can make that a reality and not just something we know intellectually, to the degree that it takes us over and we cannot help but live out of it, that is what Paul is praying about.

There have been times for all of us when we, for a moment, saw some great truth for what it is, to see it in all its glory. For a minute, we understood, and we were overwhelmed by it. We have all been carried away by these things in such a way that it made us determined to engage with these with the whole of our being. And yet, we have failed to carry them out. And that is where this last issue comes into play. Paul prays for the understanding of the power that works in us. He wants us to know: this is the power of the Christian life! Paul is almost begging for someone to understand all the possibilities of a life with that power within it.

Yes, we are influenced by the world, probably more than we imagine. Yes, we are subject to illness and accident. Yes, we are confronted with an adversary. Yes, we are opposed by the course of this world and judged by our conformity to it. Yes, our flesh is weak, yet it strives to be our master. But this power, the exceeding greatness of His power is already available, and it can overcome all of these.

So, if you are like me, you are ready to hear Paul say more about this power, but suddenly it seems like his thoughts lead him away from the immediate object of this power and he digresses for the rest of the chapter. (Just go back and read it and you will see what I mean.) And by this, I do not mean that vv. 20-23 are not important, they are. But if you long to know a little more about this third issue for which Paul prays for understanding, then have no fear, for Paul picks this issue back up in vs. 1 of the next chapter!

This is the power that raised Christ from the dead. It the power that sat at the right hand of the Father in heavenly places. It is the power by which He is made Head of the Church.

Paul has two things he wants to communicate about the power which he mentions: 1) the greatness of that power, and 2) how we may be certain this great power is working in us.

As for the greatness of that power, Christian salvation is a demonstration of the power of God in us. A Christian is the result of the operation of God and nothing else. No man can make himself a Christian, only God can make a Christian.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

1 Corinthians 1:24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

And, it is the power of God that works in us that allows us to become the Christians we are made to be in Christ. Anything that is done in us, truly done in us, is by His power within us. God is doing the work.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are **his workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that **he** which hath begun a good work in you **will perform it** until the day of Jesus Christ:

Philippians 2:13 For **it is God which worketh** in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.

Colossians 1:29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to **his working**, which worketh in me mightily.

But maybe there is no greater proof of the work of God in us than that which is stated in 2 Corinthians 5:17.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

We are a new creation. You don't become a Christian by being a member of a church or being a good person, or by "making a decision." A Christian is one who has been made anew, and only God can do that. It takes the power of God to make a Christian and it takes the power of God to live like a Christian. That power must be ongoing in us. So, the power is not just to be saved, but to live for God too.

The Bible teaches we can do nothing until God has first done something in us. We are spiritually dead and we can do nothing until God has quickened us, raised us, given us life and created us anew. The power of God is the beginning and end of salvation.

Ephesians 1:18 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,

Just like the superlatives in the second issue, once again we have Paul pointing to, not the greatness of His power, but the exceeding greatness of His power. We are almost without comprehension of the greatness of His power except for the last phrase in the verse.

Ephesians 1:19 And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, **according to the working of his mighty power**,

What does this last phrase in vs. 19 mean? This is one of the greatest things Paul has ever written. And it is his intention for us to know the exceeding greatness of His power – and to know it according to the working of his mighty power.

First, let's look at the phrase "according to," for this is the key to understanding what Paul is getting at. "According to" means "in consequence of," or "by virtue of," or "through," or "from," or "on account of," or "owing to." There are many illustrations of this in the Bible.

Ephesians 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, **according to** the good pleasure of his will,

This tells us that what God did was "as a consequence" of the good pleasure of His will.

Philippians 3:21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, **according to** the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Now, read that verse with this understanding, "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, **as a result of** the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

The point is to understand what "according to" means.

Next, look at the word "working" in vs. 19.

Ephesians 1:19 And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to **the working** of his mighty power,

Power that is working is different from power that is available but not being used. Now, look at the word “mighty.”

Ephesians 1:19 And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his **mighty** power,

The idea here is that something that is mighty is strong; it has strength which overcomes, which prevails, which conquers; a strength which coming up against resistance, overcomes it. This is the measure of the power.

So, what do we have so far? Paul speaks of a power, which is active which comes from a force which is irresistible, which in turn comes from God. This is the power (and if you don’t yet know it, it is the power of grace!) that is exerting itself in us and overcoming obstacles.

Paul is now going to give us an illustration of this power.

Ephesians 1:19 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*,**

Why does Paul choose this illustration? I think for several reasons:

- 1) Because it is a perfect analogy of what happens to us spiritually
- 2) Because it helps introduce the doctrine of our union with Christ so that when He was raised, we were raised with Him and we also are seated with Him in heavenly places
- 3) Because it is proof that every hindrance, every roadblock and every enemy in our path shall be overcome. The resurrection of Christ is proof of that

In addition to our own weakness, sinfulness and rebellion; in addition to the world, our flesh and the adversary; in spite of our experience and our sufferings, the last enemy is death. Death overcomes all men; none can escape it. But, because of the resurrection of Christ, and the power that produced it, we can have absolute confidence that nothing can prevent us from carrying out God’s

purpose with respect to us. No power can withstand Him and His power. All have been defeated and the resurrection is the proof of it.

God, who is working in us, will keep us while we are still here and make us fit for our future indescribable glory. It is He who is doing so, not us ourselves. Does this make you stop and think about the exceeding greatness of His power in you? Do you realize that having begun in us, it will continue until we find ourselves “faultless and without blame” in the presence of God?

Before we leave this section, let's be clear what Paul wants us to know about this exceeding great power of God in us. This is not simply about our future resurrection and nothing else. This is about the whole of our Christian life from start to finish. Paul is saying that we should know the greatness of that power from the moment we trusted Christ to the climactic event of our resurrection.

But the question is whether or not we will live in light of this truth. Are we aware of the fact that God's transcendent power is working in us? And why is it so important for us to know about this power and understand how it works in us?

Firstly, because of the forces which are set against us. The world opposes us. Satan's course of this world pressures us into conformity with the world.

Secondly, the flesh is weak. Thirdly, our physical condition (I don't feel like reading my Bible or studying right now, I will do it later.) Fourthly, old habits which are difficult to break. Fifthly, the adversary.

On the positive side, knowing and experiencing this power is important because we are called to holiness. We are called to make manifest the life of Christ in us. None of this is possible apart from the power of His grace working in us. It is by this power that God is fashioning us and bringing us unto perfection.

Let's tie up the loose ends for this section of Ephesians 1. Paul is praying without ceasing that the Ephesians might know these three truths: 1) God's calling and their hope in connection with it, 2) God's inheritance and the riches of the glory of it, and 3) God's power and the exceeding greatness of it. Paul knows they have to

get this and he wants their understanding of it to continue to grow so that their experience of it will result in the furtherance of their edification.

At this point in our education, having already learned the four decision-making skills, there is nothing we need to understand more than these three issues.

Why? Because at this point, nothing will strengthen us in the faith like the hope of His calling; nothing will enable us to continue in living this sanctified life like the glory of His inheritance; nothing will equip us to fight the spiritual battle and win like the exceeding greatness of His power.

So think about these things. Take inventory of what you presently know about them. How do they practically affect your life on a daily basis? How can you advance in your understanding of them?

Pay attention to what is coming up in Ephesians, for Paul will advance our understanding so that his prayers for the Ephesians will also come true for us.

ACRONYMS

A.V. – Authorized Version

DoGG – Dispensation of Gentile Grace

JSoC – Judgment Seat of Christ

JUEL – Justified Unto Eternal Life

MT – Masoretic Text

NT – New Testament

OED – Oxford English Dictionary

OT – Old Testament

PA – Practical Application

PoE – Policy of Evil

SoC – Sufferings of Christ

SoPT – Sufferings of this Present Time

VRS – Vain Religious System