

Ephesians 1:1-19

Today we begin a study in Ephesians. This is one of my favorite books in all the Bible and I believe that it contains some of the most profound verses in all scripture. Paul wrote these from a prison cell and as he does, he shares from his heart and from his experiences. We gain great insight into who God really is and how we can live the spirit filled life, through Jesus Christ. Here Paul lays out the whole idea that when we accept Christ as personal savior, we actually accept Him into our lives through the Holy Spirit and therefore can live Holy lives.

1. **Paul's Promise – vs. 1-14** – I have said many times in here that Paul's letters have two major themes. One *"Christ in You"* and the other is *"You in Christ"*. This is the start of the *"You in Christ"* theme. The phrase *"in Christ"* appears over 36 times in Paul's 4 letters here. Paul begins this letter with that thought by telling the church that as Christians and faithful followers of Jesus, they are in Christ. He continues throughout the entire book by making us understand that as Christians and being in Christ, we have all of God's richest blessings at our disposal. It is through the work of Christ that we are In Him and therefore share His riches. How did we get to be In Him? How were we able to receive the Spirit in our hearts? Three things Paul says are true.
 - a. **God CHOSE us – vs. 4** – Paul says God chose us before the beginning of the world. Now here is where this passage gets dicey. Many people use this to promote the doctrine of pre-destination or the doctrine of the elect. I'll speak to that if you do not understand it. But for right now, let's just say it is where people believe that they are pre-selected to become Christians regardless of the circumstances they are in. They have no choice to accept or reject God's free gift of salvation. I believe that Paul is speaking about choosing us to be adopted sons and daughters upon our acceptance of Christ's redemptive death and resurrection. He decided ahead of time how we would be made acceptable in His perfect world. Not that we are accepted or rejected regardless of our life and belief.
 - b. **Jesus REDEEMED us – vs. 7** – We all know that true redemption comes only from a Holy God and through a Holy sacrifice from a sinless sacrifice. We saw in Romans that no one of the human race is innocent and could pay that kind of price. Therefore Jesus came to this earth to be that sacrifice.
 - c. **The Spirit SEALS us – vs. 13** – Being sealed is like having a bullet proof vest on spiritually. We are given a promise that nothing will take away our salvation and therefore our promise of eternal life. This is where we get the notion of eternal security. We are secure in the arms of God.

2. **Paul's Prayer – vs. 16-19** Paul prays several prayers for the churches he write to and he has recorded a few of them in these letters. We have studies a couple of them in the past, but I wanted to shed new light on these here in Ephesians. Why is it important to study all of these prayers? Why should we care? Why should we know what Paul says in them? The primary reason is so that we begin to understand that what Paul prays for here is possible for us to have in our lives. If you really want what God has to offer, then begin to pray these prayers. Every day.

- a. **Spirit of Wisdom – vs. 17** – For us to have a spirit of wisdom, we need to be in fellowship with God. Only God can give wisdom. We need wisdom to make the decisions that plague us every day. We need wisdom to know how to deal with the challenges we face every day. We need wisdom on how to answer the questions that come our way on why we do or don't do things. Wisdom comes only from our intimate relationship with God.
- b. **Revelation of the knowledge of God – vs. 17** – Knowledge is that information that gives us the ability to know how we should live and how we should act and how we do what is right. You see knowledge, understanding and wisdom are all tied in together. The problem is that we get one and think we don't need the other. It is interesting that in the two prayers Paul prays and has recorded here in Ephesians, he specifically mentions knowledge, understanding, and wisdom in both of them. The words wisdom, knowledge, and understanding appear in over 200 verses in the bible. Over 40 of those are in Proverbs alone. It is vital to our ability to relate to God and appropriate the power of His spirit.
- c. **Our Hearts be Enlightened – vs. 18** – The eye is the gateway to the soul. That is what Jesus said. Therefore if we are to be what God called us to be, we need to have our hearts in tuned with His. That happens through enlightenment to our hearts. The Bible says that His spirit bears witness with our spirit.
- d. **Know God hope of His calling – vs. 18** – The importance of this is so often overlooked. Without this, we are no better off than a lost person. Because God chose us and has called us to be sons and daughters through adoption, we have hope. Hope for what? Eternal life! And that is worth shouting about. We are commanded not to be like those without hope, but are to encourage each other because we do have hope.
- e. **Know the greatness of His power – vs. 19** – You see, the hope is of eternal life, but His power is for life here on earth today. When we get to heaven, we will not need God's power. We will already be in His presence with our new bodies. So whenever we read about God's power and our ability to tap into it, it is for today. Right now. This minute. God's power is for us to use to fight the devil, resist temptation, help us with relationships, heal wounds, be kind to unkind people, and any of the other thousand things that come our way in a day.