

## Ephesians 1 Part 1 – John Karmelich

1. I've known for a good while now, that God wanted me to take on Paul's letter to the Ephesians. What I didn't know until yesterday was the why: The "why" is because God wants me (and hopefully you) to understand how far we have come as believers and what that means to us.
  - a) To explain that, let me summarize this letter in with a key thought: This letter explains how and why we were saved from God's perspective. It explains why God bothered to save us and what that means for our lives. While the first half of the letter focuses on the great things God has done for us, the second half then says, "Given what God has done for us, here is what I (God) now expect of you (us) in exchange for that blessing."
  - b) Whether we like it or not, if we have given our lives to Christ, that means that God has separated us from the world. This letter explains what that separation means in terms of our past history, our present situation whatever that may be, as well as our future.
  - c) Understand that Paul's letter to the Ephesians does not require any understanding about the particulars of the city of Ephesus or the particulars of why Paul wrote to them. It is about understanding our present and future destiny as Christians. In essence, it is about understanding that we as believers have been separated from nonbelievers and what should we do with the fact of that separation.
  - d) What is fascinating to me about this letter is there is almost no reference to that city within the letter. Paul started the first church in Ephesus when he traveled there. The book of Acts Chapter 18 mentions Aquila and Priscilla, who were a husband and wife team that sometimes worked with Paul in spreading the Gospel. Further, Paul spent three years in Ephesus teaching. (See Acts 19).
    - i) Despite that long-term relationship with Ephesus, the opening greeting is short and this letter has minimal references to anyone in this city.
    - ii) Yet, here is Ephesus, a city where Paul spent a full three years teaching, the letter does not mention any names of any people there. There are no references to how good or bad the church was doing. There were no particular problems for Paul to focus on in this letter. My point is this letter could in effect be written to any church at any time as opposed to having specific issues dealing with Ephesus.
    - iii) Think of it this way: If one studies Paul's letters to other cities, they usually end with references to people who live there. Another example is Paul's two letters to the Corinthians, which was full of issues based on problems that particular church had. There is none of that "personalization" with this letter to the Ephesians.
2. With that said, let me quickly give some background information about the City of Ephesus and Paul's relationship with that city. I doubt these facts I am about to mention are very relevant to this study, but people are always interested in the historical background when we start a study.
  - a) Ephesus is a city in what is today part of "Asia Minor". Most would associate this city as being a part of modern Greece. What was once a great city is now just a small tourist town for those familiar with its history or biblical significance. It once boasted a great harbor that was eventually ruined by silt flow into the harbor. Silt flow is in effect, build up of dirt so that the harbor no longer becomes a place where boats can sail and land.
  - b) Ephesus had one of seven wonders of the ancient world. That was a great temple built to the goddess "Diana". It existed when Paul was there. This temple probably took several hundred years to build. The city also had one of the largest amphitheatres of the ancient world that could seat 50,000 people. Despite the city's loyalty to this Greek deity, Paul started preaching Jesus here and it changed enough people to start a church.
    - i) Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesians while he was a prisoner in Rome. Most scholars date this letter around 62-63 AD, near the end of Paul's life.

3. Many years prior to Paul writing this letter, God told Paul that there were many believers in this city. In order not to miss anyone, Paul rented a classroom and taught there for three years. (See Acts 20:31.) Considering the fact that Paul seems to be the kind of guy who couldn't sit still in one town for very long, it amazes me that he spent three years in one spot teaching anyone and everyone who was interested about the Jewish beliefs in a Messiah, how there only was one God, how Jesus death and resurrection was necessary for the forgiveness of sins, and how anyone and everyone is welcome to trust in Jesus despite whatever one's background is. How's that for a run-on sentence? ☺ Since we're studying Paul's letter to the Ephesians, I figured we might as well get used to long run-on sentences. Paul has a number of them in this letter.
  - a) My point here is that this letter was not written to a bunch of newcomers. It was written to people who already believed in Jesus and had time to reflect upon that belief and how they have grown and changed since believing that message.
  - b) There are scholars who argue that this letter to the Ephesians was meant to be circulated to other churches. If that theory is correct, that means this letter was not written just to the Ephesians, but it was meant to be read by anyone and everyone who is a follower of Jesus. That would explain the lack of personalization in this letter.
  - c) So does this mean that if I am a new believer in Jesus I won't understand this letter? There are many things this letter teaches that is beneficial to the new believer as well as the Christian veteran. However I do find that once one has been a believer for a while one can look back at one's life and appreciate all the more that God has done for them and that is one point of this letter.
4. Many years ago, I had a bible teacher who told me that Paul's letter to the Ephesians is the "Alps" of the bible. He was referring to the European mountain range as in the "Swiss Alps". His point is that Ephesians is very high ground in that it teaches of the great blessings and rewards we as Christians have as believers.
  - a) As I read and listened to different teachers talk about this book, the one impression I get is that because it is "high ground" it is difficult to describe this book in words that we can relate to. What I mean by that is how does one describe all the great things God can do for us, will do for us, and has done for our lives? I don't think even Paul, with his lofty language, could fully grasp this, but he does his best.
    - i) Know that Verses 3 through 14 of chapter one, in the original Greek language is all one sentence. It is as if Paul is struggling to describe what God has done for us and he can't even stop to catch his breath to describe in one thought all of the great things God has planned for us through all of eternity.
5. Speaking of our eternal relationship with God, let me state now that is a key to understanding Paul's letter to the Ephesians is to have a good grasp of just what is "eternity":
  - a) God does not have lots of time on His "hands". God is outside of time as we know it. If God created all things, that means He also created time. Most of us adults understand that if we could travel in space fast enough, time as we know would be at a different speed than if we were just standing on earth. In other words, time is relevant to one's speed and position in this universe. My point is not to teach about time, but to grasp the idea that God is outside of time.
  - b) If you can, for the point of this study, grasp the idea that God exists outside of time as we know it, you will find that this lesson makes a lot more sense. However, if we accept the idea of an all-knowing God existing outside of time, those things that can seem like a contradiction to us will make sense to us if we accept the idea that God is outside of time.
    - i) For example, this letter gets into the idea that God has picked some people, but not all people to be saved to be with Him for all of eternity. If we can grasp the idea that God is outside of time, that will help us understand how some people, but not all people can be saved for eternity. More on that later. Meanwhile, let me get back to the key facts of this letter.

6. That last point does lead back to you and me as believers. We as Christians are a special "chosen people". It means that among those who will be with God for all of eternity, the Christian church is considered "a special subset" of all saved people. What I mean by that is that if you and I have trusted in Jesus as both the Lord of our lives (i.e., He is in charge of our lives) and our Savior (by His shed blood we are saved for eternity and eternally forgiven of our sins) than know that God has picked us Christians (as a special subset of all saved people) to be with Him for eternity.
  - a) What is hard to grasp, but is true, is the concept that God choose us before time began. In other words, we didn't know when we were born that we would be saved for all of eternity, but God did. Therefore, from our "stuck in time" perspective, we choose to have God rule over our lives. From God's "all knowing, outside of time" perspective, He choose us before the world began.
  - b) How does one know for sure that God has chosen us? Well, if one trusts in Jesus as both Lord and Savior as I just described, than one can be sure that one is chosen by God. If you have never made that commitment, and would like to do so, simply pray now that Jesus is in charge of your life and believe that He has died for the sake of your sins and that is it. If you have done that, you can know be sure that you have been chosen by God.
7. OK John, so God has chosen us before time began and I believe He is my Lord and Savior, what do I do now? That is one of the main subjects this letter to the Ephesians teaches.
  - a) In fact, the first three chapters focuses on all the blessings one does receive as a Christian and just what that belief means for our lives both now and eternally.
  - b) The final three chapters then say in effect, "If God has done all of this for us, here is what God desires of us based on that blessing." More on that concept when we get there.
  - c) In the meantime, we are actually going to start Chapter 1 in a moment. As I stated, this is the "alps" of the bible. What I meant by that is that Ephesians is considered the high point of the New Testament and teaches us how we are blessed, well just for being Christians.
  - d) It just occurred to me that I haven't given a title to this lesson, but in effect, I have been talking about the title for over two pages now. That title is, "Understanding how we as Christians are blessed by our trust in God. As both our Lord and Savior."
8. Verse 1a: Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,
  - a) I want you to notice how short this greeting is. Remember that Paul wrote it near the end of his life while he was a prisoner in Rome. (Technically Paul was under "house arrest", which means in effect Paul was required to stay in Rome, but not in a jail cell.)
    - i) My point is Paul did not say, "Hello, it is me, the guy who started your church in Ephesus". The text does not say, "Hello it is me, the guy who taught your city for three years. How are you all doing?"
    - ii) What makes this opening so significant is how short it is. There are no references to who Paul is other than the fact he is an apostle. There are no references to prove his background as an apostle or to state his relationship with the Ephesian church.
  - b) It is as if Paul is stating, "You already know who I am and if you are reading this and don't know who I am, I am an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God the Father.
    - i) It might help at this time to explain what is an apostle. That word literally means "sent one". In context, it refers to one who is specifically sent by God.
    - ii) Remember that Paul was not one of the original 12 disciples. Paul was not around when Jesus was on the earth but came on the scene a few years later.
    - iii) Paul is claiming that God called him to be an apostle at a later time (a few years after Jesus rose from the dead). He is still an apostle because he claimed that Jesus spoke directly to him to go preach about Jesus to others. (See Acts 22:8 or 26:15.)
    - iv) The reason we consider Paul's letters to be part of the bible, is that we believe God spoke directly to Paul and what he wrote was inspired by God. Other first and second century Christians made a distinction between Paul's writings and their own writings and understood that Paul was given direct revelation by God.

- c) OK John, how do we know Paul is an apostle and how does that affect my life?
    - i) I think history itself has supported Paul's claim of being sent by God, which is what an apostle is. Paul has become the most famous and most studied person in the history of the western world outside of Jesus himself. My point is time itself has supported the legitimacy of Paul's authorship. The fact that Paul's writings have survived and flourished all of this time supports the idea that He was called as an apostle and we should study his letters.
    - ii) The reason God picked Paul was that, at that time he was the perfect "blend" of things God needed to spread the word about Jesus: He was trained as a Jewish scholar in his early life. He also spoke fluent Greek, which was the common language of most of the Roman Empire. He also was a Roman citizen, which means he could freely travel around the Empire, which was at its peak in power when Paul was spreading the word about Jesus.
    - iii) This point does directly tie to the rest of Verse 1 and the evidence of Paul's life does support the fact that He was "sent" by Jesus at the will of God the Father.
9. Verse 1b: To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:
- a) The first half of Verse 1 stated who this letter is from, which was Paul. The second half states who the letter is to: It is to the saints in Ephesus and in effect, anyone and everyone who believes in Jesus. Anyone who is a Christian can appreciate this letter. That means one must trust in Jesus as one's Lord (master) and Savior (one who died for our sins).
  - b) Can one not be a Christian and still understand this letter? Of course. The difference is an "outsider" (for the lack of a better term) could understand how a Christian could believe these things about our lives by studying this letter. This letter never becomes personal until one does apply it to one's own life.
  - c) The text mentions "faithful". Does this mean if I am not faithful, I can lose my salvation?
    - i) That is a classic debate. I hold the view that as long as one is trusting in Jesus as one's Lord and Savior, one cannot lose that privilege as long as one believes it.
    - ii) I do believe one cannot sin enough to lose that privilege. Think of the term "born again". How does one become "unborn" once one is born again? I believe it was Charles Spurgeon who first said, "I am glad God choose me before time began, because if He saw me now, He might not have picked me."
    - iii) Think about the implication of that word "faithful". If God did choose us before time began, what can we possibly do to ruin that relationship? Nothing.
    - iv) As hard as it is at times to trust in Jesus, I can't imagine the alternative of not believing in Him in the first place. That is what Satan and his followers want you and I to believe: That God is not real and we are wasting our time trusting in Him. It is that lack of faith that can make us ineffective witnesses for God, but I don't believe we can lose our salvation as long as we trust in that fact.
  - d) Let me briefly discuss the word saint. Because of the Roman Catholic Church, many think of saints as "special people who have died who we can pray to for help". The bible teaches that the word "saint" refers to anyone and everyone who believes that Jesus is both God and has died for their sins. If we believe that Jesus died for our sins, we are a saint, and don't let anyone tell us otherwise.
  - e) Before I move on, it is probably important for the new believer to understand that "Christ" is not Jesus' last name. That word "Christ" comes from the Greek and is the equivalent of the Hebrew word "Messiah". That word just means that Jesus is the king that rules over our lives forever and I believe will also literally rule over the whole earth one day.
    - i) The word "Jesus" itself is probably important for us to learn as well. That word Jesus is the Greek equivalent of the Jewish word "Joshua". The word Jesus literally means, "God is with us" and is one of many titles and names for who we call Jesus.

10. Verse 2: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- a) The term "grace and peace" was a standard Christian greeting when Paul wrote this letter. It is kind of like an American saying, "Hello and I hope all is well with you."
    - i) The word grace is about God giving us something we don't deserve. It is like receiving a free gift for no particular reason. It is about understanding that one is blessed with tremendous blessing from God just because He loves us.
  - b) There is an important concept to grasp and this seems like as good a place as any to explain what that concept is. It is about understanding why God loves us.
    - i) I like to explain it this way: If God is perfect by definition then God has no need of anything. If God doesn't need anything, why did He create us in the first place? The answer is to understand the term "love". Let me explain it this way:
      - a) If I just love to play a musical instrument, or say I love to paint pictures, I would do it not for money but just because I love to do that thing.
      - b) If God is a God of love, then He desires someone or something to show that love to: God choose people for the purpose of showing us that love.
    - ii) What does God require of us in return? That we love Him out of our free will as well. That is why God never forces us to love Him. God wants to spend eternity by having a loving two-way relationship with those of us who choose to love Him in the same way that God chooses to love us.
    - iii) What does all of this have to do with God's grace? In a sense, that is the purpose of this letter to explain how and why God loves us. It is summed up in the word "grace" in that we receive this wonderful free gift from God just by choosing to accept that gift and choosing to love God in return. That is the purpose of this letter and that is the concept of God's grace.
  - c) This verse also mentions God's peace. That word "peace" is based on the Jewish word "shalom" which is a term used to describe overall happiness. In other words, because God's grace has been given to us, we can have a sense of all encompassing peace in our lives no matter what is our circumstances are at the present moment.
    - i) My point here is that God's grace always comes before God's peace and the words are always listed in that order in all of Paul's letters.
  - d) One of the things that is going to come clear in this letter is the concept of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit all existing as "one" yet all three are separate entities.
    - i) One cannot find a single verse in the bible that states that all three exist as one, but just that the concept exists. I find it best to explain the "trinity" as a solution to a problem, not a problem itself. In other words, how can the bible speak of God the Father being "God", God the Son (Jesus) being "God" and the Spirit being God at the same time? Therefore, the term trinity, which is not in the bible, but is a term that was coined by the early church to summarize the issue of three Gods in one.
    - ii) I bring that up here because the verse says we receive God's grace and peace from both God the Father and from Jesus Christ. This is the first of many times that the text implies "equality" between both God the Father and God the Son. We'll tackle this idea some more as we go through this letter.
  - e) For those of you thinking, "John, everything you've said so far in this letter is "basic" and for beginners, remember that we are only on verse two. Give it time. ☺
11. Verse 3: Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.
- a) At this point, we start getting into the heart of this letter. Notice this verse does not start with "Hey everyone in Ephesus, I haven't heard from you in a long time, hope all is well."
    - i) Instead, Paul gets right to the point of this letter which is to remind and teach all of us how blessed we are to be in Christ Jesus.

- b) It may help to remember that Paul wrote this near the end of his life.
    - i) In other words, Paul wrote this after having experienced probably dozens of occasions where he had his life threatened to the point of death just because he trusted in Jesus as his Lord and Savior. Paul has stated elsewhere how he has often survived shipwrecks, beatings and faced grave danger all because he traveled from place to place preaching Jesus. (See 2nd Corinthians 11:24-26.)
    - ii) My question here is that if a person can spent most of their adult life suffering hardships and physical pain can then in effect look us in the eye and say, "Praise be to God who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing"? The answer to that question in effect, will be answered over the remainder of this letter.
  - c) OK John, what is this spiritual blessing, how do I get it and what good is it?
    - i) The big picture idea is to understand just how blessed we are as believers. We as Christians can easily think, "My life is so difficult I don't understand why I have to live like this and go on like this." In life we deal with all sorts of hardships. Yes, trusting in Jesus gets us through those tough times, but that is only part of the big picture: Understand that every blessing Jesus Himself gets for all of eternity is also the blessing we as Christians get for all of eternity.
    - ii) Let me try this another way: Why doesn't God make everyone Christian rich with wealth in this lifetime if He loves us so much? Why make life so hard?
      - a) The short answer is we all became instantly wealthy we would not come to God out of love, but just for the material benefits. If people just became rich in this lifetime for believing in Jesus, people wouldn't care about the eternal benefits but only care about the stuff they received in this lifetime.
      - b) So if this spiritual blessing is so much greater than all and every material blessing in this lifetime, how do I get it and what is it? Again, Paul will spend the next seven verses describing what it is.
      - c) Think of it this way: If God made us rich in this lifetime, the longest we could appreciate it was say, one lifetime. If God gives us blessings in the eternal sense, that type of blessing is much greater as it lasts for eternity.
    - iii) So why can't God bless us both ways? Why can't He bless us with riches in this life as well as the next one if He loves us that much? In some cases God does bless believers with wealth if it is His desire for us to use that wealth for some purpose.
      - a) This life is in effect a test to see whether or not we will trust in Jesus no matter what are our circumstances. God is not anti-wealth. God is against people seeking wealth at the point of ignoring Him. Besides if God gave us great wealth, we would become dependant upon that wealth and not Him for our lives. That is why God chooses not to bless most of us believers with great wealth in this lifetime.
    - d) Meanwhile, the text of this verse does say that God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing that can be given to us. Let us read on to discover what that blessing is.
12. Verse 4: For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will--
- a) One of the great issues that Christians struggle with is why did God only pick, "you, you, you and me" to be with Him for eternity? If God is truly this God of love, why does He choose to ignore many people? What one needs to grasp is the idea that God did not pick us "at random". God picked us because God knew we would have a heart for Him.
    - i) If that is true, then why did God create people who would not have a heart for Him? Why did God choose to create nonbelievers in the first place? The answer is to test people and show all of us what happens when we choose to ignore Him.

- ii) God gave us free will, so logically some people will choose not to follow Him. Further, nonbelievers show us believers based on how they live what is the outcome in life of those who choose to ignore God.
- iii) We as believers should not watch the lives of nonbelievers and think, "Well, too bad for them", but instead think of them as people who need prayer or somebody who I can help (if they will let us help them) go down the right path in life.
- b) OK, so we get the idea some people are saved and some are not. We also get the idea that God knew before we were born who was saved and who was not. If that is the case, why should we tell others about Jesus? The problem is we are not God, He is. Further, all people who are not saved require believers to share the gospel with them. Think back to when you were first saved: If it was not for the effort of other believers, we would not be where we are today in our relationship with God.
  - i) God made the decision (for better or worse) that He will work through people in order to spread the word about Him to others. God uses believers not only to witness to nonbelievers but also to help other believers grow in their faith.
- c) That last statement does lead us back to these two verses. The essential point of these two verses is that if we are called to be saved, then in God's eyes we are perfectly forgiven.
  - i) The God who has "called us" before time began to be saved, sees us as perfectly forgiven. If God has forgiven us, why is it all of us (myself included) struggle with forgiving ourselves? Our problem is we think too highly of ourselves where we think, "I know I could have done better". However God knows our nature to sin and simply desires we seek His forgiveness.
  - ii) I stated earlier that there are benefits to studying this letter to the Ephesians as a veteran Christian. One of those benefits is we can look back at our lives and see how God has changed us to be like the type of person He wants us to be.
  - iii) What we also need to remind ourselves is that it is not up to us to change, but it is up to God to change us on His timing to be the type of person He wants us to be.
- d) With that said, I want to talk a little about the phrase "adopted as sons".
  - i) Paul says one of the benefits of being a Christian is to be adopted as sons.
  - ii) In Roman law, to be adopted means that an adopted son gets the full rights and privileges as if that son was naturally born to that family. Further, any debt one might have had before being adopted is now cancelled by that adoption.
  - iii) I also want us to think about the word "son" as opposed to "daughter". There is nothing sexual about our (next) eternal life. In Revelation 19:7, 21:2 and 21:9, all Christians are collectively referred to as the bride of Christ in that we become married to Jesus.
    - a) As a bride, God is in effect trying to describe the closeness we get to receive as being one of His. Just as a bride gets to share in all things the husband receives, so our future relationship with Jesus is so close and so loving, it is compared to a perfect and ever lasting marriage.
  - iv) So if we are a "bride" in Revelation, how are we "sons" here in Ephesians? In that culture, men get greater rights than women do. To be called a son in that culture means that one has the highest blessing possible. To be called a legitimate son of God means that we get as much blessing as one can imagine.
  - v) The biblical concept of adoption is a little greater than this one. It not only includes the idea as having all the rights of God's own son Jesus, but we are actually being changed and will be changed in the next life to be like Jesus in every way and get all of the same privileges that He gets. It doesn't mean we rule the world like Him, but somehow we get to share in everything God the Father gives God the Son. Again, because we are adopted as sons, we share that "son-ship" with God the Son. (If that doesn't get you in a good mood, nothing will. ☺)

13. Verse 6: to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.
- a) The idea of "praise to His glorious grace" includes the idea that God did not have to give us this wonderful destiny. If you think about it, God could have just forgiven of our sins and said in effect, "OK, you are forgiven so now you can be eternally saved."
    - i) Being saved is much greater than being forgiven of our sins. It includes the idea that we have this fantastic future and get to share in all that God "has" and gets all the benefits that one could get as if we were one of God's own sons.
  - b) The point of this verse is to try to appreciate all that God has given to us just because He loves us and wants to share that love He has for us for eternity. God the Father and God the Son share a love relationship that is eternal. God the Father made the decision before time began to create us with the purpose of showing us how much love He has for us through all of eternity. What God asks of us is not that we "try harder", but simply accept that free gift and trust in Him to guide us through the rest of our lives.
    - i) The idea I'm trying to get across is to try to comprehend that through God's grace (i.e., a free gift if we are willing to receive it), not only are we forgiven of all of our sins, but we also can enjoy a wonderful relationship of trusting in Him and getting to share in every benefit that He and the Son enjoys for all of eternity.
  - c) John you keep preaching that God created us because He is a loving God and He desires somebody or something to show that love to. If that is true, why is Jesus necessary? In other words, why doesn't God the Father just show God the Son how loving He is? Why does He want to show that love upon people as well?
    - i) Part of the answer is to understand that the Son's death and resurrection shows us just how much the Father loves us, as He is willing to die on our behalf.
    - ii) In other words, God the Father and God the Son "hatched this plan" to redeem mankind whether we like it or not and whether we accept it or not. Having God the Son was a necessary step in order to show mankind what God can do for us.
    - iii) I suppose God the Father and God the Son could just show each other how much love they have for each other, but God the Father has "so much love" that He wanted to create something to show that love to. That "something" is people. Since God the Son is not a created entity, God the Father still wanted to create something to show that love to. That is why we exist from God's perspective.
14. Verse 7: In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace
- a) Let me talk about that phrase "redemption through his blood". One of the more difficult concepts to grasp as a Christian is to understand the significance of Jesus' blood.
    - i) To explain it, one first has to understand that blood is the "internal river" that carries the nutrients our bodies need to every part of our body. When one digests food, it is the blood that in effects takes that food to every part of our body. That is why in the bible, blood is associated with life itself.
    - ii) God considers life to be sacred, since He created it in the first place. This is why the bible speaks of blood as sacred. It is not that blood is more important than any other part of our body. It is just that blood is symbolic of life itself and the need of our blood is a necessary aspect in order for one to live.
    - iii) That leads us to the basic concept that Jesus had to die for our sins. Jesus' blood being shed does not mean his literal blood is special in the biological sense. It is special in the sense that God the Father required that Jesus be killed for our sake. In that sense alone, Jesus' blood is special to us.
  - b) This brings us to the question of why did God Himself have to die for our sins? Couldn't God just say in effect, "I love people and therefore I forgive you all of your sins?" No, because to just forgive us of our sins would not be a fair punishment for the things we do wrong. There has to be punishment for sin. A perfect God has to be perfect in justice too.



- i) The only way that God could show love for people and fair punishment for sin at the same time is for God Himself to pay the price for our sins and God Himself to die for our sins. Since God the Father by definition cannot die or kill himself, God the Son was a necessary "separate, but equal entity" in order for us humans to relate to the idea of God Himself having to die for the sins in our place.
  - ii) That is why God the Son is "necessary" (for a lack of a better term) and that is why He had to die for our sins. Jesus blood was shed for us to understand just how much God the Father loves us and by having "God Himself" die for our sins is the only way of showing perfect love and perfect justice at the same time.
  - iii) My point of this speech is to understand how Jesus "shed blood" is significance in that the blood is symbolically the source of life and therefore that "blood had to be shed" in order for us to have forgiveness of sins. At the same time, one should not think that Jesus' blood as a human was anything more special than our blood in the biological sense.
- c) I just looked back at what I wrote since I started this verse, and realized that I not only covered the concept of "redemption through his blood", but that speech also covered the rest of the verse in that it talked about why we have forgiveness of sins (the second phrase of that verse) and it also explains the final part of Verse 7 that says the "riches of God's grace". In other words, the fact that "God Himself" was willing to die for the sake of our sins shows us how much God loves for us and shows us the price that God Himself was willing to pay in order to us to have that eternal relationship with Him.
15. Verse 8: that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding<sup>9</sup> And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,
- a) Paul's "run on sentence" continues here in Verse 8.
  - b) The concept of "wisdom and understanding" refers to the fact that God gave us the ability to understand this plan of salvation for all who are willing to believe in it. In fact, that salvation is for the entire world (See John 3:16), but only those who actually accept that concept become the ones who actually receive God's grace.
  - c) So if God loves all people and wants all people to share His love, why doesn't God just "force us" to accept that love? That gets back to the idea that "forced love is not love at all". That is why God gave us free will and only some choose to accept that gift of His love and His eternal salvation.
    - i) I have come to believe that Satan's greatest lie is that people can get into heaven by being a good person. In other words, most people today believe they are going to heaven because their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds. That is not the Gospel message but it is a commonly held belief. We are not saved because we are good people. We are saved simply because God loves us and we as people are willing to accept Jesus 100% payment for our sins.
    - ii) I remember explaining that concept to my father many years ago. His response was, "Well how does God judge us if we are 100% saved by what Jesus did for us?" I responded that the purpose of living is to glorify God through our lives. The way one gets in "good standing" with God is in effect to use our lives to make a difference for Him. Our lives as Christians do matter as we are rewarded based on our faithfulness to whatever God has called us to do.
  - d) This does tie back to these verses. The point of Verses 8 and 9 is that we can and do understand God's purpose for our lives. God gave us the ability to understand what is His will for our lives and God gave us the ability to understand His plan of salvation.
  - e) To put it another way, God has this wonderful, eternal plan of salvation, and we as people are able to understand it, spread that message to others and enjoy that love relationship with God. We as people can understand how much He loves us and the great lengths God was willing to go through by having "God Himself" die on our behalf.

16. Verse 10: to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment--to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.
- a) The key to Verse 10 is to understand the phrase "when the times have reached their fulfillment". The important question is "when is that time coming?"
    - i) The answer began when Jesus died for our sins. Before that, God primarily worked through the Nation of Israel to let people know of His existence.
    - ii) One day, this world will end as we know it, That is when all Christians and saved people will be united under Jesus who will rule over us forever.
    - iii) I mention "other saved people" as I believe others who are not Christians are also saved. This includes those who never heard the Gospel message but got the idea of God's existence and even those who died to young to give their lives to God.
  - b) One important concept to grasp here is that we as Christians were not chosen because we are more special than nonbelievers. In other words, we cannot point at ourselves and say that we can see why God choose us, as we are pretty special to being with.
    - i) When God first picked the Israelites to be "His people", God got the idea across that they were not picked because they were superior people. If anything, God regularly referred to the Israelites as "stiff necked." (For example see Exodus 34:9.)
    - ii) In that sense, Christians are no better. God did not choose us because we are superior to nonbelievers. If anything, it is amazing to look back at our own lives, realize the mistakes we make when we do things our way and not God's way and wonder in amazement, "Why did God ever pick me?"
    - iii) To repeat the phrase from Charles Spurgeon that I quoted earlier in this lesson, "I am glad God choose me before the foundation of the world because if He saw me now, He may not have picked me". Hopefully we can all see that we are not picked because we are superior to other humans. God picked us, well, because He picked us and that has nothing to do with us being special without Him.
    - iv) I was thinking last night about how un-special my life has been without God's help. I remember when I first got saved I felt like God looked at my life and said in effect, "I am not impressed by what you have accomplished." Now that I have lived part of my life making a difference for God I admit I like my life a lot more.
      - a) This is usually when my ego taking over occurs and starts thinking, "Yes, look at what I have done, I am special". That is when we need to remind ourselves that we are only special based on what God has done through us.
  - c) This leads me back to this verse: God desires this love relationship with Him to go on for eternity. God designed us to live this life to make a difference for Him so we can express that love relationship back to Him. I'm not exactly sure what we do for all of eternity, but I am sure it has to do with God showing love to us and we in turn showing our appreciation to Him. That is our purpose for living now and I suspect for all of eternity.
    - i) In effect, remember that all we do is in effect for the glory of Jesus who is God and who loved us enough to die for our sakes. That is why we spend our lives now and spend all of eternity enjoying that love relationship with God. That is the essence of what this verse is teaching.
17. Verse 11: In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,
- a) Remember Paul is continuing a long sentence that is a single thought (in effect) that goes all the way to Verse 14. Hang in there as we're almost to the end of that thought. ☺
  - b) Hopefully by now, we all get the concept that God choose us before time began. He knew before time started who would choose Him and who would respond to His love.
  - c) The point here is grasp that idea that because we were chosen, we who are chosen are predestined (as in it was determined for us) how we are (or "were" from God's perspective) to live out our lives to make a difference for Him.

- d) Let me put this concept another way: We tend to think everything that happens to us is either based on random luck or based on the choices we make or a combination thereof.
- i) However, a God who knows all things would know exactly what is happening to us at every moment in our lives. Therefore, God knows all the choices we make and God is aware of all the things that happen to us that we associate with luck. Here's the good part: God can use those "things" to make a difference for Him.
  - ii) We may look at our lives and see a mess. God looks at our lives and says in effect, "You are exactly where I knew you (us) would be at this moment." Now let Me (God) continue to guide you so that I can use you to make a difference for Me ".
  - iii) Christians tend to have this false view that unless we have personally lead say, lots of people to Jesus we are not used greatly by God. To be used by God is strictly about doing what He wants us to do. That may be as straight forward as working with one person for a very long time to make them a better person. It may be as simple as being a part of one's local church to support that church. Doing God's will is not only about doing "big scale things", but is about doing what God wants you and me to do at this moment in time.
  - iv) So how do I know what God wants me to do? Ask. Sometimes it is just a matter of going forward in life, regularly praying, regularly studying His word and being with other believers and then seeing what God has for us. I find it best to see how God is working in our lives in hindsight. That is when it becomes obvious exactly what God has called us to do. If God wants us to do more, He makes it obvious for us to do more and always leads us down the path He desires for us.
- e) I just reread Verse 11 and noticed this little speech summarizes this verse quite well. ☺
18. Verse 12: in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup> And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.
- a) I don't think when Paul first started his ministry he realized how big it would be. Paul just understood that God designed this gospel message to spread to all people and in that sense, Paul realized he was among the "first" to find hope in God.
    - i) Did Paul believe Jesus could come back at any time and wrap up this world? Of course he did and I believe that was part of Paul's motivation to spread the word about Jesus to as many people as possible as fast as possible.
    - ii) At the same time, I don't think in his lifetime, he appreciated the extent of how God used him in a great way to make a difference for Him. That same concept will apply to you and me as well. None of us know how much of an impact we have made for God and will not know until we get to heaven. Even if we only help one person get saved or one person grow in Christ, we never know how much of an influence that one person will have on others.
    - iii) There is a famous story of the man who led Billy Graham to Jesus. He was a local Sunday school teacher of no great fame. The difference he made in leading one man to Christ then lead millions of others because of what that one man did.
  - b) We as Christians (for the last 2,000 years and counting) are the people Paul is talking about here in Verse 13 when it says, "you also were included".
    - i) The main point of these verses is not about Paul or even us as individuals. It is about the fact that each of us as believers have been called at some point in our lives to make a difference for God and more importantly have responded in some way to that calling. The simple fact that you are reading this lesson is one proof that you care about pleasing God and are willing to grow in that trust in Him.
    - ii) The idea is that through our lives as believers we are willing to give glory to God through whatever we do in our lives to make a difference for Him. That is the main point of these verses and in effect, this whole lesson.

19. Verse 13 (cont.): Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,<sup>14</sup> who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory.
- a) The end of verse 13 says in effect that if we are believers in Jesus, we are marked with a seal. It is as if God has a stamp on each of our heads that reads "Property of Jesus".
    - i) No, there is no literal stamp. I believe the point is we couldn't lose that "stamp" if we tried. As long as we believe Jesus died for our sins and that He is God, there is nothing we can do to lose that relationship. We can't "sin enough" to lose that.
  - b) The other way we know we are saved is that God promises that all believers have the Holy Spirit "within them". That of course means it is time for a quick lecture on what is the Holy Spirit and why we should care:
    - i) Between God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, the bible spends the least amount of space on the Holy Spirit. That is because the function of the Spirit is to bring glory to God and not in effect "talk about Himself".
    - ii) So why does the Spirit have to be a separate entity? Why can't we just describe the spirit of God as being "His will" being done, say in our lives? The short answer is that the Spirit of God does only what God the Father "wills" and we can't control the Spirit in that aspect. That is why the Spirit "is" God and not something we can control or manipulate. God the Father tells the Spirit in effect what to do and in that sense we have to accept the idea of the Spirit as being "one with God" yet somehow it is a separate entity.
    - iii) Let me give you my favorite verse supporting the idea of the Trinity. It is Matthew 28:17. It reads: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (NIV)
      - a) Here Jesus tells all of us to make disciples in the names of the Father, the Son and The Holy Spirit. Jesus Himself must have thought of all three as separate entities and since Jesus is God, that's good enough for me. ☺
      - b) Notice the word "name" in Matthew 28:17. The verse does not say baptize in the "names" of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but just "name" as in the singular. The idea is that each entity is united, but somehow each is a separate entity. I can't think of a better proof text to explain the Trinity.
    - iv) Getting back to Ephesians, the verse says the Holy Spirit is "deposited within us". How is He there and what do I do with Him inside of me? The Spirit of God is the entity that teaches us what is God's will for our lives. It is the Spirit that guides us (if we are willing) to do what God wants each of us to with our lives.
    - v) At any given moment in our lives, we can choose to live "our way" or God's way. The way we even know how to live God's way (or say, pray to God or read His word in order to understand how to live "God's way" is because the Holy Spirit is guiding us to do that in the first place. In other words, one way to tell that we are saved is we have a desire to do things for God. It is the Holy Spirit within us that is guiding us to actually do those things that God desires us to do. That is the key point of these verses.
  - c) Let me end the verse with this thought: We can give glory to God for the fact we are saved. If we want proof we are saved, God gives us that proof by the fact that we have the Spirit of God "taking up residence" inside of us. For that we give the glory for all the good we do in our life back to Him. That is what these two verses are teaching us.
20. Father, We thank You for making the decision to save us before time began. We cannot express our gratitude enough for this privilege. Help us to live our lives to make a difference for You in this world. Help us to remember that no matter what else happens to us, we are saved and at the same time You are watching over our lives and guiding us in the way You want us to live. Help us to live to make that difference for You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.