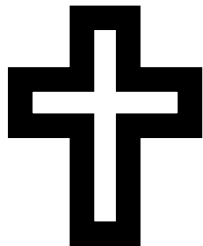


Twelve Lessons
on
Ephesians

Compiled and Written
by
Ronnie Simpson, Ph.D., Th.D., LL.D., D.D.



Macedonia Baptist College
9722 Hwy 601
Midland, NC 28107
(704) 784-4200

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THE WEALTH OF THE BELIEVER IN GOD'S PROVISIONS – LESSON 1

Introduction: The book can be divided into two parts: The Doctrine (chapters 1-3) and the Duty (chapters 4-6). Since the Duty section ends with a spiritual conflict some writers divide thus: The Wealth (1-3), The Walk (4-5) and the Warfare (6:10f). Another way is Sit (1-3), Walk (4-5), Stand (6:10f). Still another is the Calling, the Conduct and the Conflict. The occasion was to confirm the church (*at Ephesus*) regarding her exalted position in salvation and commission responsibility as custodian of the gospel; to certify that the church, called from among Gentiles, racially made up of Jews and Gentiles, was the body (assembly) of Jesus Christ, to bear His message and carry His program of work to all nations; and to direct the members of the body (congregational body) to walk according to their position of high calling. (Garner Baptist Commentary).

Lesson Goals:

1. To understand that every believer has been called “*by the will of God.*”
2. To clarify the term “*saints.*”
3. To show the correct order of salvation, “*Grace be to you, and peace*”
4. To understand the terminology, “*in Christ.*”

Definition of Terms or Phrases:

1. “In Christ” – Refers to His body – The term “body,” when used regarding “the church” is always used in the organized, institutional sense, to refer to any organized local congregation, and in a similar sense that the term “body” may be used to refer to the “student body,” the “legislative body,” or the “judicial body,” meaning an authorized, existing, functioning, orderly assembly of people – never an invisible, mysterious, ethereal composite of spirits or souls of all the saved.
2. Apostle – (Grk. *apostolos*, a “delegate”). One sent with a special message or commission. In this sense the word is used in the OT (1 Kings 14:6; Isa 18:2), and in the NT: John 13:16.
3. Saint – The NT refutes the idea of a special class of “saints.” Although it is true that in experience some believers are more “holy” than others, yet in their position before God all believers are “sanctified.”

I. A SPIRITUAL PLAN – Ephesians 1:1-2 – Paul begins with a blessing, with a replica of the Hebrew *berakhah* or blessing song.

A. Planned Career – “*by the will of God*” – Paul had not received this position by aspiration, usurpation, or nomination but by divine preparation, having been set apart and qualified by the activity of God’s sovereign will.

1. God had planned a career for Paul and Paul became the kind of Christian, God wanted him to be.
 - a. Before he was saved, he was “Saul,” named after the tallest of the Benjamites, King Saul, from whom he was descended (Phil. 3:4 – 6).
 - b. After he was saved, he takes the name “Paul” – small. God had cut him down to size.
2. Apostle – There are two concepts.
 - a. Personal Examination – Eyewitness of the resurrected Lord – I Cor. 9:1 and I Cor. 15:8-9
 - b. Personal Appointment – Direct call from the Lord – Acts 9:15
3. Authority – Paul is both a “bondservant” and a “called apostle” declaring to us that he is delivering a message from God Himself, as a servant, yet with all the authority of his apostleship. He is not only a “convert,” he has the “credentials.”
 - a. In the Greek Text, “called to be an apostle” is “*kletos apostolos*” or “called apostle.” The absence of the article denotes a definite call at an indefinite time; and refers the call and office back to God in eternity.
 - b. In the mind of God, Paul has always been an apostle.

B. Perceived Character – “*saints*” – When writing to the carnal churches at Galatia and Corinth, he used the word “churches” revealing these letters were written to the carnal man in view – the fleshy believer. But the letter to Ephesus is personal, addressed to the spiritual – the spiritual believer. Spirituality is not a “group” matter but an “individual” matter.

1. Ephesians, Phillipians, and Colossians are addressed to the individual saints. Paul confers upon these Gentiles a privilege formerly reserved for Israel. Using the privileged word, “saints” to these pagan Gentiles was mind-boggling to the Jews. They considered it a rape of sacred vocabulary.
2. This would suggest that “spirituality” is an individual matter.

3. “Faithful” – Their saintliness grew out of their believing. Calvin said, “No man is ...a believer who is not also a saint; and, on the other hand, no man is a saint who is not a believer.” Lehman Strauss says, “All the purposes of God toward the Church are related to the Lord Jesus Christ, so that the Church, in its *calling as an organism* and in its *conduct as an organization*.”

C. Proclaimed Creed – “Grace be to you, and peace”

1. Grace is mentioned 12 times – the number of authority. All we have in Christ can be claimed by the authority of grace. “Grace” was a greeting bearing the poetry of redemption, for the regular Greek greeting was “Rejoice!” (*chaire*), and the regular Jewish greeting was “Peace” (*shalom*). Paul combines the two, and then replaces rejoice (*chaire*) with the far richer *charis* – “grace.”
2. Peace is mentioned 7 times – the number of perfection. By grace, we are positioned in Christ, only His perfection brings peace. Grace and Peace reflect how salvation works. *Grace* comes first and as it fills our lives through the Holy Spirit, it brings *shalom* – *peace*.
3. Notice how correct is the Bible: In the Old Testament sacrificial system the sin offerings had to precede the peace offerings, so here grace must do its work before there can be any peace in the heart of man.

II. A SPIRITUAL PROVISION – vs. 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.*” We might note here that the names and titles of God the Father and the Son, are *personal, official, and dispensational*. Also note how Paul used the words, “us,” “we,” and “ye.” The “us” is the Jew, the “we” is the Gentile, and the “ye” is the Church.

A. A Sovereign’s View – vs. 3 – God’s view of salvation is that it is finished. We are seated in the heavenlies.

The scope of the Church’s blessing is “spiritual,” while that of Israel was temporal and material.

1. Contrast – I Peter 1:3 and Eph. 1:3 – Saints view and a Sovereign’s view.
 - a. Peter – represents the saved as pilgrims traveling through the wilderness to their inheritance.
 - b. Ephesians – represents the saved as having already arrived.
 - 1) To be in the heavenlies is to be living on a celestial level even while on the earth and to be in a heavenly state of mind and heart, even in the midst of earthly trials and sorrows.
 - 2) What a contrast with Israel and the Church. All their blessings were dependent on their obedience to God’s law while our blessings are dependent not on our faithfulness but on His.
2. Our salvation was an eternal arrangement between God the Father and His Son and they who *counseled* it and *commenced* it will *continue* and *conclude* it.
3. Our salvation contains “all” spiritual blessings; we’re not looking for anyone else.
4. Our salvation is real. W. Leon Tucker says, “The ‘heavenly places’ are as much a locality as God gave Israel, except that it is as boundless as theirs was bounded. ‘Heavenlies’ is not a figure of speech, but a place in space; not an adaptation of a spiritual principle, but a habitation for a spiritual people.”

B. A Saviour’s Victory – vs. 3 – “*in Christ*” – A small key to all of heaven’s bank, plenteous resources and reserves. W.A. Criswell says, “Paul uses the expression in his epistles, one hundred sixty – four times: “In Christ for forgiveness”; “in Christ for salvation”; “in Christ for assurance”; in Christ for holiness”; “in Christ for direction”; in Christ for service”; “in Christ forever.”

1. Change – D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones says, “If you leave out the ‘in Christ,’ you will never have any blessings at all.”
 - a. Change in our Position – Where He is, we are.
 - b. Change in our Privileges – What He is, we are.
 - c. Change in our Possessions – What He has, we share.
 - d. Change in our Practice – What He does, we do.
2. Change Contrasted – I Peter 1:3 and Ephesians 1:3
 - a. I Peter – We are told what we are going to have, Ephesians – Tells what He already has.
 - b. I Peter – We have the resurrection, Ephesians – We have the ascension.
 - c. I Peter – We are represented as pilgrims, Ephesians – We are already citizens settled down.
 - d. I Peter – We are traveling home to Heaven, Ephesians – The journey is ended.
3. Circle – “*in Christ*” – “*in*” is found 99 times and “*in Christ*” is found 25 times.
 - a. Definition – “*in*” – a fixed position – Inside a circle or sphere
 - 1) Illustrate – “Like a Balloon”
 - a) A Sphere – compasses the believer in every direction, surrounds and protects all that is within, excludes and separates from all that is without, supplies and nourishes all that is within.
 - b) A Sphere – to be within something leaves out any reference to the person that is inside. It is not who I am, what I am or what I have done, but where I am that is important. It is not if I’m

worthy, but He is worthy. I am eternally safe, secured, and supplied in Him.

- 2) August Van Ryn says, “To be in something, first of all, leaves out any reference to the person that is inside. Thus to be “in Christ” means that I myself am not being considered. It is not who I am, or what I am, or what I have done, but where I am that is important in this being in Christ.”