

The Book of Ephesians – Part Three

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Adapted from John Herbert's notes; Read by Ralph Alley

1).

Ephesians 1:15-23

15 Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease 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 to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His 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 age but also in that which is to come. 22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

- The first Chapter of the Book of Ephesians closes with this prayer for the saints there, that they would have ever before them the understanding and the awesomeness of God's promises with regards to the age to come. That this would be an ever-present and an ever-growing reality as they continue to have the eyes of their understanding enlightened, resulting in an immovable steadfastness.
- And it is the age to come and the surety of God's purpose with respect to it, manifested through the work of His Son, that has been the subject of the first Chapter.
- We had seen the bestowing of blessing –
Ephesians 1:3
Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ...
- And how this blessing is related to son-ship –
Ephesians 1:5
...having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,
- And the central focus contained here is further made clear through the revelation of the 'mystery of His will' –
Ephesians 1:9-12
9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, 10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth--in Him. 11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the

counsel of His will, 12 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

- The 'mystery of His will' is further described as 'the word of truth', 'the gospel of your salvation' – things concerning a future salvation, the salvation of the soul, receiving an inheritance, and the reconciling of rulership with regards to both realms of the Kingdom in Christ –

Colossians 1:16-20

16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. 18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. 19 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

- And in order to underscore the reality of this promise, those who believe have been sealed with the Holy Spirit –

Ephesians 1:13-14

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

- And through the work of the Holy Spirit we have the guarantee of all that is promised –

Philippians 1:6

...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

2). This focus on the coming Kingdom of Christ, and what God has made possible for those who believe in relation to that Kingdom, must be seen *firstly* against the absolute certainty that the rule of Christ and His co-heirs from the heavenly realm of the Kingdom in the place of Satan and his fallen angels has been God's purpose from before the foundation of the world –

Ephesians 1:4

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

- And secondly, this focus must be seen against the inevitability that there would be those who would leave their 'first love', who would turn away from participating in the fulfillment of God's purpose.
- Within this context we would see the unchangeableness of God's purpose and our own vulnerability to our sin nature, despite it.

- Hence the reason for the often repeated focus on what lies out ahead of us, something that is to be ever before us, as without it we would certainly begin to drift.

Hebrews 2:1

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.

- And it is for this reason that the Holy Spirit inspires Paul to begin his letter to the Ephesians with the reminder of this.
- And for every believer who is seeking the Kingdom, the contents of this letter (in conjunction with all other scripture) provide the instruction necessary to make that which is sought a reality. And along with this instruction is the ever-present warning (provided through the judgment passed on the Church in Revelation Chapters 2 + 3) of what will happen should we choose to not heed that instruction.

3). So, to view Chapter 1 as a whole, we would see a setting forth of God's plans and purposes for the ages by and for His Son (with respect to redeemed Man) concluding with a prayer directed towards a specific group of the redeemed with the realization of God's purpose in view.

4). This whole thought is then continued in Chapter 2 (remembering of course that the chapter breaks are added by the translators and do not appear in the original manuscripts), focusing again on what God has done, only now we are moving to a more individual, personal level –

Ephesians 2:1-3

1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

- In these verses Paul draws attention to our original pre-salvation condition-- 'dead in trespasses and sins' -- and shows clearly the connection between this condition and the kingdom of Satan. We walked 'according to the course of this world', after the pattern for this age – 'according to the prince of the power of the air' – in complete accord with Satan.
- And in verse 3 we see our conduct while in this condition defined as, 'the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind'. This is life under the dominion of our sin nature, before we had a redeemed spirit – resulting in us being 'children of wrath'. And this phrase 'children of wrath' are those who would experience the wrath of God because of their unsaved condition –

John 3:18

"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

- We also see reference to Satan, 'the prince of the power of the air', being the spirit – the angel – 'who now works in the sons of disobedience'.

- We see a contrast then between our being dead in trespasses and sins, and the life He has given us –
 Romans 6:23
 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- And we see a contrast between the faithful Christian (the possessor of that life) and ‘the sons of disobedience’ (also possessors of the same life). But here we see that some, despite possessing *life*, they continue, through choice, to walk in their former lusts. These ‘sons of disobedience’ would have to be a reference to those who are eternally saved, as obedience is expected only from those who have been eternally saved-
 Exodus 19:4-6
 ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. 5 ‘Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. 6 ‘And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’
- And just as our scripture here in Exodus has its focus on events following eternal salvation, so does our Ephesians scripture have the same focus –
 Ephesians 2:4-7
 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
- It is the love and mercy of God that reached out to us in our totally corrupt condition, even while our conduct placed us firmly in our enemy’s camp, in order that by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ we could be made ‘alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)’. And once again we see that it is the work of Christ that made this possible. The work of Christ on the cross of Calvary –
 Colossians 2:13-14
 13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.
 1Corinthians 5:7b
 ...For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.
- Enormous and incredible as Christ’s sacrifice on the cross is for us, we can see from the scriptures that from God’s perspective this was for a purpose beyond the event itself. Christ’s death and resurrection resulted in us being ‘raised up together’ with Christ, that we might ‘sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.’ And this has a long term objective – ‘7 that in

the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.'

- 'That in the ages to come' – these ages would be, the coming age, the Millennial Kingdom and the ages that will come after it.
- What God has accomplished through the sacrifice of His Son (redeemed man restored to the position that he was created for and thereby able to exercise the rights of the firstborn) will have a resounding effect not only in the Kingdom Age, but also the endless ages beyond. An incredible and astounding thought.

5). The next 3 verses in Ephesians provide additional commentary on our being made alive –
Ephesians 2:8-10

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

- If we look at verses 8-9 in conjunction with a verse from Acts—
Acts 16:31
So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."
- We find we have a definitive statement with regards to eternal salvation. It is by God's grace in response to our faith, our believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, and is completely apart from any action or lifestyle on our part – 'it is the gift of God, not of works'. And from God's perspective, which also needs to be ours, this is where it must be left.
- For most Christians though they cannot accept that eternal salvation can be that simple, hence the reason they set unscriptural criteria that have to be met to prove that a person is saved.
- The truth is that we cannot ever tell from what a person does or says whether they have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ or not. To do otherwise is just the feeding of our flesh, usually with a view to exalting our self at the expense of the other person.

6). If we then look at verse 10 we see reference to us walking in 'good works' –

10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.'

- Clearly this can have nothing to do with the means of eternal salvation, but equally clearly the scripture states that we have been 'created in Christ Jesus for good works', so how should we understand this within its context?
- Simply in the same way that we understood the previous verses, verses 4- 7. Remember that the purpose for eternal salvation lies beyond the event itself; the purpose is with regards to the 7th Day. But the 7th Day cannot come into view for the individual until eternal salvation has been realized.

- We are saved by grace through faith and ‘not of works’ in order that beyond that point of salvation we may walk in the good works ‘which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them’ – for the purpose of realizing our inheritance in the 7th Day.
- The ‘good works’ we are to walk in can only be accomplished through the Spirit, never through the flesh. And before our eternal salvation, we could not perform work in the spiritual realm.
- It is only beyond the point of our eternal salvation that work in the spiritual realm becomes possible and this is work only accomplished through faith-
 James 2:21-24
 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? 22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. 24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.
- And we will realize that ‘good works’ in response to faith are not automatic, but a matter of faithful obedience. Although we may now work in the spiritual realm, we also have the potential to continue to work out of our flesh, apart from faith. There is a choice that we have to make, and that choice has a consequence –
 Romans 8:1
 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.
- Perhaps it becomes clearer for us as to why judgment at the Judgment Seat is based upon works... it is a judgment concerning faithful obedience –
 Revelation 2:2 "I know your works..."
- The complete overview of the picture concerning our eternal salvation and the works, both spiritual and carnal, that follow, with the consequence for each is found in the following passage –
 1Corinthians 3:11-15
 11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ [eternal salvation]. 12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones [good works – works done in faithful obedience], wood, hay, straw [works done apart from faith], 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is [the Judgment Seat of Christ]. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward [no condemnation]. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss [condemnation]; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

7). Following this admonition concerning our eternal salvation and its purpose in

Ephesians 2:8-10, verse 11 begins with the words ‘therefore remember.’ What follows provides another comparison between our previous condition before eternal salvation and our condition following it, providing another facet to our being dead, then made alive, which we had seen earlier –

Ephesians 2:11-13

11 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh--who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands-- 12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

- The covenants of promise with regards to both realms of the Kingdom had been given to the nation of Israel, the physical descendants of Abraham and Isaac through Jacob and his 12 sons. And the blessings related to these promises could only come to the Gentile nations through those descendants. Because of Israel’s unfaithfulness, these blessings could not be bestowed upon the Gentile nations. God is the God of Israel, not the Gentiles, and apart from Israel there could be no access to Him – and Israel was and is in disobedience.
- We can begin to see the truly deplorable and literally hopeless situation the uncircumcised (the Gentile nations) found themselves in. And before the point of our eternal salvation we would share completely in this same situation. We were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.
- It is only through the sacrifice of Christ, the suffering and physical death and resurrection of God in the person of His Son, that we now have access to that which is still the province of the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. Christ is one of these descendants and through our positional standing in Him alone we have this access –

Galatians 3:29

And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

- We were once ‘far off’, but have now been ‘brought near by the blood of Christ.’

8). There was a ‘middle wall of separation’ that separated the Jew (who had a God and covenants of promise) and the Gentile (with no God and no covenant of promise), that from man’s perspective could never be removed. But through the sovereign intervention of God through the death and shed blood of His Son, that separating wall has been removed –

Ephesians 2:14-18

For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, 16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. 17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. 18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

Colossians 1:19-23

19 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. 21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight-- 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

- And here we see that Christ abolished 'in His flesh the enmity', thereby through the exercise of faith making 'one new man' from both Jew and Gentile who would believe – those who were separated now coming together in 'one body,' the body of Christ –

Galatians 3:28

There is neither Jew nor Greek [Gentile], there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

- Therefore, as a result of Christ's finished work –

Ephesians 2:19

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

- This is now such a very long way from being strangers and foreigners. The extent of this transition is incredible... we have been granted the privilege of citizenship-

Philippians 3:20

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

- And we are now members of the household of God...in one sense as family members –

Hebrews 3:6

...but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

AND-

Romans 8:16-17

16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 ¶ and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

- Although our eternal salvation automatically places us as family members within God's house, our positioning within His house as a joint-heir with Christ is conditional (as we see in our scriptures).
- And this would bring us to the other sense in which we are members of the household of God – our placing as household servants with a view to a reward for faithfulness –

Matthew 25:14, 21

14 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. ...21 "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

- And of course a just recompense of reward for those household servants who are unfaithful –
Matthew 25:28-30
28 'Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. 29 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. 30 'And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

9). As our scripture in Ephesians continues, we see that our citizenship and placement within God's household, in perfect keeping with what we have just read, is dependent upon certain action –

Ephesians 2:20-22

20... having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

- 'The foundation of the apostles and prophets', that upon which building can take place, would foundationally be the gospel of grace, followed by the gospel of the glories of Christ, just as we see in –

1Corinthians 15:1-4

1 Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures...

AND-

Hebrews 1:1-2

1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

AND-

Hebrews 2:3

...how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,

AND-

Acts 2:42

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

- And in the construction of this ‘building’ we see ‘Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone’ – He is the only foundation that can be laid with regards to His sacrifice and eternal issues.
- But also He is the chief cornerstone with regards to individuals and their issues of faithfulness and unfaithfulness with the Kingdom Age in view –

1Peter 2:6-8

6 Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame." 7 Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone," 8 and "A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.

- And we ‘also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.’ –

1Peter 2:4-5

4 Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

- This dwelling place is built with us ‘as living stones’ through the process of faithful obedience, a subject developed from another perspective in future verses of Ephesians–

Ephesians 4:15

...but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head-- Christ-- 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

- This we will look at more closely when we get to this Chapter, but suffice it to say that the growth occurs, ‘by which every part does its share’. We each have an individual responsibility here to be shaped and molded so that we may more readily be built into that ‘spiritual house’.
- This is a process of faithful obedience. Should we choose to be disobedient however, the One who should be our cornerstone will become a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense’.

Matthew 21:44

"And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder."

10). So as we draw to a close in Ephesians Chapter 2, we can see that the focus of the Book remains the same, ‘the dispensation of the fullness of the times.’ But we have moved in this chapter from the purpose of God in Chapter 1 to what God has done and made possible for us on an individual level.

- As we would view both these chapters side by side, it is difficult not to feel compelled to rejoice at the awesomeness and goodness of God.

- It causes the pulse to race and our face to be set like flint towards the accomplishment of His purpose in us, and to ponder like David –

Psalms 8:3-9

3 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, 4 What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him? 5 For You have made him a little lower than the angels, And You have crowned him with glory and honor. 6 You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, 7 All sheep and oxen-Even the beasts of the field, 8 The birds of the air, And the fish of the sea That pass through the paths of the seas. 9 O LORD, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth!