

EPHESIANS ONE

THE BLESSING CHAPTER

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THE GLORIOUS CHURCH

EPHESIANS ONE

We can well call this chapter the "blessing chapter" of the Bible.

In this chapter there are MANY wonderful answers to the question, "Exactly what is so wonderful about Christianity?"

Previewing in Outline Form (1:1-14)

Greeting; 1:1-2.

1. By Paul. 1:1.
 2. To the saints at Ephesus.
 3. To the faithful in Christ Jesus.
 4. Grace and peace requested for them. 1:2.
- A. Blessing we have in Christ from God. 1:3-14.
1. God blessed for bestowing spiritual blessings. 1:3.
 2. Blessings listed. 1:4-14.
 - a. He chose us in Christ. 1:4.
 - (1) Chosen before the foundation of the world.
 - (2) Chosen to be holy and without blemish.
 - b. He foreordained us unto adoption as sons. 1:5-6a.
 - (1) Done according to His good pleasure.
 - (2) For the praise of the glory of His grace. 1:6a.
 - c. He bestowed grace (favor) upon us. 1:6, 8.
 - (1) Bestowed upon us in Christ, the Beloved.
 - (2) Grace made to abound in wisdom and prudence. 1:8.
 - d. We have redemption in Christ. 1:7.
 - (1) Through Christ's blood.
 - (2) Redemption is the forgiveness of our trespasses.
 - e. He made known to us the mystery of His will. 1:9-10.
 - (1) Made known according to the good pleasure which He purposed in Christ. 1:9.
 - (2) Made known unto a dispensation of the fulness of times. 1:10.
 - f. In Christ we are made a heritage. 1:11-12.
 - (1) Having been foreordained according to the purpose of God. 1:11.
 - (2) That we be unto the praise of His glory. 1:12.
 - g. In Christ we were sealed with the Holy Spirit. 1:13-14.
 - (1) Sealing follows hearing the Word. 1:13.

- (2) Sealing follows believing the Word.
- (3) The Holy Spirit is an earnest of our inheritance. 1:14.

Text (1:1, 2)

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, to the saints that are at Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thought Questions (1:1-2)

1. What does Paul imply by saying that he was an apostle *through the will of God*?
2. This letter is addressed to the *saints*. Are all Christians saints? Is there any distinction between the *saints* and the *faithful* who are mentioned in the next phrase?
3. What do you think that *grace* is? Look up the meaning of this word in a dictionary. Why do we need grace?

Paraphrase

1. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God (and not of man), to the holy ones (the saints) that are in the city of Ephesus, and to the faithful souls in Christ Jesus elsewhere,
2. May divine favor and peace be given unto you from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom the Father dispenses His blessings.

Notes (1:1-2)

1. Paul, who wrote this letter (see Introduction, section VIII), was an apostle through the will of God. He was no imposter. His life history, his power to work miracles, and his complete dedication to Christ all prove that he was a true apostle. See Galatians, chapters 1 and 2, for Paul's defence of his apostleship.
2. Paul addressed the brethren at Ephesus as *saints*. All Christians are saints. The word *saint* means a *holy* one. All Christians must be holy. I Pet. 1:16.
3. Notice that the letter is addressed to the saints at Ephesus, and to the faithful (or believing ones) in Christ Jesus. We understand that this epistle was sent to Christians in other places as well as to those in Ephesus. (See Introduction, section VII.)

4. Grace is God's undeserved favor. The teaching that we are saved by God's favor, and not because we deserve it, is a central doctrine in Ephesians and throughout the New Testament.
5. Grace and peace were meaningful wishes for the saints in an age of wholesale massacres of the saints by Caesar.

Fact Questions

36. Through what was Paul an apostle?
37. What are *saints*?
38. To what two groups is the epistle addressed?
39. What two things did Paul wish for the Ephesians?
40. What is *grace*?
41. From Whom do grace and peace come?

Thought Questions (1:3-14)

4. Count how many times the text says (in 1:3-14) that our blessings are given "through Christ," or "in Christ," or "in Him" (Christ), or uses other such phrases referring to Christ. What does this indicate to you about the need for Christ? (Note: Such phrases as *in Christ* occur 164 times in the writings of Paul.)
5. Count how many times such phrases as *to the praise of His glory* occur in 1:3-14. What does this indicate to you about the necessity for praising God?

Notes (1:3-14)

Note the purposes of the blessings as stated in the text:

- (1) *That we should be holy and without blemish* (blame) *before God.* 1:4; 5:27. God wants us to be in His presence in heaven forever. But He does not want people there whose lives are spotted, blemished, and unclean with sin. His goodness in giving us these blessings should cause us to repent of sins (Romans 2:4).
- (2) *That we should be "to the praise of his glory."* (1:6, 12, 14). We must, therefore, praise God with psalms, songs, testimonies, and prayers. Heaven will be a place of perpetual praise. If we do not praise God, we disappoint God and resist His purpose in giving us the blessings.
- (3) *That he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both the things that are in heaven and that are on earth;* 1:10. Sin has broken up and disunited mankind, and also the angels in heaven (Jude 6). But now through Christ, God is

working toward an age (dispensation) when He shall bring together again for Himself one great harmonious universe in Christ. Sinners shall be cast out, but all who will receive the blessings shall be saved, and gathered into one great fellowship in Christ. Don't you want to be a part of that one great body that will be gathered together in Christ?

Fact Questions

42. Name the three purposes for which God has blessed us.

Text (1:3)

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ:

Thought Questions (1:3)

6. What is the reason for which Paul blessed God in this verse?
7. Can Christ be equal with God, and yet call God His God?
8. With what type of blessings have we been blessed? Are there no material blessings attached to the gospel of Christ?
9. What are the *heavenly places*? Does this refer to heaven? or to the church? or to both? or to something else?
10. In whom are these blessings bestowed?

Paraphrase

3. Praised be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who with every spiritual blessing has blessed all of us who are in the heavenly places in Christ, that is, in the church.

Notes (1:3)

1. Truly the Father God deserves to be blessed and praised for blessing us with every spiritual blessing. Of course, we know that He has blessings beyond measure yet in store for His saints in the life to come.
2. The Ephesians doubtless felt that they were more highly blessed than any other people, because the great image of Diana was in their city (bringing great wealth with it). God wanted the Christians to know that His blessings came *through Jesus Christ*, not Diana (or even the law of Moses). For that reason, God inspired Paul to write this section. Any one of these blessings is enough to make Christianity wonderful. But Christians have ALL of these blessings.

3. By a relationship too deep for human understanding, Christ is said to be equal with God (Phil. 2:6; John 5:23), and yet to honor God, the Father, as His God (Eph. 1:17; John 20:17).
4. The Law of Moses promised many material blessings (Deut. 7:12-16). The gospel contains some material promises (Matt. 6:33; Phil. 4:19), but its promises are mainly spiritual. Therefore the appeal of the gospel is not to the carnally minded, but to those who seek the abiding things of the Spirit (II Cor. 4:18).
5. The word *places* in the phrase *heavenly places* is not in the original Greek text. (Therefore it is written in italics in our text.) The expression is just *the heavenlies*.

The term *heavenly places* refers to Heaven itself in Eph. 1:20. In Eph. 3:10 and 6:12 it seems to refer to the region of the air, the atmospheric heavens.

However, here in 1:3 and in 2:6, it seems to refer plainly to Christ's church. This glorious institution is certainly a heavenly place. In the church our citizenship is in heaven. Phil. 3:20. The church is called "the kingdom of heaven" often in the parables of Christ.

If we say that the *heavenly places* in this verse (1:3) refer to Heaven itself, we will also have to say that God has no more spiritual blessings in Heaven than what he has given to us. (For God hath blessed us with *every* spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.) Anyone will admit that God has some spiritual blessings he has not yet given to us. Therefore we have to interpret the phrase *heavenly places* as referring to the *church*, in which God has blessed us with all of these spiritual blessings.

Fact Questions

43. What is the title of the section (1:3-14) in the outline?
44. Who is praised (or blessed) in 1:3?
45. Why is He blessed?
46. What kind of blessings are given?
47. In what places are the blessings given?
48. To what does the phrase *heavenly places* refer? Give reasons for your answer.
49. Through whom (or in whom) do the blessings come?

Text (1:4-6)

4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him; in love
 5 having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,
 6 to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved;

Thought Questions (1:4-6)

11. In Whom did God choose us? When did God make this choice? Did God choose us as individuals, or as a class of people? Exactly what did God choose concerning us?
12. The Jews had the adoption in Old Testament times (Rom. 9:4; Ex. 4:22). Who has that honor now?
13. Did God choose us to be before Him in love? Or, did He in love foreordain us unto adoption as sons? Either reading is possible. Which seems better to you?
14. What does *foreordain* (or *predestinate*) mean?
15. Did God foreordain us because we deserve it, or according to some other reason? Read the text (v. 5) carefully to see.
16. What purpose did God have in mind for choosing and foreordaining us? (v. 6)
17. Who is the Beloved? See Matthew 3:17. What did God freely bestow upon us in the Beloved?

Paraphrase

4. God has truly blessed us with every spiritual blessing, even as He, before the world was created, chose us who are in Christ to be in His presence holy and without blemish,
5. having in love foreordained that we should be adopted as sons unto Himself through Jesus Christ, and this He did according to the benevolence of His own disposition towards men of all nations,
6. in order that praise might be given unto Him for that glorious display of His grace, which He has so graciously bestowed upon us through Christ the Beloved one. (Eph. 2:7.)

Notes (1:4-6)

1. Long ago, even before God created the world, God decided, "The people who accept My son Jesus Christ shall be My chosen people." God did not choose certain individuals to go to heaven and others to go to hell. "Whosoever will" may ac-

cept Christ (Rev. 22:17). But God chose a class of people. He chose those who are *in Christ* to be His people.

2. Our being holy and without blemish is the consequence of being chosen, and not the condition of it. We cannot say to God, "I am holy and without blemish. You have to choose me as one of your people." Rather, God says to us, "You are sinners. But I have chosen you because you have accepted Christ. Now be ye holy and without blemish."
3. As sinful as we have been, it would be a favor to us if God permitted us to scrub the floors of heaven. But God, in love, honors us by adopting us as His children. What more could God do for us?
4. We prefer to put the phrase *in love* with the words that follow it. *In love* is an unnecessary additional description of us if we are holy and without blemish before the Lord. But it makes good sense to think that God has "in love" foreordained us to be adopted as sons unto Himself. There is no other reason why God would have decided to do such a great thing for us, if it were not done *in love*.

Back before the world existed, God said something to this effect: "I do make this decision and law now, even before man is created, that those who accept My son Jesus will be My chosen people, and they shall receive adoption as My children."

5. We have listed *hath chosen* and *having predestinated us* as separate blessings in the outline. The expression *having predestinated (foreordained) us* may be subordinate to *chosen* in v. 4. The choosing and foreordaining were acts done at the same time, and are closely related to each other. But still, they were separate decisions and plans made by God. Therefore, we have listed them separately in the outline.
6. The expression *freely bestowed* (v. 6) comes from the same root as the word *grace*. Rotherham's translation of v. 6 brings this out very clearly: "Unto the praise of the glory of His favour (grace), wherewith he favoured us in the Beloved One." The expression means *to pursue with grace, compass with favor, honor with blessings*. The King James translation of v. 6 is not good.
7. The idea of being saved by GRACE (favor) is completely strange to most people in our self-righteous age. They do not consider themselves to be sinners. Therefore, they do not feel that they need grace to be saved. They protest the treatment.

they get from the world around them, but not one in fifty seems to have the slightest consciousness of sin. But true Christians will be conscious of their sinfulness, and praise God for the glory of His grace.

Fact Questions

50. Whom did God choose to be His people?
51. When was the choice made?
52. What two characteristics did God desire us to have when we are before Him?
53. Unto what did God foreordain those who are in Christ?

Text (1:7, 8)

7 in whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,

Thought Questions (1:7-8)

18. What is *redemption*? From whom or from what are we redeemed?
19. What is the relationship of redemption to the forgiveness of our trespasses?
20. How freely has God dispensed His grace toward us? (v. 8)
21. What is the value of God granting grace to us in *wisdom and prudence*?

Paraphrase

7. In Whom (Christ) we have the ransom through His blood, namely the forgiveness of our sins. This redemption is provided unto us according to the wealth of His favor,
8. that favor of which He has poured out in abundance (even super-abundance) unto us, but in so doing has always bestowed it with all wisdom and understanding.

Notes (1:7-8)

1. Thank God for the blood of Christ. To those who understand its power and the need for it, it is the most valuable thing in the universe.

"Many persons have a great objection to the word 'blood,' and I have a great objection to those persons. If we take out the blood of Christ, we leave the New Testament without a theme and without a purpose." (Joseph Parker)

2. *Redemption* is a releasing effected by the payment of a ransom. This idea is an offence to many. Nevertheless, the truth remains that when we sin, divine, immutable justice is offended. The just law of God condemns us to death. Some payment must be made, or the sinner will perish.

The blood of Christ washes away sins. When this takes place, the Law of God has no more claim against us. Thus we are redeemed from the just claims of the Law of God against a guilty soul. God does not pay the redemption price to the Devil. All souls belong to God, even the souls of sinners, and God alone judges and sentences them.

3. The forgiveness of sins (in 1:8) refers to the same thing as redemption, except that in the case of *redemption* our helpless condition in sin is primarily in view, whereas in the term *forgiveness* our own personal responsibility and guilt is thrust forth for us to behold and at which to shudder.
4. We obtain this redemption at our conversion, and it is available unto us every day thereafter.
5. God has showered grace upon us so freely that it *abounds*. There is almost more grace than there is power to use it. But in all things, God bestows His grace with prudence and understanding, so that it will do the most good.

Fact Questions

54. What does the word *redemption* mean?
55. What is the relationship between redemption and forgiveness of sins?
56. To what degree has God extended grace toward us?
57. With what two good provisions has God regulated the way He gives grace to us?

Text (1:9, 10)

9 making known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him 10 unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth;

Thought Questions (1:9-10)

22. Why would God's will be called a *mystery*? We are told in II Cor. 11:3 that there is simplicity in Christ. How can the gospel of Christ be a thing of simplicity, and a mystery too?

23. What is a *dispensation*? Do some research on the meaning of this word.
24. What age or time is the *dispensation of the fulness of times*? Could this be the present Christian dispensation?
25. What does it mean to *sum up all things in Christ*? Does this teach that everyone will eventually be saved?
26. What do you think *the things in heaven* are? Is Christ the head over heavenly beings, as well as redeemed humans?

Paraphrase

9. God has made grace to abound toward us, having made known unto us (the apostles) the "sacred secret" (Rotherham translation) of His will, in a manner according to His benevolent pleasure which He purposed within Himself;
10. And this mystery He did make known in order to bring all things unto a dispensation (administration) of the fulness of the times, in which dispensation He now plans to bring all beings hitherto disunited by sin under one head in Christ, both the things in heaven and the things upon the earth.

Notes (1:9-10)

1. *Having made known* (King James Version) is a more accurate translation than *making known*, given in the American Revised Version. Christ made known all truth to the apostles. He is not making known additional truths to anyone.
2. In the New Testament the word *mystery* is often used to refer to some hidden or unrevealed information which God has now made known. One of these mysteries was God's plan of salvation for men through Christ. This plan was once hidden, but it is now revealed. You might say it is not a mystery any longer. But it was an unrevealed mystery for many ages. (See Ephesians 3:3-6.)
3. Down through all the ages men have invented all kinds of religions and philosophies in an effort to discover what is really the truth. God's final truth was not revealed until Christ made it known. Previous to that time men could only guess about His law and promises. But now the mystery has been cleared up. We ought to thank God for making known this mystery of His will.
4. When God planned out His purpose and program for the ages, He planned toward a dispensation of the fulness of the

times, when all things would be summed up in Christ. We are thankful that God is now working out this purpose in all human affairs.

5. This *dispensation of the fulness of the times* obviously refers to our present Christian age. For it is during this age that God is endeavoring to bring all things under the headship of Christ.
6. To *sum up* means to gather under one head or to sum up as one might sum up the main points of a speech in a few statements. What a glorious universe this will be when all things are under the headship of Christ.
7. Verse 10 does not teach that eventually all men, angels, and other creatures will be saved. Paul plainly teaches in this letter that sinners will perish. (See 5:5-6.) Sinners will be cast out, and then Christ shall be head over all.
8. No mere human being knows what all are described by the words *the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth*. We do know that Christ is Lord of angels as well as of men (I Pet. 3.22). He is Lord of the dead as well as of the living. God's plans for the whole universe are all designed to glorify Christ.

Fact Questions

58. What has God made known to us through Christ?
59. Why is God's will called a *mystery*?
60. What purpose does God have in mind for our sin-disunited universe?

Text (1:11, 12)

in him, I say, 11 in whom also we were made a heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will: 12 to the end that we should be unto the praise of his glory, we who had before hoped in Christ:

Thought Questions (1:11-12)

27. What is a *heritage*?
28. Who or what is God's heritage at the present time?
29. Whose plan was it that we would be a heritage?
30. What people are those *who had before hoped in Christ*?

Paraphrase

11. In Whom (Christ) we Jews, as well as you Gentiles, were made a heritage, a private possession for God, having been foreordained to this honor not by virtue of Abrahamic descent and the law, but according to that pre-planned program which God, who does all thing according to the counsel of His will, laid out in Christ;
12. In foreordaining us to be His heritage, God was working toward the purpose that we would be a people devoted to praising His glory, we, the Jews, who in ages before have been the first to have hoped in the Messiah (or Christ).

Notes (1:11-12)

1. The *we* of v. 12 refers to Jewish Christians such as Paul. The *ye* of vs. 13 refers to Gentile believers, like most of the Ephesians. For centuries the Jews had been told of the coming of the Messiah (or Christ), and had hoped in Him. The Gentiles for the most part never heard of the Messiah until after the church was established on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), indeed not until after the conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10).
2. The reading of 1:11 in the King James Version, "We have obtained an inheritance," is not a good translation. The American Revised Version is correct here. It is true that we have obtained an inheritance. But we shall not fully receive it in this life. (See I Pet. 1:4.)
3. A *heritage* is a possession that one owns by right of inheritance. In the ages before Jesus came, the Jewish people were God's portion, His heritage. (See Joel 3:2; Ex. 4:22.) But now God has broken this arrangement with the Jews, and Christians have become His heritage. This was no afterthought, but was God's plan and purpose from the beginning. The Jew had come to feel that it was his particular privilege to be God's heritage; but God had not so foreordained it from the beginning. God had foreordained that the Jew would be a part of His heritage along with the Gentiles when both were in Christ.
4. The people of Old Testament times certainly offered much praise to God. But it is noteworthy that the Jews were made to be God's heritage IN CHRIST, so that they would be unto the praise of His glory. We cannot really praise God unless that praise is offered in Christ.

5. Notice the word *purpose* in 1:11 (and see also 3:11). God's workings are not the result of chance or impulse. Before time began God laid out in His mind a program (*prothesis*, or purpose) for the ages. Christ was at the heart of this program. We who are in Christ can thank God that we are the ones who are called according to His *purpose*. (See Romans 8:28.)

Fact Questions

61. What have we been made to be for God? (1:11)
62. When did God decide that those who are in Christ would be His heritage?
63. For what purpose were we foreordained to be God's heritage?
64. Who are the *we* who had before hoped in Christ?
65. According to what were we foreordained and made a heritage?

Text (1:13, 14)

13 in whom ye also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, — in whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Thought Questions (1:13-14)

31. What people are addressed as *ye also* in v. 13? With whom are they contrasted? (See v. 12.)
32. What two things does Paul say had been done before the Ephesians were sealed with the Holy Spirit? Does this indicate that they were saved as infants?
33. What is an *earnest*? The dictionary will give you a good definition of this term.
34. What is the *earnest of our inheritance*? Why is this a most appropriate and befitting earnest?
35. What does *ye were sealed* mean? How is a document sealed? Why? How are we sealed with the Holy Spirit?

36. If we already have redemption (v. 7), why must we be satisfied with an earnest unto (or until) the redemption? Are there two meanings of the word *redemption*? If so, what does it mean here? (Compare Rom. 8:18-23.)
37. What (or who) is God's own possession?

Paraphrase

13. In Whom (Christ) you Gentiles also, having first heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and having also believed in Christ, were stamped and sealed as being God's own possession with the Holy Spirit which was promised unto us.
14. The Holy Spirit is the earnest, the advanced portion, of our inheritance; and we shall enjoy this earnest of the Spirit until the redemption of God's possession, i.e., until the time when the people who are God's own through Christ are raised from the dead unto eternal life, and all this shall redound to the praise of His glory as Saviour.

Notes (1:13-14)

1. Official papers are often stamped with a seal. This seal proves that the document is approved by the proper authorities. Seals have been used since ancient times. Cylinder-shaped seals, or seals carved on rings were used to make official impressions on clay tablets.

When we (1) heard the Word of truth, the gospel, and (2) believed it (and, of course, were baptized; Gal. 3:26-27), God gave us the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). The Holy Spirit produces in us holiness and many good fruits. (See Gal. 5:22-23.) Thus the Holy Spirit in the Christian stamps and seals him as being "God's property." It ought to be obvious to anyone who associates with a Christian that he is *sealed* with God's Spirit.

2. The Holy Spirit is an *earnest* of our inheritance until the complete redemption of the purchased possession. An *ear-*

nest is money which is given when a bargain is made, as a pledge that the full price will be paid later. Right now we Christians have the earnest of the Holy Spirit. This brings to us love, joy, peace, etc. These joys are an earnest of the boundless joys we shall have when Jesus comes back, and the dead are raised, and sin is destroyed forever. The joy we have as Christians now is only a sampling of the greater joys in store for us.

3. The *Holy Spirit of promise* means the *promised Spirit* (Zech. 12:10; Isa. 32:15).
4. The *redemption* of 1:7 refers to our redemption from sin. The *redemption* here in 1:14 refers to our redemption from human frailty and from the curse. (See Genesis 3:17-19.) This will occur when our bodies are raised from the grave. (See I Cor. 15:43-44, 51-55.)

Fact Questions

66. What two acts did Paul say had been done before *ye were sealed*?
67. With what are we sealed?
68. What is the *earnest* of our inheritance?
69. How does the Holy Spirit serve as an earnest of our inheritance?
70. What is the redemption referred to in 1:14?

THE GLORIOUS CHURCH



The Ephesians burn their books of magic when they learn of the blessings in Christ. Acts 19:19

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THE GLORIOUS CHURCH

Previewing in Outline Form (1:15-23)

- B. Paul's prayer for his readers' enlightenment. 1:15-23.
1. Basis of the prayer. 1:15.
 - a. The blessings of 1:3-14.
 - b. Having heard of the Ephesians' faith.
 - c. Having heard of their love toward the saints.
 2. Thanks given always. 1:16.
 3. Requests. 1:17-23.
 - a. That God would give them a spirit of wisdom and revelation. 1:17-18a.
 - 1) Based in the knowledge of Himself. 1:17b.
 - 2) Having the eyes of your heart enlightened. 1:18a.
 - b. That they would know these things. 1:18b-23.
 - 1) The hope of God's calling. 18b.
 - 2) The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. 18c.
 - 3) The exceeding greatness of His power toward us. 1:19-23.
 - a) This power used to raise Christ. 1:20a.
 - b) This power used to exalt Christ. 1:20b-21.
 - c) This power used to subject all things to Christ. 1:22a.
 - d) This power used to make Christ head over the church. 1:22b-23.
The church is His body. 1:23a.
The church is His fulness. 1:23b.

In the foregoing section (1:3-14) we found a marvelous list of spiritual blessings that God has given us. But often Christians do not appreciate these spiritual blessings. Many church members actually appreciate material blessings (such as money) more than they do their spiritual blessings. But actually the spiritual blessings are greater than all others because they have the promise of both the life that now is, and that which is to come (I Tim. 5:8; II Cor. 4:18). No person who seeks first the kingdom of heaven will lack any necessary thing in this life. And only those who seek first the spiritual things have the promise of salvation in the life to come.

In this section we therefore find Paul praying that his readers might know and appreciate the spiritual blessings. Paul prayed every day for this. Many church members today are lukewarm, unconcerned, and unmindful of spiritual things. We should pray for such people, even as Paul did.

Fact Questions

71. What is the title of the section (1:15-23)?
72. Why are spiritual blessings greater than material blessings?
73. What three things did Paul pray that we would know?

Text (1:15, 16)

15 For this cause I also, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which is among you, and the love which ye show toward all the saints, 16 cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

Thought Questions (1:15-16)

38. For what cause was it that Paul did not cease to pray for them?
39. Would you infer from the fact that Paul said he had *heard* of the faith of the Ephesians that (1) either Paul did not write the epistle, or (2) that it was not actually written to the Ephesians? Why or why not?
40. What was the attitude of the Ephesians toward all saints?
41. How regularly did Paul pray for the Ephesians?
42. Did Paul pray for them by name? Give a reason for your answer.

Paraphrase

15. For this reason, that ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit, and made recipients of many other blessings, I also, having heard of the commendable faith in the Lord Jesus which continues among you, and the love which you have toward all the saints, both Jew and Gentile,
16. do not cease to be giving thanks in behalf of you, making mention of you by name in my daily prayers.

Notes (1:15-16)

1. The *Interpreter's Bible* says about Ephesians 1:15 that these words belong to the literary fiction by which the epistle is represented as a message from Paul. Such conclusions are not supported by any evidence, only by personal opinion.

The mere fact that Paul said that he had "heard" of the faith of the Ephesians, does not prove that he had never been with them. He wrote the same way to Philemon (4, 5), and similarly to the Thessalonians (I Thessalonians 3:6). Cer-

tainly Paul knew these people intimately. (See Introduction, sec. VIII for further information.)

2. Paul was glad to hear (perhaps from Tychicus) about the faith which the Ephesians had steadfastly held in the Lord Jesus, and their love for one another. The church at Ephesus was unusual in that it had both Jews and Gentiles in it, and they really loved one another. But Paul still prayed for them, thanking God for them, and asking God to further enlighten them.

Fact Questions

71. What two things had Paul heard about the Ephesians?

Text (1:17)

17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him;

Thought Questions (1:17)

43. What does the phrase, *the Father of glory*, mean?
44. Did Paul pray that God would reveal His truth directly to the Ephesians? Would not such a prayer contradict 3:3-4? What exactly did Paul want them to have that he calls a *spirit of wisdom and revelation*?
45. Why is a spirit of wisdom and revelation needed by the saints who have all already accepted Christ?
46. What is the significance of the spirit of wisdom and revelation being *in the knowledge of Him*? Who is the *Him*?

Paraphrase

17. Requesting that God, the glorious Father in heaven, who is adored as God even by our Lord Jesus Christ, and who originates both the glory we now enjoy and that greater glory we shall have hereafter, that He may give unto you a wise spirit and a spirit of revelation, that is, a disposition which will make you able and ready to receive that which He has revealed concerning the precise knowledge of Himself.

Notes (1:17)

1. See notes on 1:3 concerning the expression, *God of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

2. "The apostle did not pray that God would give to all the Ephesians the knowledge of the doctrines of the Gospel by an immediate revelation made to themselves. But that he would enable them to understand the revelation of these doctrines which was made to the apostles, and which they preached to the world." (Macknight)
3. The *spirit of wisdom and revelation* is described in 1:18 as *having the eyes of your heart enlightened*. How greatly Christians need to have a heart which is responsive to God and spiritual things: Many are like blind men standing in a lovely park in broad daylight. All around them lie riches of beauty, but they cannot see. There are treasures of wisdom and knowledge revealed in Christ (Col. 2:3). But many cannot see. They need to be taught the first principles over and over. Oh God, grant that throughout our churches a spirit may sweep which will cause our brethren to grasp the riches of Thy revelation.
4. God is not interested in anyone being wise and receptive to revelations unless they are revelations that are in the knowledge of God Himself. If He felt otherwise, He would have to deny Himself. (II Tim. 2:13)

Fact Questions

72. How does Paul describe God in 1:17?
73. What did Paul pray that God would give to the Ephesians?
74. In what must this spirit of wisdom and revelation rest?

Text (1:18, 19)

18 having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, 19 and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might

Thought Questions (1:18-19)

47. What connection is there between the *spirit of wisdom and revelation* mentioned in v. 17, and the phrase *having the eyes of your heart enlightened* in v. 18?

48. So the heart has eyes! What is this heart that has *eyes*?
49. What is the *hope of his calling* that we are to know? Who is being called? By whom? How is the calling done? Doesn't every person who knows enough to accept Christ know the hope of His calling?
50. Who has an inheritance in the saints? What does He inherit? Why does this inheritance contain riches of glory?
51. What will be the benefit of knowing the exceeding greatness of God's power toward us?

Paraphrase

18. I pray that you may have a spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that the eyes of your heart (mind and understanding) may be enlightened with lasting illumination. Being thus enlightened, you may know what blessings are contained in the hope to which God has called you by the Gospel, and may know what are the riches of the glory of God's inheritance, which is His saints,
19. and that you may also know what is the exceeding greatness of the power which God employs toward us who believe, that power which is so great that it can be described only by saying that it is according to the working of the power of His strength.

Notes (1:18-19)

1. There is a great need for all of us to have the eyes of our hearts (understanding) enlightened. Many people are like Adam and Eve. They have had their eyes opened to sin by disobeying God. But it is usually much harder to have our eyes opened to good than to evil. We must learn fully about God's promises, glory, blessings, etc. Then we must live by what we know. Head knowledge without heart enlightenment is not good enough.
2. Paul lists three things we need to know through having the eyes of our heart enlightened:
 - 1) *The hope of His calling.* This refers to that living hope which we have in Christ of a heavenly inheritance that

fades not away (I Peter 1:3-4). God called us by the gospel, that good news about Christ which was preached to us (I Thess. 2:14). Some people accept Christ much as they buy fire insurance, as a matter of protection. Christ is truly your protection. Nonetheless we do not follow Christ just because we must, but because we cherish and seek after the *hope of His calling*.

- 2) *The riches of the glory of His (God's) inheritance in the saints.*

As stated in 1:11, the saints (Christians) are God's inheritance, His heritage. Naturally this brings great benefits to the saints, as well as pleasure to God. It is a rich and glorious arrangement. Christians can well apply Moses' words to themselves:

"The eternal God is thy dwelling place,
 And underneath are the everlasting arms;
 Happy art thou, O Israel (O church of God);
 Who is like unto thee, a people saved by Jehovah?"
 (Deut. 33:27, 29)

- 3) *The exceeding greatness of His power toward us that believe.*

God's people often act like they think that God cannot or will not do anything for them. We need the eyes of our heart enlightened to grasp the truth that the same power that God used for Jesus, He can and does put to work for us. This thought almost staggers the imagination. But it is true. Study the notes on 1:20-22 to see how God used His power in the life of Jesus, and remember that this is an illustration of the power he uses to deliver us from evil, rule providentially in our lives, and to raise us from the dead.

Fact Questions

75. According to 1:18, what needs to be enlightened?
 76. What are the three things Paul prayed that we would know?
 77. In what is God's inheritance?

EPHESIANS 1:18, 19

**PAUL PRAYED THAT
WE WOULD KNOW —**

1. THE HOPE OF GOD'S CALLING.
2. THE RICHES OF THE GLORY OF HIS INHERITANCE IN THE SAINTS.
3. THE GREATNESS OF HIS POWER TOWARD US.

DO YOU KNOW THESE THINGS?

Text (1:20-23)

20 which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; 22 and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church 23 which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Thought Questions (1:20-23)

52. What is that *which God wrought in Christ?* (See 1:19).
53. Why is the mighty power which God wrought in Christ described here?
54. What is shown about God's power by the fact that his power raised Christ from the dead?
55. Who will have the most honored name even in the world that is to come?
56. How can God have put all things in subjection under Christ's feet when the majority of humankind are in rebellion against Him? (Psalm 2 can help answer this question.)
57. Note that Christ is head over all things to the church. Name three areas of church affairs over which Christ is head.
58. What is the implication of the fact that the church is Christ's body? Does that suggest that the church exercises the authority of Christ? Or that the church is subject to Christ? Or that it is intimately joined to Christ?
59. To whom does this refer: "Him that filleth all in all" (1:23; cf. 4:10)?
60. What does the fact that the church is the *fulness* of Christ mean?

Paraphrase

20. (praying that you may know) that power which God put to work in the life of Christ, and will employ toward us that believe, when He raised Christ from the dead, and gave Him the honor of sitting at His own right hand in heaven as chief governor of the universe,

21. having seated Christ there by His power in spite of the efforts of wicked men, the devil, and death itself to destroy Christ. There Christ was seated far above all the ranks of authority held by men or spiritual creatures, whether they be first rulers, or authorities, or mighty powers, or lordships, yea above every name that is named, not only in this world, but even in that which is to come ;
22. and further demonstrating His great power in the life of Christ, God did subject all things in the universe under his feet, and appointed Him supreme Lord and head over all things pertaining to the church,
23. which (the church) is His (Christ's) body and His fulness, that which is filled by Him who verily filleth all things in all places.

Notes (1:20-23)

1. Verses 20-23 are an elaboration of v. 19. Paul prayed that we would know what is the exceeding greatness of God's power toward us. This power is described as being the power that God used for Jesus. It is almost staggering to think that we have available unto us the same power that God used for Christ. But that is true. Note what God did for Jesus :
 - 1) He raised Him from the dead. 1:20. If we believe that God raised up Jesus from the dead, we ought to have strong confidence, for God will use this same great power by which He raised up Jesus to help us.
 - 2) God exalted Jesus by seating Him at His right hand in heaven (Mark 16:19; Psalm 110:1). God exalted Jesus far above all principality, power, might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but in that which is to come. The "principalities, powers, might, and dominions" mentioned here seem to refer to ranks and degrees of power among angels and spiritual beings, both good and bad (Col. 1:16; Eph. 6:12).
 - 3) God put all things beneath the feet of Christ; He is Lord of all — heaven, earth, hades, hell, angels, governments, and all (Matthew 28:18).

- 4) God made Christ to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all things in all places.

The word *fulness* etymologically has a passive sense (Thayer), signifying *that which is filled*. This is a wonderful thought. The church is filled (not just allotted a sample) *by* Christ with blessings and salvation. The church is to be filled *for* Christ with holiness, service, and worship.

Note that there is only one head over the church, and that Christ is that head. He is head over *all things* to the church—its worship, its laws, its plan of salvation, its moral standards, etc. No pope, bishop, church council, convention, synod, prophet, preacher, or anyone else dares to rob Christ of any of the authority God gave to Him.

Note that the church is Christ's body. In the context here the principal suggestion is that Christ is the ruler (or head) over the church. He directs the church as a human head directs the body beneath it.

Christ has only one body, one church. Can you imagine a freak with one head, but a hundred bodies attached to the head? Surely such a monstrosity could not make any progress in any direction. Yet we must assume that such a monster exists today, if we assume that all the denominations are divine. Christ has only one church. (See Eph. 4:4.)

2. There have been false applications made of the fact that the church is the body of Christ. It would be wrong to reason that since the church is the body of Christ, and is in a sense an extension of Christ Himself, that the church therefore exercises the authority of Christ on earth. This is the Roman Catholic position.

Ephesians 5:24 makes it very plain that the relationship of the body to the head is that of SUBJECTION. The

church is subject to Christ the head in everything, and does not exercise authority for the head. The church cannot make laws for Christ. Neither can it accept nor reject any persons whom Christ has rejected or accepted.

3. Concerning the *heavenly places*, see note on 1:3.
4. We ought to pray, as Paul did, that we ourselves and all our brethren may have the eyes of our heart enlightened about these things.

Fact Questions

78. Name the four things God's power did for Christ.
79. Why are these demonstrations of God's power in the life of Christ mentioned?
80. What are the *rule, authority, power, and dominion* of v. 21?
81. What is the sense and meaning of the term *fulness*?
82. What is the body of Christ?
83. Who is the head of the church? Over what things in the church is He the head?
84. Why does the fact that the church is the fulness and body of Christ not give it the authority of Christ on earth?