



SEQUIM COMMUNITY CHURCH

EPHESIANS

SESSION I: THE HEAVENLY BLESSING FOR US

Ephesians 1:1-14

"Exploring the new life and new society God has created through Jesus"

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Paul opens his letter in verses 1:1-2 with a blessing of "grace and peace" for the believers, and then continues with an expression of thankfulness for all that God has accomplished. In this first study we will get an overview of God's purpose for our lives; especially how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit each play an important part in our salvation. Paul starts right off the bat with a description of what the Father has done.

The Father's Blessings for Us

Ephesians 1:3 says that the Father has "blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ". These blessings are described in the verses that follow:

1. Read the entire passage for this study (Ephesians 1:4-14) and note the words that stand out to you (example: chosen, predestined, adopted, redemption, forgiveness, riches, grace, wisdom, mystery, hope, salvation) Which of these ideas are particularly meaningful to you, and why? _____

"He chose us before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."

In 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, Paul speaks of the same idea: "But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." -- Ephesians 1:4

2. Based on these verses, what does it mean to be chosen by God? _____

3. Why is it significant that this was God's first thought (from the beginning... before the creation of the world)? _____

"In love he predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will, to the praise of his glorious grace, freely given in the one he loves."

-- Ephesians 1:5

Sometimes in our desire to be gender sensitive we are tempted to translate the above passage as "adopted as his children," but in this and other writings by Paul (such as Romans 8:14-17) there are times when he specifically uses the word "sons." In Hebrew culture, the sons had a special place in the family because they received the inheritance: the firstborn received a double portion, the other sons single and equal portions. Daughters were provided with dowries. What Paul is saying is that now both males and females will be "treated as sons" and receive an inheritance. In fact, adopted children will receive it as well!

In Paul's time, Greek and Roman inheritance practices came to influence this line of thinking. According to Roman law, the moment a child was born he was his father's heir. All legitimate heirs usually shared the inheritance equally and jointly rather than a division favoring a firstborn son. And legally adopted children enjoyed full inheritance rights along with natural offspring.

4. Sometimes we take it for granted that we can freely approach God as his children, but prior to this time there was no clear provision for the Gentile (non-Jew). Paul is truly telling them some good news! How does it feel to know that you are now "legally adopted" into God's family with a full inheritance? _____

5. Have you ever known anyone who got the short end of the stick when it came to receiving an inheritance after the death of a loved one? _____ If so, how did that go over?

The Son's Blessing for Us

Next we move on to the blessing that Jesus, God's Son, gives to us. In Jesus "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Ephesians 1:7). Redemption was the price paid to gain freedom for a slave (see Leviticus 25:47-54). Through his death, Jesus paid the price to release us from our slavery to sin. Forgiveness was granted in Old Testament times on the basis of the shedding of animal's blood (See Leviticus 17:11). Now we are forgiven on the basis of the shedding of Jesus' blood, because he died and was the perfect and final sacrifice. Verse 1:8 says this was "lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding."

6. Do you frequently view God as being lavish? _____ Why or why not? _____

7. Is there a particular time in your life when the awareness of Jesus' redemption and forgiveness became very real to you? _____
