

The Christian's Present Possessions in Christ

The first three chapters of the epistle deal with doctrine; the last three chapters, with duty. In the first half Paul explains the riches of God's grace; in the last half he exhorts the recipients of God's grace.

Two verses give Paul's usual method of opening a letter. In this, the salutation, the writer designates the author and the addressee: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus" (1:1).

There are no serious doubts among commentators concerning the Pauline authorship of this epistle. Confined in a prison in Rome, well stricken in years, Paul writes a letter different from his other epistles. Controversy is absent. Warning against any particular error of doctrine is missing. Yet this particular difference causes no concern, for both the external and internal evidence are convincingly strong.

Paul designates himself as "an apostle of Jesus Christ." He was alike Christ's possession and His representative. The risen Lord having both saved and sent him, Paul became God's minister to the Gentiles. Having completely surrendered his life to the Lord Jesus Christ, his learning, zeal, and teaching ability were all consecrated to the service of his Master. He was truly an apostle "by the will of God."

"By the will of God" gives additional authority to Paul's position as an apostle. When a man is sent by the will of God, then his hearers will do well to heed his message. Right here we might notice that the will of God is mentioned four times in this first chapter (verses 1, 5, 9, 11). The will of God reaches far back into eternity past, long before the foundations of the earth were laid. What a blessed privilege every servant of God has when he is called to make this known to others! Let us exercise the greatest care lest we interpose anything between the will of God and ourselves while we are here on earth. The human will has no place or function in redemption or in active service apart from the divine will. Every

exercise of the spirit, mind and body reaches its loftiest position only when it is motivated by God's will.

The letter is addressed "to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." The word for "saint" is *hagios*, and it means a *holy one*. Paul usually applied this term to the true child of God. The primary meaning of the word is *separated* or *set apart*.

The Roman Catholic Church has tainted the word "saint" with so much superstition that it is almost impossible to restore it to its original and intended use. Today its application is to any who exhibit an exceptional, artificial type of piousness, or to those whose own works merit the Pope's canonization. According to the Bible, all Christians are saints ([Heb. 10:10, 14](#)). The temple was at one time holy, not because of its materials and magnitude, but because it was a set-apart place for the service of Jehovah. The altars were holy, the vessels were holy, the sacrifices were holy, the priests were holy, all because they were divinely chosen to discharge the function of holy service to the Lord. People in their ignorance call theirs the "All Saints Church," and refer to the apostles as "Saint Peter" and "Saint Paul," but God calls all who have been washed in the blood of the Lord Jesus and born again by the Holy Spirit "saints" ([I Cor. 1:2](#)).

It is God who sanctifies us. He sets us apart; we do not consecrate ourselves. "Saint" suggests no personal merit on man's part, but a condescending act of Almighty God in setting apart those who believe in His Son. H. A. Ironside has said: "We do not become saints by saintliness, but we should be characterized by saintliness because we are saints."

The letter, moreover, is intended for "the faithful in Christ Jesus." The "faithful" are not mere professors but those who demonstrate their sainthood by their saintliness. Faithfulness to Him whose name is held, bears witness to others of God's calling. Faith in Christ is much more than intellectual assent; it includes a surrender of the intellect, the heart, and the will to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. The name and fame of a church and its testimony will remain only so long as its members are "faithful in Christ Jesus." When a man truly has faith in Christ he will keep faith with Christ. If one is not true to Christ, then he has exercised no faith in Christ.

The typical Pauline salutation continues with the words: "Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (1:2). Paul combined the two forms of salutation used by the Greeks and the Hebrews to send his Christian greeting. Here is a twofold blessing from two persons. The Father sends His grace and peace; the Son says: "Give them Mine, also." It could not be otherwise, since the Son shares the exalted position

with the Father “in the heavenlies.” God and Christ are One, thus they are the one source of “grace and peace.” The gospel that Paul preached is always known as the gospel of grace, the gospel of the unmerited favor of God.

Notice that God will not offer peace apart from grace. Nor can any man have peace before he accepts God’s grace. These two words form no mere conventional courtesy, as the Greeks and Hebrews might use them, but rather are they a rich Christian blessing.

Are we saints? Then let us receive and appropriate what is ours, for what is sent to us we have a right to possess. All through the pages of the New Testament the grace and peace of God in Christ shine gloriously forth. To accept His grace is to know His peace--peace not only with Him but with others also. Ephesians will unfold for us “the riches of His grace” (1:7). Twelve times in this one epistle Paul uses the word “grace.” May each of us lay claim to our possessions.

All of the following blessings are ours because of grace:

- salvation ([Eph. 2:8](#))
- justification ([Rom. 3:24](#))
- victory over sin ([Rom. 5:20](#))
- power to testify ([Rom. 12:3](#), [15:15](#); [Col. 4:6](#))
- strength for service ([II Tim. 2:1](#); [Heb. 12:28](#))
- a spirit of generosity ([II Cor. 8:7](#))
- sweetness in singing ([Col. 3:16](#))
- ability to stand ([I Pet. 5:12](#))
- strength in suffering ([II Cor. 12:9](#))

There are doubtless many more, but these will suffice to show us the greatness of our need in appropriating God’s grace.

1. Paul’s Praise to God for What We Received (1:3-14)

The next verse is the key verse in the first half of the epistle, since it introduces us to the source of our wealth in Christ. It is definitely a word of praise: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (1:3).

The adjective translated “blessed” means to celebrate with praises. At the very outset Paul magnifies the grace of God toward the Ephesians so that they, too, might be filled to overflowing with praise. God is said to bless us when He bestows upon us every provision for our spiritual peace and prosperity. We are said to bless God when we offer praise and thanksgiving for His provision.

More than twenty-five years had passed since Paul met the Lord Jesus Christ near Damascus. Still he was counting his blessings and praising God for them. Paul is not praising God because God desires to bless him, nor because God has determined to bless him at some future time, but because God “hath” blessed him. Yes, and “us”! God is the Blessor, and the blessed are those, and those only, who have received His Son as “our Lord Jesus Christ.” The “us” here are the “saints,” and as God’s set-apart ones we are eligible for the blessings.

The nature of the blessings is said to be “spiritual.” There is possibly more than one explanation of this. First, Paul might have intended to distinguish the blessings from those mercies of God that are material, physical, and temporal, that are intended particularly for the body. Second, Paul possibly meant by “spiritual blessings” those blessings pertaining to the Holy Spirit and intended to minister to the human spirit. The saint’s citizenship is in heaven, hence he no longer sets his affection on things in the earth. Moreover, his principal needs are spiritual so that he must be “strengthened with might by His [God’s] Spirit in the inner man” (3:16).

Too many of us place the emphasis upon those things that are temporal and transient while we neglect the values that are spiritual and eternal. The Father designed every spiritual blessing for the Church. They are ours “in Christ,” and are delivered to us by the Holy Spirit. The lasting joy that God bestows upon us is not in the things of this world, but rather in “heavenly places” or, better still, “in the heavenlies.” Ours are heavenly experiences and heavenly privileges conferred upon us by God in Christ. They originate among the eternal and unseen things.

The first of the believer’s possessions for which Paul praises God follows: “According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (1:4). We must see at the outset that all that God had done for us in Christ is “according to the *eternal purpose* which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (3:11). In eternity past, God had certain settled purposes which He accomplished

at various times during the dispensations of human history, and here we are carried back into the remotest ages of past eternity where, says Paul, God was loving us and planning that all who are “in Christ . . . should be holy and without blame before Him.” God’s eternal choice, then, was that all who are in Christ should be a holy people.

The phrase “chosen us in Him” could be rendered “chose us for Himself.” Chose us for what? Not to everlasting life, but that we should be spotless for Himself! The election in the divine Mind was that all those in Christ should be “holy ones,” free from every defilement of sin.

It is not difficult to see how God should purpose in His heart, before the world came into existence, that He was going to have a holy people who would be to the praise of His glory and grace. To that end God created Adam, and in spite of the fall of man, God is still going to carry out His purpose in Christ. The divine choice will find its consummation when Christ returns for His bride “to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” ([Jude 24](#)). Temporarily we are in this world, but not of it. We were chosen to be holy before its foundations were laid; we are merely passing through it to another world. We might fail to practice holiness here, but the eternal purpose of God will be fulfilled when our Lord Returns and “we shall be like Him” ([1 John 3:2](#)).

God has selected a people to be His holy habitation. Are you in that company, my friend? You are, if you are “in Christ.” If you are not, you may this very day join that holy band by trusting Him as your Saviour. Then you, too, will be a part of the true Church of God’s creation and design which, on the great presentation day, will be presented a glorious Church, “holy and without blemish” ([Eph. 5:25-27](#)).

The ultimate purpose of God’s choice is not salvation but sanctification. John Calvin stated that it is wrong to say that any of us may attain perfection in this life; nevertheless, this is the goal to which the whole course of our lives must be directed, even though we cannot reach it till we have finished our course. Let us grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, saying with Paul: “. . . neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy” ([Acts 20:24](#)). And let us praise God that we have been chosen to be a part of the completed structure, a perfect Church throughout all eternity. When God designed His Church in eternity past He “predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will” (1:5). The American Standard Version makes it clear that the verb translated “predestinated” is “foreordained.” It means to *appoint*, or to *determine beforehand*.

To what have we been predestinated? Neither this verse nor any other verse in the Bible teaches that God decrees that some men are foreordained to everlasting life while others

are foreordained to everlasting death. Christ “gave Himself a ransom for *all*” ([1 Tim. 2:6](#)), and “this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have *all* men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” ([1 Tim. 2:3, 4](#)).

Notice, please, that we have been foreordained *unto* adoption as sons. The word “adoption” is used only by Paul. To understand its meaning, you must lay aside the idea of the word as used today when, by a legal act, an adult person takes a minor, not his own, into the relation as his child. The adoption of the believer is still future, being a divine act whereby God sets a goal for the believer. Paul states clearly that our adoption is something for which the believer is “waiting” ([Rom. 8:23](#)), having been foreordained “*unto*” adoption. Although we do have here and now the Spirit of adoption ([Rom. 8:15](#)), His Presence in us is merely the seal, or guarantee of a future act of son-*placing*. Adoption does not mean son-*making*, for in eternity we shall be sons no more than we are now but, rather, at that time, we shall be properly placed in God’s show-case and displayed as sons. God has predestinated us unto the adoption--it is future. Therefore, His sovereign act of adoption can have nothing whatever to do with His choice of us.

In the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul explains how Jesus Christ secured our adoption for us by His death at Calvary in order that “we might receive” it ([Gal. 4:5](#)). Our present standing is that of sons; for, “beloved, now are we the sons of God.” And how wonderful this is! But, adds the Apostle John: “It doth not yet appear what we shall be” ([1 John 3:2](#)). The fact of our present son-*making* and our future son-*placing* were all “according to the good pleasure of His will.” Our future position, which was God’s choice, was not only His will but His enjoyment. The mightiest angel in heaven will not share in the glory of the believer’s future position.

If you, dear reader, are not a son of God, your future is dark indeed. But even now there is time. If you trust Jesus Christ as your Saviour, God will make you His son now and place you in an exalted position as His son in eternity. Then you, too, will join in praise to God for His goodness.

Verse six teaches us that every true believer has been foreordained to be such a trophy of the grace of God as to cause men to praise the glory of His grace. Paul writes: “To the Praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved” (1:6). These words, not to be considered by themselves, are just a link in a golden chain of thoughts beginning with verse 3.

God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing because He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him, one day to

place us on display as His glorified sons. Then His holy and unblemished Church will cause men and angels to acknowledge the wonders of His infinite love and grace toward sinners.

God has foreordained that men shall extol and praise His grace in all its eternal glory. This is the terminus of His kindness toward sinners. Today this is demonstrated only meagerly in the lives of His true followers, but in the end of the age “He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe” ([II Thess. 1:10](#)).

The Lord of heaven and earth will be wondered at by all when the Church Age has run its course and the last member has been added to the Church. With mingled surprise and admiration, the spectators of earth and hell will marvel at the monument of divine grace. All who have put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ are certain to be present and a part of that magnificent exhibition, for, adds the apostle: “He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.” We are already accepted in the Father’s presence because we are in Christ. What condescending love and grace! We are accepted, but only because the Father has “made us” so. Let us continue to praise God, not only for what we have been saved *from*, but for what we are saved *to*.

These verses (1:3-14) are referred to by Charles R. Erdman as a hymn of praise consisting of three stanzas. He says that the first relates to the past: God the Father is the subject, and the refrain closes with the words, “To the praise of the glory of His grace” (1:6). The second stanza relates to the present: God the Son is the subject, and it concludes “to the praise of *His* glory” (1:12). The third stanza relates to the future: God the Holy Spirit is the subject, and it concludes “unto the praise of *His* glory” (1:14). And then Dr. Erdman shows that the three stanzas are bound into a harmonious unity by recurring references to Christ: “In the Beloved,” “In Christ,” “In Whom.”

We have come now to the second stanza of Paul’s wonderful hymn of praise (1:7-12). The first stanza makes clear the work of God in grace in eternity past. The second shows God’s grace manifested toward us now in Jesus Christ’s earthly ministry. Paul continues: “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (1:7). Before the sinner becomes saved he is a captive in the slave-market of sin. He is sold out to the world, the flesh, and the devil. As a slave in bondage he needs to be freed. Someone must purchase him and take him out of the market of sin. Christians, once bondmen, now have redemption.

The word “redemption” appears three times in Ephesians, and it means to set free *by the payment of a ransom*. The ransom price of the slave is the blood of Jesus Christ, and if any man is to be released from the power and penalty of sin it must be “through His blood.” The

penalty for sin is death ([Gen. 2:17](#)). Death is sin's wages ([Rom. 6:23](#)). Only a substitute life will satisfy the righteous demands of God. Since the life of the flesh is in the blood ([Lev. 17:11](#)), and the Son of man gave His life a "ransom" ([Matt. 20:28](#)), all who trust in Him are assured of release from sin's power and penalty, but only "through His blood." In the first stanza, the Father plans our redemption (1:4-6); in the second, the Son provides it. We shall never be able to overestimate the worth and power of the death of Jesus Christ. God displayed His wisdom and power in creation, but only in the death of His Son do we see a manifestation of divine compassion for sinners, and the only responsibility imposed upon sinners is that of believing. Redemption is a present fact: "we *have* redemption." Paul includes in the same sentence, "the forgiveness of sins." To "forgive" is *to release from guilt*. God holds resentment against the unbeliever, the resentment being justly provoked by a violation of His holiness; but when the sinner comes to Christ, guilt is removed and resentment ceases. A man may forgive a friend who has wronged him, but the forgiveness cannot cancel the guilt. But when God forgives a sinner He actually remits the sin and removes the guilt. Forgiveness for the believing sinner is an act of God whereby He sets aside absolutely and eternally, by judicial decree, all condemnation and guilt. Judicial forgiveness, in contradistinction to the Father's forgiveness of His sinning child ([I John 1:9](#)), covers all sin, and by it the believing sinner is pardoned forever. It forever absolves and acquits the sinner. But forgiveness was dear to the Forgiver. It cost the life of God's Son. Observe the measureless abundance of divine forgiveness--"according to the riches of His Grace" (1:7). No adequate explanation of divine forgiveness can be made apart from those beautiful and precious words. Only the view of the depth and degradation of our sin will cause us to appreciate in any degree the limitless ill-merited favor of God. The word "according" shows the measure of God's grace in forgiveness. "Riches" suggests the inexhaustible springs of liberality. Have you ever tried to estimate how rich God is in grace? He has grace enough for every sinner and riches to spare. And to think He gives liberally to all in proportion to His riches!

That we might know the eternal purpose of God provided for us in His Son, "He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence" (1:8). God makes His purpose known and then gives His children the capacity to understand and appreciate it. The truths of God are deep truths, but "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit" ([I Cor. 2:10](#)). The desire in the Father's heart is that His Church should know the secret things of His divine plan. The Word of God is the revelation of His counsels, and all who search the Word may have an intelligent understanding of His wonderful plan. We, as the redeemed saints of God, "have the mind of Christ" and can foresee the ultimate destiny of the whole creation.

How does God abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence? The answer comes to us in the next verses: "Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in Him" (1:9-10). This is the manner in which He made His grace to abound toward us in all wisdom and intelligent understanding. He made known unto us the mystery.

A mystery is a truth once hidden but now revealed. A mystery is not mysterious in the present connotative meaning of the word but *a secret now revealed* by God. There are a number of mysteries in the New Testament, the true meaning of which God disclosed to Paul. In confidence God has much to tell His own concerning His plan for Israel, the Church, and the world. All of the purposes of God find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. This present dispensation began with the revelation of God in the virgin birth and virtuous life of His Son. The revelation reached its climax at Calvary. And He continued to reveal Himself in His bodily resurrection and ascension into heaven.

At this moment the authority of Jesus Christ is not fully acknowledged in the earth, but in the end of the age all things in heaven and in earth will find their headship in Christ. In Colossians, Christ is seen as "the Head of the body, the Church," but when He comes again, by Him God will reconcile all things unto Himself, whether they be things in the earth or things in heaven. God will head up all things in Christ. Many military leaders have dreamed of world empires, but God has "highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" ([Phil. 2:9-11](#)).

The "times," or seasons, suggest that God is developing His plan through a series of definite and successive stages, the fullness of which has not yet come. However, it is God's intention in the final important season to send His Son to earth again to sum up all things in Him. This divine intention was at one time unknown, even to the prophets, but according to God's good pleasure He has made it known to us now. Our Lord's first coming was in the fullness of time. However, in that day He will not merely offer Himself but will establish His throne and rule with a rod of iron.

When speaking of the future glory of Christ, the apostle is reminded again of the believer's position, for in Christ "we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (1:11). The

real meaning of this verse is missed entirely if we hold to the King James Version. Let us see it in the American Standard Version--“In whom also we were made a heritage . . .” (1:11, A.S.V.). We just saw in verse 10 how that everything in heaven and earth will be unified in Christ. Now Paul adds that, in Christ, the believer is God’s chosen portion or private possession. The saints are predestinated to be His inheritance. Of Israel it was said: “Yet they are Thy people and Thine inheritance”; “For the Lord’s portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance” ([Deut. 9:29; 32:9](#)). When Christ returns in glory to establish His kingdom, all history and creation will be combined in a glorious and harmonious consummation as His inheritance, but the apex of His inheritance will be those whom He has redeemed with His own blood along with regathered Israel. This is God’s eternal purpose and He works all things after the counsel of His own will. What majestic beauty and simplicity in the purpose of God! It is not merely that Christ shall receive the earth and all that is in it, but that we have been made His heritage.

Only as we are “in Christ” are we God’s inheritance, and the reason He made us His inheritance is “That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ” (1:12). Though now we are the objects of His love and mercy, eventually we shall be the subjects of His glory.

Speaking through the Prophet Malachi, God said: “And they shall be Mine . . . in that day when I make up My jewels” ([Mal. 3:17](#)). Here the word “jewels” means special treasure, and it is used first of David who, upon setting his affection on the house of the Lord, stored away his treasure of gold and silver for the building of the temple. Even so God is storing away His special treasure, building a holy temple, “In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord” ([Eph. 2:21](#)). As God looks down upon this sinful earth He sees a company of despised followers of His Son, and He says: “They shall be Mine when I make up My special treasure.”

We are of greater worth to God than angels. We are His costly treasure! Someone has said: “When God found me, I was no better than a cobblestone--not worth picking up. But He took me into His laboratory of grace, and by the chemistry of atoning blood He processed me, and I came out as His jewel--a bit rough, I’ll admit, but after a few years of cutting, buffing, and polishing, He will present me at last before His throne absolutely flawless.” How wonderful it all is! Thus the second stanza of this wonderful hymn of praise concludes “to the praise of His [Christ’s] glory.”

We come now to the third and last stanza of Paul’s hymn of praise (1:13-14). In the first stanza (1:3-6), we saw the plan of the Father wherein we were chosen, predestinated, and

adopted that we might be to the praise of His glory. In the second stanza (1:7-12), we saw the provision of the Son wherein we were redeemed and forgiven that we might be to the praise of His glory. Now we are to look at the last stanza (1:13-14), wherein we see the pledge of the Spirit unto the praise of His glory. The Father finished His plan. The Son finished the work which the Father gave Him to do. Now the Holy Spirit is in the world fulfilling His pledge.

Verse 13 contains three prominent words, each essential to the other. They are “heard,” “believed,” and “sealed.” Here we shall see the work of the Holy Spirit in the divine plan. All three Persons in the Godhead have had a pertinent part in man’s redemption.

What is the Spirit’s work? All men being spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, man needs new life. Since the Holy Spirit is “the Spirit of life” ([Rom. 8:2](#)), He quickens us from spiritual death.

How does the Spirit accomplish this quickening? The instrument He uses is the Word of God. In Ephesians it is called “the Word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.” Elsewhere we are reminded that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” ([Rom. 10:17](#)). Paul says: “Ye heard,” and “ye believed.” It is through the Word that men are born again, “For the Word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart” ([Heb. 4:12](#), A.S.V.). Only when we hear the gospel are we born again by the power of the Spirit ([John 3:5](#)), “not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever” ([I Pet. 1:23](#)). The written Word of God is the living, active, sharp, penetrating, discerning sword of the Spirit by which men are brought face to face with God’s plan of salvation. The duty of the sword of the Spirit is to bring life, but all who refuse it are slain by it. We cannot adequately explain our salvation apart from the Spirit’s ministry through the Word.

Upon “hearing” and “believing” the Word, immediately “ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise” (1:13). When we hear the gospel our part is to believe; it is God’s part to seal. We are not sealed by the Spirit but, rather, with the Spirit. Better still, the Spirit is the seal. It is “God who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” ([I Cor. 1:21-22](#)).

A seal is a mark of authenticity or genuineness. “Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart” ([II Cor. 3:3](#)). True believers are the credentials of Christ, His letters of recommendation to a lost world. A

letter is the written expression of the writer; hence the children of God are not those whose names are written in ink or engraved in stone, but those upon whose hearts the Holy Spirit has written the evidence of the power of God's Word. The distinguishing mark between the false professor and the true Christian is the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, a seal is the mark of ownership. God knows us by His seal. Jesus said: "I am the good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine" ([John 10:14](#)). As livestock are distinguished by the owner's brand, even so God has His own special brand whereby we are marked out as His possession, and "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" ([Rom. 8:9](#)). The stamp of validity is God's seal, the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is the sign that we are His people and members of the true Church of Jesus Christ.

Then, too, the seal is the mark of security, for the Spirit "is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession" (1:14). Here is the answer to the problem some men have regarding the preservation of the believer. Wherein does our security lie? The word "earnest" denotes a down payment, or a pledge that an agreement will be kept. Now God has offered us eternal life upon belief on His Son. But can we be certain that we shall enter into that life after we die? Yes, indeed! The earnest bound the bargain, and the deposit will not be returned until the remainder of our redemption, which is the redemption of our body ([Rom. 8:23](#)) is fully realized. The Holy Spirit is in the earth as God's deposit, or guarantee, until Jesus Christ comes again to receive His own unto Himself. The indwelling Holy Spirit is our guarantee of a finished transaction and a safe delivery of spirit, soul, and body to heaven. Our future inheritance of glory is assured, for the sealing with the Spirit is designed to give us certainty that the future will bring a completed redemption, and that "unto the praise of His glory."

2. Paul's Prayer to God for What We Require (1:15-23)

The epistles of Paul are noted for their prayers offered to God in the interest of the saints. W. H. Griffith Thomas has said that there are few more precious subjects for meditation and imitation than the prayers and intercessions of the great apostle. The greatness of the man and his ministry can be attributed in a large part to his prayer life.

There are two prayers of Paul recorded in Ephesians. The first prayer is before us; the second is to be found in 3:14-19. If prayer for others is a test of one's own spiritual life, then Paul ranks high among the godly leaders in the history of the Church. Most of our prayers are taken up with ourselves or with those nearest and dearest to us. Needs of others occupy a small place in our prayer life. Paul's prayers are included by the Holy Spirit as a corporate part of the epistle.

First, consider the occasion of the prayer. It commences with the word “wherefore,” which literally means *on account of this*. In the preceding verses Paul has issued, by the Holy Spirit, some profound teaching on the work of the triune God in making plans for the completed redemption of all believers. Now, because of this, he desires that they should possess an experiential knowledge, having the doctrine transmitted into actual experience. He would have them enjoy the full scope of their inheritance in Christ.

Paul’s heart is filled with thanksgiving for the saints at Ephesus, for, says he: “I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints” (1:15). Two things about the Ephesian Christians were controversial pieces: (1) their faith in the Lord Jesus, and (2) their love to all the saints.

The object of their faith was the Lord Jesus Christ. They were not ashamed of Him, for obviously others were hearing of their faith. Paul says: “I heard.” Where people are soundly saved they will not hide their light under a bushel, but will proclaim the joys of salvation found in Christ. Then, too, where faith is genuine, love will be in evidence. One of the unmistakable signs of the new birth is one’s conduct toward “all the saints.” True Christian love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit ([Rom. 5:5](#)). Where He is in control, there must be love to all the saints. Love is the fruit of faith in Jesus Christ, for “We know that we have passed from death into life, because we love the brethren” ([I John 3:14](#)). While true love embraces all men, it reaches out in a particular way to those who belong to our Lord Jesus Christ (see [Galatians 6:10](#)). Faith begets love.

Let us consider further the *objectives* of the prayer. Paul’s earnestness made his prayers intelligent and specific. He knew that general prayers could expect general answers, so why pray if there was nothing to pray about? But he did pray, and the Holy Spirit has preserved for us one of the most profound petitions in all of the apostle’s writings.

The prayer is addressed to “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory” (1:17). This suggests to us that the Christian’s God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the Father to whom glory belongs, for He is “the God of glory” ([Acts 7:2](#)). And to think that the Father to whom glory belongs, who is the “Father of mercies” ([II Cor. 1:3](#)), the “Father of [our] Spirits” ([Heb. 12:9](#)), and the “Father of lights” ([Jas. 1:17](#)), is *our* Father! O Christian, rejoice! How can a Christian ever think of calling any man his holy father, as Romanists do, when he has God as his Father? Our heavenly Father is the source of every blessing. To Him be all glory! The first request in the prayer is for “wisdom and revelation” (1:17). When Paul requests for the saints “the spirit of wisdom and revelation,” he is not praying for the gift of the Holy Spirit’s Presence. They have already received the Holy Spirit as the divine

seal (1:13). Paul desires for them that heavenly wisdom and revelation which is imparted by the Holy Spirit.

“Revelation” is the important word here, for revelation is the key to all knowledge. The ministry and office work of the Holy Spirit is to reveal to the Christian the meaning of all truth, whether historical or prophetic ([John 14:26; 16:12-15](#)). The Christian has no excuse for ignorance, since the Holy Spirit was given to reveal even “the deep things of God” ([I Cor. 2:10](#)). Some men are wise in Hebrew and Greek grammar and the mechanics of Bible interpretation, but Paul is not praying for the tools of knowledge. He covets for them a wise and understanding spirit that none can impart but the Holy Spirit Himself.

Why do Christians not have a wise and understanding spirit in things pertaining to God’s Word? The answer lies, in part, in the last phrase of verse 17, namely, “*in the knowledge of Him.*” Christ is true wisdom and true knowledge. Three other translations of this verse make the deeper meaning clear:

That the God of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, the Father glory-clad, may, *in bestowing the full knowledge of Himself*, bestow on you the Spirit which is manifested in divine illumination and insight into the mysteries of God (Way).

For I always beseech the God of our Lord Jesus Christ--the Father most glorious--to give you the spirit of wisdom and penetration *through an intimate knowledge of Him* (Weymouth).

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may grant you the Spirit to give wisdom and revelation *which come through a growing knowledge of Him* (Williams).

Surely you have caught the force of Paul’s statement. Wisdom and revelation come to us only by intimate associations with our Lord. A growing knowledge of the Author of the Bible guarantees a wise and understanding spirit in discernment of His Word. Paul would have us seek to know God, for then we shall have a Spirit-given knowledge which is accurate and thorough ([Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:9](#)), not merely an intellectual knowledge. Human philosophy says: “Know thyself.” Our Lord said: “And this is life eternal, that they might know *Thee* the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou has sent” ([John 17:3](#)). Ordinary knowledge may be acquired; spiritual insight into the deep things of God is a gift ([Jas. 1:5](#)). The prayer continues: “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened” (1:18). The American Standard Version reads: “the eyes of your heart,” not mind. The “heart” is the inner man, including the emotion and will; it is the whole self, man’s inward being. This marvelous faculty of spiritual sight is lacking in the unregenerated man. He is powerless to apprehend spiritual things. “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are

spiritually discerned" ([1 Cor. 2:14](#)). Now the eyes of the believer's heart must be continually taken up with his Lord in order that his knowledge of spiritual truth might increase. Paul requests for the saints the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ that they might know three things:

(1) "The hope of His calling." God has called us, but to what purpose? He has called us to perfection in the likeness of Jesus Christ ([Rom. 8:29](#); [1 John 3:1-2](#)). He has called us to a completed righteousness and to the completed redemption of our bodies. He does not call a believer to hope for the forgiveness of his sins: they are gone. The hope of His calling is to see Him and be one with Him. One day our Lord will come again, and we shall all be changed to see Him as He is and to be like Him. Such a glorious hope inspires to holy living and to a hatred of all that is of this world. "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" ([1 John 3:3](#)). All Christians have the same hope. It is Christ's coming to take His own to be with Himself.

(2) "The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." Here Paul prays that we might have a full appreciation of our worth to God. Already we have noted that God made us His heritage that we should be to the praise of His glory (1:11-12). God has an inheritance. His inheritance is in His saints. The gold and the silver and all the universes are His. He has riches untold. But His riches are not in the universes that He possesses, nor in the substance of the earth that is His, but in the saints that He purchased at infinite cost, namely, the precious blood of His only begotten Son ([1 Pet. 1:19](#)). Beloved Christian, think not of what you can get from God but, rather, think of what you mean to God. The Christian Church is precious to God. He purchased it and paid for it with the blood of His Son. Paul would have us appreciate our dignity. I cannot understand how this can be, but I know that God has an inheritance even in me.

(3) "And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe" (1:19). What an objective in prayer! That men might know the measure of God's power. The Christian needs supernatural power, and God would have us see how great is His power to accomplish His purposes in us. How much spiritual strength is available for me in my daily life? How much divine energy is at my disposal? The power that God has made available to the believer is "according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (1:19-21). Here is the inexhaustible strength of God in taking His crucified Son who was dead and buried, and raising Him from among the dead to His present majestic position in heaven. What power!

The same continuous current of His mighty power stands available to the faithful, to all who will believe.

Can you conceive this? The power which raised Christ from the grave, lifted Him to heaven, put all things under His feet and made Him the Head over all to the Church, is to us-ward who believe. How can we fail with Him as our Head and with such power at our disposal?

Now consider the last phrase. God “gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all” (1:22-23). Jesus Christ has been exalted to absolute authority over His Church, hence through His sovereign Person and exalted position the Church takes her orders. He is the exalted Head over all. The order of the Church must be His will and every activity must exalt Him, since it is in the capacity of Head over all that God gave Him to the Church. When the members of the Church recognize this, then there will be no lack, for the Church will receive its fullness from Him. As the recognized Head He imparts the needed strength to accomplish every task. When the visible body of Christ on earth recognizes the invisible Head in heaven, the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church. Popes, cardinals, and bishops are merely men; and when any man sets himself up as the head of Christ’s Church, it is sacrilege of the basest sort. Beloved, let us take our position in subjection to our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may enjoy victory all along the way, for we cannot be complete without Him ([Col. 2:9-10](#)).