

The Epistle to the Ephesians

THE THREEFOLD BLESSING OF THE TRIUNE GOD

1. The Father's selection and predestination—Eph. 1:3-6

Chosen to be holy

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, **4** Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before Him in love.

Predestinated unto sonship

Ephesians 1:5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, **6** To the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He graced us in the Beloved.

2. The Son's redemption (for the accomplishment of God's purpose)—Eph. 1:7-12

Ephesians 1:6b-7 ...With which He graced us in the Beloved; **7** In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offenses, according to the riches of His grace.

Ephesians 1:9-10 Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself, **10** Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him.

Ephesians 1:12 That we would be to the praise of His glory who have first hoped in Christ.

3. The Spirit's sealing and pledging—Eph. 1:13-14

Ephesians 1:13-14 In whom you also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, in Him also believing, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise, **14** Who is the pledge of our inheritance, unto the redemption of the acquired possession, to the praise of His glory.

Discussion

1. Ephesians 3 speaks of “every spiritual blessing”. What are these spiritual blessings?
2. What reason does Paul have to bless (or, give praise to) the Triune God? What about you?

Prayer Thank You God and Father for choosing us to be holy and predestinating us to be sons of God. Thank You Lord Jesus Christ for Your redemptive death. Thank You Holy Spirit for marking us out as those that belong to God!

NOTES*

1. The Father's selection and predestination

Chosen to be holy

Holy not only means sanctified, separated unto God, but also different, distinct, from everything that is common. Only God is different, distinct, from all things. Hence, He is holy; holiness is His nature. He chose us that we should be holy. He makes us holy by imparting Himself, the Holy One, into us so that our whole being may be permeated and saturated with His holy nature. For us, God's chosen ones, to be holy is to partake of His divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4) and to have our whole being permeated with God Himself. This is different from mere sinless perfection or sinless purity. This makes our being holy, like God Himself in His nature and in His character.

Unto sonship

God's marking us out beforehand was to destine us unto sonship. We were predestinated to be sons of God even before we were created. Hence, as God's creatures we need to be regenerated by Him that we may participate in His life to be His sons. Sonship implies having not only the life but also the position of a son... To be made holy... is the process, the procedure, whereas to be sons of God is the aim, the goal, and is a matter of our being joined to the Son of God and conformed to... the very image of the firstborn Son of God (Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:15).

2. The Son's redemption (for the accomplishment of God's purpose)

We were chosen and predestinated. But after being created, we became fallen. Hence, we need redemption, which God accomplished for us in Christ through His blood... The forgiveness of our offenses is the redemption through the blood of Christ. Apart from the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins (Heb. 9:22). Redemption is what Christ accomplished for our offenses; forgiveness is the application of Christ's accomplishment to our offenses.

God's purpose

In eternity God planned a will. This will was hidden in Him; hence, it was a mystery. In His wisdom and prudence He has made this hidden mystery known to us through His revelation in Christ, that is, through Christ's incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.

The Greek word, *oikonomia*, means *house law, household management or administration, and derivatively, administrative dispensation, plan, economy*. The economy that God, according to His desire, planned and purposed in Himself is to head up all things in Christ at the fullness of the times. This is accomplished through the dispensing of the abundant life supply of the Triune God.

3. The Spirit's sealing and pledging

To be sealed with the Holy Spirit is to be marked with the Holy Spirit as a living seal. We have been designated as God's inheritance (v. 11). At the time we were saved, God put His Holy Spirit into us as a seal to mark us out, indicating that we belong to God... Since we are God's inheritance, the Holy Spirit is a seal upon us. Since God is our inheritance (v. 14), the Holy Spirit is a pledge to us of this inheritance.

* All excerpts in this study are taken from *The Holy Bible Recovery Version*, published by Living Stream Ministry, Anaheim, CA, and used with permission.

The Epistle to the Ephesians

**THE APOSTLE’S PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH
REGARDING REVELATION**

1. Having a spirit of wisdom and revelation

Ephesians 1:17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him.

2. Knowing the hope of God’s calling

Ephesians 1:18a The eyes of your heart having been enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling...

3. Knowing the glory of God’s inheritance in the believers

Ephesians 1:18b ...And what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

4. Knowing God’s power toward us

Ephesians 1:19a And what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe...

Ephesians 1:20a Which He caused to operate in Christ in raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavenlies.

Ephesians 1:22a And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things...

5. Knowing the church—the Body, the fullness of Christ

Ephesians 1:22b-23 ...To the church, **23** Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.

Discussion

1. According to Ephesians 1:17, what kind of spirit do we need to have?
2. Why is the church, the Body, called “the fullness of Christ”?

Prayer Lord Jesus, grant us all a spirit of wisdom and revelation, and enlighten the eyes of our hearts to see the hope of God’s calling, the glory of God’s inheritance in all the believers, God’s great power toward us, the church, and the church as the Body of Christ.

NOTES

1. Having a spirit of wisdom and revelation

The spirit here must be our regenerated spirit indwelt by the Spirit of God. Such a spirit is given to us by God that we may have wisdom and revelation to know Him and His economy.

Wisdom is in our spirit that we may know the mystery of God and revelation is of God's Spirit that He may show us the vision by opening the veil. First, we have wisdom, the ability to understand which enables us to know spiritual things; then the Spirit of God reveals the spiritual things to our spiritual understanding.

2. Knowing the hope of God's calling

God's calling is the sum total of all the blessings listed in Ephesians 1:3-14: God the Father's selection and predestination, God the Son's redemption, and God the Spirit's sealing and pledging. When we were called, we participated in the Father's selection and predestination, the Son's redemption, and the Spirit's sealing and pledging.

3. Knowing the glory of God's inheritance in the believers

First, God made us His inheritance (Eph. 1:11a) as His acquired possession (v. 14b) and caused us to participate in all that He is, all that He has, and all that He has accomplished, as our inheritance (v. 14a). Ultimately, all these will become His inheritance in the saints for eternity. This will be His eternal expression, His glory with all His riches, which will express Him to the uttermost universally and eternally.

4. Knowing God's power toward us

There are four aspects of the power that operated in Christ: resurrection power (v. 20a), ascending power (v. 20b), subjecting power (v. 22a), and heading-up power (v. 22b). This fourfold power is transmitted to the church, the Body of the Head.

5. Knowing the church—the Body, the fullness of Christ

To the church implies a kind of transmission. Whatever Christ, the Head, has attained and obtained is transmitted to the church, His Body. In this transmission the church shares with Christ in all His attainments; the resurrection from the dead, His being seated in His transcendency, the subjection of all things under His feet, and the headship over all things.

Here this book uses the term "church" for the first time, pointing out the main subject of this book. The Greek word for church is *ekklesia*, meaning *the called-out congregation*. This indicates that the church is the gathering of those who have been called out of the world by God. As such, the church is composed of all the believers in Christ.

The Body of Christ is His fullness. The fullness of Christ issues from the enjoyment of the riches of Christ (Eph. 3:8). Through the enjoyment of Christ's riches, we become His fullness to express Him.

Christ, who is the infinite God without any limitations, is so great that He fills all things in all things. Such a great Christ needs the church to be His fullness for His complete expression.

The Epistle to the Ephesians

DEAD BUT MADE ALIVE

Dead in offenses and sins

Ephesians 2:1 And you, though dead in your offenses and sins.

1. We walked according to the age of this world

Ephesians 2:2a In which you once walked according to the age of this world.

2. We walked according to the ruler of the authority of the air

Ephesians 2:2b According to the ruler of the authority of the air, of the spirit which is now operating in the sons of disobedience.

3. We conducted ourselves in the lust of the flesh

Ephesians 2:3 Among whom we also all conducted ourselves once in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the thoughts and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

But we were made alive

Ephesians 2:5b ...Made us alive together with Christ.

1. We were raised up together with Christ

Ephesians 2:6a And raised us up together with Him

2. We were seated together with Christ in the heavenlies

Ephesians 2:6b And seated us together with Him in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.

3. We became the masterpiece of God

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand in order that we would walk in them.

Discussion

1. What is man's condition prior to salvation?
2. What is man's condition following salvation?

Prayer Thank You God that while we were dead in our offenses and sins, You made us alive together with Christ. And You made us, the church, Your masterpiece.

NOTES

Dead in our offenses and sins

Dead (Eph. 2:1) refers to the deadness of our spirit...offenses are acts that overstep the limit of one's rights; sins are evil doings. Before we were saved, we were dead in offenses and sins. It was from this background of death that we were saved to be the church, the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). The dead have been made alive to be a living organism to express Christ.

This world (Eph. 2:2) refers to the...system of Satan, which is used by him to usurp and occupy people and keep them away from God and His purpose. When we were dead in offenses and sins, we walked according to the age...

...When we were dead in our offenses and sins, we walked not only according to the age of this world but also according to Satan, the ruler of the aerial authority, the evil spiritual power (which operates in the sons of disobedience).

When we were dead in offenses and sins, we conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires not only of the flesh but also of the thoughts. Three evil things—the age of this world, which is outside of us; the ruler of the aerial authority, which is above and within us; and the lusts of our flesh in our fallen nature—dominated our lives. From these evil things we have been saved to be the Body of Christ.

But we were made alive

In comparison with the book of Romans, the book of Ephesians does not consider us sinners; it considers us dead persons. As sinners, we need God's forgiveness and justification, as revealed in the book of Romans. But as dead persons, we need to be made alive. Forgiveness and justification bring us back to God's presence to enjoy His grace and participate in His life, whereas being made alive causes us, the living members of the Body of Christ, to express Him. God made us alive by imparting His eternal life, which is Christ Himself (Col. 3:4), into our dead spirit through His Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2). He has enlivened us together with Christ.

To make us alive is the initial step of God's salvation in life. After this, God raised us up from the position of death.

The third step of God's salvation in life is to seat us together in the heavenlies. God not only raised us up from the position of death, but He also seated us in the highest place in the universe.

Masterpiece in Greek is *poiema*. The heavens, the earth, and man, created by God, are not God's masterpiece; but the church, the Body of Christ, the fullness of the One who fills all in all (Eph. 1:23), the corporate and universal new man (2:15), is a masterpiece. We have been saved by grace to be God's masterpiece that we may walk in the good works prepared beforehand by God.

The Epistle to the Ephesians

THE NEW MAN

1. Christ broke down the middle wall of partition

Ephesians 2:14 For He Himself is our peace, He who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of partition, the enmity.

2. Christ abolished the law of the commandments in ordinances

Ephesians 2:15a Abolishing in His flesh the law of the commandments in ordinances...

3. Christ created in Himself one new man

Ephesians 2:15b ...That He might create the two in Himself into one new man, so making peace.

1. Putting off the old man

Ephesians 4:22 That you put off, as regards your former manner of life, the old man, which is being corrupted according to the lusts of the deceit.

2. Being renewed in the spirit of our mind

Ephesians 4:23 And that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind.

3. Putting on the new man

Ephesians 4:24 And put on the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the reality.

Discussion

1. What two negative things did Christ deal with in order to create the new man?
2. According to Ephesians 4:22-24, how do we cooperate with what Christ accomplished?

Prayer Lord Jesus, thank You for breaking down the middle wall of partition and abolishing the ritual law in Your flesh and on the cross. And thank You that on the cross, You created, in Yourself, one new man. We pray that daily we would be renewed in our minds to put off the old man and put on the new man.

NOTES

1. Christ broke down the middle wall of partition

Christ, who accomplished full redemption for both the Jewish and the Gentile believers, is Himself our peace, our harmony, making both one. Because of the fall of mankind and the calling of the chosen race, there was a separation between Israel and the Gentiles. Through Christ's redemption this separation has been removed. Now, in the redeeming Christ, who is the bond of oneness, both are one.

The middle wall of partition is the law of the commandments in ordinances in Ephesians 2:15, which was instituted because of man's flesh.

2. Christ abolished the law of the commandments in ordinances

Christ broke down the middle wall of partition between the Jews and the Gentiles by abolishing the law of the commandments in ordinances. When He was crucified on the cross, all the ordinances were nailed there (Col. 2:14).

This is not the law of the moral commandments but the law of the ritual commandments, composed principally of the practice of circumcision, the observance of dietary regulations, and the keeping of the Sabbath. These ordinances were the main "columns" of Judaism. The moral commandments will never be abolished, but the ritual commandments were in force only during a particular time dispensationally and are therefore not permanent.

3. Christ created in Himself one new man

Christ created the one new man, the church, by working God's divine nature into humanity. The working of the divine nature into humanity was something new. Hence, it was a creating. In the old creation God did not work His nature into any of His creatures, not even into man. In creating the one new man, however, God's nature was wrought into man to make His divine nature one entity with humanity.

God created man as a collective entity (Gen. 1:26). The corporate man created by God was damaged through man's fall; hence, there was the need for God to produce a new man. This was accomplished through Christ's abolishing in His flesh the ordinances and through His creating of the new man in Himself.

1. Putting off the old man

In baptism we put off the old man. Our old man was crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6) and was buried in baptism (Rom. 6:4a).

2. Being renewed in the spirit of our mind

This is the regenerated spirit of the believers, which is mingled with the indwelling Spirit of God. Such a mingled spirit spreads into our mind, thus becoming the spirit of our mind. It is in such a spirit that we are renewed for our transformation (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18).

3. Putting on the new man

It was in baptism that we put on the new man (Rom. 6:4b). The old man was created outwardly according to the image of God but without God's life and nature (Gen. 1:26-27), whereas the new man was created inwardly according to God Himself and with God's life and nature (Col. 3:10).

The Epistle to the Ephesians
THE CHURCH, THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST

Ephesians 3:4 By which, in reading it, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ.

1. Hidden in other generations

Ephesians 3:5a Which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men....

2. Revealed in the New Testament age as the church, the Body of Christ

Ephesians 3:5b ...It has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in spirit.

Ephesians 3:6b ...members of the Body...

3. Brought forth out of the unsearchable riches of Christ

Ephesians 3:8 ...the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel.

4. Expressing the multifarious wisdom of God

Ephesians 3:10 In order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church.

5. According to the eternal purpose of God

Ephesians 3:11 According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Discussion

1. According to Ephesians 3:4-11, what is the mystery of Christ?
2. The church is brought forth out of what? And what does the church express?

Prayer Lord, by revelation, make known to me the church as the mystery of Christ brought forth out of the riches of Christ to express the wisdom of God.

NOTES

1. Hidden in other generations

The mystery of Christ, the church, was hidden in other generations but has been revealed in the New Testament age.

2. Revealed in the New Testament age as the church, the Body of Christ

The mystery of God in Colossians 2:2 is Christ; the mystery of Christ here is the church. God is a mystery, and Christ, as the embodiment of God to express Him, is the mystery of God. Christ also is a mystery, and the church, as the Body of Christ to express Him, is the mystery of Christ...

3. Brought forth out of the unsearchable riches of Christ

The apostle announced not doctrines but the riches of Christ. The riches of Christ are what Christ is to us, such as light, life, righteousness, and holiness, what He has for us, and what He accomplished, attained and obtained for us. These riches of Christ are unsearchable and untraceable.

4. Expressing the multifarious wisdom of God

As revealed in Ephesians 3:8, the church is produced from the unsearchable riches of Christ. When God's chosen people partake of and enjoy the riches of Christ, they are constituted with those riches to be the church, through which God's multifarious wisdom is made known... Hence, the church is God's wise exhibition of all that Christ is.

5. According to the eternal purpose of God

Literally, the purpose of the ages. The eternal purpose is the eternal plan that God made in eternity past.

The Epistle to the Ephesians

**THE APOSTLE'S PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH
REGARDING EXPERIENCE**

1. Strengthened into the inner man

Ephesians 3:16 That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man.

2. Christ making His home in the believers' hearts

Ephesians 3:17a That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith...

3. Apprehending the dimensions of Christ

Ephesians 3:17b-18 ...That you, being rooted and grounded in love, **18** May be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are.

4. Knowing the love of Christ

Ephesians 3:19a And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ...

5. Being filled unto the fullness of God

Ephesians 3:19b ...That you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.

Discussion

1. Where are we strengthened? And where does Christ make His home?
2. What (or who) do we need to apprehend the dimensions of Christ?

Prayer *Father, grant us, according to the riches of Your glory, to be strengthened with power through Your Spirit into the inner man; that Christ may make His home in our hearts through faith. Root us and ground us in love that we may be full of strength to apprehend with all the students Your vastness and know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ so that we may be filled unto all the fullness of God.*

NOTES

1. Strengthened into the inner man

The apostle's prayer in Ephesians 1:15-23 was that the saints would receive revelation concerning the church. Here in Ephesians 3:14-21 his prayer is that the saints would experience Christ for the church. This requires us to be strengthened into our spirit (*i.e.*, the inner man).

Power here is the power that is referred to in Ephesians 1:19-22 and that raised Christ from the dead, seated Christ as the right hand of God in the heavenlies, subjected all things under Christ's feet, and gave Christ to be Head over all things to the church. Such power operates in us (Eph. 3:20), and with such power God strengthens us for the church.

The Father strengthens us from within through the indwelling Spirit, who has been with us and is in us since our regeneration.

2. Christ making His home in the believers' hearts

Our heart is composed of all the parts of our soul—mind, emotion, and will—plus our conscience, the main part of our spirit. These parts are inward parts of our being. Through regeneration Christ came into our spirit. After this, we should allow Him to spread into every part of our heart. Since our heart is the totality of all our inward parts and the center of our inward being, when Christ makes His home in our heart, He controls our entire inward being and supplies and strengthens every inward part with Himself.

3. The believers apprehending the dimensions of Christ

To apprehend the dimensions of Christ (breadth, length, height and depth), we need all the saints...

4. The believers knowing the love of Christ

The love of Christ is Christ Himself. Just as Christ is immeasurable, so also is His love; hence, it is knowledge-surpassing. Yet, we can know it by experiencing it.

5. The believers being filled unto the fullness of God

The fullness of God implies that the riches of all that God is have become His expression. When the riches of God are in God Himself, they are His riches. But when the riches of God are expressed, they become His fullness (John 1:16). All the fullness of God dwells in Christ (Col. 1:19; 2:9). Through His indwelling, Christ imparts the fullness of God into our being that we may be filled even unto the fullness of God to be the practical manifestation of the church in which God may be glorified in His expression (Eph. 3:21).

The Epistle to the Ephesians

ONENESS

1. Keeping the oneness of the Spirit

Ephesians 4:3 Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace.

2. One Body, one Spirit, and one hope

Ephesians 4:4 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling.

3. One Lord, one faith, and one baptism

Ephesians 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism.

4. One God and Father

Ephesians 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Discussion

1. According to Ephesians 4:3, what makes the believers one?
2. What are the three groups, of the seven things, that form the base of our oneness? Include verse references.

Prayer *Lord, we pray that we all would be diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit. Thank You for Your one Body, regenerated by the one Spirit unto one hope of glory. Thank You that You are the one Lord and Head of the Body, into Whom we have believed and been baptized. And thank You for the one God and Father as our source of life.*

NOTES

1. Keeping the oneness of the Spirit

To walk worthily of God's calling to have the proper Body life, we first need to care for the oneness. This is crucial and vital to the Body of Christ. Strictly, oneness differs from unity. Unity is the state in which many people are united together, whereas oneness is the one entity of the Spirit within the believers, which makes them all one. This oneness is a person, Christ Himself, who is the Spirit dwelling within us. It is similar to the electricity flowing within many lamps, making them all one in the shining. In themselves, the lamps are separate, but in the electricity they are one.

2. One Body, one Spirit, and one hope

In exhorting us to safeguard the oneness (Eph. 4:3), the apostle Paul points out seven things that form the base of our oneness: one Body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father. These seven "ones" are of three groups. The first three can be grouped together: the Spirit with the Body as His expression. This Body, having been regenerated and being saturated with the Spirit as its essence, has the hope of being transfigured into the full likeness of Christ. The next three form the second group, that of the Lord with faith and baptism, that we may be joined to Him. The last of the seven forms the third group, the one God and Father, who is the Originator and source of all...

Hope here refers to the hope of glory (Col. 1:27), which is the transfiguration of our body (Phil. 3:27) and the manifestation of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19, 23-25).

3. One Lord, one faith, and one baptism

...As the Head of the Body (Eph. 1:22), He is the Lord. Christians are divided because they neglect the Head; that is, they neglect the Lord's headship and authority.

Through faith we believe into the Lord (Jon 3:36), and through baptism we are baptized into Him (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3) and terminated in Adam (Rom. 6:4). Through faith and baptism we have been transferred out of Adam into Christ, thereby being joined to the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17). Immediately after believing in Christ, we should be baptized to complete the transfer.

4. One God and Father

God is the Originator of all things, and the Father is the source of life for the Body of Christ.

The Trinity is implied even here. *Over all* refers mainly to the Father, *through all* to the Son, and *in all* to the Spirit. The Triune God eventually enters into us all by reaching us as the Spirit. The oneness of the Body of Christ is constituted of the Trinity of the Godhead—the Father as the source and origin being the Originator, the Son as the Lord and Head being the Accomplisher, and the Spirit and the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b) being the Executor. The Triune God Himself, when realized and experienced by us in our daily life, is the fundamental basis and very foundation of our oneness.

The Epistle to the Ephesians

**THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST
AND THE BUILDING UP OF THE BODY**

1. Leading captives those taken captive

Ephesians 4:8a Therefore the Scripture says, “Having ascended to the height, He led captive those taken captive...”

(Psalm 68:18a You have ascended on high; You have led captive those taken captive...)

2. Giving gifts to men

Ephesians 4:8b “...He led captive those taken captive and gave gifts to men.”

(Psalm 68:18b ...You have received gifts among men, / Even the rebellious ones also, / That Jehovah God may dwell among them.)

3. Apostles, prophets, evangelists and shepherds and teachers

Ephesians 4:11 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers.

4. Perfecting the believers for the building up of the Body of Christ

Ephesians 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ.

Discussion

1. According to Ephesians 4:8, what two things happened at the time of Christ’s ascension?
2. According to Ephesians 4:12, what was the goal of Christ giving gifts to the Body of Christ?

Prayer Lord, thank You that I am a gift to the Body of Christ. Now raise me up to function as an apostle, a prophet, an evangelist, and a shepherd and teacher. Do this for the building up of Your Body.

NOTES

1. Leading captive those taken captive

Height in the quotation from Psalm 68:18 refers to Mount Zion (vv.15-16), which symbolizes the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2; Psa. 33:13-14; Heb. 7:26), where God dwells (1 Kings 8:30). Psalm 68 implies that it was in the Ark that God ascended to Mount Zion after the Ark won the victory. Verse 1 of Psalm 68 is taken from Numbers 10:35. This indicates that the background of Psalm 68 is God's move in the tabernacle with the Ark as its center. Wherever the Ark, a type of Christ, went, the victory was won. Eventually, this Ark ascended triumphantly to the top of Mount Zion. This portrays how Christ won the victory and ascended triumphantly to the heavens.

Those refers to the redeemed saints, who were taken captive by Satan before being saved by Christ's death and resurrection. In His ascension Christ led them captive; that is, He rescued them from Satan's captivity and took them to Himself. This indicates that He conquered and overcame Satan, who had captured them by sin and death.

The Amplified New Testament renders "He led captive those taken captive" as "He led a train of vanquished foes." *Vanquished foes* may refer to Satan, to his angels, and to us the sinners, again indicating Christ's victory over Satan, sin, and death. In Christ's ascension there was a procession of these vanquished foes, led as captives from a war, for a celebration of Christ's victory.

2. Giving gifts to men

Gifts here does not refer to the abilities or capacities for various services but to the gifted persons in Ephesians 4:11—apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers. After conquering Satan and death and rescuing the sinners from Satan and death through His death and resurrection, Christ in His ascension made the rescued sinners themselves such gifts by means of His resurrection life and gave them to His Body for its building up.

3. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers

Apostles are those who are called and sent by God (1) to preach the gospel... (2) to establish the churches and (3) to teach the divine truth.

Prophets are those who speak for God and speak forth; *evangelists* preach the gospel.

Shepherds and teachers feed, nurture, instruct, and lead people with the word of God.

4. Perfecting the believers for the building up of the Body of Christ

According to the grammatical construction, the building up of the Body of Christ is the work of the ministry. Whatever the gifted persons in Ephesians 4:11 do as the work of the ministry must be for the building up of the Body of Christ. However, this building up is not accomplished directly by the gifted ones but by the saints who have been perfected (or, equipped) by the gifted ones.

The Epistle to the Ephesians
BEING FILLED IN SPIRIT

1. Being filled in the spirit

Ephesians 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissoluteness, but be filled in spirit.

2. Speaking, singing, psalming, and giving thanks to God

Ephesians 5:19-20 Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming with your heart to the Lord, **20** Giving thanks at all times for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to our God and Father.

3. Resulting in a proper relationship between husband and wife—Eph. 5:22-33

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.

4. Resulting in a proper relationship between children and parents—Eph. 6:1-4

Ephesians 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

Ephesians 6:4 And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but nurture them in the discipline and admonition of the Lord.

5. Resulting in a proper relationship between slaves and masters—Eph. 6:5-9

Ephesians 6:5a Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters...

Ephesians 6:9 And masters, do the same things toward them...

Discussion

1. According to Ephesians 5:18, in what part of our being should we be filled?
2. What are four ways to be filled? And what is the issue of being filled?

Prayer *Oh Lord Jesus! Thank You God for all things! We praise and thank You in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! Fill us every day, every moment of every day, so that we can have a proper living of expressing You!*

NOTES

1. Being filled in the spirit

To be drunk with wine is to be filled in the body, whereas to be filled in the spirit (our regenerated spirit, not God's Spirit) is to be filled with Christ (Eph. 1:23) unto the fullness of God (Eph. 3:19). To be drunk with wine in our physical body causes us to become dissolute (*i.e.*, lax in morals), but to be filled in our spirit with Christ, with the fullness of God, causes us to overflow with Christ in speaking, singing, psalming, and giving thanks to God (Eph. 5:19-20) and also causes us to subject ourselves to one another (Eph. 5:21).

2. Speaking, singing, psalming, and giving thanks to God

Ephesians 5:19-21 modify *be filled in spirit* in v. 18. Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs are not only for singing and psalming, but also for speaking to one another. Such speaking, singing, psalming, giving of thanks to God (v. 20), and subjecting of ourselves to one another (v. 21) are not only the outflow of being filled in spirit but also the way to be filled in spirit.

We should give thanks to God the Father not only in good times but at all times, and not only for good things but for all things. Even in bad times we should give thanks to God our Father for the bad things.

3.-5. Resulting in a proper relationship between husband and wife, children and parents, and slaves and masters.

The Epistle to the Ephesians

THE GREAT MYSTERY—CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

1. Christ as the Husband

Ephesians 5:23 For a husband is head of the wife as also Christ is Head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the Body.

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.

2. The church as the wife

Ephesians 5:24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be subject to their husbands in everything.

3. The two becoming one

Ephesians 5:31 For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh.

(Genesis 2:24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.)

4. The great mystery—Christ and the church

Ephesians 5:32 This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church.

Discussion

1. Who is the real Husband in this universe? And the real wife?
2. According to Ephesians 5:22-33, what does marriage represent?

Prayer Lord Jesus, You're not only our Maker, but our Husband (Isa. 54:5). Thank You for loving us with an eternal love and Your great desire to be one with us, Your church. Praise You that we are joined to You and are now one spirit with You (1 Cor. 6:17)!

NOTES

1. Christ as the Husband

The husband as the head of the wife typifies Christ as the Head of the church.

2. The church as the wife

...The apostle did not exhort husbands to rule over their wives but to love them...The wife's subjection plus the husband's love constitutes a proper married life and typifies the normal church life, in which the church is subject to Christ and Christ loves the church. Love is the very element, the inner substance, of God (1 John 4:8, 16). The goal of this book is to bring us into God's inner substance that we may enjoy God as love and enjoy His presence in the sweetness of the divine love, and thereby love others as Christ did.

3. The two becoming one

This was God's ordination in Genesis 2:24.

4. The great mystery—Christ and the church

Christ and the church as one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17), typified by husband and wife as one flesh, are the great mystery.



ο χριστός και η εκκλησία (Christ and the church)

The Epistle to the Ephesians

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

1. Being empowered in the Lord

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, be empowered in the Lord and in the might of His strength.

2. Fighting against Satan and his evil forces

Ephesians 6:12 For our wrestling is not against blood and flesh but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies.

3. The whole armor of God

Ephesians 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the stratagems of the devil.

4. Girdle of truth

Ephesians 6:14a Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth...

5. Breastplate of righteousness

Ephesians 6:14b ... and having put on the breastplate of righteousness.

6. The firm foundation of the gospel of peace

Ephesians 6:15 And having shod your feet with the firm foundation of the gospel of peace.

7. Shield of faith

Ephesians 6:16 Besides all these, having taken up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming darts of the evil one.

8. Helmet of salvation

Ephesians 6:17 And receive the helmet of salvation...

9. The sword of the Spirit

Ephesians 6:17b ...And the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God.

10. Prayer as the application of God's armor

Ephesians 6:18 By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints.

Discussion

1. Who's power and strength should we depend on?
2. Who is our wrestling – or warfare – against?

Prayer Lord, strengthen us to be watchful, persevering and persisting in our prayer, even at every time in spirit, for ourselves and others around us. Even teach us to pray together and pray in a way to apply the armor of God to stand against and ultimately defeat Your enemy.

NOTES

1. Being empowered in the Lord

Empower in Greek has the same root as the word for *power* in Ephesians 1:19. To deal with God's enemy, to fight against the evil forces of darkness, we need to be empowered with the greatness of the power that raised Christ from the dead and seated Him in the heavens, far above all the evil spirits in the air.

2. Fighting against Satan and his evil forces

Blood and flesh refers to men. Behind men of blood and flesh are the evil forces of the devil, which are against God's purpose. Hence, our wrestling, our fighting, must not be against men but against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies.

The ruler, the authorities, and the world-rulers of this darkness are the rebellious angels, who followed Satan in his rebellion against God and who now rule in the heavenlies over the nations of the world.

3. The whole armor of God

On the positive side, in the first five chapters the church is portrayed in many ways for the fulfilling of God's eternal purpose. On the negative side, the church is seen here as a warrior for the defeating of God's enemy, the devil. To defeat God's enemy, we need to put on the whole armor of God. "Put on" is an imperative, a command. God has provided the armor for us, but He does not put it on for us. Rather, we ourselves must put it on, exercising our will to cooperate with Him.

The whole armor of God is for the entire Body of Christ, not for any individual member of the Body. The church is a corporate warrior, and the believers are parts of this unique warrior. Only the corporate warrior, not any individual believer, can wear the whole armor of God. We must fight the spiritual warfare in the Body, not as individuals.

4. Girdle of truth: Truth, or reality, refers to God becoming our reality and experience in our living...this is the girdle that strengthens our whole being for the spiritual warfare.

5. Breastplate of righteousness: We need the covering of righteousness to protect us from the enemy's accusation; such righteousness is Christ (1 Cor. 1:30).

6. The firm foundation of the gospel of peace: Christ made peace for us, with both God and man, on the cross, and this peace has become our gospel (Eph. 2:13-17)...has been established as a firm foundation...with which our feet may be shod.

7. Shield of faith: If we live by God as truth, we have righteousness...which issues in peace (Heb. 12:11). Having all these, we can easily have faith as a shield against the evil one's flaming darts.

8. Helmet of salvation: For covering our mind...against the negative thoughts shot in by the evil one. Such a helmet, such a covering, is God's salvation.

9. The sword of the Spirit: Christ as the Spirit and the word furnishes us with a sword as an offensive weapon to defeat the enemy.

10. Prayer as the application of God's armor

The whole armor of God is composed of six items. Prayer may be considered the seventh. It is the unique, crucial, and vital means by which we apply the other items, making the armor available to us in a practical way...we need to be watchful, on the alert, for the maintaining of this prayer life.

The Epistle to the Ephesians
TO LOVE THE LORD IN INCORRUPTION

1. Grace

Ephesians 6:24a Grace be with all those...

2. Love

Ephesians 6:24b ...With all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Incorruption

Ephesians 6:24 Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptibility.

Discussion

1. What three key words are used in Paul's final word to the Ephesians?
2. Ephesians 1:18 and 3:9 speaks of the eyes of our heart needing to be enlightened in order to know and to see. Ephesians 3:3 speaks of the mystery being revealed. In this study of Ephesians, what did the Lord reveal and show you regarding Himself? His church? You? And your Christian life?

Prayer *Thank You Lord for choosing us in love. Keep us rooted and grounded in love, bearing one another in love, holding to the truth of Your word in love, building Your Body in love, and walking in love. Lord, at the end of this semester, we give You our first and best love. Keep us loving You all the days of our lives.*

NOTES

1. Grace

Grace is needed for us to live a church life that fulfills God's eternal purpose and solves God's problem with His enemy.

2. Love

The enjoyment of the Lord as grace is with those who love Him. In this book the phrase *in love*, which is rich in feeling, is used repeatedly (Eph. 1:4; 3:17; 4:2, 15-16; 5:2).

Ephesians 1:4 Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before Him in love.

Ephesians 3:17 That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love.

Ephesians 4:2 With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, bearing one another in love.

Ephesians 4:15-16 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ. **16** Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

Ephesians 5:2 And walk in love, even as Christ also loved us and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.

Later, the church in Ephesus was rebuked by the Lord because she had lost her first love toward Him (Rev. 2:4). One of the main points revealed in this book is that the church, which is the Body of Christ, is also the bride of Christ, Christ's wife. With the Body, the emphasis is on taking Christ as life; with the wife, the emphasis is on loving Christ. Therefore, this book emphasizes and also concludes with our love toward the Lord. The church in Ephesus, the recipient of this Epistle, failed in the matter of loving the Lord. Such a failure became the source of and main reason for the failure of the church throughout the ages (Rev. 2—3).

Revelation 2:1a To the messenger of the church in Ephesus write...

Revelation 2:4 But I have one thing against you, that you have left your first love.

3. Incorruption

For the proper church life we need to love the Lord in incorruptibility, that is, in and according to all the crucial things revealed and taught in the six chapters of this book, such as the church as the Body of Christ, the new man, the economy of God's mystery, the oneness of the Spirit, reality and grace, light and love, and the items of God's armor, all of which are incorruptible. For the sake of the church, our love towards the Lord must be in these incorruptible things.