

Ephesians

Chapter 1

Introduction - Ephesians 1:1-2

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: (Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Writer

Paul is an apostle of Christ in the sense that he was personally selected by Christ (Acts 9), an eyewitness of the risen Christ (Acts 9) and specially empowered by Christ as an apostle (Mark 16, Romans 15:19, 2 Corinthians 12:12).

This choice was through the will of God. The word *thelema* indicates a predetermined and effective will as opposed to *boulomai*, a desire. Paul did not take a vocational test to determine what he would be best at. His choice of vocation was that of a persecutor of the Church and a defender of the Jewish faith. The last thing he had on his mind on the road to Damascus was that of service to the very institution he was trying to wipe out. God had other plans, however, and divinely intervened in Paul's life and chose him to be an apostle of the Gospel.

The Recipients

The words, "At Ephesus" do not appear in nearly all *mss* of the New Testament. This might be the "circular letter" mentioned in Colossians 4:16. Possible evidence for this is 1) Tychicus is mentioned in Ephesians 6:21 and Colossians 4:7 as the bearer of these letters and since both Ephesians and Colossians are prison epistles, they must have been written very close in time and carried by the same person because of travel times and distances, 2) Laodicea and Colossae were very close in the Lycus valley, and 3) Colossians and Ephesians have many parallels, which makes sense if they were written very close in time and to people in near proximity to one another.

The Greeting - Ephesians 1:2

This was the common Pauline greeting found in most all his books. Grace refers to the unmerited favor God has shown those that are His, and peace is the result of that faith. Both of these are two great benefits that we have in Christ.

Peace is two-fold, the peace of God, and the peace with God. Furthermore, grace and peace have a dual source, Christ and the Father. Christ promised His disciples that if they believed in Him, that both He and His Father would come and make their abode with them (John 14:23). Grace and peace are two results of our fellowship and communion with Christ and the Father.

Blessed Be God! - Ephesians 1:3-14

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

Verses 3-14 comprise one long sentence in the Greek language¹. The verb is found in this first verse, *eulogia* which means “blessed.” God is to be praised and blessed by believers because of the many privileges we have in Christ. What exactly are these blessings? God has blessed us with all “spiritual things.” This word is *pneumatika* which refers to the source and character of these blessings.² They have as their source God, and their character is that of the Spirit. This same word is used to refer to the spiritual gifts bestowed on believers by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:1). Our blessings are not carnal or physical in nature, but spiritual.

The blessings we have are located in the heavenlies. This runs counter to the mentality on “Christian” TV that wants to make all our blessings earthly. This is not what we read in the Bible. We have a new home in heaven (John 14:1-3), an inheritance in heaven (1 Peter 1:3-4), a citizenship which is in heaven (Philippians 3:20-21), a seat which is in heaven (Ephesians 2:6), and our treasure is to be in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21). Our true treasure is not to be laid up on this earth, but in heaven. The rich young ruler was more interested in earthly treasure than he was heavenly, and as a result forfeited eternal treasure (Matthew 19).

These riches are only ours “in Christ.” This key term appears fifteen times in Ephesians. Our inheritance is not obtained on our merit, but on the merit of Christ. Paul indicates this as well in Romans 8:17 where we are “joint-heirs” with Christ. In and of ourselves we deserve nothing good from God’s hand. It is only the unmerited grace of God that makes us recipients of any good thing.

An Outline of Ephesians 1:3-14³

- 1. The Blessing of Election Past - God the Father - Ephesians 1:4-6.**
- 2. The Blessing of Present Forgiveness - Christ - Ephesians 1:7-10.**
- 3. The Blessing of Future Glory - The Holy Spirit - Ephesians 1:11-14.**

The Church Formed in Eternity Past - Ephesians 1:4-6

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: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Why are we blessed with all spiritual blessings as believers? The first reason is because we were chosen to be “in Christ” before the foundation of the earth. The phrase “foundation of the earth” is used to refer to eternity past, prior to creation. In other words, before God created anything, He chose us to be His child. We see a clear presentation of the doctrine of election in this verse. God chose us by Himself, and for Himself. The word *exelexato*, to choose, is in the

¹ The outline for this section is taken from John F. MacArthur, *Ephesians*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), pp. 5-37.

² William Hendricksen, *Galatians and Ephesians*, NTC (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), pp. 73-74.

³ R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians*, (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1990), p. 31.

aorist tense and appears in the middle voice. No one nominated people to be elected by God. It was done solely by Him and for reasons that only God knows.

Election In Ephesians 1⁴

1. **Its Author - God.**
2. **Its Nature - Choice.**
3. **Its Object - Saints and Believers.**
4. **Its Foundation - Christ.**
5. **Its Time - Eternity Past.**
6. **Its Purpose - A Redeemed and Holy Humanity.**

Election in Salvation

Election is the sovereign, predetermined, and unmerited choice of God the Father by which He chooses those who will be recipients of salvation (John 15:16; 17:9; Acts 13:46-48; Romans 9:13-16, 22; 11:4-5; 1 Corinthians 1:9; Ephesians 1:3-5; 1 Thessalonians 1:3-4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:8-9; 2:10). It comes from the Greek word *ekkaleo* which means “to call out from among.”

Foreknowledge is a predetermined planning of something, an intimate knowledge of someone or some event prior to its occurrence (1 Peter 1:2, 20; Acts 2:23; Acts 26:5; Romans 8:29; Romans 11:2; 2 Peter 3:17). It comes from the Greek word *proginosko* which means “to intimately know or determine beforehand.”

Predestination is a predetermined consequence or action (Acts 4:28; Romans 8:29-30; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1:5, 11). It comes from the Greek word *prooritzo* which means “to mark out beforehand.”

What are the results of this election? First, we are made a child of God, and secondly, our nature is changed. It is not right to say that a person can be one of God’s elect without their being a concomitant change in that person’s life. We are to be “holy” and “without blame”. “Holy” refers to being set apart from sin to God, and “without blame” refers to being without blemish. One cannot be a Christian and have no evidence of holy or blameless character. That is not to say we become perfect, but there is a change, even if only a little at first.

The Advantages of Election⁵

1. **It Crushes our Pride - Romans 3:27-30, Ephesians 2:8-9.**
2. **It Exalts God - Psalm 115:1.**
3. **It Produces Joy - Psalm 65:4.**
4. **It Grants Us Tremendous Privileges - Ephesians 1:3; 1 Peter 2:9.**

⁴ Hendricksen, pp. 74-78.

⁵ John MacArthur, *Chosen For Eternity*, (Panorama City: Grace to You, 1989), pp. 45-46.

5. In Promotes Holiness - Colossians 3:12.

Not only are we elect, but secondly we are predestinated. It is probably best to understand the phrase, “in love” as going with the participle “having predestinated.”⁶ Why did God predestinate us? He did it because of his love. Whereas election refers to the sovereign choice of God which will result in the salvation of the one elected, predestination refers to the result of that election, namely adoption into God's family as His very own. Election and predestination are a package deal. One does not get elected without also getting predestinated unto adoption into God's family.

Adoption is a rich word. In the Roman system a man who had no suitable heir would often adopt someone as his son. When he did, the adopted person received a new name, had all past crimes expunged from their record, and were considered as being “newly born” into the family of the man who had adopted them. Their new status even gave them precedence over natural sons when it came to matters of the inheritance. When we were adopted by God, we received a new name, had our past sins expunged, and were freshly born into God's family where we receive all the rights and privileges which thereunto appertain. This adoption was for one and only one reason, God's pleasure and will. God predetermined to adopt us in eternity past, and effected that adoption in time. We will receive the full privileges of that adoption in the future.

Six Great Legal Terms⁷

Dikaioo - justify (Romans 3:4; 4:25; 5:18; 1 Timothy 3:16). Used to refer to the act of being legally acquitted.

Aphiemi - forgive (Matthew 9:2; Romans 4:7; Ephesians 1:7; 4:32). Used to indicate the cancellation or legal repayment of a debt.

Huiothesia - adoption (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5). Used to refer to the process of adopting an heir.

Katallaso - reconcile (Romans 5:10; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20). Used to refer to the process of reconciling two disputing parties in court.

Agorazo, exagorazo - redemption (Galatians 3:13; Revelation 5:9; 14:3-4). Used to refer to buying and trading in the marketplace.

Lutroo - redemption (Ephesians 1:7). Used to refer to the payment of a ransom in order to free someone.

Thirdly, by God's grace, we are accepted in the “beloved one.” This refers, no doubt, to Christ who is the “beloved Son of God” (Luke 3:22). God's election of us in eternity past is effected in time by our predestination to be adopted and made accepted into the beloved one in the future. In God's eyes this is one continuous process. One does not get elected in the past and somehow fall out along the way. This is most clearly seen in Romans 8:29-30:

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did

⁶ F. F. Bruce, *Epistles to the Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, NICNT*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1988), pp. 255-56.

⁷ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, pp. 17-18.

predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Note the unbroken chain. ALL those whom God foreknew (*proginosko* - to choose beforehand), were predestinated (*prooritzo* - to mark out and determine beforehand) to the image of Christ. ALL those who were predestinated were called (*ekkaleo* - to efficaciously call) in time. ALL those who were called were justified (*dikaosuna* - to forensically declare righteous). ALL those who were justified will be glorified (*doxazo* - to fully and finally receive all that is ours in Christ) No one gets left out, no one is dropped off along the way. Our selection by God in eternity past will be carried all the way through to our glorification in eternity future.

Redemption From Sin - Ephesians 1:7-10

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; 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 fulness 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:

In this passage we are given a mini-theology of redemption. Redemption is one of those rich words in the New Testament that loses much during translation. The word for redemption, *apolutroo*, means to pay a ransom in order to effect the release of a captive. Christ paid the ransom price in order to free us from the captivity of sin to serve him.

The Old Testament Example of Redemption - The *goel*

A *goel* must meet three requirements:

a. He must be a near kinsman - Leviticus 25:48-49, Ruth 3:12-13

Christ was a near kinsman - Hebrews 2:14-16, 4:15

b. He must be able to redeem - Jeremiah 50:34

Christ was able to redeem - John 10:11,18

c. He must be willing to redeem

Christ was willing to redeem - Hebrews 10:4-10

The Redemption Price - Ephesians 1:7

The redemption price was the "blood of Christ." (1 Peter 1:18-19, Revelation 5:9-12) In Hebrews 9:22 we are told that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. This does not refer to the physical fluid, but is a picture of the type of death Christ would suffer. He had to suffer and die as a lamb did in the Old Testament. Christ did not bleed to death on the cross, He voluntarily "gave up the ghost" (Matthew 27:50). The blood of Christ is a picture of His death. Bengelianism is a heresy which makes something magical out of the blood of Christ, and is a view is not supported in Scripture.

The Results of Redemption - Ephesians 1:7-9a

What does this redemption accomplish? Forgiveness of sin. Forgiveness, *aphiemi*, refers to the act of sending something away, and was used legally to refer to the cancellation or payment of a debt. Christ paid our debt of sin to God, thereby releasing us from the obligation to pay for our own sins. We could never pay for our own sins, but Christ could by his sinless life and perfect sacrifice on our behalf.

God's forgiveness is *according to* the riches of His grace, not *out of* the riches of His grace. A multimillionaire who donates twenty-five dollars to a charity is giving out of his riches. A gift, however, of twenty-five thousand would be according to his riches. God has superabundantly pardoned us and forgave our sins because of the substitutionary death of Christ on our behalf.

A side note should be made that our salvation, and the resultant benefits of that salvation, are made possible only by God's grace. Grace refers to the unmerited, unearned, and undeserved goodness of God as manifested towards us in our sinful state. All salvation has its roots in God's grace, it is appropriated by faith. See Ephesians 2:8-9. In the Old Testament it is said in Genesis 6:8 that "Noah found grace". Even in the Old Testament, salvation was by grace, but that grace was appropriated by faith.

God has not only forgiven us our sin, but has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence.⁸ Wisdom, *sophia*, refers to the ability to think morally. It has an emphasis on spiritual knowledge and understanding. Spiritual wisdom is only made available to us through the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:8ff). It is the Spirit of God which enables us to grasp and comprehend spiritual truths. Prudence, *phronasei*, refers to the mind and is linked to the idea of earthly, practical, wisdom.

We need to be reminded of Proverbs 1:7 which tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Those who do not fear the Lord have no basis for moral discernment and understanding. Only through Christ do we have access to the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3).

Because of our redemption, we have been given understanding regarding the mystery of His will, which is the body of Christ mentioned in the next verse. Mystery, *musterion*, refers to something that had previously been hidden but is now revealed. In the Old Testament we do not see the Church, the Body of Christ, mentioned. When Christ arose from the dead the disciples figured that He would immediately bring in the kingdom (Acts 1). What they did not see was the "mystery age", the age of the Church, in which both Jew and Gentile would be made to be members of the same body. This will be ultimately fulfilled in the Eternal State.

The Reasons for Redemption - Ephesians 1:9b-10

What is the reason for our redemption? We are told that all of this was done because of God's own purposes and pleasure. In Revelation 4:11 we are told that all of creation exists for God's pleasure. Why did God redeem us? Only he has the ultimate answer to that question. However, we see one element of God's reason in these two verses. That is, redemption was the method whereby he will gather together in one all that belongs to Christ.

Dispensation, *oikonomia*, refers to a period of time in which God deal's with humanity in a particular way. This dispensation is when time, epochal time, has run its course and is fulfilled. This is known as the eternal state (see 1 Corinthians 15:20-28). In the eternal state

⁸ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, p. 25.

God will have fully and finally accomplished his redemptive work. All those that he chose in eternity past will have been glorified and will be in heaven praising his name forever.

Our Divine Inheritance - Ephesians 3:11-14

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted] after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Paul finishes this one, long sentence by telling us of our divine inheritance. God not only redeems us from sin, but he grants us an eternal inheritance in heaven with him that will never fade. In 1 Peter 1:3-4 we are told that this inheritance is incorruptible (not subject to decay), and undefiled (not subject to the ravages of sin), and will not fade away (lose its value).

The Surety of our Inheritance - Ephesians 1:11

The surety of our inheritance is founded in God's predetermination and power. God had decided in eternity past to give us an inheritance, and that will never change. It is also founded in his sovereign power which means he is able to accomplish whatever he decides to do. It can never be the case that God decides to do something, then finds that he cannot deliver because he lacks the power to bring his purposes about.

The Sign of our Inheritance - Ephesians 1:12-13a

What is the outward sign of this inheritance. It is our acceptance of Christ as Lord and Savior. Yes, God has chosen us in eternity past, but that selection is made evident in time when we respond to the gospel call by faith. Those who will be taking part in this divine inheritance are those who have placed their personal faith and trust in Christ as their savior. Predestination is from God's side, but trust and faith from ours.

The word trusted is *elpidos*, hope. This is a most apt word in that Christ is the eternal hope of the believer. Unlike our term hope, this term refers to something that is sure, not uncertain. It merely awaits future fulfillment. Our trust is that of an earnest expectation of future fulfillment.

What Does It Mean To Be "In Christ"⁹

1. **It indicates a radical transformation - 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Corinthians 15:22.**
2. **It brings a dynamic unity of cosmic dimensions - Ephesians 2:6; Galatians 3:28; John 17:11.**
3. **It brings deep satisfaction - John 6:35.**

The Seal of our Inheritance - Ephesians 1:14

The seal of our inheritance is the Holy Spirit, who is given to all who believe. In New Testament times sealing referred to the imprint of some official seal which signified that the

⁹ Hughes, pp. 42-44,

object being sealed belonged to the person who did the sealing. We, as believers, have been sealed (marked out as belonging to God), by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. The title for the Holy Spirit in this verse is the “Holy Spirit of Promise.” Refer to John 14:16-17.

Four Aspects of Our Sealing¹⁰

1. **Sealing signifies security.** This means that once we have been sealed by the Holy Spirit, nothing regarding the future fulfillment of our inheritance can be changed.
2. **Sealing signifies authenticity.** This means that those who have been sealed by the Holy Spirit are marked out as genuine believers.
3. **Sealing signifies ownership.** The Holy Spirit permanently marks believers as belonging to God.
4. **Sealing signifies authority.** This means that God has given us the authority to proclaim the gospel since we have been marked out as belonging to him.

The Holy Spirit is not only our seal, but he is also the “earnest” or *arrabon*. This word refers to an “engagement ring”, a down payment to insure future fulfillment. This means that the Holy Spirit is only the first installment of all that God has promised us. Someday we will receive the fullness of our inheritance in Christ, but until then the Holy Spirit is a constant reminder that we are his and he is ours.

Prayer for Spiritual Wisdom- Ephesians 1:15-23

Unlike many of the prayers offered to God today, Paul did not spend his time talking about trivial or mundane things. He did not spend his prayer time beseeching God to remove some physical disease from someone or to give them joy and happiness in their circumstances. He did not pray for material prosperity or wealth. Rather, he prayed for spiritual maturity and insight for his readers.

Paul’s Thankfulness to God - Ephesians 1:15-16

Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

Paul’s prayer starts out with a declaration of thanks to God for the Ephesian believers. The churches that Paul founded throughout the Roman world brought great joy to his heart. As great as the joy, however, of the mere *existence* of the believers, Paul had a greater joy over the faith of the believers. Not only were the Ephesian believers saved, but their faith was spoken of in such a way that their faithfulness reached the Apostle Paul.

Note that the faith of the Ephesian believers manifested itself in love to others. Faith is not a “hidden quality” that can remain unseen by others. That is the message of James in James 2. Faith without works is dead being alone. True faith will always evidence itself in the life of the one who claims to possess it. The Ephesian faith in the Lord Jesus evidenced itself in their love for others. Because of their faith, and love, Paul made mention of them often in his prayers.

Ephesus and Love

¹⁰ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, pp. 34-36.

There is strong evidence to suggest that John, the Apostle of Love, was the elder of the Ephesian church in the last half of the first century A. D.

In Acts 20 we are given the account of Paul's visit with the Ephesian elders when he was on his way to Jerusalem. What is striking about the encounter was the evident love Ephesus had for Paul.

In Revelation 2 we are introduced to the Ephesian church which "left its first love." Evidently the fires of love that burned hot in prior years had begun to cool.

Paul's Prayer For the Ephesians - Ephesians 1:17-23

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, 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: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

As noted above, Paul's prayer for the Ephesian church did not contain requests to God regarding their emotional well-being, physical needs, or material wealth. Rather, Paul's prayer centered around a request for divine wisdom. He prayed that God would supernaturally do a work in the heart of the Ephesian church so that they would be able to comprehend and understand some great spiritual truths.

It is important to note that the source of all spiritual truth is God himself. Without the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, all spiritual truth would forever remain out of reach. In 1 Corinthians 2:14, we read, "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." Natural, unregenerate men cannot grasp divine truth since they lack the internal truth teacher.

So what is the source of truth that Paul is seeking in the behalf of the Ephesian believers. It is the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of Truth, that gives the recipient the spirit of wisdom and revelation. Spirit here in this verse is not the Holy Spirit, but a spirit of understanding which is granted by the Holy Spirit.¹¹ Wisdom, sophia, refers to the ability to apply spiritual truth to life. Revelation deals with the aspect of God granting to us knowledge we could not know apart from ourselves. This should not be construed to mean a supernatural "zap" of information, but the ability to understand what God has revealed to us in his Word and an ability to apply that to life.

The Truth About God's Plan - Ephesians 1:18

The first thing that Paul wants God to reveal to the Ephesian believers is a full understanding of God's plan. This includes a full understanding of the magnificent truths of election,

¹¹ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, p. 44.

predestination, adoption, forgiveness, redemption, wisdom, insight, inheritance, and the sealing of the Holy Spirit as given by Paul in the previous verses of this letter.¹²

This is a great task, and one that can only be accomplished by God. The entire plan of salvation is first and foremost God's plan. It is he that designed it in eternity past, effected it in time, and will complete it in eternity. The entire history of man is bound up in this big plan of God's.

Paul understands that only the planner can reveal the plan. Only God can communicate the truths of eternity past to mankind as redemption is carried out. However, although God has given us significant insight into this plan, we will never fully and finally comprehend it. Even the angels do not understand this plan in its fullness. They look with wonder and awe on the salvation of worthless sinners.

Paul lists two specific items relating to this plan. The first is that the Ephesian believers understand the hope of their calling. By this, Paul is referring to the confident expectation of the future fulfillment of salvation which came about as a result of God's effectual call to salvation. The hope of the believer is not a so-so hope, but a confident reality which is ours in the future. Secondly, Paul wants the Ephesian believers to know the riches that is theirs in Christ. All of the wealth and honor this world offers pales into insignificance when compared to the riches that awaits the believer in heaven. It is too easy to become entangled in the affairs of this life to such an extent that we lost our eternal perspective. Paul's prayer is that this not happen to the Ephesian believers, but that they may know that their true riches lie ahead.

The Truth About God's Power - Ephesians 1:19-20

It is one thing to make a promise, it is quite another to assure its fulfillment. Unlike men, God's promises are sure, as he not only is a God of complete truth, but he is also a sovereign and omnipotent God who can do that which he desires. God cannot only will something to happen, but he can assure that it will happen.

The Vocabulary of Power in Ephesians 1:19

- 1. Dunamis - power. This is given only to believers and indicates the full receipt of all the necessary power to live the Christian life. No second blessing is implied in this word.**
- 2. Energeia - working. This refers to the working out of the divine power in one's life. It is the power of God revealed in a believer's life from day to day.**
- 3. Kratos - strength. Refers to the believer's dominion over sin, Satan, and the world. This is not a dominion because of who one is, but because of who one knows.**
- 4. Ischus - might. This refers to endowed power or might.**

Paul's prayer is that the Ephesian believers understand the power that is theirs in Christ. They need not pray for strength as they already have strength. They need only to appropriate the power that is already theirs in Christ. Many times we ask God for things that we already have. The problem, for the most part, is not the lack of resources, but the refusal or neglect to appropriate what is already ours.

¹² MacArthur, *Ephesians*, p. 45.

What is the most significant display of God's power that Paul could use? It is the resurrection of Christ from the dead. God revealed the greatness of his power by overcoming the corruption of the grave and overcoming death. That very same power that raised Christ from the dead is available to us, if we only tap into it.

God is not a God of "just enough." He does not give the believer just enough strength to struggle through life, or just enough peace, or just enough love. Rather, he abundantly and graciously gives the believer more than enough, he gives a superabundant supply. The power that raised Christ from the dead is the same kind of power made available to us to live the Christian life. It is not just enough to get by, but it can make us "more than conquerors."

Christ was not only raised from the dead by God's power, but he was elevated into the heavenlies and seated at the Father's right hand. This is a place of blessing and honor, and one from which Christ will rule the universe.

The Results of Christ's Exaltation¹³

- 1. It completes the resurrection - 1 Corinthians 15:20-28.**
- 2. It makes Christ part of the firstfruits of his people - 1 Corinthians 15:15, 20, 23; Colossians 1:15; 18.**
- 3. It started his ministry of intercession - Romans 8:34.**
- 4. It enabled him to be the dispenser of the Holy Spirit - John 14-16.**
- 5. It speaks of his exaltation above all things - Ephesians 1:21-23.**
- 6. It is from the right hand of power that Christ will return - Mark 14:26.**

The Truth About God's Person - Ephesians 1:20-23

Finally, Paul prays that the Ephesian believers will gain an understanding of Christ's person. When we are faced with the trials and tribulations of life, we need to keep our eyes focused on the greatness of the one we serve. Only then will we gain a true perspective on our trials, and realize that nothing can separate us from the one who has called us to be his own (Romans 8:38-39).

The terms used by Paul, rule (*arche*), authority (*exousia*), power (*dunamis*), and dominion (*kuriotes*), were used in secular Jewish writings to refer to the various rankings of angels. In Ephesians 6 we see Paul use them in reference to the "spiritual wickedness in high places" that we fight against as believers. Why is this important to know? We need to realize that God's exaltation of Christ to his right hand places Christ over all the forces of hell, and as a result we can rest assured of final victory, as there is no one greater than Christ. In fact, Christ has been exalted over every created being, not only in this age, but the age to come. Not only is Christ over all now, but he will be over all in the future as well.

Christ's headship over all of creation is important, but so also is his headship over the church. We see Paul's first reference to the church, the invisible assembly of all believers, here in these final two verses of chapter 1. Some say that whenever the term "church" appears in the New Testament, it is always in references to a local assembly of believers. Many times Paul does

¹³ Hughes, pp. 59-60.

refer to local assemblies, Corinth, Colossae, and Thessalonica to name a few. However, each local church is part of a larger assembly of believers, the invisible church made up of all believers after the cross and prior to Christ's second coming. This church, or assembly, is his body. It is through the church that Christ effects his purposes on earth. He is only the head, we are his hands and feet.

Six Great Metaphors For The Church

- A. The Head and the Body - Romans 12:4-5, 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, Colossians 3:15**
- B. The Bridegroom and the Bride - 2 Corinthians 11:2, Ephesians 5:25-32**
- C. The Vine and the Branches - John 15:1-5**
- D. The Shepherd and the Sheep - John 10:11, Hebrews 13:20, 1 Peter 5:4**
- E. The High Priest and a Kingdom of Priests - 1 Peter 2:9, Revelation 1:6, 20:6**
- F. The Cornerstone and the Living Stones - Ephesians 2:19-22, 1 Peter 2:4-5**