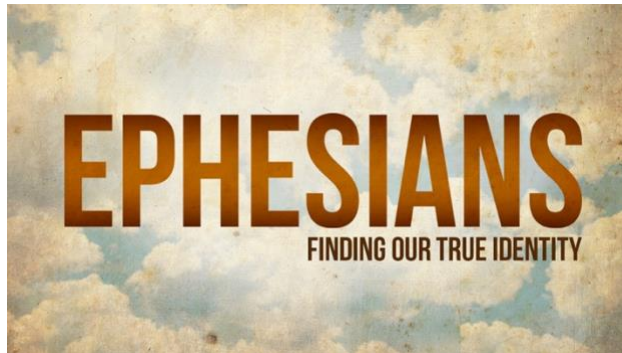


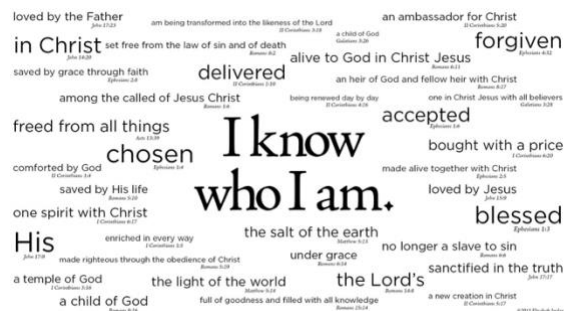
20210131 Ephesians 1:1-6 Who We Are In Christ



01 Ephesians 1:1-6 Who We Are In Christ

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus:² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places

in Christ, ⁴just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. (NKJV).



In the fall we studied the Book of Galatians in depth. In review, remember that the overall theme of the book was Jesus + Nothing = Everything. It talked about who Jesus was and what He did for each of us that trust in Him. Ephesians is the book that follows. It is about our own identity and covers who we are in Christ. Ephesians is about WHO YOU ARE in Christ. We forget over and over who we are in Christ. We

forget who and what we were created to be. We do well for a while and then revert back to who we were. People have all kinds of problems when they don't know who they are. I have worked with several close friends over the years who have been adopted, and they were just desperate to know who they were. People who don't know who they are have to deal with all kinds of identity problems.

We are God's children by adoption. It's important because we get into trouble when we don't know who we are. It's tough living day to day and we often feel powerless to change anything. We begin listening to the lies of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and pretty soon we're back at the Red Sea in need of deliverance. We're stuck out in some impossible place with enemies all around us and we don't know how, or if, we will be delivered.

We are like those Israelites who ended up out on the Red Sea who had totally forgotten about what had happened prior to their deliverance from Egypt. They had forgotten about the magnificent works that God had done using the ten plagues against the Egyptians to secure their freedom after 400 years of slavery.

We forget who God created us to be, and because we believe we're still in our old condition we start living out an old life with old thinking instead of living in a new way as a new creature. We end up making ourselves miserable. This passage today begins to give us a biblical view of who we are.

Know Your Calling and Who You Are

The worldly view will do us no good. It always leads us into a way that is contrary to God. The fact of the matter is that He wants to do amazing things through us if we will just let Him. In the first lines of this book we see Paul's greeting. He immediately reminds us that he is an Apostle of God. Even though he didn't go to seminary or have some other credentials, he calls himself an "apostle." This literally means that He was SENT by God. All of us are in ministry of some kind, and we must be sure of our calling. What did He call you to do? When I was called to Union Grove, I gave the testimony of my salvation to the committee that was calling me and explained to each of them how I knew that I had been called of God to be a Pastor-Teacher. We must be sure of our calling or when hardships come our way, we'll question why we are doing what we're doing. It often all seems so hard. If it's our own idea, then it's probably a bad idea. But if it is God's idea then we can be sure it is a great idea! For example, if God called me to be the pastor of Union Grove, then He'll give me the grace to pastor this body. The same goes for each of you in your own private ministries. For me, doing God's work has never been a "job," but rather a CALLING. It is a great labor of love. We need to know Who called us, or we'll be shaken by the first storms that come our way.

We are All Set Apart – Are are saints

Paul then addresses the church as "saints." We must always remember that saints aren't just those godly men and women of old who loved and served the Lord in their daily lives. WE, as believers, are saints today right where we are. Being called a "saint" means you are separated. What are you separated from? You are separated from the world with its thinking and its ideas. As a saint, you can be a regular, normal person going about your daily tasks, but you're enabled by God to do it in a "holy" (means separate and unique) way. When I was a little boy, my parents sent me to an Episcopal school. We had a chapel service every morning, and I loved singing a song in the old 1940 Hymnal that talked exactly about what it mean to be a "saint" of God. It was written in England and reflected English country living. Saints are ordinary people who love and serve the Lord. Saints are still sinners, but they are adopted by God and set apart to do His work. Listen as I sing.

I sing a song of the saints of God Patient and brave and true, Who toiled and fought and lived and died For the Lord they loved and knew. And one was a doctor, and one was a queen, And one was a shepherdess on the green: They were all of them saints of God -- and I	They loved their Lord so dear, so dear, And his love made them strong; And they followed the right, for Jesus's sake, The whole of their good lives long. And one was a soldier, and one was a priest, and one was slain by a fierce wild beast: And there's not
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mean, God helping, to be one too.	any reason -- no, not the least-- Why I shouldn't be one too.
They lived not only in ages past, There are hundreds of thousands still The world is bright with the joyous saints Who love to do Jesus' will You can meet them in school, or in lanes, or at sea, In church, or in trains, or in shops, or at tea, For the saints of God are folk just like me, And I mean to be one too. ¹	

Then Paul greets those saints saying “grace to you and shalom” from God our Father. This is a whole sermon in and of itself. Grace is getting favor we don’t deserve while shalom is the peace we get only from Jesus. That is available as part of our inheritance as believers. So not only are you a saint, you are also promised God’s favor and His shalom. We often forget that as we are tossed by the storms of life and buffeted by the attacks of the flesh and the devil.

This is the KEY FOCAL point of the passage

Blessed be the God and Father of Jesus Who has blessed us in the heavenly places. We have been given every spiritual blessing. We have received them ALL not just some. When we come to Jesus, we enter into a covenant relationship with Him. I want to be very clear here because Christians get all messed up confusing covenants. In the Old Testament God made a physical covenant with the Jews. He told them “love me and keep my commandments” and I will give you certain physical promises. He promised them a physical land where they are even today. He promised them that if they loved Him and kept His commandments He would give them health, wealth, and victory over their enemies. I often hear Christians today claiming the benefits of that covenant for themselves. That is not what the Bible tells us is our relationship to God. We were not promised a physical covenant but rather a spiritual covenant. This new covenant relationship was prophesied of by Jeremiah. Listen to Jeremiah chapter 31.

³¹ The time is coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. ³² It won't be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant with me even though I was their husband, declares the LORD. ³³ No, this is the covenant that I will make with the people of Israel after that time, declares the LORD. I will put my Instructions within them and engrave them on their hearts. I will be their

¹ I Sing a Song of the Saints of God, Episcopal Hymnal 1940, by Lesbia Scott, written in 1929

God, and they will be my people. ³⁴ They will no longer need to teach each other to say, "Know the LORD!" because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD; for I will forgive their wrongdoing and never again remember their sins. (Jeremiah 31:31-34, CEB).

This is a whole new deal. It is a new intimate relationship with God. It is not a physical covenant, but a spiritual covenant. This is important because we need to realize that many in the church try to claim physical aspects of covenant. I've heard Christians say that they believe we as believers should never be sick. That is not biblical. This may anger some who hear it, but we were not given that kind of physical promise. This does not mean God can't heal and that He doesn't meet our every need. Jesus, then Paul, and the disciples did a lot of physical healing. God heals. That is true, but it is not part of our covenant with God. He promised that to Israel but not to us. He told them if they obeyed his law none of the diseases of Egypt would affect them (Deuteronomy 7:15).

God makes different promises to you and me. Some are probably wondering what to do with passages like "by His stripes we are healed." The word "healed" doesn't always have a physical meaning. It is talking about our spiritual healing. That passage clearly says that He was "pierced for our transgressions." Transgressions means sins and spiritual sickness.

This doesn't mean that God doesn't heal physically. He does and I've seen it. I'm just saying you can't twist it into being part of the covenant that you have with God. It is not part of our inheritance in Christ. Ours is not a physical covenant. This passage clearly tells us that He has blessed us with "every spiritual blessing." These are blessings in "heavenly places." They are not in earthly places. It doesn't mean that God doesn't bless you, but it means that our spiritual blessings are kept in heavenly places. The disciple Peter repeats this same thought:

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, (1 Peter 1:3-4, NIV).

Physical blessings can be taken away, but spiritual blessings are forever. They will never be taken away from the believer.

⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, (Ephesians 1:4, NKJV).

We were chosen by God before the creation of the world. You and I were chosen by Him before we ever existed. So what exactly does this mean? It means that He knew you, and that He knew who you would be. To understand predestination you must remember that God exists outside of time, so He knows all things. He didn't have to wait for you to be born to know you or to know your eternal destiny. In Psalm 139 David says "God you knew me while I was being formed in my mother's womb." Well you know what, He knew David before that! From

God's perspective God foreknew you and because He foreknew you, He predestined you. It does not mean God knew something and made it happen. It means He knew how you would respond to the gospel. People wrongfully conclude that God fixes our salvation before we're ever born. They say that God also fixes the condition of lost people, and that He determines and sets in place that some will be damned. Scripture does not support that.

My old pastor, Dr Bob Tolson, at Bethel Independent Presbyterian Church, used to say, "I believe totally in the sovereignty of God, but I also believe in the personal responsibility of man to respond." We operate in the sphere of free-will because He loved you and He love me. He loved us enough to allow us to reject Him. If Sandy had no choice about whether or not to love me, her love for me really wouldn't mean anything. That's how it is with God's love. When people argue a definition of predestination that means it was all fixed ahead of time, they deny the personal responsibility of receiving the gospel and believing. I don't believe God fixed it at all. I believe God knew it all beforehand. That's it. If you believe that God fixes some to be in a lost condition, you have to throw away a whole lot of scripture.

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not willing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9, NASB).

You've got to do something with these kinds of verses. Peter is clearing saying that "He is not willing for ANY TO PERISH BUT FOR ALL TO COME TO REPENTANCE." This means what it says and it says what it means. God didn't fix it. He knew it! Even Jesus said, "Broad is the path to destruction and many go that way." But God doesn't desire that destruction for anyone.

We have had forgiveness lavished on us. We don't need to doubt if we are forgiven. It is grace alone just like Doug Taylor's song which we are singing in our service this morning. Grace is when God looked down on you and loved you before you ever thought about loving Him. Grace is Him. Grace is when He saw each of us in our sin and our lostness, and He came in the form of a man, Jesus, and allowed Himself to be placed on a cruel old rugged cross, so that you might have the perfect sacrifice. You need only receive it. It is a free choice. He loves you enough to let you accept Him or reject Him.

Today can be that day when you say, "God, I don't understand all of this, but I DO BELIEVE that you came in the form of a man that was called Jesus, and that He is and was the Messiah, and I DO BELIEVE that you raised Him from the dead. He died for me, and when I receive that sacrifice done on my behalf, I too am a saint. Your plan for me is to have a life filled with your grace and your peace.

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868.
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