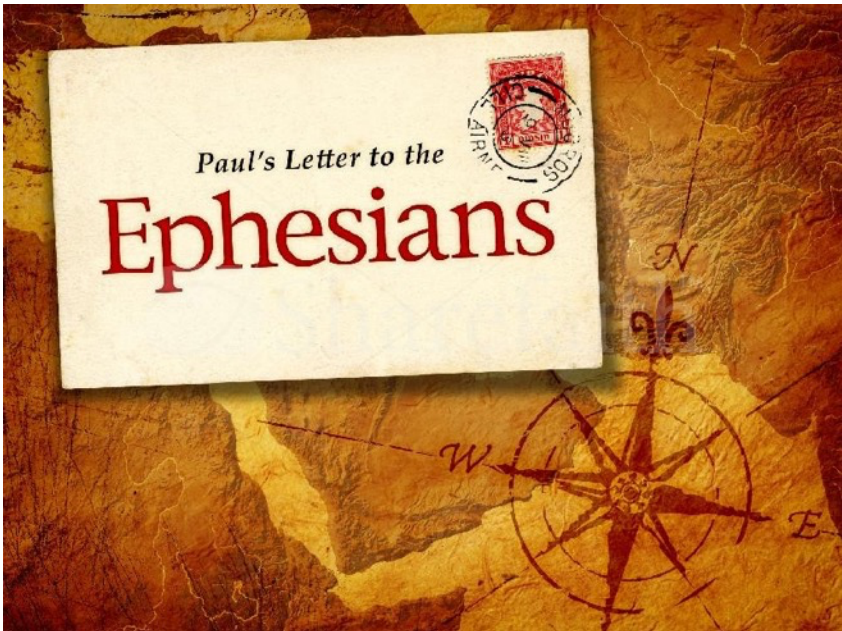


BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS



Ephesians 1: 3 - 14

We can see from Acts 19 the churches in Ephesus were unpopular and must have felt tiny against the might of imperial Rome and ancient Greek gods. Paul writes to the church to reassure them that despite what they might feel, they are special and uniquely chosen to be part of God's plan for the whole world. They need to see themselves as they truly are.

Take time to read verse 3 to 14 of chapter 1

- **Paul says that we are blessed with every spiritual blessing. Make a list of the many ways it says here that we are blessed in Christ. Which for you is most significant?**

We're going to break down these verses in a number of different ways as we explore the riches of this passage.

- **In this passage, we see contributions from each member of the Trinity. What does the Father do for us?**
- **What does Jesus accomplish for us?**
- **What role does the Holy Spirit play in what God is doing?**

In this passage we encounter the phrase "in Christ." It is crucial to our understanding of what it means to be united with Christ and united with each other as the body of Christ. A really good way to think about this is to use the picture of a car ferry. If we ask ourselves (in non-Covid times) "can a car drive from Calais to Dover?" we know the answer is no. Yet if the car is "in a ferry (or train)" it can make the crossing. There is no attribute of the car that enables this to happen or not. New or old, sports car or diesel van, they are all totally dependent upon being in the ferry to make the journey. There is nothing they can do to help; they can't do any of the journey on their own.

We as humans are similar. There is nothing we can do to help or contribute – all the blessings we receive are based upon our being "in Christ." It is his work and his alone, without any help from us

- **In verse 3 we learn that we are united with Christ in the heavenly realms. Why is it so important to know that we are in the heavenly realms already?**
- **In verses 4 and 5 we learn that we share some of the characteristics of Jesus – his holiness and his sonship. Do you think these qualities are clearly visible in us today?**

why does god need to chose us?

Some people have found the words used in verses 4 and 5 difficult to understand or accept. Why does God need to choose us? Aren't we free to choose for ourselves whether or not to follow Jesus?

This was an argument put forward by a Christian called Pelagius in the 5th century that was opposed by St Augustine. Drawing on passages like Ephesians 2:1-3, Augustine argued that the human heart and mind wandered away from God, and that if God did not call us back, we would be lost from him. Augustine's teaching became the official teaching of the church at a council in 431AD at Ephesus itself!

So for Paul, the importance of God choosing (from before the foundation of the world) is the reassurance that our faith is no accident, and isn't something we have made up for ourselves. It is God's assurance of love and grace to hard-pressed believers.

Look again at verses 7 and 8

- **Having looked at how we are united with Christ, we now see what we have received through this union. Three words stand out – redemption, remission and riches.**
- **If we belong to God (we are redeemed by him) how do we demonstrate this in our daily lives?**
- **What reassurance for our future does knowing that we have remission or forgiveness of our sins bring?**
- **“Riches” and “lavished” speak of indulgence and large amounts. Why is it a comfort to know that this is the way God gives us his grace through Jesus?**

This passage can be also broken down in to past present and future. When we read that God has done something, it is a tremendous reassurance as it is then given to us already, with no need to fear.

- **What has God already done for us in the past?**
- **What is God doing for us now?**
- **What will he do for us in the future?**
- **How can I shape my life today in the light of the future that God has promised me will come about?**

If someone were to come and ask you, “how can I know if I am a Christian?” what would you say to them?

Your answer may depend on a number of things. You may wonder whether anyone can know for certain whether they are a Christian. You may fear that even if they are a Christian, they may not want to keep going and fall away. Or you may be concerned that they appear to say the right things, but not live in a way that matches what they say they believe. The final section of the study help’s to understand.

Look again at verses 11 to 14

- **You will remember from Acts 19, that Paul went initially to teach the Jews about Jesus, but then he engaged with the many different nationalities that were found in Ephesus. Verses 11 & 12 Paul speaks from his position as a Jew. In verses 13 & 14, he shows how all the non-Jews can become part of God’s covenant people and share in the blessings God promises to them.**
- **What are the steps that we need to take?**

It is important that we think very carefully at this point. Is believing something that I do, or is it the gift of God?

Everything we have looked at so far is about what God has done for us, and we must see these verses in the same light. We cannot see unless Jesus shines his light into our hearts. So the logic of this is that “believing in him” is the proof that the Spirit is at work in us and is God’s guarantee to us that we are his.

- **What does it mean to you to think of yourself as receiving God’s inheritance?**
- **A deposit indicates that there is much more to come. How might this knowledge strengthen us in hard times?**
- **God’s seal is a reminder that the promises to come are based on God’s faithfulness not mine. How does this encourage you to keep going?**

One final thing to think about. So much of what we have thought about is based on God’s initiative and activity. What would you say to someone who says that if it is God who calls, we don’t need to be involved in outreach or sharing our faith?