

God Revealed through the Church

The Church - A Demonstration of God's Blessings

It would be a blessing if each human being were stricken blind and deaf for a few days at some time during his adult life. Darkness would make him more appreciative of sight; silence would teach him the joys of sound.

HELEN ADAMS KELLER (1880–1968)

Ephesians 1: 1 – 14

1) God has blessed us

- God has blessed us
 - We are inclined to ask God to bless us or to ask others to pray for God to bless us.
 - When we believed God has already blessed us with **every** spiritual blessing in Christ
 - This means that there aren't more blessings to be sought
 - The problem with us is that we live in a materialistic world where we equate materialism with blessing and see spiritual blessing as inferior to material blessing
 - Our old nature is one that covets what it doesn't have and is never content with what God has given us
 - ^{2 Peter 1:3} His divine power **has given us everything** we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness
 - Story of the farmer who refuses to let the oil company drill for oil on his farm as he considered it a futile exercise. He later went on to sell the farm for a meager amount. The new owner allowed the oil company to drill and they soon struck oil and the new farm owner became a multi-millionaire. We have all our riches in Christ. We just have to dig in to find them.
 - If God gives us something more than He has already given us we should receive it with great gratitude knowing that that is a bonus over and above all that we need.
- Every spiritual blessing that God has given us is in Christ.
 - If we have not believed in Christ and have not entered into relationship with Him then the spiritual blessings are not for us.
 - In his greeting Paul writes: "To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus."
 - He's addressing Christians who have received Christ
- Because God has blessed us we give Him the praise that is due to Him
 - We remind ourselves of the fact that we didn't deserve anything that God has given us and thus we can praise him for having such grace that He would bless us who were sinners.

2) God's Blessings

- God chose us in Christ
 - Imagine us to be a homeless orphan who always has to beg for food. Then one day a couple come along and choose to adopt us as their own. How would we feel? In the same way God chose each one of us out of a life of sin to be holy and blameless in His sight.
 - We might ask where the blessing is in being chosen to be holy and blameless.
 - Sin brings nothing but guilt, shame and death. A holy and blameless life is one of freedom from guilt and shame and leads to life.
 - ^{Hebrews 12:14} Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.
- God predestined us to be adopted as sons
 - We did not choose God but He chose us to be His children
 - He predestined us to be adopted as sons according to His foreknowledge.
 - Rom 8: 29 "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers"
 - None of us is an afterthought. God knew us before we were born.
 - And according to his foreknowledge – the fact that God knows all things from the beginning to the end of time – he predestined us to be His children to serve His purposes

- We were predestined in love to be adopted as His children
- Rom 5: 8 God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
- How do you feel when you are unloved and rejected and then someone you don't even know comes and loves you unconditionally?
- This is God's love for each one of you who have received Him.
- We have redemption through His blood
 - It cost God a lot to redeem us – the life of His only Son
 - What does redemption mean? If we sell a valuable item to a pawn shop they keep it. When we have enough money we go back to the pawn shop and buy that item back from them i.e. we redeem what rightfully belongs to us. Normally we have to pay more than what the pawn shop paid us for it.
 - In the same way we rightfully belonged to God but through sin became enslaved to sin and Satan. God bought us back, not with money, but with the blood of Jesus.
 - Hebrews 9: 22 “Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”
 - He lavished the riches of God's grace on us. He gave us more than we needed. He didn't just do the absolute necessary but went beyond that that we might abound in grace.
- He made known to us the mystery of His will
 - God not only forgave us and adopted us as His children but He reveals His whole will – His purposes and plans – to us.
 - Jesus said that we should “not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs.” (Matthew 7: 6)
 - However God trusts us with the secrets of His will.
 - How does it feel to be trusted with something important?
- We have been sealed by the Holy Spirit for redemption
 - Sometimes we wonder if we can have a real assurance of our salvation. The fact is that we have received the Holy Spirit who has sealed our redemption. He has made our redemption sure.
 - In a world where nothing is definite and everyone feels insecure about the future God reassures us that He has placed the seal of assurance upon our lives.
 - John 10: 28 – 29 “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

3) We have been chosen according to God's plan

- God has revealed the mystery of His will to us, His church, to fulfil His purposes.
- He has blessed us to be a blessing
 - Gen 12:2-3 "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."
 - God has chosen to bless us in Christ but we aren't to keep all these blessings to ourselves – we're to pass them on
 - These are many people around us who live as orphans and need to know God's desire to adopt them as sons
 - There are many who live under the weight of sin and shame and need the blessing of God's forgiveness and grace
 - There are many who live in uncertainty and need to know God's assurance in Christ.
- If God blesses us more than we need it is probably to pass the blessing on to someone who needs it.
- We ought to live as a church that reveals God by demonstrating His blessings to the world.