

Date: September 24, 2009

Reading: Ephesians 1-3

Paul's letter to the Ephesians divides neatly into halves with the first half being primarily a doctrinal treatise and the second half being a discussion of the consequences of the doctrine already presented.

Paul began his letter with a benediction ("Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ..." – vs. 3) in which he noted that God has blessed us with "every spiritual blessing...in Christ."

He then began to enumerate some of those blessings, adding layer upon layer. Adopted as sons, accepted in the Beloved, enjoying redemption through the blood of Jesus, recipients of the rich grace of God, obtaining an inheritance and sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

Note, however, the repetition of the phrase "in Him" or its equivalent (vs. 3, 4, 6, 7, 10 [2x], 11, 12, 13 [2x]). As the apostle noted in the benediction, every spiritual blessing is in Christ, i.e., in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Paul apparently desired to emphasize that the Gentiles could enjoy salvation in Christ just as the Jews. Both were made alive spiritually through the power of God (1:19-20; 2:1, 5-6), both were reconciled to God in one body, the church, and both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Gentiles are fellow citizens with the Jews, being built together into a holy temple to the Lord (2:19-22).

As the book of Acts demonstrated, some of the Jewish Christians were not eager to accept this truth, that "the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel" (3:6). Nevertheless, Paul indicated that it was part of the "mystery", hidden in God (3:9) in the past, but revealed by the Spirit to the apostles and prophets (3:3-5).

As you read the first three chapters of Ephesians, please note the beautiful prayers of Paul on behalf of his Ephesian brethren (1:15-21; 3:14-19) and the stirring doxology which concludes chapter 3 (vs. 20-21).

It is good to know that the power of God works in us and that He is able to do even more than we can ask or think!

Happy reading,
Allen

Date: September 25, 2009

Reading: Ephesians 4-6

Taking our first steps is one of the milestones (pun intended) of our physical development as children. It is oddly ironic that the same parents who are so eager to see those first steps will then spend the next eighteen years teaching that same child “where” and “where not” to walk!



Ephesians has been called the “book of walking” because of the number of times that Paul used the word “walk.” Of course, Paul used the word in a metaphorical sense to describe the way that one lives. In the first three chapters, the apostle noted that the Ephesian Christians had “walked” according to the course of this world, living in trespasses and sins (2:2). In contrast, those who have been made alive in Christ Jesus have been created for the purpose of “walking” in good works.

In the latter half of the book, the apostle used the word “walk” several more times as he detailed how Christians should live.

We need to walk worthy of our calling (4:1). Does it seem to you that the apostle described that kind of walk in the successive verses - “with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”?

We are not to walk as the people of the world walk, giving themselves over to lewdness, uncleanness and greediness (4:17, 19). It is interesting that Paul used a similar trilogy of words in 5:3 to describe the behavior should “not even be named among” Christians – behavior that is not “fitting” for “holy ones” (the literal meaning of “saints”).

We are to walk in love (5:2). The foundation for this exhortation actually begins in 4:32. We are to forgive one another even as we have been forgiven by God. We should, as children of God, imitate our Father and walk in love even as Christ loved us (note that, in a number of translations, the sentence of verse 1 is continued in verse 2).

We are to walk as children of light (5:8). We were once “darkness,” but now we are “light.” We should “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness” (5:11).

We are to walk circumspectly (5:15). To walk circumspectly means to walk carefully, cautiously. We must not be fools, but wise. Understanding the will of the Lord is contrasted with being “unwise” (5:17).

Paul gave some specific instructions about how we should “walk” in our various relationships (wives, husbands, children, parents, servants, masters).

As the youngsters sing in Bible class, “Be careful little feet where you go!”

Happy reading,
Allen