

## **Open the Eyes of My Heart**

Ephesians 1:1-6

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The book of Ephesians has two main parts. In the first section of the letter, Paul wants to open the eyes of our hearts (1:18) that we may know deeply who God is and what He has done for us. Then in the second part Paul describes how this understanding should make a difference in our lives. Children learn to follow rules, but when they mature they need to understand why they must behave a certain way. Think about any time in your life you changed. The change was probably a result of having your eyes opened to something. Maybe you changed your diet or exercise habits because you became more health conscious. For me, I used to hate washing the dishes. It was something I did only when it was my turn, and in college I would wash only my own dishes. But after marriage I started wanting to do the dishes more because I became conscious of the fact that within my family this was an act of service and partnership. Knowledge results in change. A deeper understanding of what God has done for us changes our behavior. It changes the relationships between husband and wife, parents and children, and employers and employees. It changes how we speak, how we react, and how we love.

In Ephesians 1:1-2 Paul addresses God's holy people, the saints. These are believers who already have faith. Their eyes have been opened already. Jesus healed the blind in order to symbolize the healing He brings to the spiritually blind. Those who have accepted Him can now see. Yet Paul still wants to keep our eyes open and even to open our eyes further. Faith is not a one-time thing. We must believe, and keep believing, and keep growing in faith. We may think we know it all already, but we must keep going deeper and letting that understanding penetrate deeper into our hearts and lives.

Also note that the phrase "in Ephesus" has a footnote that says that it is not present in some of the earliest manuscripts. This indicates that this letter was not only meant for the Ephesians, but rather it first came to the Ephesians and was then circulated from church to church. This is why Paul does not call out specific people in Ephesus, the way he does in his other letters. The letter is meant to be general. It was passed down from the church in Ephesus all the way to our church today. It addresses believers in general, so we can say that Paul is in fact writing directly to us. Therefore his teaching here should be extremely applicable for us.

Paul begins in v. 3 by telling us about God's character. The more literal translations of this verse read: "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." The word "bless" is used 3 times for emphasis. God is the God who blesses lavishly. We should be thankful that He is the God who blesses rather than curses, that He is a loving God rather than a hateful one, and that He is good rather than evil. He gives us all spiritual blessing. Do you realize this is who God is? Or do you complain to God? Do you doubt God? Are you dissatisfied with Him? Are you constantly asking for more? We get upset when our children are ungrateful and complain because they don't realize all we do for them. Do you realize all God does for you? Do you realize that He has given you everything?

In vv. 4-5 Paul begins to describe these blessings. God chose us and predestined us for adoption. We did not deserve to be chosen. We are like bruised fruit at the supermarket. We are undesirable. Yet God chose us, in the same way He chose Israel. God constantly reminds Israel that they are chosen because in their prosperity they became prideful, saying that they deserved blessing. Likewise we must acknowledge that we were chosen, and that we do not deserve any of the blessing God has showered upon us. And this blessing was to become full heirs of God's kingdom. We are adopted fully into His family, as His children, with full rights. I knew a family who had three children but then adopted three more, and changed their living trust to include the adopted children. This is what God did for us. We have a full inheritance.

Finally in v. 6 Paul emphasizes the idea of grace. The phrase "freely given" is more literally translated as "be-graced." God is the God of blessing and grace. He gives us everything for free through Jesus Christ. There is nothing more precious He could have given than His own Son. Although we did nothing to deserve it, God sacrificed His Son for us. Let your eyes be opened to how good you have it, so that you might be willing to be changed by Him.