

Open the Eyes of My Heart (Part 2)

Ephesians 1:7-14

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Last week we started our sermon series on Ephesians. We learned that Paul wants to fill us with spiritual understanding that we may know God better. He wants the eyes of our hearts to be opened (Ephesians 1:18). Those of us who have accepted Jesus have their eyes open already, but we all need to have our eyes opened more. The more spiritual revelation we receive, the more we know God. And the more we know God, the more we love Him. Ephesians 1 can be characterized with two questions: Do you understand how good you have it? And, do you understand how good God is to us? These types of questions are familiar to the parents among us. When my sons complain about Cindy's cooking, which is very good, I ask them if they understand how good they have it. After my mother died, I had to eat the food prepared by my father, who didn't know how to cook well. Some parents think of our RAV short-term missions trip to Mexico as a way to make their children appreciate what they have. That's not the purpose of the trip, but it shows this desire to help children understand how good they have it. Likewise, all of us should understand that we have it good. But often we take things for granted and are dissatisfied with our lives. God has provided us with resources, food, shelter, and freedom from persecution. Even more importantly, He has given us all spiritual blessing. We have so much. Do you appreciate it?

In this chapter, Paul mentions 11 ways God provides for us. First, in v. 3 Paul uses the word "bless" 3 times to emphasize that God is a God who desires to bless you. This is His character. We see this in Genesis 2:18-24, when God desired to provide Adam with a suitable partner. He paraded all the animals before Adam, and one by one He told them that each was not going to be his partner. But when Adam was at the point of discouragement, He provided him with Eve. And when Adam saw Eve, he understood just how much God wants to bless. Do we appreciate the blessings God has given us? By blessings I don't mean just physical blessings, which are more appropriately called provisions. The most important kind of blessing is spiritual blessing, which Paul goes on to explain.

In v. 4 we see the second way God provides for us is by choosing us. We are like bruised peaches in the supermarket that are chosen anyway. God chose us even though we don't deserve it and would never have chosen Him on our own.

Next, in v. 5 Paul says that God adopted us. We were on the outside, but now we are children of God with full privileges. We are heirs of a great inheritance. We should try to appreciate this blessing, but perhaps we cannot fully appreciate this as much as those who actually are adopted.

Then in v. 6 we see that this blessing was graced (freely given) to us. We didn't have to do anything to earn these gifts. Our blessings and inheritance were given to us for free, unconditionally.

In v. 7 Paul states that in Jesus we have redemption. This word means deliverance, which would remind any Jew of their deliverance from slavery in Egypt. Once we were slaves to sin and death, but God delivered us through Jesus. Perhaps we may not appreciate this as much as those whose families have endured slavery in the past. And just like it took the blood of soldiers in the Civil War to set the black slaves free, we are redeemed through the blood of Jesus, who was victorious in the war against sin and death. While we were still in rebellion against God, Jesus died to set us free.

Next, in v. 7 we read that we have forgiveness of sins. We are not merely whitewashed, but cleansed completely. We are now righteous in God's sight. There's a Chinese phrase *méi shì* meaning everything's alright now, which I learned to use from my father-in-law. After the kids get into trouble and are punished, I use this phrase to indicate that they are no longer in trouble and we can put it behind us. This is what God does for us. Our sins are behind us. They are remembered no more. All the times we rebel against God, we are forgiven because God gave His only Son to die for our sins.

Finally in v.8 God lavished us with wisdom and understanding. This understanding comes from Scripture. This is why we spend so much time studying the Bible. Do you take God's word for granted? Muslims treat the Koran with utmost respect, and it is just the word of their prophet. How much more should we respect God's word? It is His wisdom available for us. God has held nothing back from you. He has been good to all of us, and He is worthy of our devotion and praise.