

## Unit 2: Letter to the Ephesians

### Lesson 7 | October 17, 2021 Our Position in Christ

#### Study Text

Ephesians 1:1–23

#### Central Truth

Living in Christ is a place of great blessing.

#### Key Verse: Ephesians 1:7

In whom [Jesus Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace (KJV).

He [God] is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins (NLT).

#### Learning Objectives

- Students will be better equipped to explain God's plan to redeem the world.
- Students will find biblical reasons to have hope for their everlasting future.
- Students will discover what it means to walk in spiritual confidence.

### Introducing the Lesson

**Say:** Do you believe Jesus died for all people? (*Allow response. Most will agree that He did.*) Paul's letter to the Ephesians reminded them, and us, of the great gift God has given us in the Person of His Son, who laid down His life for us. In Ephesians 1, we find a description of blessings that should prompt thankfulness in our hearts for the gift of salvation. In the midst of that thankfulness, we ought to consider those who do not know Christ, including how we can help point them to the gift of salvation through Christ.

**(Play the video available at [RadiantLifeCurriculum.com/Adult](https://www.RadiantLifeCurriculum.com/Adult).)**

#### Opening Activity—Thankful

*Have the students make a list (either in their student books or on blank sheets of paper) of the top ten things for which they are thankful. Ask each student to share one or two items from the list. Then discuss this question: How do you care for the things you are thankful for?*

**Say:** Having a heart of thanksgiving is key to a growing and healthy spiritual life for Christians. There are many things we can be thankful for, but the top of our lists should include gratitude for our salvation. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Some theologians argue that the Book of Ephesians supports the idea that God only selects some people to be saved, by predestining them for salvation while predestining others to be lost. **Ephesians does speak of predestination, but Paul described a predestined plan of redemption that all people can take part in if they respond to the call of the Spirit.** Today we are looking at God's plan of redemption and the blessings that Christians receive as a result of Jesus' sacrificial work on the cross.

Do you believe, God only selects some people to be saved, by predestining them for salvation while predestining others to be lost. What about, [2Pe 3:9 KJV] 9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

The Lord said to each of the seven churches in Revelation "To him who overcomes ..."

**The Plan is His, the choice is ours.**

## **Part 1—Our Spiritual Blessings in Christ**

### **God's Eternal Plan**

Ephesians 1:3–6

[Eph 1:1-6 KJV] 1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 Grace [be] to you, and peace, from God our Father, and [from] the Lord Jesus Christ. **3 Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly [places] in Christ: 4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.**

**Say:** Jesus' coming to earth to live and minister and die as a sacrifice for sin was not an afterthought that came to pass because of the Fall. **God was not surprised by the rebellious choice made by Adam and Eve. He did not have to come up with a "Plan B."** God is all knowing. He was aware of what would happen, and He knew the sacrifice that would be required as a result. Before the foundation of the world, God had decided to design a way to reconcile humanity to himself. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

God the Creator desired fellowship with humanity. But in order to stand before God, a person needs to be holy, purified from the sin and stain of this world. **No person is good enough in their own actions to become holy and acceptable before God. God's plan, then, made it possible for people to be able to live with God forever** (Ephesians 1:3–4).

**The Christian's blessing goes beyond being able to stand in the presence of God. Christians are given the blessing of being a part of God's people, adopted into God's family and given all of the rights and privileges of a son or a daughter of God. Adoption was part of the predestined plan of God. He desires to pour out His love on those that He created** (verses 5–6).

All of God's blessings with regard to salvation were made possible through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, followed by His glorious resurrection. God so loved humanity that He sent Jesus to earth to be the sacrifice for the sin of all. **If God had never given Christians anything else, the gift of salvation would have been enough. Yet God has continued to bless His people well beyond human imagination** (see 3:20).

### **Resource Packet Item 1: Adopted Into a Family**

Distribute the work sheet, and divide your class into small groups to work on it. You might wish to assign one Scripture passage to each group, then have a spokesperson from each group report their findings. Invite everyone to answer the question at the bottom of the sheet.

#### ***Discuss***

? What confidence does it give you to know that God had a plan to redeem humanity despite the sin of Adam and Eve?

? How does the knowledge that today you are holy and blameless as you sit in God's presence affect the way you live and worship?

## **God's Individual Plan**

Ephesians 1:7–10

**[Eph 1:7-10 KJV] 7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; 8**

**Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; 9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: 10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; [even] in him:**

**Say:** God's eternal plan does not automatically make all people His children. Individuals must accept the gift that God has offered to them. When we acknowledge and accept the gift of forgiveness and salvation through Jesus' sacrifice, we are redeemed and can walk in new life. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

**Much like the story of Hosea and Gomer in the Old Testament Book of Hosea, God demonstrates His love in the lengths to which He is willing to go to redeem His people. Not only does God "pay the price" to redeem the lost individual, but He forgives the individual for the rebellious acts that separated him from God in the first place, doing so through the sacrifice of Christ (Ephesians 1:7).**

When we have been forgiven, **God does not hold our past sins against us. Nor does He ask us to earn our forgiveness or to live in guilt over our past. He gives us grace, for salvation is a gift that we do not deserve. This gift is not given begrudgingly. Rather, He lavishes His grace on us because God greatly desires us to have a relationship with Him.**

**It is our great privilege that God has not hidden His plan from His creation (verse 9). Through the ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ, His plan and His will have been revealed to us. Paul referred to God making known the mystery of His will. The mystery here refers to an event previously unknown, but which now has been graciously revealed to us. God made His will clear, so it is not hard for a person to understand His will with regard to salvation.**

**It is God's will for all things to be unified according to His purposes. At precisely the right time, God sent Jesus to earth to be the once-for-all sacrifice for our salvation. Such salvation brings a person into alignment with God, in a sense. When people come into alignment with God, following His will and His voice, they will experience the blessings He has in store for them.**

### ***Discuss***

? What is the most precious gift that you have received and how do you treat it?

? How did your life change when you became a child of God?

## **Part 2—God's Purchased Possession**

### **God's Plan Revealed**

Ephesians 1:11–12

**[Eph 1:11-12 KJV] 11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: 12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.**

**Say:** Over the course of Church history, some have read Paul's words concerning being predestined in Ephesians 1:11–12, and concluded that some people are chosen to be children of God and others are predestined to be separated from Him for eternity. However, as many others have concluded, this is a misunderstanding of Paul's words. In these verses, Paul explained to the Ephesians the blessings that God has made available to all people through His predestined plan of salvation. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Paul explained to the Ephesians how blessed they were to have heard the message of Christ preached to them and to have responded affirmatively upon hearing it. Those who respond to God receive an inheritance (Ephesians 1:11; this is, of course, the gift of everlasting life). **Just as a child benefits from the wealth of his parents because of the work those parents have done, a child of God enjoys all that is possessed by God because of the work that has been done—the redemption accomplished—through Jesus Christ. Likewise, just as a child can ask his or her father for anything, a child of God can ask of his or her Father and expect a positive response, if that request is in keeping with His will.**

It is God's desire that no one perish spiritually (see 2 Peter 3:9). Those who choose eternal life by submitting themselves to God's plans will be adopted and inherit all that God has planned for those He redeems. **Paul helped the Ephesian believers understand that salvation was according to God's purposes, and not merely human ideas. Jesus did what was necessary to make salvation possible.**

However, that plan was only partly revealed through the Old Testament. The Jews were the first to trust in Christ (Ephesians 1:12), reminding us that Christ came to humanity through the world of the Jews, and through Jewish lineage. **So, even as the Messiah was prophesied, the details remained a mystery before Christ. That mystery was made clear through Christ, the zenith of God's promise to Abraham that all the world (Jew and Gentile) would be blessed through him (see Genesis 12:1–3).** Paul explained to the Ephesians: Through Christ, all who believe—Jew and Gentile—will be saved. Reading Ephesians 1, we might remind ourselves that through Scripture, the plan of salvation is regarded as unfolding through a series of "seasons" that reach their climax in Christ (Galatians 4:4). This plan of God, then, had its first hints in God's prophecy to the serpent in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15) and was revealed through the Jewish people to all the world.

**Furthermore, Paul saw the Ephesian believers as just the first of countless people who would respond to God's gift of redemption. As time moves forward, many would—and will—see what is available to them by watching those of us who have already been saved and changed by this great gift of God.**

### **Resource Packet Item 2: Arminianism vs. Reformed Theology**

Distribute the information sheet and review the major points that it provides. Explain to students that Paul was not talking about individual predestination in Ephesians 1.

Rather, Paul was speaking of the predetermined plan of God to redeem humanity through Christ.

### **Discuss**

? What is the most precious inheritance that you have received from a loved one, and why is it precious? How might this help you better understand the concept of having an inheritance through Christ?

? How does one's understanding of predestination impact the way a person understands the gospel and shares it with others?

## **A Sure Promise**

Ephesians 1:13–14

**[Eph 1:13-14 KJV] 13 In whom ye also [trusted], after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, 14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.**

**Say:** When we receive salvation, we do not have to worry about having that salvation taken away from us, or even about losing that salvation in the sense that we misplace something of value. **The only way salvation is forfeited is if we stop believing in Christ as Savior.** It is important to keep this in mind as we talk about living a holy life. Those who commit their lives ought to live in a way that is pleasing to Him. We don't earn our salvation based on our actions, but rather, our actions should reflect our relationship with Him. God promises that He will never turn His back on the believer, so we can find peace and rest in knowing that God has a strong grip upon us. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

**God promises to give Christians an inheritance, but Christians don't receive all of the benefits of that inheritance at the moment of their salvation. Rather, salvation is received the moment that we are sealed by the Holy Spirit, who comes to live inside of the person, an indwelling presence within their lives (Ephesians 1:13–14; see Romans 8:9,16). The indwelling presence of the Spirit in the believer serves as a “guarantee” that God will fulfill all His promises in His timing.**

In a sense, the “sealing” with the Spirit (verse 13, KJV) is like the moment when a man asks a woman to be his wife. The engagement ring is put on the hand of the woman and there is a declaration of exclusivity between the two individuals. They understand that they will enjoy each other's company, but they will not realize and enjoy all of the benefits of the relationship until they get married. **In the same way, when people accept Jesus as Savior, they are promised to be a part of the bride of Christ in heaven (see Revelation 19:7). Christians can enjoy the presence of God today, knowing that one day they will see Jesus face-to-face. No matter how good life is**



for Christians today, so much more awaits them in the future. Until Christians transition to heaven, they must patiently wait in anticipation of that glorious day.

### **Resource Packet Item 3: Precious Promises**

Distribute the work sheet. Have students take it home and identify the promises God has made to them that they will not receive until they meet Him in heaven.

#### ***Discuss***

? How does God's unconditional commitment to you make you feel?

? What promise of God do you look forward to receiving that you don't presently possess?

## **Part 3—Enlightened by God's Spirit**

### **The Gift of Spiritual Wisdom**

Ephesians 1:15–18

**[Eph 1:15-18 KJV] 15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, 16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; 17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: 18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,**

**Say:** Paul was extremely grateful to God for what He was doing in the lives of the Ephesian believers. When Paul heard of their salvation, he desired that they experience all the blessings God had for them. He knew how much the work of the Holy Spirit would mean in their lives. Paul prayed that the Ephesian believers would recognize that they had access to the same power that had raised Christ from the dead. That same power is available to us, and it is vital to our lives as we endeavor to follow Christ. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

**As noted earlier, Paul had indicated that, upon salvation, a new believer has the Holy Spirit at work in his or her life. Now, in Ephesians 1:15–18, Paul began to unwrap what this meant, in the sense of practical manifestations of spiritual power to aid in life. This would include wisdom from the Spirit, which would in turn help them grow in their knowledge of the Lord (verse 17). Then, through this work of the Spirit, they would find confident hope as their hearts were flooded with enlightenment (verse 18). Ultimately, they needed to see that they were the holy people of God, rich in their inheritance, and called to live as His people.**

Christians must recognize that the moment of conversion is only the start of the Christian life. The Bible makes it clear that salvation involves more than the redemption of individuals; salvation also necessarily requires discipleship, which leads to spiritual maturity. Christians must grow and not remain as spiritual infants. While there is a great deal that Christians can learn from teachers and books, the ultimate teacher is the Holy Spirit, with the Bible as our textbook.

As Christians listen to the Holy Spirit and respond to Him in obedience, they will become enlightened about the hope that they have as a result of their relationship with God and all of the blessings that await them. It is only when Christians learn to listen to the Spirit and live in obedience to what He says that they will begin to comprehend the power that is available to them to walk in the purpose God has for their lives.

### *Discuss*

? How does the work of the Holy Spirit enhance your life?

? How does a Christian grow through listening to the Holy Spirit?

## **The Power of God**

Ephesians 1:19–23

**[Eph 1:19-23 KJV] 19 And what [is] the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, 20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set [him] at his own right hand in the heavenly [places], 21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: 22 And hath put all [things] under his feet, and gave him [to be] the head over all [things] to the church, 23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.**

**Say:** Paul concluded his introduction to his letter to the Ephesians by reminding his readers of the central role Jesus has in their salvation. Many religions claim to worship God, but Paul stated that the only way to truly worship God is through recognizing who Jesus is and how His death and resurrection alone provide access to the Father. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

**Paul prayed that the Ephesians would continue to seek God in order to better understand God's power (Ephesians 1:19–20), the power that raised Christ from the dead.** Now He, the Son of God, sits enthroned in heaven, exalted above all rulers and powers in the natural and supernatural realms. Jesus' supremacy is clear, now and forever.



Paul also reminded the Ephesians that Jesus is the Head of the Church, and the Church is Christ's body (Ephesians 1:21–23). The Father has placed all things under the authority of the Son. It is the responsibility of Christians to respond to Jesus' directions as given to them. It is not enough to merely hear God's words through Scripture. Christians must obey these words as well. Then, as the Church walks in obedience, people will be blessed and the world may be drawn to the light of the gospel.

### ***Discuss***

? How will a person's life change if he or she believes in the power that raised Jesus from the dead?

? How might a community be changed if believers submit their lives to Jesus?

## **What Is God Saying to Us?**

**Say:** God wants us to have confidence in our salvation. Through Christ, the ultimate price was paid to redeem all people from sin. The first step, then, is to recognize one's sin, which alienated humanity from Him. From before the foundations of the world, God had a plan to bring alignment between himself and His creation, and He has done all that is needed to make this redemption possible. Let us, then, respond to God's love. As we recognize the cost of our salvation we are moved to live in a way that expresses love toward God. In so doing, our lives will align with the purposes of God..

## **Living It Out**

### **Ministry in Action**

- Write an account of your salvation to share with those who ask about your faith in Jesus.
- Compose a plan to spend concentrated times of Scripture reading and prayer each day to listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit.
- If you have not been baptized in the Holy Spirit, open yourself to this gift and ask the Holy Spirit to baptize you..

## **Daily Bible Readings**

### **Monday:**

Covenant People.  
Genesis 17:1–9

**[Gen 17:1-9 KJV] 1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I [am] the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. 2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. 3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, 4 As for me, behold, my covenant [is] with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. 5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. 6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. 7 And I will establish my covenant between me and**

thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. 8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. 9 And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.

**Tuesday:**

Treasured People.  
Deuteronomy 7:6–11

[Deu 7:6-11 KJV] 6 For thou [art] an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that [are] upon the face of the earth. 7 The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye [were] the fewest of all people: 8 But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9 Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he [is] God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; 10 And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face. 11 Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them.

**Wednesday:**

Redeemed People.  
Psalm 107:1–9

[Psa 107:1-9 KJV] 1 O give thanks unto the LORD, for [he is] good: for his mercy [endureth] for ever. 2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say [so], whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; 3 And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south. 4 They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. 5 Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. 6 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, [and] he delivered them out of their distresses. 7 And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. 8 Oh that [men] would praise the LORD [for] his goodness, and [for] his wonderful works to the children of men! 9 For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

**Thursday:**

Blessings for Believers.  
Matthew 5:1–12

**[Mat 5:1-12 KJV] 1 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: 2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, 3 Blessed [are] the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed [are] they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. 5 Blessed [are] the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. 6 Blessed [are] they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. 7 Blessed [are] the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. 8 Blessed [are] the pure in heart: for they shall see God. 9 Blessed [are] the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. 10 Blessed [are] they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are ye, when [men] shall revile you, and persecute [you], and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great [is] your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.**

**Friday:**

Christlike Conduct.  
Colossians 3:12–17

**[Col 3:12-17 KJV] 12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; 13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also [do] ye. 14 And above all these things [put on] charity, which is the bond of perfectness. 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, [do] all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.**

**Saturday:**

Redeemed in Christ.

1 Peter 1:18–25

**[1Pe 1:18-25 KJV] 18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, [as] silver and gold, from your vain conversation [received] by tradition from your fathers; 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: 20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, 21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. 22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, [see that ye] love one another with a pure heart fervently: 23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and**

abideth for ever. 24 For all flesh [is] as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: 25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.