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Ephesians 1:6 - 1:23



Ephesians - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg focuses on Ephesians 1:6-23 and discusses the relationship between the church, God the Father, and Christ. He emphasizes the importance of acceptance in Christ and the redemption and forgiveness of sins through His blood. Gregg also delves into the meaning of the Greek word "prudence" and explores the gifts that God gives to the church, including the manifestation of His grace. He concludes by discussing the concept of the "body of Christ" and how it relates to the authority that Jesus has over all things.

Transcript

As I said, verses 3-6 focused on the relationship of the church to God the Father. But the verse numbers, of course, are artificial. Paul didn't make the verse numbers.

It would have been sensible to break verse 6 into halves, because the part about God the Father ends with the line in verse 6, to the praise of the glory of His grace. And basically what it has said is that God the Father chose us in His Son to be adopted as sons. And so in Christ we are sons, and like Christ we are to live holy and blameless before Him, and that's what He chose us for.

And now, in the end of verse 6, He says, by which, that is by the glory of His grace, He has made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption, through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace, which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth in Him, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also trusted after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession to the praise of His glory.

So, having dealt with the section that focuses on what the Father has done for us in Christ, we have a section here talking about in Christ, of our relationship to Christ, and also to the Holy Spirit. The longer portion is about Christ Himself. It says in verse 6 that God has made us accepted in Christ, and then it's in Him, that is in Christ we have, and it goes on from there.

Accepted to God, acceptable to God. It is not to be assumed that a person is just acceptable to God innately. People are sinners, and because we are sinners, we are offensive to God.

And there's no innate reason in ourselves why we would expect Him to accept us. But we have been made acceptable, and you know, one of the most crippling things in a personality is living with a sense of universal rejection. If you feel like you're not accepted by anyone, or at least by people that matter to you, then it's very disabling in relationships.

It's very crushing. And many people feel rejection because, of course, they have been rejected by people. They've been rejected by maybe their parents, by a spouse, or by friends, or all of the above, and more.

And it's a very depressing thing to feel rejected. And to be rejected by God is not only depressing, it's a crisis. It's a great tragedy, because it has eternal consequences.

And yet all people, whether they experience a great deal of rejection from man or not, will experience rejection from God if they don't repent. But if they do repent, then God at least will cease to reject them, will accept them. Now, as a Christian, having the acceptance of God may not guarantee the acceptance from people.

It should, in a sense. It should be that other Christians would accept you, if God accepts you. And every Christian should accept all those that God accepts.

When Peter was on the housetop, he saw this sheet, as it were, full of unclean beasts lowered to him, and he was told to kill and eat. Three times he was told to do this, and each time he said, I've never eaten anything that's unclean. I won't do it.

And God told him each time, what God has cleansed, don't you call common or unclean. And of course, the message had to do with Peter's soon confrontation with the Gentiles in Cornelius's house, and that Peter, as a Jew, would think the Gentiles were unclean, but God had cleansed them, and Peter should accept them. And it is criminal for Christians, really, to reject other persons that God has accepted.

It suggests that we have better taste than God, or more discriminating taste than God. That we have more wisdom in evaluating people than God does, if God has accepted them, and yet we have rejected them. But we are to accept one another, as Christ has accepted us, the Bible says.

I'm thinking in Romans, I thought it was in chapter 15, if I don't find it real quickly, I'm going to just pass on this. Oh, here it is, it's verse 7, Romans 15, 7. Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us to the glory of God. So, God has not rejected us, Christ has not rejected us, he's received us.

And therefore, as we have been received, we need to receive others. And therefore it should be that if you become a Christian, you should find acceptance with other Christians. But it's not always the case, Christians don't always act as they should.

Just like parents don't always act as they should, you might be rejected by parents, that shouldn't happen either. But whether rejected by Christians or non-Christians, by parents or people who you hardly know, being accepted by God is the greatest of all consolations. So that David said in Psalm 27, If my father and my mother reject me or forsake me, the Lord will take me up.

To be accepted by God is great consolation, having been rejected by people. And that is one of the great benefits, one of the spiritual blessings in heavenly places that we have in Christ. And that is we are accepted by God.

Now the reason he can accept us is because he has forgiven us. It says in verse 7, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins. Now both of these things, the acceptance and the redemption through his blood and the forgiveness of sins, are because we are in him.

We are accepted in the beloved and in him we have redemption through his blood. Now redemption means purchased back. It generally means to purchase a slave out of slavery.

The Jews were redeemed out of Egypt, where they were slaves, by God's activity. That was their day of redemption. And when a slave is purchased and released, then that is redemption.

The word redemption is used in the scripture frequently, part of one of the aspects of our salvation, that we have been purchased back by God. We apparently had run away or been stolen, depending on how the metaphor is to be understood. We were alienated from God and slaves of sin.

But God has purchased us out of that slavery and now we are free to be his servants. And along with that redemption comes the forgiveness of sins. Now this is all, it says, through his blood.

It's the atonement, it's what Jesus did on the cross. He bought us and acquired our forgiveness. As far as him purchasing us and redeeming us by his blood, we have both Paul and other writers expanding on that, or at least referring to it at times.

It says in 1 Peter 1, verse 18, Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things like silver or gold from your aimless conduct, received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as you were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish or without spot. There's one of the places where 1 Peter corresponds with Ephesians. I didn't mention earlier, there was an earlier place where it does.

Because when Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 4 talks about us being chosen in him, Peter makes reference to that in 1 Peter chapter 1 also. That we are, in verse 2, we are elect or chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. So, Peter makes reference both to our election and our redemption in the same order that Paul does in Ephesians.

And that we are redeemed by his blood. But Peter emphasizes that the redemption that God has bought us by is not by corruptible things like silver and gold. Silver and gold are of very little value to God, because he can make silver and gold effortlessly.

All the silver and gold in the universe he made effortlessly with a word. But the blood of his son is irreplaceable. And therefore, the redemption that we have in his blood or through his blood is a costly redemption.

God spent a lot in order to obtain us. And that's one of the reasons it's fairly insulting to suggest that people could be saved without Jesus' death. It makes God a very poor economist.

It makes God out to be one who didn't know that he could get people saved easier than that. And spent a great deal in the form of his son's blood to acquire that which really wasn't necessary. And people could be saved some other way.

That makes God rather stupid. But also the redemption that we have in Christ has these ramifications. Paul gives them in 1 Corinthians chapter 6. 1 Corinthians 6.19, he says, Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price.

He doesn't say what the price was here, but we know the price was the blood of Jesus. We were redeemed by the blood. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

So, Paul and Peter both emphasize that if price was paid, we've been purchased or redeemed. We're owned for that reason by the one who redeemed us. And along with that came the forgiveness of sins.

And how the blood of Jesus acquired the forgiveness of sins is, I hope, a very familiar story for you. So I don't need to go into it right now, but that he atoned for our sins by becoming sin for us and dying in our place and acquiring for himself the full penalty and

for us full forgiveness. Now, of this, it says at the end of verse 7, This was all according to the riches of his grace.

God's grace is not measured out in small amounts. He's rich in grace. And he's poured out his grace.

And it's according to the wealth of grace that he has done all these things for us. It should be understood that it didn't take a little bit of grace for God to forgive you. It took a great deal of mercy.

It took a lot of grace because we were so undeserving. And so, which he made to abound, that is the grace, verse 8, which he made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence. Now, when it says he made his grace to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, this could mean, of course, that God acted in wisdom and in prudence in causing his grace to abound toward us.

The sentence could mean that. But I don't believe that is what he means. Because what he goes on to say afterwards, and what he said before, all wisdom and prudence, I think, are among the things that he has given us as spiritual blessings in heavenly places that we have in Christ.

In verse 3, he said that he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. And among the heavenly blessings he's given us are wisdom and prudence. We have other references in Paul's writings to having been given wisdom by Christ, or Christ being our wisdom, in 1 Corinthians chapter 1. And there are other places that talk about wisdom as one of the benefits we have as Christians.

And wisdom and prudence are, I don't know if there's really that big a difference between the two, or if that's just an expanded way of saying the same thing. Understanding would be a possible rendering of the word prudence. But it seems that he's talking about God's grace has abounded toward us in more than one way.

Remember I said on one occasion, when we're talking about another subject, that the grace of God is viewed too narrowly if we think of it only as the acquisition of salvation in the sense of our sins forgiven and God accepts us by grace, undeserved favor. But his grace is more than his acceptance. His grace is his bestowal.

He told Paul, my grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in your weakness, in 2 Corinthians chapter 12. And Paul said earlier, I think it was in 2 Corinthians 8 or 9, or else 9, 8, I forget which, it's one of those two. He says God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you having all sufficiency in all things may abound unto every good work.

So God's grace abounding toward us has its effect in all sufficiency for all things being ours. His grace is not only his benevolence toward us, but the things he gives us that

enable us and empower us and so forth. In fact, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which we read of in 1 Corinthians 12 and in Romans 12, are called charismata, which is gifts, plural, charisma, singular.

Charisma comes from the word charis, C-H-A-R-I-S, which means grace. And charisma just means gifts of grace. The gifts that God gives the church are manifestations of grace at work in us.

And so among the things that God has made his grace abound toward us in, is in our receiving wisdom and understanding or prudence. And this being his meaning seems clear from verse 9, having made known to us the mystery of his will. So we have received wisdom and understanding because he has made known to us certain mysteries that we would not have ability to know otherwise.

What is the mystery of his will? Is Paul saying that basically we always know the will of God for our lives? That whenever there's two choices or three available to us, we'll always know exactly which choice is God's will? I don't think that's what he has in mind in this particular place. I think the mystery of his will has to do with what he goes on to explain after this, that God's purpose in Christ was fulfilled through his sovereign dealings in history, and that we understand that. That is the mystery of his will.

Those who are not Christians don't understand how Christ's crucifixion fits into God's will and how his election of the saints fits into God's will, but we have some understanding in that area that God has made known to us. And he says, he's made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in himself, that in the dispensation, now the word dispensation, the Greek word there means, it comes from the Greek word for a household, but it's a cognate of that, it means the management of a household. Its best translation in English is stewardship.

Stewardship or management of a household is really what this Greek word means. And of course the word dispensation has come to have different meanings in the vernacular of modern Christians, especially in terms of dispensational theology, where a dispensation is talked about as if it were a period of time during which God does a special thing. But the word dispensation, as near as we can tell, is not used that way in the Bible.

There are some places where it could conceivably mean that, but it's never the only possible meaning of the word. And the actual lexical meaning, if you look it up in a Greek dictionary, means stewardship or the management of a household. So when it talks about in the dispensation of the fullness of times, God did a certain thing, it means that in the process of managing his household, or in the process of stewarding history, at the proper time, God might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, in him.

Now this is the mystery of his will that Paul's expanding on. God's will, his mysterious will, is that he might gather together in one all things that are in Christ. Now what does it mean, gather together all things that are in Christ? Does it mean that all human beings who have ever lived will be in Christ someday? Is that essentially saying that there's sort of a universalism here, that eventually all people will be saved? When people believe in universalism, they often use this verse as a way of proving it.

And this verse, and similar verses, found over in Colossians. In Colossians 1.16, Paul says, For by him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or powers, all things were created through him and for him. And then in verse 20, Colossians 1.20, And by him to reconcile all things to himself, by him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace by the blood of his cross.

Now notice all things, he made all things and he redeemed all things through the blood of his cross. Now if this is literal, I mean it certainly seems to be literal in verse 16, all things were created by him and all things were created through him. All things certainly appears to be literal there, every last thing.

But then in verse 20 it says, to reconcile all things to himself. Did God reconcile all things to himself? Now it would seem even awkward if he just said all people to himself, because there are people who do not appear to be Christians. And some universalists say, well eventually all will be reconciled to God, all people.

Some say even the devil himself will eventually be saved. I certainly don't agree with that understanding of this. But the way that they sometimes see it is that although some may go to hell and even burn in hell, hell will not be for such people necessarily eternal.

And that after a certain point of having paid their debt for their sin, as it were, by suffering in hell, they will then be reconciled to God, so that as God, his mystery of his will from eternity past was that all things would eventually be in Christ. All things would be reconciled to him. That before God created the heavens and the earth, all things were good, and all things were lost in the fall.

But through Christ all things are reconciled, all things are regained. We saw when we were studying 2 Corinthians that Paul said that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their sins against them. And that if Christ died, then all died.

And that it says in Romans chapter 5 that in Adam all died, and in Christ all are made righteous, or in Adam all sinned, and in Christ all are made righteous. These uses of the word all, if taken in the absolute sense, make it sound like everything is going to be restored, everything is reconciled. But it's possible that Paul means after the wicked have been eliminated from the scene, then all that remains will be in Christ, and all that remains will be reconciled.

It's not necessary to assume that all things, including the devil himself, are someday going to be reconciled to God, although some would understand these verses that way. It's possible to take seriously the scriptures that talk about the judgment and damnation of certain persons, and then after that is taken care of, all that remains will be ultimately reconciled to God. And not just all people, but all things.

The planet too, remember, is fallen. The planet is under the curse. The planet has shared in the penalty, as it were, for Adam's sin, and groans and travails even until now, Paul said.

But that's going to be restored, it's going to be redeemed from that. So it's possible that by saying he's going to bring all things in Christ, all things reconciled to himself, he means all things, of course, except the lost, but all things, the creation as well as the redeemed humanity, will be restored to God in Christ. Now, it's also possible that all things is just a strange way of meaning all people.

And he doesn't mean all people without exception, but all people in the categories that he's describing. Namely, all the righteous people in heaven and all the righteous people on earth. The all things, he doesn't say all those who are in hell.

He says all things in heaven and all things on earth. And it's not exactly how expansive Paul wants this word all to mean. He might mean all people as opposed to just some races, like the Jews.

He might mean all races of people. The fact is, Paul doesn't give enough information here for us to know exactly how sweeping this all is. But we can see this, that it was God's intention and his purpose, that he purposed in himself according to his good pleasure, according to verse 9, that he might gather together in one all things in Christ.

Now, that doesn't leave much room for God to have wished to have some things excluded, some people excluded. It seems to confirm the general teaching of scripture that God would have all men to be saved. God may not always get what he wants from men, but what he wants is for all to be saved.

And not that God predestined some unilaterally just to be lost because he didn't want them. God's desire is to reconcile all things to himself, to gather all things in Christ. However, as Jesus said, how many times I would have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks, but you would not come.

God's desire to gather does not always result in his being able to gather. Now, that may seem to contradict what it says in verse 11, where it says, In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will. Now, we've obtained an inheritance.

That inheritance apparently is the kingdom of God. And that kingdom of God, according

to Romans 14, 17, is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. We have obtained that inheritance.

That's ours now. Peter also talks about the inheritance we've obtained in 1 Peter, very early on in that episode. 1 Peter 1, he says in verse 3 and 4, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance.

incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you. Or in the heavenlies, we might say. So, Peter, following Ephesians somewhat closely, also makes reference to this inheritance we have.

It's an undefiled inheritance. It is not fading. It will not fade.

It's an eternal inheritance. We have already, we already have it. We have already obtained it.

We don't have to wait until we die to obtain it. It says, in Christ we have obtained an inheritance. In a sense, we could argue that Christ is our inheritance.

And all these things, righteousness, peace and joy, are ours in him. That he is our inheritance and that we have been predestined. Notice this, verse 11, the wording.

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance being predestined. That means because we are predestined, we've been obtained an inheritance. Well, what are we predestined for? Well, he said back in verse 5, being predestined for adoption as sons.

That's why we have an inheritance. Sons receive an inheritance. God predestined that those who believe in Christ should be accepted as sons.

And therefore, as sons, we have an inheritance with Christ. Paul emphasizes the relationship of sonship and inheritance in Romans chapter 8, where he says, in verse 15, For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, Romans 8, 15, but you received the spirit of adoption. By whom we cry out, Abba, Father.

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs. Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Now, if we are children, then we are heirs. We are heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ. Now, heirs of God could mean that God is what we inherit.

And that would be a language similar to that in the Old Testament, in the Pentateuch, that frequently speaks of the Levites, that whereas the other 11 tribes of Israel received land inheritances, it was mentioned that the Levites would receive no inheritance land

because God was their inheritance. And Paul says, we are heirs of God. It could mean that we are those like the Levites who inherit God himself.

He's our inheritance. But heirs of God could also just mean heirs of God in the sense that children are heirs of their father. He's our father and we're his heirs.

And joint heirs with Christ. Whatever Christ inherits, we inherit with him, or we could say in him, jointly. And so we have this inheritance, which includes eternal life and righteousness and peace and joy, all in the Holy Spirit, because we were predestined, as he said earlier in verse 5, to adoption.

And as adopted sons, we are sons of God and heirs of God. According to the purpose of him, it says in verse 11, Ephesians 1.11, who works all things according to the counsel of his will. Now, I said earlier that people, God doesn't always get what he wants out of people.

And yet it says here that God works all things according to the counsel of his own will. Now, if God works all things according to the counsel of his own will, doesn't that mean that everything happens just the way he works it out for his own? Now, there is another verse we're very familiar with in Paul's other passage about predestination that also talks about all things being worked by God. And that's even a more familiar verse to us in Romans 8.28. Just before he talks about predestination, he says, all things work together for good to those who love God and who are called according to his purpose.

And so all things work together for good, but that doesn't mean that all things are good or that all things are what God wants to happen. He can manipulate things to bring about his will. He works in all things.

He energizes all things. He manipulates all things according to his will. That doesn't mean that all things are just what he'd want them to be, but he can manipulate them.

He can exploit them and bring about his will, just like he works all things for good. But certainly not all things that happen are innately good, and it's not necessary to believe that all things that happen are simply caused by God. Sin is not caused by God, and yet sin happens to people.

You may be victimized by somebody else's sin. God didn't make that sin happen, but he works through that person's sin against you to work for your good, as he did with Joseph and his brothers and many other cases. Jesus, when Judas betrayed him, God worked through that for good.

God did not make Judas do that. God did not make Joseph's brothers do that, but they did that, and God worked in it. So also, this verse probably is teaching something like that, that God works all things according to the counsel of his will, that whatever happens, he works it out, manipulates it, and directs things so the outcome brings his

will.

It doesn't mean that all the raw materials that's handed to him are his preferred tools to use, but whatever he has, he can work it for his will, work it out to bring his will out of the situation. Certainly this verse is not saying that all people accept him or reject him as he prefers, and that he works in every person's heart to do exactly what his sovereign will wants. That's how some people understand this verse, but it simply can't work that way.

The word counsel here, the same Greek word is found in Luke chapter 7. In Luke chapter 7, in verse 30, it says, But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God. Same Greek word. It's found in Ephesians 1.11. According to the counsel of his own will.

The Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the counsel of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him. That is, by John. He's referring to the fact that these people rejected John's baptism, who also later rejected Christ.

But they rejected the counsel of God. Now, God works all things according to the counsel of his own will, but apparently he doesn't work it in such a way that prevents them from rejecting his counsel. And the word counsel here, in both places, actually means will.

It's another one of the words in the Greek language for the will of God. And so it could be translated, and sometimes is, they rejected the will of God for themselves. And if you can reject the will of God, then it means God doesn't get what he wanted for you, in you.

But that doesn't mean God didn't get what he wanted in the bigger picture. God can get what he wants basically, in the final analysis, in the larger picture. And that's what he intends and fully will do.

He's sovereign in the sense that he works out the ends, but we sometimes provide the means. We don't mean, I mean, a sinner doesn't mean for his actions to work God's will, necessarily, but God can work it out that they do. And so, this statement about God's sovereignty, that he works all things according to the counsel of his own will, should not be mistaken to say that God works in every man's heart exactly what he wants to be in that heart.

The heart is free, and therefore there are people who are known to reject God's counsel of his will for them. Verse 12, Ephesians 1 says, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of his glory. In him you also trusted after you heard the word of truth.

The gospel of your salvation. In whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Now, what comes first, regeneration or faith? As you know, the Calvinist view holds that regeneration comes first.

That you, through generation, believe. Apparently they would believe that by faith you

are saved through grace. That is, grace is there, and through grace you receive faith.

Although Paul says the opposite, over in Ephesians 2.8, he says, by grace you have been saved through faith. The grace that saves comes through having faith. Therefore, the faith must be there as the means before the grace is obtained.

Grace comes through faith. Paul says that elsewhere too, in Romans 5.2. By him we have access into this grace through faith. Now, what about these verses? We're looking at verse 12 and 13.

It says, verse 13 especially, In him also you trusted after you heard the word of truth. The gospel of your salvation. In whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

The sealing of the Holy Spirit of promise happens at salvation. This happens to us after we believe. We're not saved first and then believe second.

You see, the Calvinist view is that we have to be regenerated before we can believe. Because prior to that we're dead in trespasses and sins and we can't believe. And therefore God has to bring us to life unilaterally, sovereignly.

And then once he's done so, we can believe. But the sealing of the Holy Spirit takes place at the time of coming to life. It is the Holy Spirit that brings us to life.

We're made alive through the Spirit. The Spirit of God is that which regenerates us. Jesus said a man must be born of the Spirit.

And being regenerated is a work of the Spirit. And it's that work through which God seals us. Now here it says, you were sealed by the Spirit of promise, having believed.

That means the believing came first, the sealing came second. The Spirit came into the life and regenerated and sealed the believer. After the believer believed.

The Holy Spirit of promise. Now it's not clear what the phrase at the end of verse 13, of promise means with reference to the Holy Spirit. On one hand, we might think of the statements Jesus made about the Holy Spirit being the promise of the Father.

I don't think that's how Paul means it here. But I just want to point out to you that when Jesus spoke of the coming of the Holy Spirit, he spoke of him as the promise of my Father. He said in Luke 24, 49, Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you.

But tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high. And that promise of the Father is the Holy Spirit. But now that the Holy Spirit has been given to us, it's no longer the case that we are looking for a fulfillment of a promise.

The promise was made before the Holy Spirit was given. And when the Holy Spirit came

at Pentecost, that was the fulfillment of the promise. So why would he be called today, after we've already received the Holy Spirit, why did he be called the Holy Spirit of promise? Well, I think that it means that the Holy Spirit's presence in our life is in itself a promise of something future.

It's like the wedding ring, as some people have said. It's like we've been betrothed to Christ, and betrothal means a promise. And when a betrothal takes place, a wedding gift is given, or some kind of a gift is given, a dowry, that sort of seals the promise and guarantees that the bridegroom intends to carry through with this thing.

That he's promising something, and he's sealing that promise with a gift of some kind. Well, God has promised himself to us and us to him in Christ. We're betrothed to Christ, according to 2 Corinthians 11, verse 2 or 3. And being betrothed, we look forward to marriage.

But until then, we have, as it were, an engagement ring. I said a wedding ring. I think we better say an engagement ring.

A gift that's been given as a promise of later fulfillment of the full marriage. And that is apparently what he means by we were sealed, the promise was sealed. The word seal means to have a wax seal.

Generally, it means to have a wax seal with an impression from a signet on it, which shows the authenticity of the thing. And that the promise, or the Holy Spirit who's given to us is at once a seal that we really are God's authentic people, because his authentic people do have his spirit. And a person who doesn't have the spirit is not authentically saved, or not a Christian.

But also the Holy Spirit is the spirit of promise in the sense that the presence of the Holy Spirit is a promise, is a guarantee of something. And he goes on to say that in verse 14. Who, that is the Holy Spirit, is a guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession to the praise of his glory.

Now, there's interesting ways which Paul talks about the past, excuse me, the future and the present sort of in attention. Because he says in verse 11, we have obtained an inheritance. But in verse 14, we have a guarantee of what's apparently a future inheritance.

Also, the redemption. He says in verse 7, we have redemption through his blood. We've been redeemed.

And yet we're looking forward in verse 14 to the redemption of the purchased possession. Now, the word guarantee in verse 14 means like a down payment or an earnest money that's set down. If you, Rob recently bought a guitar and when he discovered the guitar at the music store, it was very expensive and he didn't have all the

money with him at the time.

So he put down a down payment. They put the guitar away. No one else could buy it.

It was officially his. But he couldn't take it home until he paid the whole amount. So when he came and paid the whole amount, he redeemed it, as it were.

He bought it out of its layaway condition, as it were. But there was earnest money down on it in the meantime. And Paul describes, he's changing the imagery here to that of, you know, we've been bought.

We're a slave. But God hasn't taken us home yet, to his house. Hasn't collected us yet.

That he will do when Jesus returns. In the meantime, though, he's put some money down on us. We're set aside as genuinely his.

We've got his seal on us. And that seal is the Holy Spirit who serves as an earnest money, as a guarantee of him collecting us later. And so there's a future aspect of redemption.

We have been redeemed, but the full redemption of our bodies has not yet occurred. And Paul elsewhere makes a distinction in this sense between regular redemption of our souls and redemption of our bodies. The reference to the redemption of our bodies is a separate issue found in Romans 8. In Romans 8, verse 23, Paul says, And not only they, but we also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves, grown within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

Now, what we're groaning for and looking forward to is the second coming of Christ and the resurrection. This he refers to, this event of the resurrection and the second coming of Christ, Paul calls in Romans 8, verse 23, the adoption, the redemption of the body. That is when we're redeemed out of decay and our body is resurrected in glory.

What's interesting, though, is that he refers to that redemption, that day of redemption at the second coming of Christ as our adoption. But earlier in Romans 8, in verse 15, he says that we have received the spirit of adoption by whom we cry, Abba, Father. Now, the spirit of adoption is ours now.

We already speak of God as our Father. But the adoption, the real adoption, where we get to be in the family home, as it were, and receive the full inheritance of adoption, is future. So there's a sense in which all that the Christian life gives us will be realized in the future when Jesus comes back.

But in another sense, we have a taste of it already. We've tasted of the powers of the age to come already. We know the value of being redeemed and forgiven and being adopted as sons and having an inheritance, but there's a sense in which all that is still to

be realized in its fullness later.

We just have the Holy Spirit now given as earnest money, as a down payment, of that redemption, of that adoption, of that inheritance, says Paul. Now, going on, Ephesians 1, 15 says, Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers. Now, this is one of those verses that makes it sound like Paul might not be writing to close friends since he says, I have heard of your faith, I've heard of your love, which may sound like he knows these people only secondhand from reports, although even if he was writing to people he knew, he might not know except by reports what their current state is.

I mean, he might know that they had, when he was with them, been doing well or not well in these areas, but by report he knows that they're doing well now, and that would be something that as an absentee person in prison in Rome, he would only have a way of knowing by report. So even if he was writing to people that he did know, he still might say, I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and of your love for all saints, meaning I've heard that your current state is bad. It might even be that he had known them previously that way, but he would only know by report that they are that way now.

But this is where he gives his thanks to God for them as he does for most of the churches when he writes to them in his epistles. Usually it comes earlier because he doesn't usually spend so much as he spends here time laying out a long blessing. See, verses 3 through 14 were simply along the attitude of God.

Blessed be God. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And see, Peter has that same blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in verse 3 of his epistle.

And dispenses with it in a few verses. Paul has that, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and dispenses with it in like 11 verses or 12. And it takes a long time because he has all these subordinate clauses and thoughts that he goes off and talks about separately.

But now he gets what he usually does fairly early in his epistle and that's saying I thank God for you. I mean, that's just something to encourage them and that they have encouraged him. He has something to thank God for.

Though he's in prison in a situation that is not comfortable for him, he has some consolation in hearing how well the church is doing because he wears that burden on his heart all the time. He says in verse 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, this is the reason I make mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the

hope of his calling, what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe according to the working of his mighty power, which he worked in Christ, there's another long sentence, when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fulfills all in all.

Now, this is essentially a lengthy prayer that Paul prays for the church. He begins by giving thanks for them and then he says, and he makes mention of them in his prayers, he says in verse 16. And verse 17 begins to tell what it is he prays for them.

Now, what he prays for them is rather interesting because he's not really praying as he might for some churches. He doesn't pray that they'll stand firm or fall away. He doesn't pray that they'll live a holy life, although he's already mentioned earlier that they're chosen for that.

He prays mainly for their enlightenment. He prays mainly for their ability to grasp the material that he's trying to get across here. As I said in our introduction, Ephesians kind of takes the thought of Paul to the loftiest point and talks about spiritual mysteries and the things of heaven and so forth.

And these are things that are not naturally understood by the mind, even if told. You know, Paul was talking about such categories of knowledge when he wrote 1 Corinthians 2. I'd like you to look there, if you would. In 1 Corinthians 2, Paul said that when he was among the Corinthians and they were babes, he was careful not to overtax their comprehensive powers.

He says in 1 Corinthians 2, And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom, declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Now, in other words, I kept the message simple when I was with you.

Why did he do that? Well, if you look for a moment over at 1 Corinthians 3.1, he says, And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual things, but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food. For until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you're still not able.

Now, Paul says when he was among the Corinthians, they were carnal. And they still are, even as he writes to them. Now, he'd spent 18 months with them, and they never outgrew their baby stage.

And therefore he had to give them only the milk. What was that? He says, Well, chapter

2, verse 2, I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Just stuck with the basic gospel.

Now, there's some churches who boast in this. We preach nothing but Christ and Him crucified. They have a big banner across the top of the church.

We know nothing but Christ and Him crucified. They might as well put under it in parentheses, in other words, we teach only milk here. Because that's what Paul is saying.

Among you, we could only give the milk, because you are carnal, and you are babes, and therefore we preach nothing among you but Jesus and Him crucified. But look at 1 Corinthians 2, 6. However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature. Now, this category, the mature, does not include the Corinthians themselves.

As he says in chapter 3, verse 1, they're babes. But when he is among the mature, he has a different way. He does give something more.

He doesn't just talk about Christ and Him crucified when he's with mature people. With babes, he has to stick with the basic message. Give them the milk.

However, when he's with mature people, he goes another way. He gives them meat. He gives them solid food.

We do speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age. Nor of the rulers of this age who are coming to nothing, but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery. The hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew, for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

But as it is written, eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor have entered in the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things.

Now, this wisdom that Paul says he teaches to the mature are the deep things of God, which the Spirit searches. Eyes haven't seen these. It hasn't even entered into the heart of man.

That is, man would not naturally understand this with his heart, or see it with his eyes, or hear it with his ears. It has to be revealed by the Spirit. And he actually says that in very clear terms in verse 14 of the same chapter.

1 Corinthians 2, 14. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. They are foolishness to him, nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

So, the deep things of God are things that must be spiritually discerned. The natural man

cannot know them, which must mean that the natural mind is not able to fathom them, or doesn't have the categories of thought to process the information. One has to have the revelation of the Spirit to understand these things.

Now, Ephesians is a book where Paul does give these things, these deep things of God. To the Corinthians, he couldn't do that, because they were carnal, even as he wrote. But he wrote Ephesians near the end of his ministry to Christians that were more stable, who were faithful in Christ Jesus, and who were not babes and carnal.

And so, this is an example of him teaching wisdom among those who are mature. Remember, in Ephesians 1.8, he says that God has made His grace to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will. Well, that's the hidden wisdom and the mystery that he's talked about in 1 Corinthians 2 that belongs only to the mature.

Now, not everyone in Ephesus is mature, and even those who are mature might yet not get the revelation of what he's talking about. He's talking about deep things here, deep spirits. And therefore, he prays in Ephesians 1 for his readers that they would get it, that they would be able to discern it.

And notice what it takes in order to discern it. And really, as we study Ephesians, we should not expect that we will get it or understand it unless we have the same thing Paul's praying for here. Namely, that God, in Ephesians 1.17, that God, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.

Now, you can know a lot about God by reading the Bible. Or for that matter, you can get a fair bit of it just by studying His creation. There's a lot that can be known about God from hearing other people give their testimonies or tell you what they know about God.

But none of that is the same as having the revelation of the knowledge of Him. Personal revelation. When Jesus asked His disciples at Caesarea Philippi, who do you say that I am? Peter said, you're the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And Jesus said, blessed are you, Son of our Jennifer, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father, which is in heaven. Now, Peter got that revealed to him. What? That Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God? I've known that since I was a little kid.

My parents told me. Anyone can know that. Anyone who's told that Jesus is the Son of God, Jesus is the Messiah, can know that.

All they have to do is hear the words, know what they mean, and say, yeah, I agree with that. Then they know it. So what was it that had to be revealed about that? Well, actually, Peter had learned that information earlier from a human being, from his brother

Andrew.

According to John chapter 1, Andrew found Peter when he first met Jesus and told him, this is the Messiah we've found. We've found the Messiah. And so Peter knew that information from another person.

But later, much later, after he'd spent time with Jesus, and he said, you're the Christ, the Son of the living God. He said, you didn't learn that from man. That was revealed to you by my Father.

It's one thing to understand the meaning of a sentence and say, oh, I get it. Okay, I got your meaning there. It's another thing to have it revealed to you by the Spirit.

And Paul is praying that the things he's writing will not just be so many words that can be systematized into theological books, and then people can be catechized in this, and then they can be orthodox and have the views correct. He wants this book to be read with the aid of God's Spirit giving you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God. That the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened.

It says in Luke chapter 24, verse 44, that Jesus opened his disciples' understanding that they might understand the Scriptures. It says that in Luke 24, verse 45. And he opened their understanding that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

Now, the Scriptures, people would say those all their lives. There were rabbis who could tell you what they thought the Scriptures meant. The words of Scripture were not all that obscure.

Why did he have to open their understanding that they might comprehend them? Because the Scriptures are spiritual. And the rabbis and the Pharisees and the scribes had studied them all their lives, but they never did see in there what the disciples came to see there. You can see what the disciples came to see in the Scriptures by how they quoted them in their letters, how they quoted the Old Testament and applied them, certainly very differently than the Pharisees had done so or the rabbis.

They saw something entirely different there. They saw a mystery revealed there. Now, that mystery was... all the words were there before, but it wasn't until their understanding was enlightened that they could understand and comprehend what was being said there.

And so Paul prays that the eyes of your understanding would be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of his calling and what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. Now, these are things that could perhaps be explained. I mean, Paul could sit down and say, now let me explain to you exactly what is the hope of his calling and exactly what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance.

He could give a Bible study on that. I could do that. I could give a Bible study on that.

But obviously, Paul felt there was something more needed than that. There needed to be a supernatural infusion of light. There had to be an enlightenment.

There had to be a revelation from God in the inner man. And all he could do was pray that that would happen. He prayed for his readers to have that because he could not impart that by himself.

He could give the words and the sentences and the explanations, but he could not impart what it was that he wanted them to have. Likewise, no teacher can. I can't.

I can't impart to you these mysteries. I can talk about them. I can say what the Bible says about them.

But Paul wanted you to own them in a deeper way, in your heart, deep down inside, to just have the light go on. I'm sure you know exactly that phenomenon that sometimes you'll, maybe even in secular subjects probably, in school, you know, algebra, geometry or something like that, you're sitting in class and it just means nothing to you. The teacher's putting all these things on the board and trying to explain it all.

And it's just so many chicken scratches as far as you're concerned. And suddenly, at a certain point, you just get it. And it's like the light goes on and suddenly you own it.

You can figure it out. You can do the work. And, of course, that's not spiritual.

That's just the mind, you know, crossing a threshold where suddenly what was inscrutable suddenly is clear. And there's a corresponding phenomenon in the spiritual things that you can hear all about religious words, theological vocabulary, and all that kind of stuff, and you can memorize their meanings. And you can repeat, if you're catechized, in a catechism, you know, the right answers to the questions and so forth, and give the right doctrinal things, and you really believe them.

But it's different when suddenly the eyes of your understanding are open and you understand it at a different level that no one can explain to you. Only God can open it to you. These two states of knowledge are so clear to me because I spent so many of my years being able to repeat Christian doctrine as a child and as a youth, even preaching sermons in the Baptist church in my early teenage years, and studying doctrine, and studying theological books, and wanting to know, and learning how to say it, and how to explain it, and knowing the answers to the questions and so forth, and having the information.

I had all that. And it wasn't until, as you've heard my testimony before when I was 16, when I got baptized in the Spirit, that suddenly it's like a light went on, and suddenly all those things I knew about, I now knew. And they were part of the whole foundation of my

conscious living.

I knew as a matter of doctrine prior to that that God is everywhere, and therefore that He is here, and that He can hear my prayers and so forth. But when the light went on, is the only way I know how to put it, suddenly I knew God was there. I lived with the consciousness every moment that God was there, that He could hear my prayers was a given.

It wasn't just a point of theological doctrine for me, it was a matter that I knew He was listening when I was speaking. I mean, I knew His presence. And so with many things, I won't say that at that moment, suddenly every doctrine of the Bible came illuminated to me, because even now, there are areas of the Bible I don't understand.

But I will say, and I hope you can say the same thing, that as the years have gone by, that there have been many things that I've read that I've read many times before. And I kind of knew what was on the page there, I kind of knew what it said, but it never really stuck out, never made much of an impact. And then at a certain point, it's like God just gave a revelation about that thing, and it was a living, glowing text, you know.

And suddenly it was alive and powerful and sharper than any twiggged sword. That is the work of the Holy Spirit in opening the Scriptures. When the men on the road to Emmaus were walking with Jesus there, it says that he gave them sort of a Bible study about all the things in the Old Testament that were written about Jesus, about his death and resurrection.

And afterwards, when he was gone, and they realized it had been Jesus, they said, didn't our hearts burn inside of us as he opened the Scriptures to us? As they're recalling the Bible that Jesus gave them, he opened the Scriptures and their hearts burned with revelation. And of course, it made sense now. That was Jesus.

That's why it happened that way. And so also, the Christians should never be content, in my opinion, with merely book knowledge. Now, book knowledge is better than nothing.

It's better to know the truth than to think something that's false. It's better to have true doctrine than be deceived with false doctrine. But there's a level of knowledge that can only be had from God, that God gives.

And Paul can only pray for his readers to have it. He can't impart it by words. He can only pray that God will impart it, that they might know and understand at a deeper level, through the eyes of their understanding, being enlightened and a spirit of wisdom and revelation of knowledge of God being given to them, what is the hope of his calling.

Now, the hope of his calling, we know something about. I can tell you about it doctrinally. I can remember years ago when this kind of came to me in a revelatory way, but it was not as if some new words of Scripture or some extra-biblical terms came to my mind.

It's rather words of Scripture that I'd known forever suddenly had a vital meaning that was just thrilling to my heart. But the hope of his calling has to do with the hope of glory. He says that in Colossians, that the mystery is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

That's in Colossians 1.27. To them, God willed to make known what are the riches of his glory or the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Paul also referred in Titus 2.13 to the blessed hope, which is the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. And there are other places where the glory of God or the glory of Christ is identified as our hope.

And I've told you on other occasions, I won't go into it now, but the hope of the Christian is to be glorified like Christ, to be made like him. And I can't make that as exciting to you as it is to me, because no man can make it exciting to me either. It's just something that once God just opened that up to me, it just became a compelling vision that changed the whole perception of life and of the Christian walk.

And Paul hopes that you may know what is the hope of your calling through revelation, not through just explaining it like a teacher might do. And what are the riches of his glory of his inheritance in the saints? Now, his inheritance in the saints is an interesting statement, because earlier he's talked about we have obtained an inheritance. And in verse 14 he speaks of our inheritance.

But now he talks about God's inheritance. God has an inheritance too. God is going to inherit something out of this deal, and that is the church is his inheritance.

Back in the Old Testament, we read in 2 Samuel 21.3 that Israel is God's inheritance or God's heritage. 2 Samuel 21.3 and also 2 Samuel 20, verse 19, both of those places speak of Israel as God's inheritance. However, of course, in Psalm 2.8 it says that the Father has said to Christ, Ask of me, and I will give you the heathen for your inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession.

This is a promise God has made to Christ that if Christ would ask, God would give him the heathen for his inheritance. Now, Israel was God's inheritance, but Christ's inheritance is the Gentiles as well as the Jews who come to him. In other words, the church.

Gentiles who become Christians are his inheritance. That was Psalm 2.8. It says that. So what is the glory of his inheritance? It's the glory of the church.

God's inheritance in the saints. That is, the saints are his inheritance. This revelation has never hit most people.

And once a person has it, it just enlivens you with passion for the church. And by the church, I don't mean the local church or the institutional church necessarily, but just for the body of Christ. You just fall in love with the body of Christ, as God does once he

opens your eyes to understand what is the riches or the glory of this inheritance that he has in the church.

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe? So God is going to inherit something in the church, and toward the church, there is a great power released on his part toward us who believe. And he wants us to know by the spiritual revelation what is the exceeding greatness of his power. Probably because if we underestimate the power of God, we simply will live at a low level of faith, at a low level of experience.

But if God reveals to us what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us, then of course our expectations, our faith will be elevated too, and it will change the whole dimension of our Christian living. It says, According to the working of his mighty power which he worked in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places. So the power that is at work toward us, he says in verse 19, is the same power that he worked in Christ raising him from the dead and elevating him to his right hand.

Now, it's not just that God's power, his generic power does a variety of things. One thing he did was raise Jesus from the dead and elevate him. Another thing he does is what he's doing in our life, something else.

But rather he's saying the same power of resurrection and exaltation that he did in Christ is the same power he works toward us. That is for our receiving resurrection life and to be seated in Christ in heavenly places. God has exalted and raised us by the same power and intends to do more too because of course there's going to be a physical resurrection later on, but we already have been raised with Christ and experienced something of this exceeding greatness of power which was manifest first in raising Christ from the dead and seating him in heavenly places and secondly, toward us doing the like thing in our own lives.

Now, in having said in verse 20 that he seated Christ at his right hand in the heavenly places, he wants to expound on how high that is. He wants to tell exactly how lofty a position that is that Christ has received. He says that those heavenly places where Christ is at the right hand of God in verse 21 is far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

Now, that's an interesting thing that he says. First of all, Christ is far above all principality and power and might and dominion. As I mentioned in our introduction that principality and power might mean demonic or angelic powers, but it could also just mean earthly powers and that would, any of those things would of course be true.

Christ is above all powers. And therefore, we... I'm trying to think, there's a passage in 1

Peter where the same thought is given. Remember all those resemblances between 1 Peter and Ephesians.

I'm trying to think. Yeah. 1 Peter 3.22. Speaking of Christ after his resurrection, it says, He has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to him.

That's the same thought in 1 Peter that we have at this point in Ephesians. That Christ has been made ruler over all rulers. In Philippians 2, he says he's been given a name above all names that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

So Christ's position is higher than all other authorities. That means that if we are seated in Christ in heavenly places, our position is above those authorities too. That doesn't mean that we can pull rank on the rulers as if to ignore their authority.

We know that the Bible says that God has ordained the rulers and their authority is to be taken seriously. And insofar as they punish criminals, we better make sure that we don't become criminals and be punished by them. On the other hand, if they punish good people, we should not be afraid of them either.

We should go ahead and be good and obey God rather than man. But the point is, though, that we don't have to see ourselves as under them. If we are in righteous standing and persecuted by rulers and authorities, we are really, I mean, in a sense, above them.

We may be subject to their physical penalties, but we will judge the world, including them. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 16, the saints will judge angels and also will judge the world. And so we are given a status that is higher than them only because we're in Christ and he holds such a status.

And it's such a ridiculous thing that nations and pagans would worship idols and demons and so forth when those things are so low and so inferior compared to the glory of Christ who is above all rulers and dominions and principalities and powers and all names that are named. And it says in verse 22, continuing to say what God has done for Jesus in exalting him like this, it says, He has put all things under his feet and gave him to be head over all things to the church. Now God has put all things under Christ's feet.

That is not to say that necessarily Christ is in full control of everything, but all things are actually under his authority. And there is a difference between authority and control because you may go against an authority. He may not control you and make your decisions for you, but because he is authority, you are still subject to him.

That is to say, if the people who make the laws for the state of Oregon say that the maximum speed limit on the interstate is going to be 65 miles an hour, they don't

necessarily control me because they can't prevent me from going 70 miles an hour. But I am subject to them nonetheless because if they catch me going 70 miles an hour, they can penalize me and I am subject to that penalty. They have authority, which means they have the right to be obeyed.

If they are not obeyed, they have the right to punish. And to say that all things are at Christ's feet doesn't mean that everything that happens are happening exactly the way he wants it to happen or exactly controlled directly by him. The fact that that is not the case is seen in another passage, I believe it's in Hebrews 2, verses 6 and following.

It says, But one testifies in a certain place, saying, What is man? This is Psalm 8. What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that you take care of him? You made him a little lower than the angels. You crowned him with glory and honor and set him over the works of your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet.

For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see, we do not see all things yet put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that he by the grace of God might taste death for everyone.

Now, we see Jesus having been crowned with glory and honor, but we do not yet see everything put under man's feet, even Christian man's feet, because not all things are under the control of righteousness yet. All things are subject to the judgments of God, but not all things are being controlled like puppets on strings by God. And all things are put under Christ's feet, meaning that he will either, they'll either bow at his feet or he'll trample them under his feet.

One way or the other, they're at his feet and he is above them. And it says in verse 22, Ephesians 1, 22, And gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. Now, here we have the church mentioned specifically as a subject which will become the chief subject of the epistle.

That Christ has been made head over all things to the church. That means the church is subject to Christ in all things. He's head over all things to the church.

Later on in chapter 5, he says that the church is subject to Christ in all things. In Ephesians 5, 23 and 24, it says, For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is the head of the church, and he is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in all things or in everything.

The church is subject to Christ in all things and the wife, therefore, being the picture of the church and the marriage is to be subject to her husband in all things. But all areas of life are under Christ's dominion. Now, we understand that.

That's kind of a given to people of our ilk. I mean, you've studied the Bible enough and

you're in a certain circle that that's not a surprise to hear that. But it's amazing how many people there are in churches who think that there's a few areas of their life that they need to modify in order to be Christians.

They can still pursue their own careers, their own goals, their own ambitions, their own entertainment, their own possessions, their own plans for life. But they just have to modify a little bit from when they were sinners. You know, they can't really drink as much as they used to, can't really cuss and swear and blaspheme like they used to, and going to have to probably keep their sex life under control and some other areas, too, that they are aware of that Jesus would have them change, probably.

And they never dream of bringing all things in their life under his subjection. And yet, Christ is the head over all things in the church. That would include all money transactions, all relationships that are entered into, all the time that is invested in one thing or another, all the choices that we make in our daily life are subject to Christ.

And we are to be living our life consciously dependent on and obedient to him. He is the head over all things. Not just over a general sense of moral improvement, and certainly not just in the sense of our belief systems.

He doesn't just determine what we are going to believe. But he is the head over every area of life in the church. There is no area that is not under his control.

He said in Matthew 28, verse 18, I think it was, he says, All authority in heaven and earth is given to me. All authority in heaven and earth. That means all areas of authority have been put into his hands.

He is in charge of everything. Now the church, it says in verse 23, is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. The church is his body and it is the fullness of him.

A head without a body is not a complete person. And while Jesus, when he was on earth, was the complete body of Christ, and there were no other members but him, since his ascension, the body of Christ has taken on a different aspect. And that is that he, Jesus, is the head, and we are the members, the flesh and the bones, as he puts it in Ephesians chapter 5. Over in Ephesians 5, verse 30, he says we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones.

Now, how should we understand the body of Christ? What constitutes the body of Christ? Who is in the church? Who is in the body of Christ? You know, we think of a person being a church member either because they come regularly to a congregational meeting on Sundays, or they might even join and have their names added to a membership role of a church organization. And we say, well, that person is a member of the church. But we instinctively feel that there are more people in the body of Christ than just those who are members of a congregation.

There are people you'll meet who are between churches or don't go to any church at all and are clearly part of the church. You say, well, what then constitutes being part of the church? Who is a part of the church? Well, certainly a biblical answer would be whoever is a member of the body of Christ is the church. But then what constitutes being in the body? Well, what does the metaphor suggest? When you see a body of a person, what does it, what is it that makes it that person's body? Well, they contain that person.

That person's personality, that person's spirit lives inside that house called a body. And the body of Christ is the habitation or the house where God's spirit lives or Christ's spirit lives. When Jesus walked on the earth, the spirit of God, the spirit of Christ, dwelt in that man, Jesus of Nazareth, and in none other.

And therefore he was in his, in his solitude himself, the body of Christ. But that spirit that was in him, he shared now when he went to heaven to dispense his spirit upon all his followers and they now also are part of the habitation of God through the spirit. They now also are the embodiment of God's spirit.

And therefore we are part of that body. The body is corporately all those who have the spirit of Christ are the body of Christ, part of it. Not as an individual, I'm not the body of Christ.

But all the members put together, taken collectively the world over in heaven and in earth, because most of the body is now in heaven, at least a great portion of it is. We are all part of that body of Christ and all the possessors of the spirit. There's really two things that a body does, that identifies a body as belonging to somebody.

One is it is subject to its head. Your body is subject to your head, but my body is not subject to your head. Just by willing it, your head can cause your hand to pick up a pen and start taking notes.

But by willing it, you cannot with your head make me pick up a pen and take notes. My body doesn't even listen to your head. My ears might listen to your head if you talk to me, but you've got a direct connection to your nervous system.

Your head desires something and your body doesn't. Your body is subject to your head and obedient to your head. And your body contains your spirit.

I think that we do well to, in a very simple and biblical way, define the body of Christ as made up of all those who are obedient to the head and who possess his spirit. And so, there are false teachers that Paul refers to who are not holding the head and are not subject to the head and they apparently are not the body of Christ. The body of Christ, then, is, as it were, the container and vehicle of the spirit of Christ.

And members of his body are those who have the spirit of Christ and are subject and obedient to the head and do what Jesus wants them to do. Now, by the way, that doesn't

mean that you're not a member of the body of Christ if you have at times been disobedient. Even your body doesn't always respond perfectly to the desires of your head.

There are times when your hands don't do precisely what your head wants them to, miscalculate or whatever, or just through defects or weakness, do not perform what the head wants it to do, or lack of skill. But the fact is, the members of the body are eager to do the will of the head because that's what a body is, that's what a body does. Now, it's important to note when he says in verse 23 that the body, the church, is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

We know who fills all in all. That's Christ. It says so over in Ephesians chapter 4. In Ephesians 4, verses 9 and 10, it says, Now this he ascended.

What does it mean? But that he also first descended into the lower parts of the earth. He who descended is also the one who ascended far above all heavens that he might fill all things. Referring to Christ.

He who descended, ascended. That's Christ. That he might fulfill all things.

He is the one who fills all in all. And the church is his body. It is the fullness of him that fills all in all.

It's the fullness of Christ. So the church, those who are in Christ, corporately, are the extension of him. Like Jesus put it this way in another place to his disciples, I am the vine and you are the branches.

In John 15. Well, what are branches? Are they something additional to the vine? If you see a grapevine, it's mostly branches. I mean, really, a vine is not just the stalk and the branch is something else.

The vine is the whole plant, including the branches. The branches are just part of the vine. They're the extension of the life of the vine out to bear fruit.

The vine bears its fruit on its branches. But to say that I am the vine and you are the branches means that you are part of me. You're part of the same organism.

And the life that's in the branches is the life of the vine and not something else. But they have that life only because they are in the vine. And so Jesus says, abide in me.

If you abide in me, you'll bear much fruit. Every branch in me bears fruit. And so the church, made up of us members and zillions of others, is Christ's presence in bodily form.

His flesh and his bones. The fullness of him. The completion of his body.

He is present everywhere in the person of his people who are his body. So he is

embodied in a corporate way now, whereas he was embodied in a single individual when he was on earth. That's the change that has come.

That's why Jesus said to his disciples, it's expedient for you to go away. If I don't go away, the spirit cannot come. The spirit's coming to us has caused us to participate in Christ, in his identity and in his work and be part of him.

Paul goes into many of the other ramifications of this in the following chapters, but we're going to have to stop there. That's a rather quick treatment, I know, but we have only a short number of classes to finish the whole book. So we'll stop there and take some more next time.