

IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU

Ephesians 1:1-14

Introduction:

→ Illust. – Book by Max Lucado – “It’s Not About Me” and magazine ad stating, “It’s All About You.”

We live in a self-centered world. Everything is about me – my wishes and wants, my desires, my happiness, my satisfaction. Everything is measured by how it affects me.

There is a great human tendency to carry that attitude over into the spiritual realm as well. This morning I want to revisit this passage in Ephesians 1:3-14. A couple of weeks ago we went through it quickly, looking at the long litany of blessings that Paul outlines in these verses. We are going to review that message briefly, before we look at the challenge that “It’s not about you.”

There are a couple of terms introduced in v. 3 that are very significant. The first is the phrase, “*spiritual blessings*.” It is clear that Paul is not talking about health, wealth and material prosperity. He is looking at the blessings that come our way in the spiritual realm because of Jesus Christ. The second important phrase is, “*...in the heavenly realms*,” God has blessed us in the heavenly realms. That phrase is used 5 times in the book of Ephesians. 1:3; 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12. *Look at the first 3 of these.*

It is clear that Paul understood that in Christ’s resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in our union with the exalted Christ, the real issues of life are dealt with. The important aspects of life are related to the spiritual realm, not the physical, material realm.

I am reminded of Paul’s words to the Colossian church. There we read, “*If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*” (Col 3:1-4 ESV)

The other key phrase here is “in Christ.” That term or equivalent is used a dozen times in the first 14 verses of this letter. It is only through relationship with Christ, that we become the beneficiaries of the blessings that belong to and issue from the heavenly realms. Everything that he described here is for those who are “in Christ,” those who have a relationship with the Father through union with the Son.

So let’s briefly review these blessings that we looked at last week. There are four major blessings described in these verses.

- A. He chose us to make us holy. (v. 4, 11) It is not that God picked out certain people to be saved and randomly decided that certain others would be forever lost. He chose those who believe for a special purpose – to be holy and blameless in his sight.
- B. He predestined us to be his children. (v. 5, 11) His plan from the beginning was to take those who trusted in him and make them his children. He adopted us and made us his sons and daughters. “I’m so glad I’m a part of the family of God.”
- C. He redeemed us to set us free from sin. (v. 7, 13) The concept of redemption speaks of the ransom price being paid to buy a slave out of the slave market to set him free. That is what God has done for us. He paid the ransom price for sin with the blood of his own Son.
- D. He sealed us to guarantee our inheritance. (v. 13, 14) Verse 13 says that we were sealed with the Holy Spirit, whom God had promised. The Spirit became the deposit—the guarantee—assuring us of the final payment. He is our assurance that the inheritance God has promised will come to us.

That is just a quick review of these 4 spiritual blessings that we looked at a couple of weeks ago.

II. God’s Eternal Plan and Purpose

Looking at these spiritual blessings that we have in Christ, all the things God has blessed us with, it is easy to become self-focused. “He did all this for me.” And that is true. He has done so much for us, and has given us so much and has blessed us.

But we need to be careful that we do not miss the bigger picture. It’s not about you. It’s not about me. It’s about Him. Everything God

does is about His eternal plan and purpose. Let me share with you some Scriptures, from both the Old and the New Testament.

*Isaiah 14:26-27 – “This is the purpose that is purposed concerning the whole earth, and this is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations. For **the LORD of hosts has purposed**, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?”*

*Isaiah 46:8-11 - “Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘**My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose**,’ calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; **I have purposed, and I will do it.**”*

Acts 2:22-24 – the words of Peter in his sermon at Pentecost, on the day the church was born, *“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— this Jesus, delivered up **according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God**, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.”*

Throughout Scripture, we are reminded of the plan and purpose that God determined before the foundation of the world. Let’s compare those thoughts with the verses we have before us here in Ephesians.

v. 5 – *“...in accordance with his pleasure and will”*

v. 9 – *“And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,”*

v. 11 – *“...according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,”*

Do you see what this is all about? Everything that God does and everything he has done is connected to Him carrying out His plan and accomplishing His purpose.

That brings up the next question. What is His purpose? There is another phrase or concept that is repeated several times in these verses. *Look at vv. 6, 7, 12, 14.*

“to the praise of His glory.” That’s his purpose. That’s why he put us here. That’s why he did what he did in sending His Son to Calvary. Yes, he did it for us – John 3:16.

Yes, He did it for us, but ultimately He did it for Himself. He did it to showcase His glorious grace and to bring praise and glory to Himself. It’s not about you. It’s about Him and his glory and his grace and his praise.

Conclusion

Now that brings up a necessary change in our thinking. We, as humans, tend to be self-focused. What’s in it for me? If I accept Christ and turn my life over to him, and live in obedience and submission to him, what do I get out of it? How is my life better, because I am a Christian? Now Paul gave us some very important answers to those questions in these verses.

But, I believe there are some different questions we ought to be asking.

- Is my life bringing pleasure to God?
- Is my life demonstrating His grace?
- Is my life bringing praise to Him?

If we honestly ask ourselves those kinds of questions, it will affect the way we think and the things we do.

What about:

- The books and magazines we read
- The movies we watch
- The events we attend
- The way we spend free time
- The way we dress
- The things we spend our money on

Read vv. 11-14 again, slowly and pointedly.

It’s not about you. It’s all about Him – his grace, his praise, his glory.