

Sermon Sunday 11th July 2021

Ephesians 1: 3 to 14

I will take the reading from Ephesians as the basis of my sermon today; I am often challenged by some of Paul's letters or writing or perhaps by Paul himself but the more I read and study Paul I am drawn to understand him and his writings and how relevant they are today in the modern Church and the lives of Christians today. This letter from Paul to the Ephesians today has so many points in it that it could form a series of sermons or talks!

The Church is a body which comes in all shapes, styles and sizes; they can be mass gatherings for thousands, overflowing Church buildings, services watched live on stream as now but hopefully we'll soon be back together worshipping as a family here in Church. However, we must always remember that the Church of Jesus Christ is people, His people, God's people of every race, age and nation and we are all bound by the promises made to us by God which Paul is writing about.

Paul is writing to the Church in Ephesus, to a group of Christians who to you and me today were described as gentiles who through Paul's mission to them became Christians. Paul in his mission to the gentiles had spent three years in Ephesus so he was very close to them. However, he was written to them as part of the family of the Church and Jesus Christ. In verse 3 he gives praise to Jesus and says '**who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing.**' What then are the spiritual blessings Paul is writing about to the Ephesians and to you, me and all the people of the world today? Through Jesus Christ we have all 1 of the benefits of knowing God the Father or the head of the family. Through knowing God through Jesus Christ His Son, we are adopted as

God's Children. In verse 7 Paul writes 'In **Him we have redemption through His blood.**' The blood of Jesus Christ shed for the Ephesians and all people by Jesus's death on the cross.

In Roman Law the act of adoption was a very important principle and was used to free slaves and release them from slavery, becoming part of the family. To speak of the blood of Jesus in this way emphasised how important the principle of adoption by God into his family was and still is and our release from the slavery of sin by the blood of Jesus. Through the shedding of Jesus' blood, we are forgiven, the one perfect sacrifice made for all.

Returning to my earlier question what are the benefits of being adopted into God' family? Firstly, we are chosen for salvation which means we will join God and Jesus in Heaven when our life here on earth ends, something to hold dear, the promise that when we die we will join God in Heaven.

This was rammed over to me the last week. Linda and I have spent the last week coming to terms with the death at 54 of our niece's husband Joe from MND. We have naturally talked about this and I admit I have struggled with Joe's death and what I could do for the family. Linda told me to hold back and wait to be approached and said perhaps Joes death makes us focus on our own mortality. It made me think about the promise of eternal life promised by Jesus and I prayed about this and how I could help the family; I received peace and tranquillity when I shared my thoughts in prayer and asked God to guide me as well of course being with the family at this time. I was strengthened by God's promise of eternal life and being told to wait.

Secondly, we are promised forgiveness by God when we acknowledge our sins.

Thirdly, we are promised the gift of the Holy Spirit given to the Church at Pentecost.

Fourthly, the power to do Gods will even when it does not fit our own plans or ideas. No one ever said being a Christian is easy!

Fifthly, the blessings of God which come from the spiritual realm not through our own acts or those of society and false Gods or prophets.

These are all treasures from God and Paul refers to these treasures being stored in clay jars in his second letter to the Corinthians.

All these treasures and so much more are received from the sacrifice Jesus made for each and every one of us on the Cross. I implore you to never forget this and share your faith with everyone you meet by prayer, thought, words and actions. Why, look at verses 13 and 14. **And you were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation. Having believed you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the the redemption of those who are God's possession.**' The seal of being in Gods family, what a gift.

I was reading a book yesterday morning entitled Light in the Darkness which explores the path of Christian Hope and I was reminded that in the O.T. there are many examples of Gods' love and promises and what we must do. So, I finish with a verse from Micah 6 verse 8 **'The Lord has told you mortals what is good and what it is that the Lord requires of you; only to act justly, to love loyalty, and to walk humbly with your God' Amen.**