

## NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDUCTIVE STUDY OF PAUL'S LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS – CHAPTER ONE

In the first part of this course we met the Ephesian Christians. They had come out of a culture dominated by false money-making religion and all the immoral excesses which went with it. They were the fruit of 3 years of daily teaching by Paul of the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ. They seemed to be the only church to whom Paul wrote who did not have a major problem which needed correcting. He could therefore concentrate on building on a solid foundation of proven faith.

Paul is so well known to nearly everyone that he hardly needs any introduction. He began life as Saul, from the Jewish community in Tarsus, brought up in the strictest tradition of Pharisaism, educated in Jerusalem under the top teacher of his day, fanatically committed to opposing any movement which seemed different from his Jewish heritage, including the Christians whom he persecuted with a burning zeal which would not hesitate to murder.(Acts 7:58; 8:1-3; 22:3,4; Phil.3:5,6) In pursuit of this goal he met the risen Christ on the road to persecute the Christians in Damascus, was led blind into the city where a Jewish Christian named Ananias showed him how to receive forgiveness of sin and the presence of the Spirit of Jesus into his life.(Acts 22:5-16)

Immediately he began witnessing of his new faith, then spent, first time away on his own discovering the real meaning of the Old Testament he thought he understood,(Gal:1:11-17) and then some years about which we know nothing back home in Tarsus.(Acts 9:30) Encouraged by Barnabas he shared in ministry in Antioch,(Acts 11:25,26) and then together they began the first of a series of journeys.(Acts 13:1-4) Together they debated effectively with the legalistic Jewish Christians.(Acts 15:1-21) Later they fell out and one team became two.(Acts 15:36-41) With Silas he undertook a second journey which briefly touched Ephesus.(Acts 16-18) Finally on the third journey came the opportunity to work in Ephesus.(Acts 19) At the conclusion of that journey he was arrested in Jerusalem,(Acts 21) and began four years of imprisonment, first in Caesarea,(Acts 24:27) and then in Rome,(Acts 28:30) from where he wrote this letter.(6:20)

His introduction establishes his authority to write this letter. It was the will of God not man that sent him to them as the twelfth apostle, a special messenger of Jesus Christ. There was no question about who his boss was. He called the Ephesian Christians, saints, people set apart for God's use, just as he was. All they had to do was to be faithful to the One to whom they belonged. His message could be summed up in two words, grace and peace. He would spend the next three chapters defining these two simple words, and the last three chapters illustrating how they would work out in the real world of church, society, marriage, family, work and God's service.(1:1,2)

His explanation started with a comprehensive claim; we have every blessing, every resource for life, which heaven has to offer in one place, Jesus Christ. He then listed some of the key blessings, all of which are – *in* Christ, *in* Him or *in* the Beloved. They are:

#### THE PLAN TO BLESS

- Chosen **in Him** from the beginning, to be like Him.(v.4)
- Loved, predestined, adopted as God's sons because of His kindness, His grace, **in the Beloved**.(v.5,6)

#### THE PROCESS OF BLESSING

- Redemption **in Him** through His blood, forgiveness of trespasses, through the riches of His grace lavished upon us.(v.7)

#### THE PURPOSE OF BLESSING

- He purposed that we should have wisdom, insight, into the mystery of the gospel, and His kind intention for us **in Him**.(v.8,9)

#### THE PRACTICE OF BLESSING

- Leading to God's administration of our lives for ever, enjoying everything in heaven and earth **in Christ**.(v.10)

#### THE PRIVILEGE OF BLESSING

- **In Him** we have an inheritance, a plan that it should all be done His way.(v.11)

#### THE PROOF OF BLESSING

- **In Christ** we have hope, and people will praise God because of what they see in our lives.(v.12)

#### THE PERMANENCE OF BLESSING

- **In Him** after listening to the message of truth we are sealed by the Holy Spirit so that,(v.13)
- **in Him** we should have a certainty that we are redeemed and belong to Him.(v.14)

The good news of all the blessing which was theirs in Christ had been received by faith towards God which showed in love towards one another. Paul had great joy in thanking God for what He had done in the Ephesian Christians but this did not stop him praying that they might have even more, not blessing, but knowledge of the blessing which was limitlessly available in Christ. He wanted them to know Jesus better and better.(1:15-17)

He prayed for three things, that they might know:

- the hope of His calling – THE POTENTIAL OF CHRIST IN US
- the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,  
– THE PROVISION OF CHRIST IN US
- the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.  
– THE POWER OF CHRIST IN US,(1:18,19)

All this is because of THE POSITION OF CHRIST, resurrected, restored to the Father in heaven, resuming His former authority and eventually to return. Meanwhile He is the head of His body, the church, which is meant to show the world all that He is.(1:20-23)

#### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION ON CHAPTER TWO

1. What was our spiritual state before we met Jesus Christ? What was our behaviour? Who was our role model? What characterised our thinking? What was our condition before God? Could we fix our own problems?(2:1-3)

2. What did God do to save us? Why did He do it? Was our salvation deserved? What was our new position in the universe? How did He treat us after saving us? What do we have to do to be saved? What new behaviour did God plan for those He saved? Now how can our problems be fixed?(2:4-10)
3. What was the condition of Gentiles, non-Jews, before they were saved? How were Gentiles saved? Was it any different from the way Jews were saved? What difference does it make to our salvation whether we were from Christian homes or not?(2:11-13)
4. How can Jews and Gentiles have peace with God? How can we have peace with each other? How is this the secret of settling conflict between any two people or groups of people?(2:14-18)
5. According to this section, what changes have happened in our relationship to one another? To what did Paul compare the whole body of Christians? What is the foundation of God's building? Who lives in this building? How does knowing this help us?(2:19-22)