Ephesians lecture 1

**Spiritual Blessing**

Ephesians 1:1-19

Key verse 1:3

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."

The Ephesian church was pioneered by Apostle Paul for 3 years(Acts19:1-20). The characteristic of the church was that Paul raised disciples in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. Through the church, the gospel was preached not only in Ephesus but also in the whole region of Asia (Acts 19:9). When Paul was imprisoned, both the Jewish believers and the gentile believers gathered together for worship service in Ephesus. However, there was a serious problem that they were not united in God.

Today’s message is the introduction to Ephesians. The content is; first, spiritual blessing of the believers(1:1-14),second Paul’s prayer for Ephesus church(15-19), I pray that through today’s' passage, we may know the spiritual blessing God gave us so that, as Paul did, we may praise God in any difficult situations.

**I. Spiritual Blessing(1-14)**

Look at the verse 1. “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:” As Paul did in other epistles, he introduces himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. 1Corinthians 1:1 also says, “Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God”. Whenever he wrote a letter to his fellow brothers, he always introduced himself as an apostle of Christ. This shows us how he identified himself. We pray that we follow his example that we may identify as shepherds of God. We pray that we may not forget God’s calling and renew our mind that we were called as missionaries of Christ, and shepherd of campus by the will of God.

What was Paul’s situation at that time?

 Ephesians 3:1 says “For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you, Gentiles--". Ephesians was written in prison. Paul was in chains, enduring the hardship of imprisonment in Rome (Eph 6:20). The prison stood in the cave at that time, It was very dark, and moist, there was no wash room in the prison of Rome, the prisoners suffered from terrible smelling. They were fed only one meal a day. Apostle Paul might be very old. He must have been very lonely in the foreign land. He had no wife or children. He had no time to get married like Missionary Sarah Berry.

However, what was the earthly reward God gave to him? His hands were chained by heavy cuffs and his feet with shackle. The hardship of imprisonment at that time was beyond description. They say that because of the terrible condition of the prison in cave and daily beating up, 75% prisoners died before completing their prison term.

He might have been complaining out of victim's mentality and despair. But, what was his response? Did he grumble or complain?

Let’s read verse 3.”praise be to the God and father of our lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realm with every spiritual blessing in Christ”.

He begins his letter with the word ‘praise’. In the Greek original text, the verses 3-14 are of one long sentence. For Apostle Paul, once he began to praise God, out of thankful heart, he could not help praising him continually on and on. Someone says that this part of his praise was like a making a snowball of praise. That is, the praise beginning with a small scale got bigger and bigger like a snowball, and it made Paul overcome all the agony and sorrow of imprisonment.

Why did he praise and thanked God?

Look at the verse 3 again. “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ." He could praise God even in the prison because of spiritual blessing that belongs to heaven.

What then is spiritual blessing God gives us?

First, he chose us to be holy and blameless sons (4-6).

Let’s read verses 5. ”he predestined us to adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ ,in accordance with his pleasure and will “ God accepted us as his sons and his daughters. Now he takes care of us so that we may live holy and blameless lives. The happiness that a forgiven sinner enjoys is beyond imagination.

How blessed it is to have a father who takes care of us so that we may live a holy and blameless life? God is not like our physical father in this world, God is the Lord of the world who created the heavens and the earth? God rules the universe, he is the king of kings and owner of the world. When God accepts us as his son or daughter, we become prince or princess. Even earthly prince has many privileges, for example, a prince of United Kingdom Charles receives 70,000,000 pound as 1 year salary. United Kingdom is not that big country as we might think. Yet, Charles enjoys that privilege because he is the prince of the kingdom. How much more are we blessed since we are princess and princesses of Almighty God

Second, we have redemption, that is, the forgiveness of sins(7-10).

 Look at verse 7. “in him we have redemption through his blood , the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace” The more we think, the more we realize the unutterable blessing we received that sinners like us who deserved the fire of hell have been forgiven. We were dead in our transgressions and sins. (2:1,3) However, we have redemption, that is, the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus. This is the greatest grace of all.

The founder of one of biggest companies in Korea, was dying of stomach cancer about 25years ago. At that time, he pleaded with his doctor to extend his life 3 years, promising that he would give him one billion dollars. But, his money could not save his life. Present life is temporal and money has its own limit though it may give some temporary enjoyments. There will be a strict and eternal judgment after death(Heb 9:27). God saves those who believe in him at the time of judgment to be his children, and gives blessing of salvation that they may live without death, disease, and tear(Rev 21:4) Therefore, we should put our hope in the true blessing of heavenly kingdom and look for the salvation in Christ, in spite of suffering and poverty in this world.

 Third, we are God’s inheritance(14, 11). ESV Ephesian 1:11 said “ In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who

 Works According to the counsel of his will (ESV 1:11)”. God’s inheritance here means that we have become his heirs. God considers us precious because we are his heirs. He gives us all we need. Also, he protects us from Satan. We cannot bear with ourselves, but God can. It is because we are his possession.

What are the contents of God’s inheritances ?

Some explanations could be found in the Bible.

1). The kingdom of God (Matthew25:34) "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

 First inheritance from God is the kingdom of God.

2). Eternal life (Matthew19:29, John3:16) “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.”

 God gives us eternal life to those who love God than his family and his wealthy

3). Blessing (1 Peter3:9) “Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.”

 God promised to give special blessing to those who endure persecution for feeding God’s flocks.

4). Promises (Hebrews6:12) “We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.”

 There are about 8,000 blessing promises in the Bible, God promised us to inherit the blessings written in the Bible.

5). Happiness in new Jerusalem (Revelation21:3, 4) “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

God will be with his children in new Jerusalem.

6). The redemption of our bodies (Romans8:23) “Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”

The redemption of our bodies means our bodies will remain the strongest, in the most glorious and beautiful condition forever as 1 Corinthians 15:43-46 says. If we would have to live with our present bodies, skinny, bent, and suffered by nerve pains like me of 74 year-old, life in heaven would be just another suffering. Our redemptive bodies would be like the body of resurrected Jesus, that we will be like Jesus who appeared to his disciples suddenly, passing through a wall and he ascended to heaven without any limitation.(Acts 1:9)

‘Spiritual blessing’ is different from earthly human blessing. But, if we read carefully verses 3-14, we can find that Paul uses ‘spiritual blessing’ in two meanings. The first is a blessing that only God can give. There is a blessing you can get in human ways and tricks in the world. But, the blessing of salvation mentioned above is a blessing that you never get no matter how good you are humanly or no matter how hard you pursue in the world. It is a blessing only God can give and it belongs to heaven. Therefore, Apostle Paul calls it spiritual blessing. Second, God’s blessing is trustworthy and eternal. Earthly blessing dies out at some point.(1 Peter1:24) But, once you have God’s blessing, it does not go away nor is taken away. It is perfect spiritual blessing. Apostle Paul praised because such a great spiritual blessing has been given to us.

Then, what is the ground that Paul believes that God’s blessing is precious and perfect? First, it is because God chose us to be his children before the creation of the world(Romans8:29). That we became God’s sons was not by our decision, but God chose us. There is no one holy and blameless in the world. There is no one righteous. There is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. How could men become God’s children? In a word, it is because God chose us before the creation of the world. He predestined us to be adopted as his sons. This truth Paul talking about is really profound.

The second reason why God’s blessing is reliable and spiritual is that we have been redeemed through the blood of Jesus(7). We know well through the study of Romans that we have been redeemed through the blood of Christ. But, Romans just talks about the way how we are saved. Now, Ephesians opens our eyes to the abundance of God. It teaches us that the basis of our salvation is not us but the grace of Jesus. In fact, Jesus redeemed us, after receiving judgment in order to pay the price of our sins. Also in Romans, Paul says, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”(Romans5:8) The redemption through Jesus’ blood proves God certainly loves us. So, the blessing of salvation given to us can be sure spiritual blessing.

By the way, verses 8, 9 tell us that when we are forgiven through Jesus, we come to understand a mystery. Look at the verse 10. "to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ”. To bring together means to turn things around or gather things for original purpose. God created the heavens and the earth to remain in order and in harmony. God created them in the way God remain on top, men in the middle, and all other things at the bottom. He made all creation exist for God’s glory as well. However, because of men's sin, the creation order and harmony have been broken down. As a result, distress never ceases in the world, and people live in the way they like. So, the world has been split up and become hell full of hatred and jealousy. This is not God’s will. His will is that all things are united and recovered into original purpose. God set up his sovereignty of redemption for that purpose. At the right time according to his sovereignty, God granted us the forgiveness of sin through Jesus, because a true unification cannot be realized without forgiveness.

In short, God wanted everything to be united and recover the order of creation under Jesus’ rule. God recovers the order of all things through the second coming of the Lord. So, his sovereignty and predestination through Jesus remain as mystery. Only to those who have wisdom and understanding God gives forgiveness of sin. Therefore, only those who are forgiven have shepherd's hearts, and truly pray for the world. Because Apostle Paul was forgiven and knew the mystery of God’s will, he proclaimed the gospel to the Gentiles. Moreover, he made an effort to bring the Jews and the Gentiles together, for which he went as far as to be in jail. We should participate in the amazing administration of God and the mystery of his will through prayer for world mission.

The third ground supporting that God’s blessing is perfect is the seal of Holy Spirit. (14) Writing a letter and putting a seal is different. Similarly, to believe and to get sealed is different. God's answer to our faith means sealing. That “you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit” means Christ came to have a personal relationship with believers. God adopted the Jews as his inheritance, that is, a people belonging to God. Besides, he made the Gentiles his inheritance. In addition, God marked us with a seal, with the promised Holy Spirit. (13) People in those days marked their livestock with a fire-seal to mark their ownership. Similarly, God sealed us with Holy Spirit to mark that we belong to Him.

**II. Apostle Paul's prayer(15-19)**

After praising of spiritual blessing from God, Paul prays for the believers in Ephesus.

he gives thanks to God for the faith and their love.

Look at verses 15. “For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, Paul gives thanks to God because of their faith and love”. How did he thank God? Let’s see 16. “I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.” Then, what are his prayer topics for Ephesian Christians?

**First,** **Paul prayed that they may know Jesus better. (17)** His prayer is that God may give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in order to enlighten their hearts so that they may know him better. Not only for Ephesian Christians but also for us, we should pray with this prayer topic. What is your daily prayer topic for yourself?

**Second, Paul asked God so that they could know the hope and the glorious inheritance (18)** The hope to which God has called them means the hope God put in the heart of each the Ephesian believers when God called them. It is the inheritance from God.(11) We should know what hope God put in each of us when he called us so that we should live according to the hope. On the glorious inheritance, Paul prayed they might know how rich and glorious it was so that they may not put their hope in earthly glory but in the glorious inheritance. The riches of his glorious inheritances are “Kingdom of God, Eternal life, Blessing(1Peter 3:9), Promises(Heb 6:12), Happiness in new Jerusalem and redemption of our bodies.”

**Third prayer topic was that we may know the power of God. Calling means looking back the past and God’s glory means looking ahead the future**. The work of God’s power belongs to the present. What kind of strength God’s power is? Look at verse 19. “and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength.” The third prayer topic is that coworkers of Ephesians church may have great power through the faith and by the Holy Spirit. The characteristic of God’s power is described in two ways.

It means God's mighty strength. It means especially conquering power. God’s power is the strength to overcome difficulties and winning a victory. God’s power means also the power that works. The power that works means effective power. God’s power changes people. It saves lives. The gospel work is not done by human ability. It is the work of power that is given to us. The event that the power of God was revealed most powerfully was the one that happened in Christ Jesus.

Then, how can we enlighten our eyes of hearts? Look at verse 17. God should give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. We can be given the Spirit of wisdom and revelation by studying the word and repenting according to the word. We can know God when we are given the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. Therefore, we should study daily bread every day and repent according to the word so that we could be given the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. We need spiritual desire to know God better.

When we came to USA as missionaries first, our calling grace as his servants, our sense of mission and passion of the dedication for God was very hot (100 degrees). But as 10 or 20 years has passed since we became servants of God, our degree of vision and passion of dedication went down to 50 degrees or 20 degrees even to 0 degrees. However, passion of mission of Paul had had been continually hot (100 degrees).

 What is the reason? Did Paul receive another spiritual spiritual blessing from God? No. Then what is the reason?

First, apostle Paul renewed the saving grace through blood of Jesus every day and thanked and praised God.

Second, apostle Paul When we experience the saving grace through the blood of Jesus, accepted the grace of God’s inheritance as son’s and daughters and thanked and praised God everyday.

Third, Paul renewed God’s promise of inheritance and held firmly the living hope everyday.

Fourth, he renewed God’s calling as apostles of Jesus Christ every day and thanked and praised God.

In conclusion, as we studied above, Apostle Paul praised spiritual blessing of God. We should give thanks and praise the grace of the Lord who redeemed us through the forgiveness. In addition, we should praise the grace that he adopted us as princes and princesses of the holy God. We should give thanks and praise to God who adopted us as his heirs and gave us the kingdom of God, eternal life, spiritual blessing, and happiness in New Jerusalem as our inheritance. Let us give thanks and praise to God in any hardships like Apostle Paul.

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.” Hallelujah Amen!