

WHO AM I?

Ephesians

FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

INTRODUCTION

Ephesians 1:7-14

My dad has been a pastor for over 50 years. Many people would call him an “old school” pastor. One characteristic of old school preachers is that they do not shy away from preaching the truth - even if that truth is not popular and hard to take.

As a kid, I remember hearing my dad preach “hellfire and brimstone” sermons. These messages talked about the reality and the consequences of sin. One such message was preached at a summer Bible camp. I do not remember the passage that my dad was preaching from but the reality of hell really got my attention. The thought of facing God’s wrath and His judgment for my sin really scared me!

But then I heard about the great love of God and how He sent Jesus to die for my sin and in my place. (2 Corinthians 5:21) There was hope in Jesus Christ - I could be saved! So I repented of my sin and believed in the Good News, and the weight of sin was lifted off of me. I am so thankful that God in His mercy began His work of grace in me!

Initially I thought that the purpose of my salvation was just that - to save me from punishment. But as I began to grow in my faith, guided by my father and mother, I began to learn that there is a greater purpose behind this great work of God in His peoples’ lives. We learn about this purpose here in the book of Ephesians, where Paul drives home the reason why we are saved and changed: v. 6 - “to the praise of His glorious grace,” v. 12 - “to the praise of His glory,” and again v. 14 - “to the praise of His glory.”

God is the greatest person in the universe, and His very Being demands first place! All that we do is to be for the glory of God! (1 Corinthians 10:31)

OPEN IT

1. Describe something you thought you understood but really didn’t. How did you figure out how much (or little) you actually knew? (For example, a friend of mine used to think the song “Onward Christian Soldiers” was “Onward Six Gun Holders.”)

READ IT

Ephesians 1:7-14

EXPLORE IT

2. What two words describe what the blood of Jesus provides us? (v7)

3. How much of these things do we receive? What is it based on? (v7)

4. What does God make known to us? (v8)

5. What does God give to us? (v11)

6. Why does God give us this great gift? (v12)

7. What does the Holy Spirit guarantee for the people of God? (v14)

APPLY IT

What is your greatest need? If you're sick, you may think, "My greatest need is to be healed of this illness." If you're unemployed, you may think, "My greatest need is to get a good job to provide for my needs." If you're single, you may think, "My greatest need is for a mate." If you're in a difficult marriage, you may think, "My greatest need is for harmony in my marriage." If you have a child who has become ensnared by drug abuse, you may think that your greatest need is for your child to be free from this addiction.

While all of these are important needs, none of them are your greatest need. The greatest need of every person, whether he recognizes it or not, is to have God forgive his sins before he dies and faces God's eternal punishment. Health, adequate money, and a happy family are wonderful blessings, but if you die without God's forgiveness, these blessings will be useless. Your greatest need is to know that God has forgiven your sins and that you are reconciled to the holy Judge of the universe.¹

8. Sin is literally "missing the mark". What do the following passages say about sin?

Romans 5:12

Ecclesiastes 7:20

Romans 3:23

Romans 6:23

Isaiah 1:18

Hebrews 9:28

1 John 1:7-9

¹ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-5-your-greatest-need-ephesians-17-8a>

9. Do most people (non-Christians included) believe they are sinners? Do they think that their sin is a big deal? How do people minimize their sin?

Redeemed By God

The word *redemption* has both a Greek and Jewish background. Greek prisoners or slaves were redeemed by means of a payment. In the OT 'redemption' has three elements:

- i) Deliverance, particularly from the bondage of Egypt (Deut 7:8; 9:26; 13:5);
- ii) The initiative of a Redeemer (goel);
- iii) The payment of a price (particularly for redemption from bond service).²

Redemption encompasses more than forgiveness, but Paul mentions forgiveness because it is the first and foundational thing to know and experience when you are redeemed. Forgiveness means losing or letting someone go from what binds him. Trespasses is synonymous with "sins," but the nuance indicates individual acts of sin, not sin in general. Paul wants us to know that our specific, shameful, embarrassing sins that loom up in our memories to condemn us are all forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ.³

10. What is the proper place for remorse and mourning over your sins? Is there a point when that can become counterproductive?

² <https://vc.org.au/studies/ephesians-1-1-14/>

³ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-5-your-greatest-need-ephesians-17-8a>

11. God forgives you “according to the riches of His grace.” How can this truth help you in your personal struggle against sin?

12. How does Paul describe the relationship between God’s grace and His plan for the universe in verse 9-10? What does this tell you about God’s purpose for creation?

For the Glory of God

“According to Ephesians 1:11, you exist for the praise of God's glory. For much of my life, I assumed this referred primarily to the things we did in worship services at church. In our prayers and especially in our singing, we praised God. So, I read Ephesians 1:11 as saying, in effect, “You exist to go to church and sing hymns and songs. That's the core purpose of your life. Everything else is secondary.” I wasn't crazy to think this way, either. I have heard preachers and Christian writers say something very much like this. Worship is the center of life, they claim, and worship is what we do in church.

Now, I actually like singing praise to God...to a point. When I was pastor of Irvine Presbyterian Church, I helped to lead four worship services each weekend. Thus, I was singing more hymns and songs than anyone else in the church. And I loved it. It was great for my soul to spend about an hour and a half each weekend (if you added up the songs and prayers) literally praising God's glory.

Was this the core purpose of my life? Would my life have been more glorifying to God if I quit everything else I had been doing so I could spend all of my waking hours singing praise to him? I have sometimes heard preachers and read Christian writers who envision the ultimate Christian life in these terms. They equate living for the praise of God's glory with the activities of so-called worship services. Everything that happens outside of the sanctuary is of secondary value.

But this is not the meaning of Ephesians 1:11. As we'll see later in the letter, there is one verse about singing to God (5:19). But there are dozens of verses about how we are to live each day. This ratio does not suggest that singing praise is insignificant. But it does remind us that we exist for the praise of God's glory. We are called and privileged to glorify God, not just in singing and praying, not just in doing things we identify as “spiritual,” but also in every part of life, in every action, every thought, every feeling. Just think of how different your life might be if you began to think of glorifying God as the core purpose of everything.”⁴

13. Why should we give glory to God according to these verses?

Psalm 115:1

Revelation 4:11

Romans 11:33-36

14. How are you living for the glory of God? Write down some examples from your daily life and routine.

⁴ <https://www.theologyofwork.org/the-high-calling/daily-reflection/what-does-it-really-mean-exist-praise-gods-glory#:~:text=According%20to%20Ephesians%201%3A11,our%20singing%2C%20we%20praised%20God.>

15. In what *new* ways can you bring glory to God in your daily life? Are there particular talents or resources that you can use to serve others and be the Lord's "hands and feet"? How can you use your words and actions to reflect the love and grace of God to those around you?

Kept by God

Imagine a cruel parent, who always threatened his or her child with, "If you do that again, I'm going to disown you as my child! I'll take you to an orphanage and abandon you!" The poor child would never praise such a cruel parent for his love. That kind of cruel threat undermines any kind of close relationship. Every loving parent wants his child to feel secure in his love. That assurance of steadfast love undergirds strong parent-child relationships.

Even so, the loving heavenly Father wants all of His children to feel secure in His steadfast love. After all, before we even existed, He chose us in Christ and determined that we would be adopted into His family (1:4-5). When He did that, He knew everything about us and yet He still chose us, based on His grace, not on anything in us. To assure us, He gives us the Holy Spirit as the seal and pledge of our future inheritance, guaranteeing that He will complete what He has begun.⁵

16. According to verse 13, when does a person receive the Holy Spirit? What dangers are inherent in the view that we receive the Holy Spirit (or the baptism of the Spirit) as a "second" blessing, subsequent to salvation?

⁵ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-8-secure-him-ephesians-113-14>

17. How do you distinguish between the voice of the Holy Spirit and your own inner voice? Describe a time in your life when the Holy Spirit's presence was clearly felt and experienced?
18. How can the subjective experience of hearing the Holy Spirit become potentially dangerous in the lives of well-intentioned people? What are some Biblical guideposts that can help people determine the voice of the Holy Spirit?