

Ephesians 1:9-23

Ephesians 1:9-23 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, (10) that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; in Him. (11) In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, (12) that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. (13) In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, (14) who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. (15) Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, (16) do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: (17) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, (18) the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, (19) and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power (20) which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, (21) far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. (22) And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, (23) which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Questions On The Text

What is the ultimate of God's will?

Verses 9-10: God has revealed to us the mystery of His will. The word "mystery" means "a secret, a hidden thing" and refers to the fact that, although it was concealed from previous generations, God's will has now been revealed to us who are in Christ.

The word "dispensation" means "the management or administration of a household" and refers here to God's management of a specific historical time period. The word "times" is not a word that refers to time measured in seconds, minutes or hours, but rather it speaks of specific seasons of importance. "Gather together" is a word used to indicate the total sum of columns of numbers. It was also used to describe the conclusion of a speech or argument where the main points were summed up and brought to a focal point.

Put all these concepts together and we understand these verses to mean that God Himself will bring this age of grace to a conclusion when everything in heaven and earth will finally find their ultimate significance only in Christ as the focal point.

How have we been predestined?

Verses 11-12: We were predestined – marked out beforehand (see verse 5) – according to His purpose. In saying this, Paul notes that God "works all things according to the counsel of His will." God's will can be disobeyed of course. However, His overriding purpose is ultimately fulfilled. (See Acts 4:27-28)

The words "we have obtained an inheritance" could be better translated "we were made an inheritance" bringing out the truth that we, the church, are God's inheritance. (See verse 18 and Deuteronomy 32:9.) The phrase "we who first trusted" is most likely a reference to the fact that the Jews had faith in Christ before the Gentiles. (See Romans 1:16.)

How were we sealed?

Verses 13-14: After we heard the gospel, the word of truth, we put our trust in it and were sealed by the Holy Spirit. He is referred to as the Holy Spirit of promise because of the promise of what is in store for us in heaven. He Himself is the guarantee of our inheritance.

In ancient times, when a deal was struck between two traders, a part-payment was made which was the guarantee that the full payment was forthcoming. That is the word used here. In modern Greek, it is the word used for an engagement ring. The full payment will occur at our final redemption in the resurrection.

Why does Paul give thanks for the Ephesians?

Verses 15-16: Paul gave thanks because he heard of their faith and their love for the saints. The word “saint” does not refer to a person who has been granted sainthood by a particular church as this concept is a human invention and does not exist in the New Testament. Rather, the word “saint” means holy one, and holy means set apart as in set apart for God’s use. In Greek, holy, sanctify, and saint, all stem from the same root.

What does Paul ask God to give the Ephesians?

Verse 17: Paul prays that God will give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. This means that the kind of wisdom and revelation that God wants us to have is only possible as our knowledge of God grows.

Why do the eyes of our understanding need to be opened?

Verse 18-19: An enlightened understanding results in three benefits. First, we realise the hope of His calling. Not that our calling is actually God’s calling on us. The hope of that calling is the final glorification of believers at the resurrection (Romans 8:18-25).

Second, we grasp the riches of the glory of His inheritance in us. It may seem extraordinary that God sees us as His inheritance when we are ordinary sinners saved by grace. But He sees us in Christ, and values us as He values Christ. (See John 17:23 where Jesus reveals that the Father’s love for us is equal to the Father’s love for Him. Third, that we appreciate the exceeding greatness of His power towards us. This is the power of God which is at work in us.

How has God already demonstrated His power?

Verses 20-21: The power that is at work in us who believe has already been demonstrated in Christ when He was raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of the Father.

What is Christ’s position now?

Verses 22-23: Christ is now head over all things, especially the church, and all things are under His feet.

Further Questions For Discussion:

Why is Christ the focal point of all things?

What do you think it means that we are God’s inheritance?

Why was the Holy Spirit given to us?

What does it mean to be a saint?

How has God’s exceeding power towards us been demonstrated?