

Series: What's the church?

"Christ's Church"

Ephesians 1:22

Big Idea – The church is the living body of Christ on the earth.

Intro: the meaning of the word "church" in the Bible

"ekklesia" - a born again, called out body of believers.

Our standing in Christ

vs. 1 - An assembly of "saints" – set apart ones, sanctified. 9 times in this letter Paul calls his readers saints. Not dead, but "alive"

The phrase "in Christ" is used 27 times in the letter.

Local churches – like church here in Ephesus. Paul wrote this letter called "Ephesians" during his imprisonment in Rome around AD 62.

vs. 2 – grace and peace – both come from God through Christ

vs. 3 states the saints' riches in Christ.

The source of our blessings. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." God the Father has made us rich in Jesus Christ! When you were born again into God's family, you were born rich.

J. Paul Getty, one of the richest men in the world, was worth an estimated \$1.3 billion. The weekly income of some of the "oil sheiks" runs into the millions.

Yet all of this wealth is but "pennies" when compared with the spiritual wealth we have in Christ. Paul explains what these riches are and how we can access them for effective Christian living.

One of the funniest cartoons I ever saw showed a pompous lawyer reading a client's last will and testament to a group of greedy relatives. The caption read: "I, John Jones, being of sound mind and body, spent it all!"

When Jesus Christ wrote His last will and testament for His church, He made it possible for us to share His spiritual riches. Instead of spending it all, Jesus Christ paid it all.

His death on the cross and His resurrection make possible our salvation. He wrote us into His will, then He died so the will would be in force. Then He arose again that He might become the heavenly Advocate (lawyer) to make sure the terms of the will were correctly followed!

In this 1 long sentence, Paul names just a few of the blessings that make up our spiritual blessings, our riches, our wealth.

Our riches in Christ – vss. 4 - 14

1. He chose us – vs. 4

doctrine of election - a doctrine that confuses some and confounds others.

A seminary professor once said, "Try to explain election and you may lose your mind. But try to explain it away and you may lose your soul!"

That salvation begins with God, and not with man, all Christians will agree. "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you" (John 15:16). The lost sinner, left to his own ways, does not seek God (Rom. 3:10-11); God in His love seeks the sinner (Luke 19:10).

Note that God chose us even before He created the universe, so that our salvation is wholly of His grace and not on the basis of anything we ourselves have done.

He chose us in Christ, not in ourselves.

He chose us for a purpose: to be holy and without blame.

In the Bible, election is always unto something. It is a privilege that carries a great responsibility.

Does the sinner respond to God's grace against his own will? No, he responds because God's grace makes him willing to respond. The mystery of divine sovereignty and human responsibility will never be solved in this life.

Both are taught in the Bible - John 6:37 Both are true all three Persons in the Godhead are involved in our salvation

God the Father saw you saved when He chose you in Christ in eternity past. But that alone did not save you.

God the Son saw you saved when He died for you on the cross. And God the Spirit saw you saved when you yielded to His conviction and received Christ as your Saviour. What began in eternity past was fulfilled now, and will continue for all eternity!

2. He adopted us – vs. 5

Misunderstood word predestination. This word, as it is used in the Bible, refers primarily to what God does for saved people.

Nowhere in the Bible are we taught that people are predestined to hell, because this word refers only to God's people. The word simply means "to ordain beforehand, to predetermine."

Election seems to refer to people, while predestination refers to purposes. The events connected with the crucifixion of Christ were predestined (Acts 4:25-28). God has predestined our adoption (Eph. 1:5), and our conformity to Christ (Rom. 8:29-30), as well as our future inheritance (Eph. 1:11).

Adoption has a dual meaning, both present and future. You do not get into God's family by adoption. You get into His family by regeneration, the new birth (John 3:1-18; 1 Peter 1:22-25).

Adoption is the act of God by which He gives His "born ones" an adult standing in the family. Why does He do this? So that we might immediately begin to claim our inheritance and enjoy our spiritual wealth! A baby cannot legally use this inheritance (Gal. 4:1-7), but an adult son can—and should! This means that you do not have to wait until you are an old saint before you can claim your riches in Christ.

The future aspect of adoption is found in Romans 8:22-23, the glorified body we will have when Jesus returns. We already have our adult standing before God, but the world cannot see this. When Christ returns, this "private adoption" will be made public for everyone to see!

3. He accepted us

We cannot make ourselves acceptable to God; but He, by His grace, makes us accepted in Christ. This is our eternal position which will never change.

4. He redeemed us - v. 7a

To redeem means "to purchase and set free by paying a price." There were 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire, and often they were bought and sold like pieces of furniture. But a man could purchase a slave and set him free, and this is what Jesus did for us.

The price was His own blood (1 Peter 1:18). we are free from the Law (Gal. 5:1), free from slavery to sin (Rom. 6), as well as free from the power of Satan and the world (Gal. 1:4; Col. 1:13-14). If we were slaves, we would be poor, but because we are sons, we are rich!

5. He has forgiven us - v. 7b

The word forgive means "to carry away." the ritual on the Jewish Day of Atonement when the high priest sent the scapegoat into the wilderness (Lev. 16).

First the priest killed one of the two goats and sprinkled its blood before God on the mercy seat. Then he confessed Israel's sins over the live goat, and had the goat taken into the wilderness to be lost.

Christ died to carry away our sins so they might never again be seen (Ps. 103:12; John 1:29). No written accusation stands against us because our sins have been taken away! Sin made us poor, but grace makes us rich.

6. He has revealed God's will to us - vv. 8-10

We learn a lot in Ephesians about God's plan for His people, a plan that was not fully understood even in Paul's day. The word "mystery" has nothing to do with things eerie. It means a "sacred secret, once hidden but now revealed to God's people."

We believers are a part of God's "inner circle." We are able to share in the secret that God will one day unite everything in Christ.

Ever since sin came into the world, things have been falling apart.

First, man was separated from God (Gen. 3).

Then man was separated from man, as Cain killed Abel (Gen. 4)

People tried to maintain a kind of unity by building the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11), but God judged them and scattered them across the world.

God called Abraham and put a difference between the Jew and the Gentile, a difference that was maintained until Christ's death on the cross. Sin is tearing everything apart, but in Christ, God will gather everything together in the culmination of the ages. We are a part of this great eternal program.

7. He gave us an inheritance vv. 11-12

"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance," In Christ we have a wonderful inheritance (1 Peter 1:1-4)

And also, we are valuable to Him. Think of the price God paid to purchase us and make us part of His inheritance!

God the Son is the Father's love gift to us; and we are the Father's love gift to His Son. In John 17 note how many times Christ calls us "those whom Thou hast given Me."

The church is Christ's body (Eph. 1:22-23), building (Eph. 2:19-22), and bride (Eph. 5:22-23); Christ's future inheritance is wrapped up in His church. We are "joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17), which means that He cannot claim His inheritance apart from us!

We move now from eternity past (vss.4-6), and history past (vss. 7-12), to the immediate experience of the Ephesian Christians and all saints, you and me.

8. He has sealed us - v. 13

The entire process of salvation is given in this verse, so read it carefully.

It tells how the sinner becomes a saint. First, he hears the Gospel of salvation. This is the good news that Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose again (1 Cor. 15:1ff). The Ephesians were Gentiles, and the Gospel came "to the Jew first" (Rom. 1:16). But Paul, a Jew, brought the Gospel to the Gentiles as he shared the Word of God with them.

The Ephesians "heard the Gospel" and discovered it was for them—"your salvation" (Eph. 1:13).

Even though the Bible teaches election, it also announces, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

A soul-winner does not discuss election with unsaved people - it is a family secret that belongs to the saints. He simply announces the truth of the Gospel and invites men to trust Christ, and the Holy Spirit does the rest.

D.L. Moody used to pray, "Lord, save the elect—and then elect some more!" The same God who ordains the end, the salvation of souls, also ordains the means to the end, the preaching of the Gospel in the power of the Spirit.

Having heard the Word, the Ephesians believed; and it is this faith that brought salvation (Eph. 2:8-9). This pattern follows what Paul writes in Romans 10:13-15, which is God's plan for evangelism.

When the Ephesians believed, they were "sealed with the Spirit." "when ye believed." You receive the Spirit immediately on trusting Christ.

What is the significance of this sealing of the Holy Spirit? For one thing, it speaks of a finished transaction. Even today, when important legal documents are processed, they are stamped with the official seal to signify the completion of the transaction.

This sealing also implies ownership: God has put his seal on us because He has purchased us to be His own (1 Cor. 6:19-20). It also means security and protection. The Roman seal on the tomb of Jesus carried this meaning (Matt. 27:62-66). So, the believer belongs to God, and is safe and protected because he is a part of a finished transaction. According to John 14:16-17, the Holy Spirit abides with the believer forever. It is possible for us to grieve the Spirit and thereby lose the blessings of His ministry (Eph. 4:30). But He doesn't leave us.

Another use for the seal is as a mark of authenticity. Just as a signature on a letter attests to the genuineness of the document, so the presence of the Spirit proves the believer is genuine. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. 8:9). It is not simply our lip profession, our religious activity, or our good works, but the witness of the Spirit that makes our profession authentic.

9. He has given us an earnest - v. 14

Earnest is a word that in Paul's day meant "the down payment to guarantee the final purchase of some commodity or piece of property."

Even today you will hear a real estate agent talk about earnest money. The Holy Spirit is God's first installment to guarantee to His children that He will finish His work and eventually bring them to glory. The "redemption of the purchased possession" refers to the redemption of the body at the return of Christ (Rom. 8:18-23; 1 John 3:1-3).

"Redemption" is experienced in three stages:

We have been redeemed through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:7).

We are being redeemed as the Spirit works in our lives to make us more like Christ (Rom. 8:1-4).

We shall be redeemed when Christ returns and we become like Him.

But the word translated earnest also means "engagement ring."

In Greece today you would find this word being used that way. But, after all, isn't an engagement ring an assurance—a guarantee—that the promises made will be kept? Our relationship to God through Christ is not simply a commercial one, but also a personal experience of love. He is the Bridegroom and His church is the bride.

We know that He will come and claim His bride because He has given us His promise and His Spirit as the "engagement ring." What greater assurance could we want?

In Christ, you and I have "what money can't buy," and these spiritual riches open up to us all the wealth of God's vast creation. We enjoy the gifts because we know and love the Giver.

All of these riches come by God's grace and for God's glory. Did you notice that after each of the main sections in Ephesians 1:4-14, Paul has added the purpose behind these gifts?

Why has God the Father chosen us, adopted us, and accepted us? "To the praise of the glory of His grace" (Eph. 1:6).

Why has the Son redeemed us, forgiven us, revealed God's will to us, and made us part of God's inheritance? "That we should be to the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:12).

Why has God the Spirit sealed us and become the guarantee of our future blessing? "Unto the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:14).

We often have the idea that God saves sinners mainly because He pities them, or wants to rescue them from eternal judgment, but God's main purpose is that He might be glorified. His creation reveals His wisdom and power, but His church reveals His love and grace.

Our wisdom in Christ – vs. 15 – 22

Paul prayed for three things for the church:

1. To know God – vs. 17b

The believer must grow in his knowledge of God. To know God personally is salvation (John 17:3). To know Him increasingly is sanctification (Phil. 3:10). To know Him perfectly is glorification (1 Cor. 13:9-12). Since we are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28), the better we know God, the better we know ourselves and each other. It is not enough to know God only as Saviour. We must get to know Him as Father, Friend, Guide, and the better we know Him, the more satisfying our spiritual lives will be.

2. Know God's calling – vs. 18a

Paul wants us to understand the hope that is ours because of this calling (Eph. 4:4). Some callings offer no hope, but the calling we have in Christ assures us of a delightful future. Keep in mind that the word hope in the Bible does not mean "hope so," like a child hoping for a doll or a bike at Christmas. The word carries with it "assurance for the future." The believer's hope is, of course, the return of Jesus Christ for His church (1 Thes. 4:13-18; 1 John 3:1-3). When we were lost, we were "without hope" (Eph. 2:12); but in Jesus Christ, we have a "living hope" (1 Peter 1:3) that encourages us day by day.

3. Know God's riches – vs. 18b

This phrase does not refer to our inheritance in Christ (Eph. 1:11), but His inheritance in us. This is an amazing truth—that God should look on us as a part of His great wealth! Just as a man's wealth brings glory to his name, so God will get glory from the church because of what He has invested in us. When Jesus Christ returns, we shall be "to the praise of the glory of His grace" (Eph. 1:6).

God deals with us on the basis of our future, not our past. He said to cowardly Gideon, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor" (Judges 6:12). Jesus said to Andrew's brother, "Thou art Simon... thou shalt be called Cephas [a stone]" (John 1:42).

Gideon did become a mighty man of valor, and Simon did become Peter, a rock. We Christians live in the future tense, our lives controlled by what we shall be when Christ returns. Because we are God's inheritance, we live to please and glorify Him.

4. Know God's power – vs. 19 – 23

Paul offered something to challenge our faith: "the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe" (Eph. 1:19). So tremendous is this truth that Paul enlisted many different words from the Greek vocabulary to get his point across: *dunamis*—"power" as in dynamo and dynamite; *energeia*—"working" as in energy; *kratos*—"mighty"; *ischus*—"power." He is talking about divine dynamic, eternal energy, available to us! After all, what good is it to have wealth if you are too weak to use it? Or if you are so afraid of robbers that you cannot really enjoy it?

John D. Rockefeller was the world's first billionaire. It is said that for many years, he lived on crackers and milk because of stomach troubles caused by worrying about his wealth. He rarely had a good night's sleep, and guards stood constantly at his door. Wealthy—but miserable! When he began to share his wealth with others in great philanthropic endeavors, his health improved considerably and he lived to be an old man.

Paul wants us to know the greatness of God's power so that we will not fail to use our wealth, and so that the enemy will not deprive us of our wealth.

The power is seen in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Much more was involved than merely raising Him from the dead, for Christ also ascended to heaven and sat down in the place of authority at the right hand of God. He is not only Savior; He is also Sovereign (Acts 2:25-36). No authority or power, human or in the spirit world, is greater than that of Jesus Christ, the exalted Son of God. He is "far above all," and no future enemy can overcome Him, because He has been exalted "far above all" powers.

But how does this apply to you and me today? In Ephesians 1:22-23, Paul explains the practical application.

Because we are believers, we are in the church, which is Christ's body—and He is the Head. This means that there is a living connection between you and Christ. Physically speaking, the head controls the body and keeps the body functioning properly. Injure certain parts of the brain and you handicap or paralyze corresponding parts of the body. Christ is our spiritual Head. Through the Spirit, we are united to Him as the members of His body. This means that we share His resurrection, ascension, and exaltation. (Paul will amplify this later.) We too are seated, in the heavenlies (Eph. 2:6), and all things are under our feet.

In the four Gospels, we see God's power at work in the ministry of Jesus Christ, but in the Book of Acts, we see that same power at work in ordinary men and women, members of the body of Christ. What a transformation took place in Peter's life between the end of the Gospels and the beginning of Acts. What made the difference? The resurrection power of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8).

The greatest power shortage today is not in our generators or our gas tanks. It is in our personal lives. Will Paul's prayer be answered in your life? Will you, starting today, begin to know by experience God—God's calling—God's riches—and God's power?

Vance Havner: "Evangelism is to Christianity what veins are to our bodies. You can cut a true Christian anywhere and they will bleed evangelism"

"We major on evangelism" (church slogan) duh! That's like a doctor saying he majors on healing...that's our business!!

The best remedy for a sick church is to put it on a soul-winning diet!

R.G. Lee, "God never intended for the church to be a refrigerator in which to preserve perishable piety...He intended it to be an incubator in which to hatch our converts."

CBC is to be a hospital for sinners, not a rest home for saints. We are to be fishers of men, not keepers of the aquarium!