

Blessed With a Purpose

Ephesians 1:1-14

Intro:

- I. Paul's letter to the Ephesians is often held up as an excellent example of principles for Christian living: The "now what" for new creatures coming out of darkness: (*Eph. 4:1*)
 - A. Indeed, if one spends time much time reading it, especially the second half of the book, you will find there is no shortage of new found purpose to replace old selfish habits with.
 - B. But one of the aspects that I appreciate most about Ephesians is that it isn't presented in a robotic manner: Paul's reasoning isn't rooted in simply, now you're a Christian, this is how Christians act, so make sure you get these all checked off!
 - C. Paul takes the first half of his letter to build a case for *why* we should behave this way, and he does so by instilling in us a sense of gratitude. (*Eph. 2:11-13*)
 - D. By taking even a brief amount of time to speak in short of the blessings we have as Disciples, Paul is creating a sense of joy and gratitude that will naturally result in an outpouring of praise to God. (*Eph. 3:20-21*)
- II. Blessings and praise will be the central topic of our study in scripture today:
 - A. There are so many challenges to the faith of each Disciple:
 - i. One that I see being particularly prevalent is the attempt by the world to rob Christians of their Joy: (*Matt. 13:7,22*)
 - a. Jesus isn't talking about "cares" in the sense of getting too wrapped up in golf, football, hunting, hobbies etc.
 - b. Jesus is talking about *worries, anxieties, an attitude of constant concern*: It is the same word used in *Luke 21:34* to not be weighed down with the worries of *this life*
 - ii. All kinds of Media; TV, radio, papers, facebook, NYT bestsellers, all the way to the water cooler, bombard us with stories, facts, figures, etc. that they want us to be disappointed in. Come and join in the misery!
 - a. That is why I cannot stand to listen to main stream media (liberal or conservative) because nothing is okay! Everything is going wrong!

b. According to the news, I should be upset and outraged because-- if it is all true-- almost everyone is unhealthy, unwealthy, under educated, over budgeted, and none of our leaders know what they are doing:

(i) Consider this: Even if every single one of those claims are true: *So- What? Why should I be worried? Why should I let those thing rob me of the constant joy I should feel as a child of God? I shouldn't--*

III. With these thoughts in mind-- that the world is battling to replace our Joy with anxiety, lets take some time this morning to remind ourselves of some of what we have to rejoice over:

Read Ephesians 1:1-14

I. We Have Been Given a Sense of Purpose: 1:4-6

- a. Our world is filled with people who are lost, with no real sense of purpose:
 - i. According to a report from ABC News, Americans work more hours, take less vacation days, and retire later than anyone in the world: ¹
 - ii. In his book *Shiny Objects: Why We Spend Money We Don't Have in Search of Happiness We Can't Buy*, reports that our national spending per capita has increased 96% since 1972, and yet report depression, anxiety, and stress at the same levels:²
 - iii. People are by and large feeling more and more isolated, and lost, with 25% of Americans feeling as though they do not have a single person to confide in:³
 - iv. People are searching for something to belong to left and right: just look at the bumper stickers on cars! Clubs, organizations
- b. And yet as Christians, we should not *only* feel a sense of purpose, but a sense of *grand* purpose:
 - i. Age gives authenticity: Age inspires trust: (*University of Oxford--1096, Businesses making products sense 19***, *Clubs with exclusive membership: MENSA, IQ- 148*)

¹ <http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=93364&page=1#.UMSL42IETWw>

² <http://www.good.is/posts/americans-spend-more-in-the-search-for-happiness-and-it-s-not-working/>

³ "Social Isolation Growing In U.S., Study Says" The Washington Post. June 23, 2006

- ii. Membership in any of these pales in comparison: We have been called to a plan written by the Creator of the Universe, formed before time began: *Beat. That.*
- c. Consider that: God in His infinite wisdom, before the foundation of the earth was formed, laid out the course of time and predestined that people with a certain type of heart, willing to follow a certain path, would be changed for ever and inherit life ever lasting: That when all plans, schemes, and nations have gone away: YOU will exist in a new body in endless bliss:
 - i. We have a sense of purpose, and it demolishes whatever this world could offer:

2. We Have been Given a Unique Adoption: *Eph. 1:5a, 10b-11*

- a. The organization UNICEF estimates that there are appx. 210 *million* orphans worldwide⁴
 - i. Every home that opens up to one of them does something special; provides them with a family, and hopefully the love they deserve:
 - i. And yet time and circumstance will still limit that relationship in some regards:
 - a. The child will still be subject to the same burdens and cares that all other children are: (*monetary restrictions, potential health concerns, etc*)
 - b. That child will eventually be without a mother, father, siblings again:
 - c. One family is only capable of adopting so many children
 - d. In other words, as wonderful as their life may be, all of the ways that it is improved are bound and limited to *this world*.
- b. How many spiritual orphans do you imagine there are?⁵
 - i. According to UN census information, there are 6.9 Billion people in the world: over 4.5 billion claim to be something other than a follower of Jesus Christ:
 - ii. Out of that other 2.3 Billion, how many do you think are actually following the Bible as the inspired word of God?
 - iii. Suppose that there are actually 1 Billion that are following the God's Word and It alone: that would leave around 6 Billion spiritual orphans, *in our time alone*

⁴ http://www.mission1m.org/about_the_need.html

⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_religious_populations

- c. God says: “I’ve got room for them all.”
 - i. *Hebrews 12:23* says that we are all brought into God’s family as equals: Everyone of us is considered to be a first born child of God:
 - ii. Think about what that means for Eph. 1:11-- There is no such thing as a lesser inheritance: every child receives a double portion:
 - iii. And when this world ends, *1 Cor. 15:54*, I don’t lose that blessing: it will be only then that I truly begin to comprehend this blessing:
- d. I was an orphan: But I have been adopted by One with unlimited resources, unlimited love, and unlimited time to spend with me; and *no one can take that away from me.*

3. We’ve Been Relieved of Incalculable Debt: *Eph. 1:7*

- a. Can you imagine the sense of debt someone must be in to view the lottery as their only hope of fixing their life?
 - i. Under the Old Law, (*Lev. 25, 27*) There were guidelines in place for someone to temporarily sell property to alleviate debt:
 - ii. As is often the case, that person is in a situation that they will not be able to repay it them selves, someone else could “redeem” or pay the buy back cost for their land:
 - iii. There are examples of this even happening with people (*II Kings 4:1-7*)
 - iv. This is where we were! We had accumulated a debt of sin so great that there was no way that we could ever hope to repay (*Matt. 18*)
 - i. On top of that, there was no one who could afford our price of redemption:
- b. God, sent *His Son*, to pay the ultimate price, His Blood, for the ultimate debt:
- c. It is good to be debt free on this earth: *Eventually* everyone will be debt free:
 - i. I suppose there is a lot one could be concerned with seeing as how we are “speeding towards a fiscal cliff”
 - ii. But there is one debt I’m not sweating bullets over: my debt of sin-- and not everyone can say the same; *We Can.*

4. We've Been Given a Clean Past, and a Bright Future: *Eph. 1:7*

- a. Try to imagine the horror of being convicted in court, and *knowing* you are on your way to prison (*Illus. of Dream*)
 - i. Nothing you can do: all the pleas, bargains, appeals, denied: You- Are- Guilty:
 - ii. What about when you get out? How will life be then? Easy to find a job? Will you still have a family?
 - iii. These stigmas are often the case even when someone is found innocent!
- b. What did God do for you when He forgave your trespasses?
 - i. You and I stood guilty in God's court: we were going away:
 - ii. But when we became Disciples of Jesus and responded to His call, The Judge did the unthinkable: Case dismissed!
 - iii. We experienced the Joy of Psalm 32:1-2
 1. *"How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit!"*
- c. Not only that, there is no stigma towards us in God's eyes: He doesn't remember that old man: He sees a new creature:
 - i. Can you imagine having certain penalty not only dropped, but erased from memory, and replaced with promises of a future brighter than the past ever was dark?
 - ii. *Its Real!*

5. We've Been Given the Promise of Even More: *Eph. 1:13-14*

- a. The Holy Spirit has sealed us-- claimed us as God's own, certified that we are his:
- b. He has given us the promises of God as a pledge, or down payment on what is to come -- the basis of Paul's argument--
- c. All with a view of things to come: for the time when we are redeemed in the fullest sense possible
- d. *The Best is Yet to Come*

6. Why?

- a. We have been blessed beyond measure: But it has one, singular purpose:
 - i. 1:6 to the praise of the Glory of His Grace
 - ii. 1:12 to the praise of the Glory of His Grace
- b. To you get what Paul is telling us?
 - i. God has blessed You and Me more than we can possibly comprehend, all so that we will have a sense of Joy-- a sense of gratefulness: Such that the only natural course of action is to burst forth in praise to Him
- c. So, Lets review:
 - i. We have been given a sense of grand purpose
 - ii. A unique adoption
 - iii. the forgiveness of debt
 - iv. the pardon of all charges
 - v. The promise of even more to come
 - vi.... And I'm supposed to spend my time ranting and raving over:
 1. The healthcare crisis
 2. The Budget crisis
 3. The state of education
 4. Whats going to happen to my money and my possessions
 5. That the election didn't go the way I wanted it to?
 - a. Sorry: I've got more important things to do: I've got to get a head start of praising the One who has seen the anxiety that the world offers and replaced it with far more Joy.
- d. So: *you're saying* that we should go around with a fake smile and our heads in the ground. No: I'm saying you keep your head up, see what is robbing the world of Joy, be thankful that you don't have to be like that, and remember that the message of the cross is the only thing that can change any of that anyway, so lets be about *that*.