

Ephesians

Transformed by Grace, Empowered by Peace

Study 4

His Spiritual Blessings In Christ

Ephesians 1:7-14

Ephesians 1:7-14

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reached their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

1) a) Objective question. Select all that apply. What kind of sins are forgiven when a person puts their hope in Christ?

A. Past

B. Present

C. Future

b) Comprehension question. How does believing in forgiveness in such a way remove superstition and emotional instability?

c) Discussion question. Can a Christian be superstitious and emotionally unstable?

Ephesians 1:8b-10

With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

2) a) Reflection question. God had “to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ” because sin has damaged it. And God happily “made known to us the mystery of his will.” What kind of character do you think this shows about God? How do you feel about having this kind of person as your God?

b) Objective question. Select all that apply. What kind of things or systems will be united under Christ's headship?

A. Physical systems

B. Spiritual systems

C. Social systems

D. Psychological systems

E. Biological systems

F. Economical systems

Ephesians 1:11-14

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

3) Reflection question. The theology of God's predestination can typically elicit three types of responses, either a person becomes cynical/resigned, an emotional wreck, or become confident and more incentivized to work. At the moment, which emotional state do you identify with towards the theology of predestination?

Takeaway

In Ephesians 1:7-14, apostle Paul explains redemption, knowledge of God's grand plan, the inheritance we will receive, and the sealing of the Holy Spirit.

Case Study

Case 1 – Christian Dominion

Dommy Nian believes that all Christians have “to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.” according to Ephesians 1:10. He believes that the government, economy, religion, media, education, arts, and families should all be Christian or ruled by Christians and Christian laws.

1) a) Discussion question. What is wrong with this theology? What verses will you use against this thinking?

Bad exegesis of Ephesians 1:10, God will bring it in His timing, not us.

Not everyone will accept the Messiah or follow His ways, Matthew 10:14

Jesus did not ask all his disciples to become politicians and still respected Caesar’s tax to run the government Mark 12:17

The main role of believers on earth is to make disciples who become like Jesus inside and out, loving God and others Matthew 28:19-20

b) Discussion question. Would you personally start a debate with Dommy? Why or why not?

Case 1.1– Christian Dominion

Dommy believes the era of the Crusades and Spanish conquest of the New World was not wrong.

c) Discussion question. Read the quote from a book in the background information box below. Would you start a debate with Dommy? Why or why not?

Background Information

“When scholars in Europe sought to justify the Spanish conquest of the New World, they reached not for the Church Fathers, but for Aristotle. ‘As the Philosopher says, it is clear that some men are slaves by nature and others free by nature.’ Even in the Indies, though, there were Spaniards who worried whether this was truly so. ‘Tell me,’ a Dominican demanded of his fellow settlers, eight years before Cortés took the road to Tenochtitlan, ‘by what right or justice do you keep these Indians in such a cruel and horrible servitude? On what authority have you waged a detestable war against these people, who dwelt quietly and peacefully in their own land?’ Most of the friar’s congregation, too angered to reflect on his questions, contented themselves with issuing voluble complaints to the local governor, and agitating for his removal; but there were some colonists who did find their consciences pricked.

Increasingly, adventurers in the New World had to reckon with condemnation of their exploits as cruelty, oppression, greed.”

— **Tom Holland, Dominion: How the Christian Revolution Remade the World**

Case 1.2 – Christian Dominion

Dominion: How the Christian Revolution Remade the World is a book by Tom Holland, a "marvelous" (Economist) account of how the Christian Revolution forged the Western imagination.

Crucifixion, the Romans believed, was the worst fate imaginable, a punishment reserved for slaves. How astonishing it was, then, that people should have come to believe that one particular victim of crucifixion—an obscure provincial by the name of Jesus—was to be worshipped as a god. Dominion explores the implications of this shocking conviction as they have reverberated throughout history. Today, the West remains utterly saturated by Christian assumptions. As Tom Holland demonstrates, our morals and ethics are not universal but are instead the fruits of a very distinctive civilization. Concepts such as secularism, liberalism, science, and homosexuality are deeply rooted in a Christian seedbed. From Babylon to the Beatles, Saint Michael to #MeToo, Dominion tells the story of how Christianity transformed the modern world.

d) Discussion question. Tom Holland’s book Dominion had written the many ways Christian values have shaped and influenced today’s Western values. If we can’t force Christianity down other people’s throats, what are the ways that Christians should influence the world? You may refer to the verses and the background information below to help you.

Quick Verse reference

Colossians 1:13-14

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Matthew 5:14-16

“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Background Information

“A myth, though, is not a lie. At its most profound—as Tolkien, that devout Catholic, always argued—a myth can be true. To be a Christian is to believe that God became man and suffered a death as terrible as any mortal has ever suffered. This is why the cross, that ancient implement of torture, remains what it has always been: the fitting symbol of the Christian revolution. It is the audacity of it—the audacity of finding in a twisted and defeated corpse the glory of the creator of the universe—that serves to explain, more surely than anything else, the sheer strangeness of Christianity, and of the civilization to which it gave birth. Today, the power of this strangeness remains as alive as it has ever been. It is manifest in the great surge of conversions that has swept Africa and Asia over the past century; in the conviction of millions upon millions that the breath of the Spirit, like a living fire, still blows upon the world; and, in Europe and North America, in the assumptions of many more millions who would never think to describe themselves as Christian. All are heirs to the same revolution: a revolution that has, at its molten heart, the image of a god dead on a cross.”

— **Tom Holland, Dominion: How the Christian Revolution Remade the World**

“The conviction that God was a warrior bound by a timeless covenant to the defence of a particular people was one that he had abandoned after his first vision of Christ. It was a new covenant that he had preached. The Son of God, by becoming mortal, had redeemed all humanity. Not as a leader of armies, not as the conqueror of Caesars, but as a victim the Messiah had come. The message was as novel as it was shocking—and was to prove well suited to an age of trauma.”

— **Tom Holland, Dominion: How the Christian Revolution Remade the World**

