

EPHESIANS: THE CHURCH FROM START TO FINISH
"Part II: Savoring Heaven's Hope To Handle This Life's Insecurities"
(Ephesians 1:4-6)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

In the last two weeks, I have both witnessed and talked to several believers about **destabilizing** events in life:

- (1) Two Christians shared with me that the evil or spiritual blindness toward the truth they confront in the world around them is so encompassing that they often get "weary" from facing it all.
- (2) I witnessed about Christ to a woman by phone this week who is dying of cancer. She was running a fever of 104 degrees caused by her depleted white cell condition, was hardly able to think, was upset, and felt awful. I probably foolishly opened the conversation by saying, "How are you?" for she responded, "Lousy!"
- (3) This week, as has often happened in the past, I had conversations with different parents troubled about potential legal hurdles created by activities of offspring.
- (4) Sunday night, one of our Church members was late in coming to the evening service because of an accident. A neighbor had been seriously injured in a motorcycle accident near her home, and she had witnessed the police and ambulatory personnel cleaning up the road and preparing the party for transit to the hospital.
- (5) I received some sad from a Christian church leader about very troubled believers, and trouble between believers.
- (6) Nadine received a call Wednesday from a believer who faced an uncertain future in the realm of employment and housing.
- (7) To top it off, I **experienced** my own "shooting" outside the Torrington High School the day the troubled freshman in Springfield, Oregon gunned down his high school classmates! While entering the Torrington High little theater to witness a concert, and trying to put on my jacket, a teen driving by in a car unloaded his water-cannon's coldness onto my back! My shirt was so soaked that I had to go back home and change! I didn't get the car's license plate, but another witness to this incident, already infuriated that her car had just been pelted by the same water-gun, got the license and called the police! But now, when I go to see a high school concert, I will be looking out for any passing cars lest a similar incident is repeated!

In view of such INSECURITIES produced by this life's troubles, how can we ever be JOYFUL, confident people?!

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "Even in MY life as a CHRISTIAN, I struggle with feelings of insecurity: I face an uncertain future with my job, or housing, or I fear losing important relationships or acquiring a terminal disease! How are we expected to handle such INSECURITY?!"

I. When Paul wrote Ephesians, his readers faced deep insecurities:

- A. Paul had evangelized in Ephesus for two years so well that the sale of local idols was undermined, Acts 19:1, 10. This in turn jeopardized the area's economy and created a city uproar, Acts 19:23-29.
- B. To ease the pressure of persecution for new converts, Paul left the city and had only a brief later encounter with their elders, Acts 20:1, 16-38.
- C. Besides, Paul wrote this letter from the stress of a **prison** cell, Ep. 3:1.
- D. So, (1) the **insecurity** in their **heritage**, seen by the city's uproar over its threatened idol business (2) coupled with the persecution threat on the Church (3) **along with** Paul's absence **and** (4) imprisonment would all have tempted the Ephesian believers to feel **very INSECURE**.

II. Accordingly, Paul wrote Ephesians 1:4-6 to equip these converts with God's great BALM for THIS life's INSECURITIES:

- A. Paul declared that believers were placed into God's **eternal** plan, 1:4.
- B. To **appreciate** this plan, we now correct **unsettling** concepts we have inherited from theologians down thru Church History (as follows):
 1. From Paul's word in v. 4 that God "chose" believers before time, two **main unsettling** beliefs have arisen! (a) One view, that of "Calvinism" says God chose who would **believe** in Christ so only those folk **can** be saved. However, this view makes God appear **loveless** toward the perishing! (b) The other view, "Arminianism", says God knew who'd **contribute faith** to their salvation toward **getting** saved, so God chose them to be saved. Yet, this idea counters Eph. 2:8-9 where Paul says man has **no** merit in salvation!
 2. Well, **neither** of these views **can** be **justified** from Eph. 1:4-6:
 - a. God's choice was made "in Him", that is, **in Christ**, Eph. 1:3, 4.
 - b. Now, to say one is "in Christ" is to say he is **saved**, Rom. 16:7.
 - c. Thus, the **only** way to reflect **either** the Calvinist **or** Arminian view that one is chosen **to be justified** from Ep. 1:4 is to **supply** an elliptical infinitive, "to be" **just before** the "in Him" phrase!

- d. Yet, of *all* the "in Him" phrases, or of any other **similar** phrase (i.e., "in Christ", "in Christ Jesus", etc., etc.) in the Greek New Testament, **not ONE** even **hints** that such an ellipsis **EXISTS**, Moulton & Milligan, Conc. to the Greek Testament, s. v. "**EN**".
- e. Calvinism & Arminianism hold to an indefensible exegesis of v. 4
3. On the other hand, we escape the Calvinist and Arminian pitfalls by taking Eph. 1:4-6 to teach **only** to **post-justification** blessings:
 - a. The phrase "**before** Him" (KJV) at the **end** of Eph. 1:4 has the preposition, *katenopion* that lexicons have long said uses **either** the literal (geographical location) **or** figurative (one's viewpoint) meaning. Led by either Calvinist or Arminian presuppositions, translators have given *katenopion* the figurative one in Eph. 1:4.
 - b. Yet, Moulton & Milligan reveal archaeological findings show *katenopion* had **ONLY** the literal one, Ibid., s. v. "*katenopion*"!
 - c. Thus, we conclude God chose believers in eternity past, **viewing** them as **already BEING in Christ** to **arrive into** His **heavenly presence** ("**before** Him") separate from sin (holy) and blameless (the record of sins destroyed at Christ's Bema Seat, 1 C. 3:13ff)!
 - d. Now, to **transport** believers **into** heaven, Eph. 1:5 tells us that God predestined them to the "**adoption**", and we are left seeing this as the Rom. 8:23 "adoption", or the **rapture**, 1 Th. 4:13-18.
 - e. Thus, Eph. 1:4-6 does **not** teach God **chose** people to be justified! Rather, it reveals that God foresaw before time began those who would believe in Christ, foreseeing **also** their **coming earthly** sin and defeat and all of its resulting troubles, and thus planned by election and predestination to get them **beyond** these **failures** and into heaven where He could immerse them in His holiness, love and blessing. They would end up free of **sin** and its **effects** and its blemishing **record** after Christ's judgment seat!
 - f. Accordingly, Paul shared this **stabilizing** news to the Ephesians so they would hope in the life to **come** to counter **this** life's **insecurities** that are produced by **sin** and its **effects**!

Application: *Overcoming insecurity comes by shifting our hope for fulfillment in THIS life to fulfillment in the life to COME, for THAT ETERNAL destiny was planned by GOD from ETERNITY PAST to intercept the failure of sin and ALL of its damage that God FORESAW would come! However, this hope is beneficial ONLY for those who trust in Christ and look for the hope of His blessed return!*

Lesson: *ALL INSECURITIES that we face are MANAGEABLE, for God FORESAW ALL we would go through BEFORE He STARTED the world, and IN that foresight CHOSE us IN Christ to escape this world and gain His loving, holy presence sin-free, guilt-free, and (thereby) TROUBLE-free! So, focusing on our FINAL end, we can relax NOW!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

(1) Last week, I was privileged to conduct the burial service for Mrs. Bertha Munn, a lady who insisted that I call her "Granny"!

Granny had a wonderful laugh, a high-pitched chuckle that would tail off by a descent from high "C" to around "G#" in pitch! I would often go to see her to try to encourage her as she was bed-ridden with very painful arthritis, and would come away feeling guilty at having gotten more encouragement than she out of our meeting.

At her graveside, two Christians from the area talked briefly with me about a trying challenge Granny had faced in her life. They shared that years before, while attending the funeral of a wealthy white woman, Granny, who was of African-American heritage, was told by another woman, "Bertha, why did this lady have to die? Why couldn't it have been someone less significant, somebody like **you**?!"

Most people would be embittered by that remark. Not Granny!

I found out why one day. She shared how she used to have people throw rocks and bottles at her because of her race as she headed to the post office to get the mail. Granny retorted, "But God and me, we had this thing going! I'd just pray, and He went with me all the time I went to the Post Office so that we got the mail **together**!"

The last time I saw Granny was just before she moved to the Bronx to live with daughter Shirley Saunders. As I went out the door, with a sense of deep affection toward another believer in Christ, I said, "Granny, when I get to heaven, you look me up -- I'll be in your neighborhood down three blocks and around the corner!" She agreed!

Granny lived for the Lord of the life to COME, and by that outlook she could handle the horrible effects of racial hatred she faced all of her EARTHLY life! Granny knew that the coming life would be better, when race was a non-issue with God in heaven.

(2) As I typed up these notes on Grandma Munn on Tuesday, Claudia Toth drove up with the lady I had talked to about Christ! She had prayed on her own to receive Christ and was full of **joy** in spite of her debilitating suffering! She was ready for the **life to come**!

That's how we make it in this very insecure world! Like Granny and Debbie, Claudia's friend and our new sister in Christ, we trust in Jesus Christ and live for the hope of the life to COME!