

THE LAST GREAT AWAKENING: A WAKEUP CALL TO AMERICA'S CHRISTIANS
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to America's Christians**

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Rustan Hicks

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Section One
The Church Triumphant

Chapter One
The Father's Love

mIn the book of Ephesians 1, Paul is describing the role of each member of the Godhead in the salvation and redemption of mankind. After the introduction in verses 1-2, Paul addresses the role of God the Father in man's salvation in verses 3-6. He closes this section by stating that this role is "to the praise of the glory of His grace," referring to glory of God the Father's grace. In the following verses, 7-12, Paul writes of the role of God the Son in the salvation of mankind. He finishes this section, "to the praise of His glory", referring to the Son's glory. Lastly, Paul writes of the role of the Holy Spirit in mankind's salvation in verses 13-14. These verses end with the phrase, "to the praise of His glory," which refers to the glory of the Holy Spirit.

Continuing in chapter one, verses 15-23, Paul gives his prayer for not only the saints in Ephesus in his day, but for the saints throughout the entire church age. Paul prays in verse 17 that God the Father would give believers "a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him." The Greek word that Paul used for knowledge is interesting in that it means a knowledge that is beyond knowledge. In verses 18-19, Paul prays for three things, He writes, "that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know..." these three things. First, he writes that his readers may know what is "the hope of His calling." He then adds that they might know what are "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." And finally Paul adds that his readers might grasp and experience what is "the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe." It is not a coincidence that it is the Father who calls us, the Son who shares His inheritance with us and the Spirit who gives us our power.

The first phrase that Paul expressed was that his readers would grasp "the hope of His calling." From the previous section of chapter one, verses 3-6, we see the role of God the Father in the salvation of mankind. Understanding the Father's role in redemption is fundamental to the message of this book.

Paul explained:

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love

⁵ He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

Clearly the subject of these four verses is “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is the Father who has “blessed us with every spiritual blessing” from the realm of the heavenlies (v. 3). It seems that it would be easy to think of some blessings that could be added in our lives, but in actuality, with the Father’s program for His children even the negative experiences and struggles are redeemed so that “all things work together for good to those who love the Lord and are called to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). In a subsequent chapter, we will look with some depth at the reality of the Father’s blessings both in this life and certainly in the glory to follow.

The focus in this chapter is that the Father chose or called each of us “before the foundation of the world” (v. 4). Time is part of the created order and the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, all exist outside of time as well as in time. This is why God told Moses in Exodus 3 while speaking from the burning bush that His name is “I Am.” He is in the eternal present. Before formatting planet Earth to prepare it to be the place where physical life would be created and sustained God already knew every detail of every living creature that would ever live. Of Adam and Eve’s offspring, created uniquely in His image, He knew every one that would ever be born and He determined exactly which ones He would call unto eternal life and whom He would not. Paul added for emphasis in verse 5, “He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will.”

Paul’s point in these verses is that God chose whom He did on the basis of His gracious and sovereign will. Later in the chapter Paul is praying for not just the Ephesian Christians but for the saints of the entire church age. In verse 18, Paul prays that we would fully grasp what is “the hope of His calling.” The point of Paul returning to his theme that the Father has called or chosen us before creation is so that we can see that we are a gift from Him to His Son. It is extremely important to understand that we are saved not because we chose Him but because He chose us. Jesus makes that reality very clear and even emphatic as He discusses the subject with the Jewish religious leader in John 6.

Four times in chapter 6, Jesus said the same thing in a slightly different way. His emphatic words are clear and unmistakable. In verse 37 Jesus said, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.” Again, He repeats in verse 39, “And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.” In case these Jews did not get it, He repeated again in verse 44, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.” And if this still is not clear enough, He repeats again in verse 65 that “no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father.”

This fact, clearly presented by Jesus Himself, that no man or woman will come to Him apart from the Father's sovereign choosing of him or her in eternity past is hard for many Christians to grasp believing that they are simply saved because they expressed faith in Christ. To fully understand what both Paul and Jesus were saying, it is necessary to understand the state of mankind after the failure of the test of love put forth in the Garden of Eden.

The Test of Love

The Apostle John in I John 4:16 says that "God is love." God is the Cosmic Romantic. There is a type of the love of God seen in the history of Adam and Eve as recorded in Genesis. Summarizing the events God created all the animals and then He created Adam which in Hebrew means "man." Before God had brought forth Eve, He brought all of the species of animals to Adam, male and female, to have Adam give them names. I'm confident that there was a good deal of playfulness between the two mates of the various species as they walked by. I can imagine the lioness nibbling on the ears of her big lion mate as they delighted in one another in the perfect conditions of the garden.

After naming each of the species of animals, Adam must have begun to feel rather alone and empty. God purposely left Adam alone and then brought forth all the animals in pairs to make him aware of his need for someone to love and share life with. After becoming aware of his strong desire for a companion God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and then performed the first open heart surgery on him, taking a rib from his chest and from it formed the incredible form of the beautiful and delightful woman who would be the awesome prototype of all the females who would come forth after her. When Adam woke from his sleep and saw this woman, he certainly immediately fell madly in love. When watching a young male when he gets a tremendous crush on a young female, it is inevitable that he will act a bit goofy while she smiles coyly and giggles. Adam probably did something like climb a tree to show off only to slip and fall hard on the ground. And Eve just giggled at this wonderful idiot.

The Triune God has a perfect infinite love connection within the communion of the Trinity. However, being the God of infinite love and life it was fundamental to their nature to desire to create life that would share in this unfathomable love. The great motivation for God to create life stems from His heart of love with the great desire to bring forth that which could receive the fullness of His love and glory. Adam's need for a love partner is a picture of the love of our awesome Creator who desired a helper suitable to Him who would be brought forth as His bride, His eternal glorious companion in creation.

A Test for the Angels

Before addressing the love test for Adam and Eve, it will be helpful to look at the love test for the angels. The angels, both holy and evil, are called in the Old Testament the sons of God in that each angel is a unique creation of God. All of the angels were created by God at some unknown time in the past. They were each created perfect in every way yet untested, so thus they were neither holy nor sinful. They were innocent and pure. The most powerful angel who was designed to be the lead angel over all others was Lucifer, the “Bright Shining One.” At some point after his creation, Lucifer must have gotten a look at himself and fell in love with his own beauty and magnificence. Rather than appreciating the God who had created him so gloriously, he simply became a true egomaniac. This self-lover decided that rather than continuing to serve God for all eternity, he would turn and do his own thing. At this moment Lucifer failed the test of love and moved from innocence to pure evil. Immediately his basic nature moved from innocence to self-serving, self-loving, which is the fundamental essence of evil. From this point forward it would be impossible for Lucifer, who is now known as Satan, to do anything that is not for himself, for his own self interest.

Ezekiel wrote of Satan as the power behind the King of Tyre in chapter 28:12-19:

¹² “You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

¹³ “You were in Eden, the garden of God, every precious stone was your covering;

¹⁴ “You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there....

¹⁵ “You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, until unrighteousness was found in you....

¹⁶ “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor....”

Isaiah gives us further insight into Satan’s arrogance in chapter 14:12-19;

¹⁷ “But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly....

¹⁸ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’

¹⁹ Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit....

How Satan tempted the other angels is not described for us in the Bible, but we do see in Revelation 12 that the dragon, identified in verse 9 as the devil or Satan, “swept away one third of the stars of heaven” with his tail “and threw them to the earth.” This is generally understood to show that Satan deceived one third of the angels turning them to demons. Satan must have addressed the angels while they were still in the state of innocence and challenged them to consider living in freedom to do their own thing rather than be subject for eternity to the will of God. Satan offered the angels

freedom, knowing that being the strongest angel would enable him to enslave every angel who followed his leading into evil.

One third of the angels thought in essence, “Yes, I will be free to do my own thing forever. I can exist for *my own* pleasure. As soon as an angel made this decision their innermost being was transformed from innocence to pure evil. They became self-centered which again is the definition of evil. On the other hand, two-thirds of the angels thought, “How can I not serve the awesome God who created me out of His love and delights in blessing me in an infinite way? To leave this love relationship would be the height of folly.” The moment they settled on this attitude of love they moved from innocence to holiness. To be holy is to be set apart for God’s service. After Satan’s tempting of the angelic hosts they all became established either in holiness or in evil. If an angel is holy, he can do nothing that is not consistent with his perfect love for his Creator. A holy angel simply cannot do anything that does not please his Lord and is consistent with His will. This is nothing but a perfect love relationship between God and His angels and between His angels and their God.

Contrasting the holy angels is the evil demons. It is now intrinsic to the nature of a demon that he can do nothing that is not in his own interest. Herein is the definition of hate when you put it on the eternal scale. Every demon is the enemy of every other demon. Every other creature is the enemy of a demon. A demon has one driving force central to his nature and that is self service. In this the weaker demons must serve the stronger in the context of hate.

A Test for Adam and Eve

As the angels, Adam was created perfect in every way as was the woman who was formed from his rib. They were perfect and yet again, as the angels, they were created in an untested state of innocence. God created all of life stemming out of His nature of love and His glorious passion is to have a mutual love relation with both His angels and humanity. The problem is that love requires a choice and God cannot have an eternal kingdom where anyone could, at any time in eternity, decide to turn away from Him. There would have to be a test of love that would either establish a being in perfect holy love or establish him in perfect evil hate. Once the test was completed the choice of love or hate would be established to the depths of the soul. Either love or hate becomes the most foundational driving motivation for that being.

God established a test for Adam and Eve in that He told them that they could eat from any tree of the glorious garden except the one tree in the midst of the garden called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God told Adam “in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17). Biblical death is not the end of existence it means separation, either from God in spiritual death or from the body in physical death.

Eve failed the test first, but she was deceived by Satan working through the serpent. Adam, knowing clearly the words of Jesus to him, listened to his wife, putting her before his Creator. Upon the act of disobedience, Eve and Adam both had a fundamental change in the state of their being and moved from innocence to evil, exactly as the demons had done. From this point forward, the most basic driving force for both Adam and Eve was to serve self. There is no difference between the nature of a demon and the nature of the humans that would come forth from Adam and Eve.

In I Timothy 2:13-14 Paul wrote, "For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression." Because Eve was deceived, even though she sinned, the result of her sin would not be carried to her children. However, Adam sinned straight out, knowing exactly what God had commanded and because of this disobedience, every child fathered by a man would inherit the evil nature of Adam. This is why we are told in Romans 5:12, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned." The sinfulness of all mankind goes back to Adam, not to Eve.

From this time forward it will be absolutely impossible for a human to meet the demand of the Gospel. As Jesus Himself put it, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; and whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it," (Mark 8:34-35). However, as was seen in the words of Jesus in John 6:44, "No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day." So it is impossible for any human to surrender to the Lordship of Jesus. Self centeredness is to the bone of mankind but God can work the miracle to set him free again to choose.

In the spiritual realm, love and hate are seen in full expression. Love abounds infinitely with those who are holy and evil has no restraint for those who are evil. In the life we live on earth now, evil is restrained by consequences. If a young boy is good, he is rewarded, but if he misbehaves, he gets a spanking. He learns early that it is better for him if he's a good boy than a bad boy. On earth all things are gray, but in heaven all things are truly black and white, pure love or pure hate. This will be clearly seen when we step into eternity.

Paul quotes from David's 14th Psalm in Romans 3:

¹⁰ *"There is none righteous, not even one;*

¹¹ *There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God;*

¹² *All have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good,*
there is not even one."

In all of this, it can be seen that the requirement of the gospel to surrender fully to the Lordship of Jesus is fundamentally impossible for a human who at the deepest place in his or her nature is to serve self. Thus, for fallen humanity God is the greatest enemy. Who then can be saved? Remember what Jesus said, "What is impossible for man is possible for God," (Luke 18:27). For one who is fundamentally self-centered to get off of the throne of his or her life and ask Jesus to take His rightful place on that throne is one hundred percent contrary to his or her nature. This would be like a pig deciding he wanted to become a sheep. A pig cannot turn himself into a sheep. God, however, could do it!

In eternity past, God the Father looked across all history and saw specifically who He would choose to be a gift of infinite love to His Son. This is what this chapter is about. However, it raises the question: Why does God not just choose every person? What are the criteria for God's sovereign selection of the elect from among the human race? The extremely important answer to this question is fundamental to the point of this book. We will be addressing this in a subsequent chapter. If the Church can grasp the answer of the Father's criteria for choosing, we will be moving toward the Last Great Awakening!

Chapter Two

The Son's Inheritance

mIn Ephesians 1, Paul moves from explaining the Father's role in the salvation of mankind to verses 7-12 where he addresses the Son's role. Paul refers back to these passages in his prayer at the end of the chapter. In verses 18-19 Paul wrote, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His (the Father's) calling, what are the riches of the glory of His (the Son's) inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His (the Holy Spirit's) power toward us who believe." In this chapter we are going to be considering "the riches of the glory of (the Son's) inheritance in the saints." This takes us back to verses 7-12. Paul ends verse 6 by referring to Christ as "the Beloved."

⁷ In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace,

⁸ which He lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight

⁹ He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him.

10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth. In Him

11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,

12 to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

Paul is emphatic here that Christ wants us to be very aware not just that He has paid the ultimate price for our sanctification in His death, but beyond that has brought us into union with Himself so that we will be sharing fully in the administration, literally, of ruling over all creation. This is His inheritance and so it is also our inheritance. In verses 19-23 of this chapter, Paul is addressing the surpassing greatness of the power of the Holy Spirit that is available to the Church today. This power is freely available to believers today because of Christ's sacrificial death that gave Jesus total authority and victory over all things. As Paul explains of Christ's power that comes from the Father:

20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.

22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,

23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

In chapter 1, it was developed that life on earth, since the creation of Genesis 1 to today, is simply the preamble to the full establishment of God's Kingdom. The first thing that God wanted to do in creating all things was to prepare for Himself a bride who could come alongside of Him in the fullness of His glory and share in the love that permeates all that God does. Here in Ephesians 1:20, we see that Christ has been seated in the place of equal authority with the Father at His right hand. Satan's kingdom of darkness was a truly rebellious group that was not subject to God except for the broad restraints that God had put on their actions. After Christ's death and resurrection that kingdom was truly defeated and brought fully under Christ's lordship.

Looking at chapter two, verse six, we see that God has "raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus..." And this is all in the past tense. This is the current Christian's present position of authority and power. He has raised us up and seated us with Him at the Father's right hand. The Holy Spirit has the

full authority of the Son and He has come to dwell within God's people giving us corporately the fullness of the power and authority of Christ. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Christ in His fullness (Romans 8:9; Galatians 4:6). Again, we see in verses 22-23 of chapter one that "He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." It is very important to realize that we all, as Christians, have already been raised up and seated with Him at the right hand of the Father. This reality will be developed in great detail in chapter three of this book as we consider the power of the Holy Spirit that is fully available to the church today to carry out the will of our Lord.