

WE ARE PART OF SOMETHING VERY SIGNIFICANT

(Sermon Summary)

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Sunday Evening – 23 & 30 October 2022

(A two-part sermon)

Reading: Colossians 1:1-21 & Ephesians 1:9-14

As Christians, we are part of something very big and significant. We are ever having to have our eyes opened wider to what we now belong to. It is easy to think we are nothing as we serve in small churches and face a whole range of problems and challenges in society. But Ephesians 1:1-14 is cosmic in its scope. It takes in eternity past, the present and eternity future. It looks at it all as a seamless whole. The Son of God is at the centre of all these purposes of God. The Spirit brings these things into our present experience.

1. Great plans.

There were great plans for us made before we ever lived (Romans 11:33-36). Election and predestination took in mighty plans before we ever knew anything about them. Out of these plans the Lord was able to put words in the mouth of the prophets. God over-ruled and disappointed a lot of evil-doers to bring His plans to fruition. Our Lord Jesus Christ was at the centre of the purpose of His will. God revealed things to do with His coming and then, in the fullness of times, brought Him forth. This 'dispensation' means an 'administration' or 'stewardship'. It was put in the hands of Christ to oversee the administration of these plans. It was a great plan that the Lord had in mind for His son and, through His Son, a great plan He had for us. In Him there is to be this harmony and gathering together of all things under His headship. He is to be the focus of heaven and earth (Colossians 1:19-20).

This 'gathering together' is happening and will happen all the more in the future. He will gather a people made of both Jews and Gentiles. They will hear the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation. They will turn from their sin and be released from its guilt and power. In Psalm 100:1-2 we see this victory over all that opposes God, including our sins. We are drawn to His rule and authority and come under Him as Ruler and Lord. We

see the bringing into harmony of our fallen bodies (1 Corinthians 15:24-25) and our final redemption (v14) where there is no more death.

His enemies are also gathered to Him and judged. God's justice is brought into harmony and all the disharmony and discord caused by evil and wickedness is removed. God restrains evil in the here and now, but then, in the time to come, He rules over all (Revelation 6:15-17). All bow to Him (Philippians 2:9-11). Everyone is conformed in their understanding to see the glory of God in Christ Jesus but for the impenitent the knowledge will bring them no benefit. They are cast out and there is harmony (Revelation 21:7).

He rules over all angels and receives their praise. (Revelation 5: 8-12). He rules over the disobedient angelic host and announces His victory to them in advance (! Peter 3:19-20).

In fact, all creation is gathered under Him. What is in bondage to the Fall and the disharmony that this has brought is to be set free (Romans 8:18-23). Creation is in expectation of deliverance from bondage and the liberty that this will mean for it.

2. We are looking forward.

We are looking forward to our inheritance (v11). We receive all that the Son is going to receive because we are in Him. Our present possession is knowledge and assurance of what is to come. This assurance is given to us by the Holy Spirit. 'We' means the Jewish believers but v13 shows that everyone, including the Gentiles are included in this great future.

Paul is able to speak with confidence and conviction. He is not being brash and arrogant. Neither does this knowledge make us careless and lawless. Our present experience is one of anticipation as we savour the approach of these things. We do not lose sight of the fact that we are going to heaven despite Paul bring in prison, the day of small things or the lack of progress the gospel is making. It will be proof of His power and His love to bring us finally to heaven. It will be seen that He did this and that He was able to bring all His children home to glory. We trusted Him and He completed the work. His purpose and will contradicted the desires of the devil. It contradicted the world, our illnesses, our depressions and everything else. We might not become millionaires in this life, but we do more than survive.

3. You have the Holy Spirit.

It is not a matter of having the Spirit in the future, but believers have Him now. Our being able to hear and understand these things is because of the Holy Spirit. Our having faith is the gift of God by His Spirit to us. Saving faith leads to our justification, adoption and being sealed with the Holy Spirit. Being sealed indicates that we are owned by God, and that we are genuinely and truly His. We are furthermore protected by Him. We are under the protection of a sovereign.

This reality is not something we do not feel or treat simply in some matter-of-fact way. When we have the Spirit there is life within, sanctifying us, comforting us and urging us forwards.

Now the Bible is not just words but a living reality to us. It is something urgent with power to command us. It leads to ongoing repentance. It leads to a better ordered, Spirit-filled life. We are now on the way to being Christ-like.

The Spirit does not need us to have an open Bible or be in a church service to work. He can imprint the truth on us, impress us with the truth or express truth to us in such a way as to affect our thought and help us see God's love to us in election, in Christ's blood or in our future inheritance. He can bring warmth, richness and colour to the truth and apply it to our situation carefully. Things make sense to us and we are also moved to ask ourselves why we are tolerating sin in our lives. He helps us to see that we are ungrateful and makes us remark all the more at how much the Lord loved us that He should die for us.

The Spirit is a guarantee of what is to come, the proof of the reality of what is promised to us in the future. We are able to believe that we will be raised from the dead and see His great plan that finally brings us to glory and heaven itself.