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Happenstance Or A Cause For Thanksgiving?

Paul's Meditations In Ephesians

As I read the Ephesian Epistle I read that God is ever working for my spiritual maturing. When writing this epistle the apostle was not sitting in a delightful open air veranda looking out over the Aegean Sea, letting the cool summer breeze waft the fragrance of the frangipani around him. He was in a prison, a cold possibly damp spirit depressing place. In that shut off world with few visitors his mind began to meditate on the thoughtfulness of God. Little by little the Holy Spirit led him to dwell on the events in Heaven in the past eternity. As he was led into those heights his spirit began to burst into praise, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). Then he starts to enumerate them and in my mind I can visualize his face beginning to beam as there is brought to mind the wonders of God's grace to such as himself. The words "chosen; predestinated; adopted; redeemed; forgiven; sealed," all for the glory of God's grace. He understood God was working out a plan in his life and for the future when under the economy of God all things would be headed up in Christ, all things in Heaven and earth. Life was not happenstance. God was working all things according to His own plan and it was not just for the big plan. As individuals, he purposes to give teachers etc. for the maturing of the saints. God was interested in the individual, longing to see them developing for the glory of His grace, to be able to set every saint before Him holy and without blame, brought to the stature of the fulness of Christ.

This was not just for the saints in Ephesus, this is the blessedness of every child of God. He had written to the Romans of the blessedness of sins forgiven (Rom. 4:6-7) and that without works, but he does not tell why God saved us nor the motivation behind it. Ephesians informs us, all was done according to His own purpose (Eph. 1:5, 9, 11) and out of a heart of love. Notice the word "us" in the following verses:

- a) He hath chosen us in him (Christ) before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). Election looks backward and tells us we were chosen.
- b) He predestinated us unto the adoption of children (Eph. 1:4-5). That is, God marked us out beforehand, determining what He planned He would do for us. Predestination is the unveiling of the heart of God in eternity past, now those purposes being worked out in us with a view to future fulfillment, looks forward and tells us why we were chosen (Eph. 1:5). God's purpose is that we should be brought into His family and given the full status and privileges of sonship.
- c) He enriched us by making "us accepted in the Beloved", in the fulness of delight He has in His Beloved (Eph. 1:6). God could never accept us in our sinful unregenerate condition, yet once we trust Christ as our Saviour He does accept us in Him.
- d) He redeemed us from all our sins, we have been forgiven (Eph. 1:7). We who were "sold as a slave to sin" (Rom. 7:14), and we have been "bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:20), wonderful truths. Then added to that is we have been forgiven. God has not only made us His own but He has made us fit to live with Him for ever. In redeeming us from the slave market of sin, He has brought us into a new family, the Family of God, so that we are sons and daughters of God (2 Cor. 6:18).
- e) He initiated us the Divine Mystery (Eph. 1:9). This is not the mystery of chapter 3:4 as the word "that" indicates.
 - i) The word "mystery" refers to truth which was once undisclosed but which is now revealed. It is the revelation that everything is moving towards the glorious consummation of all things, all is headed up in Christ, things in Heaven and on earth.
- f) He gave us an "inheritance" (Eph. 1:11). God through Christ has given to us everything we need for time and for eternity. This is not just something to be enjoyed in the future alone, we already have the guarantee of our inheritance (Eph. 1:14). The Holy Spirit within us is the pledge that one day we shall enter into all that which already belongs to us in Christ.
- g) He sealed us with the "Holy Spirit of Promise" (Eph. 1:13-14). Note that the sealing by the Holy Spirit, which indicates ownership and security, means we belong to Him and we shall always belong to Him! There is no time period between believing and our sealing. It does not say after ye believed you were sealed, not sealed before you believed, but upon believing you are sealed.

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Considerations

Was our salvation just an act of happenstance, we just happened to be in the right place at the right time and heard the right words? Definitely not! When we sit and consider the many blessings the Lord has bestowed on us, ones that we daily take for granted such as to be able to present the gospel to the unsaved, have elders to help guide us, to be able to sing words of truth and praise to the Lord.

Surely we have so very much to give thanks for, all evidences that our God cares for us and nothing happens by happenstance. As we consider the blessings of God, both material and spiritual, we can honestly say with the hymn writer:

When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.

Refrain:

*Count your blessings, name them one by one,
Count your blessings, see what God hath done!
Count your blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.*

Are you ever burdened with a load of care?
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?
Count your many blessings, every doubt will fly,
And you will keep singing as the days go by.

When you look at others with their lands and gold,
Think that Christ has promised you His wealth untold,
Count your many blessings, Wealth can never buy
Your reward in heaven, nor your home on high.

So, amid the conflict whether great or small,
Do not be disheartened, God is over all;
Count your many blessings, angels will attend,
Help and comfort give you to your journey's end.

Edwin O Excell

. *Rowan Jennings*