

GOD IS FOR ME!
Anchors of our faith
Ephesians 1:1-14

Ephesus was originally built as a trade city. It was a harbor city and became a tourist city. Its main attraction was the famous temple of Diana. Diana was the goddess of fertility. As you can imagine, because of their priestesses who were prostitutes, it became a vile city and a sex-saturated culture.

The location is modern day Turkey and was the city where Paul stayed longer than any other place in his ministry, nearly three years, and perhaps had the greatest impact. The church was established and was a strong church, but faced continual criticism and opposition. In Acts 19-20 we see the city leaders resisted Paul's ministry because the saved people no longer needed false gods and religious icons.

What a sad commentary upon this church from Jesus in Revelation 2:1-7, ***“³ ...and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. ⁴ Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. ⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.” (Revelation 2:3-5)***

As we know it is hard to live in Christ and in culture at the same time. How many of us would have to say with sad hearts that we have let life dull the edge of our love and commitment to Christ. We don't mean for it to happen, but it is the current of this world that causes a drift to become a disaster.

***NOTE** When I was very small our family went to Niagara Falls. Honestly I remember very little about it. I can see it in my mind's eye, but I remember they discussed a rock that stood up in the river before it got to the falls and the remains of a boat lodged in the rock. It's a mystery how the boat got there but maybe they were on the lake and the boat slowly got into the current. All of a sudden the current had them and all they could do was to try to crash into the rock.

I don't know if that's the story, but I do know that life is like that.; Our drift has gotten dangerous and if we don't find something to anchor to, we are going over the edge.

Paul tells us there are some anchors for us to hold on to.

I. The plan of God for our life.

A. That we are in Christ.

1. At spiritual birth we are placed in Christ.
2. God's will is for us who are in Christ to be conformed to His image. ***“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.” (Romans 8:28-30)***

NOTE** Because of my sin, my life has been negatively affected by its consequences. The image of God was not destroyed in the fall, but mired by the fall. We are like a bombed out building; there is a shell standing but that's it. There is in man the semblance of the image of God, but we are not as we are designed by God to be. At spiritual birth the process of restoration begins. One day in our final redemption we will be complete in Christ. ***“We will be like Him!” “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 3:18)

Paul reminds the church that the Holy Spirit's work is to change us from one degree to the next. My personal hope is that when Jesus returns I will be further enough in the process it will not be such a drastic change.

B. That we know God is for me.

How do I know that?

1. Because God in His love called me out of sin. (John 3:16)

NOTE** It is because God first loved me. ***“We love Him because He first loved us.” (1 John 4:19) Jesus did what He did so we could know what it is to be in Christ. Jesus made the decision before the foundation of the world. Before there was a universe there was God choosing to love His creation. ***“³⁷ All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out...³⁹ This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.” (John 6:37; 39)***

2. Because we are predestined in Christ.

It's not who is going to be glorified, but how we will be glorified. I was destined in eternity past to be like Jesus. At salvation I am justified; I am in the process of being sanctified and one day will indeed be glorified. ***“...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ...” (Phil. 1:6)***

How do you know God will do that? Because God is a present tense God. He sees the end and the beginning at the same time. Let me give you an illustration. When we are watching a parade go by, we, by view of the corner, see what's happening in one spot. However from a different venue there are those positioned high up so they can see from their perspective the beginning of the route and its conclusion, so they are seeing the entire parade at one glance. I look back at my life five years ago and that's my past, but it's God's now! I wonder about my life five years from now and it's my future, but it's still God's now.

In Christ I am holy and without blame. God's providence accomplishes God's purposes in my life. To purpose is to design beforehand. To predestine is to choose beforehand. And providence means to provide beforehand. God sees beforehand and provides accordingly. God has seen every situation I would be in, every circumstance I would face, and made a plan accordingly so that in Christ I will be victorious.

3. Because we are adopted as sons. He loves us, warts and all. To adopt is to pay a price and He wanted to do it.

NOTE** Everyone is a creation of God, but not everyone is a child of God. People without Christ are not in God's family; they are in the orphanage of darkness and their foster parent is Satan himself. We are hopeless... ***"Dead in trespasses of sin..."
(Eph. 2:1)

Why would God do this: ***"So God would be praised for His grace."*** (vs. 6)

4. Because He has redeemed us and because He has forgiven us.
"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace..." (Eph. 1:7) Jesus redeemed us on the cross. He died in our place. He paid for our sins and He also forgave us. The wonder of forgiveness; that's better than forgetting. He treats us as if it never happened. He chooses to put our sin away (Psalm 103) He lavishes forgiveness upon His children.

5. Because He enlightens us.
"He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding."
(vs. 8, NLB) We know who we are, why we are here, and where we are going. There are so many statements that say, "For we know..." We have answers to what so many people only have questions. He gives us understanding in ultimate things ... "Life, death, heaven, hell."

Things people don't get without God:

- 1) Individual responsibility before God. Most people never think about giving an account to God.
- 2) The question about human suffering.
- 3) The brevity of life and eternity.
- 4) The futility of trying to please God in human effort.
- 5) The urgency of choosing today. People think they will live for years to come.

“He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him 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 on the earth.” (Ephesians 1:9-10, NASV)

We also have insight into things of life. God speaks to our heart, He impresses things upon our minds. How? ***“...that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. ¹¹ In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, ¹² that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.” (Ephesians 1:10-12)***

Because God is working in this universe to bring about His purposes. He is working in us. God is for you!!

II. The protection of God over our life.

A. God provides for every eventuality in my life.

1. He causes things to happen that are beyond my power to accomplish.
2. There is no way Joseph could have had a band of men come by when they did. It was no coincidence that Joseph ended up in Potipher’s house or that Pharaoh had a dream.

“You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good!” This is God’s providence.

B. God protects me from every enemy in my life.

1. He causes things not to happen that are beyond my power to avoid.
2. The prison for Joseph became the path to the palace.