

Believers Boot Camp (Ephesians) – Part 1

Ephesus was an incredibly powerful and wealthy city in the ancient world of Paul's time. It had marble streets, mosaic sidewalks, and a massive temple to Diana that was considered one of the wonders of the Greek world. It had a busy port, a popular athletic arena, one of the finest libraries of the first century, and villas filled with artwork, tapestries, silks, and exotic birds and animals. Even today, the restored coliseum at Ephesus is considered one of the finest performing arts centers in the world.

It was into this influential city of a half-million people that the Apostle Paul brought the gospel and planted a church. He worked longer here than anywhere else, staying for nearly three years (Acts 19). Later in his ministry, he called the elders of the Ephesian church to meet him in Miletus and exhorted them to be vigilant against the inevitable opposition – from within and without – that would come against the church after his death.

Acts 20:28-32 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

PAUL IS TRYING TO “WOLF-PROOF” THESE BELIEVERS – AND THAT IS THE REASON FOR HIS TEACHING IN THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS!

Contrary to the experience of many religious people today, becoming a Christian is not like joining a social club, where you simply pay your dues once in awhile, hang out occasionally with casual friends at the group's facilities, and sit back to reap the prestigious benefits of 'membership.' No, becoming a Christian in the biblical sense of the word is more like enlisting in the army. We find out immediately that a conflict is raging with eternal consequences for us and for others, and that every experience of our new life with God is actually training for this intense spiritual warfare.

*The good news is that our Commander is a brilliant military strategist, and He has already defeated our Enemy hands down. However, He has left it up to us to enforce every day in earth's trenches the victory He has won in the Heavens. The book of Ephesians serves as a **Believers Boot Camp**, teaching us that the church is equipped with vast spiritual weaponry in order to accomplish this very task. All that remains is for us to unseal our marching orders, take up our weapons, and storm the gates of Hell. Victory is ours if we fight for it! This is **serious training for serious Christians**.*

The book of Ephesians is the NT equivalent of the OT book of Joshua.

These believers are people who have ceased from aimless WANDERING and have started WARRING. God has given them a PROMISE, but has declared that they will have to fight some BATTLES to lay claim to it. However, victory is assured because God's army is well-equipped! And that's why Paul begins Ephesians by talking about the resources of God.

1:3 – the reason God can bless us is that He is a blessed God – He is not frail or impoverished – He has every resource at His disposal – and the devil doesn't own anything!

God is a good parent – He is not only good TO us, He is good FOR us – sometimes He doesn't give us everything all at once for His own reasons (when the blessing comes, we need to be mature enough to handle it)

1:3 – God HATH blessed us – past tense – we already have access to the resources of Heaven

The blessings of God are a FINISHED WORK. From God's viewpoint, we possess our “promised land” right now. All of the blessings we can ever receive from God have already been created! The first step to possessing them is BELIEVING that God has what we need; the second step to possessing them is TAKING what has been promised to us.

Most believers spend their entire lives reading the “will” and shouting over the “contract” but never living in the promises that God has decreed. Why? Because they aren't willing to FIGHT the necessary spiritual battles. You are RICH beyond measure in Christ – do you actually believe that?!

Our blessings are first and foremost SPIRITUAL blessings – but when we focus on them, spiritual blessings have a way of working into the other realms of everyday living and producing ABUNDANT LIFE.

2 Corinthians 4:18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

All spiritual blessings are ETERNAL – they existed before we did, and when we became God's child He deposited them into our spiritual “bank account.” Everything you need to live for God is already in you by His Spirit! Natural blessings are only temporary, but spiritual blessings last forever.

That's why God never goes into “emergency mode” – He has ALREADY done everything He needs to do to deliver you! You are not WAITING on your deliverance until God chooses to give it – you already POSSESS it, but you just need to FIGHT for it!

Jesus didn't "heal" the woman bowed over for eighteen years as much as He just made know unto her what she already possessed in the covenant!

Luke 13:12 And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.

Luke 13:16 And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?

The process of maturing in Christ Jesus is simply learning how to work out what God has already placed in us. Spiritual maturity is living from the spiritual reality resident in us through the Holy Ghost, instead of living according to our outward circumstances.

A baby in its mother's womb has every gene, every chromosome, every trait of an adult already built into it from the moment of conception. That's the way it is with us when we receive the Holy Ghost – if we will allow it, God's Spirit in us will continually lead us into new capabilities and possibilities! You don't yet know everything God has planned for you, but it will be awesome!

No other believer possesses more of God than YOU possess right now, but some believers have learned how to walk in their inheritance much better!

When the devil comes against you, you need to recognize that he is not only challenging where you ARE, he is troubled over what has been deposited in you for the FUTURE. **He is intimidated by your DESTINY, and is fighting to keep you from possessing it!**

1 Corinthians 2:9-10 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

GOD HAS CHOSEN YOU – so if not one person on the face of the earth showed any love toward you or valued you in the slightest way, this verse shatters all that rejection by telling you that GOD chose you even BEFORE He created the Heavens and the earth – you are LOVED and WANTED!

1:4 – “He hath” (PAST) and “we should” (FUTURE) – that's why we want to please God – because of the wonderful things He has done for us!

1:4 – “holy” (inner relationship) and “without blame” (outer relationship) – both lived “before him”

1:4 – “according” – same root as the musical term “chord” – in harmony with God's pleasure, purpose and power (**watch this word in Ephesians!**) – no believer can live a holy and blameless life without God's Spirit!

1:5 – “predestinated” – we had no influence on God choosing us, because we didn't exist yet and had no access to Him – but God planned a “script” for our Christian lives (i.e. the last scene of a movie is often shot first, and then the other scenes shot in that context) - **NOTE “ACCORDING”**

God is not making up His plan as He goes along! That's the reason He doesn't get hysterical about the things you get hysterical about. This is a FIXED FIGHT – God knows He is going to win in the end! Satan created a dilemma when he seduced Adam into sin, because he was trying to get God to work against Himself. As long as what God loved (man) was separated from what God hated (sin) there was no conflict, because God could love what He loved and hate what He hated. But when what He hated got into what He loved, it created a conflict. If He killed what He hated, He would kill what He loved. And if He loved what He loved, He would have to love what He hated because what He loved now had what He hated inside. This was the dilemma ... but Satan has never been able to create a dilemma that God has not been able to out-strategize. In fact, there was ALREADY a lamb "slain from the foundation of the world"!

Revelation 13:8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

We don't serve a God who REACTS, we serve a God who sovereignly ACTS. He is never on the defensive, but always on the offensive. And nothing that the enemy ever does can abort what God has already done. There is no way Satan can out-maneuver God!

God is not a CONTRACTOR, He is an ARCHITECT. We are building in TIME what He has designed in ETERNITY – so just give up on your own little plan and build His plan in your life! Say YES to His design for you!

1:5 – “adopted” – people give birth to children they don't want, but no one ever adopts anyone they don't want – and adoption in Paul's time was usually a childless family of means adopting a full-grown heir – GOD ADOPTED US KNOWING FULLY WHO WE WERE!

1:6 – “accepted in the beloved” – talk about self-esteem! – this is exactly why Christians don't need to be “accepted in the crowd”! – we can be more concerned about the needs of OTHERS because our need are met by God!

1:7 – quit worrying about your CURRENT CONDITION and start focusing on your ETERNAL POSITION - **NOTE “ACCORDING”**

1:7 – “redemption” – you do not have to be dominated by sin, because you are liberated by Christ - **WHERE YOUR MIND GOES, YOUR LIFE GOES!**

Any time the devil says to you “that’s just normal human behavior,” remember two things – (1) normal for the believer is not the same as normal for the sinner, and (2) the devil cannot tell the truth!

- 1:8 - "abounded" = "overflowed" / "prudence" = "wisdom acted out" - you need abundance ("more than enough") so that your blessing can "overflow" on others and MINISTER to them

1:9 – **NOTE “ACCORDING”**

1:11 – “worketh” – God is constantly manipulating, moving, maneuvering, and arranging all things **ACCORDING** to His purposes – things don’t happen at random or by coincidence for Christians!

1:13 - "sealed" - it is incontestable! (that's why they agreed to baptize the household of Cornelius - because the Holy Ghost already fell on them!)

1:14 - "earnest" = "downpayment" ("I'm coming back to claim my possession!")

1:17 – many believers are quick to see more of God’s power and mercy, but few are hungry to seek for His wisdom and revelation (Paul had a revelation on the road to Damascus and it made him a powerhouse for God!)

1:18 – “in the saints” – you don’t need to know what you have in God, nearly as much as you need to know what God has in YOU

1:19 – “his power to us-ward” – this is **INHERENT power**, or power that is in our possession but dependent on our releasing it or activating it – and it works **ACCORDING** to God’s **DOMINION power** or authority

1:20 – in the OT the defining event of God’s delivering power was the crossing of the Red Sea (Israel and the Lord continually referred back to it) – in the NT the defining event of God’s delivering power is the resurrection!

1:20 – “right hand” – figurative language for the PLACE OF POWER

1:22-23 – if it is under His feet, and you are in His body – it is under YOU!

GOD’S ARMY IS THE BEST EQUIPPED ARMY IN THE WORLD!