

Journey Into Spirit-filled Living



Lesson 1 . . . How to Begin the Spirit-filled Life (Ephesians 1:1-6)

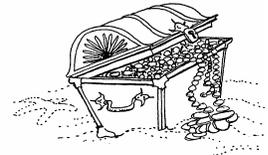
Pecos County in west Texas has a famous oil field known as the Yates Pool. During the Depression this oil field was a sheep ranch owned by a man named Yates. Mr. Yates was not able to make enough money ranching to pay his mortgage and was in danger of losing his ranch. Then, in 1926, an oil company asked Mr. Yates' permission to drill a wildcat well on his ranch, and he signed a lease.

The first well came in at 80,000 barrels a day and some subsequent wells at more than twice that. Mr. Yates owned it all and yet was living in poverty. He owned it, but he did not possess it. He was like many Christians today who have untold spiritual riches, but they don't possess them.

More than any other book in the Bible, *Ephesians* tells us how to possess the spiritual riches that are a result of living the Spirit-filled life. Beginning to live the Spirit-filled life requires **three** things . . .

Remember who we are (1:1-3).

This epistle begins: *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God* (1:1a). Since Paul is an *apostle . . . by the will of God*, he is not writing this epistle by the will of man, or his own will, but by God's will. As we study this epistle, we must remember what fact found in 2 Timothy 3:16a?



Therefore, God Himself is speaking to us through this epistle. Paul wrote this letter while a prisoner in Rome (Eph. 3:1), probably around 60 A.D. During this first imprisonment he also wrote *Philippians*, *Colossians*, and *Philemon*. During his third missionary journey, Paul had a tremendous three-year ministry at Ephesus (Acts 19, 20:31). That was the longest time Paul stayed in any one place during his three missionary journeys. He knew the church would later face serious problems from false teachers. Therefore, what does he say in his farewell address to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:29?

This epistle was written *to the saints in Ephesus* (1:1b). Ephesus was a seaport city in what is now western Turkey. Though only ruins remain today, it once had a population of 300,000. One of the Seven Wonders of

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the Ancient World—the Temple of Artemis (Roman name is “Temple of Diana”)—was located there.

The word translated *saints* means “holy ones” or “separated ones.” It refers to those who have separated themselves from the world to be used by God. *Saints* are people who are *in Christ Jesus* (1:1c). We may physically live in different places—Marietta, Dallas, Atlanta, New York, Los Angeles, etc. However, as believers, we are all spiritually in one place, *in Christ Jesus*. The phrase *in Christ* is found over 80 times in the NT—fourteen of them in *Ephesians*. Also, the phrase *in him*, referring to Christ, is found eight times, for a total of twenty-two times in this book alone.

Every Christian is a saint. You may say, “But, I don’t feel like a saint.” If so, you need to understand what the phrase *in Christ Jesus* means. How does 2 Corinthians 5:21 explain what it means to be *in Christ*?

God only sees us in Christ’s *righteousness*. Have you ever gone to church services wearing no clothes? I have never seen anyone do that, but one time when I preached in China a man came to church in just his underwear. In Christ, God only sees us in the “spiritual clothes” of His *righteousness*. How does Galatians 3:27 express this fact?



When we receive Christ as savior, we are spiritually *baptized into Christ* by the Holy Spirit: *For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body* (1 Cor. 12:13a). God only sees Christians dressed in “spiritual clothes,” and those clothes are the righteousness of Christ. That’s what it means to be *in Christ Jesus*, to be *saints*.

Paul uses his standard greeting of *grace and peace* (Eph. 1:2). Then, he writes: *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ* (1:3). This means God will not withhold any blessing in heaven from those who are *in Christ*. But, how do we appropriate *every spiritual blessing* God wants to give us. God told Joshua to go and possess the Promised Land He had already given to the Israelites. Then, what does He tell Joshua in Joshua 1:3?

Joshua and the Israelites had to do their part to receive God's promised blessings, and so must we. We must do our part in prayer, Bible study, giving, church attendance, and good deeds. Every time we fail to do one of those things we miss one of the spiritual blessings God wants to give us. Every time we skip a Bible study or church service we miss a *spiritual blessing* God wants to give us.

A "journey into Spirit-filled living" requires we **remember who we are:** *saints* in Christ whom God wants to bless with *every spiritual blessing*. But we must also . . .

Remember whose we are (1:4a & 5).



God chose us to be His even before the world was created. Paul puts it like this: *For he chose us in him before the creation of the world* (1:4a). The phrase *he chose us* refers to the doctrine of election that runs throughout the Bible, beginning with God choosing Abraham's descendants to be His chosen people. Our salvation began in eternity past *before the creation of the world*. Willie Nelson had a hit song entitled, "Always on My Mind." Well, we were always on God's mind because even *before the creation of the world*, He chose us. This means we can do nothing to earn our salvation because it is completely the result of God's choice and His grace. How does Jesus express this truth in John 15:16a?

God's sovereignty in choosing us and our responsibility in receiving Jesus as Savior seem contradictory (Jn 6:37). This is what is called an "antinomy" (an-tin'-uh-me), a contradictory and illogical conclusion caused by two apparently correct statements or facts. Our finite minds cannot understand the antinomies of God. That's why God says, "*As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts*" (Isa. 55:9).

If we are not careful, we will compromise one truth while trying to explain the other. Therefore, we must accept both truths and leave the harmonizing up to God. Because God's *ways* are beyond ours, what must we say with Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:12b?

God *chose us* and *predestined us to be adopted as his sons* (Eph. 1:5a). The word translated *predestined* (PROORISAS, pro-or-is'-as) means "marked out beforehand." Predestination seems to refer to WHAT God does for His

elect. Election seems to refer to the WHO, the people, and predestination to the WHAT, God’s blessings and purposes for His elect.

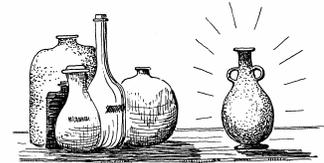
The result of God’s election and predestination is we are *adopted as his sons*. We do not get into God’s family by adoption, but by being born again (Jn 3:3). A baby or child cannot receive a physical inheritance until he or she reaches legal adulthood (Gal. 4:1-2). However, our spiritual adoption occurs when God gives us who are born again immediate adult status in the family so we can receive our spiritual inheritance. Therefore, in Christ, new Christians are immediately entitled to all the benefits of heaven. We don’t have to wait for spiritual adulthood to begin living the Spirit-filled life.

Beginning a “journey into Spirit-filled living” requires we **remember who we are, whose we are, and . . .**

Remember why we are here (1:4b, 6).

We must remember why God *chose us . . . predestined us . . . and adopted us*. He did those things so we could *be holy and blameless in his sight* (1:4b). This refers to moral excellence because God *chose us* to reflect His nature. That is why 1 Peter 1:15 gives us what command?

Being *holy* means we are set apart from sin to be used by God in this world. *Blameless* (AMŌMOS, om’-o-mos) means without blemish or fault.



God *chose us . . . predestined us . . . and adopted us*—all *to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves* (Eph. 1:6). This means our salvation is solely because of God’s *grace*, which is exclusively available in Christ, *the One he loves*. We should praise *his glorious grace* because of what truth found in John 1:16?

Beginning the Spirit-filled life requires we **remember who we are, whose we are, and why we are here.**