

The Big Picture

Is it possible to have victory in everything we face? Does God care about what I'm going through? If so, how can I know for sure? And what should I do to gain the victory that I need?

These are all good questions. And God has more than proven how much He cares by sending His Son to die on the cross for our sins.

Rom. 8:31-32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

What we need is to be reminded of the big picture. And even more, we need to learn how the big picture applies to my everyday issues and needs. It requires three things. It requires learning what we have in Christ, believing it, and taking hold of it by faith until we see His victory.

One thing we must understand. Victory doesn't always look like what we were hoping for and praying for. His ways are not our ways, and His thoughts are not our thoughts (Is. 55:8-9). But what we do know is that He loves us and cares about what we're going through.

So the victory may be God's grace and power being revealed even in the midst of my situation, to keep me in perfect peace, and receiving his direction and guidance to handle it.

There may be no better New Testament passage showing us the big picture than Ephesians 1. Here we see some of the most sweeping statements anywhere in scripture about what God has done for us.

1. He has blessed us. (v. 3)

We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. This does not simply mean immaterial blessings, though it does apply to what God has done

for us spiritually. It means every blessing that comes from the spiritual realm, from the heavenly realms, to us. This is all-encompassing. It relates to the wonderful blessings Paul's about to describe in this chapter, but it also has a more general application to anything the Holy Spirit provides for us. There are spiritual blessings we can apply to our everyday needs if God gives us the spirit of wisdom and revelation to see them (v. 17-19), believe them, and apply them.

2 Pet. 1:3 Tells us that we have been given all things that pertain to life and godliness. This covers everything we could ever need. It comes from his divine power and it's accessed by knowledge. So knowledge really is power.

2. He has chosen us. (v. 4)

God chose us before the world began. We were chosen to be in Christ. We are not chosen based on our worthiness. We were selected before we were born. We were chosen before we did anything good or bad. This tells us that he chose us according to His own purpose and grace. Grace is something we don't fully understand or appreciate. He loved us before the foundation of the world, and His love for us does not change based on our performance.

He chose us to pour His love upon us, both now and in the ages to come. The good work in us has begun. He chose us to be holy and without blame before Him in love. We are set apart and justified. No condemnation. No guilt and no shame. He is not angry with us. So if we do get into trouble or fall into sin, we have an Advocate with the Father. We should run to Him and not away from Him.

He uses the wonderful and powerful word picture of adopting us to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. It was His pleasure to adopt us. He has no regrets. He never will.

3. He has redeemed us. (v. 7)

By His blood our sins are forgiven. This means past, present and future. We do need to confess our sins, but He is faithful to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9). We don't have to grovel in guilt and condemnation when we miss it and sin. We can be forgiven, cleansed and delivered. It is a process, but in Him we are victorious.

Redemption is both an event and a process. We have been redeemed, we are being redeemed, and we will ultimately be redeemed (v. 14). What we must do is not let people put us in a yoke of bondage. Some people have trouble seeing us as anything but guilty, but God doesn't see us that way. We need to keep our eyes on Him and not on the approval of people.

4. We are heirs. (v. 11)

We have an inheritance. We are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17). So many Christians miss out on the inheritance God intends for them to have here in this life through a lack of knowledge or a lack of accessing it by faith. However, it's not too late. It requires learning what we have, believing it, and receiving it by faith (Mk. 11:24).

5. We are sealed. (v.13-14)

The Holy Spirit is the guarantee, earnest, the down payment, the first installment, the engagement ring, of our coming redemption, to the praise of His glory. We are preserved to His heavenly kingdom, like a canning process in jars.

So now that we know the big picture, how do we apply it to our everyday lives? Paul tells us beginning in v. 16 that he's praying for the Ephesians (and for us) that God would give the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. That God would open the eyes of our hearts, to know the hope of His calling, to know

how wonderful the riches of His glory are, and how great His power is in us who believe. So it requires knowing and believing. Once we believe it we should do what He said to do, declare it (Matt. 21:21, Mark 11:23), and receive it (Mark 11:24). It will require renewing our minds for many things to manifest, because we're still often plagued with doubt, and doubt will keep us from receiving (James 1:6-7).

But always remember this. He already loves us, He chose us, He blessed us, He's changing us by His Spirit, and He's given us the victory in Christ through everything we face. Nothing is excluded. If we will believe and live this out, we will have a blessed and victorious Christian life.