

“God’s Plan to Position Us”

All right, I want to start with just a few sentences of review last week. From our responses last week, we all want to know the will of God for our lives and we also want the strength and the knowledge to accomplish that will. That should be a given for the Christian. Secondly, we learned that to correctly position yourself with God to know and do those things, we must have a proper understanding of how high God is and in comparison to God, how low we are. We need to recognize where God is and where we are. Third, we must begin our God Positioning System with an attitude of worship for who God is. Worship is about God and not about us. And finally we can understand the majesty of God because he has lovingly made known to us his person, his purposes, his plans and his power to make that plan come to pass for us.

We can be very comfortable with the plan God has for us because of what he shares with us in Jeremiah 29:11, here it is once again. “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord; ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a future and a hope.’” With all that said, lets begin today with the questions, “Well what is God’s plan for my positioning for him? What is God’s plan for my growth spiritually and temporally speaking?”

Let’s begin the process of answering those questions by turning to our scripture passage for today, Ephesians 1: 15-23. ¹⁵For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶I have not stopped giving thanks for you,

remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, ²⁰which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²²And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”

Unless you have been living under a rock for the past couple of years you know the international monetary systems around the planet and equities markets are described as very skittish. There are wild swings in valuations and many investors are worried about the fragile growth expectations amidst some fragile economies. What we lack is a plan for growth based on economic fundamentals. In the first part of Ephesians chapter 1, Paul talks about the foundation of God’s plan and he set forth the amazing and unlimited blessings believers have in Jesus Christ, blessings that amount to our personal inheritance of all that belongs to Him. Paul tells us in this passage that once we are correctly positioned before God we have a great inheritance from our Heavenly Father. In the remainder of the chapter, our scripture passage today Paul prays that the believers to whom he writes will come to fully understand and appreciate the position God has placed

us. To fully understand and appreciate that position, there is some growth in us all that must take place.

Now I think it is important for all of you to note that Paul is likely in prison in Rome when he writes this letter and travel by sea was brisk enough in those days that many people were able to travel to Rome and visit Paul while in prison. Four years had lapsed since the apostle carried on his labors in Ephesus — labors from which the people of the surrounding territories also benefited. The evidence is clear in this letter that Paul had been kept well informed of what had transpired and what was occurring in Ephesus. He had heard from letters, as well as through personal reports from friends who visited him in prison, he had received considerable information from and about the churches. He heard two things that indicated the genuineness of their salvation. He had heard that they were exhibiting the two traits that are the marks of a true Christian. One, faith in Jesus and two a genuine love for other Christians and he praises them for that. Friends, these two dimensions of spiritual life are inseparable. The apostle John said it this way in 1 John 2:9-11, “Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.”

Here is your first “take away” for today, “An abiding love of God and the love of others is the next turn we must make in our God Positioning System.” For many people in many churches maybe even some here today, you might be hearing what I always hear on the GPS system that I carry in my car when I have gotten off the proscribed

path, “Recalculating.” We have to recalculate what we have been taught that we are the center of our universe. God’s word tells us that it is really about God and about others before self.

Paul starts off praising the Ephesian believers for being positioned well before God. First, Paul praises their faith: “For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus...” Paul is not praising the Ephesians for some later, supplemental act of faith but for the original faith that brought them to saving submission to the sovereign Lord. The same saving faith with which they entered the Christian life and in which they were continuing to live. Secondly, Paul praises their love for their fellow believers: “...and your love toward all the saints.” Now let me tell you once you have it, doesn’t mean you keep it. Just about 35 years later the Apostle John would write these words to the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2:2-4, “I have this against you, that you have left your first love” They had lost the great love for Christ and their fellow believers for which only a few decades earlier Paul had so warmly praised them. But, at the time of writing of Paul’s Ephesian letter they had the right balance of faith and love, and it was for their great faith and their great love that the apostle assured them, in Ephesians 1:16 “I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering/while making mention of you in my prayers.”

The remainder of the chapter is a petition in which Paul prays for God to give believers true comprehension and appreciation of who they are in Jesus Christ, in order that they might begin to have some idea of how magnificent and unlimited are the blessings that already belonged to them in their Lord and Savior. In essence Paul prayed that the Ephesians would be spared from frantically searching for what was already theirs,

but rather would see that the great God who is their God is the source of all they need and has it ready for them if they are open to receive it. Such a receptive attitude requires that God Himself give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.

Warren Wiersbe tells the story of how William Randolph Hearst once read of an extremely valuable piece of art, which he decided he must add to his extensive collection. He instructed his agent to scour the galleries of the world to find the masterpiece he was determined to have at any price. After many months of painstaking search and at great expense the agent reported that the piece already belonged to Mr. Hearst and had been stored in one of his warehouses for many years.

It is tragic that many believers become entangled in a quest for something more in the Christian life, for something special, something extra that the “ordinary” Christian life does not possess. They talk of getting more of Jesus Christ, more of the Holy Spirit, more power, more blessings, a higher life, a deeper life—as if the resources of God were divinely doled out one at a time like so many pharmaceutical prescriptions or were unlocked by some spiritual combination that only an initiated few can know.

We see that from the beginning of scripture, when God called Moses, he said, “But God, how will they know that you sent me?” God’s response, “What do you have in your hand Moses?” What did he have? A staff. When the judge Shamgar was called by God, Shamgar responded, “Lord, give me a weapon that I may use to defeat my enemies.” God replied, “What do you have in your hand?” What did he have? A pointed stick. When God called Isaiah to speak for him, Isaiah replied, “O God, I am a man of unclean lips.” How did God respond? “I know that, speak for me anyway.” When Jesus needed to feed the five

thousand, remember what the disciples said, “We have five loaves and two small fish but what are they among so many?” Jesus’ reply was what? “They will be enough.” What ever we have is always enough in the hands of God.

Today God is asking us all, “What do you have in your life that will enable you to be positioned before me and carry out my divine will and my divine plan?” He simply shares with us that our next turn in our God Positioning System is simply to open your heart to a simple path of faith in the mighty, majestic God we spoke of last week and to open our hearts to the possibility that the love of your fellow believers, the love of other Christians should be our wish and our desire. The Christian’s primary need is for wisdom and obedience to appropriate the abundance of blessings the Lord has already given. Our problem is not lack of blessings, but lack of insight and wisdom to understand and use them properly and faithfully. Our blessings are so vast that the human mind cannot comprehend them. In our own minds we cannot fathom the riches we have in our position in Jesus Christ. Such things seem to be beyond the human mind to grasp. It all starts so simply and progresses to greater understanding and greater blessing. But we must start with first things first.

In my GPS system in my car, I have to sit down and enter the address or the intersection to where I need to go. We all agreed last week that we need to know the will of God in all things and have the strength to do that will. That is our destination. The next thing I always hear when I press “ENTER” is this, a pleasant voice comes on and says, “Checking route.” The way of faith and the way of love is the route. The next thing, I hear on my car’s GPS system is, “Go to ...and so on.” We’ll “Go to...” in weeks to come but

are you will to enter a proper destination, are you will to check the route? Search your hearts; are you at the correct starting point? Where are you going? Notice, I didn't say where have you been, where are you now in this step of faith and love. I asked you, "Where are you going?" I want to close with this wonderful illustration that will tell you why I ask you, "Where are you going?"

Philip Henry, the father of Matthew Henry the great bible commentator had fallen in love with a young lady and she had fallen in love with him. She belonged to a much "higher" level of society than he did, and although she had become a Christian and therefore regarded such things differently, her parents saw the disparity in social status as an obstacle to the marriage. Her father, a very wealthy man asked his daughter this question when she told her father that she intended to marry Philip Henry. "This man Philip Henry, where has he come from?" To this question the future Mrs. Henry gave the immortal reply, "I do not know where he has come from, but I know where he is going."

Where are you going, dear friend. If it is where I hope you are going, toward the will of God, you need a God Positioning System. Stick with this series and you'll get there. But check your route right now.