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A publication for the families and friends of Asbury United Methodist Church

**SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK: Ephesians 1: 3-10 (NIV) 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. 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to son-ship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace 8 that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, 9 he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. 11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, 12 in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.**

Spiritual Matters is going to explore Ephesians 1:3-14 over the next couple of weeks. I hope that we can start to see what God expects His people (Christian) and His Church (The Body Of Christ) to look like. I hope that if we have become something other than what God expects, we would be honest enough to repent as individuals and a Church and return to Gods ways .

**II Chronicles 7:14 (NIV) if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.**

Paul start out in verses 3 praising God for being the Father of our Lord Jesus. Paul then proceeds to Praise God for the blessings that originate in Heaven and are eternal. Paul states that God ..has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly {places} in Christ. Notice the past tense: God has already blessed us! He’s already given us citizenship in heaven (Phil. 3:20), and He’s causing all things to work together for good here on earth (Rom. 8:28). God has already blessed us with more than we have acknowledged and we are to bless Him for this. Are we being thankful? Are we being worshipful? The adjective translated “blessed” means to celebrate with praises. The definition of celebrate is **(1.To observe (a day or event) with ceremonies of respect, festivity, or rejoicing. 2.To perform (a religious ceremony) 3.To extol or praise: 4.To make**

**widely known; display)** . Many of us perform a religious ceremony each Sunday. But should not every day be a day of rejoicing and praise for Gods Blessing. More importantly should we not be making Jesus known to the world. When the Body of Christ the Church comes together should we not Celebrate Jesus with rejoicing and praise. Also as a Church are we making Jesus known to the world is his name being proclaimed as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The Church of Acts was being added to daily with those who where accepting Jesus as Lord. Should not our numbers be growing by those who have come from the darkness of sin into the light of Jesus and received eternal live with Him.

Paul continues in verse 4 Praising God for choosing us before the foundations of the earth were laid. God knows all, He knows the beginning from the end. God knew that man would fall and need a savior. Gods way to salvation and eternal life is not earned. We could never do enough as people and as the Church to earn our way to heaven. Gods has only one way to eternal life and that goes through His Son Jesus..

Paul stresses that God's people and His Church are called by God to be **Holy and Blameless in his sight**. Holy is the Greek word Hagois which has the idea of different and separate. Christians and the Church should not only look different but be act different from the world. William Barclay states “that being Holy is the challenge that the modern Church has been slow to face. In the early Church the Christian never had any doubt that they must be different from the world; they, in fact, knew that they must be so different that the probability was that the world would kill them and for sure hate them. But the tendency in the modern Church has been to play down the differences between the Church and the world. We have, in effect often said to people: So long as you live a decent, respectable life, you can be a Church member and call yourself a Christian.” When a person becomes a member of a local Church he or she becomes a part of the Body of Christ. To be a part of the Body of Christ or to be a Christian you must have been born again. The question is do we and or the Church look any different than the world. Does any one outside of Church know that you are from Gods Kingdom? We are called His and we should act like His.

God expects each of us, to be a living offering and all offerings are to be without blemish. The context for this comes from the fact that all an any animal offered for sacrifice was inspected for any imperfection. If there was any blemish it was rejected as an offering to God. Only the best is fit to be offered to God. We are called to perfection we are called to offer our best to God. God wants the first fruits of our lives not second or third best. The Question for us and the Church is God getting our best? God gave us His best in His Son Jesus, it is only right for us to give God our best in every area of our lives. God does expect perfection but that perfection comes when we believe in Jesus Christ and His Death and Resurrection. **Can we say as Christians and as a Church that we are Holy and Blameless in Gods sight.?**