

“Introduction to Ephesians”

Ephesians 1:1-2

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(Lord’s Day Service, September 9, 2018)

Ephesians 1:1-2

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus:

² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Introduction

Winnie the Pooh in the Movie Christopher Robin said, “I always get to where I’m going by walking away from where I’ve been.” You can get many things from this passage, but I was thinking about having ceaseless progress. This is done by leaving where we were and heading to where we should be. This does not mean we forget the past, but we use it to continuously grow. We need to grow so that we can be better versions than we were yesterday.

As a church, we want to be able to help you progress in life. We especially want to help you progress spiritually so that you may have substance. This way you will have impact in every sphere of your life. We believe God’s Word will be given to God’s people so that they can use God’s Spirit in God’s world, that they may bring to the world, God’s Son.

We will study the whole book of Ephesians because we want to understand the intention of the author. The letter of Ephesians is a marvelously concise, yet meticulously comprehensive, summary of the essence of Christianity and its implications. This letter is written to the church about the church.

I. The Message- The Outline of Ephesians [2]

Grace comes first and fills our lives with the Holy Spirit and it brings peace. The word for peace is *shalom*, which means “reconciliation, wholeness, completeness”. Grace comes vertically, indicating God’s free saving initiative. He empowers us, graces us. And then horizontally, peace comes. But He has taken the initiative to reconcile sinners to himself and to each other in his new community. Grace and peace are the two key words in Ephesians. Gospel security is that through grace God grants us peace. Grace is the root and peace is the fruit that happens in our lives. The whole letter is a combination of these two words.

There are six chapters in Ephesians that can be divided into two sections.

Chapters 1-3 are about: Grace Christian doctrine Christian faith What God has done through Christ Who we are in Christ	Chapters 4-6 are about: Peace Christian duty Christian life What we must do for Christ How we ought to live for Christ
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Being Called to Christ Being in Christ	About being called to the world Being in Champaign-Urbana
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II. The Author - Paul [1]

A. Paul the author

The author is Paul. He was an apostle, missionary, pastor, a pastor to pastors. Through his preaching, the first century was never the same again. Other than the books of the Gospels, a large portion of the New Testament is written by Paul.

B. Paul the persecutor

In reflection of his life, Paul says, “by the will of God,” he is where he is. Before he became Paul, his name was Saul. In the beginning of the Christian era, he was a militant opponent of Christ, a leader killing Christians. But in Acts 9, on the road to do just that, he meets Christ and became a Christian. The one who used to murder Christians became a Christian. His conversion was so amazing that it impacted so many people. It was a miracle and nothing else made him one of the apostles.

Who do you believe in your heart to say: that person can never become a Christian? Keep praying for the people you know. Maybe in the last moment of their life, like the robber beside Jesus Christ, they can come to know the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

C. Paul the apostle

The word *apostles* mean, “ones who are sent”. Paul’s authority was not self-generated but ordained by God. He was called by God to write this letter, so that 2000 years later, we would be studying the Word of God through his letters.

Sometimes God gives a new name, but it doesn’t say in the scripture that Paul’s name was given. I believe he took on this new name, which means “small or little”. We see how humble this great and wonderful apostle was. He knew he was an apostle by Christ Jesus, by the will of God.

At times, I know some of us think of how we want to live according to how we want. But the Christian version of living is that we have a plan and ask God to help us, so we can achieve our plan in our lives. We have to have God as the center of our lives. If we don’t have God as our foundation, it’s like when you wear a shirt and the first button is in the wrong hole: everything is wrong. Everything comes after living according to the will of God, called by God. It doesn’t mean you don’t live according to your dreams. You can have your dreams, but it has to be filtered by the plan and will of God.

III. The Recipients [1]

A. The saints

When it says saints, Paul is not only referring to a group of spiritual elites within the congregation, but he’s talking about Christians in general. The word *saint* means, “holy” or “ones who are set apart.” It means all Christians, though sinners, are forgiven in Jesus Christ and set apart to live for God. Calvin said, “No man is a believer who is not also a saint and

no man is a saint who is not also a believer.” This letter is written to all the believers in Jesus Christ. It is circulated so that all Christians can read it.

B. Faithful

The word *faithful* could be referring to an active meaning – “ones who have faith” – or a passive meaning – “ones who are being faithful”. Commentators argue about this, but the reality is, conceptually speaking, we are both. Because we have faith, we can be faithful. Because of our faith in Jesus Christ, we can receive His grace so that we can be faithful. Faith will lead faithfulness and fidelity. The grace of faith leads to the glory of faithfulness.

C. In Christ Jesus

This statement is important in all of Paul’s letters. It is to be personally, vitally united to Christ as branches are to the vine. This is a theological phrase: in union with Christ. It is impossible to be a part of the body without being related to the head. Jesus is our head and we, together, are the members of the body.

According to the New Testament, to be Christian is to be in Christ. One with Him. Therefore, because all of us are one with Him, we are one with one another.

I believe the kind of attitude we ought to have in our lives it to want to be with God. To be hungry for His word. To want to be where He is. To converse with Him.

IV. Why Ephesians?

We are studying the book of Ephesians because there is an identity, truth, and purpose crisis. I believe that Ephesians answers these crises, telling us who we are, what we should believe, and what we should love for.

A. Identity crisis – Who are we? [Ephesians 1-6]

Ephesians 1-6 teaches us about our Gospel identity. Chapters 1-3 talk about our personal relationship with Jesus Christ and chapters four to six talk about our relationship with other people. We are in Jesus Christ but in this world. But the problem in this world is that our identity is who we think we are, rather than who we are given to be, according to how God created us to be. We cannot be whoever we think we are. Our identity is objective rather than subjective. There are some identities that we become and those are our secondary identities.

1. Our relationship to Christ [Ephesians 1-3]

The primary identity, as we are made in the image of God, is given to us in the Scripture. Our identity in Jesus Christ. Sometimes we get confused because as ones in Jesus Christ, ones who are forgiven, as we are called saints, we sin. We must be able to see two natures, two lives in both. But ultimately, we are in Jesus Christ and that is the primary identity the Bible gives to us.

2. Our relationship to others [Ephesians 4-6]

Then, we have many secondary identities. What we are called to do, according to Ephesians, is that we are to use our secondary identities in the realm of our secondary

identities – our workplace, families, the groups we belong to. We ought to show Christ in all the spheres and realm of our lives.

Because of our vertical relationship with Christ, in all our secondary spheres, we are never alone. This is especially true in the church. We are called to be together, to belong to one another, affect one another, be affected by one another.

According to Ephesians, the church should be “we” cultured. We are one together. It sets forth God’s eternal purpose to create a new community or society which stands out as bright light against the dark and hopeless world.

Today more than ever, we need to catch a biblical vision of the church. According to the Bible, “I” equals “we” and “we” equals “us” because we are connected to Jesus Christ. I believe Paul got this concept when he first met Christ. While on his way to kill Christians, Jesus says, as written in Act 9:4-5,

*“And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, **“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”** And he said, **“Who are you, Lord?”** And he said, **“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.”**”*

Notice Paul was going to kill Christians. He wasn’t persecuting Jesus. Yet Jesus asks, “why are you persecuting me?” and in verse five He claims He is being persecuted. To Jesus, Christians are so much a part of Him that when they are persecuted, He is persecuted. The church is the body of Christ and Jesus is the head. When the body hurts, everything hurts, including the head.

From this comes many implications. Sometimes when people go through hard times, they ask me, “where is God while I’m going through this?” According to the Bible, God is right there with you, suffering and hurting with you. He understands the pain you are going through. Another implication is we should be careful of hurting other Christians because you are hurting Christ.

Positively, it is also true to be diligent about serving other people because, when you serve other Christians, Jesus takes it personally. Our identity is that: I am in Christ. We are in Christ. We are one in Christ.

B. Truth crisis – What should we believe [Ephesians 1-3]

Truth is important because it is not just information, but it tells the reality: what kind of realm we live in. Ephesians says there are two kinds of reality/truths: earthly and heavenly. Ephesians 1 talks about how the Ephesian believers are in Ephesus. But according to verse three, we are not only in the place we live in, but we are in the heavenly place in Jesus.

We need to understand that there are two kinds of truths/realms in our lives and that we have two homes. Ephesians teaches us that the Ephesian believers had two homes as they resided equality in Christ and in Ephesus. All Christians live both in Christ and in the world.

Many of our spiritual troubles arise from the failure to remember we are citizens of two kingdoms. Paul calls us to immerse ourselves in both worlds, in truth and to celebrate. Ephesians 2:6 talks about our position in Christ: “*and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus*”.

Spiritually, powerfully, we are in the heavenly realm in the position of Christ. We have the power of Christ as we are living in this world. Paul’s head was in heaven while his body was on earth.

One implication from this: as we are engaging in the world we can and should be *in* this world but not *of* this world. Unless we can impact the world, we are not ready to go into the world. If we are impacted by the world, it will hinder our lives spiritually. So please be connected to the body of Christ so that that you can be strengthened and make impact in the world.

Another implication is that as we go through difficulties in this life, we need to and can rise above the crisis of our lives because we are people that are placed in the realm of heaven though we are living in this world. Paul was a great example of this. He wrote this letter in Rome while imprisoned. Yet though his wrist was chained and his body confined, his heart and mind were free. His heart and mind inhabited eternity.

We have to remember we have access to God in the heavenly realm. We are connected to the head, Christ, and He can empower us, strengthen us to rise above our difficult circumstances. Only the ones in Christ can do this and that is our Gospel security – that God grants us peace through grace. That’s why we never have to lose hope, no matter what kind of circumstances we face. There will be hardships. But biblical hope is not blind optimism. There is a God who is good and faithful for us.

C. Purpose crisis – What should we be living for? [Ephesians 4-6]

We have to understand the Gospel grammar of Ephesians. I will take some verses in chapter one that teaches us what to live for:

Ephesians 1:6 says, “*to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.*”

Ephesians 1:9 says, “*making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ*”

Ephesians 1:12 says, “*so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.*”

Ephesians 1:14 says, “*who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*”

We are to live for the praise of the name of our God and Lord Jesus Christ. People will see Him through us and praise, honor, and glorify Him.

The more we understand Him, the more we can show Him. Our theology then must become our doxology. When we understand Him, it will lead to praise of Him. When we understand Him, it will lead us to showing Him in our lives. Our doxology will then lead to our practicality. Our praise will lead to our prayer, so we can receive His grace. Then we can live in this world to His peace.

In this responsibility to live for His glory, we are never alone. This is where the Gospel grammar comes in. Nouns do not make sense unless we understand the grammar structure of the language. In the first three chapters, almost all the verbs are in the indicative. It talks about what God has done in Christ. Then, the last chapters are filled with imperatives. The first three chapters is about what God has done for us while the next chapters are about what we must do for Christ. What God had done is the power, foundation, and basis for what we can do for Christ.

At the end of chapter three, when the indicative part is ending, Paul summarizes the letter with this prayer in Ephesians 3:20:

“Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us”.

God is far more able than we can ask or think. Now we have power that is already at work within us and in the church through Christ, forever and ever. He had done it so that we can do it do it for His glory.

Saul, who became Paul, is a great example of this. Before he met Christ, Paul's name was Saul. As a descendant of King Saul, he was named after the tallest of the Benjamites. After coming to know Christ, Paul became so small and humble that even in prison, he had a global heart. The smaller we become, we become spiritual giant for the glory of God. The lion of Judah had cut him down to size so that he acknowledges himself as the smallest of the apostles, least of the saints, worst of the sinner. Paul's smallness became the instrument of God's bigness. His weakness was a channel for God's great power. Matthew 17:20 is a summary of Paul's life and of the church of Jesus Christ:

“He said to them, ‘Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.’”

A mustard seed was culturally known as the smallest seed back then. Nothing is impossible. Though we are small in our faith, God is so great, He is able to do more that you can ask for and imagine. Paul is saying that he is just a mustard seed apostle. Each of us just mustard seed saints. But we keep serving because of His grace that will create peace in this world.