

Getting to know Ephesians

A. Introduction

- “The crown and climax of Paul’s writings” – John Calvin
- “It is the most comprehensive statement of the Christian faith ever penned” – John Stott
- “I saw a new world; everything looked new. I had a new outlook, and new attitudes to other people. I loved God and Jesus became the centre of everything. I was quickened. I was really alive” – John Mackay
- If we reverently absorb this letter it will change our church and us.

B. The Author – Ephesians 1:1

- Paul wrote this letter from prison (1:1; 3:1; 6:20).
- Paul had been a religious terrorist but Christ broke into his life and called him to be an Apostle and sent him to teach with authority.
- He belongs to Christ and speaks with His authority (2:20; 4:11)

C. The Audience – Ephesians 1:1

❖ Two Characteristics

- **Saints** – people set-aside by God to belong to Him.
- **Faithful** – they are saved by faith and must remain faithful.

❖ Two locations

- **In Christ** – all the blessings of God come to us through Him.
- **In Ephesus** – the capital of the Roman province of Asia Minor.
 - ⇒ A wealthy, religious and self-confident city.
 - ⇒ Dominated by the temple of Diana and steeped in witchcraft.
 - ⇒ Intellectually proud – morally corrupt.
 - ⇒ **Acts 19:1-22** - Paul planted the church staying for 3 years.
 - ⇒ **Acts 19:23-41** - The Christians were under pressure.

- ❖ It may have been a round robin letter – read in many churches.

D. Purpose

- The letter is written to strengthen and encourage Gentile Christians living at the heart of a pagan society.
- It is gloriously God centred – it begins with God and His plan.
- It is Trinitarian – the Father initiates the plan, the Son accomplishes the plan and the Spirit applies the plan (1:1-23).
- The plan concerns individuals who are saved by grace alone (2:1-10).
- The plan concerns the church, which is the supreme expression of God’s purpose in this world (2:11-3:21).
- The plan concerns the whole cosmos – one day God will mend this broken world and unite all things under the headship of Christ (1:9-10).
- Knowledge of this should affect every part of our lives now
 - ⇒ In the church – Unity (4:1-16)
 - ⇒ In the world – Purity (4:17-5:21)
 - ⇒ In the home – Harmony (5:21-6:4)
 - ⇒ In the workplace – Integrity (6:5-9)
 - ⇒ In warfare – Victory (6:10-20)

Structure

- **Wealth** (1:3-3:21) – Sit - “...seated with Christ in the heavenly realms” (2:6)
- **Walk** (4:1-6:9) – Walk - “...I urge you to walk worthy...” (4:1)
- **Warfare** (6:10-20) – Stand - “...Stand your ground...” (6:13)

Ephesians 1:3-6

E. Introduction – Ephesians 1:3-14

- Paul begins with a “**eulogy**” (1:3) – he speaks well of God.
- This is a 202-word sentence – the longest in the New Testament.
- It is a rhapsody of praise and a song of salvation. Salvation is:
 - ❖ *Far richer than you think* – it is the eternal purpose of the triune God
 - ⇒ 1:4-6 – Planned and administered by the Father
 - ⇒ 1:7-12 – Purchased and accomplished by the Son
 - ⇒ 1:13-14 – Applied and communicated by the Holy Spirit
 - ❖ *Far older than you imagine* – from eternity (1:4) to eternity (1:10, 14).
 - ❖ *Far bigger than you can comprehend* – it concerns individuals, the church and the cosmos (1:9-10).

F. Title – Ephesians 1:3

- **The Source of blessing:** The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the subject of all the verbs. The only God who exists is the Triune God – the one God who exists eternally in three Persons.
- **The Scope of blessing:** Every “spiritual” blessing. It is communicated by the Spirit and covers all that we need in this life and for eternity.
- **The Location of blessing:** These blessings are ours “*in the heavenly realms*” and “*in Christ*”. Christ has ascended to heaven and He pours out these blessings on us (Acts 2:33). “*In Christ*” refers to:
 - ⇒ **Identity** – the thing that most defines me is that I am in Christ.
 - ⇒ **Security** – I am safe because I am in Him.

G. The Blessings of the Father - 1:4-6 – The Fact of Election

- He chose us (1:4) and predestined us in love (1:5, 11).
- Election is not human speculation, but divine revelation.
 - ⇒ In the Old Testament God chose Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), Israel (Deuteronomy 7:6-8) and David (1 Samuel 16:8-13).
 - ⇒ In the New Testament Jesus (John 15:16) and His Apostles (Acts 13:48; Romans 8:28-30; 1 Thessalonians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:1) taught the doctrine of election.
- It is not based on our goodness or holiness – we were chosen before the creation of the world.
- We were chosen in Christ – the Father and Son planned this together (John 17:4-6, 24).
- The Bible also clearly teaches human responsibility and free agency. We must urge people to come to Christ. “*The truth does not lie in one extreme or the other; nor does it lie in the middle; it lies in both extremes at the same time.*” (Matthew 11:25-29).

H. The Blessings of the Father - 1:4-6 – The Results of Election

- **1:4 - Holiness** – the great purpose of salvation is to set us aside to belong to God and to transform us to be like Christ (Romans 8:29-30; 12:1; 2 Peter 1:3-4).
- **1:5 – Adoption** – this is the great outcome of salvation (Romans 8:15-17; Galatians 4:6-7). In adoption we receive the status and rights of a son. It is “in Christ” – God sees us in Christ and loves us as He loves His Son. It is out of His “*good pleasure*” – He delights to do this.
- **1:6 – Worship** – the proper response is not arrogance or complacency. We are to glory in God’s grace (Exodus 34:4-7).