

The Book of Ephesians

Introduction:

This morning we're going to begin a series on the Book of Ephesians. We're going to go chapter by chapter, verse by verse, until we complete the entire Book of Ephesians.

Ordinarily, in our regular services, I'm more of a topical teacher than an exegetical teacher, and that's because I believe that kind of teaching is better done in an interactive Bible Study setting.

But the Book of Ephesians is such a foundational body of revelation, and is so vital to the spiritual development of every believer, that I believe an exception is in order.

Before we get started, I need to acknowledge the teachings of Bob Yandian and Rick Renner from which a lot of this teaching was derived.

Also, it might interest you to know that I taught this course in our Bible School in Louisiana, for credit, and even though I only taught it for one year, it was one of the most popular courses in the school that year.

If you're a note taker, there's a huge amount of information that'll be coming your way, so do the best you can.

We will endeavor, however, to put the notes I'm using on the website so you can download them and study them for yourselves.

OK, then, let's get started with:

I. Introduction to Ephesians and the Redemptive Plan of God

Overview of the Book of Ephesians

- The book of Ephesians is one of the most concentrated doctrinal epistles written by the Apostle Paul.
- It is the only one of Paul's letters which does not address a specific problem in a church or in someone's personal life.
- It's a wonderful book that applies to the entire Body of Christ.
- I say that because there is some doubt that the letter was specifically written to the church at Ephesus.
- Many of the oldest manuscripts do not include the phrase "at Ephesus" in the opening salutation. (Eph 1:1)
- The theory is that the letter was first read at Ephesus and then passed on to the other churches of Asia Minor.
- The book of Ephesians and the book of Colossians are companion books. And in fact, many of the same phrases are found in both books, almost verbatim.
- At first glance, as you read these books, you might wonder what the difference is between the two might be.
- Ephesians deals with the Body of Christ - the Church. Colossians deals with the head of the Body - Jesus Christ.
- The two join together as the head and the body and so they are naturally complementary.
- The Book of Ephesians is divided into two parts: Chapters 1-3 and Chapters 4-6.

- Part One/Chapters 1-3 deals with our position in Christ or “who we are in Christ”.
- Part Two/Chapters 4-6 deals with the application of these positional truths in our daily lives.
- Themes of Part One include our righteousness, eternal life, our election, our hope, and our redemption.
- Themes of Part Two include Biblical instruction on how to be good husbands, wives, children, bosses, employees, and witnesses.
- The truths in Ephesians are fairly deep but relatively simple in their applications.

Background of the Book of Ephesians

- Philemon was a rich business man in the city of Colosse. The Colossian church met in his home.
- He had a servant named Onesimus. (Col 4:9, Philemon 10)
- Onesimus stole some money from Philemon, ran away to Rome and spent it all.
- He ended up in prison with Paul. Paul led him to the Lord and sent him back to Onesimus with the letter of Philemon. The theme, as you might expect, was forgiveness.
- One of Paul’s friends, Tychicus, went with Philemon and also delivered the book of Ephesians and Colossians.

The City of Ephesus

- Ephesus was a major sea port on the Aegean Sea and a leading center of trade and commerce.
- The city itself was built around the worship of Diana, the Greek goddess of fertility and was known for the worship and the pursuit of sexual pleasure.
- Even though there were other attractions in the city such as race courses and theaters, the temple of Diana was the most popular.
- The reason for this was that worship in the temple was conducted with sexual orgies.
- Since beauty and pleasure played a central role in Greek culture, sexual immorality was rampant.
- Fornication, adultery, and homosexuality were considered perfectly acceptable lifestyles.
- For this reason, much of chapters 4 and 5 deals with sexual sin.
- And Chapter 5 spends a great deal of time on proper marriage relationships.
- And last but not least, a city founded on idolatry and the desires of the flesh was no doubt infested with demons.
(I Cor 10:19-20)
- So you imagine what a difficult place the city of Ephesus must have been to start a church.

Origins of the Church at Ephesus

- Paul's first ministry to the city began in the upper coasts.
- Finding some early disciples there, he laid his hands on them, they were filled with the Holy Ghost and spoke with other tongues and prophesied.

Acts 19

¹And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,

²He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

³And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

⁴Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

⁵When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

⁶And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

⁷ And all the men were about twelve.

⁸ And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

⁹ But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.

¹⁰ And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

- Paul's ministry to the Ephesians was characterized by the bold preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the supernatural power of God in manifestation.
- As a result, all of Asia Minor, the entire region around the City of Ephesus, was evangelized in just 2 years!

¹¹ And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:

¹² So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

- It seems that God's strategy for the city was to counter the darkness with God's Word and to confirm his Word with powerful miracles, healings, and deliverance.
- Notice what happened when the Seven Sons of Sceva tried to move in the power of God the way that Paul did.
- When the plan backfired, it was powerful evidence of the truth of Paul's preaching.

13 Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the LORD Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.

14 And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so.

15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?

16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

18 And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds.

19 Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver (at least one million dollars).

20 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

- Many who have studied the Bible extensively believe that the revival at Ephesus was one of the two greatest revivals found in the Bible.
- One was the revival at Nineveh that broke out when Jonah preached to that totally heathen city. And as you know the

Bible says the entire city of Nineveh repented of their evil ways.

- Consequently, judgment on Nineveh was delayed for a hundred years.
- The other was the revival of the city of Ephesus which was totally overtaken by rampant sexual depravity and the widespread worship of demons and practice of witchcraft.
- Yet at the end of just two years, the city of Ephesus was home to the largest Christian Church in the known world at the time.
- And practitioners of the dark arts were willing to burn millions of dollars of books which they could have sold for considerable gain.
- So with all this in mind it is clear that we can learn a lot about the spirit filled life and our authority over Satan and his kingdom from the passage we just read from the Book of Acts and from a thorough study of the Book of Ephesians.

Flow of the Book of Ephesians

- The main character of chapter 1 is God the Father.
- The main character of chapter 2 is God the Son, Jesus Christ.
- The main character of chapter 3 is God the Holy Ghost.
- The unity of the Godhead or the Trinity is seen in Part One/Chapters 1-3 where positional truths are emphasized.
- Chapters 1-3 deal with the plan of redemption and the building of the Church.

- God the Father originated the plan and this is the theme of chapter 1.
- God the Son executed the plan in his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, and this is the theme of chapter 2.
- God the Holy Ghost revealed of the plan of redemption and this is the theme of chapter 3.
- The plan is given to the Church through the five-fold ministry offices and this is the theme of chapter 4.
- Overcoming sin and putting God's Word into practice in our daily lives is the theme of chapter 5.
- Our victory over Satan and our witness to the world is the theme of chapter 6.

II. The Plan of God (Ephesians 1:1-14):

Salutations

¹Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

- The word Paul literally means "small". (I Cor 15:9, Eph 3:8) We need to be like Paul and see ourselves as small.
- The balance to "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil 4:13) is "without him I can do nothing". (John 15:5)

- The Greek word for apostle is *apostolos* and it means “sent one”. Its origins are from the Phoenician Navy and it also means “the one of highest rank”. Today we might call him Admiral Paul.
- This is why the apostle is mentioned first in the order of five fold ministry offices. (I Cor 12:28, Eph 4:11)
- The irony is that although Paul was “the one of highest rank” he still saw himself as small.
- We see this concept in the phrase “to the saints which are at Ephesus”. The word “saints” means “holy ones” but the fact that they lived in Ephesus ties them to the physical world.
- This illustrates that we have a natural physical side which is small but we have a greater one living on the inside of us in the realm of the spirit.
- Notice that the apostle, as are all the five fold office gifts, is called by God and not by man. No one can make themselves an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor or teacher. You must be called by God.
- Notice also that Paul addresses the “saints”, but he also addresses the “faithful”.
- The saints represent all the born again Christians who are in the Church.
- The faithful represent “the church within the church”. These are the faithful workers and sometimes the full-time ministers that God is looking for.
- This salutation is repeated almost verbatim in the letter to the Colossians. (Col 1:1)

- So the letter is to all the saints, but especially to the faithful ones.

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

- Notice that grace comes before peace. When we strive to please God through our own efforts we can become frustrated.
- Once we cease from our own efforts (Heb 4:10), then peace comes with the knowledge that God is working in our lives.
- We see this same concept repeated throughout the New Testament. (Rom1:7, I Cor 1:3, II Cor 1:2, Gal 1:3, Phil 1:2, Col1:2)

The Plan of Redemption

- Now I want you to notice the italicized phrases in these scriptures as we read through the first chapter of Ephesians because they are unmistakably past tense.
- They indicate that all these things we're going to read about pertaining to the redemptive plan of God for man were already given to us before the foundation of the world.
- Before time, space, and matter were created, these plans existed and were designated for us in the heart and mind of God.
- They are not things that we should aspire to receive or to become.
- They are things that we already have.

- They are things that we already are. If we are in Christ.
- If you're going to live a life of true faith, then this is a fundamental paradigm shift you're going to have to make.

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

- God has blessed us, past tense, with all these blessings but they exist in the spirit realm.
- We have to appropriate them by faith to bring them from the realm of the spirit into manifestation in the natural realm.
- **⁴According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:**

⁵Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

⁶To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

⁷In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

⁸Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

- Concerning the redemptive plan of God for mankind, the wisdom of God was knowing what to do about the fallen state of man, well before it happened.

- The prudence of God was knowing when and where and how to send Jesus into the world to pay the price and seal the deal that he had preconceived before the universe was created.

⁹*Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:*

- The gift of Jesus Christ and the redemption that he would bring was a mystery that none of the ancient prophets knew about.
- But in the fullness of time, it was manifested and was thoroughly conveyed to mankind primarily through the Apostle Paul who had this mystery unfolded to him by Jesus Christ Himself.

¹⁰*That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:*

- This is a reference to the rapture of the church when all believers that are alive on the earth will be gathered together with all the believers that have already preceded them into the next life.
- And beginning with the Millennial Reign, ultimately all things in Heaven and on the Earth will be brought under the rulership of Jesus Christ Our King.
- We will rule and reign with him but he will be our King.

¹¹*In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:*

¹²That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

- Now you can disagree with me if you want to but I believe that all believers will receive an inheritance from the Lord but he has something special for those of us who first trusted in Christ, primarily the Church Age Saints.

¹³In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

¹⁴Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

- When you got Born Again, when you said yes to Jesus, you were sealed and set apart by the Holy Spirit.
- You became a marked man, or a marked woman, destined to receive an inheritance, and in our case, that includes a purchased possession, that is a brand new, immortal, incorruptible, and indestructible body.
- One last thing I want to emphasize concerning these verses in Chapter One before we wrap things up.
- The text makes it clear that all these things were and are ours "in Christ".
- They were held in him before the foundation of the world until his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, and then they were given to us who believe.

Conclusion:

One of the most important concepts you can glean from these scriptures is that all the blessings that were secured for us by Jesus Christ are past tense.

They have already been bought and paid for by the Lord Jesus himself.

They are already ours. All we have to do is receive them.

Salvation is already ours, healing is already ours, deliverance is already ours.

His authority and power are already ours to use as we carry out our assignments in this life.

This is a recurring theme in the first 3 chapters of the Book of Ephesians and one that cannot be overemphasized.

As hard as it is to imagine, God knew before the creation of the universe that man would fall and that he would need a redeemer.

He knew all of us before we were born and had a plan to save us and restore us to the level of authority that we had before Adam fell from grace.

We'll pick it up where we left off next Sunday.