

EPHESIANS

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SESSION 1

INTRODUCTION

Ephesians is a great epistle about the Church - temple, body, bride, army, new man

1. OUR STARTING PLACE

An inadequate view of man's condition will lead to superficial approaches to the Gospel and the Church.

We live in days of mutual toleration - multi-faith where all roads apparently lead to God.

Against that background Paul's opening words come as an axe to the root.

A. You were dead.

- (i) Not desperately ill and weak but actually dead.
- (ii) What does 'dead' mean? - opposite to life!

How does the Bible describe life? - John 17:3 - "This is eternal life to know God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent."

God is the source and sustainer of life. To be in relationship with him, enjoy him, experience his companionship is life.

The natural man is not interested in the things of God. Church going, Bible reading, worship are an anathema to him.

Interested in TV, video, movies, sport, fashion, money, holidays.

If approached about knowing a Holy God he is more interested in sin.

Without the life that Christ gives, mankind is dead and experiencing the wages of sin (Romans 6:23) which will ultimately result in physical death, judgement and total exclusion from the presence of God.

John Stott - "They are as unresponsive to him as a corpse."

B. You Were Enslaved.

Though 'walking' therefore apparently alive, in fact subject to overwhelming forces.

- (i) Following the course of this world. (Greek - 'age of this world')
 - (a) Society organised without reference to God. Both 'age' and 'world' express a social value system alien to God.
 - (b) Pressure to conform (Ro 12:1-2)

Either

Voluntarily embracing cultural bondage and preoccupation with possessions, fashion, clothing etc.

or

Oppressive regime imposing its culture of injustice, e.g. racial discrimination.

- (ii) Prince of the power of the air. (ruler of the realm of the air)
Their lives were under the control of a ruler. (cf 1:21, 3:10, 6:11-12)
Cf Col 1:13 - deliverance from dominion of darkness and transference to the Kingdom of God's beloved Son.

The spirit now at work (energio - same word used regarding God's power) in the "sons of disobedience". Satan's power inflames passions and actions in the unregenerate.

'Sons of disobedience' does not simply mean disobedient sons.

Charles Hodge points out "sons of famine" are famished.
Sons of Beliel are worthless.
Sons of disobedience are disobedient.

Disobedience is the source of our character. The sin is not simply the absence of good quality it is a lack of obedience. It challenges God's right to choose for us.

The Bible teaches this to be the root of our problem. Man is a rebel against God.

Modern man refused to see himself as a creature of God and therefore is unaccountable.

Man likes to think of himself as free - Adam was but all since his fall have been children of disobedience.

As such we are very vulnerable to the Prince of the power of the air who "works" in us.

(iii) The Passions of our Flesh

'Flesh' used in different ways in New Testament (even in Eph - see 2:11,15, 5:29,31, 6:5,12) - only here in negative ethical way.

- Lincoln "Flesh in such a context stands not simply for a person's physical existence, but for the sphere of humanity in its sinfulness and opposition to God. It is the sphere in which a person not only displeases God but is also in fact incapable of pleasing God (Ro 8:18). It is the sphere in which life is lived in pursuit of one's own ends and in independence of God. As such, it is not limited to indulgence in sensuality but can take on various forms, including allegiance to the law (Gal:3)."

Not only actions but even 'thoughts' were corrupt. (Ro 8:5-7, Co 2:18).

C. We Were Condemned.

We were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind (v3).

(i) The wrath of God.

- Stott "It is God's personal, righteous, constant hostility to evil, his settled refusal to compromise with it, and his resolve instead to condemn it."

(ii) Children of Wrath.

Hebraism - like 'sons of disobedience' (cf Dt 25:2, 1 Sam 26:16, ?)

(iii) By Nature.

Same phrase Gal 2:15 "we who are Jews by nature."

Cf Ro 5:12-21 - Paul recognised that as well as sinning themselves, men in solidarity with Adam, inherit a sinful situation by sharing in the one sin of the one man.

- Stott "For we were ourselves in Adam. It may truly be said that we sinned in Adam, and that in and with him we incurred guilt and died."

'By nature' should not be taken as of the essence of human nature.

Paul always sees sin as abnormal, a disorder.

2. **BUT GOD (v4-10)**

(A) What God Has Done.

God has saved us - "You have been saved." - vs 5 & 8.

3 verbs with the prefix syn (together with). He made us alive together with Christ (v5), raised us up with him (v6), made us sit with him (v6). Three things that happened to Jesus included us who are in Him.

- Stott "Fundamental to New Testament Christianity is this concept of the union of God's people with Christ."
- Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones "Our union with Christ - one of the greatest and most marvellous of all Christian doctrines, one of the most glorious beyond any question at all."

Scripture represents it in two ways:-

- (i) Federal or Covenantal - we were in Adam now we are in Christ - developed particularly in Romans 5.

(ii) Mystical - I am the vine you are the branches - we enjoy the same life (or sap).
Body and members
Husband and wife - two become one flesh.
Therefore what has happened to Christ has happened to us.
We were dead - but Christ took our place, suffered and died.
But he was raised up again.
So the Christian has come to the end of his death.

- Lincoln "Christ's death was a death to the old order, to the powers of this age, including sin, and his resurrection was a coming alive to a new order, in which he functioned as Lord with the power of God.

"Christ's death and resurrection changed the power structures in history. For believers to have died and been raised with Christ was the equivalent of having been transformed from the old dominion to the new, because in God's sight they had been included in what happened to Christ.

"Christ's exaltation involved his triumph and rule over hostile cosmic powers. A new situation in regard to these powers was inaugurated in history by Christ's victory. That God has seated believers with Christ means therefore that they are part of the new dominion's superiority over the old, participating in its liberation from the powers and its restoration of harmony to the cosmos."

He has made us alive - quickened - regenerated.

Regeneration - Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones, "An act of God by which a principle of new life is implanted in man, and the governing disposition of the soul is made holy."

A creative act of God - a new creation.

Raised up with him -

No longer dead in trespass and sins
Walking in newness of life
A new heart
A renewed mind

In the heavenlies:

- (a) Negatively - No longer of this world.
No longer of the dominion of Satan.
No longer under the wrath of God.
Like a Pilgrim - Hebrews 11 - no continuing city
looking for a city to come.
1 Peter 2 - "strangers and pilgrims"

- (b) Positively - We participate in Christ's triumph.
We enjoy the fruits of His victory.
We enjoy the life of the Holy Spirit.
We are "within the veil".
We are seated and secure.

(B) Why God Did It.

4 key words:- mercy (4), love (4), grace (5,8), kindness (7).
God's overflowing compassion has come to those with no merit.

His character of love and kindness is poured out on undeserving sinners.

Not only for our sake, but also as part of a larger purpose to display the riches of his grace (cf Eph 1:6 - the praise of the glory of his grace) - which will only in the coming ages be fully shown for what it is (v7).

(C) How God Did It.

(i) By grace through faith (v8)

God's act of grace is the ground of salvation and faith is the means by which it becomes effective in a person's life.

The whole process is not of ourselves but the gift of God.

Paul never wants us to boast. (e.g. Rom 3:27 - in works; 1 Cor 1:28-31 - in human wisdom; Gal 6:13, Ph 3:3 - in the flesh) but only in the Lord and his Cross.

(ii) By a new creation (v10)

- Lincoln " Paul saw the salvation God had inaugurated through Christ as a new creation (Gal 6:15, 2 Cor 5:17). It was more than simply a restoration of conditions before the fall; it involved, rather, the creation of a new humanity, that destiny God had purposed but which before Christ had not been reached."

We are his workmanship (poiema - work of art, masterpiece) created for works which God prepared beforehand.

God has specific purpose for us - even this flows from his grace.

Not that we are without responsibility, we have to 'walk in them'. We have to actually live out those purposes.

- Note contrast - v1-2 walking in trespasses and sins
v10 walking in good works

God's saving power reaches its intended goal by changed life style.