

Place: Lurgan Baptist 16:2:2016

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

Reading: Ephesians 1:1-14

50. THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

In 1916 a woman named Hettie Green died in the U.S.A. When she died, it was discovered that she had left an estate valued at 100 million dollars. That is an enormous amount of money today, but it was an astronomical amount in those days. Hettie Green may have been wealthy, but she was known as America's greatest miser. She would often eat cold oatmeal because it was too costly to heat the water to cook it. Once, when her son suffered a severe leg injury, she spent so much time looking for a free clinic that the leg had to be amputated. She even hastened her own death by allowing herself to get worked up into a fit of rage in an argument over skim milk, because it was cheaper than whole milk. *Hettie Green was a woman who possessed great wealth, but she did not have the ability to tap into it.* The book of Ephesians was written to people just like that. They are rich in the things of God, but they do not know. This book came to them to let them know just what they had in Christ, who they were in Christ, and how to spend what they possessed in Jesus Christ.

I wonder how many of you have ever visited the magnificent ruins of the city of Ephesus ? It's well worth a visit and a few years ago (September (2009) I had the privilege of seeing around what is left of this ancient city

located near the Turkish town of Kusadasi. To say I was impressed is an understatement. The grandeur, the structure, the architecture is amazing. It will not surprise you then when I tell you that its citizens liked to call Ephesus, “ *The Metropolis of Asia.*” Think of,

THE CITY:

For a moment. The city of Ephesus was an inland city three miles from the sea, but the broad mouth of the Cayster River allowed access and provided the greatest harbour in Asia Minor. Four great trade roads went through Ephesus, therefore it became known as the gateway to Asia. This was a prosperous business centre for it was located on the trade route from Rome to the East. Ephesus was also a centre of pagan worship. *One of the seven wonders of the ancient world was located here in Ephesus, the Temple of Diana, a massive structure that was long as two football fields.* With Temple worship there came not only idolatry but immorality. Small wonder businessmen travelled the four major roadways to Ephesus.

They came flocking into the Temple to have every sexual fantasy fulfilled. For the worship of Artemis (Diana) was unspeakably vile. Her idol was a gross many breasted monstrosity, popularly believed to have fallen from heaven. (Acts 19:35) The temple was attended by numerous priests, eunuchs and slaves. Thousands of priestesses who were little more than temple prostitutes, played a major role in the worship of Diana. Ephesus, became known as the “ *Vanity Fair of the Ancient*

World.” Yet it was there, in that midst of that godless city, that God planted a church.

THE CHURCH:

Was possibly founded by Priscilla and Aquila who were there left by Paul (Acts 18:18-19) on his second missionary. The work was later firmly established by Paul on his missionary journey (Acts 19:1) and he served there as their pastor for some three years. Timothy also ministered there (1 Tim 1:3) and according to an early tradition, the apostle John replaced Timothy toward the end of the first century. Now Ephesus was a very privileged church, the only church in the New Testament to which two apostles addressed letters. *When Paul wrote to Ephesus it was the **Climax church** of the day,*

*A.D. 60-62 when John wrote some 20-30 years later it was the **Crisis church** of the day. (Rev 2:4) 1.2.*

THE CORRESPONDENCE:

For it appears that Paul wrote this letter from a prison cell in Rome where he described himself as “ *an ambassador in bonds.*” (6:20) The book was penned around the years 60-62 A.D. and was brought to the church by a gentleman by the name of Tychicus. (6:21-22) So Ephesians is a letter from jail. Besides Ephesians Paul wrote three other letters during his period of Roman incarceration.

(Acts 28:30) Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. Isn't it good to remind ourselves that no matter how restricted our movements may be there is always something we can do for the Lord. Here is Paul chained daily to a Roman

soldier yet writing four of the most Christ-exalting books of the New Testament. Now while the letter was directed to the church at Ephesus there is reason to believe that it circulated among the churches of Asia mentioned in Revelation Chapters 2 and 3. (1:1 Col 4:16) You see, this letter deals with church truth in general, not the kind of local problems you would find in the Corinthian letters or 1 Thessalonians. In every sense Ephesians is Paul's greatest word on the church teaching us what the church is in the mind of God, and what it ought to be in practice before the eyes of men. *Now the one theme which runs throughout this letter is the church. Now keep in mind there are two aspects of the church in the New Testament. In the Corinthian letter we have the Church, the body of Christ in its local aspect, the church which is visible or manifested. In the Ephesian letter we have the church, the body of Christ in its universal aspect, the church which is invisible or mystical.*

A believer is born into the church universal when saved (1:5 2:13) he may subsequently join a local church. So the theme of this epistle is a grand and exalted one. It is that of the church declared to be the body of Christ. Now This book has been given many soaring titles. It has been called “ *The Alps of the New Testament,*” “ *The crown and climax of Pauline theology,*” Samuel Coleridge called it “ *The divinest composition of man.*” Someone has called Ephesians “ *The believer's checkbook.*” Imagine having an account upon which you could write checks as often as you wished, in any amount you wished, and that account would never be diminished. That is what the believer has in the book of Ephesians. Notice first of

all that Paul talks about,

(1)OUR SPIRITUAL WEALTH: Ch's 1-3

This book reveals the riches of God's grace to the believer. It teaches us about what we have because of who we are in Christ. Paul talks here about the “ *riches of his grace*,” (1:7) and the “ *riches of his glory*.” (3:16) Here we see something of the wonderful, spiritual, eternal riches which are ours through grace, in our Lord Jesus Christ. Here Paul talks about,

(a)OUR POSSESSIONS IN CHRIST CH 1:

The spiritual blessings that are ours because we are in Christ. (1:3) Now one of the key words of this epistle is the word “ *in*,” mentioned 27 times in this letter. What does it mean to be in Christ ? It means a change of position and a difference in possession. “ *Without Christ*,” a sinner spiritually dead, and a moral bankrupt. “ *In Christ*,” a saint spiritually alive and a joint heir with Christ. “ *Without Christ*,” one is, has and can do nothing. “ *In Christ*,” one is, has, and can do everything. There's another phrase here that deserves our attention, “ *in heavenly places in Christ*.” (1:3) Or “ *in the heavenlies*.” Now it is obvious that Paul is not speaking here about heaven, rather he speaking of the sphere where Christ is. And where Christ is the Christian is also by virtue of his union with Christ. (1:2, 2:6) You see, the Christian really operates in two spheres, the human and the divine, the visible and the invisible. Physically we are on the earth in a human body, but spiritually we are seated

with Christ in the heavenly sphere and it is this heavenly sphere that provides the power and direction for the earthly walk. When she was young Victoria was shielded from the fact that she would be the next ruling monarch of this nation lest this knowledge spoil her. When her teacher finally did let her discover for herself that she would be one day be Queen, Victoria's response was “ *Then I will be good*.” Her life would be controlled by her position. No matter where she was Victoria was governed by the fact that she on throne of England. Likewise with us, no matter we are on earth we are seated in the heavenlies with Christ, and that is the basis of our life and power. Now Paul tells us here that each person of the Godhead has blessed us. Do you see,

The Blessings from God the Father:

He has Chosen us: This is the doctrine of election, a doctrine that we cannot fully explain but one that we can fully enjoy. Someone has said, “ *Try to explain the doctrine of election and you may lose your mind try to explain it away and you may lose your soul*.” Think of it we were chosen in Him, by Him and for Him. Notice that God chose us before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ and not in ourselves. And He chose for us a purpose to be holy and without blame. A story is told a child named Freddie. The news leaked out at school that Freddie was adopted and with the typical cruelty of children some of the boys teased him about it. One day Freddie turned on his chief tormentor “ *All right, Frankie*,” he said “ *your parents had to take you mine chose me*.” (Deut 7:7-8)

*I sought the Lord
And afterwards I knew
He moved my soul to seek Him
Seeking me
It was not I that found
O Saviour true
No, I was found by Thee*

He has Adopted us: The word “*predestination*,” means “*to ordain beforehand, to predetermine.*” Now it seems that election refers to people while predestination refers to purposes, that is, purposes for those persons. The events connected with the crucifixion of Christ were predestined. (Acts 4:25-28) God has predestined our adoption (1:5) and our conformity to Christ. (Rom 8:29-30) Now adoption is not the way you enter God’s family. The only way to get into God’s family is by being born again. But the instant you were saved you received an adult standing which means you have all the adult privileges and yes all the adult responsibilities.

He has Accepted us: (1:6) In ourselves we are not acceptable to God but in Christ we are “*made accepted.*” Do you recall that Paul wrote to Philemon to encourage him to accept his runaway slave Onesimus. He said, “*If he owes you anything I will pay it. Receive him as you would receive me.*” (Phile 17) That’s what Christ says to the Father, “*Receive this saint as you would receive Me.*”

The Blessings from God the Son:

He redeemed us, He forgave us, He revealed God’s will

and way to us. He secured for us an inheritance. But there is a third movement for now the focus is on

The Blessings of God the Holy Spirit:

You see we are moving from eternity past (1:4-6) and history past (1:7-12) to the immediate experience of the Ephesian Christians. The Spirit of God has Sealed us: “*After ye believed,*” should read “*when ye believed,*” for the Holy Spirit enters the heart the instant the sinner trusts Christ and this sealing means God owns us and God keeps us. Moreover the Spirit of God: is given us as an “*earnest.*” Do you know what that means ? God has given us His Spirit as the down payment,” to assure us that we will experience total redemption, the redemption of the body as well as the redemption of the soul. Now do you notice that at end of these three sections Paul tells us why the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirt have given these blessings. “*To the praise of his glory,*” (1:6,12, 14) You see, salvation is by God’s grace for God’s glory.

My do you realize how rich you are ? During an evening walk a son asked his father, “*Dad we will ever be rich ?*” Affectionately the father replied, “*Son we are rich. Perhaps someday we will also have money.*” (a)

(b) OUR POSITION IN CHRIST: CH 2

You see, the sinner who trusts Christ has been raised and seated on the throne (2:1-10) and believing Jews and Gentiles have been reconciled and set into the temple. (2:11-22) So,

We are Raised: (2:1-10) You see (2:1) tells us were Dead: (2:2) we were Dominated: and (2:3) we were Depraved: “ But God,” are these words not some of the greatest in the Bible ? I mean God could have allowed us to go in sin and live eternally with the devil in hell but instead He chose to save us. “ *But God.*” Dr. Sidlow Baxter says, “ *It is a marvel of Divine Power for when our condition was such who **could** have done it but God ? And it is a marvel of Divine Grace for when our condition was such who **would** have done it but God ?*” “ *Oh to grace how great a debtor daily I’m constrained to me.*”

We are Reconciled: (2:11-22) “ *But now,*” in (2:13) parallels “ *But God,*” in (2:4) You know, when Christ died on the cross He broke down every barrier that stood between Jews and Gentiles. Remember there was no love lost between them. In the Jewish temple there was a wall about three and half feet high that separated the “ *Court of the Gentiles,*” from the rest of the structure and on the wall there was a sign giving warning that any Gentile who passed beyond it would be killed. My when Jesus Christ died He tore down that wall. He not only made peace between sinners and God, but He made peace between Jews and Gentiles. He took sinful Jews and sinful Gentiles and through His cross made a “ *new man,*” the church. Its out with the old and in with the new.

Is this not the mystery Paul talks about in (Ch 3) ? *A mystery is a truth once hidden but now revealed.* The mystery here is not that Gentiles would be saved, that was no mystery but that God would make of Jew and Gentile something new, the church, the body of Christ, this was

something not revealed in Old Testament times. But today we can say,

***In Christ there is no East or West
In Him no south or north
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide earth***

(c) OUR POTENTIAL IN CHRIST: CH 3

This is seen in Paul’s two tremendous prayers. The first one in (1:15-23) the second one is in (3:13-21) and the two complement each other. In the first Paul prays “ *that ye may know,*” (1:18) in the second prayer Paul prays that “ *ye might be.*” (3:19) The first prayer is a prayer for *enlightenment*, the second is a prayer for *enablement*. Now in these prison prayers of Paul we discover the blessings Paul wanted his converts to enjoy. Isn’t it interesting that in none of these prayers Paul requests material things, or physical things, or financial things ? I mean what is our emphasis when we are praying for each other ?

Now it’s not wrong to pray for physical and material needs, but the emphasis here is on the spiritual. Paul emphasis is on spiritual perception and real Christian character. He is not asking the Lord to give them what they do not have he is praying that the Lord will reveal to them what they already have. Paul prays first that we might know what Christ has done for us (1:15-23) then he prays that we might live up to these wonderful blessings and put them to work in our daily lives. (1)

(2) OUR SPIRITUAL WALK CH’S 4:1-6:9

Is this not typical of Paul's letters ? He teaches doctrine before deportment, calling before conduct, wealth before walk and position before practice. It is vital that we keep these two elements together. *If we believe we are saved and have a ticket to heaven regardless of how we live we have not understood the gospel.* This letter as written to remind Christians of their immeasurable blessings in Christ, and not only to be thankful for those blessings but also to live in a manner worthy of them. Now the Christian life is compared to a walk because it starts with one step of faith, involves progress and demands balance and strength. If we do not learn to walk we will never be able to run (Heb 12:2) or stand in the battle. (6:11) Notice here that we are to,

(a) WALK CHARACTERISTICALLY: 4:1-16

That is certain traits of character will mark us. We will seek to Preserve Unity: Do you see (4:3) ? Notice please what we are not asked to do. We are not asked to make unity, Paul does not tell us to manufacture unity, but to maintain the unity already existing in the body. This is not ecumenical unity or ecclesiastical unity rather this is evangelical unity a unity based on organism not on organisation. Dr. A. C. Gaebelin says, “ *We keep the unity of the Spirit when we recognize in every true believer a member of the same body.*” My the unity is there but are you seeking to maintain it ? Sadly, there is hardly a week goes by when we do not hear of some church somewhere having a split. But as Sam Gordon in his book on Ephesians says, “ *biblical unity is all about the right hand of fellowship not the right fist of fellowship, unity is linking hearts not banging heads.*”

We will seek to Promote Usefulness: Unity is a requirement for usefulness, especially in the church where we find the greatest variety of gifts. Now the Gifts to the Church: are given in (4:7-11) You see, when Christ ascended He gifts to His people through the coming of the Holy Spirit. He also gave these gifted people to the local assemblies. I think that Paul is looking at the church here on two level's, he saw the body of Christ made up of all believers growing gradually, until it reaches maturity, but he also saw the local body of believers ministering to each other. The goal of the church is described in (4:12-16) The pastor teacher is to nourish the saints with the Word of God, and equip them for service, the saints in turn perform the work of the ministry. As each Christian grows the entire body grows in Christ.

Now is that not a different concept than we have ? Churches call pastors and pay him to do the work. Paul says “ *no you've got it wrong.*” The pastor teacher through the ministry of the Word equips the church to do the job. (2 Tim 3:13-17) Look at (4:12) again for here is how it should read, “ For the maturing of the saints unto the work of the ministry until the building up of the body of Christ.” Tell me, how is the body built up ? Through the Word of God. Do you recall the declaration of the apostles ? “ *We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.*” (Acts 6:4) Now listen, I do a lot of visitation sometimes far too much, but here is my priority “ *prayer and the ministry of the Word.*” Dr. Donald Barnhouse says, “ *No man is ever able to fill the pulpit adequately unless he spends thousands of hours year after year in the study of God's Word.*”

Sure there are churches and pastors who have all kinds of programmes and some of them are doing all kinds of things but is the flock being fed ? the church is a body and must have spiritual food and that food is the Word of God.

(b) WALK CONSISTENTLY: 4:17-5:14

That is our practice must match our profession. Let me show you a few phrases here about walking. Do you see what Paul says in (4:17) “ *Walk not*,” the believer is not to imitate the life of the unsaved around him, for the unsaved man is spiritually darkened (4:18) spiritually dead (4:18) and spiritually depraved. (4:19) Rather we are to “ *put off*,” (4:22-23) “ *put on*,” (5:24) and “ *put away*.” (4:25) You see, the old man, the old self (the former life) has been crucified and buried, and as we reckon this to be true we “ *put off*,” the old man. Do you recall the instruction the Lord gave concerning Lazarus ? Lazarus had been in the grave four days when Christ and His disciples arrived in Bethany. Martha the sister of Lazarus even admitted “ *Lord by this time he stinketh for he hath been dead four days.*” (Jn 11:39) But Christ spoke the word and Lazarus came forth alive, then Christ said “ *Loose him and let him go.*” (Jn 11:44)

“ *Take off the grave clothes and let him go.*” It’s not enough to die to the old life there must be resurrection and manifestation of the new life. Lazarus no longer belonged to the old dominion of death, for he was now alive. Why go about wearing grave clothes ? Take off the old and put on the new. We must “ *put away*,” (once for all) certain sins and Paul names these. Lying, (4:25) anger

(4:26-27) stealing, corrupt speech (4:29) and bitterness. (4:30-32) Such things should not be found in the heart of the child of God. Sometimes we sing that hymn “ *What a wonderful change in my life has been wrought since Jesus came into my heart.*” But Paul is saying here the proof of the pudding is in the eating. My are you what you claim to be ? Do you see the other phrase In (5:2) “ *Walk in love*,” we have often it said, “ *Like father like son.*” That’s what the word “ *followers*,” means “ *mimics*.” Have you ever seen a child sitting in the front seat of a car trying to drive like his father ? Or walking behind him pretending to mow the lawn. Or perhaps even imitating Dad smoking a cigarette or drinking alcohol. You see if we are children of God then we ought to imitate our Father. God is love and we should walk in love. How like your Heavenly Father are you ? Do you see that other phrase ? “ *Walk as children of light*,” (5:9) What does that mean ? It means to live before the eyes of God, not hiding anything.

One day some fellows came to see Charles Haddon Spurgeon. They were trying to blackmail him They walked into his office and threatened him saying that if he didn’t meet their demands they would publish things that would ruin his reputation. Do you what the great preacher said ? “ *Write all you know about me across the heavens I have no hide.*” Do you know what that is ? Its “ *walking in the light*,” is this you ? Is your walk characteristic of a believer ? Is it consistent ? (a) (b)

(c) WALK CAREFULLY: 5:15-6:9

Do you see that word “ *circumspectly*,” ? (5:15) It’s the last time appearance of the word “ *walk*,” in this epistle.

It means looking around carefully so as not to stumble. It means walking wisely. The Reason for walking wisely is in (5:16) The Resources for walking wisely is in (5:18) and the Results of walking wisely is in (5:19-6:9) Indeed in (5:18) Paul gives us the key for living the Christian life. “ *Be filled with the Spirit,*” he says. Look at Paul’s analogy. He likens being filled with the Spirit to be being drunk with wine. You see, the similarity between the two is in the matter of control. A drunken person is controlled by the alcohol which he has consumed. In just the same way a Spirit filled person is controlled by the Holy Spirit. D.L. Moody was preaching and witnessing quite a bit of blessing. However there were two women in his congregation who detected that something was missing in his preaching, so they began to pray for him. They told him so and he was angry. Eventually he joined them in the place of prayer. Sometime later he was in New York and he felt the Lord was dealing with him. He went to the store of a friend and handed his life afresh to the Lord.

The mighty Spirit of God took control of him, and God remarkably used him so much so that everyone everywhere was talking about D.L. Moody. A committee gathered together to discuss the coming of D.L. Moody for a gospel campaign. One young unimpressed minister stood to his feet and said, “ *I don’t see why we have to D.L. Moody for a gospel campaign after has he a monopoly exclusive control of the Holy Spirit.*” In response one old servant of the Lord stood to his feet and said, “ *Young man we who know Mr. Moody personally know that he has no monopoly of the Holy Spirit but we know this the Holy Spirit has a monopoly of D.L. Moody.*”

That’s the secret. And when the Holy Spirit has a monopoly of your life, it affects the church relationship (5:19-21) the domestic relationship (5:22-6:4) and the business relationship. (6:5-9) My You have all of Him, has He all of you ? Do you want your spiritual walk to be effective for God ? “ Be filled,” (1) (2)

(3) OUR SPIRITUAL WARFARE CH’S 6:10-24

You see, after the wealth in the first three chapters and the walk in the ensuing chapters, the end bit is all about warfare. Does that surprise you ? Do you think that Satan is going to let such wealth and walk go uncontested ? No, for Paul talks here about,

(a) OUR ENEMY: 6:10-12

He is described in (6:11) as “ the devil,” which means the “ accuser,” because he accuses God’s people day and night before the throne of God. (Rev 12:7-11) My our enemy is real and we need to take him seriously. Now I am fully aware that many people in our society discount the idea of a personal devil, even some professing Christians. Years ago the New York Independent printed these words by Alfred H. Hough.

**Men don’t believe in a devil now as their fathers used
to do**

**They forced the door of the broadest creed
To let his majesty through
There isn’t a print of his cloven foot
A fiery dart from his bow**

**To be found in earth or air today
For the world has voted so
But who is mixing the fatal drink
That palsies heart and brain
And loads the bier of each passing year
With ten hundred thousand slain
Who blights the bloom of the land today
With the fiery breathe of hell
If the Devil isn't and never was
Won't someone rise and tell**

**Who dog's the steps of the toiling saint
And digs the pit for his feet
Who sows the tares in the field of time
Wherever God sows his wheat
The Devil is voted not to be
And of course the thing is true
But who is doing the kind of work
The Devil alone should so**

**Won't someone step to the front forthwith
And make their bow and show
How the frauds and crimes of a single day
Spring up, we want to know
The Devil was voted fairly out
And of course the Devil's gone
But simple people would like to know
Who carries his business on ?**

My all of this is in line with Satanic strategy. The Devil is an expert at the disappearing act. “ *The Devil's*

best trick,” observes Baudelaire “ *is to persuade us that he does not exist.*” Are you taking your enemy seriously ?

(b) OUR EQUIPMENT: 6:13-18

What Paul calls “ *the whole armour of God,*” (6:13) He details this armour for us here. I mean how are we going to deal with one who wants to destroy the work of God, discredit the Word of God and discourage the people of God ? We need to wear the panoply of God.

(a) OUR EXAMPLES: 6:19-24

Paul and Tychicus. “ *A beloved brother,*” describes his personal attachment to Paul, “ *a faithful minister,*” describes his spiritual allegiance to God. Isn't it an encouragement to know that we are not fighting the battle alone ?

***I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God,
I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His blood
Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod,
For I'm part of the family, the family of God.***

***From the door of an orphanage to the house of the King,
No longer an outcast, a new song I sing
From rags unto riches, from the weak to the strong,
I'm not worthy to be here, but praise God I belong***

Paul closes the letter with four words, peace, love, faith, grace. He was a prisoner of Rome yet he was richer than the Emperor. My no matter what our circumstances are in Christ we are “ *blessed with all spiritual blessings.*”

