

Ephesians - Lesson 1

Background & Ephesians 1:1-2

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, without Your help our labor is useless, and without Your light our search is in vain. Invigorate our study of Your holy Word that, by due diligence and right discernment, we may establish ourselves and others in Your holy faith; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

Study Introduction

Introductory Question

- When you think of Ephesians, what comes to mind? A specific passage or topic?

Why study Ephesians?

- In this chief letter written by Paul, nearly every major article of faith can be found.
 - Example: Justification, the Church, Original and Actual Sin, Baptism, and Election
- In fact, seeing the richness of this book, the Lutheran father cited Ephesians over sixty different times throughout the confessions.
- This gives us the opportunity to discuss a wide variety of topics, such as: saved by grace through faith apart from works, the new life and walking in love, marriage, and spiritual warfare.
- All of which is applicable for us today.

Background Information

Where is Ephesus?

- The chief city of Ionia in Asia Minor
- Modern day Turkey

The City of Ephesus

- It was a major city.
- Throughout its history it was conquered by Ionians, Lydians, Greeks, and Romans
- It was a commercial crossroad
- Both the battles fought in Ephesus and its centrality in trading made the city one of the most culturally diverse population in the Greek East.
- These characteristics would have suited Paul who regularly chose commercially and intellectually vibrant cities as his mission centers.

The Religious Scene in Ephesus

- The city of Ephesus had a diverse religious scene.
- In addition to Christianity, there was:
 - There was a large population of Jews.
 - Paul could begin his mission in Ephesus by engaging the Jews in synagogues.
 - However, Jews in this region would have seen the Christian movement as a threat.
 - Predominately in Ephesus was Polytheism:
 - Ephesus housed numerous pagan temples, including dedications gods such as Zeus.

- Some say worship included up to fifty gods, including Greek, Egyptian, and local gods.

Author

- Ephesians as written by St. Paul
- However, liberal scholars have recently disputed this.
- We'll take a look at this further once we start looking at verse one.

Date of Composition

- Paul writes to the Ephesians while a prisoner “an ambassador in chains” as Ephesians 6:20.
- Ephesian along with Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon are the Captivity Letters. Letters Paul wrote while he was imprisoned from AD 58-60.
- Location:
 - Traditionally, Rome is considered the location where Paul wrote this letter.
 - However, Ephesus and Caesarea have all been suggested.
 - For the sake of time, and requiring further research on this I'll skip this for now.

Why a letter to the Ephesians?

- Missionary Trips
 - 2nd Missionary Trip - Journeyed through Ephesus on his way to Antioch (Acts 18:18-22).
 - 3rd Missionary Trip
 - Stayed in Ephesus two years and three months (18:23-19:41)
 - Professor of mine says this was A.D. 55-56, though others will place this earlier.
- 1 Cor.16:9 - Paul had gathered a large church for Christ.
- 1 Tim. 1:3 - After his departure Paul had entrusted to his disciple Timothy the church and of which the evangelist John is said to have been in charge there.
- Johann Gerhard, a Luther church father further explains:
 - No schisms had been stirred up there
 - No false doctrine had been sown there, as among the Galatians.
 - Rather, the impelling cause for writing was the far-seeing concern of the apostle lest they become weak and weary of the Gospel because of the chains that were binding him at Rome.
 - Eph. 3:13 - I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.
 - Ephesians could have grown dispirited due to Paul's imprisonment.

Outline of Ephesians

- Luther's Preface to the Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians:
 - *In this epistle St. Paul teaches, first, what the gospel is, how it was predestined by God alone in eternity, and earned and sent forth through Christ, so that all who believe on it become righteous, godly, living, saved men, and free from the law, sin, and death. This he does in the first three chapters.*
 - *Then he teaches that false teachings and the commandments of men are to be avoided, so that we may remain true to one Head, and become sure and genuine and complete in Christ alone. For in him we have everything, so that we need nothing beside him. This he does in chapter 4.*

- *Then he goes on to teach that we are to practice and prove our faith with good works, avoid sin, and fight with spiritual weapons against the devil, so that through the cross we may be steadfast in hope.*¹

Ephesians - Chapter 1

- **Read verses 1 & 2**
- These opening verses are called the greeting or salutation.
- More often than not, these opening verses are usually glanced over. However, these verses are packed with meaning.
 - Usually introduces here what he will be writing on.
 - These initial verses opens a dialogue between the author and the addressee that continues throughout the rest of the letter.

Verse 1

- *Paul...*
 - Here we see that the writer of this epistle is St. Paul.
 - Authorship:
 - Prior to the 18th century no Christian writer expressed doubt that Ephesians was written by the apostle Paul.
 - In modern times this authorship has come under question.
 - On the right you have those that defend Paul is the writer.
 - To the left stand roughly 80% of critical scholars doubt this.
 - Style, Vocabulary, Thought/Theology (ie: church, Christ)
 - Internal Evidence
 - Self-identification
 - Here and in Ephesians 3:1
 - Structure
 - opening greeting, prayers and thanksgiving, didactic (teaching) material, concluding greetings and salutation.
 - Follows other Pauline Epistles
 - External Evidence
 - No early author disputed Pauline authorship
 - Early church father's state it was Paul
 - 2nd Century unanimous attestation to Pauline authorship
 - Irenaus
 - Clement of Alexandria
 - Tertullian
 - **QUESTION - To the church, does it really matter whether or not Ephesians was written by Paul?**
 - Yes - it does matter as we will see with this the next phrase
- *...an apostle of Christ Jesus...*
 - Paul is appealing to his office as apostle.

¹ Martin Luther, Luther's Works, Vol. 35: Word and Sacrament I, p.385.

- All of Paul's letter except Phillipians, and 1st and 2nd Thessalonians, and Philemon begin with this assertion.
- Apostle means "one who is sent". He was sent by Christ Jesus Himself, the one who was crucified for sins and raised from the dead.
- Everything that Paul writes and speaks carries the authority of the one who sent him, which is Christ.
- Authenticity and authority cannot be separated.
 - Paul's writing hold authority for the church because he was authorized by Christ as his apostle to speak for him in teaching his church.
 - If Paul didn't write Ephesians, it would have no place in the Christian Scriptures and could claim no authority over the faith and life of its readers.
 - It would be deeply ironic if a writer falsely claiming to be the apostle Paul would have written:
 - "Therefore, since you have put off falsehood, 'each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are member of one another" (Eph 4:25).
- *...To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus...*
 - Here, Paul gives a description of who he his addressing - Ephesians.
 - The ESV mentions saints, but a closure look at the original language says "Holy ones - τοῖς ἁγίοις"
 - Holiness is given by the Holy Spirit in Baptism (Eph 5:26) and located "In Christ Jesus."

Verse 2

- *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*
 - 10 of Paul's 13 letters greet the saints with the words "grace to you and peace."
 - **QUESTION**
 - How do you define these two terms?
 - What comes to mind?
 - How do you find peace?
 - Grace
 - Grace denotes undeserved favor shown by a superior, specifically God, to an inferior (Ex 33:19).
 - *And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' An I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."*
 - Grace describes God's love and mercy, which is shown to his people, particularly in accordance with his promises.
 - Peace
 - This reflect the traditional Hebrew greeting *salom*, meaning wellness in body and soul.
 - It is connected with God's convent promises.
 - In the NT peace is the resurrected Lord's greeting (Luke 24:36).
 - Luther explains Grace and Peace embrace the entire Christian Gospel:
 - These two words embrace the whole Christianity.

- Grace forgives sin, and peace stills the conscience. The two devils who plague us are sin and conscience, the power of the Law and the sting of sin.
- But Christ has conquered these two
- Grace contains the forgiveness of sins, a joyful peace, and a quiet conscience.
- But peace is impossible unless sin has first been given, for the Law accuses and terrifies the conscience on account of sin.
- Paul, though a prisoner in chains, having guards standing around, certain death on the horizon is still able to find peace.
- This grace and peace comes from God our Father, who sent His son to die on behalf of sinners, so that the law may not long accuse us and we are able to find peace.

Questions?

Thoughts/Questions

Any other items you would like to discuss?

Closing Prayers

O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, you have safely brought us to the beginning of this day. Defend us in the same with Your mighty power, and grant that this day we fall into no sin neither run into any kind of danger, but that all our doings, being ordered by Your governance, may be righteous in Your sight; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.