

Heaven in the Here and Now

Ephesians 1.1-3

If HONEST – know Church can be place of PAIN and DISAPPOINTMENT
 Sometimes church DRIVES People AWAY from God, Instead of DRAW to Him
 We can look MORE HYPOCRITICAL than HOLY – More PROUD than PIOUS

4 or 5 yrs had PASSED Since Paul was in a LOCAL church

Wrote between 60-62 AD – 1st IMPRISONMENT in Rome > Acts 28 – 2 Years

2 yrs before being SHIPPED to Rome > Paul Languished in JUDEAN Cell

Not focused on SQUABBLES in Local churches – Eudoia & Synteché's Quarrels
 LEGALISTS in Galatia – Thessalonians who THINK they Missed Resurrection
 Crazy-Charismatic CORINTHIANS who were Swinging from Chandeliers
 Letter to Ephesians CELEBRATES the Church – GLORIOUS Body of Christ

Church in RADIANT GLORY and REDEEDED grace

1. Challenge of the Gospel Ministry

a. Seen: Limits of Time and Space

Paul was FAR AWAY in Person from church / FERVENT in Prayer for church
 TRUE us in ZGC who Travel, May BE Homelands, God's Work here in Hearts
 ...the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches 2 Corinthians 11.28

CONFINEMENT did NOT Remove his CONFIDENCE

SURE all is WELL – Not because of Circumstances – CALLING of God

“He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the universe”
 Ephesians 4.10

Despite four years of bonds, Paul's vision is never more free and expansive. He writes with the enthusiasm of a father and the vision of a prophet to inspire the infant churches he must love from afar.
 Bryan Chapell

PROSE leads to PRAISE – Declaring DOCTRINE leads Paul to DOXOLOGY

v. 1 To the saints who are in Ephesus – OXMORON – 2 Conflicting IDEAS

Ephesus – One of 5 Most Important Cities in Roman Empire – City of SIN

False PHILOSOPHIES – Immoral RELIGIONS – Evil SMILE of Goddess Diana

We are DEFINED by our GEOGRAPHY

CITY / COUNTRY – Politics, Language, Culture, Sports Teams, Cuisine

Over-riding Truth CHRIST our Spiritual Location – Resurrection Power in Us

v. 1 To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus

Living in X – In God’s HOT SPOT - get Love, Joy, Peace – with FULL BARS

The gospel defines life for Christians, but that life is always lived out in a culture, a culture that also seeks to define us. Christians must therefore understand the culture they live in and must decide what in culture may be legitimately adapted and enjoyed and what must be rejected. Klyne Snodgrass

Diff btwn GOSPEL and Church’s Cultural Expression of Christianity

GOSPEL is More than Style of Dress, Foods, Political Views, Religious Rituals

Challenge > Be AUTHENTIC Believer – HUMBLE Witness of HOLY ONE

b. Unseen: Spiritual Forces of Darkness

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Ephesians 6.12

ASK is Paul talking of HUMAN Leaders or DEMONIC Forces? Answer YES!

SATAN’S greatest BLOW was CROSS – Crucified by order of Pontius Pilate

What men INTENDED for EVIL God designed for Everlasting GOOD

God does NOT Live in MUSEUM – Not a RELIC from ANCIENT HISTORY
 Paul writes about GOD he Talks WITH – Even WORKING in PAGAN Ephesus
 Does NOT Mean Questions are SIMPLE or Life will be Without SUFFERING

God is NOT FAR AWAY – So INVOLVED, So NEAR, We are IN HIM
 Gospel is REALITY > ASSAULT on OUR IDEA of Reality, Our World, Way
 World says SIN will WIN > by SINNING you will STAY on the Winning Side
 Paul EXALTS in Truth that CHRIST has ALREADY Won – Risen! Returning!
 “So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but what is unseen. For what is seen is
 temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” 2 Corinthians 4.18

2. Confidence in the Gospel Message

a. God’s Word v. 1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus

APOSTLE – Appointed MESSENGER – Jesus of Nazareth is GOD and LORD
 Paul BELONGS to Christ and he REPRESENTS Christ – SPEAKS for Him
 When Paul speaks under INSPIRATION of SPIRIT – CHRIST Speaks!

Paul in PRISON – REAL Suffering – OPPOSITION is Great > COURAGE!
 We have SAME CONFIDENCE – Are WE are APOSTLES today? I say NO!

Yet have Full APOSTOLIC Confidence – Word of God is Ours –

On HANDphones & In HEARTS All its Power, Provision, Protection

OFFENSE – Paul has RIGHT to Speak, People have RESPONSIBILITY to Hear

PREACHING of Paul in Ephesus had DRAMATIC Impact

God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even
 handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick,
 and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. Acts 19.11,12

WHOLE City in UPROAR – Fear ECONOMIC Disaster
SHOUTED for 2 hrs “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians”!! Forgot WHY!!

CONFIDENCE Not just for Preachers and Missionaries

Every Christian HOLDING God’s Word – Sword of Spirit – Filled with Spirit
Speak in PUBLIC Arena or DORM Room of Friend > Speak TRUTH in LOVE

When we SPEAK from this WORD – God SPEAKS and God SHOW’S UP!

No Challenge, No Threat, No Law of Man is BEYOND Sovereign Plan of God

God’s PROMISES are our OFFENSE / God’s PROTECTION is our DEFENSE

God’s WORD is our CONFIDENCE / God’s WILL is our COMFORT

b. God’s Will v. 1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God

Paul DECLARES but does NOT DEFEND his Apostleship // unlike Galatians

DEFENSE – Paul’s Apostleship IS the WILL of God

Paul Attacked & Killed Christ’s Followers – Did Not EARN Apostleship

Paul NOT Apostle because of HIS RECORD but by Christ’s REDEMPTION

Jesus Confronted him, Claimed him, Cleansed him, and Commissioned him

This GREAT SINNER could Speak for God because he had Great SAVIOR

True whether that SINNER Named Saul of Tarsus or MARK BLAIR

Paul talks MORE about the WILL of God in Eph than in ANY Other Letter

Focus NOT on DISCOVERING God’s Will – but on DELIGHTING in it

Will of God source of SECURITY even through his SUFFERINGS

I am an ambassador in chains

Ephesians 6.20

Paul was APOSTLE because God WANTED him TO BE
 Before Paul PREACHES the Gospel is POSSESSED by the Gospel
 SEES way BEYOND walls of Dark and Dreary Roman Prison cell

VISTA from ETERNITY to ETERNITY

From Before Foundation of World - All Things under HEADSHIP of Jesus

3. Comfort because the Gospel is Mine

v. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us
 in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places

Blessed be our God and Father / GOD THE FATHER

ALL OUR BLESSINGS HAVE THEIR ORIGIN IN GOD THE FATHER –

HE IS THE ARCHITECT OF THE PLAN OF SALVATION

"The Father is subject of all the main verbs in these verses" John Stott

“our Lord Jesus Christ” - Paul teaches that He has 2 natures

1) Human Nature - Jesus is a Man - "the God of Jesus Christ"

AS A MAN - JESUS RELATED TO the FATHER AS HIS GOD

2) Divine Nature - Jesus is God "the Father of Jesus Christ"

Jesus knew God as Father in a way no man ever did

HE IS GOD THE SON FROM ALL ETERNITY - ONLY BEGOTTEN

"unique" / "there is no son like Him"

HE WAS NOT JUST “a” Son of God / HE IS “THE” SON OF GOD

a. Holy One v. 1 the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus
 27 x's in Ephesians: Paul writes “IN CHRIST,” in Him, in the Beloved, in Jesus

UNION with Christ – Key to Paul’s Theology – phrase 170 X’s 13 Letters

2 Representative MEN STAND before GOD – IN One or Other - Adam & Jesus

In Adam - Sin, Judgment, Death, Hell

In Christ - Righteousness, Blessing, Life, Heaven

IN Christ – Like ISRAEL Protected by DAVID who fought GOLIATH

David was representing Israel; he had already been anointed as king...he would lead Israel into God’s future. So with us: Jesus has won the decisive victory over the oldest and darkest enemy of all, and if we are ‘in him,’ ‘in the king,’ ‘in Christ,’ we shall discover step by step what that means. N.T. Wright

RC Church has Distorted BIBLICAL Truth by CANONIZING Saints

Extensive Study – Person did great DEEDS and Even Linked to MIRACLE

After careful EXAMINATION decreed a SAINT of Church > then Pray to Them

NT Identifies Saint NOT by Looking @ Xtians! Imperfect, Sinners, Hypocrites

NT Declares person a SAINT if they are IN CHRIST – He is THE HOLY ONE

Every Christian is a saint, and every saint is a Christian. James Boice

If you leave out the ‘in Christ’ you will never have any blessings at all

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

SAINT more describes their POSITION than their PURITY – IN CHRIST

Jesus is THE HOLY ONE and we are Only So when we’re HIDDEN in HIM

Main Message of Ephes: GOSPEL is about being IN CHRIST – Now & Forever

Christian Faith DEEP ENGAGEMENT with Christ –ACTIVE Union with Jesus

He DETERMINES Who we Are – SHAPES our Personality & PROGRAM

b. Heavenly Places

v. 3 ... blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places

"in the heavenlies" USED 5 X'S AND ONLY IN EPHESIANS

Literal MEANING - Not a Geographical or Spatial Reference

EARTHLY BLESSINGS - EVIDENCE OF COMMON GRACE

MANY NON-XTIANS BETTER EARTHLY LIFE - House, Job, Car

unseen world of spiritual realities, where Jesus reigns & His people reign w/ Him

The distinctive blessings of the new covenant are spiritual, not material...God's law written on our hearts by the Holy Spirit, a personal knowledge of God, and the forgiveness of our sins. John Stott

REAL - Heavenly GIFTS Not Fairy Tales, NOT Only After Death

Heavenly Realms – NOT mean it is FAR AWAY Location or FUTURE Time

Focus on PRESENT ENJOYMENT of these BLESSINGS – OURS NOW

JESUS Now EXALTED and ENTHRONED in Heavenly Places

power...he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand *in the heavenly places* Ephesians 1.20

GRACE Raised BELIEVERS to NOW be SEATED w/ Him in Heavenly Places

by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and *seated us with him in the heavenly places* in Christ Jesus Ephesians 2.5,6

CHURCH is to REVEAL our Privileged STANDING to HOSTILE World

through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities *in the heavenly places* Ephesians 3.10

“Heavenlies” NOT Physical Location but SPIRITUAL REALITY

Last Wednesday BICF Staff Gathering – BEIJING Restaurant

Heavenly: All U-Can-Eat BREAKFAST Buffet

Brother > GUITAR led in Songs of Praise- Fellowship – Worship – Prayer

Secular Business became HABITATION of God > Lifted to Heavenly Places

A larger reality exists where Christ is already exalted as Lord, where believers participate in his victory, and where spiritual forces are opposed. Though believers live physically on this earth, they receive spiritual resources and their identity from a higher plane. Klyne Snodgrass

c. Have it All! v. 3 every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places

TEMPLE OF GODDESS Artemis or Diana in Ephesus

ONE of 7 Wonders of World / Filled with Wealth

Filled with some of Greatest Treasures of Art in Ancient World

TEMPLE WAS THE CENTRAL BANK OF ASIA MINOR

ALL THE RICHES OF PEOPLE IN AREA CAME FROM THERE

HOW did poor Xtians FEEL SURROUNDED by THESE RICHES?

No SHRINE dedicated to Jesus / No Cathedral of St. Paul / Not even STATUE

Meetings were in Homes and Halls – Could NOT hire the Ephesus Hilton

Yet Paul declares they Are RICH – Christ Followers NOT 2nd class Citizens

RECEIVED “every spiritual blessing in heavenly places”

Other financial Words - Inheritance 4 x's / Fullness or Filled 6 x's

ALL BLESSINGS COME FROM THE TEMPLE OF GOD - JESUS

Whatever happens to us, let us always assure ourselves that we have good cause to praise our God, and that even if we are poor and miserable in this world, the happiness of heaven is enough to appease us, to sweeten all our afflictions and sorrows...our heritage has been purchased for us by the blood of his only Son...

John Calvin

Letter continues on to UNFOLD Some of our Blessings –

Election, Adoption, Grace, Forgiveness, Revelation, the Gospel, Holy Spirit

ALL OF THE GIFTS OF GOD ARE GIVEN TO US IN CHRIST

faithful in Christ Jesus	Ephesians 1.1
he chose us in him	Ephesians 1.4
adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ	Ephesians 1.5
In Him we have redemption through his blood	Ephesians 1.7
the mystery of his will...which he purposed in Christ	Ephesians 1.9
And you also were sealed in Christ	Ephesians 1.13
God made us alive with Christ	Ephesians 2.5
God raised us up with Christ	Ephesians 2.6

1) Exclusive - No Other Source of Such Gifts

1000's Shops in BEIJING - MANY HAVE THE SAME PRODUCTS

If one is closed - there are hundreds of others to find what you need

Some have SAME ATTITUDE TOWARD RELIGIONS - ALL SAME!

EXCLUSIVE CLAIM OF JESUS/ NO GROUND FOR COMPROMISE

by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus

Ephesians 2.5,6

JESUS IS THE ONLY ONE WHO MAKES THE FATHER KNOWN

Acts 19 - Paul in Ephesus / Home of Goddess - Diana/ Artemis

Her temple was one of Ancient Seven Wonders of the World

Makers of silver shrines of goddess “brought in no little business”

So THEY SHOUTED FOR 2 HRS “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians”

EVEN IF PAUL NEVER SPOKE OF ARTEMIS - Implication is Clear

IF JESUS IS LORD - Artemis Cannot Remain on her Throne

THRONE OF HEAVEN IS OCCUPIED BY KING JESUS / NO ROOM

GOD raised CHRIST...far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet Ephesians 1.21-22

2) Exhaustive - All we ever need is in the Lord

NEVER FIND MORE OF GOD THAN WHAT JESUS REVEALS

CANNOT GO BEYOND CHRIST - IF NOT SATISFIED WITH HIM

the unsearchable riches of Christ

Ephesians 3.8

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in Him Colossians 1.19

PERHAPS Philip was BORED, NOW WHAT?

WE’VE BEEN WITH YOU FOR A COUPLE OF YEARS - ENOUGH?

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father..." John 14.8,9

AS YOU GROW IN LIFE YOU'LL SEE NOTHING ELSE MATTERS

looked forward to Summer Vacation - now Tan is Fading, Stuck with Bills

looked forward to Graduation - Now have to Work EVERY DAY

looked forward to Marriage - now..... DON'T GO THERE!!!

NOT THAT LIFE IS NOT GREAT - IT IS INCOMPLETE – Cannot SATISFY

Looking SOMEONE to FILL You UP – NOT GOD – Will be DISAPPOINTED

GOD SHAPED VACUUM IN OUR SOUL - ONLY HE CAN FILL

10 Million yrs into ETERNITY – Every Day we will be WOWED by GLORY

3) Exuberant / GRATITUDE

THAT'S WHY LONG SENTENCE IS PUNCTUATED BY PRAISE

v. 3 “Praise be to God”

v. 6 “to the praise of His glorious grace”

v. 12 “for the praise of His glory”

v. 14 “to the praise of His glory”

Songs of Worship – Duty and Delight – Not waiting for Late Comers!

Practice for heaven - Where we will endlessly praise our God & King

Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits--who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things Psalms 103:1-5