

EPHESIANS – FACT SHEET 5



Ephesians – Its Message:

Up to now we have seen the Apostle remind us that everything we have, are and hope to be – starts with God. He loved us and chose us ‘in Him’ before the foundation of the world. Our efforts and activities now can only ever be in response to what He has already done.

Chapter One:

In chapter one we saw two major sections:

Verses 1-14 – Doxology and Praise – Paul praising God for what He has done – it is ‘all of Him’ and ‘all to the praise of His glory’. God has predestined us, chosen us in Him, adopted us, redeemed us and sealed us by His Spirit – guaranteeing our future ‘In Christ’. In Week one - we saw that God is so serious about us that He has:

SOUGHT us
SAVED us
SEALED us

Such a discovery can only lead to a response of praise!

Verses 15-23 (week 2) lead us naturally from praise to prayer – with our challenge being that we need to “*Be Serious about Prayer*”.

Our prayer comes out of what we **know and discover about God** – after reminding us of the amazing lengths God has gone to – Paul can then say, ‘For this reason..’ (vs 15). Paul goes on to pray that the Ephesians will be enlightened by the Holy Spirit of God (the Spirit of Truth – John 14:26) – and that the ‘eyes of their hearts’ (inner selves) will be opened to grasp these amazing truths. Yet prior to prayer – Paul states what he has ‘heard’ about the Ephesian believers, that they have demonstrated the two-fold qualities of ‘faith’ in Christ Jesus and ‘love’ for the saints. **Faith** and **love** are the critical platform for any praying fellowship or believer.

Paul then gives us a model prayer in which he shows us that:

Prayer is PERSISTENT
Prayer is PURPOSEFUL
Prayer is POWERFUL

Busy activity is no replacement for prayer – without which, nothing happens.

Chapter Two:

Where chapter one reveals to us the amazing purposes of God in bringing '*all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ*' (Eph 1:10) – chapter two commences by showing us the steps God will take to bring it to fulfilment – commencing with the salvation of individuals (Eph 2:1-10). Whilst praising and praying should be a natural response to the 'heights' of our privileges in chapter one – chapter two is a stark reminder and comparison of the depths from which we came from – if chapter one is the highest point of praise, 'in the heavenlies'; the first three verses of chapter two shows man at his lowest (Eph 2:1-3). Thus we need to '*Be serious about transformation*' or moreover, our 'need' for transformation. Religious activity and 'playing church' is no substitute.

In the first 10 verses of chapter 2, we are encouraged to remember that like Christ, we too have been raised from death (a spiritual death). Whilst God was able to show His power in raising Christ, in raising us, He demonstrates His amazing grace.

The first 3 verses encourage us to have a realistic view of what we were 'pre-Christ' (or are if not in Christ) – revealing three appalling truths about our pre-Christ state – that we were:

- **Dead** – 2:1
- **Enslaved** to the world, the flesh and the devil – 2:3
- **Condemned** under God's wrath (His Divine opposition to all that is evil) – 2:3

Yet gloriously, verses 4-10 reveal the amazing intervention of God, beginning, 'but God....' (vs 4) or 'but because of His great love for us, God..'. Paul reminds us of **what God has done and why He has done it** – all out of His amazing:

- **Mercy & Love** - vs 4
- **Grace** – vs 5&8
- **Kindness** – vs 7

The amazing blessing continues, as we see that God has not finished with us yet – we are a 'work in progress' (vs 8-10) – 'created in Christ Jesus to do good works' (vs 10).

Verses 11-22 of chapter 2 offer us an interesting parallel with the first 10 verses:

- In verses 1-3 – we were alienated from God
- In verses 11-12 – we were alienated from each other

- In verses 4-10 - Christ intervened and has given us peace with God
- In verses 13-18 – Christ has intervened to bring peace between us and our fellow men

From this section (11-22) we can see three things:

Remember the PAST:

The Apostle highlights the hostility that existed between the Jew and the Gentile (11-12) – stating as a ‘double whammy’ that Gentiles were not only condemned along with everyone else in verses 1-3; but here in 12-13, are also Christless, Stateless, hopeless and Godless – as those who had not received the original covenant promise given to Israel (Gen 12, 15, 17). This all said- this hostility should only now be a memory – as In Christ, they have been reconciled – but this amazing fact should cause them to:

Remember the COST:

Verses 13-18 highlight the great cost and method employed by Almighty God in securing our peace with one another and our fellow man; namely through the ‘blood of Christ’ (13). Christ’s sacrifice has broken down the ‘wall of hostility’ (14) and has made the ceremonial laws obsolete (15), at the same time creating a single new society (‘one man’ – 15) with everyone ‘reconciled to God’ (16). Such a reflection should cause us to view one another in a different light – not highlighting our differences, but focussing on our ‘agreement’ in Christ (13). Such a people, called together to worship God, must therefore: *Be Serious about Fellowship* and

Remember their PRIVILEGES and RESPONSIBILITIES: 19-22:

Whilst in verse 12, we were considered ‘excluded from citizenship’ – Christ’s reconciling act on the cross has now given us three amazing privileges:

- We are members of God’s Kingdom (19)
- Members of God’s Family (19)
- A Holy Temple (21)

We can say that in Christ we are:

- The Kingdom where God rules
- The Family who God loves
- The Temple where He is happy to dwell

The temple of God’s people today is built upon the sure foundation of God’s Word (20) with Christ as the solid Cornerstone (20). With such a foundation, the resultant ‘temple’ will be one of both unity and growth (21).

With such privileges – we need to ensure that we behave in a manner worthy of our calling and position and also that we model the Gospel to a watching world.

Chapter 3:

Summary Outline:

There are three things that one can note about this chapter:

Firstly – that it is essential that our message is a **Personal** one – we must have received God's grace first – if we are ever to hope to pass it on.

The Apostle talks about '*Grace given me*' (2,3,7,8) – he then goes on to talk about his commission to share God's great message – great discoveries need sharing (8).

The message we give, should also be a **Plain** message (9) – 'come to the Father through Jesus the Son', as the hymn says. We are simply stewards of God's great message – revelation and commission go together. Access to the father is through Christ, not the church (12).

Ultimately, all that we do is within God's **Power** (16,18,20).

Detail:

At the outset of chapter three, in all the excitement and amazing truths Paul has revealed – it would be easy to forget from where he was writing – a prison cell. Paul reminds us that he is a, '...prisoner of Christ Jesus' (1). Although held under the instructions and authority of Nero – Paul sees everything that happens to him as being 'In Christ' – he has a *theology of suffering*. Paul's God is no 'fair weather God' – but one who promises His continued presence (Matthew 28:20).

Paul then moves on to talk about the reason for his imprisonment – the *mystery (greek – mysterion) made know (to him) by revelation* (3). This mystery is not some confusing nonsense that can never be understood – but is '*Truth beyond human discovery but now disclosed by the revelation of God*' (Stott). Paul's problem was not the fact that he was telling everyone 'God loves gentiles' – but that the great 'mystery', which was *not made known to previous generations* (5) – was that gentiles were co-heirs and benefactors within the 'new community' of God – through Christ (6). All believers are in effect, in Christ, on an equal footing.

Paul then demonstrates his great humility by referring to himself as the 'least of the least' (8) – or '*the leastest*' – the closer one gets to Christ, to a Holy God, the more acutely aware one becomes of ones own sinfulness and unworthiness to partake in the salvation and subsequent blessings on offer through Christ's shed blood. Increased awareness of *grace* leads to increased *humility*.

The Apostle then reminds his church(es) – that they have a key role in the overall purposes of God ('to bring all things under one head, even Christ' – Eph 1:10) – that being that the Church is the administrator/steward of this amazing Gospel of reconciliation (9-10). What is more, Paul remarkably tells us that those watching – are none other than the *rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms* (10). Thus the circle of divine communication is complete: God, in His pre-destined purpose, calls individual men and women to Himself, who subsequently tell others, forming His church, thus used to reach the world, whilst heaven watches – from heaven, back to heaven.

Yet just in case his readers get the impression that the church is somehow the 'be and end all' – Paul reminds us of (what the later great reformers termed) the *priesthood of all believers* (12) – that **through faith in Christ** – we *may approach God with freedom and confidence*.

In verses 14-21, Paul flows from exposition to intercession – from teaching to prayer. This should always be such a natural flow – the more we know of our amazing God, the more we praise Him and communicate with Him in awesome adoration. The earnestness and heartfelt appeal of Paul's prayer is shown by the fact that he *kneels before the Father*, the usual Jewish posture was to stand. Paul then gives a beautiful four step 'stairway' pray for the Ephesian believers, for strength (16), love (17), knowledge (18) and fullness (19).

Finally, a spirit filled church, empowered by God, with His great commission, functioning on all four cylinders, can expect great things – in fact '*more than all we can ask or imagine*' (20). No wonder the Apostle finishes with an outburst of praise again, we must join him and say, '*to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus, throughout all generations, for ever and ever!*'

Further Study:

- Mystery: In the OT: only in Daniel 2:29 – not unrelated to NT use as the mysteries of which Daniel speaks are also related to God's eternal plan
- Mystery: In the NT: 'Divine truth which needs to be made known to people by God through His Spirit' (New Bible Dictionary, p367) – reserved for those to whom it is revealed (Mark 4:1)
- Apostle Paul's use: Mystery as: *Eternal* (Eph 3:11, 6:19) focussed on Christ (Col 2:2); it is *historical* – announced by God in life of Jesus (Eph 1:9, 3:3), Paul was commissioned to proclaim it (Eph 3:8); it is *spiritually perceived* – revealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph 3:4); it is *eschatological* – it awaits it's fulfilment in eternity (1cor15:51)

"Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your Word"
Psalm 119:18