

# Discovering Our True Identity

(Studies in Ephesians)



Part I

12 January to 29 March 2020

Dear Friends,

Although Paul's letter to the Ephesians was probably written around 60AD it is a surprisingly current letter and could have been written directly to the church today.

Why? Well we live in a time when our society's moral guidelines have not only been erased but actually are being rewritten by a post-modern liberal agenda that cares little for objective truth and instead places value on that which is felt or perceived. It leaves us asking the question who are we really, what holds our society together?

As a Christian in this context we feel like aliens. What does it mean to be a Christian in this society? How does God view me? How am I good news to my neighbour? How should I live as a result?

Paul answers all those questions and more in his letter to the Ephesians. It has two main themes, power and identity. It describes the power God's Spirit gives for living and it shows who we really are without Christ and who we become both individually and corporately with Christ.<sup>1</sup>

As we journey through this letter we will find it tells us of God's grace and love, and the privileges he gives us in living life in union with Christ. It will demand that we make choices and put our faith into action. If we take it seriously this letter will bring about a reformation in our lives and release God's kingdom power to a dark and dying world.

I hope you are as excited by this series as I am; please take time to prayerfully reflect and act on each part of it as we journey through it together in the coming months.

Grace and peace,



Neil Douglas

---

<sup>1</sup> Snodgrass, Klyne, NIVAC *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan; 1996), p17

## **Using these notes**

Although the notes are written in a format for small group use in a bible study, they are also just as usable for self-study so please don't be put off by the format. For example discussion questions can be used for self-reflection.

The notes are designed to be used whether you have heard the sermon or not.

The preacher may not read these notes when preparing the sermon; they will always bring what they feel God wants to say to us.

We do expect God will speak to us through the sermon though so I would encourage you to listen to in on the website if you missed it, and that is why the first question is always about the sermon.

The rest of the questions provide a way of engaging with the topic each week regardless of whether you have had an opportunity to hear the sermon or not, but please do try to listen to the sermon as it should enrich your study of the topic.

There are weeks where there are no notes, these are weeks where the preacher / topic is not part of this set. Please feel free to use these weeks creatively, or you may wish to devote them to extended prayer for the life of Ebenezer, our other communities, and God's vision for our future.

**Date:** 12 January

**Theme:** Our identity in Christ

**Key Readings:** Ephesians 1:1-3

**Additional**

**Readings:** 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 2:1-7

### **Questions from the sermon**

a. What did God say to you through the sermon, and what caught your attention?

### **Questions**

1. What sort of place was Ephesus? In what ways can we (in 21st century England) identify with this city?
2. In Acts 19: 2-7, Paul prayed with the Ephesian disciples for them to receive the Holy Spirit. This was a vital, powerful and equipping encounter and following this the church grew rapidly. When was the last time you asked God to fill you afresh with the power of His Holy Spirit?
3. Paul was a prolific church planter. What makes for an effective ministry in this area? What is to stop us from forming new missional communities to do this ourselves?
4. The Christians at Ephesus are included in John's writings in Revelation 2:1-7. What can we learn from his letter to them?
5. The church at Ephesus had lost its first love, are we in danger of doing the same? How can we make sure that we keep our first love?
6. Spend some time praying for each other to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

## Leader's Notes

Ephesus was a luxurious and splendid eastern city but it was given up to the magic arts and idolatrous superstitions of the Orient. The Ephesians worshipped the Asiatic goddess Diana and its supreme glory was the temple of Diana, one of the Seven Wonders of the World, which made the city famous. Ephesus was a wealthy metropolis and in Paul's day the population was about 250,000. The word Ephesus means "desirable". This was a proud, rich, busy port, the market of Asia Minor and called "The Treasure House of Asia" and was a meeting place of many currents of Hellenistic thought.

Between the occult worship of Artemis and the widespread practice of magic, the city was preoccupied with the black arts. The worship of Artemis included shameless and vile practices such as prostitution and mutilation in the rituals. This made the residents easy prey to false magicians. Into the darkness of Ephesus God brought Paul.

He established the church here on his second missionary journey, but stayed only briefly leaving Priscilla and Aquila in charge. In Acts 19, Paul returned during his third missionary journey and spent at least 2 years building up the Ephesian church. He then continued travelling throughout Asia Minor and down to Corinth. On his return journey to Jerusalem, Paul stopped briefly at Miletus where he talked with the Elders from the Ephesian church and finally bid them a sorrowful farewell, knowing they would never meet again in this life. The letter of Paul to the Ephesians was written at the same time as Colossians, during Paul's imprisonment at Rome, and carried by Tychicus on the journey to Asia.

The Ephesian epistle was addressed to the church in Ephesus, but intended also as a circular letter to neighbouring churches. Paul wrote Ephesians in about

60AD from prison in Rome. Paul had seen the greatest number of converts from around 54AD to 57AD and there was such a multitude of converts that almost overnight Ephesian Christianity became one of the most powerful influences in the city. There were many Jews of the city who were influenced by Christianity, not to mention the many Gentiles. At Ephesus Paul had found a door for effective work wide open and the ones that opposed him did so because he was so successful that trade in silver shrines was affected. Christians had become so numerous that heathen temples were almost deserted.

### **Weekly Prayer Focus:**

Paul saw revival break out in the city of Ephesus, please pray that revival will break out in Scarborough and the surrounding area. Pray also for the other churches in Scarborough, that they may know revival as well.

**Date:** 19 January

**Theme:** Our standing in Christ

**Key Readings:** Ephesians 1:3-6

**Additional**

**Readings:** Matthew 7:7-12; Hebrews 12:1-3; John 3:16-21

### **Questions from the sermon**

a. What did God say to you through the sermon, and what caught your attention?

### **Questions**

1. What blessings that God gave us do we see in the passage, why does he give us those blessings?
2. What does it mean to 'be adopted as his sons'? How does this make you feel personally?
3. Note the strong terms used in verse 4 and 5 concerning the sovereign will of God. Who has God chosen and why?
4. What blessings has God given each member of the group and how are they using them?
5. How would you explain God's grace to a non Christian?
6. Spend some time praying for the group to be blessed afresh by God.

### **Leader's Notes**

Paul begins his letter to the Ephesian church with a statement of praise to God. This declaration of praise runs from verse 3 through to verse 14. In verse 3, Paul starts by praising God for his wonderful blessings. In verses 4-6 Paul identifies the first spiritual blessing, that of being set apart as a holy people, God like, Christ like, chosen to be holy and blameless in the sight of God.

From the introduction of Paul's letter to the Ephesians we are able to draw out quite a few truths that touch our Christian lives. Firstly we are told in v4-5 that God has

determined to "adopt" us "as his sons through Christ" that we might be "holy and blameless in his sight"; we are set apart to be made a holy people. Everyone who accepts salvation in Jesus Christ becomes a part of the chosen people of God. Not only that, the description of us as sons (regardless of whether we are male or female) tells us that we are heirs alongside Christ of every good thing God has planned for us. As God's children, the day is coming, when out of his abundant grace we will be as Christ is.

Secondly, that our being chosen is in God's pleasure and will. Just take that in for a moment, God takes pleasure in choosing you, in choosing each one of us. No wonder it says in Zephaniah 3 that God takes great delight in us. Try and help the group see that them being a Christian is, and was not, an accident, but that God had chosen them, that they are unique and special in his sight.

### **Weekly Prayer Focus:**

Please pray for our church, that we may be a place of spiritual blessing for people, whether they are saved or not yet Christians, whether they are a part of our church or just visiting us. Pray that our church will be a place where heaven regularly touches earth, changing lives, bringing salvation and healing.



**Date:** 26 January

**Theme:** God's grace lavished on us

**Key Readings:** Ephesians 1:7-10

**Additional**

**Readings:** Romans 5:12-21: Colossians 3:12-17: Galatians 4:1-7

**Questions from the sermon**

a. What did God say to you through the sermon, and what caught your attention?

**Questions**

1. Share with each other your testimonies of how you became Christians.
2. How do you see God lavishing his grace on you in your life?
3. What is the 'divine mystery' Paul talks about in verse 9? (Romans 16:25, Ephesians 3:4, 9, Colossians 1:27, 1 Timothy 3:16).
4. How do you think we can help God to bring about more unity?
5. In what areas of your life do you struggle to show grace?
6. Name one thing about being a Christian that really blesses you.

## **Leader's Notes**

Paul begins by giving thanks for his readers' faith and love and then goes on to pray for an increase in their knowledge so that they would know Christ better and that they may understand the hope that is before them, the riches of their inheritance and the power working in them.

Through our identification with Christ we are redeemed, purchased and rescued from the slavery of sin by the sacrificial death of Christ. Paul, then goes on to say that we have come to know and understand a mystery long hidden. This mystery is the wonderful truth of the gospel of God's sovereign grace. It is the truth that God is gathering a people to himself to share his divinity for eternity. God has determined that those who share this blessing are not limited to a special family (descendants of Abraham), or to a special religious group (people who keep the law), but rather to all who reach out to Jesus in faith.

The Christian life has two dimensions: faith towards God and love towards men, and you cannot separate the two. Paul knew that faith and love were just the beginning and that the Ephesians needed to know much more. This is why he prayed for them, and for us.

### **Weekly Prayer Focus:**

Please pray about our calling as a church. Pray that as a church we will hear the voice and leading of God. Pray that faith will be released to us, and that we will be bold in joining in God's mission to the communities around us. Pray that everybody from the youngest to the oldest will confidently play their part in God's kingdom purposes for Ebenezer.

**Date:** 2 February  
**Theme:** God chose you

**Key Readings:** Ephesians 1:11-14

### **Additional**

**Readings:** Acts 19:1-7: Revelation 5:6-14: Romans  
8:31-39

### **Questions from the sermon**

a. What did God say to you through the sermon, and what caught your attention?

### **Questions**

1. What does it mean to be chosen by God?
2. The Holy Spirit is 'a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance'. What is our glorious inheritance? (Romans 8:17, Colossians 1:12, 3:24, Titus 3:7, 1 Peter 1:4)
3. Jeremiah 29:11 says that God has plans to give us hope and a future, share with each other what plans you feel God has for your lives.
4. Would you say the 'message of truth' is just 'come to Jesus and repent of your sins'? Or do you think that there is more to the gospel message than that?
5. The Holy Spirit is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance. What would you say is our full inheritance, if the Holy Spirit is just the deposit.
6. Share with each other examples of people who have enriched your Christian life and explain why.

### **Leader's Notes**

The extent of God's gift of salvation is quite wondrous. We can confidently say that we are "declared right." before God. Although we are anything but right until "the old Adam is planted in the ground" (Luther), we are none-the-less eternally right and are actually "raised up with Christ"

and seated "with him in the heavenly realms." Our eternal possession is a present reality. As the old country song puts it, "this world is not my home, I'm just a passin through."

God's unlimited kindness toward us is triggered by the instrument of faith. When a person rests on the faithfulness of Christ they receive in full the abundance of new life in Christ. Although our faithfulness has nothing to do with the gift of salvation, faithfulness remains a natural consequence of salvation. In fact, Paul says that the creation of God's blessed community has as its purpose the doing of "good works." God even "prepared in advance for us to do" them. Love is the sum of the good work.

In verses 11-12. Paul says that we are assured. The church is destined for glory, for the living God has purposed it and for this, let his name be praised. In verses 13-14. Paul now reminds his readers how they became included in the spiritual blessings - "you also were included in Christ." Being included in the family of God, being a child of God, once meant being part of the people of Israel. Yet, God's ultimate intentions are now revealed and have changed all that. Initially, God's sovereign will defined the family of Abraham as inheritors of the blessings; now all those who respond to the gospel are inheritors of the blessings. All of which brings us such assurance. We share in the blessings of the kingdom when we hear and believe the gospel.

We are also told that we are sealed with "the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance". Paul says "you" to remind his Gentile readers of their equal possession of sonship. The gift of the Holy Spirit is a "deposit" - a down payment of the blessings to come. He is also a "seal" - a guarantee of the glory to come. It is the Spirit who moulds us into the image of Christ, giving us the character of our creator and preparing us to meet with our Lord and Saviour and live with Him eternally.

## **Weekly Prayer Focus:**

Please pray for all the ministries that we have in Ebenezer, in Hope Whitby, Restore Filey, FAMILYLights, Arise Cayton and beyond. Pray that we will see many people saved, baptised and disciplined. Pray that we will see an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that changes lives and heals communities

**Date:** 16 February

**Theme:** A new lens to see things by

**Key Readings:** Ephesians 1:15-23

### **Additional**

**Readings:** Romans 8:9-14; John 3:14-21

### **Questions from the sermon**

a. What did God say to you through the sermon, and what caught your attention?

### **Questions**

1. In what ways has your love for God and his people grown recently? Who amongst God's people do you give him thanks for regularly?
2. How would you describe the hope that we have been called to?
3. What did "the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people" mean in your life today?
4. In what ways have you moved in the power of God in the last 12 months?
5. Christ should be the head of the church; can you see anything in Ebenezer Baptist Church, where this is not happening? What can we do to change things?
6. Spend some time praying for each other and thanking God for the members of your small group.

### **Leader's Notes**

**Christ's power above all other power....**The passage contains quite an impressive array of words about God's power. Verse 19 alone contains four different Greek words for power, combined with amplifying words like "greatness" and "overwhelming". Verse 20 evokes the Hebrew Bible imagery of "the right hand of God", an expression of God's ability to accomplish mighty deeds on earth. Rather than

trying to separate these tightly packed references apart, the message here seems to be about the comprehensiveness and fullness of God's power. The author piles on words because ultimately words are inadequate.

The resurrection message is that God is still in power, even when it seems like the powers and principalities of this world are gaining in strength. The passage doesn't say that those other dominions and authorities don't exist. But God's power, poured out through Christ in the resurrection, is above all these things. There is no other power we need fear. Nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God.

It's fairly easy to claim that God's power is above all destructive powers and authorities. But that isn't the only thing the passage says. It reminds us that Christ reigns over every government and authority, power and dominion and any title bestowed. This includes those powers and authorities which seek good in the world. This includes even the church and all the authorities and titles which have accumulated in the church. When we come before the cross, we realise that these things have no power of their own. Even the forces of good in this world are only good when they live not for themselves but for Christ. Even our own Christian efforts for faithfulness and righteousness only work for God's kingdom when we give over our own wills and our own desire for power, and know finally that all power is God's...

### **Illumine the eyes of the heart**

The second theme of the passage has to do with this work of discerning the movement of God's power in the world. How do we know that God's power reigns, over all other powers and authorities in the church and the world? We don't often see this with our rational mind. There's so much

evidence to the contrary. But when we see with the mind of Christ, we begin to glimpse a deeper truth than the world's truth. Paul prays in this passage that God will illumine the eyes of our hearts. To me, this is the crux of the passage, the centre of Paul's prayer for the church.

Illumine the eyes of the heart. This is perhaps analogous to the circumcision of the heart in Romans 2:29. It is not really about a physical experience, about literal eyes, but using body imagery to express something which goes beyond the body, but which certainly includes the body. Like the psalmist who says that all creation has a new smell, we may indeed see with new eyes.

The eyes of the heart — I see this as a poetic way of describing our God-given, created connection to God through the Light of Christ, the image of God in humanity. The eyes of the heart, when illumined by the Holy Spirit, can become the eyes of Christ. To discern the mind of Christ is to see with eyes which see the whole, not with our own fragmented vision.

What do we see? “the hope to which he is calling you”, hope for all creation, the hope of unity and reconciliation which is the essence of the gospel. We see the role of the church in God's plan, and know that we are called to participate in the hope of creation. Our faith is not for our own benefit, but that we might participate with God in the hope of the world...

### **Comprehensiveness of the vision**

So what are the characteristics of that vision, of the glimpses we get when we see through illumined eyes of the heart? The most fundamental characteristic which I see in this passage is the comprehensiveness of the vision. “Full of him who fills all things totally.” The concept of fullness at the end of the passage is hard to translate into grammatical



sense. Like the use of “power” earlier, there is the sense of heaping on words, to try to express in words what is really inexpressible. Our tendency is to conceive of Christ in too narrow terms. This passage pushes us to broaden our faith beyond that which we can know by human means...

The body of Christ imagery is expansive, beyond whatever definition of the church might spring from our own experience of the church. The passage emphasises the comprehensiveness of it all. It can only be grasped by illumined eyes. As a form of Pentecost, such enlightenment is a collective experience, not an individual one. We need each other, in order to approach the light and mind of Christ...<sup>2</sup>

### **Weekly Prayer Focus:**

Pray for more power to be seen in our church and in the churches in Scarborough. Pray that each individual Christian would know who they really are in Jesus, and the power that is available to them. Pray that each member of Ebenezer Baptist Church would be filled with the power of God.

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.edengrace.org/ephesians.html>

**Date:** 23 February

**Theme:** What we are now

**Key Readings:** Ephesians 2:1-5

### **Additional**

**Readings:** Romans 5:12-21; Psalm 32:1-2; Isaiah 53

### **Questions from the sermon**

a. What did God say to you through the sermon, and what caught your attention?

### **Questions**

1. Share with each other some of the things that God has saved and forgiven you from.
2. Paul says that we should not walk in the ways of the world. What do you think he meant? What are the cultural trends today that we should not walk in?
3. How can we be good news when we avoid walking in the ways you identified in (2), and how do we avoid looking like we are “holier than though”?
4. Why is it do you think we struggle so much with our ‘earthly nature’?
5. How would you explain Grace to someone without using ‘churchy’ words?
6. In what areas in your life has God showed his mercy and how has it changed you?
7. Spend some time praying for each other that you would know more of God’s grace and mercy in your lives.

### **Leader’s Notes**

We all hate to hear bad news. We dislike being told something is wrong. At times we try to amend the bad with good. Here are some items of good and bad news given to church leaders ...

Good News: You baptised seven people today in the river.

Bad News: You lost two of them in the swift current.

Good News: The Deacons voted to send you a get-well card.

Bad News: The vote passed by 7-6.

Good News: The Elders accepted your job description the way you wrote it.

Bad News: They were so inspired by it, they also formed a search committee to find somebody capable of filling the position.

Good News: Mrs. Jones is wild about your sermons.

Bad News: Mrs. Jones is also wild about Coronation Street, Holby City and anything on Netflix.

It is the twist which makes "Good news / bad news" scenarios humorous. Their humour is that the good news never outweighs the bad. Fortunately, in Scripture when we come across a combination of good news/bad news, it is the good which always wins out. Where the Law condemns, the Gospel frees.

The trouble is we so dislike to hear really bad news, that we sweep it under the rug to avoid the negative feelings we may find when the negative is explained. Unfortunately, we do this to our own peril, for when we downplay the bad, the good ceases to be so great.

In our passage.. we find ourselves confronted with news so horrible that people down through the ages have denied its truth, have so deliberately downplayed its diagnosis of humanity that the good news of what God has done seems rather superficial, even unnecessary. But when this is done we no longer have a realistic outlook on where we are. When we deny the tremendous hopelessness of our condition without Christ we then lose the magnificent glory and wonder of the position we have in Christ.

You cannot worship God for who He is, unless you understand who you are, unless you understand the true depravity of the human race. But once we accept this most difficult teaching, once we understand that there is absolutely no basis on which we can approach a perfectly holy God, then we can begin to understand the breadth and length and height and depth of God's love; we can begin to know the love of Christ<sup>3</sup>

### **Weekly Prayer Focus:**

Please pray for our gatherings across our communities. That people would know and feel the love that God has for them, the moment that they step into each one of them. Pray that Ebenezer Baptist Church and its communities will be known as being full of grace and mercy.

---

<sup>3</sup> [http://my.execpc.com/~crrstn/sermons/ephesians\\_215.htm](http://my.execpc.com/~crrstn/sermons/ephesians_215.htm)

**Date:** 8 March

**Theme:** We are in a different place

**Key Readings:** Ephesians 2:6-10

**Additional**

**Readings:** Hebrews 12:1-6; Romans 3:21-26; 2  
Corinthians 12:8

**Questions from the sermon**

a. What did God say to you through the sermon, and what caught your attention?

**Questions**

1. What do you think are the riches of God's grace?
2. How would you explain salvation to people without using 'churchy' words?
3. What parts of God's handiwork can you see in each other? Share with each other where and how, you can see God in each other.
4. What good works do you think God has for you?
5. Share with each other a time when God has lead you to do a 'good work' for him.
6. Get each member of the group to try and share their testimony in no more than one minute!

**Leader's Notes**

The very minute that a person attempts to add works or self effort in any form to the salvation equation the whole is corrupted and is unacceptable to God. While it is true that we are saved by faith alone and not by works; it is true that God has saved us for the purpose of acceptable works or service to God. Ephesians reveals the mandate, the method, and the means of serving the Lord.

The Mandate – Go, Work, Witness, Win

- A. Mandate – literally "to give into one's hand", means commission or order. A mandate is that which is obligatory because commanded.
- B. Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.
- C. Ephesians 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation where with ye are called,
- D. Service to Christ is not optional for the believer. Listen to what Paul tells the church at Corinth: "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. (1 Corinthians 4:1 – 2), For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. 2 Corinthians 5:10
- E. You are a tool in the hands of God. He demands your service, not your rest. "Yet, how fortunate you are that he lets you take part in his work". – Ulrich Zwingli, in "Zwingli: Father of the Swiss Reformation," Christian History, no. 4
- F. "The Possessor of heaven and earth placed you here, not as a proprietor, but as a steward". – John Wesley, in The Use of Money
- G. Some are more dedicated to serving their clubs than Christ, the scouts than the Saviour, their jobs more than Jesus.
- H. "Servant" in our English New Testament usually represents the Greek *doulos* (bondslave). Sometimes it means *diakonos* (deacon or minister); this is strictly accurate, for *doulos* and *diakonos* are synonyms. Both words denote a man who is not at his own disposal, but is his master's

purchased property. Bought to serve his master's needs, to be at his beck and call every moment, the slave's sole business is to do as he is told. Christian service therefore means, first and foremost, living out a slave relationship to one's Saviour (1 Corinthians. 6:19-20). – J Packer<sup>4</sup>

### **Weekly Prayer Focus:**

Please pray that each person in our fellowship would properly grasp God's love for them, his purpose for their lives, and their part in his kingdom purposes. Pray that those who feel too old, too young, too weak, too sinful or in any other way unqualified would realise afresh that God loves them as much now as he ever could and longs for them to step out to follow him because his strength is made perfect in their weakness.

---

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/his-workman-jerry-flury-sermon-on-character-93106.asp>

**Date:** 15 March

**Theme:** Christ is our peace

**Key Readings:** Ephesians 2:11-18

**Additional**

**Readings:** Psalm 4; Psalm 85; Colosians 1:15-22

**Questions from the sermon**

a. What did God say to you through the sermon, and what caught your attention?

**Questions**

1. What one word would have best summed you up before you became a Christian and why?
2. Briefly share with each other how God found you.
3. In what ways has Jesus brought peace to your life?
4. How do you think that our various communities can become more 'reconciled' to the other churches in their areas?
5. In what ways to do draw close to God, now that we have free access to him?
6. Pray for those in the group that are facing difficult situations, and need the peace of Jesus to come afresh into their hearts and minds.

**Leader's Notes**

This is not just theory. If you are having a conflict with anybody, this is the way of peace: For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one. Paul starts with a definition of what true peace really is. True peace is oneness. It is not merely the cessation of hostility, the absence of conflict; it means being one. Anything else is superficial and temporary and highly unsatisfactory. You know this to be true. You have made peace on superficial terms and have found it only external. If you merely agree



not to fight, it is not peace. And invariably it results in a new outbreak, with all the previous animosity surging to the surface once again. This is why what we call peace among nations never lasts--because it isn't really peace. It isn't oneness at all. It is only a weariness with warfare, an agreement to stop it for awhile until we can all recuperate and rearm. Then it breaks out all over again, because nothing is ever settled.

But here the apostle tells us the secret of peace. The secret of oneness is a Person: he himself is our peace. And when Christ Jesus makes peace--between individuals or between nations--that peace will be a satisfying, permanent, and genuine peace. 'What Paul is saying is that in order to live at peace, you must have peace. The problem with most of us is that we want to start by clearing up only the results of conflict. God never starts there; He starts with the person. He says peace is a Person, and in order for you to live at peace with someone else, you must be at peace with the Person of Christ. If you have His peace, then you can start solving the conflict around you. But you never can do it on any other basis. So the place to start, the origin of peace, is the settling of any problems between you and Jesus Christ.

Many people come to me with various problems involving conflict. Usually they are upset, troubled, discouraged, or angry. They report all the terrible things the other person has done and all the reasons they are justified in being so angry. I listen to it all, and then I say to them, Yes, you've got a problem. But that isn't your only problem. You really have two problems. And the one you haven't mentioned at all is the one you must start with. Then I point out to them that their basic problem is that they don't have any peace themselves. They are upset, angry, and emotionally distraught. And everything they do is coloured by that

emotional state. And it is impossible to solve the problem until they themselves acquire peace.

But this is the promise of God to Christians: He is our peace. And once their attitude is changed, once their heart is settled, once they have put the matter into the hands of the Lord and they see that He is active in it, that He has a solution, and their own heart is therefore at peace, then they can begin to understand what is happening and can apply some intelligent remedies to the situation that will work out the problem. There is profound psychological insight in the fact that the apostle begins with the declaration that Christ is our peace. He alone can accomplish it.<sup>5</sup>

### **Weekly Prayer Focus:**

Please pray for a new move of God within the churches of Scarborough, and the churches up and down the Yorkshire Coast. That the churches would work more closely together, that they would support and bless each other. Pray that the churches would be one, and they would seek together to see revival come to this beautiful part of the world that we live in.

---

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.raystedman.org/daily-devotions/ephesians/he-is-our-peace>

**Date:** 22 March

**Theme:** We are one in Christ

**Key Readings:** Ephesians 2:19-22

### **Additional**

**Readings:** Psalm 118:15-26; Zechariah 10:1-5; 1 Peter 2:4- 10

### **Questions from the sermon**

a. What did God say to you through the sermon, and what caught your attention?

### **Questions**

1. We are called to be fellow citizens with all of God's people, how can we do that on a day-to-day basis?
2. In what ways can we help to build in other people's lives that our younger than us, so that they have good foundations? What part can you personally play?
3. What sort of church do you think God wants us to be?
4. In what ways do you personally need to grow spiritually in the next year?
5. In what ways can you see God's spirit moving in each other?
6. Spend some time praying for each other to be filled afresh with the Holy Spirit.

### **Leader's Notes**

Among the benefits resulting from their justification is this, viz., that they are no longer "strangers," deprived of the rights of citizens, as they were before, when "strangers to the testament" (verse 12), and "foreigners," not belonging to the household of God, for they were "afar off" (verse 13), nay, "without God." But they now are "fellow-citizens with the saints," which may refer to the Patriarchs and saints of old with whom they were connected, as being the spiritual

Israel—or, it may refer to the faithful members of the Church of Christ, who are frequently called “saints,” by the Apostle; and they are inmates of God’s own family...

The Apostle introduces the metaphor of the house to which he already had compared the Church of Christ (verse 14). He shows the union that had subsisted between the Ephesians and the rest of the faithful, as they form a part of the spiritual edifice built upon Christ and the Apostles. Christ is the primary foundation in this edifice; it is by his faith and grace it is sustained. “The Prophets,” who ushered in the Gospel, and “the Apostles,” who were the first to announce it, are called a “foundation,” but only secondary foundations, since Christ is the corner-stone, on which both the walls, that is to say, Jews and Gentiles, were united, on which both rested; and by which, both were supported, forming only one edifice...<sup>6</sup>

### **Weekly Prayer Focus:**

Please pray for the deacons, elders and the leaders of our communities as they seek to lead us forward. Pray that they would have godly wisdom, faith and courage to step into all that God has planned for us and our different communities. Pray that we would see many people coming to faith in Jesus in the next 12 months.

---

<sup>6</sup> <http://stjoeofoblog.wordpress.com/2013/06/30/bishop-macevillys-commentary-on-ephesians-219-22/>

**Date:** 29 March

**Theme:** Our lives are now in Christ

**Key Readings:** Ephesians 3:1-6

**Additional**

**Readings:** Colossians 1:24-29; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

### **Questions from the sermon**

a. What did God say to you through the sermon, and what caught your attention?

### **Questions**

1. In what ways do we think that we are 'prisoners' of Christ?
2. In what ways does God administer his grace?
3. What is the mystery that Paul is talking about in V3?
4. What things do you think that we share with Israel in God?
5. In what ways can we share more with the body of Christ in Scarborough and the other towns and villages where our communities are based?
6. Share with each other some of the promises that God has given you and that he has fulfilled.
7. Share promises that God has made that are yet to be fulfilled and spend some time praying into them.

### **Leader's Notes**

"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you" Ephesians 3:1

"I beseech you therefore, I, the prisoner in the Lord, to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called." Ephesians 4:1

It is not hard to think of Paul the great apostle, the great Evangelist, great writer of the epistles; to even think of him as a prisoner of Rome-as he penned letters to the churches.

But Paul considered himself, and wrote that he was a prisoner of Christ. Physically he was in a prison, but in reality he was imprisoned in Christ.

What does it mean to be imprisoned in Christ? Am I imprisoned in Christ? Do I really want, deep down inside to be imprisoned in Christ? If I desire so, am I willing to live so? I would suppose that a prisoner in the Lord would walk in the Lord. Such a person would no longer be free to come and go as he pleases or according to his own convenience but would abide in Christ in such a way as to have his comings and goings directed by God....

Our abiding in the Lord is a relational abiding. In this relationship we are not bound by rules, but are constrained by our relationship and love. Christ came not to end the law, but to fulfil it. This paradox is lived out, in a concrete way, daily in my relationship to my husband; I do not walk around with a list of do's and don'ts but I am mindful and constrained by our relationship and mindful of not wanting to hurt him. Our life in Christ is often one of constraint, demanding decisions of me that impact my walk with Him.

“But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere..” (2 Cor. 2:14) the picture Paul painted here is of the triumphal procession in the Roman Empire when a battle was won. This procession showed off the captives taken in victory. Paul was such a captive of Christ. He did not consider himself the impressive apostle or great teacher, but merely a captive in the triumphal procession of Christ the victor.

Do I let Christ conquer and subdue me? Do I deport myself as a captive of Christ, or do I demand to walk in a freedom of my own self-will? Am I only seeking the Lord's will according to my own will? Have I been defeated by Christ

Do I see that freedom is not grasped through my living out my will in an outward way, but true freedom comes through Christ living in me?

My daily struggle is not with the world, but between the Lord and I, until I am willing to be constrained by Christ and see this abiding as a free-ing thing.<sup>7</sup>

### **Weekly Prayer Focus:**

Pray for the mystery of the Gospel to be made known throughout Scarborough and up and down this coast. Pray for the churches on this coast to share the gospel more, to see more people saved and disciple. Pray for Scarborough and the surrounding towns and villages to come back to God.

---

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.homeiswhereyoustartfrom.com/2006/12/i-paul-prisoner-of-christ/>

**e**ben<sup>†</sup>ezer baptist church  
rockofhelp.org.uk

Columbus Ravine  
Scarborough, YO12 7QZ  
Registered Charity No. 1148674