

**14.01.07 Coromandel Baptist 10:00 a.m.**

***To the Praise of His Grace***

Bible Readings = Ephesians 1:1-6; Romans 8:28-39

**Introduction:**

- (1) This week sees us taking the first portion of the letter to the Ephesians, in which Paul sets out some of his main themes.
- (2) The material in this first chapter is densely packed and much of it forms one long sentence in Greek (from verse 3 to verse 14 at least). This means that it is hard to break up the chapter according to English rules of grammar and sentence construction.
- (3) However, what we see set before us in this first chapter is an expansive description of the plan and purpose of God the Father, brought into actuality through the gracious gift of his Son, which is all revealed to us in the power of his Spirit.
- (4) The chapter is thus divided according to the actions and operations of the persons of the Godhead, each shown to be in complete union with the other persons for the doing of the Father's will.

***This week we hope to see something of the glory of the grace of the Father, who has given us all things freely in his Beloved Son, so that we might live to the praise of the glory of his grace.***

**1. The Salutation**

- (1) The letter begins with a greeting: 1:1-2.
  - The first verse indicates that the letter is to the Ephesians, but not all early manuscripts have this phrase included. There are reasons for this, debated by the scholars, but it may be (as mentioned last week) that this was an encyclical i.e. a letter to be passed on to other churches in the region to read (cf. Col. 4:15-16).
  - However, the question of location is only ever to be understood by our position in Christ.
    - The saints (i.e. holy ones) 'in Ephesus' are really 'in Christ'. Compare with 1 Thess. 1:1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace
    - Repeatedly we will see that all we have and are is *in* Christ.
      - Luther (I believe) once said something to the effect that gospel lies in the prepositions (in, with, by, through, into, from, out of, under, etc.).
        - Whether it was Luther or not, it is true! Our entire life as believers is something that is *from* God, *in* the Son, *by* the Holy Spirit. The prepositions indicate the direction in which our eyes must look. (If we have obtained something from a person, or in a shop, or by a special arrangement, we look to the person, place or thing who as given/enabled the result to come about).

- The phrases *in Christ, in him, with him, through him*, saturate this letter, not least the first chapter (run your eyes down the page!).

(2) This means that wherever we are, geographically, we are in Christ! He is our home, as in him, we are in the Father. All this is because we are in the Spirit, into whom Christ has baptised us!

- It also means that this is our *settled* position. We are never not in Christ. We do not wobble in and out of Christ, according to our experiences of his presence, nor our emotional state, nor of our ‘success’ or otherwise in the Christian life. (No such thing, separate from Christ!).
  - There is an analogy in our experience of marriage. Those of us who are married, are married...whether we experience the joy and ecstasy of it or not! The married state does not automatically prevent sin against marriage (e.g. lustful look), but it does not alter the state in which we are! Negative mindset: ‘trapped’. Positively, it is our greatest security, and real freedom.

§ This is given powerful expression in Ephesians 5, where Paul speaks of the marriage of the Christ and his Church.

(3) Here, Paul emphasises that we have *grace and peace from the Father and our Lord Jesus, Messiah*: grace which abounded where sin did abound, and peace which is our settled position before God.

- Grace and peace are repeatedly found together in the New Testament (e.g. Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Col. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:2; etc.) and sometimes with other terms included (e.g. grace, mercy and peace in 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 John 1:3; etc.)
  - Peace here is objective i.e. hostility has ceased, the enmity has been removed, wrath has been taken out of the way, warfare has ended. It has subjective effects, but it is finally the peace of being a Son, at one with the Father (e.g. John 14:27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid)
- These things, of necessity, belong together. There could be no peace without it being brought about by the grace of God.
  - This grace is manifest in Jesus, the Messiah. The Father and Jesus are shown to be co-equally (to use a non-biblical term) the givers of grace and peace. This means that the work of the Son as our redeemer is fully and freely his, though fully and completely commanded by the Father. Jesus is no reluctant saviour!

## 2. Blessed by the Will of God, the Father

(1) The rest of the chapter introduces us to the bedrock reality of our Christian existence: praise and thanksgiving to God the Father. To bless God is to praise him, to give thanks, to exalt his name etc.

- Notice, that the undifferentiated term ‘God’ is clearly delineated: the Christian God = the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (1:3 cf. Rom. 15:6; 2 Cor. 1:3; 11:31; 1 Pet. 1:3; and also see Eph. 1:17; Phil. 2:11).
- All things hinge on the Father’s will, and all our fullness is finally found in the Father, through the Son.

(2) This great Father has purposed that we would be blessed! We bless Him, who has blessed us!

- The nature of the blessing: it is in Christ, and it is spiritual (i.e. in the Spirit). Not ‘other worldly’, but fully creational, in the Spirit! Is enjoying the creation spiritual? Yes!, but it is an enjoyment that comes in the Spirit.
  - What spiritual blessings in view here? Gk. = every kind of, all sorts of. All possible blessings we may ever receive, we *have received* in Christ. All the promises of God are Yes and Amen in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20) and we have received Christ!! Grace, peace, faith and faithfulness, holiness, inheritance, knowledge of the Father, fullness of the Spirit...all granted to us freely in Christ!
    - § We receive them (him) by faith, and we need the Spirit’s fullness to open our eyes to them, but already have them. In the new creation we will see them all by sight.

(3) It is all by God’s will (1:1, 4, 5)

- We should not let our discussions about predestination and election take away from the reality! These are based on faithless reasoning.
  - We are all ‘practical predestinarians’, and expect our will to be done and our plans to succeed! This is an expression of having been made in God’s image, but with the Fall, none of our plans are those of love!
  - All the Father has planned and purposed is love (different versions handle the break at 1:4 and 5a differently: e.g. in the NASB; ESV even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love... while the KJV has According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love and NJB has Thus he chose us in Christ before the world was made to be holy and faultless before him in love,) BUT it is all in love that this has been planned.
- The goal is that we will be *holy and blameless before Him* which is parallel to, and equivalent to, *being adopted as Sons to God* (1:4, 5). As the Son is before the Father, so we will be
  - Compare with Rom. 8:28ff. Geoff Bingham’s phrase “God’s peer community”.

(4) All this is to *the praise of the glory of his grace*.

- This is the continual theme of all our worship...that the God the Holy Father should be gracious to us!
  - The letter shows us how this grace is to be lived in: as we have received grace we are to be gracious.

(5) We have received all this *in the Beloved*.

- Matt. 3:17; 17:5 (and parallel passages indicate that the Beloved is Jesus himself)
  - He is beloved of God, and we are in Him!