

EPHESIANS

Introduction Of The Letter: Cont'd Message 3; Oct. 4, 1998

Intro: This week I was reading a biography of George Mueller. While he was a student of divinity, that is a Bible school or seminary, he lived in all kinds wrongdoing, as did most of the rest of the students. The Christian life had been drowned out by the religiosity of the parents. Inside of George Mueller there was something that seemed to keep nagging at him that there was more to so called Christianity. One night he accepted an invitation to go to a prayer meeting. When one of the men there was asked to begin the meeting in prayer he dropped to his knees and prayed. When George Mueller saw that man kneel before his Lord and when he talked to Him as though God was real, even as though he was right there in the room something happened to George Mueller. That night he too found the living God.

Well, we have begun looking at the letter to the Ephesians, written by the Apostle Paul who too was a man trained in religiosity, but a man who found or rather was found by the living God. In our last message we considered from Ephesians 1:1, the writer of this letter. We looked at his name, Paul; his office, an apostle; his Lord, Jesus Christ; and his ultimate owner, God, by whose will he was what he was.

b. The recipients

This morning we want to consider the recipients of this letter. We are going to look at their spiritual status, saints; their physical location, Ephesus; their daily life, faithful; and their spiritual location, in Christ.

1) Their spiritual status

Recently I heard rumors that people were pressing that Princess Diana should be recognized as a saint. Now there are various religions that have saints. To these religions a saint is one who has a special relationship to various god's or in Roman Catholicism, to God. Now the basis upon which a person is recognized as

saint is works. Listen to Encyclopedia Britannica's explanation on this: "The significance of saintly personages is generally based upon real or alleged deeds and qualities that become apparent during their lifetimes and continue to exert influence after their deaths." The Roman Catholic Church has a formal procedure for recognizing saints. This is called canonization. That does not mean blowing them to pieces. The idea is to have criteria to measure someone's life to see if they are saints. The idea of canon is that of a ruler. One of the things required to be recognized as a saint in RC is that the candidate needs to have performed miracles during his/her lifetime.

Now one of the saints we are most familiar with is Saint Nicholas, whom we know as Santa Claus. Nicholas of Myra met the condition of canonization which required that he had worked miracles. Apparently three officers were condemned to death by Constantine. Now this is in the 4th century, so that is 15 to 1600 years ago. Then Constantine dreamed a dream in which Nicholas appeared and on the basis of this dream the lives of the four men were spared. Apparently his best miracles have to do with sparing the lives of children. In a sense he sounds like a modern day Mother Teresa. Well, "Saint" Nicholas became the patron saint of Russia and Greece and thousands of European churches are dedicated to him.

Now I want you to look at the recipients of this letter. This letter is not to the Ephesians. This letter is to a select group in Ephesus. It is to the saints of Ephesus. So we now must answer the question, "Who is a saint?" Well, if people are usually sainted after they have died, who is Paul writing to? Surely Paul is not writing to a bunch of dead saints!

And if qualifications for sainthood requires doing miracles, what a church must Ephesus have been! Surely some research is necessary to see what it means to be a saint.

Let us begin by looking at the Greek word here translated *saints*. It is the word *hagiois*. Behind the meaning of the Greek word as used in the NT is the Hebrew word *qadosh*. The New Bible Dictionary says that the simple root of the word *qadosh* is *qad*, meaning to cut or to separate. And there, it seems we have the root idea behind the word saint; it means apartness or separation. So Vines Dictionary says it, "...fundamentally signifies separated...., and hence, in Scripture in its moral and spiritual significance, separated from sin and therefore separated to God, sacred."

In the OT the bread used in the tabernacle, the items used in connection with the tabernacle were holy or sanctified. That is they were cut apart or separated from common use to spiritual use. In our day a person is set apart from the world by the Holy Spirit at the moment that person becomes a Christian. He or she is separated by God from the world to Himself and thus is a sanctified one or saint. Turn to a very helpful passage on this (2 Thess. 2:13-14a). Now look at the doctrines found in these verses. There is election, conversion, salvation, sanctification, and vocation or calling. Now let me put the doctrines found in 2 Thess. 2:13 in chronological order as I understand them. 1 Election or God's choice of certain individuals for Himself (we'll be looking at this soon in Ephesians). 2 Vocation, God's call to these people through the Gospel. 3 Conversion, belief or acceptance of the call. 4 Sanctification of the Spirit. 5 Salvation. Here is the point: God calls us to salvation through the preaching of the

Gospel. When we respond in faith, the Spirit sanctifies us. Now this sanctification of the Spirit has to do with becoming saints. A saint is one who has been sanctified by the Holy Spirit. The word for saint is *hagios*. The word for sanctification is *hagiosmos*. The very moment I believe or put my trust in Jesus Christ for salvation by believing the Gospel, the Holy Spirit cuts me off from the world of the lost and separates me to God.

Mark this down: The moment I accept Christ as my personal Saviour, that moment I become a sanctified one or a saint! Isn't that wonderful! Now I cannot give you the whole doctrine of sanctification here but let me give you this much. When I become a Christian I am a saint. That is initial sanctification. It takes place in a moment of time and is done. But this begins the process of sanctification. Look at another word related to the word saint in Hebrews 12:14. The Scripture tells us here, "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord." The word translated holiness is *hagiasmos*. We are to pursue holiness continually. The continual idea of sanctification is to be daily separated from sin.

Let me say in conclusion to this point, there is no group or church on earth that can induct anyone into sainthood. And there is no power on earth that can keep one from becoming a saint. A person becomes a saint when he becomes a believer. Let me say further that the Scripture categorizes Christians into at least two camps, the carnal or fleshly Christian and the spiritual Christian but they are both saints. The most carnal of all churches mentioned in Scripture is the Church at Corinth. Look at 1 Corinthians 1:1-2, 30.

This morning, if you have accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour, recognize your position in Christ. You are a saint of God. Let that message filter through your soul. Then consider your life before God and ask if there is anything in your life you need to be cut off from, meaning to be sanctified in or to become holy in.

I want to make one further point here before moving on to the next point. I give it by quoting from D. Martyn Lloyd Jones, "Let me emphasize also that this letter is not a letter addressed to some unusual and exceptional people, it is not a letter addressed to some great scholar or theologian, it is not a letter addressed to teachers, it is not a letter addressed to so-called scholars who study the Scriptures. It is not a letter to specialists but a letter to ordinary church members. That is from every standpoint a most important observation, and for this reason, that everything the Apostle says here about Christians and members of churches must therefore equally be true of us" (I:23).

This also means that the things written in this book is not addressed to scholars. Ordinary people like you and I are meant to understand what is here. Look at verse 4. This book deals with election. Look at verse 5. It deals with predestination. This book deals with many topics we might think belong to the scholar or exceptional Christian. But because it is addressed to the saints who are at Ephesus we know these topics are meant to be understood by you and me. May the Lord help us all to understand.

2) Their physical location

The saints addressed in this letter are located at Ephesus. You and I are saints

at LaCrete or Buffalo Head Prairie, or Tompkins Landing.

Their location physically tells us where they are geographically or in the world of mankind. As saints we are in the world but we are not to be of the world. Our location in the world gives each of us opportunities to touch the lives of those who need to become saints.

Now before leaving this section I wish to make a few remarks with regard to the whole debate of versions. If you have a Bible with study notes it will mention that the words *in Ephesus* are not found in some of the earliest manuscripts of this letter. It is suggested that this may have been an encyclical letter intended for all the churches around Ephesus. Marcion, from the middle of the second century calls it the letter to the Laodiceans. Turn to Colossians 4:16. Here there is indication that there was a letter sent from Paul to Laodicea.

It is not within the scope of this message to deal with the manuscript issues of the NT nor with the methods of translation. At another time perhaps. Let me just briefly state my position so you will understand why in Eph. 1:1 and other places I simply adopt the KJV or NKJV translation. I prefer the MS that the KJV versions (old and new) come from. And second, I prefer the method of translation used by both the Old and New King James versions. I do not say this because I am not aware of the historical issues. I say this because I am aware of them and in light of those issues I take this view. I am not saying that either the old or new KJV are without fault but I do believe they are more accurate to the original than any other versions. Let me say further that I am not one of those who holds to the KJV only, such as Perry F. Rockwood and others, but

neither do I condemn them. I will be glad to discuss this matter with any of you on a personal basis if you so wish.

3) Their daily life

Let me read Eph. 1:1 again, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and faithful in Christ Jesus." The saints and the faithful in Christ Jesus are not two groups of people. These latter words are a further description of the saints. They are the faithful in Christ Jesus.

But what does this mean? There are two ideas which may be attached to the meaning. There is passive faithfulness which speaks of trustworthy or dependable character (1 Cor. 7:25).

Then there is the possibility of the word having the active idea. In the active sense it means to be full of faith. There is an illustration of this in the NT. Thomas, one of the 12 who was not with the disciples when Jesus first appeared after the resurrection said, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand in His side, I will not believe." Well, some eight days later Jesus appeared at a place where Thomas was as well. After greeting them with the words, "Peace to you" He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing" (John 20:27). Now that last word is the same word we have in Ephesians 1:1. And, my friends, when Thomas became faithful or full of faith or believing he said, "My Lord and my God!" Now there is a picture of a faithful man in an active sense. Awestruck by an awesome Lord, and full of faith.

In Ephesians 1:1 I prefer the active sense of faithful in Ephesians 1:1. Saints are those who are full of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation. They trust in Him to deliver them from sin and ultimately bring them into the presence of God Almighty. They do not trust in their works or church but in Jesus Christ. The saint believes in the cardinal doctrines; that Jesus was born of the virgin Mary, that He was fully God and fully man, that He died for the sin of mankind, that one has only to believe in Him to be saved and so on. All of salvation is by grace through faith so the believer must be faithful, that is full of faith.

4. Their spiritual location

The saint of God has two locations. Physically they are wherever their physical location is but spiritually he or she is in Christ Jesus. Notice first the difference in names for our Lord. Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ. But the saints and faithful are in Christ Jesus. In this name we have the humanity and deity of Jesus Christ. He was fully God and fully man. But when He is referred to as Christ Jesus we have stress on His deity. You see, the spiritual location of all believers is in a divine Person. One of the key words of Ephesians is the preposition *in*. If you would like an interesting assignment circle or color in every occurrence of this little preposition and then meditate on the significance of this word in Ephesians. We have two occurrences of it in Ephesians 1:1.

CONCL: Last Sunday Brother Henry Knelsen told us the story of a man who crossed the ocean in a ship eating cheese and dry crackers not realizing that included in his ticket was the price of all the meals. Paul says in Ephesians 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing

in the heavenly places in Christ..." Maybe you did not know that you became a saint the very moment you accepted Christ as Saviour. Maybe you did not realize that you are one of the faithful who is situated, as to your spiritual location, in Christ Jesus. You see, we were baptized into Him and placed into His body at salvation (1 Cor. 12:13).

In closing I want us to bow our heads before God and reflect for a moment on the fact that as a believer I am a saint of God. I am one of His chosen people. I am in Christ right this very moment. If I died right now I would go to be with Him.

In Ephesians 1:3-14 our attention will be drawn to God, the blessed source of salvation. I am memorizing these verses and what encouraging meditations I have had as I recall these verses to mind as I drive or lie in bed or awake at night. But I have a request from you. Pray for me that I might accurately and profitably be able to expose these great truths about God to you.