

EPHESIANS 1:17a  
The Wonderful Work of Salvation  
Message 25, November 7, 1999

INTRO: Picture with me this morning the city of Ephesus. In Paul's time it was already over 1000 years old. It is a city with history. Picture it on the banks of the Aegean sea, a proud rich, busy seaport. Here people from all over the world would do business. Here you could see people from every nation under heaven. Furthermore, it lies at the intersection of two major overland routes. It is much different than Tompkins Landing. Walk about this city with monumental gateways and marble streets flanked by beautiful colonades. As you walk about you see shopping places of every description and even a sun dial and water clock.

There is a stadium, an amphitheatre where gladiator combats are still taking place. Furthermore, you see its religious nature when you see the amazing temple of Diana. Here you know are people who worship, but they know not God. Now you realize that to bring the Gospel to this place will be a challenge at best.

It was here that Paul arrived to preach the Gospel. He describes the people to whom he came in 2:1-3, 11-12. Well despite the difficulties a flourishing church is finally in place and then some years later the Apostle Paul writes them a letter. After formal introductions are out of the way in 1:1-2 he begins to speak to them of the wonderful source of salvation. He speaks to them of their election and predestination and many wonderful blessings which they have in Christ.

Then in 1:15-2:10 he speaks of himself, the thankful messenger of this salvation. In our last message we considered some of the introductory information regarding this thanksgiving. This morning we want to begin looking at the twofold purpose of his thanksgiving and prayers for the Ephesian believers. It is hard to notice in a cursory reading, but 1:15-2:10 is one full thought. It is all tied together and 1:17-2:10 gives us the twofold purpose of his prayers.

2. The twofold purpose of his prayers (1:17-2:10)

As we introduce the topic of his twofold purpose in praying for the Ephesian believers, let us first notice that Paul has a purpose for his prayers. He writes in 1 Corinthians 9:26, "Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air." Paul did not pray just to put in time or fulfill an obligation. He had a purpose. He takes an illustration in 1 Corinthians from the field of sports. One of his illustrations is from boxing. My wife and I were in a motel one evening and we turned on the TV and there was a boxing match about to begin. A huge muscular Negro stepped in the ring. He had never lost a fight and he always won his fights in a very short time. He was a very intimidating boxer with a muscular body, a wicked hair cut and a very boastful mouth.

Then a second man stepped in. He was clearly the underdog. But this man had a plan and a purpose. He was not facing his opponent just to make the newspaper. He knew that his adversary intimidated and always won his fights early so he purposed to reserve energy and simply survive the first few rounds. He knew that if he could survive the first few rounds and conserve energy, his opponent would be on unknown territory. Of course, we as viewers did not know this. The fight began and it looked like it would not last long. The underdog took a few nasty blows but he survived for several rounds. It looked like it was only a matter of time.

Well when Mr. Intimidator did not knock out his opponent in the first few rounds Mr. Underdog took courage and he got in a few good blows. With that the fight took on a new turn. Mr. Intimidator now began to fight out of desperation and then he began to take a few nasty blows. Well he made a big mistake when he came at his opponent in a rush. Mr. Underdog ducked his blow and then landed one that kept Mr. Intimidator's rush going right along the ropes and all the way to the floor, nor did the count of eight and nine lift him out of his stupor. That night, a new man was the hero. So fight I, not as one who beats

the air. So pray I, not as one fulfilling an obligation.

Now I want you to notice the word that begins verse 17, *that*. It is the Greek word *hina*. What is in view is purpose. Paul is saying, "I pray in order that..." Well, we are going to look at the first purpose as given in 1:17 in the next message. This morning we are simply going to introduce the twofold purpose of Paul's prayers for the Ephesian believers.

a. The first purpose (1:17)

So before we look at this first purpose we must notice something. Let me put it to you in the form of a question. Why does Paul say that he prays for them in order that, "...the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory may give..."? Why does he not simply say he prays that "...God may give..."? Why does he use so many words to describe God? He could have simply used the word God. But he did not. First he calls Him the God of the Lord Jesus Christ and then he calls him the Father of glory. Interesting isn't it?

And so before we consider the content of the first purpose we want to explore this question. Notice first that he does not pray to Jesus Christ, nor to the Holy Spirit. I remember a certain pastor in a church we attended for a number of years, who almost always began his prayers by addressing them to the dear Lord Jesus or simply Jesus. He was a Bible school trained man and had been in the ministry for many years already. Then one day he shared that he had made a new discovery. He had discovered from the Bible that we address our prayers to God, not Jesus Christ. You see, our prayers are to be addressed to God the Father, in the name of Jesus Christ. Christ is the mediator of our prayers not the aim or end (Jn. 15:16).

Notice secondly that when he prays he stops to remind himself to whom he is praying. There

are gods many, and lords many. But he is not praying to any of those. No. He is praying to the only God who can be described as the God of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is praying to the only God who is the Father of glory!

But let us consider for a moment why he describes God the way he does. Consider first that he calls the one he is praying to, "The God of the Lord Jesus Christ." Before the times of the NT we might find prayers addressed to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Now that is the same God but it speaks of our God before the time of the NC. We are people of the NC. We are people of the covenant promised by the OT.

Furthermore, I recommend to you that he addresses God as the God of the Lord Jesus Christ because he reminds us that Jesus Christ is human. You see, Jesus in His deity was God. But in His humanity Jehovah God was His God. In the OT God was sometimes addressed as the God of Abraham and so on. You see, there was a human connection. And in Jesus there is a human connection as well, and we have it in the Lord Jesus Christ!

A while ago my wife and I and the deacons and their wives were driving to a Joint Ministerial Meeting. And we were discussing Genesis 6 and the mystery of the sons of God. And one of our deacons brought up a very interesting point. If the sons of God in that passage were literally angels, one of the prominent views of many Christians, then the Virgin birth ceases to be a miracle. Now there is an interesting and challenging thought! And when we speak of God as the God of the Lord Jesus Christ we see Him in His humanity. He was born of a human being and thus a man and thus God was His God too.

Well we have spent enough time on that topic in 1:3, so let's move on to the point that Paul speaks of God here as the Father of glory. Now why would he call him the Father of

glory? I suppose you wonder why I take so much time going through these passages. But could we deal with the questions these passages raise if we did not take much time? No, we must not rush through as is so commonly done. Let us be content to take our time and look and understand. Now as to our question: Why does Paul call God the Father of glory? Listen for a moment to D. Martin Lloyd Jones, "Let me attempt to expound these words with fear and trembling. Who am I to speak on such words? As we approach them it is good for us to remember the words spoken to Moses at the burning bush: 'Take off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground (Exodus 3:5).'" Surely most of us would pass by without even noticing these words in this passage if they we did not take time to consider them.

Many of you have already sat in my classes and heard my explanation of the meaning of glory. But for those who have not and for our tape ministry audience I want to give the explanation here. I am going to ask you a question. To answer it is not a matter of pride, it is a matter of honesty. How many of you have ever made something that turned out as good or maybe better than you expected. Maybe it was a picture you colored, or painted, or maybe you built something, or baked something or sewed something. Maybe it was landscaping, anything. And when you were done you were very pleased with it and you just kept looking at it or thinking of it? (Ask).

How many of you have had that experience and then you got company and you invited them to see or taste or inspect your achievement? How many of you have had someone else say to you: "Wow!" And how many of you know the surge of the feeling that goes through one when this happens? That is glory!

You see, glory is that sensation of awe aroused in another when some good quality is

revealed in a person. Now you may tell your friend about some incredible act or ability of some other person and the moment when awe is inspired in another person because of some good quality or trait, that is glory. The very opposite of glory is shame. 1 Corinthians 11 sets these two opposite each other in one passages. It says it is a glory for a woman to have long hair, but for a man, that is a shame.

Now I want us to notice something in our text. When Paul prays he comes into the presence of the Father of glory! I think this may refer to two things. It may refer to Jesus. In this sense Jesus is the glory referred to. You see, to bring glory to God is to reveal some characteristic of God. Notice Jesus words in John 17:4, "I have glorified You on the earth." How did He do that? (Read Mark 2:1-12). So this may be a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ (See John 14:9). If so, then the first part, the God of the Lord Jesus Christ, is a reference to His humanity, and the Father of glory is a reference to His deity.

Then it may be a reference to God as being the Father of all glory. If there is any glory, real glory, God is the Father of it all. That would mean that without God there is no good to be revealed and there is nothing good to reveal.

Well in our next message we will see even more clearly why Paul tells the Ephesians that he prays to the God of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory. It is this One, before Whom he comes to ask for the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. It is this One he asks to open the eyes of the Ephesian believers that they might know and understand three very important things.

CONCL: Well, may this message be a reminder to us, the next time we pray, to take a moment to reflect on Whose presence we enter when we pray. It is the God of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory! May we be reminded that we are

praying to God, and that we come to Him through the Lord Jesus Christ. May we be reminded that we come into the presence of a holy God.

In a sense we are reminded that when we pray, we have entered holy ground. When I think of holy ground I always think of the work I was hired to do on a B.C. Hydro station. I was hired to do some excavation work on this site. Overhead ran these thick electricity busses about 4 or 5 inches thick. I was told how many volts of electricity were humming overhead but I have forgotten. When I was in position and the stabilizer bars were down I opened the back window of the machine and turned the excavator seat to face out the back and prepared to dig. The man with whom I was working motioned for me to wait and he calmly rested his one boot on the swivel of the boom. He seemed in no rush and I think he wanted me to know that we had all day. Then he told me how much electricity was running overhead. He reminded me that there could be enough electricity in the ground cables under the ground to electrocute a person. Then he said, "Now it could happen that if you get that boom a little too close to that buss overhead that the electricity could arc through your machine and into the ground. I am here to advise you what to do should such an event happen. Whatever you do, do not jump from your machine. If you jump from your machine, in all likelihood, the moment your feet touch the ground you will be burned to a crisp." And then he told me something very interesting. He said something like this, "You can be in the sphere of all those thousands of volts of electricity and it will not hurt you but the moment you touch the ground you are finished. So, in the event that the electricity should arc through your machine, you make sure you obey me in one thing. Stay right there in your machine." He told me that people who hit a power pole and caused the wires to come down were usually killed when they left their vehicle.

That experience reminded me of being in the presence of God. The closer we come to our holy God, the less we can afford to be grounded out by sin. And when we pray, we have entered holy ground. We are praying to the God of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory!