

Ephesians 003 - 1:3-6 - 2014-06-08

Call to Worship: 2 Samuel 22:47

Scripture Reading: Psalm 124

Sermon: "Blessed Be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ" Ephesians 1:3-6

Benediction: Psalm 72:18-19

FURTHER INTRODUCTION TO STUDY OF EPHESIANS

In these days we are taking up a study of the letter now known as Ephesians. The past two weeks, we have taken the first two verses of chapter one, and the first verse of chapter 4 as an introduction to the study. Please recall that I am hoping for at least four things, and inviting you to hope for them, work toward them, and pray for them with me.

1. that the Holy Spirit will renew and maintain and increase our focus on the glory of God in the Lord Jesus Christ
2. that we will better learn the truth about the very fundamentals of true Christianity
3. that the Holy Spirit, by the grace of God, will teach us the relationship between what God commands us to do, and what He has done for us in Christ.
4. that those of you who do not yet trust in Christ will be brought to faith in Him

Let me now, for a few moments, as just one more introductory note, make an observation based on the two other letters we have in the bible, that also were written to the church in Ephesus.

1 Timothy 1:3-7 Please notice in this first passage that the church in Ephesus is having trouble with false teachers, and the church is to some extent listening to false doctrine.

1 Timothy 1:3-7 As I urged you when I went into Macedonia--remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, (4) nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. (5) Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, (6) from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, (7) desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.

You recognize, I am sure, how similar our situation has been, and is, to theirs. Most of us have been highly influenced by pastors, Sunday School teachers, youth ministers, conference speakers, authors, and others who have set themselves up as Bible teachers, but who do not know what they are talking about as well as they think they do. They have filled our ears with a confusing mixture of what is true and helpful from the scriptures, and what is false and destructive, from their own imaginations.

Would you now turn with me to Revelation chapter 2. Here we have another letter to the church in Ephesus. Please note that the church no longer has much trouble with false teachers, but instead is known for rejecting false doctrine.

Revelation 2:1-7 "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: (2) "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; (3) and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. (4) Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. (5) Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you repent. (6) But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. (7) "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." '

You see, then, how the church in Ephesus had rejected the false teachers and had come to be sound in the faith, believing the truth and rejecting lies. However, in the process, they had left, had forsaken, had abandoned, their first love, the love they had for the Lord God at first. The situation was so severe that the Lord Jesus warned them that if they did not repent, He would remove them from their place as a church.

Would you please take this as a warning to us, also?

Without a doubt we must struggle against every false doctrine, with spiritual weapons in the right hand and in the left, we must cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Yet, in the process, we must take care that our love for the Lord God grows hot rather than cold.

So, let us, let this church, accept this letter, the book of Ephesians, as a God-given means by which we may become and remain committedly orthodox in the truths of the faith, and fervently constant in love for God in Christ.

To those ends, please consider with me today Ephesians 1:3-6.

Ephesians 1:3-6 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: (4) 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: (5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself,

according to the good pleasure of his will, (6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

It seems to me that the Holy Spirit, by the words of the apostle Paul, is doing something for us in this opening section that is very much like what is done in navigation. I'll tell you what I mean by that, and then ask you to consider these verses today in those terms.

Navigation: finding your way to where you want to go or need to go.

old-fashioned way: with a map and compass

new-fangled way: with a GPS, usually with built-in map

Two parts to the task

Locating yourself

Orienting yourself

I. The Holy Spirit shows us our correct location in religion: with God in Christ

A. We have a sinful tendency to think of ourselves as being somewhere else

1. above Christ

a. so that I can let Him be Lord of my life

b. or even make Him Lord of my life

c. or not let Him be Lord of my life

2. below Christ

Christ is above me in heaven; I am down here on the earth

(which is true in a sense, no doubt; but we tend to stop there, as if that is the whole story)

B. But where are we, really?

blessed in the heavenly places in Christ (Eph 1:3)

Colossians 3:1-3 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. (2) Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. (3) For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

chosen in Him (Eph 1:4)

accepted in the Beloved (Eph 1:6)

C. This union with Christ is mystical, not physical

I can't see this

I can't always feel this

(John 15:4ff) Abide in Me, and thus bear much good fruit; by this My Father is glorified

II. The Holy Spirit shows us our course in religion: toward the praise of God

A. We have a sinful tendency to make religion be about ourselves. We tend to orient our religious experience toward ourselves.

1. what I want or don't want; what I like or what I don't like
 - a. I like that song; I don't like that song
 - b. I like the way she plays that instrument; I don't like the way
 - c. I really enjoy this; I don't enjoy this
 - d. I like the pastors; I don't like the pastors
 - e. I want to get baptized; I don't want to get baptized
 - f. I want to take the Lord's Supper; I don't want to take the Lord's Supper
 - g. I feel good here; I don't feel good here
 - h. I like this church better than my old one; I like my old church better
 - i. I like these people; I don't like those people
2. what I have done
 - a. I said a prayer
 - b. I walked down to the front
 - c. I got baptized
 - d. I made a choice; I chose
 - e. I made a decision; I decided
3. honor, glory, recognition of ourselves or each other
 - a. making The Lord's Day into mother's day, father's day, veteran's day

B. Here near the beginning of this letter, we are urged to orient ourselves toward the praise of God; we are told, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"

1. by considering what He has done
 - blessed us with every spiritual blessing
 - note how so much religion has to do with physical blessing in this world, whether from the Israel camp or the Word of Faith camp, or some other
 - chose us before the foundation of the world
 - to be holy
 - to be without blame before Him
 - predestined us to adoption as sons
 - Greek *proorizo* (*pro - horizo*) our word "horizon"
 - He decided our destiny, our fate, for us ahead of time.
2. by considering why He has done it
 - He loves us
 - Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
 - it is the good pleasure of His will
 - Isaiah 46:9-10 Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, (10) Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times

things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,'

note what this refutes: the idea that He chose me because He knew I would choose Him

in the Arminian remonstrance, the Arminians wrote that God chose for salvation all of those who would believe in Christ and persevere in that belief

3. by considering to what end He has done it to the praise of the glory of His grace

CONCLUSION

So, then, by the work of the Holy Spirit,

-we know where we are --- with God in Christ.

-we know what direction to travel --- toward the praise of God.

In doing this, we will be well set up to do the two things required of the church in Ephesus so long ago

1. to take no heed to false doctrines, but to believe only the truth
2. to repent of lack of love toward God, and return to our previous zeal for Him

“in Christ”

Poole (Rom 8:1)

The phrase imports, that there is a mystical and spiritual union between Christ and believers. This is sometimes expressed by Christ's being in them, Rom_8:10 2Co_13:5 Col_1:17; and here by their being in Christ: see 1Co_1:30 1Jo_5:20. Christ is in believers by his Spirit, and believers are in Christ by faith.

Barnes (Rom 8:1)

Who are united to Christ. To be in him is an expression not seldom used in the New Testament, denoting close and intimate union. Phi_1:1; Phi_3:9; 2Co_5:17; Rom_16:7-11. The union between Christ and his people is compared to that between the vine and its branches Joh_15:1-6, and hence, believers are said to be in him in a similar sense, as deriving their support from him, and as united in feeling, in purpose, and destiny.

JFB (Rom 8:1)

one with Him in the divine reckoning. there is to such “NO CONDEMNATION.” (Compare Joh_3:18; Joh_5:24; Rom_5:18, Rom_5:19). But this is no mere legal arrangement: it is a union in life; believers, through the indwelling of Christ's Spirit in them, having one life with Him, as truly as the head and the members of the same body have one life.