

EPHESIANS 1:1-23

SUNDAY 28th SEPTEMBER 2025 | SIM FORDER

Ephesians 1:1-23

Taught by Simeon Forder on Sunday morning, 28th September 2025 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

Reading: 1 John 4:20-21

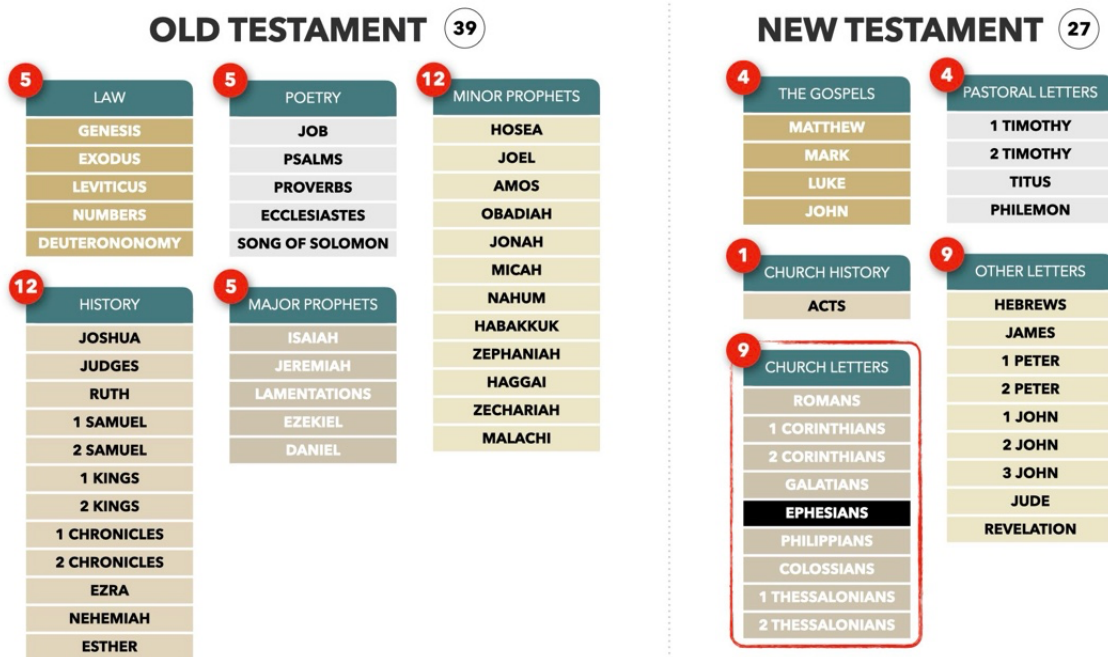
Introduction

This morning we are going to begin a fresh verse by study of the book of Ephesians — the first time since 2008 as a church family, and we should be excited about working our way through what is described by many as the high ground of the New Testament. That is, this book reaches the pinnacle of what we believe, of what Christ has done for us, of what we have *in Him*.

It also gives us much instruction on the change that should inevitably follow in in our lives. But whereas the book of Romans first lays down doctrine and then talks about our individual lives, Ephesians lays down doctrine and then talks more about our lives *together* — in our marriages, in our homes, in our workplaces, in our church. So, while the focus starts (and necessarily so) with the *spiritual*, it will very much be *practical* for us in our lives too.

Where

Now, to get our bearings, let's first consider where we find this book in the Bible...



...which, as you know, is comprised of two parts — the Old and New Testaments. Together these consist of 66 books that were written down by around 40 different authors, each inspired by the Holy Spirit to write exactly what God would have them say — for our learning, for our obedience, for our comfort, and for our hope.

And each book is different. Some, such as Genesis that we studied not so long ago, offer more of a narrative, following the lives and actions of individuals, families, peoples, and nations. While others, are in the form of poetry, proverbs, or prophecy. Others, such as Galatians (that we studied last year), are more personal, written in the form of a letter to a group of churches, while other letters were written to a specific church or individual — such as Titus that we studied around 2.5 years ago. And as you can see here, there are some logical ways we can group these books together.

In the Old Testament we find 3 groups of 5 books — first the Pentateuch, commonly known as the law, which Moses wrote down, and second, later on, there are 5 poetical books (3 of which were written by King Solomon), plus the 5 major prophets, most named after those who wrote them.

We also see 2 groups of 12 books — the first being the history books that focus on the history of the nation of Israel (including Ruth that we studied around a year ago now in the evenings), and the second are the minor prophets, so called because they are typically shorter in length — not lesser in importance (and as with the major prophets, they are named after those who wrote them).

In the New Testament, we find two groups of 4, and two groups of 9 books — plus one other. And it begins with the 4 gospel accounts — Matthew (which we just studied), plus Mark, Luke and John — followed by Acts which records the history of the very early church. There are then 9 letters written by Paul to churches, 4 he writes to individuals, and then 9 more letters that are written by various men — each named after the author (with the exception of Hebrews), plus Revelation, which the apostle John wrote (and which, God willing, we'll start studying before the end of this year).

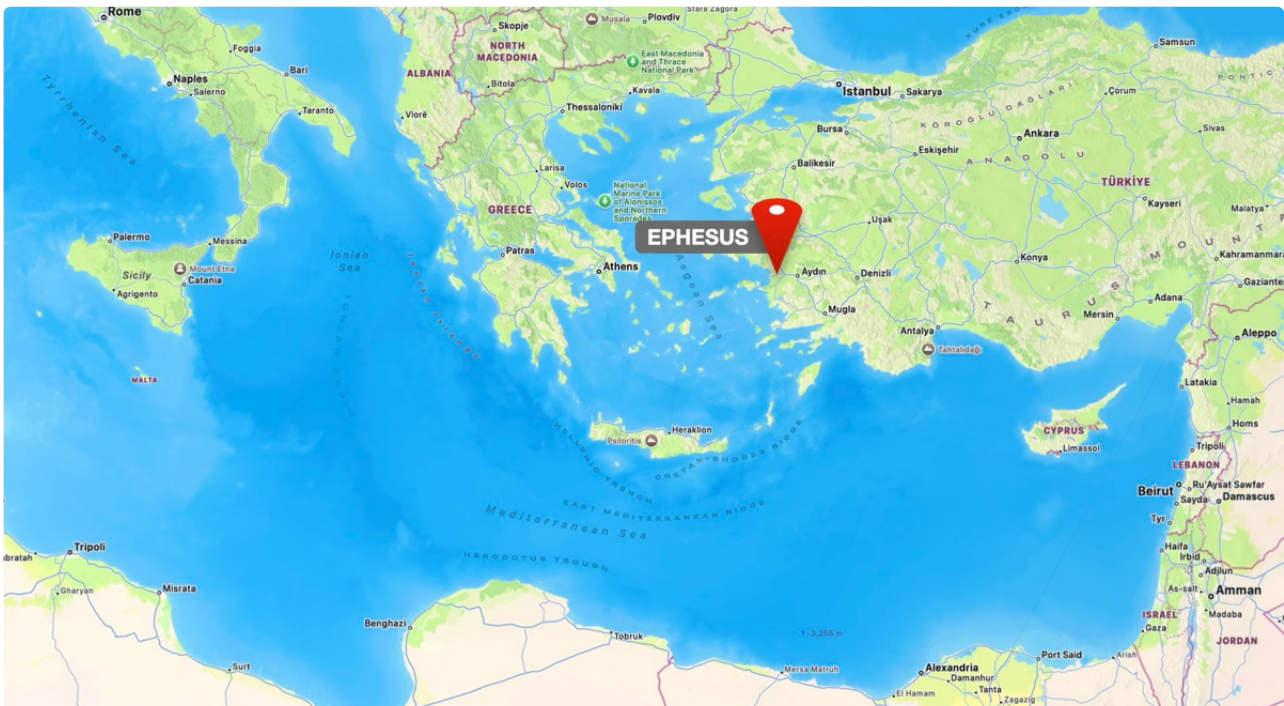
And it is here, in the New Testament, among the church letters, that we find the book of Ephesians, the 49th book in the Bible, which is around 3000 words long.

Who

And this book, this letter, was written by the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians. Though, as a side note, several commentators record that some early copies of this letter have a blank space where *Ephesians* is written, and the thinking is, among some, that this was a letter written to *also* be sent to *other* churches — that essentially there was a blank space on these copies to fill in the name of each church that it would be sent to. A bit like an early version of mail merge, for those who know what that is. And indeed, we know Paul *encouraged* the reading of letters by other churches.

But, whether that was the intent of those copies or not, we should keep in mind that since this letter to the Ephesians is part of the *Bible*, it is very much necessary for *you and I* to read, digest, and apply to our lives today. So in that sense, we are sure that it wasn't *only* written for the Ephesians.

However, with that said, context is helpful, and you might be wondering who the Ephesians were. Well, as with Paul's other letters in the Bible, the clue is in the name — that these people were those that lived in the ancient Greek city of Ephesus, which is in modern-day Türkiye, as you can see here, almost due east of Athens:



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Now, for the last 500 years or so the city has been abandoned, and these days you will find an extensive number of ruins there, including temples, the library (which you can see here), the amphitheatre, and remains of the former harbour, which is now a few miles inland from the shore of the Aegean Sea (due to the river Cayster silting up the old harbour).



But at the time Paul wrote this letter it was quite different. In fact, Ephesus was a major city and commercial centre, with a population of around 300,000 to 350,000 people. In fact, only Rome itself and Alexandria in Egypt were larger in population. And as is still the way with many cities today, this hive of activity was a breeding ground for all sorts of sin, idolatry, and immorality — including the hundreds of temple prostitutes that were present there. And to give you an idea of the scale of idolatry, the temple to Diana (one of some 25 deities they worshipped) was 420 feet long, 220 feet wide, and over 60 feet tall — that's four times bigger than the Parthenon in Athens, and it was one of the seven wonders of the world.

Yet in the middle of all of this was a thriving group of believers — Christians — that Paul had previously nurtured, taught, and equipped with the Bible over a three year period. And we read more of Paul's time there in Acts chapter 19, where we learn that Paul came to the city, and realised something was missing in the lives of the disciples there — that they were not filled with the Holy Spirit. But then, having baptised them, and laid hands on them, he then taught in the synagogue for three months until it became clear that *some* of the Jews that lived there wanted nothing to do with Jesus whom Paul preached.

And that prompted Paul to then meet daily with those who *did* believe in the school of Tyrannus, where he reasoned from the Scriptures for another two years. And such was the impact of Paul's life, and the Word of God in the lives of those that believed — with them even burning their wicked books in public — that those in the city whose income relied on the making and selling of idols could take it no more, and so stirred up the people of the city into a frenzy, dragging some of Paul's travel companions into the amphitheatre, in front of a mob crowd, shouting for two whole hours "*Great is Diana of the Ephesians!*" — until one of the officials stepped in to calm them down, reminding them that if they didn't then Rome would start asking questions about how orderly the city was.

Another way of putting it, was that these Christians were so sure, so bold in their faith, that they were impacting the city around them, and people were turning away from their old lives, from their sin and idolatry. But what was *behind* all this? Well, again, you may recall from last Sunday morning, that later in Acts chapter 20, as Paul met with the Ephesian elders at a place called Miletus, he reminded them that he had not failed to teach them the whole counsel of God. That is, these Christians were thoroughly equipped through the thorough teaching of God's Word.

Yet, despite that, Paul still believed it necessary to warn the elders of those (from both outside and inside the church) who would try and draw away people to themselves, and he *still* believed it necessary to write this letter to *all* the believers there, to remind them of what Christ had done for them, and how their lives should be lived in light of that.

So, let us not think we don't need this letter. Let us never be complacent that we don't need to learn any more from *any* part of the Bible. For even if we're thriving in our walk with the Lord, we need His Word daily. And we need to come *together* often to study it, discuss it, and to live it out in our lives.

In fact, of all churches Paul wrote to, the Ephesian church should really remind us to not be complacent, for we read in Revelation chapter two that Jesus told the apostle John to write these words to the very same church, saying:

Revelation 2:2-4

"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; and you have persevered and have patience, and have laboured for My name's sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

Let that not be the case with us. To have so much right, but to grow cold in our walk with Jesus.

When

Now, having considered the *where* and *who*, let us consider *when* this letter was written. And in terms of dates, it was likely written in 62 or 63 AD (and certainly between 60-64 AD).

But as for when this was written in Paul's life, this was one of four letters he wrote from prison in Rome — the other three letters being Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. Yet, as we'll see, Paul didn't consider himself the prisoner of *Rome*, for he begins chapter three by calling himself *the prisoner of Christ Jesus* and chapter four by calling himself *the prisoner of the Lord*.

In other words, his imprisonment was merely a detail in what God was doing, for in chapter six we'll read him asking the Ephesians to pray for him — not that he would be released from prison, but that he would have boldness to share the gospel there. What a reminder for us to look upon our circumstances as opportunities! That even when confined to our homes, we can do much to share the gospel, to pray, and to encourage believers.

What

And that brings us to *what* this letter is about. For it is very much one of encouragement, to live the *new* life we now have *in Christ*, and not one of correction in the same way that Paul wrote to the Corinthians about all the issues taking place in that church, or the way in which he wrote to the churches in Galatia — even saying "Oh foolish Galatians!".

Rather, the key in all this is who we are, and what we have *in Christ*. Indeed, in the opening 14 verses we read "*in Christ Jesus*", "*in Christ*", "*in Him*", "*in the Beloved*", "*in Him*", "*in Himself*", "*in Christ*", "*in Him*", "*in Him*" (again), "*in Christ*", "*in Him*", and "*in whom*".

You see, it is that foundation that we need, for as one commentator put it "*if we simply think through, bask in, and meditate on the doctrine of what Christ has done for us, we find ourselves saying, "I want to serve Him." Duty then becomes not a demand but a delight.*"

Put another way, if we skip ahead to chapters 4 to 6, and only read about wives submitting to their husbands, husbands giving up all for their wives, children obeying their parents and so on, it will feel like legalism. It will feel like demands on us. But if we begin with chapters 1 to 3, as we ought to, and as we will, then we will see who we are in Christ, what we have in Him. And it will be our joy to say *Your will, Your way, Lord*.

So then, I encourage you to watch out for the *therefores* as we go through this, for Paul will use the word *therefore* fifteen times in this letter, with one point building upon another.

Overview of Ephesians

- **Chapter 1** — The believer's place in Christ
- **Chapter 2** — God's grace
- **Chapter 3** — The plan of salvation
- **Chapter 4** — Walking in Christ
- **Chapter 5** — Walking in love
- **Chapter 6** — Standing with Christ

Now, as the briefest of overviews, then, chapter one will speak of the believer's place in Christ, of what we have *in Him*. Chapter two will speak of God's grace (including one of the most well known verses from this book). While chapter three will talk more of God's plan of salvation for us.

Then, in response to that, chapter four will instruct us about how to *walk in Christ*, that we might walk worthy of Him. While chapter five will emphasise how we ought to walk in love — especially in our marriages which should point to Jesus — and then chapter six will encourage us to *stand with Christ*, to be strong in the Lord.

Overview of chapter one

- **v1-2** — Greeting to the Ephesians
- **v3-14** — Redemption in Christ
- **v15-23** — Prayer for the saints

Zooming in to chapter one then, which we'll study this morning, we'll find that first Paul greets those he is writing to, and then in verses 3-14 goes on to say how God has blessed us so much, having planned our Salvation long ago, that He might gather together, in the fullness of time, a people who love Him, who live for Him, who are to His praise and glory. And then, from verses 15-23 Paul will smile, as it were, at how the Ephesians had also trusted in Jesus, saying how he continually gave thanks for them, praying that they would grow in their understanding of Him, as they sit at Jesus feet, who is Head of the church. And so there will be example for us in that!

So let's get in to this chapter, then. Starting at verse 1, of course. We read:

Ephesians 1:1

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus:

And there is much I could say just on the first word here, for **Paul** was such an incredible character — born and raised as the strictest of Jews, studied at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the most respected Pharisees, and then became a Pharisee himself, passionately holding to his beliefs, and persecuting Christians to the point of death. Yet when confronted by Jesus Himself, everything changed. This man who *hated* Jesus, came to know Him as his Saviour, and *loved* Him until the day he died for Him. And instead of killing Christians, he started making them, so to speak, by preaching the gospel everywhere he went, and not only teaching the Word of God, but writing it too, under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

And as he writes here, he was an **apostle** — meaning one that was sent as a delegate of God, and specifically, one that had received his commission directly from the living lips of Jesus, having seen Him, and having performed miracles as the other apostles did. But note how this was **by the will of God** — it wasn't Paul's crazy idea to find fame or something. It was him being obedient to what God had called Him to do. And in similar fashion we are also to respond to what God has called *us* to do.

Now, you're not necessarily going to hear the call of God to clean the toilets, Hoover the hall, or make tea and coffee. Those things are done out of love for God, and love for others. And we *already* have instruction to do that, to do good works, to show hospitality, to be good stewards. But there are also ministry roles and responsibilities to which God *does* call. And it is oh so important that you not only respond to the call, and remain faithful to that calling, but if you don't hear it, that you don't go! That you don't try and take on what you merely think would be a good idea, or foolishly think would be nice to do — for you need the conviction that comes with God's call to ministry. So if God calls you to go — go! But go at His command, not your own whim or will.

Here, Paul had faithfully taught these believers for years as he had been called to do, establishing them in their faith, and now, from prison in Rome, he writes to them. To the **saints**. Not to those who had been canonised by the Catholic church (which didn't even exist then). He wasn't writing to some elite group of super-Christians who had halos or capes. It was to the saints — which simply means *holy*, or *separated*. The idea of being *set apart*. Which is what all Christians are, which means, if you are a Christian, you're a saint too.

And specifically, Paul was writing to the saints in **Ephesus**, this city filled with commerce, with idolatry, with immorality, with sin. Yet these saints, these believers who were separated unto Christ, were **faithful in Him**. In other words, they were in the world, but they were not of it!

And to them he wrote:

Ephesians 1:2

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Which is a far bigger deal than fifteen words could ever convey. For neither the Ephesians or us could ever *know* the peace of God, or *have* peace with God, without God's grace — and so it's a good reminder each time we read these opening greetings, to note that Paul *always* writes about grace and peace in that order, in all his letters. For without the grace of God, there is no peace. In your life, or my life.

And having reinforced that, we now find that verses 3-14 are made up of just four sentences, which essentially speak of the will of the Father, the work of the Son (over two sentences), and the ministry of the Holy Spirit (in that order). Essentially looking at what God has done, and will do in the past, present, and future. Each section ending with the words "to the praise of His glory". We read:

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,

That is, writing from prison, Paul is able to count his blessings. But his focus is not material ones, but spiritual ones. For anything we could ever possess in this world is worthless compared to the spiritual blessings we have in Christ. And note, he's not yet talking about what we *will* have in the future, but what we have *already*. About what the Father *has* done for us. And specifically, what He has done for us *in Christ*. We read:

Ephesians 1:4

just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,

So then, thankfully, our salvation wasn't an afterthought. When Adam & Eve sinned, God didn't panic and say "Oh no! What am I going to do?!".

Rather, God, knowing we would sin, knowing that sin would separate us from Him, before He even created the world, chose us in Him, that we would be separated unto Him, and *without blame* — which can mean only one thing; that we would be forgiven of all our sin. And that forgiveness could only come through one means, which is not through our earning, but through the sacrifice of Jesus in our place. God knew that ahead of time, and created us anyway, and chose us, that rightfully, *He* would get the glory. How wonderful is that?!

I mean, we can find it hard enough to forgive someone who has hurt us in the past, right? Yet isn't it true that if we had really known how someone would *go on* to treat us ahead of time, we would probably never have made friends with them in the first place?! Yet God, knowing full well how deeply we would sin, how wickedly we would act, how abhorrent our thoughts would be, still made us, and chose us in Him, knowing all it would cost. That is humbling, right?!

But there's more, for God didn't only plan our *salvation* ahead of time, but we read on:

Ephesians 1:5

having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

That is, He even planned from before the creation of the world to adopt us as His sons. That not only would He forgive us, but He would give us an inheritance in Him. That we would be heirs with Christ, as we read in Romans. Not because He was forced into it, but because it pleased Him to do so. This is a God of immense love.

I don't know about you, but I can hear John exclaiming in his first letter, *"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!"*

But what of our choice, you might ask? Does this mean God forces our hand? No. You see, God is outside of time, and He knew from before He formed you in your mother's womb, before He even created the world, how you would respond to Him. And He knows how each one of us will respond. And knowing that, He chose each one that would come to Him. Why? That *He* would get the glory, that as we read in verse 6, it would be:

Ephesians 1:6

to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

This is the key, that in all this *He* would get the glory for making a way by which we could be saved, and rightly so! That the *author* and *giver* of the gift of salvation would get the praise, not the *receiver* of the gift. But again, this doesn't take away our ability to accept or reject Christ, or our need to respond. Yes, it is God that calls us, yes it is God who draws us, yes it is His Holy Spirit that convicts us. But our free will is not over-ridden in this.

Consider the giving of a birthday present. The person who is offered the gift has the freedom to reject that gift. I've seen that happen, and it's not a pretty sight. But had they been willing to accept it, they would have received *no credit* for the gift *or* the giving. And so it is with us. We have the choice to accept or reject Christ, but our turning to Him in repentance in faith in no-way takes away from the credit He deserves for giving us that gift! The freedom we have to choose takes nothing away from God's glory, or His sovereignty.

And this freedom is what the Bible teaches. For we read in Acts 2, how after Peter shared the gospel with the Jews in the first sermon, that they asked *"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"* to which Peter responded, saying *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..."*

Likewise we see with the Philippian jailer in Acts 16 that when he said to Paul and Silas *"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"* that they replied, saying *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."*

There was a choice in both cases. And there is a choice in ours. So don't let anyone dupe you into thinking that God only died for those He chose, or that we have no choice in whether we are saved, for we read in Peter's second letter that...

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

And in John's first letter that...

1 John 2:2b

He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

And in John's gospel of course that...

John 3:16b

...God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

The late Dave Hunt put this so well, saying:

God has all the glory when we say "yes" to His grace and love, because He has both provided the salvation and drawn us by His Spirit. And man has all the blame when he rejects Christ, for God has done all that He can to persuade him to believe.

Dave Hunt

So if you have never put your faith and trust in Jesus, know that He has died for you. If you have never turned to Him in repentance and faith. Now is the time. God has done all necessary for you to be saved. But He won't force you to turn to Him. The choice is yours.

Now, turning to those of you that *do* know Jesus as your Saviour, and before we move on to the next verse, I want to stress a couple of things.

The first, is that we are a church *family*, and that means we have here those of all ages and stages of their Christian faith. Therefore, some of you may not have previously considered one or more of these things that some people say — that is, it is a surprise to you that some would say Jesus only died for *some*, or that we have *no choice* in our salvation. While others of you will have immediately recognised that I've been talking about viewpoints that are often called Calvinism and Arminianism, as we've gone through these verses.

Second, I want to stress that as a church family, indeed as Christians, we are called to love, even in our disagreements. For we read in chapter four John's first letter:

1 John 4:7-11

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

So don't speak, don't discuss, don't act, without doing so in love.

However, love should care. And as your pastor, as a fellow believer in Christ, I care that you come to a Biblical understanding in these things, which is why I have spent some more time on these verses than I will on others today, because these things *do* matter. You see, strict five point Calvinists believe that only the elect can be saved and that God has elected others to spend eternity in hell. But at DCF, we believe that Jesus died on the Cross for all the sins of *all* people, and that *anyone* who wants to can accept Him as their Lord and Saviour and be born again. That is what we are confident the Bible teaches, which is why we have had that in our statement of faith on our web site for a long time. And it is what we will continue to preach.

So, I would simply add, should you have questions on this topic, myself or the elders would gladly talk with you, and we really would seek to do so in love, looking at what the Bible says together. But also, as we do so in our statement of faith, I want to point you to two helpful books called “Calvinism versus Arminianism” by Chuck Smith, and “What Love Is This” by Dave Hunt — and if you find it easier to listen than to read, there is a free to watch recording of Dave Hunt speaking on this topic that I would be happy to share with you too.

Now, let us continue in God's Word. Paul, having now written of the will of the Father, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, now moves to the work of the Son, writing:

Ephesians 1:7-10

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.

That is, our redemption, the saving of our souls and forgiveness of our sin has come about through the high price of the blood of Jesus shed on the cross for you and I. Not because we in anyway merited or earned it, but because of His amazing grace toward us. Grace that is not scarce, but rather abounds toward us. Not with a hidden purpose, but now with God's plan revealed to us — that He wants to gather to Himself one people, forgiven, free, and united in Him.

And Paul continues, writing, saying:

Ephesians 1:11-12

In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

Again, it is all for our good and His glory, that since before the world was made, God arranged it that we, who He knew would turn to Him in repentance and faith, would receive an inheritance in Him.

But let us not lose sight of the fact that our inheritance is not merely *through* Him, but *in* Him. That is, Jesus Himself is the joy of our inheritance. Sure, Heaven is going to be wonderful. The new heavens and new earth are going to be incredible. But nothing will compare to being in the presence of Jesus Himself, and I really think we should keep that in mind — for if we do not, it would be like me being more excited about living in mine and Siân's house, or driving her car, than I am excited about actually being married to her. At best that would be foolish, at worst it would be rather hurtful, wouldn't it? So, let us keep a healthy perspective in this.

Now, here, Paul is writing to the Ephesians saying we — that is those Jews who first trusted in Christ as their Saviour — did so to the praise of His glory. But now goes on to say in verse 13:

Ephesians 1:13-14

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

So then, turning to *them*, he says to these Ephesian Christians, these Gentile believers, that their faith was *also* to the praise of *His* glory! Not theirs. And that their trust in Him came about as they first heard, then believed in Him — again that's choice on their part, yet to God's glory, for not only did the Son redeem them, but the Holy Spirit *sealed* them, the guarantee and thus the *security* of their Salvation. That rather than their eternal security rest on *their* ability or faithfulness, it would rest on *His*. What comfort that is, and how rightly God is praised for that!

And in light of their coming to Christ, and of their trust in Him, Paul says:

Ephesians 1:15-16

Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers:

Oh, what example this is to us. For let me ask you... does it bring you joy when you hear of others walking closely with the Lord? Does it bring you joy when you see how much love a fellow Christian has for other believers? And do those things cause you to give thanks for them in prayer? Looking at Paul's example here, I think the answer ought to be yes in all those things!

Indeed, if we look at Paul, we find a consistency in his writings and his life, that he *prayed for others*. Here, he told the *Ephesians* how he prayed for them. To the Christians in Rome he wrote that "*without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers*". To the Thessalonians he wrote "*We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.*". And to Philemon he wrote "I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers,".

Can the same be said about us, about our commitment to pray for *anyone*? I know I don't pray like I ought, or as often as I ought. And it's not that I don't pray, but that I want to, and need to pray more. To pray more for my wife, my children, my family and friends, and you all — my church family. Yet beyond that, there are countless Christian friends and churches I love elsewhere that far too seldom get mentioned in my prayers. If that is the same in your life, then let us indeed each commit to praying more, more often, and for more people.

Yet not only when things go wrong, but when things are good too. Jon Courson put this well. He said: *Who do you pray for? I have a tendency to pray for those who are hurting, for those who are going through tragedies and difficulties, for those who are backsliding and failing—and that's fine. But here Paul is saying something very different when he says, "When I heard how well you're doing, I was moved to pray for you."*

Oh, what example this is indeed to us. Let us follow it, noting *what* Paul prayed too, for he prayed:

Ephesians 1:17-21

that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

In light of this, I don't think we should ever be able to say "I don't know what to pray for this person", for if in any doubt we can follow Paul's example, in praying for someone that we know, that;

- God may give them wisdom through the Holy Spirit
- That He would reveal Himself to them
- That their understanding in Him may grow
- That they would remember the hope they have in Him
- That they would focus on eternal rewards, not material gain
- That they would know God's power in their lives

And not praying tentatively, but praying with confidence, knowing that He raised Jesus from the dead, and has put everything under His feet. And that there is nothing in His goodness that He cannot do. And that there is no other power or authority that can usurp Him. For, as we read:

Ephesians 1:22-23

And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Let us pray as we ought to pray. Full of confidence in Him. And praying for each other as we ought to as the body of Christ. For as we read in 1 Corinthians, if one part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers with it. If you are limping along spiritually, it's going to affect me. If I'm not praying as I ought, it's going to affect you. If none of us are devoting time to God's Word, it will affect us all. So, as the song says:

*Let us pray, let us pray, everywhere in every way
Every moment of the day, it is the right time
For the Father above, He is listening with love
And He wants to answer us, so let us pray*
Steven Curtis Chapman

God loves us, and has demonstrated His marvellous love toward us. Let us imitate Him, and love one another. That He would have joy in His children getting along as they ought to.

Summary

There's a lot in this chapter, right? But to put it as concisely as I can, Paul wrote to the Ephesians here that God has blessed us so much, having planned our Salvation long ago, that He might gather together, in the fullness of time, a people who love Him, who live for Him, who are to His praise and glory. So when he heard of their faith, he couldn't stop giving thanks to God for them, praying that God would do yet more in their lives, that they would understand more, as they sit at Jesus feet, who is the Head of the church.

So may that also be the case with us.

Application questions

As we head out for tea & coffee in a moment, and as we go home today, I encourage you to think on the following three questions, to help apply this chapter to your life:

- Is your life to the praise of God's glory? Or your own?
- When was the last time you gave thanks for another believer?
- Are you praying *often* for other believers? Or only in emergencies?

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