

=THE EPISTLES=

Lesson 5

Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians

AIM: to teach my pupils the general teaching of the book of Ephesians.

POINT OF CONTACT: Since the letter was written by Paul while he was in jail at Rome, start the class session by talking about jails, prisons, etc. Ask the class how many have ever seen a jail or a prison. Have someone describe what he saw. Discuss jails for a few minutes. Then describe the one Paul was in when he wrote this letter. It was a little room, circular in shape, about twenty feet across. It was beneath the ground with no windows or light. There was a hole in the middle of this room just big enough for a body to fall through. This led down into the inner basement prison. This was even darker, more damp, and more dreary! This was where Paul was when he wrote this letter.

INTRODUCTION: Let us notice some interesting facts about the book of Ephesians.

1. As has already been said, Paul was in prison. (Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; 6:20)
2. Paul was old; his life was nearly over. He died just a few months later. Yet it is perhaps the most radiant and glorious book of all he wrote.
3. It was written to several churches, or to the churches, in the area of Ephesus. The church at Ephesus was probably the biggest of those that Paul started, and it probably became the most influential of all his churches. As is always the case, other churches began to spring up around it, until other evangelistic, soul-winning works were near. A church ought to influence more than just its own block; it ought to influence an entire area.
4. Paul loved these people dearly. One of the most touching scenes in all the Bible concerning a pastor and his people and the love that ought to exist between them is found in Acts 20:35-38. This is the picture of Paul's leaving Ephesus for the last time. Now let us notice the main outline of the book:

I. SALUTATION. (Ephesians 1:1, 2)

1. Paul called himself an apostle. (Ephesians 1:1a) There is a difference between an apostle and a disciple. The disciples were simply the "learners" or "followers" of Jesus Christ. Each of us is a disciple. An apostle was one chosen especially by God and sent by Jesus. He was one who had seen Jesus. Paul was an apostle.
2. The letter was written to the saints. (Ephesians 1:1b) This does not mean a weird assortment of emaciated individuals with halos on their heads. It means a people who have been separated by the grace of God and have trusted Jesus Christ as Saviour. Every Christian is a saint.
3. Notice the salutation: "Grace be unto you, and peace," in Ephesians 1:2. When a Jew met another Jew, he would say, "Shalom." This meant "peace." It was his "Howdy," "Good morning," "How are you?" It was his greeting. Paul added "grace" and "peace" to his salutation, realizing there could be no real peace unless there was first grace.

- II. THE BELIEVER'S POSITION IN JESUS CHRIST. (Ephesians 1:3-23) Paul tells here what we have in Jesus Christ. Look at some of the things that we have in Christ. In verse 3, as a Christian we have blessings in heavenly places. In verse 4, we stand positionally without blame. In verse 4, we find He loves us. In verse 5, we find we have been adopted. This does not mean that as individuals we have been adopted, but God has chosen to adopt the Gentiles, also, who by faith trust the Saviour. They, too, may be born again into the family of God. In verse 6, we find that we are accepted. Ah, this is wonderful  $\frac{3}{4}$ to be accepted before God. In verse 7, we find that we have been redeemed. This means we have been "bought back." We once belonged to God. Through sin we fell. Jesus bought us back, and we are now His again. In verse 9, we find we can know His will and have a purpose in life. In verse 11, we find that we have an inheritance; we are rich. In verse 14, we find we have the Holy Spirit as the earnest, or down payment, of our inheritance. God has deposited to us the Holy Spirit, guaranteeing that we will have the rest of it when Jesus comes. These and many other things reveal our position in Jesus Christ. This is found in Ephesians 1:3-23.

III. THE BELIEVER'S TESTIMONY.

1. What we were. (Ephesians 2:1-3)
  - 1) We were dead.
  - 2) We walked according to the world, according to the prince of the power of the air, who is the Devil. Before God saved us, our walk was worldly, and we walked according to the Devil.
  - 3) We were disobedient. We did as we wanted to do and not as God wanted us to do.
  - 4) Our conversation was bad.
  - 5) We fulfilled our own desires. What we wanted to do, we did. We lived a fleshly life.
2. What we are. We have looked at what we were before God saved us. Now let us look at what we are since God has saved us. Notice Ephesians 2:4-7.
  - 1) God loves us. (Ephesians 2:4)
  - 2) God quickened us. This means He made us anew. He gave us a new life, a new nature. He raised us from the old life to walk in newness of life.
  - 3) We have the privilege of fellowshiping with Christ and sitting in heavenly places with Christ.
  - 4) We have a tremendous future. Think of all the Christian has before him!
3. How we came from what we were to what we are. (Ephesians 2:8-10) You will notice salvation is by grace through faith. It is God's gift. It is not what we do, or we could brag about it. Explain here the plan of salvation very carefully.

IV. THE BELIEVER'S WALK. See Ephesians 4:1-6:9. These verses teach us how we should walk as God's people. We have seen what we used to be, what we are, and how we got there. Now we see what we should be and how we should walk on our way to Heaven.

1. It should be a worthy walk. (Ephesians 4:1)
2. It should be a humble walk. (Ephesians 4:2)
3. It should be a walk of unity. (Ephesians 4:3-6)
4. We are to walk in the Spirit. (Ephesians 4:30)
5. We are to walk in love. (Ephesians 5:2)
6. We are to be filled with the Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18)
7. We are to walk in our homes properly. (Ephesians 5:21-6:9)

V. THE BELIEVER'S CONFLICT. In Ephesians 6:10-20, we are reminded that we are in a battle. Notice the weapons that we are to use. It might be wise to bring some soldier's equipment to class. This might especially interest the children. Notice the warfare that we have to fight and what we have with which to fight!

VI. CONCLUSION OF THE EPISTLE. (Ephesians 6:21-24) These are just a few words of closing from Paul.

CONCLUSION: Once again go back to that prison and picture Paul writing such glorious truths and such a glorious Epistle from prison. Let us never complain! As one preacher prayed as he knelt in this prison where Paul had been, "Lord, never let me complain again."