



Reading through the New Testament—Week 34

August 27-September 2

Becoming more like Jesus—growing in His Word

This week's reading takes us into Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Details of Paul's lengthy ministry in Ephesus are found in Acts 19 (see also 20:16-38). At the time, Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of Asia. Its population in the first century may have approached half a million. Many believe that Paul originally composed the letter to the Ephesians for a group of congregations in the Roman province of Asia, which included also the church in Ephesus.

Unfortunately, Ephesus was known for pagan and occult worship practices. It is possible that Paul wrote Ephesians to commend Christ as Lord to readers who had once (and perhaps in some ways still) bowed to the occult or pagan practices in the city.






The primary message of Ephesians is that the church is the body of Christ. Some scholars see the theme of Ephesians summarized in 2:10, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." On the basis of this theme, Ephesians would consist of two large divisions. Chapters 1-3 would treat the church as God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus, while chapters 4-6 would emphasize that the church is created for good works.

This second half of the letter describes the life and work of Christians from a practical perspective. This new life affects the Christian family including relationships between husband and wife, children and parents, masters and servants which is why Paul writes what he does here in 5:21-6:9. To maintain the new life in Christ and His church, spiritual weapons are needed to defeat, with God's help, powerful forces (6:10-20).

SERMON NOTES

New Testament in a Year—August 7-September 2

Galatians/Ephesians

Chapter 5  6  1  2  3 

Additional Reflections from this week's reading

Galatians 5 In vv.13-15, how does Paul navigate between the dangers of legalism and total license? Paul says, (a) we are not under the law anymore, and (b) we are to fulfill it. What's the difference between (a) and (b)?

Galatians 6 Read v. 2 and then read v. 5. They aren't actually contradictory, but meant to be complimentary. Obviously, we have to take personal accountability for our own actions (v. 5), but we all are called to serve one another in love as Christ serves us (v. 2) as well.

Ephesians 1 In your own words, describe the "blessings in Christ" we receive as Christians (vv. 3-9).

Ephesians 2 After reading this chapter, think through, or discuss with others:

- Describe the lives of those who were "dead in . . . transgressions and sin" (vv. 1-3).
- How have the spiritually dead been raised to life (vv. 4-10)?
- Describe how Paul defines the "process of salvation" (vv. 8-10).
- Describe the condition suffered by those who were formerly "separate from Christ" (vv. 11-13).
- What blessing do those who were once alienated from God, now enjoy (v. 19)?

Ephesians 3 Memorize vv. 20-21 and pray it often!

Blessing the World

God Uses Us.

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

Ephesians 3:20-21

Take a few minutes this week and ponder: If God can do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, what is He doing in and through us? God places us in situations to be His hands and feet on a daily basis. How has He used you this week? Unsure, ask Him to open your eyes to opportunities that He presents.

Belonging in Community

This week we are going to talk about rebuilding which can be a very frustrating process.

- Have you ever had a time where you worked at something only to come across a flaw or mistake that caused you to start over? Take the time to share your stories of what happened.

Even though this process can be incredibly frustrating it is important to go through it. Otherwise we continue to incorporate the flaws into the original creation. As people we are God's creation and although He doesn't make mistakes we often bring flaws and imperfections into ourselves. Because of this, the breaking down and rebuilding is necessary.

- Is there a time where you experienced God doing some rebuilding work in your life?
- According to Ephesians 3 we have the gift of God's love and power as we go through these seasons. How can the truth of those gifts affect us as we go through these experiences?

We don't only have seasons where we are personally being rebuilt, but we also experience seasons where our families, organizations, and communities experience rebuilding. Can you share a time where you experienced this with a group of people that you are a part of?

- What were ways that people were or were not able to bring the truth of God's love and power into the process?

As you close, discuss how you can be a group that encourages through seasons of rebuilding and can safely and effectively speak the promises of God to each other during these times.