

The People of God Tour 2019 [A Walk Through the Book of Ephesians]

[5:00] Instrumental Preludes

[1:05] Reading: The Divine Purpose: The Glory and Headship of Christ (Ephesians 1:1-14)

After the resurrection of Jesus, the kingdom of God was continually revealed in His church. A part of the church was in Ephesus, a cultural hub of the first century. Ephesus was located in what is now modern day Turkey, on the Aegean Sea.

Paul's letter to the Ephesians first notes their faithfulness, launches into praise of God, and rejoices in what He has done for the church.

Choir: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 1:3)

In the first chapter, God is praised in clear trinitarian fashion. This begins with the Father's role planning the adoption of the saints before the world began.

It continues with the work of Jesus Christ in the redemption of His blood and pouring out of His grace on us. Christ also revealed to us the fullness of God's plan. The work of the Holy Spirit is indispensable to the work of God in our salvation. When He calls us to belief, the Spirit marks us as God's possession. All of this is to the glory of God.

[3:08] "*To God Be the Glory*" words by Fannie J. Crosby, music by William H. Doane arr by Pepper Choplin (Ephesians 1:11-14)

[1:20] Reading 2: Paul Prays That Christians May Realize God's Purpose and Power (Ephesians 1:15- 2:22)

The long opening statement of Ephesians has sometimes been considered a poem, an outburst of Spirit driven praise in reflection of the work of God. Paul then prays that the eyes of our heart may be open to see the glory of Christ.

This privilege of having open "heart eyes" was not ours in the flesh. We were blind. We were dead in our transgressions. We were children of wrath and followed the ways of this world and the ruler of the kingdom of the air. But God, rich in mercy, made us alive and raised us with Jesus.

Choir: "8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

This wonderful gift of salvation is what drives the life of the Christian. Our ability to understand any of the book of Ephesians, any Scripture, anything at all about God, comes from this gift.

As we reflect on Jesus our Savior and our future with Him, it can be difficult to see past the pain of the fallen world we live in. The song “Is He Worthy”, infused with words from the Revelation to John, offers encouragement to see Jesus in His majesty.

[4:50] *Is He Worthy*, words and music by Andrew Peterson and Ben Shive, arr. by Heather Sorenson (Ephesians 1:17)

[1:05] Reading 3: The Mystery of Christ (Ephesians 3)

The plan of God is referred to as a mystery in the first part of Ephesians- something once concealed, now revealed. The mystery is explored again in chapter 3, and we learn that salvation is coming to the Gentiles equally with God’s chosen people.

Paul had been given apostleship by Jesus to preach good news to two of the most separated groups in human history- the Jews and the Gentiles. What had been hidden in ages past was as open as the wounds which spilled the blood of Christ to a dying world- God’s salvation would reach the ends of the earth.

Once a persecutor of Christians and proud member of the religious elite, Paul rejoiced to see God’s redemption open to all.

The wonder of the gospel is not simply an earthly revolution or gathering of people, but the formation of a beautiful family. Those who were far away have been brought near. With us, would you “Come Behold the Wondrous Mystery”?

[4:00] *Come Behold the Wondrous Mystery* words and music by Michael Bleecker, Matt Boswell and Matt Papa, arr. by Cliff Duren (Ephesians 2:3-6)

[1:20] Reading No. 4: The Practice of the Christian Life (Ephesians 4:1-16)

A transition takes place halfway through the letter to the Ephesians, commonly observed as a division between doctrine and practice. As with faith and works in the book of James, the two are indispensable from each other.

Belief drives behavior, and behavior reveals belief.

Brought together by the same salvation, the church is to reflect the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Paul said “I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:1-3)

Choir: “⁴There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” (Ephesians 4:4-6)

The coming together of the church from every nation is captured in the classic hymn “The Church’s One Foundation”. The song was written in 1866 by Samuel John Stone to encourage the church of South Africa that was going through a crisis of division and straying from the gospel. Please stand and join us in singing.

[4:00] *The Church’s One Foundation* words by Samuel Stone, music by Samuel S. Wesley (Ephesians 4:11-13)

[1:40] Reading No. 5: Living as Children of Light (Ephesians 4:17-6:9)

The work of Jesus in the life of the Christian shows up in many ways. Jesus gives grace in the form of spiritual gifts, granted as though by a conquering king in a victory march.

Believers are not to remain infants in their faith, but to grow up in Christ. We are to lay aside our old selves and put on the new self.

We do away with lies and speak the truth. Instead of taking advantage of others, we work hard to have something to give. We put away bitterness and harsh words and use kindness and forgiveness, for we too have been forgiven. The Bible does not tell us simply to be good, but we are to:

“...[B]e imitators of God, as beloved children. ² And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. ⁸ ...[A]t one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰ and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. (Ephesians 5:1-2,8-10)

We are also given a description of how the relationships in our lives are to reflect the work of the gospel. The grace of God is revealed in the lives of wives and husbands, children and parents, and slaves and masters.

We learn that we are not caught in the deceit and the impurity of the world, because we are no longer children of darkness--- we are children of light! As children of light, there are signs of the Spirit’s work in our lives. One of the most exciting is the command to sing with one another!

[2:57] *Children of Love, Children of Light*, words and music by Cindy Berry (Ephesians 5:1-2,8)

[0:57] Reading No. 6: The Armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-20)

The sweet fellowship of the church that is evident when we walk in loving submission to one another is not without danger. The exhortation in the end of Ephesians is for the Christian, with heart eyes wide open, to prepare for war in the spiritual realm with the armor of God.

Paul is using an analogy drawn from his own experience with Roman soldiers, which included both defensive gear and offensive weaponry which they carried daily.

To be involved in this cosmic struggle where we are wrestling against powers and principalities, against demonic forces, we must be fully dressed for battle and steadily in prayer for those around us. As soldiers with shields, we protect each other with faith.

Choir: “¹³...[T]ake up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.” (Ephesians 6:13)

3:38 *O Church Arise*, words and music by Stewart Townend and Keith Getty, arr. by Russell Mauldin.” (Ephesians 6:11-13)

[1:57] Reading No. 7: Christ, Our Living Hope

Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus that before we were saved and “in Christ” we were “without hope” and without God in the world. (Ephesians 2:12) But in Christ we are not “without hope;” rather we have a “living hope.”

The apostle Peter in 1 Peter 1:3 wrote that “³....According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” (1 Peter 1:3). A mother who lost her adult daughter earlier this year to an emergency medical condition wrote this meditation on that verse:

“Living hope. Jesus’ death brought us to life. I realized that I was viewing the world incorrectly. This is not the land of the living, but the land of the dead (the Shadowlands as C.S. Lewis would say). We are spiritual zombies and it was through Christ’s death and resurrection that we were born again into a living hope, the hope of a new heaven and earth, a hope that begins right now. My daughter has finished her race and is now fully restored. I can’t wait to see her glorified in Christ. I can’t imagine how wondrous she looks. But what about my pain and suffering now? I’m finding there is a freedom in grieving. It is okay to both rejoice in my God and trust in His plan as well as mourn the loss of my daughter. I can do both. The pain makes me run to God, crawl up in His lap and stay there. That’s not a bad place to be. Jesus Christ took on the grief of this world for our sakes, and I can take on my small share of it for the sake of others. God is sovereign, God is good, and He has a plan. Don’t take my grief away, don’t deny it, don’t minimize it. God is working through it.”

[5:19] *Living Hope*, words and music by Phil Wickham and Brian Johnson, arr. by David Wise

[2:00] Closing Remarks

[3:20] *The Reason We Sing*, words and music by Dick and Mel Tunney