

Sermon on Ephesians 1:1-23

Good morning, dear brothers, and sisters in Christ. Today, we begin our journey through the book of Ephesians, focusing on the opening verses, Ephesians 1:1-23. This passage is a profound declaration of the spiritual blessings we have in Christ. Paul's words in these verses are a hymn of praise, celebrating the incredible grace and love of God bestowed upon us. Let us open our hearts and minds to receive this rich teaching.

Introduction

Paul's letter to the Ephesians begins with a greeting that sets the tone for the entire epistle. He addresses the believers in Ephesus as "saints" and "faithful in Christ Jesus." This greeting is more than a mere formality; it is a declaration of our identity in Christ.

The Christian always lives a double life. Paul's friends were people who lives in Ephesus and in Christ. Every human has a human address and divine address. We live in a certain place in the world, but we also live in Christ. We are saints, set apart for God's purpose, and we are faithful, living out our trust in Jesus Christ.

Background:

when study Ephesians closely, we find that in last degree unlikely it was written to the church at Ephesus.

- a) the letter was written to the Gentiles. The recipients were "Gentiles in the flesh, called the uncircumcised by what is called the circumcision, separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise" Paul urges them not to live as Gentiles do" (4:17).

- b) Ephesian is most impersonal letter Paul ever wrote. It is entirely without personal greetings and without impersonal message of which the other letters are so full. Paul spends longer time in Ephesus than any other cities.
- c) The indication of the letter is that Paul and the recipients did not know each other personally their knowledge of each other by hearsay. 1:15 wrote “because I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus” the loyalty of the people he wrote them came by information and not by experience.

The key though of Ephesian is the gathering of all things in Jesus Christ. In the nature without Christ, there is nothing but disunity and disharmony. Man’s dominion has broken the social union from man; class; nations from nations; ideology from ideology; Gentiles from Jews. Without Christ there is nothing but disunity.

That disunity is not God’s purpose, but it can become a unity only when all things are united in Christ. The central thought of Ephasian is the realisation of disunity in the universe and conviction that it can become unity only when everything is united in Christ.

It is these three chapters that Paul deal with this conception of disunity in Christ. And in here that Paul strikes out one his phrases. The church is the body of Christ. The church is to Christ work. The church should be the instrument of reconciliation. The church must bring Christ in the world; it is within the church that all the middle walls of separation must be broken down.

Paul identifies himself out of the depth of his most vivid self-consciousness and sense of call— “an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God” (v. 1). Paul knew who he was. Apostle in Paul’s mind did not signify a class, or an office; it was a calling, a vocation.

Those of us who are ordained clergy would do well to think more often about fulfilment of our calling than success in our profession. To be sure, there are functions uniquely belonging to the ordained clergy as the church has developed, yet our primary task is to be representative ministers in the congregation where all members are a part of the general ministry or community. To think of ministry should be to think vocationally, not professionally.

Paul's claim to apostleship was that he had seen the risen Christ (1 Cor. 9:1). His calling had come directly from Christ, not from men nor through man (Gal. 1:1). He was commissioned as an ambassador of Christ (2 Cor. 5:20).

Paul also saw himself uniquely called to be an apostle to the Gentiles. Whether so or not, there is truth behind the assumption. It is in this role that he writes "by the will of God."

Paul was convinced that God had a plan for his life. Are you? Like Jeremiah, who heard God say, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations" (Jer. 1:5, RSV), Paul knew himself set apart before he was born (Gal. 1:15). His Damascus Road experience brought a dramatic and drastic upheaval in his experience and thinking, but it was a part of the working of God's purpose in his life. As we will see shortly, the purpose which shaped Paul's life was a part of a larger purpose that included not only all humanity but embraced the whole of creation.

Spiritual Blessings in Christ

Paul opens his letter with a beautiful doxology, praising God for the spiritual blessings we have in Christ. He writes:

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3).

1. Chosen and Predestined (Verses 4-6): Paul reminds us that we were chosen by God before the foundation of the world. This choice was not based on our merits but on His love and grace. We are predestined to be adopted as His children, a testament to His glorious grace. This means that our relationship with God is secured and eternal. He stood amazed that God could have not chosen him to do his work. Jesus said to his disciple “you did not choose me, but I chose you” (John 15:16) Here precisely lies the wonder. Here Paul thinks of the purpose of God chose us to bless us with blessings which are to be found only in heaven. There are other things which man by himself can acquire certain skills, can archive a position, but by himself can never reach to the goodness or to peace of mind. But God chose us to give us those things which He alone can give.

2. “Grace be to you” he says “and peace”

Redemption and Forgiveness (Verses 7-8) :

Through Christ’s sacrifice, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. This redemption is the centrepiece of our faith. It means we are no longer slaves to sin but are set free to live in the fullness of God’s grace in Christ.

3. Revealed Mystery (Verses 9-10) :

Paul speaks of the mystery of God’s will, which has been made known to us in Christ. This mystery is God’s plan to unite all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. We are part of this grand design, called to live in unity and purpose.

4. Inheritance (Verses 11-12) :

In Christ, we have obtained an inheritance. This inheritance is not just a future hope but a present reality. We are heirs of God's promises, called to live in the light of His glory.

5. Seal of the Holy Spirit (Verses 13-14) : Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit as the seal and guarantee of our inheritance. The Holy Spirit is the down payment of what is to come, assuring us that God's promises are true and that we are secure in His love.

Paul's Prayer for the Ephesians (Verses 15-23)

After recounting the spiritual blessings, Paul transitions to a heartfelt prayer for the Ephesians. This prayer is a powerful model for us as we seek to grow in our faith.

1. Thanksgiving (Verses 15-16) :

Paul begins by giving thanks for the faith and love of the Ephesians. This reminds us to be grateful for the faith of our fellow believers and to encourage one another in love.

2. Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation (Verses 17-18) :

Paul prays that God would give the Ephesians the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that they may know Him better. Our knowledge of God is not just intellectual but experiential, deepening through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

3. Hope and Inheritance (Verses 18-19) : Paul prays that the eyes of their hearts may be enlightened to know the hope to which they are called and the riches of their glorious inheritance. We are called to live with hope, knowing that our future is secure in Christ.

Power of God (Verses 19-23) :

Finally, Paul prays that the Ephesians would know the immeasurable greatness of God's power. This power is the same that raised Christ from the dead and

seated Him at the right hand of God. This power is at work in us, enabling us to live victoriously.

Application

My brothers and sisters in Christ, as we reflect on this passage, let us remember that our identity and blessings in Christ is secured. We are chosen, redeemed, and sealed by the Holy Spirit. Our lives are part of God's grand design, and we are called to live with purpose, unity, and hope.

Let us also take Paul's prayer to heart, seeking to know God better through the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. Let us encourage one another in faith and love, living out the hope and power that we have in Christ.

Conclusion

Ephesians 1:1-23 is a profound reminder of who we are in Christ and the incredible blessings we have received. As we go forth today, let us live in the light of these truths, confident in our identity and calling as God's children. May the Holy Spirit continue to work in us, revealing more of God's love and power in our lives.

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the spiritual blessings we have in Christ. Help us to live in the fullness of our identity as Your children. Open the eyes of our hearts to know You better and to live in the hope and power of Your calling. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.