

## **Come and Worship**

**Ephesians 1:1-14 (Part 1) 10/11/09 a.m.**

**ENGAGE:** Pastor Steve May writes: “Quincy was on death row when I first saw him. As I walked the long corridor, past the dozens of others facing an imminent demise, Quincy watched me through the bars of his cage. Right away I knew he was the one I had come for. I paid the animal shelter \$50 and took him home with me.

“Adjusting to life with the May family wasn’t as easy for Quincy as I thought it would be. **He must have been abused in the past, because he cowered every time I approached him.** And in spite of having been saved from the gas chamber by a family intent on feeding him, playing with him, loving him, and even spoiling him, he tried to run away two or three times.

“When he got past the desire to run away, he began to develop other problems. **Acute separation anxiety, for one.** I guess he decided that since he no longer wants to leave, surely we must. Every time we pack a suitcase, Quincy goes a little nuts. He shadows my wife’s every step (he’s still a little afraid of me), and if she steps outside—even for a moment—he sits at the door and whines. Clearly, Quincy has some abandonment issues to deal with.”

**May goes on to say:** “If I could speak Quincy’s language, I would say to him, “Relax. Everything is going to be OK. **You are part of our family, and we will take care of you. Whatever happened in the past is past. You’re with us now. Your life is different. Enjoy it.**” That’s what I would say if I could speak dog. Unfortunately I don’t. I’ve tried saying it to him in English, but I don’t think he gets it. So, for now at least, Quincy remains just a little neurotic.” [Steve May, “If He had to Do It Over,” Eph 1:1-14.]

**APPL:** **How you ever met any “Quincy’s in the church?** Have there ever been times in your own spiritual life when you have related to God the way Quincy related to his family? How often have we been timid, cowering, wanting to run away, yet afraid of being abandoned –and not having a clue about what it means to be part of God’s family?

Have you ever felt a sense of powerlessness and a lack of resolve in living for the Lord? You know what is right, but you lack the motivation to obey? Do you ever feel insufficient for what life throws at you? Does instability or immaturity mark your life? Do weakness, wavering, and lack of resolve sometimes characterize your life? **Do you need to learn and use more fully the resources God has provided for living?**

**SET THE STAGE biblically:** Today we begin a sermon series on the book of Ephesians. As we work our way through the book of Ephesians, you will gain knowledge of our salvation. **You will have the opportunity to grow deeper in your love for God. The book of Ephesians will give you a greater appreciation of your identity as a believer and as a member of the**

**church.** Through our study and application of the truths in Ephesians the Holy Spirit can help us with **more consistent living in such areas as our speech, our moral purity, and our household relationships.**

**FOCUS:** Now the apostle Paul understood human nature. **Paul knew we cannot assume that just because we have a right understanding we will do what is right.** Sometimes as preachers or teachers or parents we think if we just teach people HOW they are suppose to live people WILL BE the kind of people God calls them to be. Paul understood it is not enough to hold before someone the vision of the kind of person God desires them to be.

In the book of Ephesians Paul appeals to the deep springs of our experience, our emotions, the common values we celebrate in our worship. **Paul helps us to define more clearly WHO we are by inviting us to remember what God has done for us in Christ. And the apostle Paul communicates our identity in Christ through the language and forms of worship and prayer.** The book of Ephesians is a book of worship for who God is and what He has done for us!

**APPL:** Paul calls us to worship God by reminding us of God's saving activities on our behalf. Paul knows that as we grow in gratefulness to God for what He has done for us we will also grow in our desire to please God in wise and holy living. At the same time, the apostle Paul assures you and me that **in living out our calling we are not on our own.** The power God displayed in raising Christ from the dead and in changing our status is available to us to enable us to be the people God wants us to be. [Cf. Andrew T. Lincoln, *Word Bible Commentary: Vol. 42, Ephesians*, p. lxxxvi.]

Now to help us grow in our love for God and motivation to please God in wise and holy living the question we will introduce this week and look at more fully next week is this: **Why is God worthy of our praise and worship?** What God has done for us in Christ? We will ponder and marvel at the wonder of God's grace and love for us.

**PREVIEW:** Today I want to provide some of the background to the book of Ephesians.

**ANNOUNCE the passage:** We will focus on the first two verses of the book of Ephesians today but to introduce this opening section of Ephesians I will read the first 14 verses. Turn with me in your Bibles for the Scripture Reading to **Eph 1:1-14** [p. 1037].

**TRANS:** Our understanding of the book of Ephesians is enhanced as we **understand the background of the Roman world in which Paul ministered** [cf. Ronald B. Allen, class notes on Ephesians from DTS]. There were extensive Jewish settlements in the Roman Empire. Luke notes that on the day of Pentecost when the church was born: [SLIDE] "Now there were devout Jews **from every nation under heaven** residing in Jerusalem." <sup>2:6</sup> When this sound occurred, a crowd gathered and was in confusion, because each one heard them speaking in his own

language. <sup>2:7</sup> Completely baffled, they said, “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? <sup>2:8</sup> And how is it that each one of us hears them in our own native language? <sup>2:9</sup> **Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and the province of Asia, <sup>2:10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, <sup>2:11</sup> both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs** – we hear them speaking in our own languages about the great deeds God has done!” (Acts 2:5-11 NET). BLANK SLIDE

In those cities where there were Jewish synagogues there were Christian churches within 60 years after the death of Paul (as well as churches in India and North Africa). [SLIDE – MAP  
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**Now the concept of God-fearers is the reason for this spread of the gospel.** Wherever Jewish people had established Jewish communities they touched the people around them. The non-Jews who came to the Jewish faith and became practicing Jews were known as proselytes. Non-Jewish male proselytes would be circumcised. But the larger number of the non-Jewish people who came to faith felt they couldn’t become Jews. These non-Jews who came to faith were known as “**God-fearers.**”

The number of these Gentiles who were tired of the Roman gods who became God-fearers was amazing. If there was a synagogue of 50 there might be a thousand God-fearers. **Now the God-fearers could not come to the temple.** Sometimes the “God-fearers,” would be in the balcony where they could look down on the Jewish synagogue. The “God-fearers” were not a part of the community, much like the slaves were treated here in America in the south in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

People from all ranks of Roman society became God-fearers. For example in Acts 10 we have the story of the conversion to Christianity of Cornelius, a Roman centurion, who was a God-fearer. So **God-fearers were Gentiles who worshiped the God of Israel and in many cases kept the Mosaic law, but did not take the final step of circumcision necessary to become a proselyte to Judaism** [Cf. NET notes on Acts 10:1.] SLIDE “Now there was a man in Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort. <sup>10:2</sup> He was a devout, God-fearing man, as was all his household; he did many acts of charity for the people and prayed to God regularly” (Acts 10:1-2 NET). BLANK SLIDE

Now when Paul and his missionary team, along with others came preaching the good news of Jesus Christ, and proclaiming that you didn’t have to become a Jew to be made right with God, people were overjoyed. When believers came with the gospel of Christ, Gentiles were overjoyed they could become Christians without becoming a Jew. These God-fearers who came to faith in Christ came from all walks of society. **The growth of the church was through God-fearers.**

So in preparation for the good news about Jesus Christ God sent Jews abroad to every nation under heaven. God provided a common language for the people. God also used the Jews who had led people to faith in God.

Now Paul, set apart by God as an apostle to the Gentiles, would go into a synagogue, because that's the natural point of contact, as a Jew, who believes in the Hebrew Messiah, *Yeshua*. Some of the Jewish people would come to faith, but Paul wouldn't be there long before other Jews would kick him out of the synagogue, and also root out those Jews who believed in Jesus.

Now all the time Paul's preaching in the synagogue he's networking with the God-fearers. Paul would live in the home of a **patron**, someone who desired the work of the gospel to go forth in that community. Then **often the home of this patron would become a house church**, where a group of believers would meet regularly together to support and encourage one another in their Christian walk and to be instructed in God's Word.

**Background to Ephesians:** Now what did the apostle Paul hope to achieve through the writing of the book of Ephesians for these Gentiles who had come to faith in Christ? And what results do we desire as we ponder the truths presented here? Through our study of the book of Ephesians I believe **God desires to intensify our desire to become more like Christ in our convictions and values.** The Spirit of God wants to use the book of Ephesians to bring our lives into greater conformity to the life of Christ.

Through our study of the book of Ephesians you and I will become more aware of who we are in Christ, the privileged position we possess in Christ. Through Ephesians our knowledge, love, and the experience of God's power will all grow as we take God's truth to heart.

**TRANS:** Now it's interesting Paul does not just start right in telling us how we are to live. Within the framework of an extended thanksgiving Paul first reminds us as Gentile Christians of the privileges and status we enjoy as believers in Christ and members of the Church. **Paul reinforces for us our significance in God's plan for history and the world.** Then in the second part of Ephesians [chapters 4-6] **Paul appeals to us to live in the world in light of who we are in Christ.** Paul exhorts us in how we can keep from becoming swallowed up in the sins of our surrounding culture. Christianity is the faith that so strongly stresses the importance of what a person believes, and Ephesians is about belief. The first half of Ephesians stresses what we believe (or doctrine); the second half of the book of Ephesians focuses on our behavior, our responsibilities as Christians.

**So in chapters 1-3 Paul reminds us of our calling as believers** [cf. 1:18 (NET), "so that you may know what is the hope of his calling"], **then Paul exhorts us to live in a manner appropriate to our distinctive calling** [cf. 4:1 (NET), "I ... urge you to live worthily of the calling with which you have been called"]. [SLIDES A/B] "I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you spiritual wisdom and revelation in your growing knowledge of him ... **so that you may know what is the hope of his calling**" (Eph 1:18 NET). "I ... urge you to **live worthily of the calling with which you have been called**" (Eph 4:1 NET). BLANK SLIDE

In essence Paul urges us to remember with awe and worship the wonder of who we are in Christ, what God has done for us, and then to rely on God's power to live in a way pleasing to God. A simple outline of Ephesians is this: SLIDE: **Praise God for His amazing grace (1:1-3:21)** (Who we are) **Instruct believers on how to live in grateful response (4:1-6:24)** (What we are to do)  
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**TRANS to v.1a:** Now some people question the authority of the Bible. They argue that the instructions of the Bible are given based on morals and traditions of civilizations centuries old. Some don't believe the instructions the Bible gives are applicable to us today.

Now to any of you that may question the Bible's authority Paul begins the book of Ephesians by reminding us that **he is the authorized representative of the exalted Christ**. Paul's authority came not from his self-appointment to this office but from God's election of him to it. **Notice how the book of Ephesians begins in v. 1:** "*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God*" (Eph 1:1a NKJV). An apostle carries the idea of one sent forth. An apostle of Jesus Christ was one sent forth with the same authority and power that Christ had (cf. 2 Cor 12:12).

Paul was made an apostle of Christ Jesus through God's will or decision. Paul did not become an apostle of Christ by His own choosing. Thus the apostle Paul has God's authority behind him. As an apostle Paul was commissioned and sent by God with the gospel message. [Cf. Hoehner, BKC: Ephesians].

**So the Spirit of God reminds us today that God's authority stands behind this book.** The implication, which is stated explicitly in 2 Tim 3:16-17, is that all Scripture is profitable for us. Every individual portion of Scripture is inspired by God and useful to us. SLIDE: "Every scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>3:17</sup> that the person dedicated to God may be capable and equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17 NET). BLANK SLIDE **Every portion of Scripture is useful** not only for teaching but also for reproof. God's Word exposes our sin in order to correct how we live. God's Word completes you and me. Every portion of Scripture is designed to help us be competent, able to meet all demands that come upon us. In 2 Tim 3:15 the apostle Paul referred to the Old Testament Scriptures as holy. The OT and NT Scriptures are different, distinct, or unique in contrast with all nonscriptural writings. This is so because they are inspired (breathed out) by God. [Cf. Showers, *The Foundations of Faith*, Vol 1: 63.]

Thus the moral instructions of the Bible are not based on the traditions of civilizations but on God's character itself. When the Bible instructs us, "You shall not lie," this command is based on God being a God of truth and honesty.

**APPL:** God uses every portion of Scripture to step into our universe and give us information about Himself, and not only about Himself but about ourselves, about our world; information that we could never know otherwise. **As we read and study the Bible we get to know the God**

**who made us.** We come to know God up close and personal. What He's like. Why He made us. How much He loves us. How He wants us to live and that He wants to help us. What our priorities should be. Things like what happens to us when we die, and how we can know for certain that we will be with Him in heaven when this life is over. **When we read the Bible God speaks to us, urging us to grow and make changes in our lives that we need to make.** [Cf. Bill Kraftson, Search Ministries CD set: *Two Friends Search for Meaning*, Disk 2, "What Difference Does It Make.]"

**APPL:** So in order for Ephesians to have the effect God wants it to have on your life you must accept it as God's Word. If you struggle with accepting the authority of God's Word I encourage you to check out such resources as *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* by Josh McDowell. Most of all come with an open heart to hear what the Spirit of God says to the churches.

**TRANS to v. 1b:** Now there's strong evidence that the book of Ephesians was intended for more than one audience. We know this, **first**, because **while many of the Greek manuscripts have "in Ephesus," many do not. Also**, unlike the book of Romans, **Paul does not have personal greetings for anyone in this church.** That's surprising since Paul lived in Ephesus for three years during his third missionary journey. **It appears that besides the believers in Ephesus, several other churches also received this circular letter as their own.** Paul intended this letter first to go to Ephesus, the port of entry of Asia Minor, then to Laodicea, then Colossae. So Paul wrote it to the church at Ephesus, but the church was probably suppose to send it on and it would be then a circular writing. Although eventually all the epistles became **encyclicals** as they all were circulated among assemblies until they were all gathered in what we call the NT canon. So it appears Paul wrote Ephesians with the idea it would be circulated among the churches. For example to the church at Colossae Paul wrote, SLIDE: "And after you have read this letter, have it read to the church of Laodicea. In turn, read the letter from Laodicea as well" (Col 4:16 NET). BLANK SLIDE Some have speculated this letter from Laodicea may be what we know as the book of Ephesians.

**Background to Ephesus:** As Paul writes the book of Ephesians in 60 A.D. **Ephesus, with its temple to Artemis (Diana), is the leading religious city of Asia (present day Turkey).** While by A.D. 60 Ephesus has declined somewhat in commercial importance due to the silting up of its canals which lead to the **Aegean Sea**, it is still a major commercial and political center. It would not be far off to say that Ephesus, with its approximately 250,000 inhabitants is the New York City, Washington, D.C. and Rome all rolled into one of its day.

**Ephesus was a city full of wickedness.** The temple of Artemis (Diana), located one and a half miles northeast of the city, with its 117 sixty foot columns and its large size (180' wide and 377' feet long), is considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Within the temple courts hundreds, if not thousands of temple prostitutes offer their services to the tourists who visit the city.

**People from all manner of background came to faith in Jesus and that's really wonderful.**

The city was filled with magnificent structures. The city of Ephesus was filled with magnificence in every place one looked. Ephesus had more than one theater. The grand theater is just astonishing. The Romans loved to be entertained, like the Americans. We build our football stadiums, imagine when we build a football stadium, as the city of Dallas has just completed. It's only used 8 times a year for its principal purpose and over one billion dollars is spent. Well in the Greco-Roman world it was the theater. And we find these theaters everywhere. They're magnificent. The grand theater in Ephesus seated between 24,000 and 25,000 people. SLIDE: picture of the great theater in Ephesus where Paul preached. BLANK SLIDE

**The apostle Paul recognized the strategic location of the city in the spread of the gospel.** On his second missionary journey, c. fall, A.D. 52, Paul visited Ephesus briefly (Acts 18:19-21) leaving **Priscilla and Aquila** there. **The third journey is where Paul actually established the church at Ephesus.** Paul returned to Ephesus, Sept. A.D. 53 and remained there for over two years until the riot at Ephesus the first of May A.D. 56. SLIDES Map of Paul's third missionary journey. BLANK SLIDE On Paul's third missionary journey **he now comes to the southern area here and spends a great deal of time at Ephesus** and then traces his route northerly and does the circuit in Greece. A year later Paul visited briefly with the Ephesian elders at **Miletus** on his way back to Jerusalem (cf. Acts 20:17-38).

Paul sent this letter from Rome, probably early during his first imprisonment in Rome around 60 A.D. So although Paul was in official custody and his movements were restricted Paul continued to guide the early church and preach the gospel. The authorities could imprison Paul but not the spread of the good news.

**TRANS: Now the Spirit of God reminds us of God's calling on our lives by how Paul addresses the recipients of this letter. Notice how Paul addresses those to whom he writes at the end of v. 1: "To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus" (Eph 1:1b NKJV). The construction in Greek suggests that **the saints are identical to the faithful.** [Cf. NET note on Eph 1:1.]**

**APPL:** Did you know that you and I, as believers in Jesus Christ, are saints? The word "saints" [*hagioi*] reminds us **we have been set apart by God for Himself.** In that sense, we are "holy people." Like the nation of Israel [cf. Exod 19:6 LXX], as believers in Jesus Christ we are people who are to be separated from everything sinful that characterizes pagan people.

Paul further characterizes what it means to be "holy people," by calling us "the faithful in Christ Jesus," i.e., those who have exercised faith in Christ Jesus. **Paul marks us out then not only in terms of God's choice of us as His holy people but also in terms of our believing response.**

**TRANS:** So Paul states who his letter is from and who the letter is to—those set apart by God for Himself, those who have responded in faith to God's good news of salvation. Then Paul

expresses his desire that we experience **the undeserved favor** and **deep well-being** that flows from Christ and from God, who through Christ is known as our Father. **Notice Paul's greeting in v. 2:** "*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*" (Eph 1:2 NKJV).

How we need God's grace and peace to be with us! Twelve times Paul uses this word "grace" (charis) in Ephesians. "Grace" was used in non-Christian writings to refer to free, uncoerced, cheerfully bestowed openness toward one another." Grace carries the idea of showing kindness to someone, with the implication of graciousness on the part of the one showing such kindness. Grace is God's free and loving turning to us as sinners in the atoning death of Jesus Christ (Rom 3:24). "**Grace**" expresses **God's steadfast love** [Heb. *chesid*] **toward us**.

"Peace" [Gr. *eirene*, which translates the Hebrew *shalom*] is our condition resulting from God's grace to us. "We have peace with God and we can experience the peace of God, the fullness of His blessing, because of God's grace" [*Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*, Eph 1:2].

APPL: A counselor, **David Seamands**, summed up his career this way: "Many years ago I was driven to the conclusion that the two major causes of emotional problems among evangelical Christians are these: the failure to understand, receive, and live out God's unconditional grace and forgiveness; and the failure to give out that unconditional love, forgiveness, and grace to other people.... We read, we hear, we believe a good theology of grace. But that's not the way we live. The good news of the Gospel of grace has not penetrated the level of our emotions." [Quoted by Phillip Yancy, *What's So Amazing about Grace*, 15.] Is this at times why we hear people say, "I wish people in the church would recognize **how judgmental and hurtful they can be in what they say to one another**." May the gospel of God's grace abound in and through us!

APPL: Just as a parent wants what is best for their children, so the Spirit of God wants you and me to know that God has our best interests at heart! God wants you to experience **the fullness of His underserved favor**. God wants you to experience the sense of deep well-being that flows from our relationship with God our Father through Jesus Christ. Even here in this opening greeting Paul wants you and me to recognize the wonder of God's love for you and me! "[These] two elements, grace and peace, recur, though not linked so immediately, in the epistle's closing blessing of 6:23-24, and before that, in the body of the letter, they represent two of its major themes, χάρις ["grace"] occurring twelve times (1:2, 6, 7; 2:5, 7, 8; 3:2,7, 8; 4:7,29; 6:24) and εἰρήνη ["peace"] six times (2:14, 15, 17; 4:3; 6:15)." [Cf. Lincoln, *Ephesian*, 6.]

**CONCL (Cf. May):** A million centuries before Genesis 1:1, God knew that you would be where you are today in your job, in your relationships, in all areas of your life. He knew you would be here at this moment. For some, it's been a rough ride. There have been mistakes and disappointments along the way, and you've fallen short of God's glory more times than you want to admit. **Many of you have many regrets, and you've wanted to give up many times. But**

**God's love for you has never changed.** From the beginning he has known your life would bring you to this place today. Even though your past may be littered with failure upon failure, it doesn't change the fact God loves you, He chose you, and He believes in you. You have been on His mind from the very beginning.

**Quincy**, the May's dog didn't get it. Those who had selected him **wanted him. They chose him.** They bought him. They adopted him. As far as his owners are concerned their last name is his last name. Quincy's owners will see that he is **never hungry.** He will never be **cold.** He will never be **alone.** But still Quincy doesn't get it. After a year he still had not stopped **covering** around certain people. He hadn't stopped hoarding his food, or panicking at the sight of a suitcase. **Does he really think he was saved from death in order to be abused or abandoned?** Doesn't he realize his owners are committed to giving him whatever he needs? Obviously, he doesn't. At least, not yet.

**Sometimes as believers we are just as slow to grasp God's goodness in our lives.** God didn't bring you this far to abandon you. He didn't save you with the intention of leaving you all alone. God has blessed you and me with **every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms.** God has showered His kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.

God is generous. He doesn't withhold his kindness, His love, His mercy, His forgiveness, His compassion, or His blessings from us. He showers us with kindness. God is generous. He will bestow his generosity on you, if you are willing to receive it. **And God will generously provide all you need.** Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. (2 Cor 9:8)

Paul isn't talking exclusively about our physical needs; he is referring to our spiritual and emotional needs as well. God will pour out blessing upon blessing in your life, giving you all the joy you need, all the love you need, all the patience you need, all the mercy you need, and on and on. **You have probably spent most of your Christian life thinking that you had to manufacture these things on your own, and that most of the time God is ticked off that you don't do a better job at it.** You've probably spent most of your Christian life thinking that God doles out blessings only with great resistance, only to the most deserving. The truth is, God wants to shower His kindness upon you. Everything you need, He wants to provide.

**Today I am challenging you to view your relationship with God in a new way...in a non-adversarial way.** God isn't mad at you. He isn't disappointed in you. He isn't sorry that He chose you. He didn't choose you because He had to, **He chose you because He wanted to.** And if He had to do it over, He would choose you again. Why? Because you have been on His mind from the very beginning. He chose you to be His very own. You belong to Him, and that will never change.

Sin hinders our fellowship with God but not our relationship. When my child disobeys our fellowship can be broken but my son or daughter is still my child.

I want to give you a homework assignment: Read Eph 1:3-14 several times this week and ponder ALL that God has done for you in Christ. See if this doesn't help you draw near to God in worship!