

DON'T GET USED TO THIS

EPHESIANS 1:1-14

INTRO

One of the hardest things for me to do, is to preach just one sermon. I can do 2, 3, or 4. But one is hard.

Paul finds himself in a similar situation here.

This is Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus. Ephesus was a place that Paul loved. This is the end of his life. This could be the last thing he gets to say to them.

BACKGROUND

Let's back up for a minute. The bible is a collection of documents. Some letters. The book we've been going through, 1 Timothy, is Paul's letter to one of his closest friends and disciples, the young pastor at Ephesus.

This is his letter to Timothy's Church.

EPHESUS

Paul spent more time here than in any other city, and had a genuine love for the people. (Acts tells us there was much weeping upon his departure.

Paul planted the church in Ephesus right after the Church in Corinth, and spent 2.5 years there. (during this time he wrote 1st & 2nd Corinthians.) (Acts 19)

Upon leaving, Timothy took over the pastoral work in Ephesus, and remained under Paul's tutelage.

This city was one of the political, cultural, and economic centers in the Roman Empire; 2nd probably only to Athens. (Think New York City or LA) The temple of Artemies was there, and was the largest building in the roman world. (4 times larger than the temple in Athens, one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world.) Devotion was fierce, often causing riots about religious disagreements. A sort of Meca for Roman pilgrims as well.

SITUATION— A FINAL WORD

Paul writes to this church most likely near the end of his life, from prison in Rome. This is the last message Paul wants to convey to them. How to be an effective church, how to live rightly as the people of God, in an urban, and religiously hostile place. Much like us today.

CONTENT

So this morning, what I'd like to do, is to take a brief look at how Paul opens this letter. What is his initial statement, the foundational principle that he lays down for those trying to live as God's people in a city that does not know or want the Gospel?

We could sum up this sentiment in one statement, "Don't get used to this." Let's take a look at his intro, the first 14 verses of Chapter 1.

EPHESIANS 1:1-14

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,
To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **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,** even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. **In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,** to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. **In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.**

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, **so that we who were the first to hope in Christ** might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

PAUL WAS AMAZED.

He begins by simply explaining who Jesus is, and what he's done. But look at the way he says it. He can't help himself, he begins to ramble.

Do you see what Paul is saying? "This is amazing!!" God himself has redeemed, forgiven, predestined, adopted, blessed us with EVERY blessing, Lavished his riches upon us, made known to us his mysteries and will, given us his spirit, and guaranteed our inheritance.

Paul never stopped being amazed by the gospel. At the end of his life, he was still excited to talk about it.

TOO OFTEN, WE ARE NOT.

As soon as this Gospel becomes mundane, as soon as you begin to think you deserve this, as soon as you take this for granted, the writing is on the wall in your Christian life. We need to be reminded of how amazing this is.

We should live every day in drop-to-your-knees awe, gut-wrenching gratitude. We should never get used to the gospel, or "move on from" it.

Don't take this for granted. **Don't get used to this.**

Today I'm going to give you 2 reasons not to get used to this, and conclude with one question.

1 | YOU HAVE WHAT HISTORY HOPED FOR

Verse 12 here in this chapter tells us something amazing. “we who were the first to hope in Christ, might be to the praise of his glory.” (*Paul was a Pharisee, a Rabbi*)

Or look at how Peter phrases this same idea in 1 Peter 1:10, “Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven...”

Peter tells us here that your salvation, this new covenant is so amazing, that for thousands of years people have been looking forward to it, waiting for it, talking about it... but unable to see it. **And it has come to you.**

Or look at Luke 7:28, Jesus tells us that John the Baptist was the greatest prophet ever to have lived. That’s a big statement, think about the prophets for a moment. But **the least of the saints in the new covenant is greater than him.** Are you hearing this??

Abraham

- Moses
- David
- Elijah
- Elisha
- Daniel

Went to bed at night wishing that they could be you.

They lived dreaming that they could see what we have, life in the New Covenant.

How were they saved then?

SALVATION IN THE OLD COVENANT

They, contrary to misconceptions, were saved the same way we are. By Jesus. You see, we look to a past event, what Jesus DID to save us, but those in the OT looked to a future event, to what Jesus WOULD DO to save them.

We have Faith that Christ has rescued us from sin, they had faith that Christ would rescue them from sin. But life was different. (Old system and ceremony.)

MYSTERIES REVEALED TO US

Verse nine here in Ephesians says that we, (New Covenant Christians) have the Mystery of God's will made known to us.

Not only did the OT saints have the ceremonies to deal with, but they didn't know all that God was planning! God didn't tell them that someday the Veil would be torn, or that someday we would all be changed in the moment, in the twinkling of an eye, that we would get new bodies, a new heaven, a new earth... **But we do.**

They looked with longing at what today we take for granted.

Said another way, Better men than you would have given anything just to see what is freely yours for the taking.

Harsh? Jesus said it. Matthew 13:16, "But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

2 | IT ONLY GETS BETTER

Look at verses 13 and 14, "In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory."

You think it's good now? You don't know the half of it. You have it so much better right now than you will probably ever realize. But this isn't the end! I gets better.

Not only to we have redemption, forgiveness of sins, adoption into God's family, EVERY blessing in heaven, all of the riches of Christ, knowledge of the mysteries of his will, and the Holy Spirit... But an inheritance, something more, something much better.

NEW HEAVEN, NEW EARTH, THE AGE TO COME

The Bible doesn't simply promise to save us from this world. To take us away to some place called heaven. The Gospel is not merely, "Jesus died to take you to heaven."

Jesus Came, not to take us away from the world, but to save the world. All of it! In the end, We don't go up there, but the Kingdom of God, the New Jerusalem, comes down to us!

NT Wright, God is not throwing the world away. God does not make mistakes.

BETTER THAN EDEN

Good kingdom, great king. Adam knew God as creator and friend, we will know him as savior and redeemer. With the scars still on his hands. (Knit you together)

This is not something we should take lightly.

This is something that we should never get used to hearing.

When this ceases to amaze, inspire awe, and bring you to tearful gratitude, you will begin to find yourself dissatisfied, restless, longing for more.

- Do you have an almost insatiable desire for material things? You buy things to entertain you on a constant basis?
- Do you define your quality of life and sense of happiness by the people that love you? Or romantic involvement?
- Can you think of anything, that you think, "If I only had that, my problems would be gone, my life would be great."
- Is there some sin that totally dominates your life? No matter how hard you try, not matter how many times you say, "Never again."

If so, your problem is that you've lost your awe. You've gotten used to the gospel. You've begun to take it for granted.

3 | HOW DO I GET THAT?

If you've ignored me all morning, now is the moment to tune in. At this point every other religion on the planet is different than the Gospel. This is where I would tell you how much you have to pay, how good you have to be, what stage of enlightenment you must realize before you can access these wonders.

Martin Luther changed my life with his teaching on Galatians. In it he explained that **the word Gospel means Good News. It doesn't mean Good advice.**

Every other religion on the planet offers advice. You see, advice is all about you. What you have to do, how righteous you have to be. Good news isn't about you, it's something else entirely.

Advice says do, Gospel says done. Finished.

If you read this book as advice, a manual on how to live, you will miss the point! You will fail to do all that it says. Even if you are real good, the natural human heart will use that goodness to serve yourself. You'll be burnt out, discouraged, and without hope.

But most of all, you won't be thunderstruck, in awe, you'll take it for granted.

IN HIM

Over and over again, this passage tells us how we buy in on this inheritance. It's not in us, in our goodness, in our ability, or in our righteousness.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins,
In him we have obtained an inheritance
In him ... when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

The Gospel is a lot less about what you have to do, then it is about what Jesus has already done. For you. He gave up his inheritance, so you could have it. He died that you would live, he was forsaken that you would be accepted. **Don't get used to this.**

Appeal, prayer team.