

Alive in **CHRIST**

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ”

- Ephesians 2v 4-5



Session #1: Looking at Life in Christ

Ephesians Chapter 1 verses 1-23

Sladebrook Evangelical Church

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Introduction and Aim of this Teaching Series:

In 6 chapters, the book of Ephesians reveals some of the richest truths in Scripture. The Apostle Paul, who wrote the letter to the Christians in Ephesus, could, it seems, barely contain his excitement as he told them all about the wonders of what God has done in Christ. Blending high spiritual realities with practical ways in which Christians are called to live them out, the Ephesian letter exhorts Christians throughout history to look again at what it really means to be alive in Christ.

The New Testament scholar, F. F. Bruce said about Ephesians; “it sums up in large measure the leading themes of the Pauline writings... but it does more than that; it carries the thought of the earlier letters forward to a new stage.” It is as though Paul’s appreciation of the gospel that so radically transformed his life has scaled new heights: So that even within the confines of his roman captivity, the apostle is able, under inspiration, to transcend his circumstances and celebrate all that God has provided for him within the heavenly realms.

As we look at this letter, the aim is not only to understand more of its contents, but to apply its teachings to our own lives. With topics ranging from the spiritual reality of heavenly blessings and the importance of church unity, to effective Christian witness and spiritual warfare, Ephesians touches on essential areas of the Christian life.

We must learn to engage with these heavenly themes if we are to understand what it means to be alive in Christ. The more we learn to appreciate the great truths that underpin our salvation, the more we learn to appreciate Jesus and just how much He loves us. Once we realise what Christ has done for us, we can look beyond our own struggles and circumstances and hold on to everything that God, in His rich mercy and because of His great love, has forever blessed us with.

Alive in Christ #1: Looking at Life in Christ

Located in present day Turkey, Ephesus was the third largest city in the Roman Empire; with a population of around 250,000. In Acts 19 we read how Paul's visited Ephesus and how the city was full of idolatry. Ephesus was also famous for magic and sorcery (Acts 19v 19). These are important pieces of information because it helps us to relate to what Christians in Ephesus were dealing with and the pressures they faced daily.

Paul visited Ephesus in 52 AD and wrote this letter from prison in Rome. Paul identifies himself as an "apostle" (1:1) which literally means someone who is sent. Since he cannot be there in person, this letter stands as his representative.

The letter changes direction at 4:1, "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received." Paul spends the first three chapters laying the foundation of who God is and what God has done and then closes with three chapters of what God then requires of those who believe these things to be true.

But before getting practical in the later chapters, Paul devotes the first three chapters of Ephesians to introducing some wonderful themes, understanding that the Ephesians first needed some foundational truth about God and the gospel. He writes about key doctrines: heavenly realities that are intended to bolster Christians as, amidst the trials of life, they seek to live for Christ.

After a brief preface, where he introduces himself, confirms his calling and extends God's grace and peace to his readers, Paul then goes on to write a free flowing section of praise: an amazing section of Scripture that touches on some of the loftiest themes in the Bible. These heavenly realities are meant to encourage Christians throughout the ages of all that God has given us in Christ. He then, "For this reason" (v15) shares with the Ephesians about his prayer for them. Speaking personally, he reminds them that he has "not stopped giving thanks for them..." (v16). Chapter 1 concludes by Paul revealing what he is praying for: that the Ephesians may take hold of the things he has highlighted, be strengthened in their faith and enabled to experience fully their life in Christ.

Read: Ephesians Chapter 1 verses 1-23

Paul's Preface: Introduction: Ephesians 1v 1-2

Paul introduces himself, extending greetings to the Ephesians

Paul's Praise: Heavenly Realities: Ephesians 1v 3-14

Paul explains all that has been accomplished in Christ

Paul's Prayer: Earthly Realisations: Ephesians 1v 15-23

Paul prays that the Ephesians will understand what God has done

Alive in Christ:

Discuss:

How would you summarise this chapter?

What is the key teaching you would take from it?

Why do you think Paul starts the epistle this way and not with some practical exhortations?

What impact should these heavenly realities make in our earthly circumstance?

Why, at times, do we lose sight of these great gospel truths? How can we learn to keep them at the forefront of our Christian lives?

Pray:

Paul prayed for the Ephesians, especially for 3 things: (1v 16-19). Spend some time praying into all 3 aspects of his prayer and that God would make them an increasing reality in your own life.

Respond:

Paul prayed for the Ephesians, especially for 3 things: (1v 16-19). Spend some time praying into all 3 aspects of his prayer and that God would make them an increasing reality in your own life.