

Ephesians 1 Salutation

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Date: 20 May 2021

Preacher: Malcolm Macdonald

- [0 : 00] We're going to begin our worship this evening singing to God's praise from Psalm 34. These verses will be sung in Gaelic and from verse 11. Psalm 34. We can read them in English.
- O children, hither do ye come, and unto me give ear. I shall you teach to understand how ye the Lord should fear. What man is he that life desires, to see good would live long.
- Thy lips refrain from speaking guile, and from ill words thy tongue. Depart from ill, do good, seek peace, pursue it earnestly.
- God's eyes are on the just. His ears are open to their cry. The face of God is set against those that do wickedly. That he may quiet out from the earth, cut off their memory.
- [1 : 08] He give a chlam this ish, Jefraim. I have nocum. Eglge. Ye. tree. j bacteria.
- They kill me damn you iç What an Oh kitchen Do Or know CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS Thank you.
- Thank you.
- Thank you.
- [5 : 05] Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- [7 : 59] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- Thank you. We are debtors to your grace. There may be many in this world and it is said of them that with regard to the relationship that they have with some that they owe them a veritable fortune.
- Some even who should not be in such a situation have maxed out all their credit cards and they have come to the point in their expenditure that far outweighs their ability to ever comprehend settling these debts.
- But if that is true of anyone in human terms and fiscal terms, it is certainly true of every one of us as far as our relationship with our God is concerned.
- We are the God of our salvation and that you daily provide to us of all your gracious benefits.
- [10 : 07] We are the God of our salvation and that you have the God of our salvation. We are the God of our salvation and that you have the God of our salvation. So it is our God of our salvation.

We are the God of our salvation and we provided our God of flesh and we would give thanks to that you have to permit you've heard all the things you only do to call your son. We will give thanks to our God of that. us, the means by which to settle all our deaths, humanly speaking. We would always have to give account to you, that is what awaits every one of us. When we close our eyes in death, we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and there we must give our account. There the pages of the lecture are opened, and if there is deficit, then it will find us out. And it will surely be true of everyone who have not made peace with you through Christ, that they will be in the red, and that they will answer to you. So we pray for your blessing to be upon us this evening, directing us to the one that you have made provision of, even Christ Jesus. We give thanks that he is described to us in the scripture, as the one who who came to offer a sacrifice for sin. And in so doing, that he settled the dead of his people. He bore their shame on the cross, and he entered into the position that they could not possibly hold their feet. But he stood where they could not. We give thanks for the words that remind us of his sufferings on the cross, that speaks to us of a way that he took upon himself the guilt that was there. And that he encountered all the shame and sorrow that was there.

Reproach, he said, has broken my heart. My shame and my disgrace. And his enemies, his enemies and adversaries were without number. But you stood with him, even though you hid your face from him, on the cross. So much so that he cried out, oh my God, my God, why?

And so, we give thanks that there was a dawn on the night of his sufferings, following on from it. And though he had to enter into the grave, he rose from the grave. And he was exalted to the right hand of the majesty.

The place of honor and glory. And there he is, resident, interceding on our behalf, even now as we pray.

[13 : 52] But give thanks that our prayers, such as they are, are empowered by the efficacy of a saviour who is pleading out all cause on the basis of his merits.

Remember your people. Remember your people. Encourage them in their need. And there is not one who doesn't have need in this world, because this world is a hostile environment for your people.

Sometimes they are more aware of it. Sometimes they are threatened. Sometimes they are threatened. Sometimes they know that the enemy of their soul is close by.

And there is intent on their destruction. And there is intent on their destruction. At other times they are lulled into its false sense of security, when all things are going well with them.

But you have made known to us that these are the most dangerous times. Just as the seafeders knew. When they were in the storm they were on alert.

[14 : 58] They were struggling and striving and seeking to secure a safe haven. When there was a lull in the storm. Then they were in danger because who knows what might come unexpectedly.

Help your people to understand that and to be looking to yourself at this time and always. So bless every home and family we represent. Remember this corner of your vineyard.

The villages that make up the congregation we pray for. Those that make up the number of your professing people. Encourage them in their faith. Grant to them the spirit of penitence. Grant to them the spirit of penitence. And that the sorrows that assail us. That they may be seen in the light of the joys that belong to your people.

You have made known to your people. You have made known to your people that many are the troubles that afflict the just. They are without number.

But out of them all the Lord of grace will safely take them. You watch them in their journey through this world and we give thanks that whoever they are.

[16 : 31] You have promised that not one of them will be taken out of your hand. They are wrote large on the palms of your hand.

So here our prayers on the behalf. Every home and family. Any of that number who are unwell we pray for their healing. Those in hospital we pray for their recovery.

Those in home being cared for within the home. Nurses and doctors engaged in care of such. We pray for your blessing and your encouragement.

Remember this nation of ours as we continue to be afflicted by the COVID virus in different forms. While we see inroads being made in the process of recovery.

We are still in danger. And until such time as we realise that it is in your hands. And it may well be that this may be a shadow cast over us.

[17 : 32] We confess our sin and we confess our hard heartedness. And we confess our need of acknowledging that you are the God who is the great physician of souls.

So magnify your name amongst us. Blessing governments and parliaments and those who rule over us in whatever capacity. Be it at Westminster or Edinburgh or even locally here in our own council.

We pray that you would remember each one. Visit the sick. Heal their hurts. Bind up the wounds of those that you have visited with the voice of death.

We pray that you would remind us all that we are on a short journey. How long lived we are and in the scheme of things. Our life is but a shadow.

Your servants have acknowledged that. What is my life but a vapour? Something that is a fleeting shadow. Something that comes with the morning and that the evening is no longer.

[18 : 43] So we pray Lord you do it. Bless your word as it goes out. Remember those who go out with it to the far corners of the earth. Missionaries, ministers, those who are seeking to alleviate the hurts of this world.

May you encourage them in their labour. May they know that Christ Jesus is Lord. May they proclaim his name without fear or favour to whoever would want to hear of him.

Go before us now, blessing your word as we read it and forgiving our sins in Jesus' name. Amen. I'm going to read from the New Testament Scriptures. From Paul's epistle to the Ephesians in chapter 1.

Ephesians chapter 1. We'll read from the beginning the first 14 verses. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus, grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us into the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace, wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ, in whom you also trusted, after that you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also, after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, and to the praise of his glory.

[21 : 49] And so on, may the Lord add his blessing to this reading of his word, and to his name be the praise. I'd like us now to turn to this passage that we have read, Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 1, and we'll read the first two verses.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus, grace be to you and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

God willing, I would like us to spend the next few weeks, if we're spared, looking at this first chapter in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians.

I don't intend it to be an in-depth study, but hopefully, we will cover the most important aspects of Paul's teaching that he sees worthy of highlighting.

The preacher and writer, John Stott, speaking at the Keswick Convention, he chose to speak of the whole epistle, all six chapters, which he dealt with in four hours.

[23 : 26] and he sought to justify that by stating that it was one of our characteristics of an evangelistic or evangelical weaknesses to concentrate so much on microscopic and atomistic study that we miss the overview, the ground sweep of the revelation of God.

You cannot but agree that such a danger exists, but there are, of course, advantages to both. If you have ever flown over these islands of Aux, as I'm sure you have, in a plane, there is an incredible majesty in viewing with a bird's eye, but then so is that when you put on your hiking boots and walk the moors.

No doubt we will overlook some of what Paul is saying, perhaps even what he wants us to note, but hopefully not. Many commentaries have been written that spend time on issues that they would consider to be of interest, that do not form part of the content of the epistle, at least from a teaching perspective.

For example, some spend time debating the language that is used and the doctrines taught, and they do so from the perspective of wanting to prove or disprove Pauline authorship that may be an issue for some modern critics, but my approach will be simply to consider this letter as written by the apostle Paul to the church in Ephesus, notwithstanding similarities and dissimilarities to other Pauline epistles.

For example, you will find some that argue that Paul could not have written the epistle because the language or the words that he uses are dissimilar to what we find elsewhere.

[25 : 48] Other critics see similarities and argue that they were borrowed by someone else from Paul's writings, something that would not have happened if Paul himself had written.

in Ephesus. I don't want to introduce any element of doubt into your thinking concerning the authorship of this epistle. Reformed evangelical preachers have always taught almost universally that these are the words of Paul the apostle written to the church in Ephesus, a congregation he knew well and where he spent two to three years living and working amongst them.

But I want us today to begin with the opening words of introduction or salutation where the author is identified as also are the recipients of the letter and we are also given thirdly a summary of the message.

We'll begin with the author Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. If Paul was a local someone who lived amongst us here if you asked him to describe himself who his forbearers were he would probably describe himself by his patronym but here the description is simply Paul an apostle else where we find him describe himself a Hebrew of the Hebrews a Benjamite who was schooled in Pharisee a strong Jewish pedigree but also a Roman citizen identified as Saul of

Tarshish a city of Ciresia all of these things are important in their own place but what is important to Paul is that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ someone who is specially chosen by God as is indicated by the words by the will of God he is a messenger of the cross he is an ambassador a missionary this is what he is in chapter 3 he states that he was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power unto me who who nonetheless who experienced or who became the a saint through the work of the

[29 : 06] Holy Spirit in him he experienced the power of God in his life and that is that is what sent him out with the gospel that is what persuaded him to proclaim Christ his own words at the best I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which is from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God and created in all things in Christ Jesus and to me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given that I should preach the gospel he is elsewhere the

Lord's servant he sees himself as someone who is not only the Lord's servant but their servant for the sake of Christ it was God's will for him that he do this and in these words Paul not only recognises that God has called him to such a work but he sees it as an awesome gift the American theologian Charles Hodge writes the gift referred to was his vocation to be an apostle that he who was a persecutor and blasphemer should be called to be an apostle was in his view a wonderful display of the very grace of God his vocation as an apostle involved his conversion and his conversion was the effect of the power of

God this is all important it's important for us to remember that when he begins this epistle begins with something that requires a point it has a beginning it's a starting point but it's a very broad starting point because it involves a whole host of different things that needed to be true before it could come to fruition and it reminds us that we should never despair of God's saving power no matter how some appear to be beyond the pale if we think of Paul or Saul of Tarshish as he was nobody in the right mind would have looked at him and seen a candidate for the ministry of the Christian gospel he was the exact opposite somebody intent on his destruction nor should we see anyone in that same light because no matter how they appear to us

God can not only transform their lives by quickening them and making them living souls but also make them useful in his cause we need to remind ourselves of that and we need to remind ourselves of that not only concerning others but concerning ourselves in the sense that sometimes the enemy of our souls would have us believe that when we do err or when we do slip or slide that things are completely beyond redemption which is not the case speaking speaking to two different groups of people the saints which are at

Ephesus the faithful in Christ Jesus this was a large cosmopolitan city a capital city of the region with well over 200,000 people that's one of one of the seven churches spoken of by John in Revelation many of the commentators are of the opinion based on various manuscripts that the epistle was writing was written more as a circular letter written to all the saints in the region rather than a particular congregation the well-known conservative scholar and preacher Dr.

[34 : 28] Martin Lloyd Jones for example is quite specific when he says the letter to the Ephesians arose from the fact that the original copy did not go to the church at Ephesus itself but that it was circulated to other churches in the region however having said that it was meant for all the ordinary Christian members of these churches saints and faithful in Christ it is not an exalted body of unique people but a title that speaks of the position of every Christian believer who has come to faith in Jesus Christ all Christians are saints they are not super Christians or ultra holy yet they are called to be holy to a life of holiness consecrated to a life lived for

God as the scripture says they are no longer their own they are bought with a price now we should not downplay what we are in Christ nor go to the other extreme James Montgomery Boyce writes every Christian is a saint and every saint is a Christian if we are truly Christ we have a new nature a new set of loyalties and a new agenda we belong to a different kingdom Paul says Christians are faithful faithful to who they are in a new relationship to Christ they believe in him to the saving of their soul divine speak of such faith being three dimensional intellectual emotional and finally volitional some people speak of a blind faith but there is nothing blind about the faith of the believer like

Paul they can say I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day there is nothing cold about his faith they are moved deeply to love the Lord as he indeed has loved them they are obedient to the word of Christ he is their Lord as well as their saviour they follow him they do not remain as they were they forsake the old ways and they go into this new path of obedience unto God the third thing we can briefly mention is that we have a summary of the message that he has for them grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ some have called this an apostolic benediction

Paul does not explain the meaning of these distinct words at this point but I believe when we read through the epistle as a whole you will find that he will expound them at greater length throughout the epistle of course it is a form of greeting and like many greetings it could be that when we use them we just use them as a matter of form there's no thought going into stating that greeting like we wish someone a good morning or we wish them a good day now that's not what we think Paul is doing here that doesn't mean that Paul's statement is meaningless far from it he desires nothing more than the reader that he would be a beneficiary of

God's grace that they would know the unfathomable peace of God which is only possible by way of the cross God is the God of peace he is the God of all grace we cannot enjoy either apart from him we are unworthy recipients of the least of his mercies and this is Paul's letter but it is delivered in God's name whether the preacher or proclaimer of God's word is the only message they have any right to proclaim in God's name is the message grace mercy and peace through the Lord Jesus Christ remind yourselves if you are a believer of this Warren Rearsby puts it God in his mercy does not give me what I do to serve in his grace he gives me what I do not to serve and the believer in

[39 : 42] Christ Jesus an expression that Paul uses I think someone says 27 times throughout this epistle he uses freely anyway as an expression that is descriptive of someone who is identified with Christ who enjoys spiritual blessings without equal now the question for you is do you recognize yourself as one such the epistle is written to someone of that ilk and the epistle is written to confirm the reader and the truths concerning such a believer we pray that God in his grace as we consider the words of this opening chapter that we would see ourselves and see what God has done for us see what God has done in us, see what God continues to do in our lives and the potential that there is for him to do the same in the lives of others. May God bless to us his word let us pray

Heavenly Father we give thanks that your word encourages your people to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and that those who have believed that they are encouraged to appreciate what such belief has introduced them to may your name be ever sanctified to us, may it be lifted up before our mind's eye that we might see in Christ all that is to settle every craving of soul that we have to endure continue with us we pray watching over each one and now may grace, mercy and peace from God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you all now and always as any praise the Lord Father and are we