

Ephesians through the lens of Holiness

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[0:00] Last week I preached a sermon on Isaiah 6. You remember the seraphim? Six-winged angels above God on His throne crying out, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts.

The whole earth is full of His glory. The thresholds of the heavenly temple shook. Smoke filled the place. It would have been awesome. You can't walk away from Isaiah 6 without the realization that God is serious about His holiness.

His holiness and our holiness. God is qualitatively set apart from everything else. He is an all-consuming fire of moral purity.

And throughout the New Testament, we read over and over again that God saves sinners in order to make them holy as He is holy. All by His grace.

He saved us to be qualitatively different from everybody else. He wants us to share in His holiness. That's no burden.

[1:17] That's joy. That's joy. That's joy.

I need to get two things done. I'm not going to preach on Ephesians 5, 3 through 6 this morning. And so the note in your bulletin, I'll be preaching on that next week.

What I'm going to preach on this morning is this. We're going to do an overview of the book of Ephesians. And then the second thing I want to help you see is that there is a really important connection in the book of Ephesians.

Really important for our holiness. So let's get reacquainted with the book of Ephesians. Now if you suddenly found yourself in a city that you'd never been to before or you were unfamiliar with, what would you do?

I'm guessing some of us would look for a map. I think other of us would pull out our smartphones and hit our map application to figure out, hey, where am I in this city?

[2:44] I've got a little app on my phone and I love it. Because not only it shows me the city, it shows me where I am in the city. It's very helpful. And so this morning, not only do I want to give you a map of the book of Ephesians, I want to show you where we're going to be at in Ephesians next week.

So we're going to start off by flying to 45,000 feet so we can overview the book of Ephesians. And then we're going to come down to 10,000 feet so we can see some specific contours.

So it's been over a month and a half since we were in the book of Ephesians. I'm not sure if you've realized that. It's been some time. And we finished off having just started Ephesians 5.

And Ephesians is essentially a sustained line of apostolic logic. It's progressive. The first half of Ephesians, chapters 1 through 3, is all about the truth of who we are in Christ.

It's truth after truth. Fact after fact. Full of instruction. This is who you are. This is who you are. This is who you are. The second half of Ephesians depends on the first.

[4:08] After informing us of who we are in Christ over and over again, Paul in the second half of Ephesians exhorts us over and over and over again.

This is who you are. This is who you are. First half. First half. Second half. This is how you live. Did you hear that word exhort? That might be an unfamiliar word to you.

It's not extort. Coaches exhort. Like Urban Myers of the Ohio State Buckeyes exhorted his Ohio State Buckeyes onto victory.

So the first half of Ephesians who you are in Christ truth after truth. The second half how to live exhortation after exhortation.

So that's the 45,000 feet overview. Let's now go down to 10,000 feet. I want to lay this out this book to give you a better sense of the whole and where we are in it.

[5:08] But there's a particular thing I want you to see as we go through this. I want you to help you to see Ephesians through the lens of holiness. God is serious about His holiness.

We need to be serious about His holiness. And Ephesians helps us. So Ephesians 1.1 Here's what you're going to need to do this morning. You're going to need your Bible open.

So turn in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 1 and you might need to kind of buckle up because we're going to be moving. So I'm going to hit the high points throughout Ephesians so that you can see this beautiful book as a whole and how it bears on our holiness.

So Paul in Ephesians 1.1 addresses the church. Did you notice how he addresses them? Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ to the saints who are in Ephesus. And last week I told you that word saints literally means holy ones.

The holy ones living in Ephesus. If God had an apostle and wrote us a letter it would start this way. To the holy ones of Christ the King Church in Kenosha.

[6:17] Holy. That's where Paul starts the book. And then we move to Ephesians chapter 1 verses 3 through 14. This is an awesome passage of triune spectacularness.

It's amazing. God the Father chose us before the foundation of the world. That's 1.4. God the Son redeemed us by His blood. 1.7. God the Spirit indwelt us as a deposit guaranteeing the inheritance to come.

1.14. I mean it's triune meganess. And then 1.4 is what I really want you to see. We learn that from eternity past from before the foundation of the world.

God chose us in Christ so that we should be holy and blameless before Him.

Christian, when God thought of you in eternity past, He chose you. He set His love on you in order to make you holy so that you can stand in His holy presence without fear.

[7:29] From eternity past, God has loved us into holiness. So from the very get-go, we learn from Ephesians 1, God chose us for holiness.

Holy ones, God chose you for holiness. And then in Ephesians 2, 1-10, we see how God makes sinners holy. He makes sinners holy by uniting sinners to Christ.

Christ is our holiness. Christ is our righteousness. Christ is our life. And so in chapter 2, 1-3, we learn what we were before becoming Christians.

Things I think we already know of. Before we were Christians, we were spiritually dead because of our trespasses and sins. Deceived by the world and held captive by the devil.

We were sons of disobedience and daughters of disobedience. We were unholy. And we were under God's wrath, children of wrath like the rest.

[8:33] We were under God's just and holy wrath. That's who we were. And then in chapter 2, verses 4 and 5, we hear gospel news.

Verse 4, but God, that is one of my favorite but Gods in the Bible. But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which He loves us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, for by grace you've been saved.

God loved us into holiness by uniting us to Christ. For those Christians in the room, you're no longer dead in your sin.

You're alive to God in Christ. At the moment you were born again, you were born with a new appetite. And not for chocolate.

But you were born with an appetite for holiness. You were born with a desire to obey. It might have been a little desire, but it was there.

[9:45] You were no longer a son or daughter of disobedience under God's wrath, but you were made new. You became a beloved child of God, an imitator of God, according to Ephesians 5.

So you see what happens in Ephesians 2 is you go from being a sinner to a saint, and that's all because of God's grace in Christ. He radically changed us.

We were under God's wrath, and now we are beloved by God fully. Lavished in His grace. This is gospel news. And then in 2.10, we see why God did this.

He created you in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before Him, that you should walk in them. God made us alive in Christ, who is our holiness, so that we could walk in holiness.

And then we move on to chapter 2, verses 11 through 22. Not only have we been united to Christ individually, but those of us who have been united to Christ have also been united to each other. [10:51] God has placed us in a new people, the church. According to Paul, it's an entirely new people group. Not a Jew, not a Gentile, a Christian.

And we read in Ephesians 2, 19 through 22, that God has made His people the new dwelling place for His Spirit. We're the new temple.

Holy. not a temple made with steel and cement and stone, but a temple that is made of sinners who were made saints by God's grace.

We are the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit of God. We're a holy people. This is who we are now. Chosen by God from eternity past for holiness. United to Christ so that we could live holy lives. And we are being united to one another as a holy dwelling place for God.

[11:59] Holiness. So when Paul addresses the Ephesians as saints in 1.1, it means a lot. Set apart for God in Christ, a holy people.

Now, let's turn the corner. In the middle of Ephesians is a transition point. We see it in chapter 4, verse 1.

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you've been called. What Paul is doing here is he's moving from explaining who saints are to explaining how saints live.

He's moving from instruction to exhortation. He's saying, I urge you holy ones to live real holy lives because you've been really called and made holy in Christ.

Live out who you are in Christ. You've been made holy, so live like it. And so chapters 1-3, truth after truth, instruction of who we are in Christ.

[13:08] Gospel truth after gospel truth. And then chapters 4-6 is going to be exhortation after exhortation to holiness. Here's how you need to think about it.

Right down 60th, there is a train trestle. And often times in the morning you see metro trains cruising over that thing. Do you have a picture in your mind of one of those big metro locomotives and one of those big blue things with metro across it you know what I'm talking about?

Here's how you need to think about chapters 1-3 in Ephesians. It is the gospel locomotive. It is the gospel engine.

It is dynamic. It is powerful. It changes things. This is God's grace unleashed on us. It makes us new people. And so the gospel engine of Ephesians 1-3 drives the holy exhortations of Ephesians 4-6.

It's dynamic. It's powered by God through the gospel. He changed us by Christ and it changes the way we live our lives.

[14:23] So moving into Ephesians 4 into all these exhortations were first exhorted to unity as a church. Verses 1-16 the church is one body with the diversity of gifts given by one God for the building up of the body.

It's an exhortation to holy unity. And then Ephesians 4 verses 17 through chapter 5 verse 21 it's a really big section and it's exhortation after exhortation to live holy lives.

We're exhorted to put off the old self be renewed in our minds and to put on the new self which is created in the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

What's interesting is that verses 25 through 425 through 5-2 it seems as though Paul is emphasizing holy behavior within the church. And then when we get to 5-3 through 5-21 it seems to have an emphasis on our relationship to people who are not Christians those outside of the church. Paul says stop lying. Paul says stop stealing. Paul says stop being bitter. Speak the truth. Give. Forgive. Forgive. Calls us out of a certain way of living as non-Christians live.

[15:51] And next week that's where we're going to pick up in Ephesians 5 in this section of how we are to live among non-Christians. We're going to experience some exhortations and some warnings.

But it's all gospel driven. Ephesians doesn't end here. It continues on. In Ephesians 5 22-6 9 the Apostle Paul exhorts us onto a holiness in relationship to other people.

In 5 22-33 wives are exhorted to holiness in relationship to their husbands. Husbands are exhorted to holiness in their relationship to their wives.

In chapter 6 1-4 children you're exhorted to holiness in your relationship to your parents. And parents you're exhorted to holiness in relationship to your children. chapter 6 5-9 holiness in the workplace. And then we get to chapter 6 verses 10-20 all throughout Ephesians there's this repeated command walk walk walk walk walk walk walk walk walk and when you get to Ephesians chapter 6 it's stand stand firm against the schemes of the devil. [17:15] take a stand fight the fight and so where we're going to end up is an exhortation to fight the spiritual battle to put on the armor of God to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

Christians aren't jihadists our battle is not against flesh and blood but against spiritual forces and principalities in the heavenly places. God provides everything we need for that fight but it's a holy fight.

So there you have it. A brief overview of Ephesians through the lens of holiness. God is serious about holiness. He's serious about our holiness.

The first half truth after truth of who you are in Christ. God has made you holy in Jesus. And then the second half is exhortation after exhortation.

We are to live out who we already have been made. Holy ones live holy lives. So that's where we're going to pick it up next week in Ephesians chapter 5 verses 3 through 6.

[18:27] But I just want to see at the risk of overkill that you are seeing not only a connection in Ephesians but the kind of connection.

The nature of it. Gospel truths drive holy exhortations. Gospel truths who we are in Christ drive holy exhortations.

Who God has made us in Jesus changes the way that we live our lives. The Gospel fuels our holiness which means ours is a holiness by grace.

Let me say it this way. Just speaking personally. Because I am a saint by grace I strive for unity in the church Ephesians 4.

Because I have been made holy by the blood of Jesus I speak the truth in love to others. Because God and the Gospel has radically changed me brought me from death to life by uniting me to Jesus I no longer steal but I use my hands to give.

[20:05] Because God has chosen me from eternity past bought me with the blood of Jesus and sealed me with His Spirit I don't lie I speak the truth I don't steal I give I don't get bitter I forgive give because I've been made alive in Jesus I imitate my holy father as a beloved son and I love as Jesus loved because I'm blood bought made righteous with the righteousness of Christ holy I love my wife as Christ loved the church because God has changed me by His grace I raise my children to fear the Lord because God has delivered me from the kingdom of darkness into His kingdom of the beloved son I fight now I fight a spiritual battle do you want to know how serious

God is about your holiness God shows you from eternity past and then He sent His son to die for you and caused His spirit to dwell you so that you could be made new so that you could walk in holiness that's how serious God is about holiness let's pray together God in heaven we do praise you for being a holy God and we do thank you God for what you've done for us in Christ that you have brought us in and we no longer fear there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus you have made us righteous in your sight you welcomed us as your sons and daughters God we thank you and we as a church come before you now and ask God that you would pour out your sanctifying grace on us that you would make us holy experientially that we would hear these exhortations in the latter half of Ephesians and say oh God thank you we welcome it stir us up God we ask help us to strive for holiness we ask this in Jesus name amen