

First Baptist Church – Calgary

Week of: January 3, 2010

Message Series: Ephesians – God’s New Society

#1 – Living in the present in light of the past.

Introduction:

This winter our Sunday teaching will focus on Paul’s letter to the Church in Ephesus. It is a fascinating letter, full of warmth, joy, hope, & practical instruction. In fact, many commentators consider Ephesians to be one of the crown jewels of the Bible. It was John Calvin’s (the great 16th century reformer) favourite letter, and John Stott has called it “the most contemporary book in the Bible, since it promises community in a world of disunity, reconciliation in place of alienation, and peace instead of war.”¹ As we explore this wonderful letter of hope & grace, written with the heart of a pastor and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, my prayer is that we will together gain a new perspective on what it means to live as “God’s New Society.”

Study Notes:

¹ John Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians*. Intersity Press, 1979, p.16.

Personal Study: #1 – *Living in the present in light of the past*

The *Serendipity Study Bible* introduces the letter to the Ephesians by stating that “in this letter Paul takes us to the mountaintops of Christian truth and invites us to look at the breathtaking view! When we do so, we see that it is Jesus Christ who dominates the view. We see him breaking down the wall between God and humanity. We see him subduing the hostile cosmic powers. We see him creating the Church, a new social order of love & unity that transcends the racial, ethnic, and social distinctions between people. In conveying this vision, Paul reaches into eternity past and eternity future to demonstrate how God, out of his love and glory, calls people to be reconciled to himself and to one another through the cross of Christ. The cross provides forgiveness of sins, a new life, and a new people.”

Read Acts 18:18-20:1 and 20:13-38

1. Describe the beginnings of this faith community in Ephesus.
How big was it? What kind of believers seemed to live there?
What is its history?

Take 15 minutes and read the entire letter of Ephesians.

2. What are your first impressions?
 - what is the tone of the letter, and what sort of person does Paul seem to be? (especially in light of his behavior with the Ephesian believers in the book of Acts).
- 3 In Ephesians 1:1-2, we find that the writer is *an apostle of Christ Jesus*; the recipients are themselves *in Christ Jesus*, and; the blessing to them comes from . . . *the Lord Jesus Christ*.
Why is Jesus so dominant in Paul’s opening remarks?
 - what direction does he even now seem to be taking people?
4. What does it mean to be *saints . . . faithful in Christ Jesus*?
 - What does it mean to you? What does it mean to Jesus?
5. How does God’s *grace & peace* (v. 3) alter the way you live your life; raise your family; treat your neighbours, approach your work?
6. Pastor Ken spoke about God’s call to live with one foot in each world (the secular world and God’s Kingdom), and the necessity to practice what John Stott calls “double listening.”
 - as God’s New Society, how do we practically measure this?
 - How can you practice “double listening” this year in your family; your neighbourhood; your workplace?