

# THE EXPOSITION OF EPHESIANS

## Ephesians, Message 01: Introduction

**This morning we start a new series: An exposition of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians.**

- By “exposition” we mean “expository preaching”: Working through the book, verse by verse.
- We intend to study the Book of Ephesians on Sunday morning, in its proper, biblical context by studying the entire Epistle from start to finish.

**This message is meant to introduce the study.**

- We are going to take a look at what the Bible says about expository preaching (why would we preach expositionally and not thematically?).
- Then we are going to try to take a broad, contextual look at the Book of Ephesians (why would we want to preach Ephesians expositoryly and not some other book of the Bible?).

### **I. The Importance of Expository Preaching in the Life of the Believer**

#### **A. Expository preaching addresses one of the main problems in life: Final Authority.**

1. (Jud 21.25) The same problem that existed in the days of the Judges still exists today: There is no final authority (no kind), and everyone simply does what is right in his own eyes.
2. (2Tim 4.1-4) Paul describes this problem as turning away from sound doctrine (God's final authority) and turning rather to fables that sound good to the people but that are simply false.
3. If we take a look at the world around us, we can see that everyone is basically doing what they think is right—the individual is the final authority in his life, and he lives to please himself.
4. And if we take an even closer look at churches today, we can see that very same problem: Churches are doing what is right in their own eyes in order to achieve the results they deem right.
5. Almost no one is following God's final authority for us today, in this world: The Scripture.
6. Expository preaching is designed around and based on the final authority of the Bible. It is the type of preaching that needs to be the main diet of believer and churches each week.

#### **B. (Acts 20.26-27) One of Paul's main concerns was to declare “all the counsel of God.”**

1. How can a person declare “all the counsel of God”? First, he must *have* all the counsel that God wants him to declare, and then must *declare* it.
  - a) We have all the counsel that God wants us to have in the Scripture, and there is no way to declare *all* the counsel of God without systematically preaching and teaching the Bible.
  - b) Expository preaching is preaching that is designed to do just that: Declare all of Scripture.
2. Therefore, expository preaching is one of the principal duties and responsibilities of a pastor.
  - a) (Eph 4.11-12) The senior pastor (the pastor-teacher) has the duty and responsibility to *perfect* the saints.
  - b) (2Tim 3.16-17) That perfection is the result of the teaching and application of Scripture.
  - c) (Col 1.28) Therefore, a church needs a steady diet of systematic, expository teaching and preaching of *all wisdom*—of the entire counsel of God (of Scripture, all of it).
  - d) (1Tim 4.13-16) Expository preaching (verse-by-verse teaching of Scripture) is one of the primary duties given by God to the elders/pastors of a church.
  - e) Teaching topics is good (and we will do that). But the main, weekly diet of the believer and the Church needs to be Scripture (verse-by-verse explanation of what the Bible says).

**C. (Neh 8.1-8) Scripture itself defines and describes how God wants Scripture taught to His people.**

1. (v1) When we gather together as the people of God, Scripture is the center of all we do.
2. (v2) We should all gather together: adults and children alike (all that can understand).
3. (v3-4) We gather together in order to be attentive to the Book of God taught to the people of God.
4. (v5) The Book (Scripture) is to be the focus of attention because it is our final authority.
5. (v6) Ezra began with worship, and then...
6. (v7-8) He preached expositively: He read in the Book of God distinctly and then explained it so that the congregation could understand the reading.
7. This way, the Scripture becomes of the final authority and not the preacher.
  - a) Expository preaching is designed to simply teach you the plain, normal meaning of what the Bible says.
  - b) Once you know what the Bible says, then you are responsible (personally and individually) to respond to God by either submitting to what it says or rejecting it and living in rebellion.

**D. One of the greatest needs in pulpits today is the exposition of Scripture: Expository Preaching.**

1. Expository preaching (verse-by-verse reading and explanation of the Bible) is the only preaching designed around and based on the final authority of Scripture.
2. For this reason, Harvest Baptist Church is dedicated to using the pulpit on Sunday mornings to preach expositively through books of the Bible.
3. This morning, we are going to start our exposition of the Book of Ephesians.
4. Simple suggestions to get the most out the exposition of Scripture:
  - a) I would suggest you get a Bible with wide margins or interleaved You can jot notes down on note paper during the message (or listen to it in greater detail off the web site).
  - b) Then you can transfer the notes into the margins of your Bible after you under the passage.
  - c) That way you build your own personal study Bible with your own personal notes to help you as you read through Scripture. It will also help you to be ready to explain Scripture to others.

**II. The Introduction to the Book of Ephesians for the Life of Believers Today**

- Why study the Book of Ephesians? What does this book have to say to us today?

**A. Ephesians is a book written to a church that had a good beginning similar to ours.**

1. (Acts 19.1-7) Paul started the church in Ephesus with a group of about 12 disciples of John the Baptist—a group of people that already had some sort of background in biblical instruction.
  - a) Ephesus at that time was in many ways similar to our society and culture today.
  - b) It was a sea port off the west coast of Asia Minor and therefore had a lot of commerce.
  - c) People from all over would pass through Ephesus; there was a lot of trade and access to material goods.
  - d) Ephesus, therefore, had its tendency to materialistic and immoral (everything for sale).
2. (Acts 19.8-10) After starting a church in Ephesus, Paul stayed there for two or three years teaching and establishing the church in sound doctrine. They had a very good beginning!
3. (Acts 19.10) We can see that the church in Ephesus was a hard working church that was active in the mission of making disciples. They were out preaching the gospel throughout Asia Minor.

## **B. Ephesians is a book written to a church that had to face problems similar to ours.**

1. Paul eventually had to leave Ephesus because of persecution and when he left, he left the church in the capable hands of a team of elders/pastors.
2. (Acts 20.17) Soon after, he met with the elders of the church in Ephesus and spoke of some of the problems that would arise in their congregation.
  - a) (Acts 20.28-32) The church in Ephesus faced problems of false teachers (wolves in sheep's clothing) that rose up among them (they came from within—from among the “Christians”—and not from without—from the pagans).
  - b) This is a good description of many of the problems we face today. It's easy to spot bad teaching that comes from without (from the pagans; e.g., evolution, sexual immortality, atheism, idolatry, etc.). The danger is when the teaching comes from “Christians” with “good intentions” and a semblance of “spirituality.”
  - c) There is so much teaching out there today that seems okay. It's written by Christians who have good intentions and sincerely (we hope) want to help people know God. But, so much of it is based on man's wisdom, the world's philosophies (like psychology), and not the Bible.
  - d) Just like the church at Ephesus, we need to watch for these kinds of problems and prepare for them by knowing Scripture (v32).
  - e) These problems didn't just go away either. They went from bad to worse...
3. (1Tim 1.3) Later on in Paul's missionary career, he had to leave Timothy in Ephesus as the senior pastor in order to deal with these very same problems.
  - a) (1Tim 1.4) There were some that had risen up from among the congregation in Ephesus who were teaching bad doctrine (fables, false teaching, doubts and questions that didn't edify).
  - b) (1Tim 3.15) Therefore, Paul left Timothy there to instruct that church in in the most basic and essential elements: The local church is to be the pillar and ground of the truth, not fables, false teaching, and endless questions that only cast doubt on the Word of God.
  - c) We face these same challenges today in churches. Pulpits are given to stories (fables) and teaching that casts doubt on what the Bible really says (doubt and uncertainty seem to be virtues in pulpits today).
  - d) (1Tim 5.17) Paul addresses these matters in the church of the Ephesians by reminding them that they are to be given to laboring in word and in doctrine, from the pulpit to the pew.
  - e) And, yet, this focus on the Word of God can swing a church to the other extreme, too.
    - (1) We can appreciate the correction given to the Ephesians about being careful with doctrine in order to be watchful with regard to false teaching and false teachers. Amen to that!
    - (2) But, what is the danger of a church that is committed to sound doctrine and the teaching of the whole counsel of God? We run the risk of becoming cold and intellectual.
    - (3) We see this very same thing in life and history of the church in Ephesus.
4. (Rev 2.1-7) The Ephesians were dedicated to sound doctrine (truth), but they lost their first love.
  - a) Paul started the church in Ephesus in Acts 19 (around AD 55). He left Timothy there as senior pastor (and wrote 1Timothy) around AD 64, about nine or ten years after starting the church.
  - b) Now John writes to the same congregation about 30 years later, around AD 95.
  - c) (v2-3, 6) The Ephesians learned the lesson that Paul and Timothy taught them. They had good works. They tirelessly “tried” the false teachers and found them to be liars. Amen!

- d) (v4) Nevertheless, along the way they had fallen into the ditch on the other side of the road.
  - (1) One extreme to avoid is the false teaching; we need to be dedicated to sound doctrine.
  - (2) But, in our dedication to sound doctrine, we need to be aware of (and avoid) the other extreme of letting our dedication to Scripture and sound doctrine rob us of our first love, Jesus Christ (the Person who wrote us the Book; the Person who gave us the doctrine).
- e) (v5) The way to avoid losing our first love is to “remember” and “repent.”
  - (1) These two words (these two commands) are what the Book of Ephesians is all about.
  - (2) The first half of the book (Eph 1-3) is about “remembering” what we have in Christ.
  - (3) The second half of the book (Eph 4-6) is about “repenting” of *our* ways in order to following Jesus Christ in *His* way.
  - (4) The first half is about doctrine (remembering what we have in Christ) and the second half is about application (repenting of sin and selfishness in order to live for Christ).

**C. Therefore, Ephesians is a book written to a church that had needs very similar to ours.**

1. The Ephesians needed to be reminded of all that they had “in Christ”.
  - a) Take some time this week and read through Ephesians. Mark every time you see the phrase “in Christ” (or “in Him,” etc.). That's the key phrase of the book because the book is all about what God has given us (what we have) in Christ.
  - b) (Eph 1.3) The first half of the book reminds of all the spiritual blessings that we have in Christ.
  - c) (Eph 4.1) The second half shows us how we can walk worthy of all we have in Christ.
    - (1) (Eph 4.22-24) The way to walk worthy is to develop a walk of “repentance.”
    - (2) We need to walk with Christ (the Person) by walking according to Scripture. But, we should never let Scripture replace the Person who gave us the Bible: Jesus.
    - (3) And as we walk with the Lord, He will use Scripture to point out things in our lives we need to stop doing and other things we need to start doing.
2. Ephesians, then, is the book that exhorts us to maintain sound doctrine, but not to the exclusion of our first love
  - a) Ephesians 1-3 is going to remind us of all spiritual blessings we have in Christ.
  - b) Ephesians 4-6 is going to encourage us to repent of our own way of thinking and living in order to think on Christ and live for him.
  - c) And that's how life in Christ works: We don't “do” in order to “get” (we don't work in order to deserve God's blessing). God in Jesus Christ has already given us all spiritual blessing, and that is our motivation to draw near to God and walk closely with the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - d) Ephesians is a book about our new life in Christ.

**Conclusion:**

**Our society and culture is very similar to that of Ephesus in the first century.**

- We have a thriving economy that based on commerce and trade. That wealth and abundance has led to the development of a society that is very immoral (selfish, self-satisfying), idolatrous, and materialistic.
- What Paul has to say to the church at Ephesus is what we need to hear today.

**Our church culture is very similar to what we see develop in the church of Ephesus during the first century.**

- Paul warned the elders of the church of Ephesus that false teachers would rise up from among them and draw away disciples with their teaching. So many “Christian leaders” today are leading God's people *away from* sound doctrine and *into* fables (stories) and false teaching.
- And, yet, as we strive to avoid that problem, we need to avoid the other extreme of making an idol out of sound doctrine. We need to remember that our life in Christ is about living in and with a *Person*, Jesus.

**Ephesians is a book that will speak to us today in many ways and in many areas of our lives, because Ephesians is a book about our new life in the Lord Jesus Christ.**

- If you're not sure you have life in the Lord Jesus Christ, you can be sure. Repent and trust the Lord.
- If you are sure of the life you have in Christ, are you committed to putting off the former conversation (your way of living) in order to renew your mind and put on the new man in order to walk with Christ?
- Both of those decision will begin with repentance. And both of the decisions require faith. God has given us sound doctrine in the Scripture, and He expects us to learn it and adjust our lives to it.