

G. Campbell Morgan's Exposition on the Whole Bible

Ephesians 1

Verses 1-23

The theme of this letter is pre-eminently of the Church as the medium for the accomplishment of the divine purpose. Those addressed are described as "saints," and as "the faithful in Christ Jesus." These the apostle greets in the words, "Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Grace is the river flowing from the heart of God. Peace is the consciousness of the trusting soul.

The letter itself begins with a great benediction in which the apostle speaks as a member of the Church, declaring the blessedness of God and the blessedness

of the Church through God. In dealing with the subject of the Church, he first writes of its origin. It is predestined to be holy and without blemish," and that to the praise of the glory of the divine grace. The method of His predestination is threefold: redemption (verse Ephesians 1:7), revelation (verses Ephesians 1:8-12), realization (verses Ephesians 1:13-14).

This doctrine of grace creates in the heart of the apostle desires for the saints which are constantly expressed in prayer. He prays that they may have "a spirit of wisdom and revelation," and this by having "the eyes of their heart enlightened."

All this in order that they may know, first, the vocation, and, second, the power. The vocation of the Church is here

described as the "riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." God has an inheritance in His people, and it is that of the Church as a medium through which His grace is to be manifested. The apostle prays, moreover, that they may know "the exceeding greatness of His power." This he described as "the working of the strength of His might," and gave as supreme illustration the resurrection and ascension of our Lord.

Ephesians 2

Verses 1-22

The next subject is the edification or building of the Church. The materials of the building are found amid things which are absolutely opposed to the will and purpose of God. From this material God, who is rich in mercy, finds the material for His building. The process is that in Christ Jesus those found are made alive, are raised up, and made to sit with Him.

The purpose for which the building is created is then distinctly told in the words, "That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." If the heart is overwhelmed by the splendor of the vision suggested, it is

comforted by the declaration immediately following,

'We are His workmanship.'

Following on, the apostle shows how these materials are to be unified into one building. Jew and Gentile are to be united in Christ. Though they were "far off," they are to be "made nigh." Thus Jew and Gentile are admitted into the one household of God.

Finally, we have the revelation of the foundation, "Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief Cornerstone." It is evident that the geometrical figure in the mind of the apostle was of a pyramid, for in the pyramid the cornerstone is the key to the whole structure. This can hardly be said

of any other form of building. The building is then described as "a holy temple in the Lord," and its purpose that it should be "a habitation of God in the Spirit." The creation of the temple is the result of the work of Jesus. The incoming of the Spirit is making use of the appropriated temple according to the intended purpose.

Ephesians 3

Verses 1-21

God's dwelling in the Church is not finality. It is equipment for the fulfillment of the divine purpose. The apostle claims a stewardship in the mystery of the Church, and declares the astounding fact that "unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God." In his Corinthian letter the apostle showed that the Word of the Cross is the wisdom of God. Therefore, through the Church is to come the proclamation to the unfallen ones of the infinite Grace of God. Heaven will have much music, but none so full of infinite meaning as the song of the ransomed.

Called forth by the stupendous magnitude of his theme, the apostle again speaks of the fact that he is

praying for them. Through a series of consecutive petitions he reaches the statement of his final desire. It is "that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God."

The doctrinal section of the letter ends with the doxology, "Unto Him, the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus." Thus the inherent blessedness referred to in the opening benediction (1:3) finds its expression in the Church and in Christ Jesus. So stupendous are the ideas developed in this letter that in the presence of them faith must stagger, save as it is recognized that God bestows power equal to the accomplishment of the great purpose. He is One "that is able to do," and that, moreover, "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Finally, he declares that this ability is "according to the power that worketh in us."

This doxology is full of a sublimity which is characterized by simplicity. "Unto Him

be the glory," that is, the great purpose;
"in the Church and in Christ Jesus," such
the wondrous medium; "unto all the
generations of the age of the ages," that
the immeasurable duration.

Ephesians 4

Verses 1-32

The apostle at once proceeded to apply this great doctrine to the present life of the Church. From the heavenly calling he passed to the earthly conduct. The matter of first importance is maintenance of the unity of the Spirit. The fact of that unity is then declared. "There is one body, and one Spirit"; the function of the instrument so described is revealed in the words, "one hope of your calling." He then showed how the unity is created: "one Lord," the Object of faith; "one faith," centered on the one Lord; "one baptism," that of the Spirit. The great result is "one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all."

The ascended Christ received gifts, and bestowed them "for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ."

Having referred to the ascension of Christ, the apostle linked that ascension to His descent. These Christians are called to the maintenance of unity, and how each one is equipped for such obedience is then declared. Grace sufficient is supplied to each until all shall attain to the fulness of the stature of Christ.

In order to realize these things there must be an absolute turning away from the old manner of life in accepting the new. In a series of eight remarkable contrasts the apostle showed the difference between the old and the new. In order to fulfil these injunctions, it is

solemnly charged, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." Putting away all these things of the old is the work of the Holy Spirit, as is also the realization in life and character of the things of the new. If we will let the Spirit have His way, we shall find these evil things wither and die, and it will be possible, in the power of the new life, to obey the positive injunctions. If, on the other hand, we cling to, and indulge in, the things condemned, we shall cause sorrow to the great Indweller.

Ephesians 5

Verses 1-33

All that the apostle had been saying was emphasized by the statement of their relationship to God as he called them to be "imitators of God." Again he urged them to put off the old and put on the new. In the old are things of darkness. Believers are to walk as children of the light. That light is found in Christ, "Christ shall shine upon thee."

In the final movement the apostle makes a contrast between false excitement and true enthusiasm, between being "drunken with wine" and being "filled with the Spirit." The whole teaching here is emphasized by the words, "Walk worthily of the calling." In order to do this, we find two principal injunctions:

**"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God (4:30),
and "Be filled with the Spirit" (5:18).**

Dealing with the Christian household the apostle first revealed the divine conception of the sacredness of the marriage relation. The ideal is presented as conformity to the pattern of the relationship existing between Christ and His Church. The wife yields her complete allegiance to an absolutely self-sacrificing love. Therefore, in his relationship the husband is mastered by a self-emptying devotion. Thus the heads of the household are called on to bear such relation to each other as is worthy of the high calling of the Church, made possible by the glorious union existing between her and her Lord.

Ephesians 6

Verses 1-24

The teaching now turned to the next relationship of importance in the Christian household-the relationship of parents and children. Children are to yield obedience, and thus be set free from all care and anxiety. When the period of childhood passes, obligation does not cease. They are still to honor father and mother.

The responsibility of parents is referred to only with regard to the father. Thus the apostle emphasized that the chief responsibility for training a child should rest with the father. In the exercise of parental authority there must always be the principle of reasonableness, that the

obedience of the child may be constrained by love.

The next relationship in the Christian household is that between servants and masters. Service is to be rendered, ever remembering that the final standard must come from the Lord Himself, and is to be rendered as to Him. Masters also are to rule always from the standpoint of loyalty to Christ. The master's relation to his servant will depend on his relation to his own Master in heaven.

The apostle now turned to the subject of conflict. Life on earth after the pattern of the heavens is bound to bring the soul into conflict with all the forces that are opposed to God. He recognized that behind all the opposition of man is the more terrific opposition of spiritual powers. If, however, there is the

revelation of a terrible conflict, there is no room for cowardly fear. Perfect provision is made for the saint. Concerning this armor the apostle has two injunctions. First, 'Put on the whole armour of God'; second, "Take up the whole armour of God," indicating equipment and actual conflict. Then the saint is "to stand," and "to withstand," and, 'having done all, to stand.'" The letter ends with personal matters, every one of which is interesting and suggestive, and, finally, the benediction.