

Ephesians 1

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[0 : 00] I hope this evening to begin what will be a series of our working through the letter to the Ephesians, which is quite a substantial book, but if we take it a stage at a time, hopefully it shouldn't be too far beyond us.

This chapter one that we read from this evening, you could very easily chop up into lots and lots of different pieces and do deep, deep sermons on just a couple of verses each time.

I'm seeking not to do that as we work our way through it. I'd like us to be able to cover the chapters in the weeks ahead with maybe one or two at the most sermons, really per chapter.

This first one has got an awful lot in it, but I'd like us really rather to take an overview of what Paul is trying to say to those at Ephesus here.

There is so much we could deal with, even about Ephesus itself. Paul, remember, is writing very positively to the Ephesians, as he does, of course, to the Corinthians and to others, always emphasizing the positives, always speaking to them all as though they were all faithful and diligent Christians.

[1 : 16] When, of course, we know from his letters to Timothy, for example, who was based at Ephesus by that stage, that clearly all is not as it should be in Ephesus.

But he is always upbeat and positive and seeking to encourage these largely Gentile believers to recognize that they, too, have just as much opportunity to be part of God's great gift of grace as anybody else does.

He's seeking to enable them to know that they, too, belong by virtue of what Christ has done. So the overall theme of this opening chapter is, if you look at it and if you read through it, is glorifying God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

You're thinking, okay, well, so all the Bible surely does that. Yes, but look at the emphasis in the language. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, it means he didn't choose to do it himself.

It means men didn't appoint him to this. Even the other apostles didn't appoint him to this. And by the will of God, to the saints, which are at Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus. It means it's not to a town in general.

[2 : 24] It's not to the world in general that he's writing or all manner and kinds of people. He is writing to believers, or those at least who profess to believe in Christ, to the saints, which are at Ephesus.

This is a letter addressed to a church, not just to a city, but to a church, to those who with Paul have put their trust in Christ.

Not all will continue faithful in that doctrine, in that belief, in that relationship to Christ. Many perhaps will fall away, but he's going on the basis that because they have outwardly professed and adhered to this great truth, that he is going on the assumption that they are all true believers.

And he's got nothing else to go on. We can't see into people's hearts, nor can Paul, in taking it as charitably as possible, all those professing are likewise all those who will be redeemed.

That's the basis on which he's going. It's to a church. And he is assuming that those who trust, or outwardly profess to trust in Christ, are those who actually do so.

[3 : 30] That the glorifying of God's grace be to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places and so on.

The Ephesians had their struggles. They had their problems. If you think about in the Acts of the Apostles when Demetrius the silversmith organized all those other fellow tradesmen to cause the riot in Ephesus and dragged out some of the Christians and tried to persecute them there, the Ephesians had real problems and real struggles that they had to face.

The blessings they receive are not material blessings as such. They are spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. This chapter is all about the glory and the sovereignty of the Lord.

The sovereignty of God in election and predestination might mean that the Ephesians and like Christians in every age have a tendency perhaps to be slipping back.

Why is he emphasizing the sovereignty of God, predestination, God's election from all eternity? Is he majoring on these things? Because perhaps the Ephesians, like Christians everywhere in every age, as we say, may have a tendency to slip back into thinking that they have a tendency to a belief that they themselves could influence their salvation in real time.

[4 : 55] That my salvation is depending on what I do. You know, if I'm a good Christian and I seek to keep the commandments and take the doctrine, then God's going to shuffle me into heaven. And if I, well, if I'm a bit laid back and a backslidden, well, maybe I'm in more trouble.

Then it's not down to us and what we have done. We are not saved because we are good. We are unsaved because we are faithful. We are saved because Christ is good and because what he has done and because our trust is in him.

That's the salvation. That's the foundation. That is the safety of every believer. Not how good they are, but how good Christ is. This is why we can have assurance because our assurance is not that I'm saved because I'm a really good person or I'm saved because I'm a really good Christian.

It's not arrogance or conceit on the part of the true believer. It's assurance in how good Christ is and how holy Christ is and what he has done for sinners like us.

And people might say, what makes you think that God has chosen you as opposed to anybody else? Who are you to think that God would choose you? What have you got? And you can say, I have nothing. Christ, if he has chosen and seen me, he's done it from all eternity.

[6 : 13] This is what we read, having predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ himself according to the good pleasure of his will. It's from all eternity. Predestined.

In the dispensation, verse 10, He might gather together and one all things which are in heaven, which are in earth, in whom we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of them who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

It's all been from all eternity. Verse 4, according to the chosenness and him before the foundation of the world, before we've done anything good or bad, it's because of his sovereign grace.

And this emphasis upon the sovereignty of God, upon God's divine election, it takes away all of our own pride.

It takes away all of our own sense of, well, I've got to keep on trying to be better. If I'm a good faithful Christian, then I'm going to go to heaven. If I'm backslidden, well, I don't stand a chance. It's not about us.

[7 : 15] And this is part of the emphasis Paul is making. And what he writes to the Ephesians, which of course in the first instance is applicable to them, we can recognize this is applicable to believers in every place and in every age.

Because the tendency is always, even if we start well in the spirit, to slide back into the flesh. And even with the best will in the world trying to be faithful, that's how legalism comes in.

When we lose the first flush of our delight in the Lord and the sense of his sovereignty and grace and the sort of spiritual high that went on and then we lose that sort of first flush of delight in the Lord and we think, well, how do we keep this going?

Well, we're going to do it by keeping the rules. And yes, if we love the Lord, we will follow these commandments and teachings, but that's not what saves us. Legalism comes in on the one hand or laxity comes in on the other hand and we lose our first love.

And of course, remember in the letter in Revelation, the letter for the seven churches, that's what the Lord says he has against the church in Ephesus. Thou hast lost thy first love, left thy first love.

[8 : 28] And that is a danger for all of us. But what Paul emphasizes here right at the start of this letter then is putting the sovereign Lord over everything in time and eternity.

Right at the start of this substantial, you know, this is quite a meaty letter, there's a lot in it, this significant church letter. It's setting the scene and the worldview which the Ephesians and by extension we also need to recognize is that the universe is God-centered.

It is not man-centered. It is not all about us. It is not all about me. This is the thing we have to unlock burn. It is the emphasis that we have to reverse because man has it in his natural mind that he is at the top of the pyramid and all the other creatures are sort of, you know, evolving their way up towards this pinnacle which mankind is.

And mankind is only going to improve and only going to get better. We are not at the top of the pyramid. We are down in the dust. We are like little creatures running about the anthill.

The universe is God-centered. It is not man-centered. And the sovereign scheme of salvation is God-centered.

[9 : 48] It is not man-centered. Yes, God has become man in his son Jesus Christ. But it is all about what the Lord has done. And that is what Paul is emphasizing throughout this chapter.

Because the Ephesians, if they knew it before, need to learn it again. And if they do, so do we. The universe is God-centered.

The glory of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. And at the center of everything. Both the physical world, the real world, the eternity and time and all these things.

So the themes in this chapter are first of all, we look at overview of verses 1 to 12 here. We can see that this is our joint inheritance in Christ.

Our joint inheritance. Because Paul is talking about, as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world. Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings.

[10 : 47] Having predestinated us the praise of the glory of his grace. In whom we have redemption through his blood. He hath bounded toward us having made known to us the mystery of his world. It's all about what they share.

He, the apostles, the apostle and the Ephesians themselves and by extension other believers in all places. If the apostle has it, if Paul has it, he doesn't have it because he's been set apart as an apostle.

He's got it because he's a believer. And that which is accessible to him is accessible to all who will put their trust in Christ for their salvation.

salvation because, as I said a minute ago, the universe is God-centered, Christ-centered. Our salvation is Christ-centered, not man-centered. And this Christ-centered salvation is available to all.

Even the most hardened sinner, even the most atheistic renegade can be turned and put their faith in Christ and be forgiven for everything they have done.

[11 : 48] It is our joint inheritance. But there is always a tendency, of course, for people to say, well, that's all very well. I recognize, yeah, for people who are, you know, in Christ and really spiritual, or you, you know, your apostle, that's fair enough, Paul, or maybe those who are Israelites after the flesh, you know, verse 12, that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

Does he mean here the Jewish believers, you know, in Palestine and us Ephesians, we're mostly Gentiles. We come from a background where Diana of the Ephesians is the goddess that's worshipped, that we sort of somehow less going to inherit what they've got, you know.

It's all very well speaking about our joint inheritance, but, you know, does it really apply to me? And this is why I would suggest to you from verse 13 on to verse 19, he is emphasizing that it applies to you in whom ye also trusted, after that ye 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 and the redemption of the purchased possession.

Wherefore, I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, seeks not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers. You know, the emphasis all the way through to verse 19, it is that because you have trusted in Christ, this is every bit as much your inheritance, not just collectively ours and all the kind of good people Christians, but everybody who has put their trust in Christ Jesus.

This is a gospel for sinners. this is a gospel for the outcast. This is a gospel for the ordinary. It is for those who may think of themselves as, well, well, I'm not, you know, the worst of sinners, I wasn't steeped in vice, you know, a criminal or a drug dealer or a murderer, I'm just ordinary.

[13 : 52] I know a wee bit about the things of the Lord or about church, but, you know, I'm not that bad, I'm not that good. Why did God take notice of me when I'm so dead ordinary? because the Lord delights to glorify that which would have no glory in itself.

He is glorified in doing the impossible and to take the ordinary and turn it into something spectacular and precious is just as glorifying to him as to take the most hopelessly lost rebel and turn them into a saint of the Lord or to take somebody holy and to make them recognize that the holiness they had of themselves is nothing.

Whether you're Nicodemus, the Pharisee or whether you're one of the priests or whether you're one of the godly saints of Israel, you're not saved except by Christ. God is glorified in the redemption of sinners and that applies to you, Paul is saying.

In these verses 13 to 19, he is turning it back on himself. This isn't just our joint inheritance. This is your inheritance.

And again, what we said before, what applies to the Ephesians, applies to us. What applies in the first century, applies in the 21st century. And you might think, well, 2,000 years on, surely things have changed.

[15 : 14] God has not changed. To him, 1,000 years. And as a watch in the night and as yesterday when it is passed, a watch in the night was three hours, maybe four, depending on how you count.

2,000 years, which is since this was written, that's like eight hours to the Lord. It's like this morning. It's, you know, it's the blink of an eye.

The Lord's idea of time and hours are completely different. This applies just as much right now, tonight, right here, to us, as it did 2,000 years ago to Ephesus.

Ephesus, which doesn't exist anymore as a living city. But notice, the letter to them, the letter in Revelation to the seven churches of which Ephesus is the first name.

This living word continues. And those who were living saints, trusting in Christ, will be with them now in glory.

[16 : 14] They live. Ephesus itself is dead. The pagan city is dead. The worship of Diana of the Ephesians is dead. That ruin can be visited by tourists, and it is, and demonstrated.

This is where ancient Ephesus is, well, look at the pillars, look at the ancient Roman roads, and so on. But it's gone. It's dead. But those Ephesian believers to whom these letters were written, and who put their trust in Christ, they live.

And they live with Christ in glory. This is a living word. It is still here. when Ephesus itself has gone. This is your inheritance, he writes.

This is your promise. It is for sinners. It is for you. And just as, you know, as a minister of the gospel, of course, one almost has to be careful about saying, oh yes, you, if you trust and believe, you can be saved.

Christ died for you. Christ died for his elect. He died for the sheep. You know, I, if I lay down my life for the sheep, you know, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him.

[17 : 25] I can't say to everybody in the world, Christ died for you. Because I don't know who's saved and who isn't. We know that Christ died to save those who will be saved. He didn't die to save those who won't be saved.

Because if the price was paid for them, then they would be in glory. But they're not. They're lost. Christ. Because Christ hasn't died for them. And that, of course, makes us panic.

Oh, how do I know if he died for me? How do I know? Well, you don't know, but you do know the invitation. You do know that this is your inheritance. This is that which is freely offered to you in the gospel.

You don't have to qualify the offer of the gospel. You only have to qualify if you're going to say who is definitely saved and who isn't. Or whom did Christ die? Or not. This free offer is absolutely genuine.

Somebody might, for example, go to their lawyers and be told at an appointment saying, well, your uncle has left you so many million pounds and this lovely big house and this is your inheritance and it's for you.

[18 : 30] And they might say, well, fine, thanks. And they go off back to their own home and they ignore it. They leave it. They don't enter the house. They don't draw the money out the bank. They just leave it. They don't touch it. It is their inheritance.

It is given there for them but they may never touch it. They may never get the benefit of it. And all it is freely offered to them. And it is given to them but they don't want it.

They don't take it. So they don't benefit from it. They don't in any sense be lifted up by, be blessed by it. Because although it is theirs for the asking and the receiving, they don't want anything to do with it.

It's kind of like that with the gospel. It is the riches of God's great grace freely held out to sinners. In Ephesus and in Scalpia and in Scotland and all over the world.

But an awful lot will say, well actually I don't think I won that just yet. I'm quite happy where I am, what I'm doing. That's fine. But the clock is ticking and you don't have forever. The letter to the Ephesians will still be here on record long after you and I have gone from here just as Ephesus itself is gone.

[19 : 36] But the Ephesians, the letter to the Ephesians is still here. And then from verse 19 onwards we have this pointing back from verse 20 to the end.

It's pointing back again to the glory of God. It's not just a little hymn of praise. He hath wrought in Christ and he raised him from the dead, set him at his own right hand, far above all principality and power.

It's not just a waxing miracle about how great God is again. But rather, having emphasized this is your inheritance to the Ephesians, rather now he is emphasizing this is the means by which they, the Ephesians, could rest in the certainty of salvation because it's not down to your power.

It's not down to your goodness. It's not down to your own particular godliness or goodness or devotion or whatever.

It's down to Christ. And you put your trust in Christ who is the glory of God or not is the case maybe. If you don't, you can't be saved.

[20 : 44] If you do, you will be saved. You can rest in the certainty of salvation by the power of God. Now we said this morning, remember, looking at Zechariah chapter 3 and said with reference to Peter says, if judgment first began at the house of God, then where shall the ungodly and the unrighteous appear?

If the righteous scarcely be saved, then what about everybody else? We said how it takes all that Christ gives in order to save his people.

It takes everything he has. So if it takes all that God himself has got, and remember, think of the scale of the universe. Think of how tiny the earth is in terms of our own solar system, and then think in terms of how tiny our own sun is in relation to some of these huge mega stars, massive ones.

I think I've used the illustration before in the past about how if you were to think in terms of our own earth as a single grain of salt, then our own sun would be like a green pea, out of a packet, a pea, sitting beside that grain of salt.

And a star like Arcturus, for example, which is named in the Bible, would be like a basketball beside the green pea. That's the difference in size. And it's not even the biggest one.

[22 : 08] Canis Major, which is the biggest star we've identified so far, is even bigger than Arcturus. God made all these things. God created all these systems and constellations and stars.

We are tiny in comparison to it all. God's power is infinite beyond our description. This is the God who has exercised all his power in his son, Jesus Christ, to redeem the lost who will believe in him.

So if it takes all that God has to give and created the vastness of the universe and the heavens and the earth through the person of his son, Jesus, how in the world do we think that I'm that reasonably good person, you know, I'm not too bad, I don't harm anyone, so you know, that should be good enough.

It took all that God had. How do you think what we have, a tiny fraction and proportion of our little lives is going to satisfy the perfect justice of God?

But you can rest in the power of who God is and what he has done. Far above, verse 21, all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.

[23 : 32] He had put all things under his feet and gave him to be the head over all things to the church. So the apostle desires in this chapter to reiterate how good and wonderful is the deliverance Christians have together, our joint inheritance in these verses, we said 1 to 12.

He wants us to understand that it applies to them too, to ordinary sinners, which they are, to people from pagan backgrounds, which they came from, and we all come from different backgrounds.

Some of us were brought up in and with the church and the knowledge of some of the things of God, and some of us might come from totally heathen backgrounds. We might come from different parts of the country, just like the Ephesians.

Some of them were Jewish. Some of them had been steeped in the Old Testament scriptures. Some of them were only five minutes out of paganism. And Ephesus, remember, was also the place where they brought all their books of magic and occult and dark arts, and they burned them in a big bonfire.

That's the kind of occult activity that was going on. People were redeemed out of that to follow Christ. So their backgrounds are all very diverse. But they are all common sinners.

[24 : 48] They are all entering into this inheritance which believers, apostles, that all believers enjoy. And he intends to convince the believers that they too are part of this inheritance.

It applies to them too, because of what Christ has done, because of what he has done, and because they have laid hold upon him by faith.

Now, if we're to look at some of the particular elements in this chapter, we see, first of all, that all the blessings come from God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We see verse three here. who have blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. No good can be expected from a righteous and holy God, the sinful creatures, except through his Son, Jesus Christ.

The blessings that proceed from God come not from him as a creator. Some things do come from God as a creator. He gives common good gifts to all of us.

[25 : 55] He maketh the Son to rise on the evil and the good. He sendeth the rain on the just and on the unjust. He has blessings that he distributes to everybody regardless of who they are.

But the spiritual blessings come not from God as a creator. They come from him as a father. In other words, by special relation.

You might think, oh, surely, you know, God's the father of everybody, isn't he? That's not what the Bible teaches. Because remember what Jesus said to those Pharisees who were opposing him, he said, if God were your father, you would believe in me.

But because you don't, you show that you're not children of God. You are of your father, the devil, who was a liar from the first and a murderer from the first. And that was why they wanted to kill him.

In other words, if God is your father, like he is my father, Jesus said, then you would believe in me. God is father in that sense to those who are enabled to believe in Christ as their savior.

[26 : 59] When Jesus taught the Lord's prayer, he didn't teach it to all the crowds and the Romans and the Greeks and all the Jews, he taught it to his disciples. Our father, which art in heaven.

And God is our father, only to the extent that Christ is our savior. And that might be a scary thought. Oh, but God is the father of everybody.

The Bible doesn't actually say that. God is the father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is our father if we are trusting in him.

And if we believe and trust in him, we are part of his body. And because we're part of his body, he's our father too. Head over all things to the church, which is his body, verse 23, the fullness of him that filleth all and all.

We'll come back to that moment. Now the blessings that proceed from God then as a father, that's something we have to take into consideration. When we think in terms of, you know, this election and predestination and we think, well, these are complicated things.

[28 : 06] What does that mean? We need to remember that when the Bible speaks about those who are God's elect, that's in terms of the rest of humanity from whom they are chosen out.

God chooses his people out from the rest of humanity just as he chose Israel, the descendants of Abraham, out from all the other nations of the world.

He chooses his own children out from all the mass of humanity. Predestination really talks about the blessings that they are designed for.

You know, to become the children of God, adoption of children, verse five, by Jesus Christ to himself, according to good pleasure of his will. That's what we're heading for.

Where you're heading for, the blessings you're heading for are your destination. If I get on the ferry in Target, I'm heading for Uri, that is my destination.

[29 : 02] That's what I'm heading for. And when God talks about predestination, it means that he has already determined where his children are heading for. They are heading to be with him.

He has chosen them out of the mass of humanity in order to bring them to himself. That is their predestination, that they're predestined to come to him.

And it sounds all kind of scary. Everything to do with God should make us just a little bit afraid. To have that solemnity in terms of the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom.

It's not a bad thing to have that. It's not a bad thing for us to recognize that, no, actually, it's not down to me. No, it's not getting to what I think or do. It's down to God. We are completely at his mercy.

That should make you bow before the Lord. That should make you humble before the Lord. That is part of the fruit of God's Spirit, that love for the Lord. It will also bring joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

[30 : 06] It will bring all these things with it. But the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Now, the commentator Matthew Henry puts it this way. He says that language is a wee bit old-fashioned, so we'll translate it out there.

The alms which you give, in other words, if you give charity to somebody, the alms which you give to beggars at your doors proceed from a sudden resolve. In other words, if a poor man kept your door locked in the door and asked for some food or bread or something like that, and you decide to give him some, or you pass a homeless person on the street and you put some money in their bowl or in their hat or whatever, then this moves from a sudden resolve.

You say, oh, you see the need and you respond to it. Say, oh, here's this hungry man, give him a loaf of bread or give him something to help him. And it's a sudden resolve, a spot, on the spot decision, an immediate impulse.

And that's the provision, that's the alms, the good gifts that you give to those who are in need, who you're suddenly confronted with. It's a sudden resolve. Matthew says, it's an on-your-spot decision, but the provision which a parent makes for his children is the result of many thoughts and is put into his last will and testament with a great deal of solemnity.

You see the contrast. If you give help to a beggar in the street, that's a sudden impulse. That's a sudden result. You see the need, you decide, you give your help, and that's it, and you move on.

[31 : 35] But somebody who is seeking to provide after their death for their children, what house they will leave to them, what resources they might leave to them if they have them, of their estate, or whatever, that's not, oh, what will I do today?

Oh, I think I'll leave the house to sow itself. I'll leave so much of my bank balance to my cousin, I'll leave this to my daughter, or whatever, you know. It's not just the thought, the spur of a moment thought. You think about it, dear believer, when you pray over it, it's the result of many thoughts, and it's put into his last will and testament with a great deal of solemnity.

When God decides the predestination of his children, when he lays up for them in store the inheritance that he has prepared for them, it is not a sudden resolve.

It is not a spur of the moment impulse. It is not in a reaction to some good thing they do that day. It is from all eternity. It has been prepared with much thought, many thoughts, and it's put into his will and testament.

Now, where a testament is, Hebrew tells us, chapter 9, verse 16, there must also necessarily be the death of the testator. That is why we have the old testament of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

[32 : 54] It's all about him, and it's all about the inheritance he has laid up for those who put their trust in him. But just as with any will that you make, any testament that you make, as things change and as time moves on, you may update that testament, and you may add a codicil or add a new piece to it that doesn't negate or nullify what has gone before, but rather completes it.

Thus we have the new testament of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, which is not to sweep away the old, but is rather to complete it. And again, as with the old, it has reference to the death of the testator, God himself in the person of his son, because that inheritance into which they enter is only theirs by virtue of the death of the person who leaves it to them.

If you've got a rich uncle or distant relative who's going to leave you a fortune or a house or whatever and say on his death, then that's great, but it's not yours yet. If you're a prince-in-waiting and your father or your mother is king or queen, you may be the next in line to the throne, but you're not king or queen until they die.

And all the inheritance into which the Lord has laid up for his children, it doesn't become ours until and unless the testator has died. Where the testament is, there must in necessity be the death of the testator.

Now, where that is the case, if Christ is just a man, then we are lost. But if he is God as well, then that sacrifice, that inheritance, is a divine inheritance.

[34 : 38] Now, how can he be both God, both man? Well, I don't think this can be put better other than the old Scots confession of 1560. He puts it like this.

He says, but because the Godhead alone could not suffer death. God can't die in that sense. And neither could manhood overcome death.

He joined both together in one person, that the weakness of one should suffer and be subject to death, which we have deserved, and the infinite invincible power of the other, that is, of the Godhead, should triumph.

God became man so that he could die. But in becoming man, he also was God, the Son, so that that death would be sufficient for all who would trust and believe in him.

What he has prepared for those who love him, he has prepared so that they will be with him. These closing verses, put it thus, he has put all things under his feet, gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.

[35 : 57] Now, if we can say it reverently, and without casting any aspersions in our Lord, we say it reverently, there is a sense in which Christ is incomplete without the church.

Say that again, there is a sense in which Christ is incomplete without the church, his bride, who is the fullness of him that filleth all in all.

He already fills the heavens and the earth, we talked a minute ago, about the vastness of the universe, all the stars and the planets that he had made, but the God who has made all these things, is yet, in a sense, incomplete without his bride, without the church, without his children for whom he has died.

In a sense, you know, a king needs a kingdom. A bridegroom needs, must have a bride, and some of, of course, the strongest and greatest and most powerful men in the world and in history have been reduced to weakness when their heart is lost to one whom they love as they love no other.

Whatever their powers, whatever their strength, now, of course, we have to speak reverently of Christ. We can't say, oh, he's become weak and his heart is lost, but there is a sense in which he is incomplete until his bride is gathered in completely.

[37 : 32] there is a passage in Colossians which was very likely written at the same time as Ephesians.

There are great similarities in some of the chapters and some of the text is almost word for word in some of the passages. But there's a reference, if I can just find it, which refers to the fact of making up that which is lacking in the sufferings of Christ.

And we think it's verse 24 of chapter 1, who now rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church.

You know, Christ didn't suffer enough on the cross. You know, what's behind in the afflictions of Christ? What is still lacking? And it's not that there is anything lacking in Christ. There's nothing lacking in Christ.

but rather in his body, the church, there is that which has yet to be suffered by his children, by his people, the persecuted, suffering church throughout the world, the saints here on earth.

[38 : 42] Whilst we are separated from Christ, we are not at home. This world is not our home. We have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Anyone who is in Christ knows some of the sorrows of being in this world.

And the heartbreak that we know, the constrictions of the flesh and of the body that we know, we have a yearning to be away and be with them. We are in a sense constrained on every side here.

There is suffering yet to be undergone by his bride, by the church. There is that which has yet to be completed.

And without her, if we may say it in all reverence, Christ remains incomplete, even in glory, as yet until he is joined by the fullness of his bride.

They are yet to come in. There are souls yet to be born, yet to be brought into the world who will be Christians, who will be part of his body in that sense. And we say it with all restraint and reverence.

[39 : 49] He remains as yet incomplete until they are brought in, until they are made part of him, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.

And if he does not yet enjoy the fullness, then it means there is that which is yet to be completed. Think of that, friends. Think of that when you consider, well, he can't possibly want anything to do with me.

If you are trusting in Christ, then not only is that something in which he delights, it is something which helps to make him complete. It's when sinners like us are brought to Christ and brought within the body of his church, his own body, his bride, we are made one with him and he delights in the completing piece by piece of the body of his beloved, the church, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.

This is not only God-centered and Christ-centered like the universe is meant to be. This is not just a shared inheritance with the apostles and those who have gone before. It is your inheritance, he writes to the Ephesians.

It is your inheritance, we might say to sinners now, without a shadow of contradiction, that this is that which is laid up for all who will come and receive it.

[41 : 17] If they will have Christ to their Savior, let go of the false ideas and well, I'm good enough, I'm okay, you know, there's nothing too bad about me. You are hopeless without Christ.

If he is incomplete without his people, how much more are we partial, incomplete, half done, lacking the fullness of our humanity, without him.

Until we are united to Christ, we are incomplete. We are only half alive. We are not yet the fullness of all that we could be.

That is yet to be claimed. That is yet to be inherited. But this is your inheritance if you will step up to receive it.

It is not down to what you do. It is down to what Christ has done and he offers us this gift. Receive and accept and believe and be part of it.

[42 : 24] Whether we be in Ephesus, whether we be in Scalding, whether it is the first century, whether it is the 21st century, this is an eternal God who remains alive and reigning and the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Yes, yes, yes. Thank you.