

CM 11th October Talk: Ephesians 1: 1:11 – 20.

A full measure, topped up and overflowing.

Andy Intro: Ephesians 1: 11 – 14 – Chosen, sealed and redeemed.

Talk start

[slide with talk title and John 10:10]

“I came that they may have life and have it to the full ([until it overflows])” John 10:10.

This talk is about the fullness of life, love, truth and grace we have been given by God through his Son Jesus Christ – so get ready for a feast!

We will also perhaps wrestle with our human condition, despite the overriding reality written in these versus, before returning to some practical perspectives.

It’s also a great joy for me to speak on the letter of Paul to the Ephesians.

I first came across this idea of an ecumenical charismatic Christian community in the Summer of 1982 when I was 19 and studying in London. I went away intrigued and troubled.

How did this fit with my plan to be a leader in the Evangelical Anglican Church? I went back to my home town after finishing term and happened to decide to study the book of Ephesians, using a commentary by John Stott. After finishing the study I was convinced God was calling me to be part of Antioch, and have been since! That’s how powerful this letter is – so watch out!

Firstly, a bit of stage setting.

Ephesus was the most important city in Asia (actually the original term used for modern day Turkey – it just got stretched a bit!).

[Map and pictures]

Paul visited came to Ephesus in about AD 49 and stayed for about three years and used Ephesus as a base for evangelism to the surrounding area (Acts 19:10) and challenged the whole economic model of the city as a centre of worship of the Greek god Artemis/Diana (Acts 19:23-41).

Paul wrote this letter, meant as letter to the whole church, about AD 60 while he was in prison in Rome.

Let’s get into the passage itself.

[Slide]

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Ephesians 1: 15 – 23

Paul writes to the Ephesians and us as their successors, to encourage them by proclaiming all that God has done for us and given us through His Son Jesus Christ. We are simply called to believe it and shape our lives around this overriding reality.

I say overriding reality because the acts of God are more permanent than anything we can see in the world that surrounds us and anything going on in our lives at present or in the future.

The gift of God through his Son to us – that we are chosen, sealed and redeemed as Andy emphasized at the beginning – is the TRUTH. Everything else fits around it – or should.

[Bullet slide]

We need help – from the Holy Spirit

We need wisdom and revelation – in order to see and think correctly- v17

We need our hearts changed – v18

We need to understand the supreme power of the resurrection – more powerful than anything else in the universe – v 19 – 20 – which he has given to us (!!!)

We need to understand that Jesus Christ is now the supreme ruler over all matter in the universe and he, the supreme ruler – is our friend.

We are Christ body on earth, to be his witness to this reality and truth.

[Gulp - Pause]

So why did Paul need to write this as a reminder for the last 2,000 years?
Well – because we forget – or struggle with our human condition.

I've asked Mary Bull to share a bit of how our human condition can sometimes obscure this reality, but how it wins in the end.

[Sharing]

Thank you – very brave and very real – and deeply encouraging.

There's one more point I'd like to make about how we can live this reality, despite our human condition.

I think God wants us to live the present (now) in this truth and also be assured of our place with him after this life. The bit in the middle (the future) needs to be treated differently.

We are made in the image of God to live with him for eternity.
This is what Jesus Christ has enabled for us.

We live in this world a short while. We live in God's presence for eternity.

What does this mean in practice.

Well firstly Jesus tells us not to worry about the future (the bit in between)

[Matthew 6:25 – 33]

We are to believe that God has given us what we need for the present “daily bread”.

We are to believe we have a secure place with Him.

Another way of speaking about it is to live for the now and not yet.
To live in the faith and knowledge of all that we have been given in Christ that we have been reminded of today for TODAY knowing our end point (DESTINY) is secure.

Well from a young age I've always wanted to a comfortable bank balance and a secure financial future.

Many of you will have heard how I had to exercise trust in this reality we are speaking about when I was made redundant by my previously employer in 2010 – with whom I'd planned to work my whole life.
God gave me a job with equal pay within days after I decided to trust in Him for our needs.

Well, I face the same challenge now.
The company I joined 5 years ago is being bought by another (Shell).
This will happen early next year.
I'm 53. Normally that means I would be made redundant again.
That might be what God wants.
I'm certainly a lot more peaceful about this than in 2010.

Perhaps I'm learning to live the present and for heaven, rather than the future.
Keep reminding me through 2016!

So in summary,

We live in this world a short while. We live in God's presence for eternity.

We need help – from the Holy Spirit – so ask – daily for his help!

We need our hearts changed to live this reality – so ask daily for this happen!

We need to understand the supreme power of the resurrection – and that same power is in us. We need to understand that Jesus Christ is now the supreme ruler over all in the universe – so keep reading and studying the Bible.

We are Christ's body on earth, to be his witness to this reality and truth – so thank God we are in Antioch, as well as in our local churches and be Christ to our families, friends and streets.

Amen.