Ephesians

Before we open in prayer, one announcement, and that is on Thursday, well, actually two, the one is that you have your next exam over Acts through Galatians, which we’ll finish up Galatians today. But there is an exam on Acts through Galatians on Monday during this class period. But the second thing is, you should’ve gotten the e-mail that there is a review session led by my TA tomorrow night at eight o'clock in this room. So I try as much as I can to get this room so you don't have to go hunting around for a different one. So come to this room tomorrow night, eight o'clock, and there is an optional, though extra credit will be given for that review session for the exam. And, once again, several of you have asked me this, and I’ll reiterate it that you will receive extra credit for the number of times you’ve come. So if you only show up to one review session, you'll get extra credit for that. Obviously, if you show up to all four, that will help your grade even more; you’ll get more extra credit. So tomorrow, eight o'clock, in this room. Any questions?

Student: When are you going to post the first exam?

The first exams will be out by Friday, for sure. You’ll get to see them. They’re all graded, but as I said, there’s a couple grading issues I'm working out, but those should be up Friday, so you can see how you did before, before for exam number two.

Alright. Let's open with prayer, and then we’ll finish looking at Galatians and maybe a move into the next letter that we’ll consider. Father, again we thank you for so graciously revealing yourself to us in the form of the New Testament. Lord, I pray that we will take advantage of the opportunity to analyze that and think about that and study that revelation, with the desire that our lives would be conformed and molded to your will that has been revealed to us in your word. So to that end, we apply all our mental and spiritual energy to comprehending your revelation to us. And I pray that this class will in just a small
way contribute to that end. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

We've been looking at the book of Galatians, which I suggested was Paul's attempt not to sit down and simply talk about a theology of the law or a theology of justification and salvation, although Paul does that, but it's theology in the service of Paul's particular purpose. And that is, Paul is addressing a situation where Jewish Christians, often labeled Judaizers, have infiltrated the churches in Galatia, that is, the southern province of Galatia, churches that Paul himself has planted. Now Jewish Christians have infiltrated the church and are trying to convince Gentile Christians that faith in Jesus Christ is not enough. They're not saying that faith in Jesus Christ is not necessary; they're not denying that Jesus is the Messiah or that he existed. They're just saying faith in Jesus isn't enough, but one also must observe the law of Moses as an identity marker, as a sign that you are the true people of God and that you truly belong to God.

We said that for most of the Jewish Christians that Paul is combating, they would've understood that all the promises of salvation go back to Abraham. Remember Genesis 12 from the Old Testament, that God promised that he would bless Abraham and that ultimately all the nations of the earth would be blessed through Abraham. So all the promises of salvation, justification, the Holy Spirit, belonging to the people of God, all of that goes back to Abraham. Now for the Jewish Christians, they would've drawn a straight line from the promises to Abraham, to obeying and keeping the Mosaic law, to fulfillment and faith in Jesus Christ. So they would've said that the law of Moses is an important and it's not an optional step. It is a necessary step in the fulfillment of the promises of Abraham and the salvation that was promised through Abraham. So they would've gotten rid of these brackets, and they would have a straight line from promises to Abraham to Mosaic law and then to faith in Christ. So the Mosaic law was an important and necessary component and they were then trying to get the Gentile Christians to understand that if they were to truly be God's people and if they were truly justified, then they would submit to the law of Moses and live life as Judaizers, as the Jews were.

But what Paul does in Galatians, especially chapters 3 and 4, is Paul demonstrates -
and that’s why I’ve put Mosaic law in parentheses - he tries to argue that the Mosaic law played an important but only a temporary role, a role where the law only functioned until Jesus Christ came. So now that Christ is come and brought fulfillment, the Mosaic law is no longer necessary. So Paul kind of takes the scheme of the Judaizers that would've had the law playing an important, necessary and essential role, and he brackets that to say, “Yes, the law played an important role but it was only a temporary one until Christ came.” When Christ arrived, the primary function of the Old Testament law to guard and to guide and, in a sense, to have authority and power over God's people is now over.

Now, again, we’re going to raise the question: Does that mean that we don’t have to listen to the Mosaic law or pay any attention to it today, or that it has nothing to do with us and we can safely ignore it? I want to raise that question briefly. What should we do with the law of Moses?

But let me talk briefly about chapter 5, the very end of Paul's argument in chapter 5, and this is the well-known section where Paul contrasts -- if we know anything about Galatians, usually this is the text that we’re most familiar with - and that is Paul's contrast between the flesh and the spirit. And so Paul says the works of the flesh are these and he lists vices that he wants his readers to avoid. And then he says, “However, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace.” Perhaps of you have memorized that list of fruits of the Spirit. And the question is, what is it doing here? Why does Paul elaborate on this contrast between the works of the flesh and the Fruit of the Spirit? For two reasons, I think.

Number one is, in a sense, Paul is addressing the question if, as Paul says, the law was only temporary and it no longer plays a crucial role in the lives of God's people now that Christ is come, then does that mean that Christians are free from all law? Does that mean that they have no moral guidance and that they can do as they please? And Paul makes it clear, “No, the Christian is still bound by love and the Christian now is responsible to walk in the new covenant spirit that has been poured out.” In other words, Paul's reference to the fruit of the spirit goes back to the Old Testament, where, do you remember, the new covenant in Jeremiah chapter 31? God promised that he would one day write his
law on the hearts of the people, and Ezekiel promised that God would pour his spirit out
upon the people in order to transform them. So what Paul's basically saying is, the fact that
Mosaic law is no longer that the dominant authority and ruler over God's people does not
mean that they’re without moral guidance. Now they have the new covenant Holy Spirit
that transforms them and enables them to do what the law commanded and expected of
God's people to do in the first place. So Paul's very clear, God’s people are not without
moral guidance. Instead, they now have the new covenant spirit that God promised he
would pour out and write his law on their hearts and transform them and enable them to
live the kind of life that the law was pointing to in the first place. So quite to the contrary:
God's people are not free from moral guidance.

The second thing to understand about this passage is, I'm convinced that Paul is
still contrasting the law and the spirit. He’s still talking about the Old Testament law.
Basically what he's saying is this: If the Galatians want to live life under the law, they can
do so, but Paul’s saying that the law does not ultimately have the power to overcome the
sins of the flesh. These kinds of things he lists here, that the works of the flesh are these.
What Paul saying is, ultimately, the law does not have the power to ultimately deal with
that and overcome the works of the flesh, but the spirit does. That's why Paul says,
“Therefore, if one walks in the spirit, you have overcome the flesh.” You will no longer
walk according to the flesh. Why? Because now through this new covenant spirit that God
has promised and poured out that promises that God will write his law on their hearts and
that will transform them so that they can keep God’s requirements is through the new
covenant spirit. Now they are able to overcome the deeds of the flesh.

So once again you can see Paul's argument. Why would the Galatians want to go
back to the Mosaic law? Why would they want to give into the Judaizers and live life under
the law when it doesn't have the power? Not only was it only temporary, but it doesn't
ultimately have the power to overcome the sins of the flesh. Only the new covenant spirit
that comes through faith in Christ ultimately enables them to live the kind of life the law
was pointing to in the first place and to overcome sin.
So what does this, when we start to think about the question: “Well, what does this mean as far as our relationship to the law? What should be our response to the Mosaic law?” And by law, I don't mean any law. Paul is speaking specifically of the law of Moses that we read about in the Old Testament. What should be our relationship to that? Notice what he says in 5:18. Paul says, “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are no longer under the law,” or you are not subject to the law. So if we’re no longer subject to the law or under the law, and this is basically what Paul is saying, the law played a temporary role in ruling over and containing God's people. If we’re no longer under the law and instead we’re to walk by the Spirit, in light of the fulfillment that is come in Christ, then what does that suggest about the relationship of the law to Christians, to God's people today? Do we have any obligation to it, or can we safely ignore it, ‘cause Paul says we’re no longer under the law and instead we’re guided by the spirit, we’re to walk in the Spirit. So does that mean that I can safely ignore the bulk of the Old Testament because it addresses issues of the Mosaic law?

I think a couple things. First of all, again, I think Paul is clear that, as he says, we are no longer under the law. That means we are no longer under the law’s rulership and regime as part of the Mosaic covenant. When Paul’s referring to the law, I think he's understanding it in light of the entire covenant that God made with Moses. Now that the covenant that God made with Moses has been fulfilled and is no longer in force, I take it that the Mosaic law is as well. So I think Paul is saying that Christians are no longer bound to the Mosaic law. They are no longer under its regime and rulership; however, there's two other things we need to keep in mind, I think.

Number one is, Paul is equally convinced that the law has not just been removed and set aside and done away with. Rather, the law has been brought to fulfillment in Christ Jesus. What Paul seems to be saying in Galatians 5, this fruit of the spirit passage, is if one lives life under the spirit, if one follows the fruits of the spirit – love, joy, peace, and the other things, you are actually living the kind of life that the law was pointing to in the first place. So the law is not simply done away with and thrown out or removed. It's brought to
fulfillment so that the kind of life the law was pointing to is ultimately fulfilled now in Jesus Christ and in living life in the new covenant Holy Spirit. So the first question I would suggest to you when it comes to thinking about the law of Moses and whether it applies to us, is you should ask how has the law been fulfilled in Jesus Christ? If you go back to Matthew, remember Matthew chapter 5, the Sermon on the Mount? Very early on in the sermon in Matthew 5, Jesus said, “I’ve not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it.” I suggested what he meant was that Jesus’ own life and teaching was what the law was pointing to. So I'm suggesting, then, and I think what Paul is saying in Galatians 5, one of the implications is, we should look at the law through the lenses of how it has been brought to fulfillment in Christ.

For example, the easiest example - and this isn't always easy to discern, because the New Testament does not go through every law and show how it has been fulfilled in Christ - but one of the easier examples is, what about all the laws of sacrifice? What about all the animal sacrifices that were offered up in the Old Testament? That’s one of the easiest examples. Instead of saying, “Well, that no longer applies; that's been thrown out.” Instead we have to ask how, do we keep that law or how do we observe that? How do we relate to the Old Testament sacrificial laws where they sacrificed animals in light of the coming of Christ? Well, in that Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice, we fulfill the law of sacrifices now by trusting in Jesus Christ for our salvation, not by offering up animal sacrifices any longer. So that's one easy example of how reading the law through the lens of fulfillment in Christ helps us to understand what our responsibility is towards the law.

So I'm suggesting, as was through the entire law, the first thing we should ask is: how has the law been brought to fulfillment in Christ? How do we read through the lenses of the fulfillment that Jesus Christ has brought?

The second thing I suggest to you is that when it comes to reading the law is to ask yourself when we look at the law is first, let me back up. I'm assuming that the law, even though Paul says we’re no longer under the law, the Mosaic law is no longer the regime that we now live under, but Paul says you're no longer under the law. You're no longer
under its authority, its regime. Yet the Law still is an expression, even though it was a specific expression for Israel and at a specific point in time until fulfillment came in Christ, it's still an expression of God's will for his people. So the second thing, in addition to asking how the law has been fulfilled in Christ, the next question we should ask is: In any given law, what seems to be the intention of this law? What seems to be the true intention? What was the law driving at? And then asking how that might we apply to God's people today, as an expression of God's character and an expression of God's will.

Let me give you an example of a couple of them. This is found in Leviticus chapter 19. This is Leviticus chapter 19 in verses 27 and 28. This is out of the Old Testament law. “You shall not round off the hair of your Temple or mar the edges of your beard. You shall not make any gashes in your flesh for the dead or have any tattoo marks upon you. I am the Lord.” Alright, so no trimming your hair and no tattoos. Most of us probably wouldn't gash our flesh intentionally, but how do we read that? I mean if you go get a haircut, have you disobeyed the Mosaic law? If you have a tattoo, have you disobeyed the Mosaic Law? I mean, that's what it says: don't tattoo yourself, don't trim the edges of your hair or the edges of your beard. Have you violated the Mosaic law?

That's one way to handle it. But what if we ask, in light of fulfillment in Christ and in light of what was the true intention, what seemed to be the intention of this law? At least many commentaries think that these laws were aimed at pagan religious practices; that is, the tattooing and cutting or trimming of one's beard or hair. These were aimed at the specific pagan religious practices. So the intention of this law is not just plain out right no tattoos and no trimming hair, it's avoiding practices that are associated with pagan religions. And so, then, what one would want to ask oneself today, is what kinds of practices and activities would be associated with pagan religious types of activities that I want to avoid. Very seldom today does anyone tattoo for religious practices, most of us don't. There may be other reasons why you might or might not tattoo, but certainly the command in Leviticus would not be one of them, because it's, aimed at probably pagan religious practices that God wants the Israelites to avoid.
So when we understand that intention, then we ask ourselves, in our context, what kinds of activities or even manners of dress might reflect that. When we start thinking about applying these texts, then I understand that the intention is to get God's people to avoid those kinds of activities that are associated with pagan religious type practices. Then one would want to ask what kinds of things or activities would be those things that would associate me with pagan religious activity, whatever that might be.

So do you see the difference by asking the question of intention? What seems to be the intention of this law rather than just reading them just straight across the board and not asking why? Why do they seem to have it? Why did God seem to give them in the first place? What does that reflect about his intention for his people and his will for his people, and then what might that look like today?

Another example is one of the laws in the – I might have to ask Ted to help me with this, I can't member where it is – the law that the commands Israelites to build a parapet, or a fence, around the roof, I think, is that in Deuteronomy 22:8? So Deuteronomy commands the Israelites to build a parapet, or a fence, around the roof of their house. Now, if you came to my house and you looked at the roof - you would be stupid to try to get up on it, it’s so pitched – but have I violated the Mosaic law because I don't have a parapet or fence around my roof? I bet that most of your houses don't either. So are you in violation of the Mosaic law because you don't have a parapet or a fence built around the roof your house? It's important again to remember what seems to be the intention of this law? Well, at least during that time, the roof of the house was used for different functions and there were people up on the roof. They were, I would guess, they were more flat during that time. So the intention was, in telling the Israelites to build a fence around the roof, the intention seemed to be to protect the welfare and well-being of their neighbors, to make sure that they were showing concern for their life, in demonstrating the value of the life of their neighbors, so that, someone wouldn’t fall off the roof and get killed or suffer bodily injury. So that seems to be the true intention.

So then I ask today in what ways can I embody that intention? Well, it’s probably
not going to be by building roof around my house or that fence around the roof of my house, I’m sorry, because no one goes up there and no one could go up there, unless they're putting new shingles on. So then I have to ask, in what ways do I need to demonstrate a care and concern for the well-being and the safety of my neighbor? Again, it’s probably not going to be building a fence around my house, but I can start thinking of other ways where I can embody that intention and that principle. So do you see by looking at the laws from the standpoint of what seemed to be the true intention? How are they a reflection of God's intention for his people and his will for his people? Then one can start understanding ways in which the law of Moses does apply.

So then I suggest on the one hand, while we are no longer under the law of Moses, we’re not bound to it as a list of legislation, we’re not under its regime and authority, at the same time, number one, we do need to read it in light of how it’s been fulfilled in Christ, understand how we relate to it, and we need to read it as an expression of God's will and intention for his people and to ask what seems to be the intention behind the laws and how can I live that out under the power of the new covenant spirit that Paul talks about? By walking in the Spirit, how can I continue to live out God's will and intention for his people today?

If you're interested, I've given you a couple resources at the bottom of your notes. There's a very interesting book, I think I mentioned this before, but the Zondervan Publishing Company has a series, they've been cranking out a series of books on different views on different issues, and what they do is, they take different issues - like the millennium or women in ministry, or whether Christians should go to war, or what kind of government should exist in the church, or how the church is to be governed, not with the government, but how the church should be run what should be our relationship to government etc. etc. It basically presents different views and has different persons presenting their views and then responds to each other. One of those books is called *The Law and the Christian,* and there’s five different approaches to what should be the Christian’s relationship to the law, and they respond to each other. So if you're interested in
pursuing more about that, that might be a starting point.

Alright. That’s all I want to say about Galatians, but that the main thing you should understand is Paul’s whole intention in writing is to try to dissuade the Galatians from submitting to the Mosaic law and giving in to the Judaizers, but at the same time persuading them and convincing them that they have everything they need in Christ and in the new covenant Spirit that they possess, not only to be justified and for their salvation, but also for their ongoing lifestyle. So in neither case do they need to return to the Mosaic law as the Judaizers were demanding of them.

Good. Any other questions on Galatians? You’ll notice next in your syllabus is one of the excurses. I want to talk a little bit about one of the themes that emerges from Galatians but is also important in the rest of the New Testament, and that is the theme of the people of God. In order to understand this theme, we need to go all the way back to the Old Testament and in fact all the way back to Genesis 1 and 2, where, in my opinion, the creation of Adam and Eve was not just the creation of the first human beings, but they were the first people of God with whom God entered into a covenant relationship. So again Adam and Eve were not just the first human beings, although they're the first people of God, the first created people that God will enter into a relationship with.

Now after the fall of Adam and Eve, after their sin in Genesis 3, in one sense, the rest of the Old Testament narrative and into the New Testament as well - but we’ll wait on that for a moment - the rest of the Old Testament narrative can be seen as God's intention to re-establish and re-create his people. God is looking for a people that he can enter into a covenant relationship with, and it starts with God's command to Abraham. So you can see why it was so important that Paul talked about Abraham in Galatians because with Abraham, God will now begin to restore his covenant relationship with his people that started back in the Garden of Eden but was disrupted because of sin. So in Genesis chapter 12, God chooses Abraham and tells him that he will not only bless him, but he will make his name great and make him a great nation, and from that nation, eventually all the nations of the earth would be blessed. So Abraham and the covenant God made with Abraham is
the first stage in God establishing a humanity as he had back in the Garden of Eden, with whom he will enter into a covenant relationship. He will be their God, and they will be his people.

Now, ultimately, as with all of the rest of the Old Testament, ultimately that emerges in the nation of Israel with whom God establishes a covenant relationship. And so you can see again why the Judaizers that Paul confronted in Galatians were so keen to get the Gentiles to identify with Judaism, to submit to the law of Moses, because according the Old Testament, they were the true sons of Abraham, they were the true people of God. However, a shift begins to take place when you get to the New Testament. What you find taking place is if you follow this pattern, Adam and Eve are the first humanity that God enters into a covenant relationship, but because of sin, God will now act to restore his people and re-create his people. So he chooses Abraham and promises to make him a great nation, and that is the nation of Israel. However, as we saw in the prophetic literature – remember, actually, there's an interesting parallel going on. Adam and Eve are tempted, and they give into temptation and they sin, and if you remember, they are exiled from the Garden of Eden. Now what happens with Israel is, God chooses the nation of Israel, brings them to the land yet, and tests them. They also failed the test and they are exiled as well. And so if you remember your Old Testament history, Israel goes into exile to Babylon and Assyria who cart the nation of Israel and Judah off into exile. So the prophets anticipate a time when once again God will restore his people. God still must restore his people into a covenant relationship that he intended all the way back in Genesis 1 and 2.

Now, how that gets fulfilled in the New Testament is, first of all, Jesus is portrayed as the true Israel. Jesus is the one who ultimately fulfills God's intention for his people Israel. If you remember Jesus’ temptation, we talked a little bit about his temptation back in Matthew three and four, when Jesus was tempted by Satan. He takes him up to a high mountain and shows him all the kingdoms. He takes them to the Temple and tells him to jump off. He tells him to turn stones into bread. Not in that order, but do you remember that? What's going on is Jesus is repeating both the temptation of Israel and the
temptation of Adam and Eve. They failed, but Jesus passes the test. He is the true Israel that brings the intention of God for humanity to its intended purpose. So Jesus then becomes the true Israel and then, by virtue of faith in Christ, by virtue of belonging to Christ, we then become the true people of God as well.

So that's why I have this line starting with Adam and Eve and then, after sin, Abraham and Israel are meant to bring God's intention, that is, his intention to create a people that he will enter into a relationship with. But Israel fails because of sin, but then Jesus comes and he brings to fulfillment of God's true intention for his people, and then all of those who have faith in Christ then also become the true people of God. So that is why you remember we talked about before I before I made a comment on the criteria for membership in God's people this helps explain something very interesting going on in Galatians in that chapter 3. Remember that the main question is: who are the true people? Who are the true at and children of Abraham? Who get to participate in the blessings that God promised Abraham the blessings of salvation and the promise of the Holy Spirit? Who are the true children of Abraham who participate in the promises to Abraham? Then notice what Paul says in Galatians starting with chapter 3, if I can find it, he says, “No, the promises were made to Abraham in Genesis chapter 12 and to his offspring.” Paul says, it does not say into offsprings plural as to many but it says and to your offspring, that is the one person who is Christ. So again when he is saying that the true even Abraham that should true people of Abraham the true children of Abraham is the person of Jesus Christ.

However if you skip to the end of chapter 3 in verse 29. Notice what Paul says and if you belong to Christ, you readers, the Galatians, if you belong to Christ then you are Abraham's offspring heirs according to the promise.” So how can Jesus be Abraham's offspring in the Galatian? I would include us as well while it's because Jesus first of all brings the promise of Abraham to fulfillment and then we participate in that by virtue of faith in Christ and belong to Christ. Therefore Paul can say Jesus is the true seed of Abraham if we are in Christ we are the seed of Abraham as that is the criteria for membership. Got it? In the people of God remember up until this time and especially Paul's
opponents in this book the Judaizers would've answer the class and the true criteria to belong to the people of God is living life under the Mosaic law. It was physically being the children of Abraham.

However, Paul says with the coming of Jesus Christ the criteria has changed. Now membership in the people of God is not restricted physically to Israel, to the children of Abraham, but now all membership in the people of God revolves solely around the person of Jesus Christ. That's why Paul can say Gentiles as well as Jews are equally God's people. Why? Because now it's not national identity it's no longer living under the law but faith in Jesus Christ is the sole criteria. Paul can say if you're in Christ who is the seed of Abraham, you too are the true seed of Abraham. You too are the true children of God.

I think I mentioned this before that we used to sing this song. It’s quirky and silly but it's probably one the most theologically accurate ones that, “father Abraham had many sons, many sons of father Abraham.” That couldn't be truer. Again whatever you think of the song it communicates a profound theological truth found in Galatians that in Christ we participate in the promises made to Abraham. Paul's ardent in Galatians that the Gentiles do not need to submit to the wall or live life as a Jew because membership in the people of God is no longer restricted to national identity. Now because of the fulfillment in Christ because of this scheme Jesus has brought the true people of God to its destiny and goal. Now membership in the people of God is determined solely by faith in Jesus Christ.

Therefore Gentiles and Jews equally make up the true people of God but what Paul sees happening, then I think what the New Testament sees, is not that the church replaces Israel gets rid of it, but Israel is expanded now to include the Gentiles which is then redefined on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ. So that’s why of you will see a number of other New Testament books taking the Old Testament text that referred Israel and now applying them to the church because now that the church is the new Israel the new people of God that consists of Jew and Gentile. Now all of focus is centered on Jesus Christ, the true Israelite. Alright any questions on the people of God? While I don't want to go into a lot of detail in this I think it has a very profound effect and how we think about our
relationship to the nation of Israel today and what goes on in the Middle East and things like that is what we read in Galatians. I think it should profoundly affect the way we think about that.

Alright, let's open another piece of the early church's mail and in a sense this is a cut-off point. From what I’m going to say from now on will not be on the exam Monday. What I'm going to say from now on will you be in exam number three that will come later. So the discussion of Galatians and people of God that we just talked about is the limit. So Acts through Galatians including this excursus on the people of God is fair game for the exam.

But let’s open another piece of the early church's mail and let's look at a book that we call the epistle to the Ephesians. The first thing to recognize is that along with Philippians, Colossians and Philemon, Ephesians belongs to a collection of Paul's letters often termed the Prison Epistles. So along with Philippians, Colossians and Philemon; Ephesians belongs to this fourfold group of writings often referred to as the Prison Epistles. The reason is fairly obvious because Paul clearly indicates in these four letters that he is in prison as he is writing these letters. Now the difficulty of determining where he's in prison, the most common view today is that Paul is in Rome. Paul is imprisoned in Rome and it's from his imprisonment in Rome that he writes these letters. However there are other suggestions. Some have suggested that some of the letters will may have been written when Paul was in prison the city of Ephesus. Some have suggested Caesarea. So there's other options. I'm not interested right now in the arguing the case. I don't think it makes a lot of difference as far as how we actually read the letters. It may affect how we construct a timeline of Paul's life but other than that nothing really crucial hangs on where Paul is imprisoned as far as how we interpret some of these letters Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. But it's enough for you right now to know that the Paul was imprisoned as he wrote these letters and that the most common theory is that he was imprisoned in Rome. The time the book of the Ephesians is it just a little bit later on.

I wish to argue and try to demonstrate that the name of this book “Ephesians” is
probably a misnomer that it probably should not be named the letter to the Ephesians. I’ll tell you why little bit later but I'll still call it the letter to the Ephesians because that is the way it’s referred to in our Bibles and to do anything else would just invite too much confusion.

Let's start with what seems to be the over-arching theme of this letter and we’ll also talk a little bit about the purpose why Paul seems to be writing this. But we just looked at Galatians and saw that Paul was combating a type of false teaching from Judaizers who had infiltrated the church and were trying to get Gentile Christians to submit to the law of Moses.

Is there some similar issue or problem or crisis in in in this book that caused Paul to write it? We’ll ask that you first of all it seems to be the over-arching theme. I would suggest to you that the primary theme of Ephesians is the over-arching theme is the complete reconciliation of all things in Christ. That dominant theme really weaves its way through all of Ephesians. I have changed my mind since the last time I taught this class but the dominant theme is the reconciliation of all things in Christ.

In fact chapter 1 and verse 9 of Ephesians could in a sense be seen as a summary of what much of the rest of Ephesians is about. In chapter 1 and verse 10 I’ll back up and read verse 9 is “God has made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of times to gather or sum up all things [or reconcile] all things in Christ, the things in heaven and things in earth.” I would suggest you that the rest of Ephesians is about how that is taking place and how it will take place in the book of Ephesians. The main theme is the reconciliation of all things in heaven and earth, all things in Christ Jesus.

Now the letter of Ephesians actually although I’m going to argue that Paul was not explicitly addressing the church of Ephesus. Although in the book of Acts you do read much about or it tells a lot about the time Paul spent in Ephesus. These are simply pictures of modern-day pictures of ancient Ephesus, the amphitheater I believe that's part of the Temple to Domitian, that’s part of the Temple of Artemis.
Ephesians has a rather straightforward plan or outline the way it’s developed. The first three chapters of Ephesians could be seen as the “indicative.” Remember a couple weeks ago in our introduction to Paul we talked about it's kind of Paul's version of “the already but not yet” in relationship to Jesus’ teaching the kingdom. Scholars call it with reference to Paul the “indicative/imperative”. The indicative is what has already taken place by virtue of the fulfillment in Christ by virtue of belonging to Christ. The imperative expresses what has not yet come about. The fact that the kingdom has not arrived in its perfection and its fullness means that the indicative/imperative or the commands are still necessary and Ephesians breaks down rather naturally and there are other structural and grammatical indicators that this is the case. But Ephesians breaks down naturally into two fairly even sections the first three chapters being the indicative where Paul discusses that currently already that that is who we are in Christ who we are by virtue of being incorporated into Christ and then chapters 4 through 6 shift to more the imperative that is the commands that indicate how God's people are to live and respond in light of chapters 1 to 3. Chapters 1 to 3 provide the basis for 4-6 and four through six grow naturally out of chapters 1 to 3. Chapter 4-6 are a kind of lifestyle that is made possible by but should naturally reflect the reality of the indicative in chapters 1 to 3. So if we’re raised with Christ, we’re seated with Christ, if anyone is in Christ a person has died to their sins in Christ that is the indicative and the imperative in Paul's injunctions as to how that should work out and how one should live life in light of that. So Ephesians there's other ways can be divided up but Ephesians rather naturally can be divided in these two sections. In fact there's one two-volume commentary on Ephesians and the two volumes are almost of identical size and one of them is on chapters 1 to 3, and one is on 4 through 6. So that there's always been a sense that Ephesians could easily be divided in this way.

Now why was Ephesians written? We asked this question with most of all Paul's letters. Why did he write Galatians? Why did he have to sit down to write First and Second Corinthians? Why did he write Romans? We have been able to come up the rather plausible suggestions. It’s not as easy with Ephesians and New Testament students have
had a lot harder time determining a specific reason for why Paul wrote Ephesians.

So let's start just generally by asking if we read Ephesians on its own can we summarize generally what Paul appears to be doing? We’ll ask if we can be more specific. Is there a major problem? Is there a major teaching some deviant or false teaching that Paul's responding to? Is there some crisis in the church that Paul’s reacting to.

Generally, I think Paul's purpose is basically summarized in the transition between these two sections the indicative and the imperative in chapter 4. In verse 1, Paul says, “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you were called.” The calling refers back to chapters 1 through 3 the command to live their life refers now to chapters 4 through 6. So I would say generally the main purpose Paul's writing this letter is to encourage the Christians to live a life worthy of the gospel, who they are in Jesus Christ. So again based on the indicative based on who they are in Christ they’re calling now they are to live the life consistently and worthy of that calling. So generally Paul writes to encourage Christians to live a life worthy of the gospel, worthy of who they are in Christ.

Now I can we be more specific than that the problem is what if it again as I said before if all of us to time to read Galatians even before I said anything about it, I'm convinced that most of us would be able to come up with a rather plausible description of why Paul had to write the letter. I think you would have a lot more difficult time with Ephesians. The question is: is there some problem or crisis that Paul seems to be addressing? Is there some issue or is there some false teaching that may be along the lines of the Galatians? Were there Judaizers or something else that had infiltrated the church that had caused him to write this letter?

There has been a number of suggestions but I want to focus on one of them there is there's been one suggestion as to the specific purpose and what the key is. Notice all the power language that occurs in Ephesians references to strength and might and power. I have given you a list of some of the most prominent verses. I will not read all of them, but chapter 1 verse 19 listen to this referring to what God has done for his people. He says, “but
what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us to believe according to the working of the might of his strength or his mighty power.” Notice the piling up of terms of strength and power. Chapter 1 verse 21 the couple verses later, “I broke every rule and authority and power and dominion.” Again notice the piling up of language in the semantic domain of power and strength. Chapter 3 in verse 7 just to give you one more example of this theme by Paul had become a servant according to the gift of God's grace “that was given to me by the working of his power.” So for the size of the book of Ephesians there's a disproportionate amount of this language of strength and power. The question is could that be a clue as to what Paul was addressing that is some issue or problem that he was going after.

There is one person you'll notice the next section your notes the proposal of Clinton Arnold. You may not know who Clinton Arnold is, you may not care but he's one of the most well-known advocates of the position that Paul was addressing a very specific problem. Clinton Arnold is a professor of New Testament at Talbot Theological Seminary in California. Clinton Arnold suggested that all this power language is a reflection that Paul is addressing the situation of magic. Remember we talked, not of magic by pulling rabbits out of hats or making things disappear not that type of magic. We talked about magic back early in the semester as a first century religious philosophical belief magic being that through incantations one could invoke the god to work or one could ward off the powers of evil. So basically what Arnold does is through examining a number of early sources and documents from around the first century Arnold proposes that the Ephesians Christians were infatuated with magic and infatuated with this idea that the spiritual demonic beings control their destiny and control the world. Magic was an answer provided to that. One could do it to provoke or ward off the powers of evil through incantations or the correct prayers and sayings and things like that. So that's why Arnold says why there is all this power language. Paul wants to show you don't have to fear the spiritual powers, these inimical beings, instead Jesus Christ has already defeated them and Jesus is the true power. So when Paul talks about “we will do that God raised Christ by the
power of his might,” when he talks about the fact that we now can participate in that when God raised Jesus from the dead through his mighty power. Power language is a way of Paul combating this problem of magic and this fear of the spiritual world and demonic beings.

I am not sure if he thinks that the main purpose but certainly he sees that as one of the main purposes. So he would say, “Yes, Paul is combating the false teaching, that is this notion of magic in the spiritual evil beings and the fear of those. He’s trying to get the Ephesians to see they have nothing to fear. Jesus Christ has already conquered them by the power that raised Jesus from the dead. God worked in him far greater and he has subjected all these other powers so they have nothing to fear.

That's Clinton Arnold proposal and it's a very common one, a number of people have followed him and have read Ephesians as Paul's response to magic and the problem of demonic evil beings.

On Friday we'll talk more about Ephesians, I'm then going take issue with that and I'm going to suggest to you a very different solution for what I think is going on in Ephesians.

Remember, tomorrow night at 8 o'clock in this room extra credit a review session for the exam which will take place Monday.

Rough edited by Ted Hildebrandt