

The Message of Ephesians

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[0 : 0 0] All right, so we are in this series, Birth of the Church, very important series because especially coming back to church 2020, we need to, after lockdown, just realize again, get into touch again with what the church is and why it's here and why it's established and how it came to be.

And that's what we're doing in this series. We've looked through Acts, select passages, and now we're working through the four letters Paul wrote from prison. So Dylan did Galatians for us last week.

We're doing Ephesians today, and so we're going to try to cover the whole book of Ephesians. In 1892, a boy named John Ronald was born in Bloemfontein, the son of a local bank manager.

At the age of three, he moved to England, and he led a fairly mundane life. He actually, his biggest accolade by the time he was 19 was joining a tea club.

Not many Plumstead teenagers, I'm sure, would be seen joining tea clubs, but that was his thing. He did fight in World War I, but he was sent back home with trench fever, and he spent the rest of the war in a hospital, in an infirmary.

[1 : 1 5] After that, infirmary, rather. After that, he got a job at the Oxford English Dictionary. Not very exciting, but it's there that he developed his love for languages, and still led a fairly unremarkable life, visiting his tea club, working for the dictionary.

But he started writing, and his books became quite popular. He actually wrote a hit book, a children's bestseller, but it's in 1954 that he became internationally famous, when he wrote what would become the best British novel ever written, and one of the best-selling books in history.

Yes, John Ronald is better known as J.R.R. Tolkien, the author of the Lord of the Rings fantasy trilogy, which has sold over 150 million copies, and has become one of the most successful movie trilogies of all time as well.

Now, you might not be a fantasy fan. You might go, oh, here's another Lord of the Rings illustration. You might not be into wizards and orcs and all that. But the question is, if it's such a successful book, the best British novel ever written, according to the press, you've got to ask, anybody should be interested, what makes it so good?

What makes that story so good? In fact, it's the only fantasy I've ever read. I'm not into fantasy. Jean's a big fantasy now, but I'm not. But this story was, it's compelling.

[2 : 4 3] And if you haven't read it, I do recommend it. Because at the heart of it is not about, is not the battles and the wizards and all of that. At the heart of the story of the Lord of the Rings is a tale of small people caught up in a big, epic story.

And that is something that I think has made that story so appealing. And it's something that connects to people. Because we, I think we all wish that were true of our own lives. And stories that do that.

There's a lot of stories. And some of the best movies and stories are similar along those lines. Someone insignificant. Someone small. But they're caught up in something much bigger. And I think that's something we all desperately yearn for in our own lives, don't we?

We all yearn to be caught up in something bigger than our own mundane lives. Well, this book of Ephesians is in your Bible to convince you that if you are a Christian, you are caught up in something much bigger than you ever realized.

That's why it was written. In fact, the first three chapters is essentially the Apostle Paul just trying to convince Christians of the amazing cosmic story they've been caught up in.

[4 : 00] If you look in your Bibles, just at some of the things he says when he prays for them. Chapter 1, verse 17, he says, I pray that God would give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation.

Verse 18, I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened. He says similar things like this. If you go to 3, verse 18, that you may be able to comprehend. So his burden in these opening chapters is that you get something that you haven't got before.

That's what he's writing to these Ephesians. He's told them the gospel. He's told them a lot of stuff. But it's in this letter he wants them to just see the epic nature of the cosmic story that they're caught up in for the first time for many of them and maybe for the first time for many of you today.

And as you hopefully go home and read this book fully. Now, to understand the arrangement of Ephesians, it's pretty easy. There's six chapters. There's the first half and the second half.

The first half is the first three chapters. And that is all about what you've been caught up in if you are a believer in Christ. If you're in Christ, what it is that you are now part of. That's the first three chapters.

[5 : 09] The second three chapters is how you should now live because of it. That's a very simple outline for that book. And that's how we're going to do this sermon. We're going to look at it in those parts. What you've been caught up in if you're a Christian and how you should therefore live because of it.

So the first one, what Christians are caught up in. Now, to fully understand the nature of what you're caught up in, we need to go back to Genesis.

Now, we did study Genesis at this church. If you didn't listen to those sermons, they are available on our website. But you'll remember when we studied that, Genesis 1-2, well, actually, Genesis 3-6, 3-11, tells us why the world is currently in the state it's in.

But 1-2, the first two chapters, they tell us the original creation and how God created the world. And it's very interesting because he created the world by bringing order out of chaos.

Remember that? He worked with the chaotic raw materials. And he brought order to it by putting boundaries in place. By putting boundaries between the sky and the land and the land and the sea and the animals and humans and different species.

[6 : 20] And he gave Adam, the first human, the responsibility of categorizing and naming and bringing order to creation and subduing creation. And in society as well, God instituted marriage as a way to bring order into families and roles where humans were to be over creation and authority structures.

And all of that was in the original first two chapters of the Bible to show us how God created. And the big thing that we've got to take from that is that God created bringing order and authority into this cosmos that before that had no order and authority.

But then that didn't last long because we get to Genesis 3 and sin and brokenness entered the world. It's why the world is like it is today. But essential to what happened there is that God's order was violated.

That's why we're in the situation we're in. That's why you can see it in Genesis 3. God's boundaries that he placed there were transgressed. The order was pushed against.

So instead of, you'll remember this if you're with us for Genesis, instead of man under God leading his wife to rule creation, what have you got in Genesis 3? You've got creation, a creature, the serpent, leading the woman to lead the man to defy God.

[7 : 37] You've got a complete reversal of God's intended order. And that's what starts the snowball effect of us going into this cursed, sinful state that we find ourselves in today.

And then what you read in the next few chapters, especially chapter 6, if you get to Genesis 6, you start to see that even the order and the boundaries God has created between the spiritual world and the physical world are broken down.

Spiritual beings coming and breaking those boundaries and intermixing with men and making chaos on earth. To the point that you get in Genesis 6, you just see this picture of God's created order in tatters due to human and spiritual rebellion against it.

And this disorder is actually at the heart of what it means to be cursed and fallen. Because really, all the suffering that we undergo in this life is just a version of disorder.

When we have diseases, when our bodies stop working, when we're growing old, it's actually ourselves and the very creation in us going into disorder.

[8 : 48] Curse and disorder are connected. And the curse came because God's boundaries were broken and disorder came into the world. Now, I need to take you through this to understand this big cosmic plan that Paul talks about in Ephesians.

But we still mustn't leave Genesis yet because that wasn't the end of the story. Genesis 12 came and there we see for the first time the start of God's plan to reverse this disorder that has entered his world and to bring blessing and order back into his world.

And he does that through a particular man, a particular family, Abraham. And he creates a covenant with Abraham. As you know, a covenant is essentially a vehicle that God uses to carry people from a state of curse back to a state of blessing.

They can't do it themselves. God needs to provide the way and the mechanism for people that they can enter into for him to take them from curse to blessing. But that's not all God provides.

He doesn't only provide this vehicle of a way to get us out of the state we're in. But we read on in the Old Testament and we read the prophets. And we discover another thing that God is planning to provide.

[9 : 58] And that is a Messiah. A Messiah is a king who is going to come and establish God's rule and order back into this disordered and unruly world.

That's his job, essentially. And that you see developed throughout the Old Testament. And the prophets, they talk about this coming Messiah, this king who is going to come and rule and bring God's rule to earth again.

Because the only thing that can undo disorder and rebellion is order and rule. If curse, if at the heart of curse and the heart of the situation we're in now and the sin that we suffer each and every day and the effects of it in our world and the natural disorder of this world and all the results of the curse, if the heart of that is disorder, then the only thing that is going to break that is God's rule to be established again.

And he has chosen to do that through his Messiah. The only thing that can undo the rebellion and disorder is rule and order by someone, though, who has the righteousness and power to rule creation as God intends.

You read 1 Kings, 2 Kings, and you see that the human rulers over his covenant people never succeeded because they didn't have the righteousness and the power they needed to rule as God intended.

[11 : 21] But the Messiah will. And to rule not just people and countries, but to rule spiritual forces in the heavenly realm and to rule the very fabric of creation itself, right down to the cellular level.

That's the kind of rule the Messiah is going to bring. A human ruler who can tell coronavirus to go away and it'll listen to him. Imagine. Well, you don't have to imagine.

Because he was here. And he told diseases to go away and they listened to him. Jesus Christ, when he was on earth, his miracles showed us that he was the Messiah the Old Testament spoke about.

When he healed diseases, when he calmed a storm, he showed his authority over the fabric of creation. When he told demons to leave people and they obeyed because he was ruler over the spiritual realm as well.

In all of those miracles, Jesus didn't do them just randomly as magic tricks to impress us. He did them to show us he is the Messiah that God has always planned to send who is going to restore order to creation.

[12 : 26] And that's always been God's plan from day one. For rule to return to this world under the Messiah. That's the plan. That's the cosmic plan.

And it's what Paul means by these words. Have a look. Ephesians 1, 9 to 10. And I think these are probably my favorite verses in the whole book. He made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure.

Now, the mystery of his will, what does that mean? It means that it's something that he hadn't made known before. It's something that was hidden. But it's something that he is now in this time as Paul writes and through the apostles, he has revealed this is his plan for the world.

This is his cosmic plan. What is it? According to his good pleasure that he purposed in Christ as a plan for the right time. This is it. To bring everything together in Christ.

Both things in heaven and things on earth in him. That's the plan. To bring everything together in Christ.

[13 : 28] What does that mean? Well, the original word actually means, I guess the best translation is to bring to a main point. To bring to a head. All of creation. All of the things that God has done.

All of the history of creation have always intended to be brought to a main point in his son Jesus Christ. The point of the universe is Jesus Christ, the son of God.

Not us. You know, we tend to read the Bible very assented. But it only starts to make sense if we forget about ourselves and we realize that God's plan is for him to give the cosmos to his son.

To have creation under the rule of his son Jesus. That was always the plan. Look at Psalm 2. Just keep your finger in Ephesians. Flip back to Psalm 2. Because we see that in the very second Psalm.

One of the key Psalms to the whole book of Psalms. You know, all these Psalms that we read and we get comfort from and we draw from when we're going through the trials of life.

[14 : 37] They only ever make sense if we understand what we learn in Psalm 1 and 2. Which is all about the Messiah. And God's way of bringing us from a place of sin to blessing.

It compares and contrasts those two ways of life. And then Psalm 2 is all about his son. Look at what he says. Psalm 2 verse 7 and 8.

I will declare the Lord's decree. He said to me. This is essentially the words of the Messiah. You are my son. Today I have become your father. Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance and the ends of the earth your possession.

So the whole story of the Bible and God's cosmic plan is actually just something between him and his son Jesus Christ. And we happen to have the privilege of seeing it and getting caught up in it.

But the main thing is about them and what they're doing. For the father to give the cosmos over to his son. It's like a father who has built a family business from scratch for the purpose of giving it to his son as an inheritance.

[15 : 48] That's essentially what's going on here. Except it's no small family business. It's the entire cosmos that God has built from nothing in order to give it to his son to rule and take over for his glory.

For the glory of God, Father, Son and Spirit. To give his son the cosmos to rule. That is God's restoration plan for this world.

But there's more. Okay. We read on. And we discover. Now this is the amazing thing. And it's what Paul outlines in chapter 1. That God chooses to bring pathetic little humans into this amazing cosmic restoration plan.

This is how the Bible puts it. To give his son a bride. A washed and purified holy people who he has taken out of the muck of this world.

And set apart to rule creation under Christ in perfect relationship with God to his glory forever. And it's pictured in the Bible more often than not as a marriage relationship.

[17 : 00] In fact, later on in Ephesians, Paul touches on the subject of marriage. And it's quite an important part of his letter. I'll touch on later why he does that.

But it's interesting that he says marriage that we experience is only ever meant to point us to the ultimate relationship of Christ and his people.

Look just page over to chapter 5 verse 32. He says, This reason a man will leave his father and mother, be joined to his wife.

That's God establishing the pattern of marriage in creation. The two will become one flesh. Then Paul says, This mystery is profound. But I'm talking about Christ and the church. What he means by that is that marriage is good.

It's a great blessing that God has given us to be the basis of families and societies. But it actually, marriage on earth is temporary and it's pointing to a much greater relationship that Christ will have with people in the new creation.

[17 : 57] And so, essentially, you could think about it like this. The inheritance of the nations that the father promised Christ in Psalm 2 wasn't just a gift, but it's a wedding gift.

It's a wedding gift from the father to the son and his bride. The inheritance of the nations, the cosmos. To rule. And to bless. And to enjoy forever.

And so, so far we see this amazing cosmic restoration plan that the whole story of the Bible has covered. We see God's plan to restore the cosmos and bring order and rule back in through the Messiah.

Where everything will be included in him. And nothing outside of Christ will be included. Because only under him can there be the rule that will bring blessing and break the curse.

And God then also brings people into that to enjoy that with Christ. And this bringing in. This God planning to take people like you and me and bring us into this grand epic story that lasts for eternity is the story of the Bible.

[19 : 14] The story of the Bible is here to show you not just God's epic plan for this cosmos, but what he does to bring you and me into it and give us a chance to be part of it.

And it's something that Paul now outlines in Ephesians. This is what he's talking about in chapter 1, 2, and 3. And then he also mentions how each part of the Trinity of God works to accomplish bringing people in.

It's amazing. Have a look with me. Chapter 1. One of these great passages on election and predestination and how God chooses before he created any of this.

He's chosen who is going to be part of this cosmic restoration plan. 1 verse 4 to 5. For he chose us in him before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in love.

He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ for himself according to the good pleasure of his will. And of course he chose us because if he waited for us to decide, we would never because we wouldn't even know about it.

[20 : 23] Let alone have the ability to join his cosmic plan. So he chooses who's going to be part of this cosmic plan. But there's more. Not only does the Father choose before the creation of the world, but Jesus then does something amazing.

Jesus comes down in the incarnation that we're going to celebrate next month in Christmas. And he comes to this earth to die. To pay for the sins of his people.

To pay an atoning death that no one else could do. To wash his people clean so that they can be fit to be part of God's restoration plan for this world. Turn back. Sorry for all the skipping around, but we are doing a whole book.

So you do have to go from place to place. Look at chapter 5 verse 32. No, no, not verse 32. From verse 25.

Again, he's talking about marriage. But then he uses the marriage of Jesus and his people as a pattern. And look what he says about what Jesus did when he died on the cross. He's telling husbands. Verse 25.

[21 : 25] Love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her to make her holy. Cleansing her with the washing of water by the word. He did this to present the church to himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle.

Anything like that. But holy and blameless. That's talking about the people that God from the creation of the world has planned to be part of the bride of Christ. Who he through dying on the cross washes clean of their sins.

And that's what the cross does. If you don't know, you must. That Jesus dying on the cross was necessary to pay for the sins of others. He never sinned.

And his death, he talks about it being a ransom for many. And through that he breaks the power of the law over us. The law we learned in Galatians last week could only ever condemn us.

When God tells us what he wants us to do and how he wants us to live, the only thing it can do is to show us how bad we are at living the way God wants us to live. But look what Paul says in Ephesians happened.

[22 : 29] Go back to chapter 2. About what the death of Jesus actually achieved. 2.14. He says, So that's saying that because Jesus has paid for the sins of the people who are his and in him, the law can't condemn them anymore.

He tears down the barrier between the Jews and the Gentiles because there's no difference. If people are in Christ, they are forgiven and they are made into his people. And then the third member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, comes in and does his work to actually inwardly sanctify God's people.

So that's another thing that Paul mentions in these first three chapters. The Holy Spirit's role. Let's look at just some of the verses.

1.17. He says, I pray that he would give you the Spirit, referring to the Holy Spirit, of wisdom and revelation. That's what the Spirit is called.

The Spirit of wisdom and revelation. Why? Because we would not know any of this. We would not be able to see beyond the small little horizon of our lives. If God didn't give his Holy Spirit to not only inspire the word to be written, but to convince us that it's true in our own minds.

[24 : 07] And to therefore reveal this great cosmic plan. Without the Holy Spirit, we would have no understanding of it and no faith in it. So he gives us faith.

He gives us revelation. And then look at verse 22 of chapter 2. Chapter 2 verse 22. What does he do? In Christ, you are also being built together for God's dwelling in the Spirit.

He builds us into the people that we're meant to be. And he does that through the process of sanctification and through the community and everything like that. But that's what the Spirit's doing. So do you see how God's plan to bring people into his cosmic plan, his cosmic restoration of this creation, involves each of the members of the Trinity, each doing something, to enable you to be part of what God is doing in this cosmos.

Which essentially is, we've just read there, creating in himself one new man, one humanity, one new humanity. That's essential to what Paul is saying here in this letter.

God is making a new race of people. Who aren't black or white or colored or Indian, but we are Christ's. And we are diverse, but we are united in Christ.

[25 : 26] And new humanity. People from Jews and Gentiles. He has broken down the barrier between the two. And so Paul writes all these three chapters here to convince us what we're doing here, what we've been caught up in if we are Christians.

The Ephesians needed to know, the Ephesian Christians needed to know, this is what, now that they believed in Christ, Paul comes and says, okay, now I want to tell you what that means, what you've been caught up in.

And that's why he writes these chapters. Meditate on them. Take them home. Read them this week. Chew over them. If you're a Christian, if God has given you faith in Christ, all this applies to you and it tells you, probably gives you the biggest view of your existence in this world and what's going on.

So read them slowly and carefully. And pray that the Holy Spirit would open your eyes to just realize how big this is, what we're part of as Christians.

But not only that, not only that we're part of it, but that we therefore have been saved for a reason. That's what Paul says in 2 verse 10. Have a look. It's a very important verse.

[26 : 48] Chapter 2 verse 10. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.

You see, God didn't choose particular people to be part of his plan of salvation. And now, okay, let me pause there actually. You might be wondering whether you're one of those people.

The very fact that you're at church listening to this means that if you don't yet believe in Christ, God is doing something and he has drawn you here for a reason. Or he has drawn you to watch this on YouTube for a reason.

And so don't ignore it. Explore it and ask questions and read more. Pray that God would continue to reveal these things to you. But when God chooses people to reveal these things to you and by his Holy Spirit to give faith to you, he doesn't choose them for no reason, just to sit and watch what he's doing.

He chooses them to get involved in what he's doing. Very important. If he has chosen you before the beginning of time to believe, he's chosen you not just to sit in a pew and listen, but to do something.

[27 : 56] A sports person is not chosen for the first team so he can go sit in the stands and watch the team play. He's chosen to get involved on the field. And that's why the rest of Ephesians, from 4 to 6, is how we get involved in God's cosmic restoration plan.

So that's what we're going to look at now. And it's essentially summed up in that passage Gene read for us earlier, chapter 4, verse 20 to 24. Look at that in your Bibles.

But that is not how you came to know Christ, assuming that you heard about him and were taught by him as the truth is in Jesus. Two, okay, so this is what it means to get involved in God's new humanity that he's called us to be if we believe in Christ.

To take off your former way of life, the old self that is corrupted by deceitful desires, to be renewed in the spirit of your minds and to put on the new self, the one created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity.

Of the truth. And that's essentially to sum up what our role is. It's to put off the old humanity we were born into, and it's to put on the new humanity that Jesus atoned for us to enter into.

[29 : 11] And that God planned for us to enter into. But it's an action that we've got to do. It's a putting off and a putting on. It's like putting on a new set of clothes.

Or putting on a school uniform. If you go to school, boys and girls, you should have a school uniform. If you're at a school that does school uniforms, which I think they all should do.

But, you know, if you want to be seen as a pupil of that school, you've got to come with the right uniform. Or if you go to a new job, sometimes your job comes with a special outfit you have to wear to do that job.

It's the same for people in God's new creation. You see, it's in God's new humanity, He's given us a job outfit to wear. And that's what then Paul goes into from verse 25 onwards.

He lists specific examples of this new life that must be put on by members of God's new humanity who have been saved in Christ. He lists what new humans must do and how it contrasts to your old way of living.

[30 : 18] So he lists what you must put off and what you must put on in this section from 425 onwards. I'll just list a few of them. In verse 25, he says, Put on truth rather than lies.

Right? Therefore, putting away lying, speak the truth, each one to his neighbor. He's saying, old humanity lies. They cover the truth, whatever suits themselves. New humanity are marked by people who uphold truth.

New humans strive for peace rather than harboring anger. Verse 26. New humans learn to be truly generous rather than taking for themselves.

Verse 28. Let the thief no longer steal. Instead, so he mustn't just stop stealing. He mustn't just put off the old. He must put on the new. What is the new? He is to do honest work so that he has something to share.

It's a totally flipped around way of living. That's the outfit that new humans put on. Verse 29. No corrupting talk should come from your mouth, but only that is what is good for building up someone in need.

[31 : 25] Corrupting talk. A week or two ago, I went into the kitchen and I saw a piece of fruit in our fruit bowl and a little bit of rot had set in.

And I intended to take it out, but I forgot. And two days later, I looked and it had touched all the rest of the fruit. You know how that happens? Rot sets into one and then it spreads to the other. That's the kind of talk that Paul is talking about here.

Rotting talk. Talking about others behind their backs. Slander, he calls it later. Little bitterness, anger and wrath. Shouting and slander. It's drawing attention to the negative points of others behind their back.

And what it does is it creates a distrust and it creates a suspicion and it rots a church community. And I've seen it time and time again. It's why actually that psalm that Michiel opened the service with is so appropriate.

Psalm 15. Who can dwell in your tent? The one who does not slander with his tongue. Because that is not appropriate for God's new humanity. New humans.

[32 : 37] Back in chapter 4. Verse 31 to 32. Show kindness rather than seeking to hurt others. New humans forgive.

Verse 32. Rather than seeking revenge. New humans exercise. Look at this. Look at this. 5 verse 3. They exercise self-control rather than promiscuity.

Sexual immorality, impurity, greed should not even be named among you or heard among you. As is proper for the saints. God's new humanity. There are people who are able to control their bodies and their urges because they have God's Holy Spirit.

And they are called to something better. And 5 verse 18. New humans are called to be under the influence of God's Spirit rather than under the influence of alcohol.

And so that's the first thing that we must do. That's the first part of our role that we play to put on the outfit of God's new humanity that he's called us to be in his cosmic plan to restore this creation.

[33 : 40] But there's another thing we must do. And that's what he goes on towards the end of the book of Ephesians about. And that is to live in ways that display God's order in our lives and our communities, which was lost in the fall.

And that's why you get this in chapter 5. It almost seems like a divergence. And he goes on for quite a while. But it's actually right smack bang part of what he's trying to say the new humanity is called to do.

And that is to live in ordered relationships. Look from verse 5, 21 onwards. He says, submitting to each other in the fear of Christ.

Now that word submit, a very controversial word. But it's a very important one because then he goes into examples of what these submissions look like. But that word is a military term actually.

And it means arranging under. It means ordering oneself in authority structures. Which is the very nature of what was lost in the fall.

[34 : 43] The moment the authority structures broke down, sin entered this world. And so part of the restoration plan is to bring God's authority and structures and boundaries and order back into this world.

And his new humans, even before Christ returns, must show that in their own lives. To arrange under. Paul actually uses a lot of this military imagery in these chapters.

And it's quite curious. I was thinking, you know, why was he using so much military imagery? So there's this famous, in chapter 6, this famous armor of God. Where he says, you know, put on the sword, put on the shield, put on the belt, breastplate.

Partly it was, he was in prison and he could just look out the bars. And the only thing he could see every day was the Roman guard that was guarding him. So the illustration was right there. But also, he uses this military imagery of arranging under and arming ourselves.

Because right now, before our Lord returns to this world so that everything comes under his authority and he judges and does away with all the things that are in rebellion to him.

[35 : 48] Which will happen. Before he does that, this new humanity that we are called to be part of is under siege from enemies who hate it.

And Paul talks about that. Look what he says in chapter 5. When he's talking about this armor of God, he says, chapter 5, no, sorry, chapter 6, verse 10.

Finally, be strengthened in the Lord and his vast strength. Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness.

Against evil spiritual forces in the heavenly realms. It's serious stuff. God did an amazing thing in Jesus to bring you and I, through faith, into his new humanity.

But the moment he did that, the enemy took notice. You know, elsewhere in this letter, he says how in Christ, God has revealed this mystery kept hidden to the forces in the spiritual realms as well.

[36 : 58] They didn't know what God was doing. Even the good ones, but the evil ones as well. The enemies of God in the spiritual realm only realized God's cosmic plan when Jesus came and they did not like it at all.

It's like, you know, in those war movies, often you've got a covert force. And they're integrating in the population. They're wearing the clothes of the population. And then suddenly when their operation kicks off, they take those clothes off and they get their weapons and stuff.

And they're in the midst of the enemy behind enemy lines. And they've been revealed now and discovered this covert force. And the enemies go crazy and they raise the alarm. That's what the spiritual forces in the heavenly realms, the evil forces are doing now when they look at the church.

They are raising the alarm and they are wanting to attack God's new humanity. Because they hate it and they will use society and culture and films and whatever they can to oppose this new humanity.

And so, that's why Paul writes in the rest of the letter, and we're coming in for a landing soon. He writes how we fight it.

[38 : 06] How we fight these enemies who want to take down this new humanity. In chapter 521 to 6.9, just look in your Bibles, just photograph that section so you know when you're at home reading this how it's structured.

521 to 6.9 is how we order and arrange that army now while we await for Christ's return. Because an army cannot function without order. Just imagine for a second an army, but where everybody, irrespective of their rank, got to do what they wanted.

Do you think it would be a very effective army? No. If there's no authority, if there's no boundaries, if there's no structure, it's not going to work. Especially when it's under crisis and under attack.

So, 521 to 6.9 is how we order this army. And from 6.10 onwards is how we arm ourselves for the fight as we await the return of our Lord.

So, let's quickly, before we finish, look at those two things. And then, pretty much, you'll have the whole book of Ephesians. How do we order the army? How do we order this new humanity? Well, it begins in the home.

[39 : 15] Ordering the army begins in the home. And the home begins with the marriage. The foundation of a home and a family is a good marriage.

The foundation of a society are good homes. And so, essentially, the foundation of societies and countries is the marriage. And how well the marriage works.

And that is why, today, we look around and we see that as the first point of attack that the spiritual forces focus on. If they want to take down societies, where do they go? To sex and sexual immorality.

And they break down marriages. Because they know that is the foundation, not just of a functioning society, but of God's new humanity on earth here, while we await for Christ to come.

And so, that's where Paul starts as well. When he says how we must order our homes. Well, we must look at our marriages if we are married. And if we are not, we must help those who are married to be married in a way that reflects God's order and new creation values.

[40 : 18] And we see that in 5.22-33. Where the wife is told to submit and allow her husband to lead and become responsible. And the husband is told to use his responsibility to seek his wife's welfare above his own.

And then in 6.1-4, we're told how families, in family structures, there's an authority with the father as the head of the home and the children to honor and respect their parents.

And then the father is to use their position to train their children to be part of this new humanity. Fathers, if you're a Christian and you are the head of a Christian home, look what your responsibility is.

6.4, fathers, don't stir up anger in your child or your children. But bring them up in the training and the instruction of the Lord. Equip them to fight because they're going to have to before Jesus comes back.

And they are part of this new humanity too. So teach them what that's like. Teach them this cosmic restoration plan that God is doing in this world. Teach them where they fit into it.

[41 : 17] That will be the foundation they need for the rest of their lives. And then slaves and masters even. Back in the age where slavery and ownership of slaves was still part of society, even slaves are told to submit to certain order.

But the masters are also told to remember that Jesus is their ultimate boss. And the slaves are told to work in a way, even though their job is rubbish, to work in a way that shows that Jesus is in charge of them.

And so that's how this new humanity, while we await the return of Christ, needs to order ourselves in all the different spheres of life we find ourselves, in all the different relationships.

Not just to put off the old way of living and put on the outfit of God's new humanity, but then to look at each of the relationships we have. And make sure we're reflecting the order of Christ and restoring God's order back into this world in the ways that we can.

Even if it means joining Dylan later to take out weeds. That is a reflection, isn't it? Of restoring order to a cursed world. It's a small way, but it's a great way.

[42 : 31] And it's fun too. But then, so that's how we order ourselves, arrange ourselves under, but then we equip ourselves for the fight. Actually, we don't equip ourselves for the fight, I lie.

Jesus equips us for the fight with everything we need. The first way he does that is actually back in chapter 4. Because you're reading this and you're thinking, whoa, this is going to be really tough.

This is really difficult for me to be one of these people and to do all these things. Of course, it's not difficult, it's impossible. But Jesus gives us everything we need to stand up and to be this new humanity.

The first way he does that is in chapter 4 from verse 10. The one who descended, that's Jesus, came down to earth, is also the one who ascended far above the heavens to fill all things, which he's preparing to do.

And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors, and teachers, equipping the saints for works of ministry to build up the body of Christ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, growing into maturity.

[43 : 37] And so he goes. But do you see that the first way Jesus equips us? Is through our mind. It's engaging our mind with truth.

Because the enemy's first tactic against the new humanity is to fudge truth. Satan is called the father of lies for a reason. Because the first way he gets in and messes with us is to make the truth, both in the media and in the world around us and in our own lives, uncertain.

And so that's why Jesus gives us the Bible and people to teach it. So that we can know what is true. We can know what is right and wrong. We can know what this world's about. We don't have to wonder and be tossed around.

Verse 14. By the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with the cleverness and the techniques of deceit. Of course. You look around. You look on TV. You look on internet.

There's people standing in pulpits with a Bible in front of them. And they're just deceiving people. And they're forwarding all these crazy ideas that are going to lead people astray.

[44 : 47] So God gives his word and people who are equipped and recognized to teach it. So that we can know what is true. As we engage in God's word as we should.

Like those Bereans we saw a few weeks ago. Actually seeking scriptures to make sure that what we hear is true. That's what Jesus has equipped us with. But he also then equips us to fight.

And that's where we get to the end of the letter. Chapter 6. The second half of it. He equips us to fight against these spiritual forces. With all the weapons that he in his grace gives us. And he tells us to use them.

You know Paul doesn't just say. Jesus has given you this great armor. He says use it. Put it on. Look at 6 verse 11. Put on the full armor of God.

What does that imply? Why? That implies that it could be off you right now. If you haven't actually actively put it on. That's why we're told to put it on.

[45 : 42] What must we put on? Well the first one, unsurprisingly, is truth. We must put on truth. We must put on doctrine. What is right and what is wrong. We must engage our minds with the word. We must do Bible studies. We must come and sit under sermons.

We have to work on putting on truth in our minds. So that we're not led astray by crazy thinking. Then the next one is righteousness.

Right living. Seek holiness. Actually work with Christ and the Holy Spirit. To live more and more holy lives. Because of who he's called us to be.

Verse 15. The gospel of peace. Yes. Knowing the true gospel that brings peace between us and God. And between us and each other. Knowing that. Through and through.

And knowing what the true gospel is. As we've been seeing in the last few weeks. Essential. That we've got to put that on. And engage with that. Faith. 16. Faith in God's sovereignty in all situations.

[46 : 39] Good and bad. Is going to protect us. What does it say? Verse 16. It will extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And that's the way the evil one wants to cause God's people to doubt.

Is sending them all kinds of trials and problems. And making them doubt God's goodness and God's care for them. Faith. Verse 17.

The confidence of our salvation. Not thinking that we need to earn our place in God's covenant. But realizing Jesus has done it all for us. Verse 17. The word of God as our sword.

Which can be both a defensive and an offensive weapon. When we open it up and share it with others. And. Verse 18. Prayer. As our constant connection with our Lord.

As we do his work and await his return. And that's the book of Ephesians. And I hope. I hope you've seen it. Even a little bit. Of the treasures that are in this book.

[47 : 37] To help us to get a bigger view of this world. Because this life on earth. If we understand what's going on. Is more epic and more profound than any story we could read. Or movie we could watch. Because God is carrying out a cosmic restoration plan.

To bring all things in the cosmos. Under the rule of his dearly beloved son. And that is a plan of the mystery hidden for ages. But revealed in these last days. Through the apostles.

And God saw fit. To give you and me. A place. In that epic story. Through believing in his son. And so I pray.

For us now. St. Mark's Church. I pray before God our Father. With the words of Paul taken from throughout this letter. That the eyes of your hearts. Will be enlightened. To these incredible truths.

That you may truly know. What is the hope to which he has called you. The riches of his glorious inheritance. In a new humanity. And the immeasurable greatness of his power.

[48 : 37] Towards us who believe. So that you will not be tossed around. By every wind of human cunning. And deceitful schemes. But rather. Speaking the truth in love and grace to each other.

We will put off the deeds of darkness. And put on the armor of light. And grow up in every way. Into him. Who is the head of all creation.

Our Lord. Jesus Christ. The Son of God. Through him I pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[49 : 32] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.