

# DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

*Verses & Notes April 25, 2007*

## *Introduction to Ephesians*

1: Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,  
To the saints who are also faithful in Christ Jesus:

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- 11: In him,  
according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things  
according to the counsel of his will,
- 12: **WE** who first hoped in Christ  
have been destined and appointed  
to live for the praise of his glory.
- 13: In him **YOU** also,  
who have heard the word of truth,  
the gospel of your salvation,  
and have believed in him,  
were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,
- 14: which is the guarantee of our inheritance  
until we acquire possession of it,  
to the praise of his glory.
- 15: For this reason,  
because **I** have heard of **YOUR** faith in the Lord Jesus  
and **YOUR** love toward all the saints...

### **INTRODUCTION:**

- Today we begin our study of St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, and as we do we recognize that Paul's warning to the early Ephesian believers is equally true for us today. He had warned them that fierce wolves would come in among them, not sparing the flock, and from among their own selves would arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Whenever we study the bible, we can't escape the opinions of people that undercut the authority and trustworthiness of God's Word. Sometimes these critical views are sincere attempts to understand the seeming contradictions and questions from within the biblical text; but sometimes these criticisms arise from fierce wolves. This is part of what we will be discussing today on **Deep In Scripture.**

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- Welcome ... website / phone numbers / special:
- Today we begin our study of Ephesians:
  - A brief introduction to this great NT Epistle, that sadly in the last century has been buried in scholarly controversy;
  - 100's of commentaries...
    - Mostly Protestant; each using Ephesians to reaffirm their denominational assumptions;
    - Demonstrates the fallacy of sola Scriptura;
    - In a sense frees us up: nearly anything we say has been said!
  - "Most modern scholars": any commentary you read will use this phrase...
    - A blanket phrase that is immeasurably meaningless;

- Many teachers / preachers pass along what this supposed "majority" believe, even though they themselves may not agree with them, because they feel obligated to pass along the "majority opinion."
- But can "the majority" be wrong?! Of course! Mt 7:13-16  
*"Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few. Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits."*
  - The devil will do everything possible to undercut the Scriptures. His strategy:
    - 1st to destroy;
    - 2nd to pollute the market with counterfeits;
    - 3rd to cast doubt on its veracity.
  - Jesus gives a very important key: "by their fruit"
    - Far too often, the critical / skeptical opinions are accepted and passed along without any knowledge of the lives or beliefs of the critics!
    - A large majority of biblical critics do not accept the authority of the Church;
      - They do not begin with accepting the inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures;
      - and sadly far too many accept the progressive view of history, which presumes that modern man is more developed, more intelligent than those 1st century Christians.
- One other caution: always read "Notes" in your bible with caution, even suspicion!
  - The notes are not a part of the inspired canon, so can be opinionated!
    - Jerome & the deuteroconicals
    - The Reformation Bibles!
    - Scofield bible
    - Many modern bibles!

## BREAK

- Our approach:
  - We begin by accepting the authority of the Church established by Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit:
    - It was this Church which established the canon of Scripture...
    - It did this primarily because it recognized the Apostolic witness to their veracity;
    - Catechism:

**105** *God is the author of Sacred Scripture. "The divinely revealed realities, which are contained and presented in the text of Sacred Scripture, have been written down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit."<sup>69</sup>*

*"For Holy Mother Church, relying on the faith of the apostolic age, accepts as sacred and canonical the books of the Old and the New Testaments, whole and entire, with all their parts, on the grounds that, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author, and have been handed on as such to the Church herself."<sup>70</sup>*

**106** *God inspired the human authors of the sacred books. "To compose the sacred books, God chose certain men who, all the while he employed them in this task, made full use of their own faculties and powers so that, though he acted in them and by them, it was as true authors that they consigned to writing whatever he wanted written, and no more."<sup>71</sup>*

**107** *The inspired books teach the truth. "Since therefore all that the inspired authors or sacred writers affirm should be regarded as affirmed by the Holy Spirit, we must acknowledge that the books of Scripture firmly, faithfully, and without error teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the Sacred Scriptures."<sup>72</sup>*

**109** *In Sacred Scripture, God speaks to man in a human way. To interpret Scripture correctly, the reader must be attentive to what the human authors truly wanted to affirm, and to what God wanted*

to reveal to us by their words.<sup>75</sup>

**110** In order to discover the sacred authors' intention, the reader must take into account the conditions of their time and culture, the literary genres in use at that time, and the modes of feeling, speaking and narrating then current. "For the fact is that truth is differently presented and expressed in the various types of historical writing, in prophetic and poetical texts, and in other forms of literary expression."<sup>76</sup>

**111** But since Sacred Scripture is inspired, there is another and no less important principle of correct interpretation, without which Scripture would remain a dead letter. "Sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted in the light of the same Spirit by whom it was written."<sup>77</sup>  
The Second Vatican Council indicates three criteria for interpreting Scripture in accordance with the Spirit who inspired it.<sup>78</sup>

**112** 1. Be especially attentive "to the content and unity of the whole Scripture". Different as the books which compose it may be, Scripture is a unity by reason of the unity of God's plan, of which Christ Jesus is the center and heart, open since his Passover.<sup>79</sup>

The phrase "heart of Christ" can refer to Sacred Scripture, which makes known his heart, closed before the Passion, as the Scripture was obscure. But the Scripture has been opened since the Passion; since those who from then on have understood it, consider and discern in what way the prophecies must be interpreted.<sup>80</sup>

**113** 2. Read the Scripture within "the living Tradition of the whole Church". According to a saying of the Fathers, Sacred Scripture is written principally in the Church's heart rather than in documents and records, for the Church carries in her Tradition the living memorial of God's Word, and it is the Holy Spirit who gives her the spiritual interpretation of the Scripture ("... according to the spiritual meaning which the Spirit grants to the Church"<sup>81</sup>).

**114** 3. Be attentive to the analogy of faith.<sup>82</sup> By "analogy of faith" we mean the coherence of the truths of faith among themselves and within the whole plan of Revelation.

- We follow the advice of the Fathers: "Faith seeking understanding" not the other way around.
- Given this, let's look at the **"WHO, WHAT WHERE, WHEN, WHY, AND HOW'S"** of St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians.

## From the earliest years of the Church, Ephesians has been accepted & quoted as "Scripture"... (Jim's notes)

### WHO? WHERE? WHEN?

**1:1, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God..."**

**To the saints who are also faithful in Christ Jesus:**

- Unanimously accepted for 18 centuries;
  - One of 4 of St. Paul's Captivity Epistles
  - Written from Rome ~ AD 63
  - Delivered by Tychicus (6:21)
  - To the believers at Ephesus.
- Why questioned?
  - Impersonal: none of his usual personal greetings;
  - Voc / style different from his other letters;
  - Theology / doctrines more developed.
  - "To Ephesus" not in a few important early manuscripts.
- An Explanation: (many, many views)
  - Begin by accepting the universal witness of history;
  - St. Paul was in prison!!!!
  - Possibly Tychicus was his amanuensis (secretary);
  - Development of his own understanding... (i.e., my own development)
  - Addressed to specific people for a specific reason.

### WHAT? WHY?

- Majority of scholars today consider it a circular letter; possibly but not necessary:
  - All NT documents were preserved by their being read in Liturgy;
  - Possibly originally to Ephesians & then copyists dropped for their churches;
- But why written?
- Common practice in early Church:

- Testimonies of Justin Martyr & Hippolytus in 2nd century indicate the development of an initiation process especially for Gentiles who needed a more comprehensive formation in the Judeo-Christian tradition.
- Circular letters and catechetical instructions from bishops!
  - Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, Thirty-Ninth Festal Letter, Jan 7, 367; to be read throughout the Churches of Egypt;
- Possibly the transcript of a homily from St. Paul to be read to the new Gentile converts at Ephesus:
  - While in prison, as Easter approaches, St. Paul hears from his old friends about the "faith & love" of the new Gentile converts, but also their concerns over their place in the Church.
  - St. Paul dictates a homily addressed, not to his friends, but to the new Gentile converts, describing their equal membership in the Body of Christ: the mystery!
- Not original with us; proposed by other scholars:
  - "Apart from the address and greeting and the last four verses, Ephesians does not appear like a letter at all. It is more like a treatise or homily in the guise of a letter. Apart from the passages just mentioned, it is clearly composed of two parts, of almost identical length. The first part (ch. 1-3), which could be called the "doctrinal" section, is in fact made up entirely of prayers. The second part, the "moral" section, is a series of exhortations. Both of these sections contain elements which reflect the early church's baptismal liturgy. Ephesians appears, therefore, as a very carefully constructed amalgam of prayers and homiletic elements." Lionel Swain, (1980 commentary; Michael Glazier, Inc.
  - In the commentary we are recommending from Ignatius Study Bible: "Since many of Paul's readers are recent converts, Ephesians might best be described as Paul's mystagogical catechesis for the newly baptized."
- Best explains the theology & purpose of letter, and why he's not addressing personal friends:
  - 11: *In him,*  
*according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things*  
*according to the counsel of his will,*
  - 12: **WE** *who first hoped in Christ*  
*have been destined and appointed*  
*to live for the praise of his glory.*
  - 13: *In him YOU also,*  
*who have heard the word of truth,*  
*the gospel of your salvation,*  
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  - 14: *which is the guarantee of our inheritance*  
*until we acquire possession of it,*  
*to the praise of his glory.*
  - 15: *For this reason,*  
*because I have heard of YOUR faith in the Lord Jesus*  
*and YOUR love toward all the saints...*
  - **"We"** ... St. Paul as well as the elders / bishops in Ephesus and his companions;
  - **"You"** ... the new recently baptized Gentile believers.

## HOW?

- We will be studying this letter very slowly, examining the exegetical & doctrinal issues, but mostly from a pastoral perspective: How does what St. Paul taught help us grow closer to Christ.
- Read through the letter in one sitting, & often if possible;
  - Hear it as the first hearers would have;
  - Out loud if you can!
- Be cautious of the footnotes!
- Think of it as a homily of St. Paul to the newly baptized Gentile converts;
- Reflect on how what St. Paul said is true in your life: your baptism, your faith, your love, your Church, and your place in the Body of Christ.