Ephesians 1

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[0:00] If you will turn with me back to that passage that we read in Ephesians. And for the next reply we're going to try and look at some of the verses that we read.

And I suppose maybe the best way to start is to ask a very simple question.
Who wrote this book? Sounds a bit of a daft question. If you've got your Bibles open, it sounds even daft. Because in my Bible, it doesn't say it on the screen, it just says Ephesians chapter 1 verses 1 to 3.
But in my Bible, in the pulpit Bible, it says the letter of Paul to the Ephesians. On the very first few verses, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus.
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. So when I ask you, if I ask you, who wrote the book?
[1:17] You could almost expect, a wee bit like when I said to you, who speaks English? I would expect every hand to go up. Because the answer is there right in front of us. It's Paul.

Paul wrote the book to the Ephesians. But who is Paul? Who is this man, Paul, that wrote this book?
If you clued up in your Bible reading, you'll know that he wasn't always called Paul. He had a previous name called Saul. Saul. His previous name was known.
He was known as Saul of Tarshish. Tarshish was the city where he grew up in, where he was born, where he had lived. And there's nothing new in that. There's nothing new in someone being referred to the village or the community where he grew up.
I'm sure we can all think of people who have the nickname of their village. There's different people I can think of, whether they came from Bara or whether they came from Harris or wherever they might come from.
[2:29] They have that nickname. And so it was with Saul of Tarshish, this city, this community that he grew up with. And Tarshish was a city found in south-central Turkey.

And I don't know what image you have of this man. But when you actually look into the Bible, when you look into Acts, you realize that this man is maybe not what we think he is.
Because he wasn't the most physically impressive man. He wasn't the best speaker. Even there, we can turn back almost to the Old Testament and think about Moses.
And so when we hear of Moses, we hear Moses saying, Lord, don't send me. I can't speak. Send my brother. Saul, Paul was more or less the same. And if we turn to 2 Corinthians in chapter 10, in verse 10, we hear Paul basically being described.
He can't speak. He's a rubbish speaker. He doesn't grip anyone's attention. And yet, the amazing thing is this. That this man, God used his words.
[3:57] He used what he said to accomplish great things. So that 2,000 years on, we are looking at what Paul, what Saul has said and written.

So here is this man who is not physically impressive. Not the best person to make an address or a speech. He was a Roman citizen.
He was Roman by birth. It was his birthright. He was allowed to be called a Roman. Other people had to buy it. But here was Saul.
Having brought up under the feet of the famous Jewish teacher, Gamaliel. And he was entitled to be a Roman citizen. He had been educated in Jerusalem.
He was very religious. If you look at his life story. Religion. He knew it all. He crossed the T's.
[5:08] He dotted the I's. He made no mistakes. Outwardly, he was a religious, upright man. He practiced his faith.

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He lived his faith. To the extent he would go about persecuting Christians. Because Christianity was not his faith. It was the exact opposite almost to what he wanted to believe in.
He was waiting for the Messiah, but did not believe that Jesus was that Messiah. And in Acts chapter 27, where do we find Saul?
We find him at the feet and at the gathering of those who were stoning Stephen to death. The first Christian martyr, they say.
And there was Saul. Saul. Man who wrote this book. Watching what was going on. He was a religious man.
[6:15] He was probably one of the most religious men that you could come across. He was enthusiastic. He was right into his belief. But then one day, this man, this man, Saul, met somebody else.

He was on a journey. He was walking about and he met this man. And his life changed forever. He met Jesus.
And when he met Jesus, he was asked one simple, he asked one simple question. Who are you, Lord? And you've got to reply, I am Jesus.
This man who was looking for the promised one. He was looking for the Messiah. He thought he was still to come.
Met him. And Paul, or Saul, as he was then, his life was changed in a very simple but dramatic way.
[7:27] In a way that everybody, each and every one of us who have come to know Jesus, our lives have been changed. And yet, and yet, and yet, here is this man who experienced Jesus, who met him, and the people standing right beside him heard a voice and saw nobody.

Heard a voice, but we're not changed. Here is Saul, speaking to his saviour, and the people next to him had no idea.
They heard a voice. But so nobody. One person finds Jesus. The person next to them remains unchanged.
Can I ask you today, have you met with Jesus? Do you know Jesus for yourself?
I'm not asking the person next to you. I'm not asking the person sitting in front of you or behind you. I'm asking you. Have you met Jesus for yourself?
[8:44] Or are you like, are you like those with Saul? You're seeing what's going on. You're seeing people's lives being changed. Maybe it's a family member. Maybe it's your best friend. Maybe it's someone you work with.

Maybe it could be anybody, but you are seeing them. Their lives being changed. But have you met with the risen Lord, like Saul did?
I find it frightening to think that there could be those of us who are hearing a voice, who are hearing a voice, but seeing nobody.
To me, this even the name Paul reminds me of that hope. of a life that is changed.
I hope that reminds me that I can be changed by putting my faith and my trust in Jesus. But I also find it quite amazing as we look at this, and as we were to do a study in Paul, one of the amazing things as well is that in Acts chapter 19, we hear of after Paul became a Christian, as he became a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, God spoke to Ananias, one of the leading Christians at the time.
[10:12] The equivalent of your minister or one of your elders, and God said to him, Ananias, go and speak to Saul. And as we look into Acts chapter 19, Ananias tells God, but Saul's done this, and he's done that, and he's done the next thing.

Do you not remember what he did at Stephen's death when he got stunned? And yet Ananias goes, and he meets with Saul.
And he goes up to him, and he says, Brother Saul, can you imagine what it would be like if the most notorious criminal came into your church?
Would I be able to welcome him if you had done something towards me and my family? And yet here is Ananias going in and calling Saul his brother in Christ.
If we carried on looking in Acts, we would see that Saul was called that name for several years, but it's when he was in Cyprus, his name changed from, I think it's from the Hebrew into the Greek, Paulus.
[11:40] Saul and Paul is actually the same name. It's a bit like Dole, Donny, Callum, Malcolm. So here we now have Paul. Here we have him sharing the great good news of the Saviour, going out of his way to tell others about the glorious good news of the one who came to pay the price for his sins

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and for my sins.

Can I ask you, when is the last time you've told somebody about your Saviour? When is the last time I've told somebody? The other day I was walking through town and I, a group of us have been talking about how difficult it is to talk about Jesus and to share our faith.
And I was saying, you know, we really need to pray and say, Lord, give us the opportunities to speak. The Lord also give us the boldness and the strength to speak.
The other day I was in town and I met this guy and he told me his father was a preacher, a minister. What an opportunity to talk about the gospel.
The door was open, wide, wide open to me. I talked about where his father preached, what his congregations were, where he is now. And I walked away and I thought to myself, Tony, he talked about everything apart from Jesus.
[13:21] Isn't it amazing we can't talk about the weather, we can't talk about the sheep and the croft, we can't talk about the ferry, we can't talk about there has been no gangway for us, we can't talk about Jesus.

Surely, Paul is a challenge to us. Here we find this man, an apostle called by Jesus. He had seen the risen Savior, he had experienced him and 30 years later, here he is.
it's about 60, 80, thereabouts and he's writing as a prisoner from a Roman cell and he's saying to these people in Ephesus to remain faithful.
He had spent two or three years with them. He had lived with them, he had talked with them, he had ate with them, he had worshipped with them, he had been out in the fields with them, he had mixed with them and here he is writing from his prison cell.
Ephesus, that great, that mighty city found then on the Indian coast. It's more in that now because of silting and the way things have worked out.
[14:34] And while we don't know the size of the city, what we do know is there was a temple that told 24,000 people to watch the gladiators, 24,000 people would turn up to watch two men fight.

That's, give or take, a couple of thousand the same population as the Western Isles. That's how big Ephesus was. It was an impressive place of city.
And here were believers there. it had a temple, the temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.
It was massive, larger than a football pitch, 377 feet long, it was 180 feet wide, 120 marble pillars decorating the outside, each of them 60 feet high.
It wasn't a small building like this, it was massive. It was absolutely massive. And this temple dedicated to the goddess Artemis was the centre of political, social life to these people.
[15:46] The largest temple in the known world of that time. Who was Artemis? Artemis was a goddess represented hunting, wild animals, the wilderness, to name a couple of things.

She was the daughter of Zeus and Leto. In Roman mythology, she would have been called Diana.
But does the name Artemis mean anything to you today? See, we can talk about Greek mythology, we can look down on those people and say they were worshipping false gods.
But even in today's society, if you can think back, think of when NASA put the astronauts into space earlier on this year.
What was the name of the ship? Spaceship? Artemis. That has been the name of their program. So even today in today's society, I'm not saying NASA follows false gods.
[17:02] But here we have the name Artemis still in today's society. I'm going to be a bit of a tangent here.

Why astronauts were going into space? there was a period of time that the aircraft went to the far side of the moon.
I think it was four astronauts that were on the aircraft. And for a period of 40 minutes they were on the far side of the moon.
They had no contact with anybody. Nobody total silence. Space control had no contact.
They didn't know where they were. There were four of them and all they could do was think and speak to each other. None of us will ever be on the dark side where we cannot speak to God.
[18:15] There are times in our life we might feel alone. We might be in a crowd of 24,000 people. We might be in a stadium of football fans. We might be in wherever we might be and we feel alone.

Whatever your situation today is, can I reassure you, you are never out of God's presence. God can and will be there if you call on him.

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There is no radio silence from him. Even today, if you were to call to him and speak to him right now and say to him, God, I want to know your son just like Paul knew him, just like others in this congregation knew him.
I want to know him for myself. nobody needs to know, but he knows and he will hear and the promise is that he can hear and he will answer our prayers.
Time's going on. We've had a quick look at Paul. We're having a bit of a look at Ephesus, this large place. There was a group of believers.
[19:30] We don't know how many there were, but there wasn't a great number. One of the fascinating things about this is they lived their lives. They were committed to the Lord Jesus Christ.

They were so committed to the Lord Jesus Christ that if we were to delve back into Acts and if we were to look into their lives, we find that Paul is preaching there.
And Paul is preaching so much with so much commitment with his great blessing. This man wasn't of great stature. He was a rubbish speaker. And what do we hear?
When Paul is preaching there, God uses him so much. There was a man called Demetrius. He was a silversmith.
He made images of false gods. He made pendants for people to buy for them, to take home, to worship, to say their prayers to, whatever it was.
[20:27] And Paul was used by God as he preached about the one living and true God, that it was spoiling Demetrius' livelihood.

Morally, financially, he was being challenged because people were turning and trusting in Jesus. Demetrius was saying to them, she, the goddess Artemis, the one who the whole of Asia follows and trusts in.
The whole earth is following her. And if we're not careful, they're going to stop worshipping her. They're going to depose her and she's going to counter us nothing.
Do you know there will come a time that every knee shall bow before a God? Every tongue will confess before a God.
But it's not the God of Greek mythology. It's not the God of Roman mythology. It is not the gods of Western world beliefs and opinions.
[21:41] Every knee shall bow. Every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. Some of us, it will be out of love and adoration to our Saviour.

And for others, it won't be. Are you bound in adoration to the Lord Jesus Christ today?
Am I? You see number one in my life. You see number one in your life. We are all equal. Whoever we are, whether it's Demetrius, whether it's Paul, whether it's Donnie McLean, all of us will need to bow before him.
Demetrius caused a riot. It was chaos. He resented knowing about Jesus. But even there, I find myself thinking that of his boldness, of his commitment, of his dedication to his goddesses and gods.
And I have to question myself and think, am I so committed as a Christian, as a believer? Am I so committed to my Saviour?
[22:55] Are you, as a believer, committed, that committed to the Lord Jesus Christ? Christ. So here we have Paul speaking.

He's not speaking to the general people of Ephesus. He is speaking to who? To the saints who are faithful.
He is speaking to the believers, those whose lives were having an effect in that city, those who were being touched by God's spirit, those who have been touched by the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ, those who have been changed.
Some of them were having hard lives. All of them would have been hard lives. They were living in a society that did not love Jesus, that wanted nothing to do with him, that had no influence, and they were a small group of people who were living an effective life.
others didn't, and even today in our islands, some of us love Jesus, and some of us will do anything to turn away from him.
[24:21] Does his name, does the name of Jesus draw you to himself? you are faithful, you are part of a fellowship, you are part of the family of God.

Are you part of that family today? What was the message Paul proclaimed? Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

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And have you noticed, have you noticed what he's saying? Grace to you, and peace from God my Father. That's not what he says.
Grace to you, and peace from God your Father. That's not what he says. Grace and peace from God our Father. He was speaking to them as a family, as brothers and sisters.
They were part of that community, they were part of that fellowship. He might have been in Rome, they might have been in Ephesus, we might be in Carleway, but God through Paul is saying, you are part of my family, I am your God and you are my child.
[25:39] As we look at this passage, we hear Paul mentioning the name of Jesus three times, an apostle of Christ Christ Jesus, faithful in Christ Jesus, grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Three opportunities, three pointers to the Saviour. And we have every spiritual blessing available to us.
What a privilege as a believer you have. What a privilege as God's people we have to have all God's blessings and richnesses given to us so that we can follow him.
This is what this book is about. we read about people being told how God has blessed them in Christ Jesus.
How God knew us from the very foundations of this world. Way back in Jeremiah 23 we read that God knows us personally. He has a plan for you.
[27:00] He has a plan for me. It's hard really to believe that. Who are we in the great scheme of things in this world? And yet God has a plan. For each and every one of us.

We are part if we trust in Jesus of the great church. Of the true church. I mentioned in the prayer about there are people who are worshipping today underneath the trees in Kenya and different other parts of the world.
Some of Warrington countries, their buildings have been destroyed. Parts of maybe even in Canada there's been wildfires, houses have been destroyed. Others it's been floods.
They don't have a warm place for shelter like we do but they are part of God's church with all their nationalities, with all their languages, with all the different forms of worship.
We are all part and we can say from God our Father. God is to the praise of his glorious grace with which he has blessed us to the beloved.
[28:23] God is not amazing that today here in Cargway, here in Lewis, that God wants us to praise his name.

And surely that alone knowing that God speaks to us and calls us and wants us to be his own is seen enough for us to sing from the very depths of our hearts.
I've tried to look at this passage. I've tried to explain the person who wrote the book, this man that's been transformed, a way that you and I can be transformed.
We've tried to look at the people he wrote to, the faithful saints who were in Ephesus, a very needy spiritual place.
And we've tried to look at the provider. our God, the one who gives grace and peace to us all. But there is one last thing I want to say.
[29:33] I've tried to point you and myself to the Savior. I've tried to show our need of him, but also the way that he is willing to accept us.

But for those of us who live this Christian life, we need to be careful because these faithful servants and saints, if we were to turn into the second book of revolutions, we find the church of Ephesus and they have remained faithful to their doctrine, to their belief.
but they have left their first love. Have you as a believer moved away from Jesus? Outwardly, you are faithful to your doctrine and your beliefs.
Outwardly, maybe I am still faithful to the doctrine and the beliefs. but have you lost and left your first love?
And if you have, that opportunity is given for you to come back to him because you are never out of radio silence. And today, if that is your situation, he is saying to you, my child, come back and he will welcome us back.
[31:07] We are going to close by singing.

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