

Slide 1



Announcements

Friday 7.00 am – Men’s Coffee/Breakfast at BakeHouse

The leadership has committed to prayer – half an hour a day – specifically for Harvest Church, (and the churches of our community).

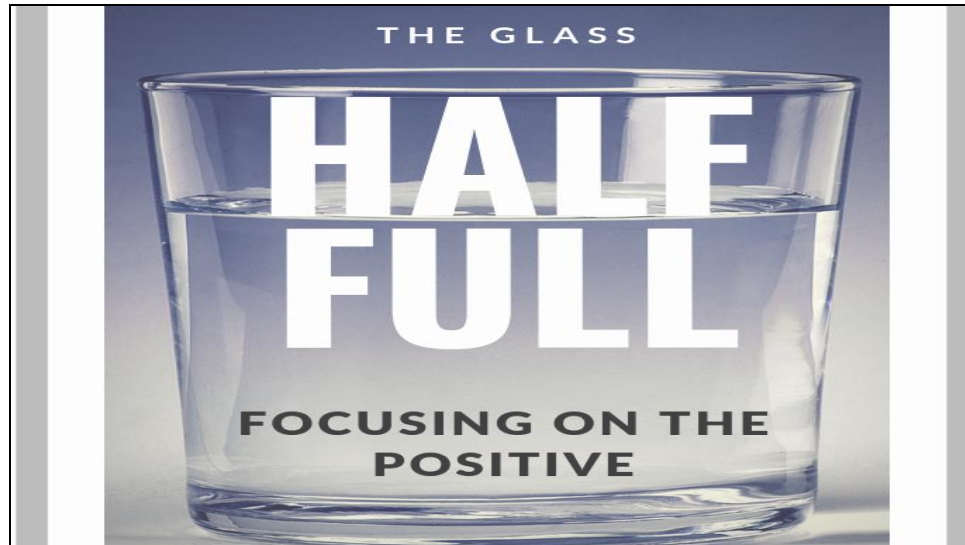
Can you commit to half an hour in the morning or evening this week?

**Wednesday Night “Equippers Study” and discussion...
ON HOLD THIS WEEK – STARTS AGAIN 27TH JULY**

AGM – Sunday 14th August



Slide 4



Eventually, I would like to do some preaching on the book of Ephesians

HENRIETTA MEARS SAYS OF EPHESIANS "IT IS THE GREATEST REVELATION OF TRUTH THAT GOD HAS GIVEN TO MAN. IT IS THE MYSTERY THAT HAS BEEN HIDDEN FROM BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD"

Now, whether you believe that or not, Ephesians is a pretty special book.

I started with Ephesians 4:11-16, but I went looking for the context, and kept getting pushed further and further back.

What is it about Ephesians?

Does it have anything to say to the church in the 21st Century? Right now, I am distressed about the what the church is going through...

Does it have anything to say to you and I personally?

I have ordered some books, and will be doing heaps of individual research, but it is fair to say that this is the widest ranging set of sermons I will have ever have preached.

Selah – Pause and Consider...

Romans 8:31 – “If God be for us, who can be against us?”

2 Chronicles 16:9 – “⁹ For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of *those* whose heart is loyal to Him.”

Philippians 4:13 – “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”

Isaiah 41:10 – “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

So let's back up – quite some way! I will probably need to re-enforce these thoughts quickly next week, so most of us are on the same page.

These are verses well known to most of us. We probably heard them in Sunday School or Y.P. We've seen them on posters, and no doubt read them in our “Promises for the day” type readings. But somehow, although they are in scripture, we tend to **OVERLOOK** them

Between January 2021, and January 2022, the statistics for pastors resigning increased.

In January 2021, 29% of pastors had a plan to leave the ministry.

By January 2022, that had increased to 38%

So what is going on. Why are we all battling like this, and does the Bible, and Ephesians specifically have anything to say?

“Think about what you think about...”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TkqolgNLJxU&t=645s>

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 – “⁴ For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵ casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”.

“You are the air traffic controller over the airport of your mind. You control which thoughts land, and which thoughts are not allowed to land in your mind” (Max Lucado)

For those of you who were here last week, remember the video by Max Lucado (If you weren't here, may I suggest you watch it...

I would like to ultimately do some study around Ephesians, but I have come to the conclusion that I need to be way better prepared – Ephesians could – AND SHOULD – change every one of us.

Please try to read through Ephesians, maybe in a few different translations, over the next few weeks.

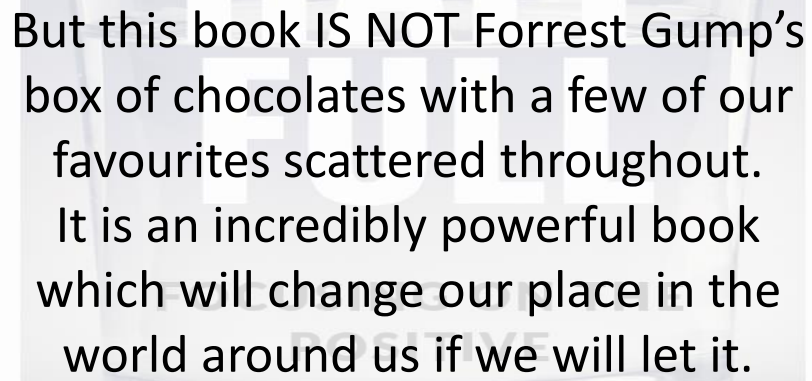
Before going into Ephesians, I would like to lay some groundwork – groundwork which I hope will radically change the way you think about Ephesians, and cause each one of us to have a rethink on our understanding...

Ephesians has some wonderful verses which we all know well – husbands and wives and children; armour of God; seated in heavenly places; equipping the saints!

A glass of water is shown in the background, with the text overlaid on it. The text is in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The background image is a close-up of a clear glass filled with water, with light reflecting off the surface and the glass itself. The text is centered and reads: "What are some of your favourite memories from Ephesians?"

**What are some of
your favourite
memories from
Ephesians?**

I love 1:18; 1:15-19; 2:5-10; 2:19-22; 3:14-21; 4:11-16; 5:22-6:9; 6:10-19
Such wonderfully deep and meaningful verses, but what is the background to them?



But this book IS NOT Forrest Gump's box of chocolates with a few of our favourites scattered throughout. It is an incredibly powerful book which will change our place in the world around us if we will let it.

Acts 18; 19; 20.

2 Corinthians 1:3-11

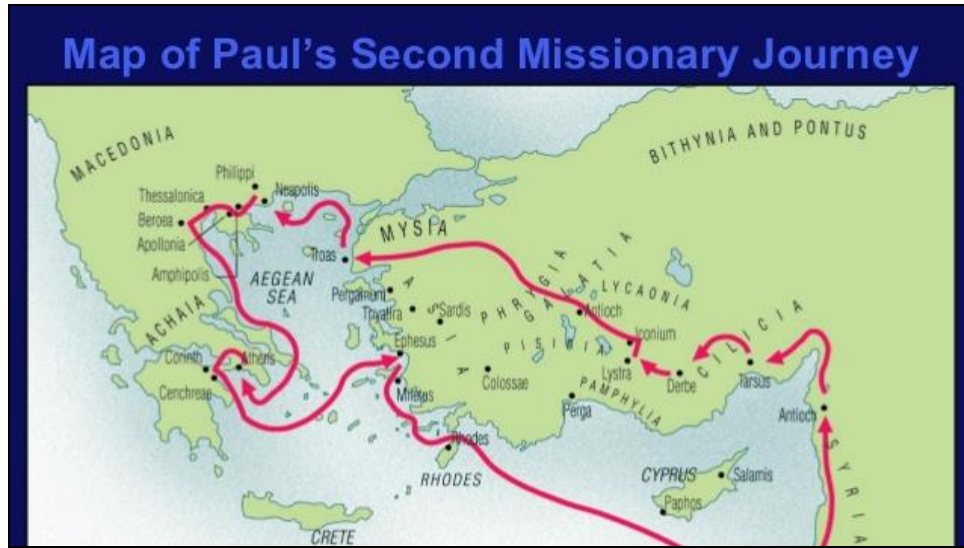
2 Corinthians 4:8-12

When you read 2 Corinthians,
understanding the backstory, “It feels
as if it is being dragged out of Paul
through a filter of darkness and pain”

(Professor N.T. Wright”)

In order to really get to grips with Ephesians – we need to get our heads around other parts of scripture, specifically a portion of Acts, and also meditate on Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians.

2Corinthians is written while Paul is reflecting on the events in Ephesus, and is possibly in prison in Ephesus, although there are arguments both ways for that. (Tom Wright)

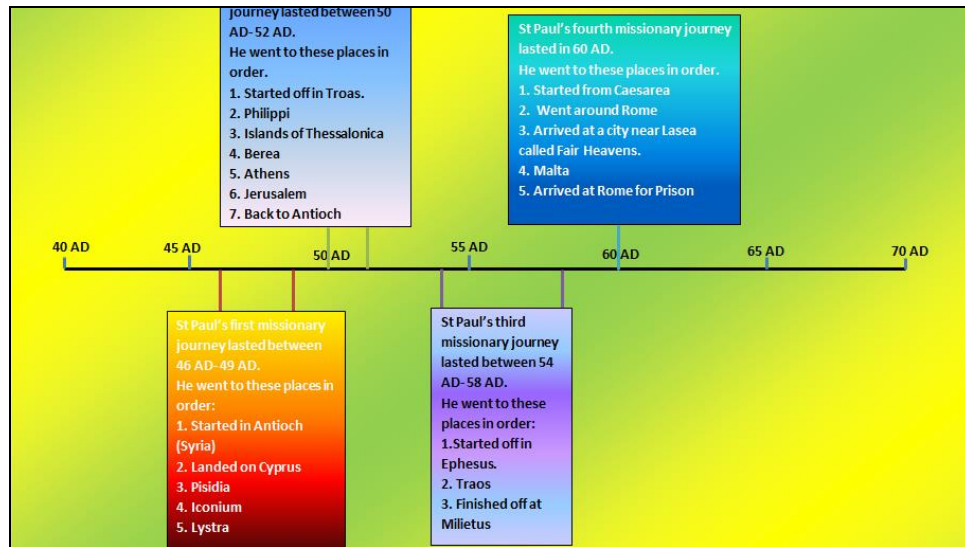


This is the whole Acts 16; 17;18.

Acts 18 – Paul arrives at Corinth and, with the help of Aquila and Priscilla (In Corinth because they had been deported from Rome), he plants the Corinthian church in about 51AD

Acts 18:18-20, Paul stopped at Ephesus on his way home, but didn't do any ministry there of note, promising to return.

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Two years later Paul sets off again – **ACTS 18:23** – Through what we now call Turkey.

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Take note of Acts 18:24-28 & 19:1

This time he stops at Ephesus and spends about 2½ years there – firstly in the synagogue and then in the lecture hall of Tyrannus

Whilst Paul is in Ephesus, he hears what is going on in Corinth (Sexual immorality, dubious financial dealings, Taking people to court, getting drunk at the communion table etc) so he writes 1 Corinthians which is quite a harsh letter. At the end of 1 Corinthians, he says he would like to try and visit Corinth, and he mentions Apollos again, and his busy schedule.

So now, **WE DON'T HAVE DIRECT SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE FOR THIS**, but a number of very clued up theologians (Tom Wright being one), on reading all these portions of scripture, together with other material extra scriptural, believe Paul took a quick trip back across the sea to Corinth, because he had heard that his letter had not gone down to well. On returning, the Corinthian Church, a church he loved dearly, had turned on him (quotes 241/243).

He is distraught – and I have some small understanding of how he feels – so he heads back to Ephesus in despair, only to find things have gone pear-shaped in Ephesus also. Exactly what happened we don't know. Whether the silversmiths had gone on another riot, maybe the “magicians” (idolaters) had stirred something up, But the Apostle Paul, this amazing Apostle of God, who had faced death and torture and lashing and imprisonment more than anyone else in Scripture, went into a very dark place...

2 Corinthians 1:3-11

³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ⁵ For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. ⁶ Now if we are afflicted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation. ⁷ And our hope for you *is* steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also *you will partake* of the consolation. ⁸ **For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.** ⁹ **Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves** but in God who raises the dead, ¹⁰ who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver *us*, ¹¹ you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift *granted* to us through many.

2 Corinthians 4:8-12

⁸ We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed— ¹⁰ always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. ¹¹ For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹² So then death is working in us, but life in you.

When you read 2 Corinthians, understanding the backstory, “It feels as if it is being dragged out of Paul through a filter of darkness and pain”

As Tom Wright says, if a modern day pastor wrote 2 Corinthians today, we would recognise a severe case of depression and possibly even suicidal ideation.

This is the background to Paul’s state of mind in writing Ephesians.

Ephesus

“Ephesus was a wealthy city and the obvious choice for the provincial capital of Roman Asia Minor” (DeSilva)

“The Landmark for which Ephesus enjoyed it’s fame in the ancient world was the grand temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the world”

The churches of Asia Minor are in a period of difficulty. Some outside influences are putting pressure on Gentile believers to conform to Jewish identity markers (circumcision, food laws, etc). Others are discouraged, distressed by magic and the powers of the demonic (“ the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”)

So what about the city itself – what kind of environment was Paul writing into?
It was a massive temple, of marble and gold (maybe read page 714 in DeSilva)
From a natural standpoint, this was not a city conducive to revival
Yet – despite that – let’s take a read at how it all started...

Acts 19:1-20

19 And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples ² he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." ³ And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." ⁴ Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." ⁵ When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Acts 19:1-20

⁶ And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. ⁷ Now the men were about twelve in all. ⁸ And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. ⁹ But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ **And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.**

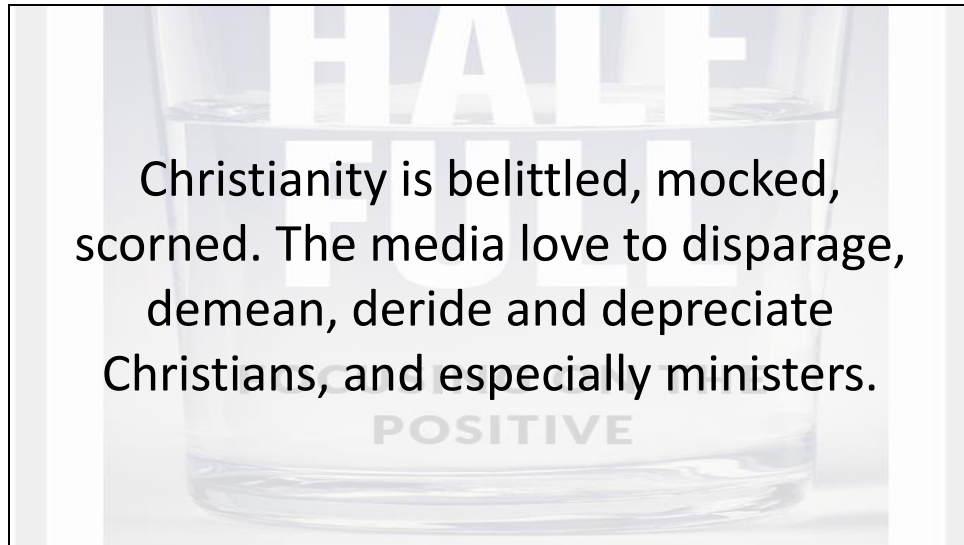
Acts 19:1-20

¹¹ Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹² so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them. ¹³ Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." ¹⁴ Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. ¹⁵ And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" ¹⁶ Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. ¹⁷ This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. ¹⁸ And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. ¹⁹ Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned *them* in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and *it* totalled fifty thousand *pieces* of silver. ²⁰ **So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.**

In the beginning, there was remarkable revival

BUT THEN THINGS TOOK A TURN FOR THE WORSE.

Rioting, opposition, bullying, threats. It all went south very quickly, and, whatever it was, it had a significant effect on Paul



Christianity is belittled, mocked,
scorned. The media love to disparage,
demean, deride and depreciate
Christians, and especially ministers.

I put this slide up two weeks ago when we were asking the question “WHAT IF???”
It turns out, Paul faced exactly the same opposition back in 54 A.D.
Despite all this, Paul still produces this quite amazing and outstanding epistle, which has been
and continues to be, a source of inspiration to Christians of all generations.

Ephesians 4:11-14 – ¹¹ And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² **for the equipping of the saints for works of service**, **so that the body of Christ may be built up** ¹³ *until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.* ¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.