

Slide 1



Announcements

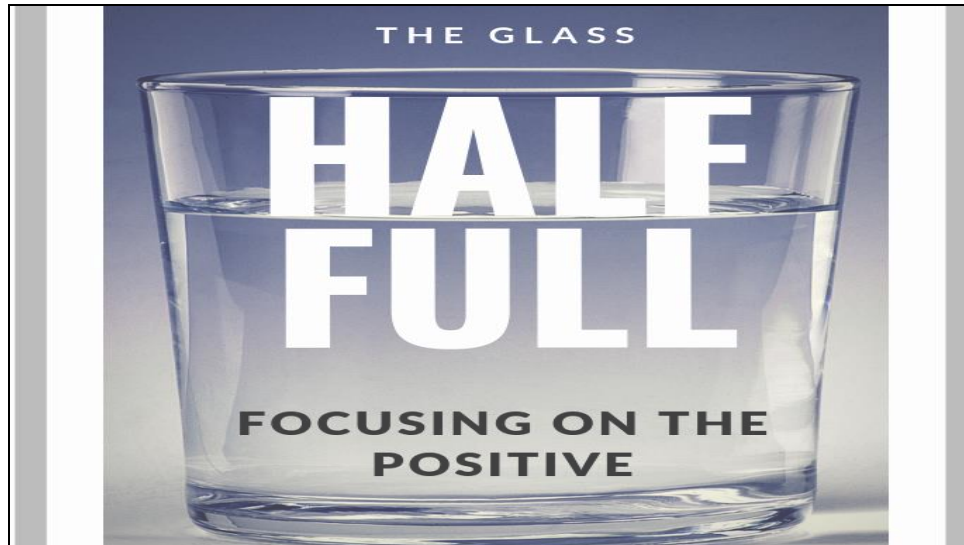
Friday 7.00 am – Men’s Coffee/Breakfast at BakeHouse

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...

AGM – Sunday 14th August



There's so much going on around us. Economic pressure the likes of which we haven't witnessed for a while.

Wherever I look, including into the mirror, there just seems to be a tiredness, lethargy, listlessness, sluggishness, fatigue, stupor, melancholy!

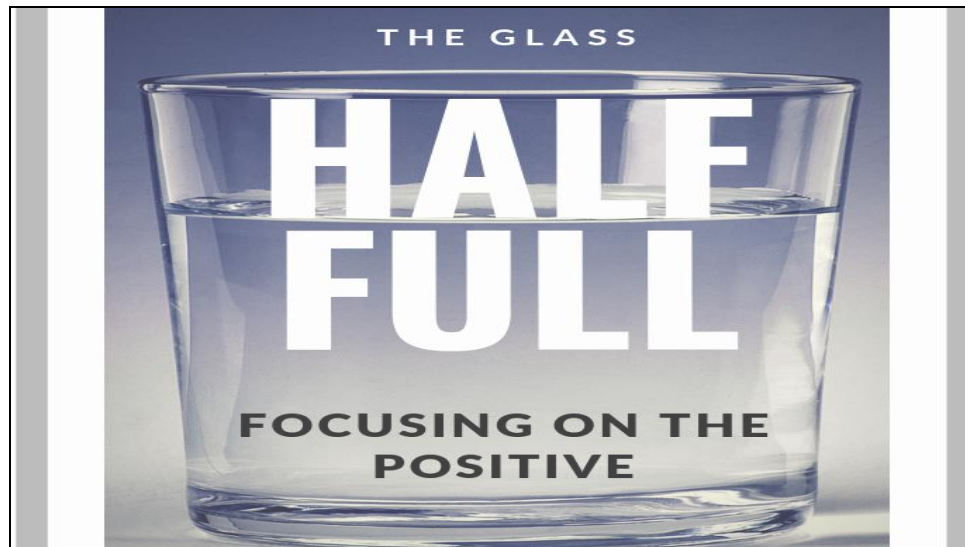
The church seems to be continually under spiritual attack and church buildings are closing. Truths we have held dear for generations are now considered "hate speech" or something similar and "Truth" is something the world reviles.

Not only is spiritual warfare raging over the church, physical warfare and unrest and anger is raging around the globe. (Leading in an angry age)

Slide 4



It seems so easy to focus on the "HALF EMPTY" ---- and so hard to focus on the "HALF FULL"



But as we take a look at Ephesians, we will find so many similarities – and if Paul meant this epistle to have a practical and a relevant message for the church in Ephesus, does that message still have something to say to us in the 21st Century?

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.

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?

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%

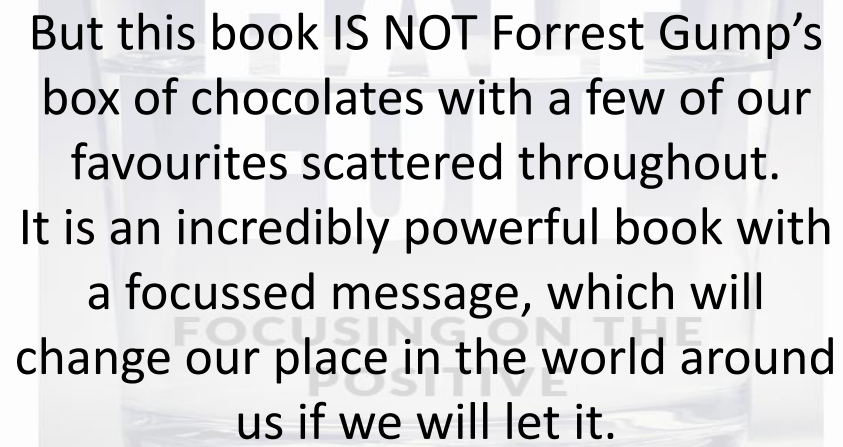
So what is going on. Why are we all battling like this, and does the Bible, and Ephesians specifically have anything to say?

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?

A glass filled with water, with a faint, light-colored background image of a book cover. The book cover has the text 'FOCUSING ON THE POSITIVE' visible. The glass is centered in the background of the text box.

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 with
a focussed message, 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)

2 Corinthians 1:3-11

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,

But at the same time, if you read **Acts 19**, in the two and a half years Paul was in Ephesus, a remarkable revival began

And there are others in a similar vein – as we saw in detail last week – something happened to Paul in Ephesus, we don't know exactly what, but it seems he came under incredible spiritual attack, and it is out of an understanding of that, that Paul writes this amazing epistle

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...

Ephesians 1

Ephesians 1:3 – “³ **Blessed** be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ,”

“Praise” “Adore”

“When you begin to glimpse the reality of God, the natural reaction is to worship him. Not to have that reaction is a fairly sure sign that you haven’t yet really understood who he is or what he’s done.” (Tom Wright – Simply Christian)

Despite everything going on around him, and we are not even sure what that was, Paul’s first word to the Ephesians (after the introduction) is “Praise, Bless, Adore”.

The opening section of **Ephesians (1:3-14)** contains **one single sentence** in the original language which offers an aretology to God for his wonderful benefactions. In case some of this language is new to you, let me define my terms. An aretology is a kind of list, stating a deities’ virtues. A benefactor is someone who gives money, resources or aid to an individual, institution or a cause. In Ephesians 1:3-14 the writer outlines various activities of God, Christ and the Spirit which have greatly benefited humanity and the entire world.

Ephesians 1:3-14 celebrates the initiative and action of God in blessing, choosing, planning, favouring, coming, rescuing, revealing, and restoring people.

God’s plan is to ultimately restore the entire world back to harmony with God (1:10). (Proverbs 19:21 – IT WILL HAPPEN, WITH OR WITHOUT ME)

One of the main victories of God is bringing people to a place of trust and allegiance in Him (1:13).

The goal of God’s restoring work is that “we might live for the praise of His glory” (1:12).

But the ability to live for the praise of His glory, comes from the fact that we are “in Christ” (1:11, 13), and marked with the empowering presence of the Spirit (1:14).

Ephesians 1 - PRAISE

³ Blessed (**Praise**) *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,

“The point Paul makes is a cosmic one – the blessings are as unlimited as the universe God created” (Lynn H. Cohick)

This is not to say Paul isn't interested in the secular, physical world, and all the blessings of God are for the afterlife.

IT'S WAY BIGGER THAN THAT...

Does Our Worship tell the Story?

One of the curious things in modern worship songs is that we use words like “redemption,” “forgiveness,” “grace,” “love,” and many other terms, but we abstract these terms from the Story. We sing about the grace of God, but we are not reminded about where and when God has been gracious. We sing about the love of God, but we are often not reminded where God’s love has been demonstrated and revealed. Distancing these terms from the Story creates a vacuum, where one’s own life experiences (and perhaps limited understanding) must now fill in the gaps. We must remember that these words gain their meaning and impact from the contexts in which they are used.

That’s what chapter 1 of Ephesians is all about.

Ephesians 1 - PREDESTINATION

Predestination 1: the belief that God appointed the eternal destiny of some to salvation by grace, while leaving the remainder to receive eternal damnation for all their sins, even their original sin.

Predestination 2: God has predestined the plan of salvation before the foundations of the world, such that believers would be adopted as children of God through Christ's work of redemption. (Lynn H. Cohick NICNT Ephesians Page 244)

Roman 6:23 "The gift of God..."

John 3:15-17 "Whoever believes in Him..."

2 Peter 3:9 "Not willing that any should perish but that ALL..."

Why is this important? What does it offer to a lesson on encouragement and edification and application of scripture

If that first teaching is true – what hope and surety do we really have?

If that first teaching is true – I would probably have left Christianity and the church behind a long time ago...

If that second teaching is true – it changes everything. With the full knowledge, well in advance, that we would fail (that **I** would fail), The executive of Heaven still went ahead and had a plan in place to save me...

We're NEVER too far gone. We have ABSOLUTE SURETY that we are part of God's plan.
THERE IS NEVER ANY DOUBT.

Ephesians 1 - PRAYER

Purpose Prayer: (vs 15-19) “That is why since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God’s people, ¹⁶I have not stopped giving thanks to God for you. I always remember you in my prayers, ¹⁷asking the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, to give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you will know him better. ¹⁸I pray also that you will have greater understanding in your heart so you will know the hope to which he has called us and that you will know how rich and glorious are the blessings God has promised his holy people. ¹⁹And you will know that God’s power is very great for us who believe. That power is the same as the great strength ²⁰God used to raise Christ from the dead and put him at his right side in the heavenly world. ²¹God has put Christ over all rulers, authorities, powers, and kings, not only in this world but also in the next. ²²God put everything under his power and made him the head over everything for the church, ²³which is Christ’s body. The church is filled with Christ, and Christ fills everything in every way.

Again, this is a really long sentence...

Later on, Paul talks about Apostles etc “equipping the saints” Right here is how an apostle equips a church...

Remember...

- Paul is under attack
- Ephesus is known as a place of “magicians” and “Dark arts” (witchcraft etc)

We could probably do a complete series just on these verses

This opening chapter serves multiple purposes in Ephesians, but one of them is to clearly tie the work of God to the story of Christ and the Spirit, and then also to Paul and his team (1:11- 12) and also to the Ephesians (1:13). These Christians are compelled to praise God because of the work of the triune God on their behalf, and because they are experiencing the wonderful grace of God through the work of the Spirit. Telling the story of God’s actions fuels and inspires their devotion and worship of God. To place the Father, Jesus and Holy Spirit at the centre of our attention, our affection and our allegiance, that is worship!