

# A Conclusion to Ephesians

## Introduction

### a. objectives

1. subject – a conclusion to the book of Ephesians, understanding its message and importance
2. aim – to cause us to review our understanding of the church as we finish this letter
3. passage – Ephesians 3:9-11

### b. outline

1. The Review of the Letter to the Ephesians
2. The Summation of the Letter to the Ephesians
3. The Application of the Letter to the Ephesians

### c. opening

- 10:30 1. the **statistics** about our series through Ephesians
  - a. it has taken 45 Sunday mornings to preach through this letter
    1. however, that is only 16 “sermons”, nine (9) of which were made up of multiple parts
    2. **e.g.** the “sermon” entitled “The Unity of the Body (4:1-16)” required six (6) parts to complete
    3. one additional sermon as the introduction, an 18<sup>th</sup> one now as a conclusion
  - b. I have preached 49 sermons since 06/04/17; four (4) outside of Ephesians
    1. this sermon is the 50<sup>th</sup> sermon of this full year (I did not preach 10/08/17 & 03/18/18)
  - c. the total amount of time of preaching (not including final prayer) has been 41:04:35 (1:17:04:35)
    1. an average of 54:46 per sermon
    2. shortest sermon was preached 06/18/17 (39:06), longest 11/19/17 (1:02:07)
- 10:33 2. the **conclusion** of our series through Ephesians
  - a. I normally preach an introduction sermon when beginning a new Bible book series
    1. to set the context and establish a set of expectations of what we will hear along the way
  - b. however, I have never actually preached a conclusion sermon when ending a Bible book series
    1. frankly, I have always just “moved on” to the next series – however, here it was suggested
    2. the **above statistics** show a tremendous amount of *detail*, but what is the *overall message*?
    3. so, my goal this morning will be to preach through the entire book *in a single sermon*
      - a. **i.e.** to capture the “essence” of the book as a whole – from “30,000 feet up”

## I. The Review of the Letter to the Ephesians

### Content

#### a. the indicative of the letter

- 10:35 1. **1:1-2** – Paul’s **greeting**
  - a. establishing his authority as an apostle and bidding them grace and peace
- 10:35 2. **1:3-14** – Paul’s **thesis**
  - a. a single, long sentence as a Father-centered introduction to Paul’s theme and point
  - b. a great overview of the **Divine Decree** = the eternal wisdom of God, in which he has foreordained all things that come to pass, for the purpose of his own glory
    1. a whole raft of “*blessings*” – the Father chooses a people and predestines them to be his children (by adoption); the Son redeems that people, establishing an eternal inheritance for them; and the Spirit seals that people in that inheritance, all to the glory of God
  - c. **Paul begins this letter by establishing a high view of God – everything else in the letter will flow from this high view of God in his decree (the essence of reformed theology)**
- 10:39 3. **1:15-23** – Paul’s **prayer for his thesis**
  - a. (**again**) a single, long sentence as a *decree-centered* prayer for God’s will to be done in them
  - b. specifically, that from a grateful heart, the Spirit of God would fill them with greater knowledge of this decree, the wisdom to apply it to their lives, and the ability to revel in this revelation with great certainty and assurance
  - c. specifically, in understanding the *power* of God that raised Christ from the dead, seated him at the right hand of the Father, established his name above all others, and put everything under his feet
  - d. **Paul prays for the Ephesians that the decree of God would be *real* in their minds and hearts, as they ponder the *content* of that decree and its *power* in real life**

- 10:41 4. **2:1-10** – Paul’s **first proof of his thesis**
- a **continuation** of the thought of the previous prayer – the power of God in his decree
  - b. specifically, that God’s decree purposed to save a people who are, by virtue of their inclusion in the sinful lot of men, spiritually dead and “live” only to follow the ways of this world and its prince
    1. God exercised a great *love* in his decree to raise up a people with Christ
    2. God lavished upon them his *radical choice of grace* to seat them with Christ
    3. God gifted them with *purpose* within the great intention of his decree from eternity past
  - c. **Paul demonstrates how this decree of God has been active in them already, as God has exerted his power, by grace, to raise them from a state of spiritual death to a real purpose**
- 10:45 5. **2:11-22** – Paul’s **second proof of his thesis**
- a. **another way** that the power of God in his decree has been exercised amongst them
  - b. specifically, that God’s decree purposed to save a people who are, by virtue of their separation from his *actions in the past*, are far from God with no hope of a messiah, no revelation, no promises
    1. that God formed those close to him along with those far off into a *single people* in Christ
    2. and this organism is actually a great **Third Temple** built from the individual stones of a diversity of believers upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ as the cornerstone
  - c. **Paul demonstrates another way that the decree of God has been active, as God has drawn together a wide variety of people into a structure (organism) of worship and glory**
- 10:48 6. **3:1-13** – Paul’s **focus in his thesis**
- a. **question:** do the Ephesians truly understand the impact of the revelation made in **chaps. 1-2?**
  - b. the mystery of the gospel = that it has always been God’s intention to include people from *all over the world* in his decree of salvation (**i.e.** it was never limited to just one *ethnic* people)
  - c. however, the *true revelation* of this mystery is that all of this work of God, through his decree, constitutes a great **Cosmic Drama**, unfolding the *glory of God* to a heavenly audience
  - d. **Paul focuses on the real intention of the decree of God – to demonstrate to a watching audience the fullness of his glory as he acts in time to accomplish his will in all things**
- 10:52 7. **3:14-19, 3:20-21** – Paul’s **doxology for his thesis**
- a. that the Ephesians would “get it” regarding this great revelation and that it would deeply move them with awe, inspiring them to truly know the love of Christ and the glory of God
  - b. **Paul prays (again) for the Ephesians that the decree of God would be so real in their minds and hearts that everything about them would bring glory to God**
- 10:53 8. **the great indicative of the letter – the divine decree is the establishment of a people through which comes the manifestation of God’s glory in all things**
- b. the imperative of the letter**
- 10:57 1. **4:1-16** – Paul’s **imperative**
- a. that the church would be **utterly unified:**
    1. in a way of life (a walk) that is worthy of the great calling God has made upon his people
    2. in an organic unity through the gifts that the Spirit of God has poured out upon his people
    3. in a doctrinal unity through the teaching of the shepherds set apart by God for his people
  - b. so that the cause of Christ is advanced in the world through a sound established church
  - c. **Paul commands the Ephesians to be unified doctrinally and organically as the people of the decree, so that the intention of the decree will continue into the world**
- 11:54 2. **4:17-24** – Paul’s **clarification of his imperative**
- a. specifically, that this unity in the church would be a unity of **genuine Christian love:**
    1. not a unity of sentimentality or emotionalism or tradition or morality (**i.e.** how the world thinks)
    2. rather, a unity of *truth*, to think as God thinks; to abandon the old life and to put on the new self
  - b. **Paul clarifies his command to the Ephesians that true unity is a love which takes the truth given to us in Christ and forms the new self in it, putting off old ways of thinking**
- 10:57 3. **4:25-5:21** – Paul’s **explanation of his imperative**
- a. specifically, what a true unity of genuine Christian love **looks like** in believers:
    1. to be self-controlled emotionally, productive in the community, edifying in speech, and kind
    2. to imitate our adopted heavenly Father by pursuing his nature of holiness
    3. to abandon physical pleasures in anticipation of what the Father has in store
    4. to discern what it means to walk in the light rather than in the darkness of the world
  - b. **Paul explains in great detail to the Ephesians how this unity of genuine Christian love is to imitate God as his beloved children in every imaginable way**

- 11:00 4. **5:22-33, 6:1-4, 6:5-9** – Paul’s **examples in his imperative**
- specifically, that a true unity of genuine Christian love is a form of **mutual submission**
  - and, he uses three (3) specific examples of such submission *in the church* to make his point:
    - husbands and wives, loving each other in submission to Christ; parents and children, loving each other in an accountability to truth in Christ; masters and slaves loving each other in support of one another in the trust of Christ
  - Paul uses three examples before the Ephesians of human relationships in the church that show how genuine Christian love is actually a form of mutual submission**
- 11:03 5. **6:10-20** – Paul’s **warning in his imperative**
- specifically, that there will be opposition to the unity of love in the church, and this opposition will come against us from spiritual forces
  - thus, believers must take up the full armor of God’s own power: a belt of truth, a breastplate of righteousness, shoes of peace, a shield of faith, a helmet of salvation, and the sword of the word
    - with a deep sense of commitment and focus upon what God is doing in us and through us
  - Paul warns the Ephesians of the reality of spiritual opposition to genuine Christian love, designed to derail their efforts of unity**
- 11:06 6. **6:21-24** – Paul’s **final words**
7. **the great imperative of the letter – that the people of the divine decree are to be utterly unified in a genuine Christian love, a mutual submission in the truth, in the face of opposition**

## II. The Summation of the Letter to the Ephesians

### Content

- 11:10 a. **the purpose of the letter (the **umbrella** over it)**
- to (re)establish in the minds of the believers at Ephesus the *divine nature* of the church – to remind them of the fact that the church is established by God for his eternal purposes**  
“There is mass confusion about what the church is to *be* in our time, especially among so-called evangelical Christians. The problem is not with biblical terminology. Evangelicals know that the church is ‘the body of Christ’, ‘the bride of Christ’, [etc.] But for many people [these] are only slogans. The important questions have to do with how the church comes into *being*: Is forming the church something *we* do, or is it God’s doing? How is the church to *function*? Are we free to organize it any way we want or does God have determining ideas in this area? **Perhaps most important**, What is the church *for* anyway? Does the church exist merely to reach others with the gospel? Does it exist only to make us happy? Or is there some *greater plan* involved, something perhaps that even the angels look into (Eph. 3:10-11)?” (James Montgomery Boice, *Ephesians*)
  - the church is the visible manifestation of the eternal decree of God to make his wisdom and glory known throughout all time and to all creatures**  
“Of this gospel I was made a minister ... to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that **through the church** the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known **to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places**. This was according to the **eternal purpose** that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:9-11)
    - thus, our involvement in the church as followers of Christ is to truly *understand* this purpose
    - thus, our involvement in the church as followers of Christ is to *be unified* under this purpose

## III. The Application of the Letter to the Ephesians

### Content

- 11:20 a. **the application of the letter (the **implication** of it)**
- remember**: one of the primary questions of my *introduction* sermon was: what is the *next phase* of our church, and how will it impact me?
    - now that a full year has gone by, how would I answer that question today?
    - yes, there *have* been a number of **incremental** changes in the life of GFBC over this past year
    - but, my final answer: ...**