Week 1: Ephesians 1:1-2:10

Introduction

To kick-start the 7-week Bible study on Ephesians, you are encouraged to go through the "Brief Facts" on the previous page with your group and learn the background of Ephesians, and re-visit some fundamental questions about Christian faith: What is "the gospel"? How do we receive salvation? What is the biblical narrative (creation, fall, redemption, restoration)? – All these will be highly useful for understanding Ephesians 1–2. In fact most answers and explanations can be found within Ephesians 1–2 too.

As mentioned in the "Brief Facts", the first three chapters of Ephesians set out the Christian **calling** (i.e. how we are saved by grace through faith in Christ), which should transform us and guide our **conduct** as illustrated in the last three chapters of Ephesians. So a thorough understanding of the first three chapters would set a good foundation for learning the whole Book of Ephesians.

Warm-up question

Share one occasion when you are "chosen", e.g. admission / audition / interview. How did you feel?

Read Ephesians 1:1-10

We often think we are the one "choosing God" and becoming a Christian. But in 1:4-5, Paul said God "chose us" even before creation and "predestined us" to be saved. Salvation is a gift initiated and offered by God to us, and we can accept it when we believe in Jesus Christ as our savior.

1. **Do you think you are "chosen" by God? How does being "chosen" by God make you feel or influence your behavior?**

Read Ephesians 1:11-14

"Seal" is an indication of security, authentication and ownership. In 1:13-14, Paul said when a person hears the gospel and believes, God "seals" a believer by giving him/her the Holy Spirit, who keeps him/her securely in Christ. This is a "deposit" guaranteeing our future "inheritance", i.e. eternity with God.

2. **What gives you a sense of security? (E.g. work / relationship / religion?) How long does it last? Do you feel secure in God, why or why not?**

Read Ephesians 1:15-23

Having been chosen and sealed by God as believers secured in Christ, Paul's prayer was for the believers to have "the spirit of wisdom and revelation" so they may know God better (1:17). God wants us to know that He has given believers the power that defeated death and resurrected Jesus (1:19) which is transformational for us.

3. On a scale of 1 to 10, how well do you think you know God? "Knowing" someone doesn't always translate into "believing" or even "relying" on someone. How would you describe your level of belief/reliance on God and the power that He gives believers? Share a real-life example, if any.

> ***"To know God personally is salvation (John 17:3). To know Him increasingly is sanctification (Phil 3:10). To know Him perfectly is glorification (1 Cor. 13:9-12)." - Warren Wiersbe, Bible teacher (1929–2019)***

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

This passage powerfully summarises the message of the gospel: We are all sinful beings as reflected in our tendency to follow the ways of the world, gratify our selfish desires, and rebel against God (2:1-3); but out of His great love, God offers us a way to be saved from our sinful condition and consequences—when we put our faith in Jesus Christ who died for our sins and resurrected, we are given a new life, a new identity, and a new hope (2:4-7).

Paul emphasised that our salvation is entirely by God's grace and through our faith in Jesus Christ, and we do not earn it with our own effort (2:8-9); our "good works" is not a condition to our salvation but the fruit of our salvation (2:10).

4a. In what ways do you feel impacted or controlled by "ways of this world", "cravings of the flesh" and earthly "desires and thoughts" (2:1-3)?

4b. How can the new identity brought by the gospel through Christ (2:4-9) help you break through your old patterns and do good works for Him (2:10)?

> ***"The world tells you that 'you are because you do ___'; the gospel says 'you are so you do___.'" - Anonymous***

Own notes: