

Bridge Building (Ephesians 1)

By Bob Young

Introduction

Interesting time in the history of a church. Illus: two different churches in ministerial transition. Time for doubting, yet dreaming. Time for remembering and recommitting. Time to think about identity and purpose. Calling and challenge. What does it mean to be church? Standing as bridge between gospel and culture. How connect the two?

When see the Lord of creation--lord of purpose, lord of people, lord of power, what does it mean to call Jesus Lord, to simply be his people unencumbered by the baggage of the ages?

The nature of church is determined by the purpose of the church, and the purpose of the church that calls Jesus Lord can be no different than the purpose of Jesus Christ himself.

The future of this church, any church, depends on how we put Jesus in his proper place in our lives, how we depend upon God, and how we go forth as God's empowered presence in this world, connecting the good news and our world.

We must understand this connecting process: bridge-building. There is a great divide, a great river, between the unchanging gospel and the contemporary world. The bridge between gospel and world is firmly anchored on the gospel side of the chasm, but the bridge flexes. Bridge changes—not the message. Coping with that change is difficult, misunderstood, is misinterpreted, and often mishandled.

Key to coping with change is to see the unchanging God. First, let us see God for who he really is. Also key to depending on God, recognizing Jesus and Lord, and living life consistent with that claim.

We find help in the first part of Ephesians—a description of God's plan for church.

1. His abundant provision, 3-4

- every spiritual blessing in Christ
- selection by God to holiness and blamelessness
- love before we were born
- sonship
- graciousness extended

2. His preparation, 5-6

- selection
- sonship through Jesus Christ, Rom. 13:8
- 2:10 [How can we but praise him?]

3. His promise, 7-8, 13

- Redemption
- Forgiveness
- lavished wisdom and understanding

4. His purpose, 9-12

- salvation in Christ, lordship
- ownership
- sonship, inheritance

Thus, Paul prays....here is the key: that we might know....that in knowing we will respond....

I. Accepting his purpose, v. 18

- the hope to which he has called you
- the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints

II. Claiming his power, v. 19-21

- raising power

III. Being his presence, v. 22-23

- pleroma, fullness

Conclusion

I like a story from two Columbian missionaries. "Driving thru traffic, fighting drizzling rain, we chanced on a 4-yr-old girl. She was wet, cold, shaking. Her clothes ragged, hair matted, nose running. She walked between the cars at the stoplight, washing headlights because she was too short to wash windshields. We few gave her coins, others honked at her to get out of the way. As we drove away 50c poorer, I raged at God for the injustice in the world that allowed the situation. 'God, how could You just stand by. Why don't you do something?' Later that evening, God came softly and responded calmly, not in kind with my rage, but with tenderness, "I have done something, I created you."

Why doesn't God do something? He has—he has put us in this place for such a time as this!