

Title: The Normal Christian Life
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Introduction:

- Becoming a Christian is easy.
- Staying in the race?
- When life 'happens'...
- Recipes for success...
- If you came hungry, you will be satisfied!
- God is willing and able!

The letter(s) to the Ephesian church

- Two letters, one directly from God via John, the other from His apostle Paul.
- Both contain 'good news', the first letter in the beginning; the last one ends with a beautiful promise.
- Both contain conditions that have more to do with 'being' than 'doing'.
- You can't love without doing!

Last letter:

Revelation 2:1-7

¹ To the angel of the church of Ephesus write: He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands, says these things. ² I know your works and your labor and your patience, and how you cannot bear those who are evil. And *you* tried those pretending to be apostles, and are not, and have found them liars. ³ And *you* have borne, and have patience, and for My name's sake you have labored and have not fainted. ⁴ But I have against you that you left your first love. ⁵ Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent, and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and will remove your lampstand out of its place unless you repent. ⁶ But you have this, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Paul's letter to the Ephesians:

- It is a common letter, not only to the Ephesians, but to the church as a whole.
- Ephesus was a major financial hub.
- A meteorite fell with bumps that looked like female breasts.
- Letters to Timothy were to him in Ephesus and about the Ephesian church.
- John's three letters and gospel were written here.
- John also buried there.
- Paul stayed there on two occasions and for about two years.
- First half of letter is about our relationship with God.
- Jesus pictured as the anointed Christ who gives us our relationship to God.
- First three chapters are about the power and the purpose of God. To sum up all things in Christ!
- Second part is about our relationship with each other.
- It is the Lord Jesus who governs our relationship with each other:

Ephesians 4:1

¹ ...prisoner of the Lord...

Ephesians 6:1

¹ ...obey your parents in the Lord...

- Chapters 4-6 are concerned with our response to what God has done – we must walk in the Spirit – obedient to Him showing the way.
- We are not saved by good deeds, but for them.
- The world thinks that being good saves us.
- The gospel states that we are being saved in order to do good.
- Most religions in the world put sanctification before justification.
- Christian behaviour is built upon Christian belief.
- The letter has two parts:

Part 1: Chapters 1-3

- His purpose and power
- Relationship to God (in Christ)
- Salvation worked in
- Doctrine (what we believe)
- What we are saved by
- Adoration
- Forgiveness
- Justification
- Our release
- Divine sovereignty
- Inside the church

Part 2: Chapters 4-6

- His purpose and power – our walk and warfare
- Relationship to God (in Christ) – relationship to others (in the Lord)
- Salvation worked in – salvation worked out
- Doctrine (what we believe) – duty (what we do)
- What we are saved by – what we are saved for
- God is now your Father, tell it to your neighbour!
- Adoration – application
- Forgiveness – holiness
- Justification – sanctification
- Our release – our response
- Divine sovereignty – human responsibility
- Inside the church – outside the church

Walking in the Spirit

- Humility - we are what we are by the grace of God – 4:2
- Unity – one body, one faith, baptism, Spirit – 4:3
- Maturity – to grow up to the full stature of Christ – 4:13
- Integrity – our lives must match what we say – 4:17
- Charity – must be tolerant of each other, but intolerant to sin – 5:2
- Purity – keep on being filled with the Spirit – 5:18
- Docility – submission to one another in Christ – wives, children, slaves – 5:22-6:9
- Responsibility – be worthy to be submitted to.
- We cannot by our own effort do these things – they are the natural results of our ‘being in Christ’, our ‘walking in the Spirit’, our sit, walk, stand in Christ, our blessedness as we walk, stand, sit in the counsel of the godly – Psalm 1.
- The Ephesians developed a problem – Revelation 3 – They lost their first love.
- The latter part is not new prescriptions, but a description of a Spirit-filled life.
- Proverbs 2: My son...concentrate on part 1, then 2 is a natural consequence! Live by the Spirit, then the flesh dies a natural death!
- Matthew 5: Man shall not live by bread alone, but from every word that proceeds from the mouth of God! His words define us, show us our true worth! In His light – we must see as He does, who we are!
- Isaiah 55 says that God’s thoughts are higher than our thoughts, just like the heavens are higher than the earth; often we stop reading there thinking that it’s supposed to be like that!
- The words that come from His mouth, (the authentic thought, the eye of the fountain) will impact you just like the rain and snow that come down from above, and not return there without first saturating the

soil, awakening the dormant seed, causing it to sprout into a full harvest, ready to feed and repeat the ongoing cycle of life, “giving bread to the eater and seed to the sower.”

- Just like our daily bread, the Word comes to us from above. Even though the seed is already buried in the soil, without the rain and the snow there will be no bread! It is amazing how rain awakens seed even in the driest desert.
- He desires to feed us with the finest of the wheat and nourish us with honey from the rock. He counsels us to buy from Him wine and milk without money and without price (Isaiah 55:1). The only valid currency in that realm is to pay attention to the original Word that proceeds from His mouth like rain.
- Paul receives and understands the revelation – and all he wants to preach about is Christ and Him as crucified – as He was the last Adam, and in Him everything was fulfilled, and in Him we all live and move and have our being! It is not about His gifts, miracles, what He can give to us – it is about He Himself, what He is to us, and what we are in Him!
- Paul never once referred to the miracles or parables of Jesus! He spoke about the revelation of Christ in us that is our & your hope to the glory of being a child of Father God.

What does Ephesians tell us?

Ephesians 1:3-4, 7-8, 11, 13

³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ: ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love:

⁷ in whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, His blood is the ransom that secures our redemption. His forgiving us our sins measures the wealth of His grace

¹¹ in whom also we were made a heritage, having been fore ordained according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his will;

¹³ in whom also you...were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,

Ephesians 2:1, 6, 10

¹ And He *has made you alive*, who were once dead in trespasses and sins,

⁶ and has raised *us* up together and made *us* sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus

¹⁰ For we are *His* workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them

- We are engineered by His design, He manufactured us in Christ. (Greek, *poema*: we are His poem, God finds inspired expression of Christ in us.) We are fully fit to do good. God has prepared a highway for us to lead us like kings out of death into life,

Ephesians 2:19

¹⁹ Now therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God,

- The conclusion is clear, you are no longer standing outside as a stranger or a second grade citizen, you are where you belong; you are a joint indigenous inhabitant of your own country and part of an intimate family where no-one is suspicious, inferior or condemned.
- Amazing – but that is who and what we are in Christ Jesus!

Ephesians 4:1

¹ As one captive in the Lord, (I have no other identity or agenda outside of Jesus, my complete existence is confined in Him) I urgently appeal to you therefore, with reference to your original identity, to conduct your life in such a way that your every move bears witness to the weight and value of who you really are. (He surnamed you, not your parents or your culture!)

- And that is what it is all about! That is what and who you really are!
- It is all about Jesus – He is the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2) – let us keep our eyes on Him, and not on people, circumstances, conditions.
- Let us look intently into the mirror, into the perfect law of our redemption and our freedom – James 1.
- Don't miss the mark – *hamartia* – not to possess your legal and rightful inheritance – then you will always “sin”, miss the mark in trying to fill the void in your life. You will be tested – challenged about your faith – it will develop perseverance (*lankmoedigheid*) – because you are absolutely convinced about God's

favour on your life and who you are in Christ. James 1:2-4 – so that you will be mature and complete – to possess all that is becoming to you!

- Let us remember where we are – seated with Christ in heavenly places. Let us take the fight from there – with the full armour at our disposal for attack, and never to retreat – don't go back to Egypt where you were slaves...but it's always your choice – so be careful where you walk, stand and sit in the natural! (Psalm 1).
- Jesus, it is all about you! You are the High Priest of our confession.
- You loved us unconditionally.
- Psalm 45 – and this morning, we write you a love song of worship, adoration, praise.
- You are our Great Reward!
- You are our First Love!