

1. We begin our study in Ephesians

A. Where we are called to enter into that spiritual fulness and blessing of God

Thought: So necessary because so many live like spiritual paupers even though they are so rich in Christ

A. John MacArthur in his commentary writes of Hetty Green – called America’s greatest miser

1). When she died in 1916, she left an estate valued at \$100 million

2). But she was so miserly she ate cold oatmeal to save the expense of heating the water.

3). When her son had a severe leg injury, she took so long trying to find a free clinic to treat him that his leg had to be amputated because of advanced infection.

B. I fear there are Christians like that – Spiritual Hetty Green’s - rich in Christ but live in spiritual poverty

C. Ephesians is written to free us from that

1). Ephesians has been called the “Believer’s bank” and the “Christian’s checkbook”

a). This book tells us what we possess and how to enjoy those possessions

2). This book is the answer to the “underwhelming Christianity” so many believers experience

D. But there are some conditions we must take care of in the beginning

1). You must be a true believer – we will look at that in a minute

2). You must believe what this book says and apply what it says

a). If you meet those conditions then this book will change your life

2. Out outline

A. Paul: A recipient of grace

B. Paul: A commissioned Apostle

C. The Believer: Defined

I. PAUL: A RECIPIENT OF GRACE

Eph 1:1–2 (ESV) Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God...

1. “Paul an Apostle of Christ Jesus” What a statement about the grace of God!

A. I believe this is something Paul wrote with amazement. Never took it for granted – Why?

He remembered who he was: 1 Ti 1:15 (ESV) The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

Question: Why would he say that? Because of who he was before he was saved! How he was saved

A. In Acts 9 he was saved on that Damascus road when he wasn’t looking for Christ

1). He was trying to snuff out everything attached to Christ.

2). He was filled with rage and he was hunting Christians to imprison them or kill them

Point: Paul was such a fan of grace because he knew how undeserving he was of God’s kindness

A. Almighty God stood in his way on that Damascus road on his way to hunt down Christians

B. Jesus Christ said – “Paul I’m changing your plans – you are mine”

“But Lord, I hate you and everything about you.”

“Yes, Paul but you are being rescued by grace, unmerited favor. You are mine. The Father has chosen you and adopted you and will keep you until you are in glory with him.”

1). No wonder Paul wrote so much about grace

Transition: We lose this in our soft pedaled Christianity – that conforms to our soft age of “Safe zones”

2. We live in an age consumed by self-image

A. We don’t want anybody to feel bad about themselves

1). We don’t give trophies to winning team – we give participation trophies to everyone

- a). We don't want the second-place team to feel bad
- 2). That's what they should have done for the World Series – So Dodgers didn't feel bad
- B. But it seems Paul got his self-worth not by hiding the ugly truth – but by embracing it
Not by building up his own ego, but by celebrating who he was in Christ
 - 1). I was the worst of sinners but let me tell you about who I am now. I am saved by grace.
 - 2). I don't deserve it – but God loves me, has rescued me and is using me for his kingdom.
 - 3). I am accepted by him – therefore – in him I can accept myself – that new me
 - a). AND I don't have to worry about being accepted by you!

Thought: I think we do no favor to believers when we're afraid to talk about the ugliness of who they were **God does.** **Turn: Eph 2:1–3 (ESV)** And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ⁽²⁾ in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ⁽³⁾ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Next verse: Eph 2:4 (ESV) *But God,* being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,

- A. It is against that black backdrop of who we were that causes the grace of God to shine brilliantly
 - 1). I know who I was – the darkness of how I lived – I loved sin and hated God
- B. And I know the amazing grace of God. That he would rescue an undeserving sinner like me.
 - 1). That truth captures my heart - All I can do is worship him with my life.

Question: Are you thrilled by grace? Are you amazed by what God has done?

- A. He has stood in your way as you rushed headlong into hell – just like he did Paul
- B. You may have not been blinded by a bright light – but he lit up the truth in your understanding

You were: 2 Co 4:4 (ESV) In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

But God: 2 Co 4:6 (ESV) For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

- 1). You have been saved by grace – unmerited favor – how grateful we should all be

Transition: Paul was saved in a miraculous way on that Damascus road and commissioned to be an Apostle

II. PAUL: A COMMISSIONED APOSTLE

Eph 1:1 (ESV) Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God...

1. Notice his authority was not self-generated

- A. He makes it clear that his calling came from God and not from him, or any body of believers.
 - 1). This was not a self-appointed, or church appointed call. This calling came from God himself.

2. Important - I wish the church would take this into consideration more.

- A. We appoint men and women to positions based on things like diplomas from seminary
“They have a masters of theology. So, let's put them in the pulpit.”
- B. A diploma is never a proof a man is called by God.
 - 1). Many credentialed men in pulpits today – are recognized by an institution but not by God
 - a). Many aren't even saved! They've never seen their need of a Savior and forgiveness
 - b). They don't even believe that the Bible is authored by God himself.
- C. What is most important in choosing a man is not a diploma but the calling of God upon that life

Richard Glover: None is a Christian minister who has not been ordained by the laying on of unseen hands.

- 1). Is he a man that loves God, his Son, and his Word?
- 2). Is the Bible his final authority for all things in his life and the life of the church?

- 3). Does his life prove he is a follower of Christ? Does his heart burn for his Lord?

Transition: So Paul was called by God and commissioned to be an Apostle. Let's define that

Apostle defined

1. Simply means in Greek = One that is sent by another - can be translated "messenger"

- A. Some take this simple meaning and give it to men today
 "He has a powerful message – obviously sent by God as His messenger – he's an apostle"
- B. We must see the term in the NT is radically elevated beyond this simple "sending"

2. The NT Apostle

- A. Each one had seen the Risen Lord personally
- B. Each one had been commissioned by Jesus personally into this office
- C. Their writings and teaching were fully inspired by God (no error at all)
- 1). When they spoke or wrote these weren't the Words of man but God Himself
- 2). Before the NT they were in a sense the Bible to the church - God's will came through them
- D. They were also gifted with working miracles whenever that was necessary – to validate message

Transition: I know some disagree with me – I have trouble with men calling themselves Apostles

- A. Paul has told us who he was – now he tells us who the Christian is
- 1). We can think these introductions in the epistles aren't important
 But Paul tells us who can avail themselves of these riches in this introduction

III. THE DEFINITION OF A CHRISTIAN

Eph 1:1 (ESV) Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, *To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus:*

1. Paul writes this book filled with spiritual riches to a very limited audience

- A. It is not for everybody in the world – it is not for everybody in the church
 It is not for everybody who raised a hand at an evangelistic outreach or prayed a prayer to receive Christ
- B. These blessings are for "Saints" who are "Faithful" and who are "In Christ Jesus"

2. In v. 1 Paul gives us a description of who a Christian is

- A. What Lloyd-Jones calls the "*irreducible minimum*" of what constitutes a real Christian
- 1). They are not someone who decided for Christ at one time – but their life hasn't changed
- 2). They aren't someone who regularly attends a church – but outside of church live like the world
- B. The true believer is only those who are "Saints," "Faithful," and "in Christ"

Transition: So in this verse we have the "Irreducible minimum" of what a Christian is

- A. These and only these – are those who can enjoy the spiritual riches found in Ephesians
- 1). Let's define this - Not looking for perfection, but must see these to some degree in our life

The Christian Is a Saint

1. Not Saint like Catholic church – one they feel is extraordinary (Saint Christopher)

- A. The NT grants sainthood to every believer – "Saint Bill"

Transition: Every true believer is a "Saint" but what does that mean?

2. A saint is somebody who is set apart for God – separated from the world

- A. A Saint has answered the call to salvation and has left the world behind to follow Christ

2 Cor 6:16-18 (NIV) What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." (17) *"Therefore come out from them and be separate,* says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, *and I will receive you."* (18) "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

- 1). The call to God in salvation always contains a call out to come out of the sinfulness of the world
- 2). Isn't this what Paul said to the Galatians?

Gal 1:3-4 (KJV) Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, (4) Who gave himself for our sins, *that he might deliver us from this present evil world...*

- a). In salvation, God in his grace sent his son, who gave himself for our sins.
 - b). Notice what that did. It not only saved us from hell
 - 1a). It delivered us from living a life of sin in this present evil world
- B. Peter says the same thing in his second sermon in Acts 3 – how to get right with God
- Acts 3:19 (NIV)** *Repent*, then, *and turn* to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,
- 1). You are saved when you turn away from sin in repentance and turn towards God by faith
 - 2). Saving faith is always a repenting faith – Always!

3. The genuine believer lives differently than those in the world

- A. If you know anything about what happens in salvation this just makes sense
- 1). How could someone have a new nature given by God – His nature that desires holiness
And have Almighty God take up residence in them to empower them to live those desires out
 - a). But still stay the same! That is impossible!

2 Co 5:17 (ESV) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a *new creation*. The old has passed away; behold, *the new has come*.

Question: So who are the blessings in Ephesians for? The true believer who is a "Saint"

- A. Those who have answered the call to salvation and have left the life of sin to follow Christ
- 1). Again NOT perfectly – but this is what characterizes thier life
- B. If you call yourself a Christian but live like everybody else in the world
- 1). Then these blessings are not for you – the Scripture I would apply is 2 Pet 1:10
"Be eager to make your calling and election sure"
 - a). Or as Paul put it – "Examine yourself to see if you be in the faith" – 2 Cor 13:5
 - 1a). Why is there no evidence? Better to know now than when it's too late

Transition: We sound teaching that defines what a believer really is

- A. We have to many calling themselves Christians who aren't – there is no evidence at all
- 1). People saying they are Christians who live like the world weaken the church and its effectiveness

4. Why do you think the Ephesian believers turned Ephesus upside down?

- A. This city so given over to the grossest of sins (saw last week)
- 1). This place that made Las Vegas look like a monastery
- B. The church turned that city upside because Paul taught truth empowered by the Spirit
And the believers lived that truth out without compromising
- 1). They were different – separate – had committed themselves to Christ at their Lord
And their lives showed it
 - 2). The unbeliever saw the hope and joy they had – the rest and contentment – saw the difference!
 - a). They became jealous over what they had – they wanted it
- C. A holy jealousy is a powerful thing

I tell wives – husbands – parents – who have loved ones not living for Christ

“Make them jealous. YOU live so closely to him that you have such joy and peace. That you are blessed so much that they want what you have! Make them jealous!”

Question: Does that sound strange? It’s Biblical. God uses this tactic of holy jealousy to reach the Jews.

Rom 11:11 (NKJV) I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, *to provoke them to jealousy*, salvation has come to the Gentiles.

- A. God used his blessings to the Gentiles to cause the Jews to see what they were missing and want that.
- B. This is an amazing thought for the Christian who is serious about their walk with God
 - 1). That will bring blessing into your life – the spiritual riches of Ephesians
 - a). That true rest – contentment – deep joy
 - 2). That is enough to make some who don’t know Christ to desire to know him.
 - a). They will want what you have – that’s how it works
- C. But live like them and you remove that dynamic.
 - 1). They won’t want what you have – they already have what you have

Joe Focht: “There is no more confused message that you and I could give to a lost and dying world than to live in sin and at the same time to tell people about the transforming power of Jesus Christ. There isn’t a more confusing thing we can do to our kids and the generation behind us, in this world.

God will not use a compromised life to reach a compromised world. God will use a life that is given over to Him, that is a demonstration of the message that through the power of Jesus Christ and His love He can transform our lives and set us free.”

Transition: So the Christian is one who is a Saint – separated from the world and sin – to live for Him

The Christian Is One Who Is **Faithful**

Eph 1:1 (ESV) Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are *faithful* in Christ Jesus:

Has two meanings

1. **First meaning: A Christian is one who believes certain things**

- A. The word in the Greek means to “Exercise faith.”
 - 1). IOW the Apostle’s audience believed certain things – the truths in the Bible

This Is Essential: You Can’t Be a Christian Apart from Certain Beliefs

- A. The Christian is not just a nice person, member of a church, somewhat honest. Or a republican.
- B. A Christian is one who believes those truths recorded in the Bible
 - 1). He believes what the Bible says about Christ such as
 - a). That he is God come to earth, born of a virgin in a human body.
 - b). He died to pay the debt of man’s sin
 - c). Faith in him is the only way to be saved.
 - 2). He believes what the Bible says about God – about heaven and hell etc.
 - 3). He believes what is said about man – born lost in need of a Savior

Transition: A believer believes what the Bible says – because they believe God authored the book

- A. Brings us to the second meaning

2. **Second meaning of this word faithful: They are faithful to the faith**

- A. First meaning – they believe in the right things
Second meaning they are faithful to those things they claim to believe in
- B. We could say these first two definitions are negative and positive

- 1). Negative: What they don't do - They separate themselves from the sins of the world = A saint
- 2). Positive: What they do - They are faithful to the things they claim to believe
 - a). They stand for those truths they believe in – those truths govern their lives
- C. IOW they aren't compromisers – chameleons changing depending upon the crowd their around
 - 1). Act piously in church – act like the world when they are in the world

Point: Believers are called to be faithful to Christ and to stand for truth – not to compromise

- A. One of the reasons we don't do this is we are afraid of man – we are man pleasers
The Bible deals with this – the Bible confronts us and comforts us regarding this

TURN: Php 1:27–28 (ESV) Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, ⁽²⁸⁾ *and not frightened in anything by your opponents.*

- A. He says – don't be intimidated by man – God's truth is to dominate your life – your actions - words
- B. I know that's not easy – but Paul says there is a great blessing in standing = You'll have assurance

Php 1:28 (ESV) and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.

Phil 1:28 (NIV) without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. *This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved--and that by God.*

- 1). The fact that you stand by your convictions – don't live a compromised life – proves something
 - a). That you are saved – why? It proves that God is first in your life
 - 1a). That you care more about his opinion than you do man's
- C. But if I really live out my convictions I might suffer! I guarantee you will!

Look at: Php 1:29 (ESV) For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,

- 1). We love the fact that it has been granted for us to believe in Christ and be saved
 - a). But God has granted to us that we will suffer! What!
- 2). Word granted – same word “charizomai” from “charis” = *grace*
 - a). This suffering is a grace gift from God = it is meant to bring blessing now and later
 - b). We are so afraid of what God says will be so beneficial

Transition: Let's look at that to try and get a handle on this fear

Suffering brings blessing now

TURN: Rom 5:3-5 (NIV) Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; (4) perseverance, character; and character, hope. (5) And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

1. What suffering produces in our life now – why it's a gift

- A. Suffering produces *perseverance*: The ability to do right thing regardless of the resistance
 - 1). How we need this – so many wilt so easily – every little thing defeats them
- B. Perseverance produces *character* – as we persevere doing the right – that produces Christlikeness
- C. Character leads to *hope* = Assurance of salvation - confident expectation
 - 1). Why? We see God changing us – we see the evidence of God in our life
 - a). As we see that our certainty of salvation grows
 - b). If we don't see growth – don't see holiness – don't see the evidence of God in our life
 - 1a). We will doubt we are saved – for a good reason – there must be evidence

Point: Suffering (still light here - rolled eyes – mocking - sighs) brings the blessing of assurance

2. Suffering brings God into our life in a very real way

- A. I've learned whenever man has risen up against me – God has stood with me
- 1). I am filled with peace and joy – I experience Him – isn't that what he said?
Jos 1:9 (ESV) Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”
- a). Want to experience God more in your life – stand for him – take some risks
- B. We are called to walk the same path as Christ – he will walk it with us
1 Pe 2:20–21 (ESV) For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. ⁽²¹⁾ *For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.*
- 1). We are living for the Father like Christ lived – we will be blessed for that
- Thought:** Listen - the only way to avoid suffering altogether is to live a compromised life
- A. Why do I say that? Because of this promise
2 Ti 3:12 (ESV) Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,
Vance Havner: If you are under any illusions about the attitude of this world towards Jesus Christ, try really living for him for a week and you will find out!
- B. If I'm living a life that never causes any discomfort – that is worrisome!
- 1). How can I really be following Christ who is so counter-culture and never stir the waters
- C. Only way to avoid that is compromise:
 If you understood the danger of compromise you'd stay far from it
- 1). Compromise leads to compromise which leads to compromise
- C. Don't be afraid of suffering at the hands of man – it brings blessing – we rejoice in our suffering
- 1). When we stand for God we will see how he uses suffering as a gift
- Transition:** It is worth it now and it will be worth it later

Suffering brings blessing later

Mat 5:10-12 (NIV) Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (11) "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. (12) Rejoice and be glad, (Why?) because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

1. Every rolled eye – every sigh – every harsh word etc.

- A. It is all deposited into the bank of heaven – waiting there for you as a reward
- 1). You will wish you had been bolder!

Transition: That only leaves *“In Christ”* We'll pick that up next week

CONCLUSION

1. We see who Paul was – an Apostle commissioned by Christ

2. We see who Paul was writing to – the believers in Ephesus

- A. Those who are saints – who no longer live like the world – they follow him
- B. Faithful – those who believe what God has recorded in the Word
- 1). Those who live like they believe those things are God's word and are true
- C. They are “In Christ” – united to him – fused to him