

Ephesians 1 - (Part 1)

by Paul Washer

Paul Washer emphasizes the importance of establishing authority, right thinking, and humility in interpreting the scriptures, and living according to God's will.

Duration: 1:22:23

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:7, Hebrews 11:1, Hebrews 11:7-9

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the amazing nature of the preaching of the word of God. The book of Ephesians is highlighted as a guide for living the Christian life. The first three chapters focus on what God has done for believers in Christ, while the fourth chapter urges them to live according to their high calling. The preacher emphasizes the importance of knowing and experiencing Christ personally, and encourages believers to have faith and renew their minds in the word of God.

Transcript

Let's start again in the book of Ephesians, chapter one, Ephesians, chapter one, and I praise God for the songs that we just we just sang, they were they were absolutely phenomenal in their beauty, but they were also phenomenal in the truth they conveyed. You know, Martin Luther said that, well, at least he attributed a big part of the Reformation not simply to the preaching, but to the hymns that were written because those hymns were sung by the people, they were remembered by the people. And I tell you, there are some songs that we have sung here in the last several months that they're worthy of being remembered.

They truly are. Now, let's look at Ephesians, chapter one. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus, grace to you and peace from God, our father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. When we think of theology in the Bible, most of the time our mind goes to the book of Romans and rightfully so, it's not a systematic theology, but it's the probably the closest thing we have in the New Testament. And it is a marvelous book of tremendous Christian doctrine.

But I have to admit something to you in the book of Ephesians, the first three chapters, I find the highest, most exalted truths. There is such theology in these first three chapters, it's utterly amazing, and the book is kind of designed around that way and we can see an appropriate way to live the Christian life in the

sense that the first three chapters are all about what God has done for us in Christ. Then we get to the fourth chapter and it basically says, therefore, based on everything that you have been taught in these first three chapters, now go on and live according to this high calling that you have received.

And that's what I long for you and for me. That we would see biblical truth and because of that truth, that sure foundation, we would live to the glory of God. Now, there's also a problem that we see in the book of Ephesians when we compare it to the book of Revelation, you see, this is high theology.

But when we get to the book of Revelation, chapter two, we see that the church in Ephesus is struggling with some problems. They were quick to point out bad theology. But they had lost their first love.

Now, I don't want to exaggerate, but there is a sense in which our blood should boil whenever we hear someone say, I don't want any of that theology stuff or I don't want any of that doctrine stuff. I just want Jesus. It's wrong, we cannot divorce the Christian life from knowledge and doctrine, and yet.

We must always be very careful, each and every one of us is a theologian, whether we admit it or not, and each and every one of us need to have good theology. But theology is not the end goal. Right thinking is not even the end goal, as we're going to see hopefully today, there's a statement in Christianity and among those who study the Bible quite a bit and who are prone to use big words, and that is orthodoxy, right thinking.

Should lead to doxology, to praise and to praxis praxis is practice a correct way of living. And so having said that, let's look at the first verse, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God now, Paul, an apostle. What is Paul doing at the very outset of this letter, Paul is establishing his credentials, he's establishing his authority as an apostle.

And why is that important? Well, it's important for several reasons, particularly with regard to this book is because he is going to ask us to believe unseen things that are biblical realities. And the only way that if you're in your right mind, that you ought to believe something you cannot see is because. Because of the authority of the one who promised it.

He's going to tell us of great things that not even the most mature saint. Has glimpsed in its fullness. And so we're going to have to trust Paul, and the only way we can trust Paul is to know that Paul is speaking as one who has authority.

Now, the word apostles used in the Roman Greco world as someone who was sent out, but sent out with orders, but not only sent out with orders, sent out with the authority to speak those orders, to enact those orders. Now, in the New Testament, what do we see? We see that word used in the context. Of these men that have been chosen by God, they've been chosen by God.

And not only they've been chosen, they have been empowered in a special way so that Peter could say that they were men carried by the Holy Spirit and spoke from God. Now, this is very, very important, and I want to say a few things about it. First of all, if you don't have to turn there, but in Colossians, Paul says Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God and Timothy, our brother.

Now, I want you to understand something because I'm going to apply it to me and the pastors who are here and any preacher you ever hear. Paul says that he's an apostle and he says Timothy, our brother. Now, Timothy was highly esteemed by Paul and by the rest of the church.

They loved Timothy. They respected Timothy, but Timothy was not an apostle. Timothy did not speak with authority given to him by Christ as an apostle truly was.

And no preacher living today has authority as an apostle. And as speakers, as preachers, we have authority only to the degree that we line up with what the apostles have said. Please understand that you may you may hear a preacher that you admire.

There are many I admire from from Spurgeon to Martin Lloyd-Jones to Dr. Piper to John MacArthur, so many good men. But that's all they are. That's all they are.

That's all they are now, I want to look at a few things that are very, very important, and I am going to be depending a great deal on my notes today because I just want to make sure that I'm as clear as possible. So this may not be the most elegant thing you've ever heard, and I'm going to be looking down a lot, but it's more important that you think about the truth that's being told you. And not the eloquence of the delivery.

Now, first of all, Paul's first task was to establish his authority. Your first task is to determine. Your authority.

Now, I know, brothers and sisters in Christ, you're a lot like me, I hope better, but I'm sure you're a lot like me, I know that in my head, I know that the scriptures are my authority, but I find myself thinking thoughts that are not according to that authority, and I find myself doing things that are not according to that authority. And I find myself so often like the men of judges who did what was right in their own eyes. I'm sorry.

I wish I was more. I hope you are more, but don't just say the word of God is our authority. Because even after 30 years, I realize how difficult it is for me to live that simple phrase.

Now, I want to point out a few things, first of all, do you know that we are constantly being bombarded by things that oppose and contradict that are contrary to the word of God? They come from everywhere, they come from the world, they come from the devil, they come from our flesh, they can come from our own hearts, our own unrenewed minds. There's a lot of things being said out there, there's a lot of things that drive our actions and our attitudes. But brothers and sisters in Christ, it must be the word.

It must be the word. Now, I'm going to give you the only appropriate response to the scriptures, I'm going to read it to you in First Thessalonians 2, 13, Paul said, for this reason, we also constantly thank God that when you receive the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also also performs its work in you who believe. I also want you to listen to this, Second Corinthians 10, five, we are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Now, brothers and sisters, you and I, when we hear the word of God, we must remind ourselves and we must remind each other that's one of the purposes of the church. Look, this is God. Speaking to us, we must take heed, we must listen.

Also, we must realize that all these thoughts that come into our life, we must take them captive, we must compare them to the word of God. And if they are found wanting, if they are contradictory, we must cage them and throw them out. Now, another thing I just want to throw to you, especially you young guys and young Christians, girls also is Ezra 7-11, for Ezra had said in his heart to study the law of God and to

practice it and to teach his statutes and ordinances in Israel.

The only way you're going to be able to stand on apostolic authority on scripture is to study the scriptures. Because the study of scripture, the reception of truth, something like working out physically, you don't work out physically, your muscles just keep getting smaller and smaller and smaller. You work out physically, you begin to see some growth.

It's the same way with the word. Now, now listen to me, I don't want to hurt you, but I don't want you to escape from here. Was just a pious nod, realize that when we open the book, it is God speaking to us.

And we must take it seriously because it is going to tell us things that we cannot see with our eyes, it is going to tell us things that others say are not true, so we must be bound to the word of God. Now, another thing that I want to point out that I think is extremely, extremely important. And please listen to me, because I've seen this as a great danger, your interpretation of the scriptures and my interpretation of the scriptures are not the scriptures.

Now, why do I say that? There are a lot of people who say, bless God, I believe this book and I think they're sincere and whatever this book says I'm going to do and I believe they're sincere. But there's a there's a problem. There's a fallacy in their logic.

They think that their interpretation is synonymous with the book itself. And that's not always the case. Why? Not because the book is fallible.

It's not fallible. It's infallible, but because you and I are fallible, especially young people, if you have a lot of zeal for following the Lord, recognize this zeal without knowledge is dangerous. You and I are fallible.

I know men who have shipwrecked themselves in the faith because they thought that everything they interpreted in the scriptures was the way that it is and everyone else was wrong. Now, there is a right answer in the scriptures, and if we don't have it, we are wrong. But what I want you to see is all of us are wrong at times.

And so what is the cure? Well, if I interpret the Bible and then I just go to you in my church and ask you the same question, that may that may help me as I listen to your opinion. But you and I are of the same church. If I go to every Christian in my contemporary culture, that may be very helpful to me.

But also, I need to know that my entire contemporary Christian culture has also been swayed by influences outside of the scriptures. So what must I do to truly discover what the Bible is saying and stand on apostolic authority? Well, there's a there's a thing in the interpretation of scripture that we talk about quite a bit, and it's this you always do your theology in the context of the church. And what does that mean, dear sister, dear brother? This is what I do when I study the scriptures, but it's what you must do to some degree that when I come up with an interpretation that I think is grammatically correct, historically correct, I go to church history and I ask myself, has anyone else ever believed this before? And if no one has, I'm probably wrong, aren't I? You see, this is what I want you to develop.

I want you to love the word, but I want you to love the word and humility. I'm not saying that you go and interpret the passage and then you go somewhere and you you know, talk to people who don't even believe the scriptures or liberal theologians who don't even believe it's inspired. It's not what I'm saying.

But when you interpret the scriptures, go outside of your context and compare yourself to other godly men and women down through history and see if there is unity. New things and new discoveries in Christianity are extremely dangerous. Extremely dangerous.

Now, he says here, Paul, an apostle, and then he says of Christ, Jesus, of Christ, Jesus. Now, this is a genitive of. And it can either be a genitive of possession or description, there's a lot of things it can be, there's a lot of different types of genitives.

But I want to talk about two different things here. When Paul says that he is an apostle of Christ Jesus, he is saying, first of all, that he belongs to him. He's he's possessed by him, the ownership, the claim upon the life of Paul is Christ Jesus.

Now, let me ask you a question. Can you say that or let me put it this way, so I don't heap condemnation on you because I can't say it fully, are you growing in that reality? Is your life more and more under the control? Look at me under the control of Christ. What other people see it and say, my.

That person is belongs to another. Jesus Christ, also, Paul is not only saying that his life, but also his ministry, what he does is under the ownership of Christ and then we can go even farther. Paul is saying that his life and ministry are defined by the person of Christ.

Is yours. Would you say that your life is marked out? By Christ. His lordship in your life now, young Christian, let me share with you something that's very, very important to to be saved, you must believe in Christ not only as savior, but as Lord, don't let anybody fool you.

But here's what you need to understand. As we grow, those realities become greater and greater in our lives, when you say as a brand new Christian, Jesus is Lord, I am sure that you are sincere, but you really don't know what you're talking about. Thirty years later, you know a little bit more what that means, and hopefully 60 years later, you know a lot more what it means.

It's something we grow into. But look at me. All true believers will have this as some sort of reality in their life.

That their life will be defined by Christ and his commandments, that you will notice a growing ownership of them now. Now. I want to look at some other things, he says, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God.

Now, the Greek word here for will is Philemon, and it can also mean desire. And here's something that I want you to see about God's will and your life as we look at the life of Paul. And it's this this this will is not a cold, calculated rationality.

It is not this mechanical thing that has somehow been fixed for you, the word here can also mean desire, and what it means is this God has a will, God has a desire for you. Can't you see woven into that truth more than just do this and do that? Can't you see woven into that truth more than just slavery? More than just him being governor, can't you see woven into this word, God's will, a father's love, a father's love. A brother's love, I want you to embrace God's will as he shows you his will in his word, I want that for you, but I want you to see this just love, magnificent love of God that is flowing from this.

It's absolutely amazing. Now, are you in the will of God now as a young Christian, you're probably saying, I don't know. Well, if you are a Christian, he's got you in there somewhere.

Many times we don't know exactly what it's all about, but his providence overrides our lack of knowledge. So you can trust him and don't be afraid. But also you're not to be lackadaisical or apathetic.

You're not just to come to a crossroad in your life, some decision and then decide you're going to get into the word and find out where the answer is. That's not how Christianity works. The way it works is this way, that you have a practice of renewing your mind in the word of God so that you will know what that will be.

An old professor of mine, T.W. Hunt, wrote a book on the mind of Christ, that as we renew our mind more and more, we become to think like he thinks. You see, and here's here's the danger, sitting under preaching and not being under the word of God in your own private life can make you start thinking like the preacher. That's dangerous, even if he's a good man.

You don't want that, there's only one authority. And that's Christ now. I want us to I want us to go on, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus.

Oh, let me mention something, let me back up here for a second. And you're going to think this is trivial, but it's not Christ Jesus. Do you know what that means? I mean, so many people think it's like his first and second name.

I mean, what is going on here? Christ Jesus. Christ refers to. What's more clear anointing.

In the Old Testament, when when God would appoint a priest or sometimes prophet or king like King David, what would happen? Samuel came and poured oil on his head. It represented an anointing, an outward external sign of the anointing of the Holy Spirit to carry out this task that had been given to him. Well, Christ is the anointed, the appointed one.

And there was a doctrine a few years ago that's going around in several churches that Christ is anointed and we're anointed and we're little Christ's throw that out. There's one Christ. Yes, it is true that the Holy Spirit indwells us and there is a sense in which every believer has been anointed, not just the so-called TV prophets.

But there's only one Christ, and I would not put myself in a conjunctive relationship with him. Not in that way. He's Christ, he's anointed, and then what else? Jesus is the Greek transliteration of the name Joshua.

Did you know that is very, very important. And what does it mean? The Lord is salvation. So who is Jesus Christ? He's God's appointed savior.

He's God's anointed savior. And there's only one. There's only one.

One. Only one now. He says we've got through verse one, we're partway, haven't we? This Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus.

Now we're going to talk about what I call the universal nomenclature of the Christian nomenclature is when you have a category or you gather together a series of terms that define a science or a discipline or some some category. All right. There are names that over and over seem to be given to the Christian.

Like saints. Faithful. And one that's not so much a name as it is sort of a title or a phrase in Christ.

Now, I want to look at that for just a moment. First of all, he says to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus. Now, the first thing I want you to see is Ephesus was a lot like.

Our world today, they were wealthy. They were idolatrous. They were sensual and they were immoral.

But now here's the thing, Ephesus did not define. Who those believers were. Ephesus did not set the standard, Ephesus did not set the goal for who these believers were.

Now, saints, listen to me, it's the same way your standard. Church. It's not this world.

Do not allow the world to put you in its mold. As Romans chapter 12, verses one and two talks about, don't allow that to happen, do not be conformed to this world. So, brother, how much can we, you know, we're in the world, we're not of the world.

Yes, that's true. God does not want us to go move on a mountain somewhere and start a cult. Well, then how do we do that? First of all, you can't do that unless you're renewing your mind in the word of God and you're in a community of believers who also love Christ and we're all encouraging one another as the day draws near.

That's first of all. Second of all, young person, listen to me. Lost people need Christ, you have lost people in your classrooms, you have lost relatives, lost friends, you should not shun them, you should not run away from them.

You should love them, be kind to them. Don't preach to them all the time. The word normal might be good for you.

Just act normal and loving and kind. Share the gospel. Pray that God will open up a door.

That's what you need to do. Well, when should I pull away? Brother Paul, when you see that you're being yoked. When you see that they're beginning to have an influence on you.

You know, do not be unequally yoked. It was a wooden structure. They went over the neck of one ox and over the neck of another and where one went, the other went.

When you start seeing yourself getting in that type of relationship, pull out. But even then pull out graciously. I am so very tired of mean Christians who just want to run away from everybody.

No, not here. We need to be holy. We need to be loving.

Now, so Ephesus did not define them. What did define them? There's the word they were in Ephesus. But more importantly, they were in Christ Jesus.

Now, what does that mean? There's the idea of a locative of sphere. It's it's the idea of, well, the way I want to put it before you is this. I want you to think about two spheres, OK? And you're either in one or you're in the other.

Now, I'm doing this so that you understand what it means for you to be in Christ. First of all, let's look at what we were in Adam. United with Adam under Adam's head, what are some of the words that describe us there? Moral depravity, that's referring to nature.

We're morally corrupt, but also acts of sin. See, that's where Luther comes off with the bondage of the will, whatever your nature is, your will will do. So it was moral depravity, acts of sin, condemnation, alienation and also death.

That's what you were, that's what you had, that was your inheritance, your endowment in Adam. Now, what is it in Christ united with Christ under Christ's head? Well, here are some of the words that we can use regeneration. Been made alive, justification, legally declared right before God, sanctification.

He who justifies us is working in this life. To make us holy communion with God and synonymous eternal life, which this is eternal life to know him. You see, you are you were born in Adam, you must be born again to be in Christ.

You were in a kingdom of darkness, you are now in a kingdom of light, and it is this king and this kingdom that ought to be defining you. But listen to me, dear believer, as much as I believe in the importance of preaching and gathering together, this definition, Christ defining you becomes most complete when you yourself go after the prize. Don't make the preacher go after it for you.

You should study. You should know. You should think, and even even when I preach or someone else preaches here, know this, if you have a question or a disagreement, you owe it to me or the other preachers as a brother in Christ to come and tell us you don't agree, not so that we can show you how you're wrong.

But so that we might learn. Maybe we have seen something in air. I'm not afraid of that.

I want to learn. I want to grow. Just like you, I can't do it without you, and neither can the elders of this church in Christ.

Now, I had a young man one time he came up to me and he goes, Brother Paul, you're right. Christ is all we need. I said, young man, Christ is all we have.

That is true, he's all we need, but he's all we have and he is enough because in him. In him. Everything from the father comes everything, he is the treasury, he is the door, he's the vine, he's everything in the Christian life, and that's why I'd be so ashamed for you to stop at the pulpit and not go beyond the pulpit to the prayer room, to your own study, to feed off him and taste and see that the Lord is good.

So in Christ now, he says here to the saints who are at Ephesus now. There are certain words I love, the new American standard, I like ESV is good, different, different transit, love the King James. I really wish, though, that we could just change this word saying.

Because the literal word, the Greek is Agios or Hagios. It means holy ones. Holy ones, see, saints, when I hear that word, I don't get a picture.

Of really what that means for me, and I doubt if you do either, you're a saint, oh, you're a saint. We may even laugh about it, but when the Bible says you're a holy one. That changes things, that's like, whoa, we need to take this seriously, don't we? A holy one now, holy means to be separate from the common and profane and to be separated unto God.

For worship, for service. Most of all, dear friend, for communion to belong to him, see, separation is not just you got out from the bad. You know what that is, you stop right there, congratulations, you're a

legalist, you got out from the bad.

Maybe you ought to pat yourself on the back. You're only getting out from the bad so that you can run to the good and the good is in him. It's him.

Now, let's go on, there is a debate, does the word holy primarily refer to our position before God, our legal position before God or the fact that God has separated us to work in us? Does holiness refer to our position before God or does it refer to our Christian experience? To the way we live today, something, is it a reality in our life? And my answer to that is yes, it's both of them. It is not either or it is both and positionally we have been made holy ones in that God has separated us out from the mass of fallen humanity to do a work in us. But then there's the other side of that.

Those of us who have been separated out. We should be striving, we will be striving. To be holy, you see these ideas of justification, it's the same way people say, well, justification, is it a legal standing? Absolutely.

Is righteousness a legal standing? Absolutely. But those who have that legal standing, God is working in their life to do what? To produce righteousness, conformity to him. Now.

I want to just read something here that I've written, the believer has been justified by faith in Christ, he has literally become the righteousness of God in Christ. Second Corinthians five twenty one. OK, and that's what we stand upon.

This is the believer's position before God. However, those whom God justifies, he also regenerates and sanctifies. Now there's another word I'd like to change a little bit, but I really don't know how to do it.

Means makes holy. He is working to make them holy, they have become God's workmanship and holiness becomes an increasing reality in their life. Just look over, turn the page on Ephesians to ten.

Look what he says, for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them now finally. So we've said that he does separate us out positionally, he does work in us throughout the full course of our life, those whom he justifies, he also sanctifies. Well, here's now the other thing you need to understand, those who have been justified and in whom God is doing a work of sanctification, they will one day be what? Glorified.

And those who have this kind of hope, what do they do? They purify themselves. Do you see that? All right, let's go on. He also calls them.

Let's go back to verse one. He says, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God to the saints who are at Ephesus, who are faithful. Now, this is this is maybe a little bit more difficult than you might think here, because the word can mean peace.

Those means believing ones, faithful ones. Some commentators go more towards believing ones, others towards faithful ones, I believe that in this one term, we have both the idea of believing and faithful wrapped up together, so maybe I've just come to a compromise with the whole thing. But here's some things that I want you to see, the believing ones are the faithful ones are the same ones who are called saints.

So saints are believing ones. And there will be a degree of faithfulness in them. There are those who remain constant in faith and faithfulness to Jesus Christ.

Now, you may say, well, Brother Paul, I struggle in faithfulness. Yes, I do, too. But now let me clarify that.

Many people use terminology like that to say I'm not faithful at all. There's a difference between being faithful, not at all, and struggling in your faithfulness and wanting to be more faithful, a true Christian will want to be faithful. Will seek to be faithful, and when that desire to be faithful wanes, they'll be sad of their waning desire.

Now, I want to do something here because I feel like it's very important because especially young believers don't understand something, and that is the relationship between faith. And faithfulness, or let me put it in another another term, another way of talking, the relationship between faith and obedience, and I'm not talking with regard to our position before God or anything, I'm just talking about practical matters. And here's what I want you to see.

We obey God. Because we believe him. No.

We believe that what he is saying is true, and that leads to obedience. Let me give you an example, if I say and I'm not saying this, but if I were to say the building is on fire and there was no evidence whatsoever, most of you would not believe and therefore you would not obey when I said run for your lives. But if you caught the reality that the building really is on fire, you would be sure to obey.

Now, hold your place in Ephesians and just quickly, I want us to run over and I want to show you how this works out in Hebrews chapter 11. It exquisite illustrations here. Now, look.

Chapter of chapter 11, verse seven of Hebrews, by faith, Noah being warned by God about things not yet seen in reverence, prepared an ark, you see that he didn't see it. God told him he believed it and he obeyed it. You see how faith.

Was the foundation, even the catalyst of his obedience. Now, look at verse eight, by faith, Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive a place he really hadn't seen. Do you see that he believed God and therefore he obeyed? Look at look at verse nine, by faith, he lived in an alien as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise.

Now, look at this. This is you. This isn't Abraham.

Look at verse nine. This is you. Do you believe God enough to live like an alien? Alien.

Or are are you trying to live like the folks down here? Are you conforming yourself to them? To the people of this land who do not know God. Or do you believe God enough to live differently than them, not for the sake of being different. But according to his commandments, do you? You see, it's faith and you see, why am I going to this? Here is the reason.

Also, look at verse twenty four just quickly, by faith, Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill treatment with the people of God. Now, why would he do that because of faith? But what's the foundation of his faith, a revelation of who God is, a revelation of Christ, actually, the writer of Hebrews is so bold to say. So here's what I want you to see.

Does your obedience now follow the line of logic, does your obedience wane? Does it weaken, can you correlate the weakness of your obedience to the weakness of your faith, and can you correlate the weakness of your faith to the fact that you do not know God as well as you should and you do not know his promises as well as you should? Now, why am I harping on this? Because in Ephesians, we're going to talk about all these heavenly realities that are unseen. And if you don't learn to believe God when you do not see, you will never grasp a hold of these realities and they'll never drive you. They'll never drive you.

To a passionate, joyful obedience. Huge. OK, well, let's go on.

We talked about a universal Norman Norman Clay nomenclature. Now we're going to talk about a universal Christian blessing. We're finally in verse to grace to you and peace from God, our father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I want you to know that it is very common in most commentaries to say Paul is combining in this salutation, this greeting, he's combining a Greek greeting, peace of grace and a Hebrew greeting, you know, peace. He's combining them all together. He's making the salutation.

Well, there's a lot of truth in that, but that's not the point. Here's what I want you to see. When even a common greeting is brought within the context of Christ, when even a common and oftentimes meaningless greeting is brought into the New Testament, it's infused with meaning.

Paul is not just greeting these people. This is not just proper letter writing. It's a prayer.

A real sincere prayer, he is praying. That grace and peace be multiplied to these people. Now, what does that tell me? I think it tells us something that is extremely important.

There are those who argue that we we've been given all the treasures of grace in Christ, there's no need to pray for grace. There is some truth in that. But there is also some great danger in what's being said, my dear brothers and sisters, we have been given so much in Christ, I would say 99 percent probably of what we have been given, we don't even have a clue about.

But are we not to pray? That grace might be greater manifested in our life, that it might become a greater reality, a greater power driving us, and that's what Paul is getting at here, and that's what I want you to see, not only for yourself, but your brothers and sisters in Christ, what that you should pray, oh, God manifest your grace to a greater degree in that believer's life, Lord, manifest your grace, that grace begin to control them, that the peace of God would take over their lives. Grace, when you see a believer struggling, pray for greater manifestations of Christ, it does not mean that they are somehow incomplete in Christ, they are complete. But we need to adapt an attitude of open your mouth wide that he will fill it.

Open your mouth wide, saints. I fear for myself that even after 30 years, I live in so much spiritual poverty because I will not avail myself. Of these gigantic storehouses of grace.

So grace to you. And peace, peace is the result of the knowledge of God. The knowledge of his working.

But it's not just intellectual peace also has to do with we have been indwelt with the Holy Spirit who feels who fills us truly, organically, spiritually. With power to have peace now, I want you to look at he says grace to you and peace from God, our father. Now, why does he say that? I mean, just, you know, sometimes you read that, don't you just read it? You OK from God, our father.

But why is this important? Here's the reason I think this is important. I'm going to read a text to you from First Timothy five. Just listen.

Paul refers to God as the blessed and only sovereign, the king of kings and lord of lords who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light who no man has seen or can see God real big. You and me really small. How on earth, after hearing something like that, do you and I think we're going to find boldness if we have any sense at all to draw near to this kind of God? Well, here's the reason, because he's our father, because he's our father.

Isn't that amazing? See, it's important to hear that. How can one like him bless one like me? Here's the reason he's your father. Now, there's another thing that I want to point out here that I think is very, very important.

He says. Grace to you and peace from God, our father and the Lord Jesus Christ now. Now.

If you are a person who does not believe in the deity. Of Jesus, you've got a real problem here, and I'll tell you why here we have a verse where God the father is mentioned in a conjunctive relationship with another person and the title Lord is not given to God. Do any of you have any idea how blasphemous that would be if Jesus was not God in the flesh? Do you see there? I mean, Lord, the word Kurios or Kyrios, however you want to pronounce it, was often used in the New Testament to translate that one word Yahweh, that one name of God.

And here it's given not to not to God, the father, but it's given to Jesus. The Messiah. That is great proof of his deity and his power.

But here's another thing that I want to point out, and this is one of the most important things, the father. Is the source I'm going to read this and the son. Is the Lord.

Over all the father's treasures, many times you and I think of Jesus Christ as Lord and we think of it as manward, he has authority over us. But what I want you to see is that God has taken everything that is God's. And put it under him.

Now, this is amazing. All the treasures of God have been put under Christ as the mediator, and you're familiar with that word because we went through the book of Hebrews, the mediator. But I want to use another word administrator.

And dispenser. Of all the treasures of God, he's Lord over it now, I want to read you something, just listen, Joseph was made Lord over all of Egypt to dispense the grain to the people that they might live. How relieved were Joseph's brothers when they discovered that the one who was Lord over all the granaries.

Granaries of Egypt was their brother. How my heart just literally I want to grab you right now by the ears and just shake you, I want to do something to you that you would see this so that the spirit of God would reveal this to you. You go up to this matchless, this God who no man has seen in this kingdom of light.

You look at yourself as as maybe even the world sees you. You think, how could I call upon him, how could I ask him to even give me a measure of bread? Knowing who he is and what I am, how could this be? And then all of a sudden you look and the Lord over all the treasures of God. God.

Is your brother. Is from your stock, as the Puritans used to say, bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh. That he.

Runs it all, but how can I be sure that my brother was such greatness would look to one like me, he died for you so that you could come to the source so that you could come to him died. Should never be a question in the believer's heart with regard to the love of this administrator and his willingness, as we are going to see, and as as Paul points out in the book of Colossians, God does not meet your need according to your need. God meets your need according to his infinite riches and glory.

If you were starving, you would only have need of a few grains of grams of protein, actually. So if you were starving and a beggar and I walk up to you and gave you a sandwich, I would be giving you according to your need. But if I was a multibillionaire and I walked up to you and decided I'm not going to give you according to your need, I'm going to give you according to my surplus.

Guess what? You're very wealthy now. This is what I'm talking about. This is why, as the people of God, you do not need to be driven by a whip, you do not be you don't need to be led by some personality, you need to know Christ.

You need to know Christ. I need to know Christ better. Now.

I want us to go on also in Matthew 24, you remember when it talks about the faithful steward is over his master's house, who gives to those in need every time they need it. Well, guess what? There's a faithful steward over God's house. It's not the pastor.

It's Christ. He knows what you need, even before you ask him, his coffers are always full. Go to him, open your mouth wide, he will fill it.

Now, I want us to look at the believers treasury on verse three. Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who has blessed us with all spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

Now, why does he say God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ? Here's here's some of the reasons I believe he's done that. First of all, Paul is speaking to Gentiles and Gentiles were idolatrous and Gentiles had wrong ideas of a multiplicity of gods. They were at all kinds of gods.

Paul here is emphasizing. Since over the at the beginning of this text and on through the Bible, Paul is going to give Christ, he is going to exalt Christ to such a degree. That it is obvious that he's more than man, more than angel, that he's God.

Yet Paul wants to be careful to show the relationship between the father and the son in the context of the Trinity, because the last thing these Gentiles need are two gods. The next the last thing they need is to draw a separation between God, the father and God, the son, and maybe even God, the Holy Spirit. So Paul is emphasizing here, emphasizing the relationship between the father and the son.

Also, I think there's something very, very important going on here because he says, blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our Lord Jesus Christ, who happens to be our brother. Now, I want you to look at it this way in the Middle East. Even today, the idea, the relationship between the father and the son is much more pronounced than what you and I would know it much more pronounced to dishonor a son is to dishonor his father and to evoke his wrath, to honor, to honor a son is to honor the father and to gain his favor.

And this relationship is also very important because look at you, look at you. I know you're just like me, I know you're speckled, I know there's sin, I know there's problems, I know there's there's doubts, I know all sorts of things, but you love the son. You love him.

You esteem him. You desire to be obedient to him, and for this reason, the father loves you. You love his son.

Some of you today, you need to hear that. I know he knows he knows better. He knows all.

Look, I'm 30 years into this. And have so many weaknesses. So many failings and they bother me.

They're nuisances to me, they make me doubt. So I know some of you young believers, you must you must sometimes think, how can I go to him? How can I make these gigantic requests? How can I believe you do love his son? You love his son. And you desire to honor his son.

And he loves you for it. Yes, I know all you theologians, your brains are clicking right now. Well, I only love him because he loved me first.

Yes, we all know that. That's why you can't pray. You're just always so confused about what's the right thing to say.

He he loves you because you love his son and he will open up heaven's gates. He has what this what he's opened up, let no man close because no man can. Now, let's go on.

Verse three, blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, here's what you need to understand. He's saying, I mean, what does that mean when a man says blessed be God? I mean, how can a man bless God? Well, in one sense, what is being done here is in one sense, I don't think the primary sense is that when this happens, the person is acknowledging the blessed state of God because of all his perfections, his blessed state. But also, it's a declaration that this God is worthy of being blessed.

He's worthy of being praised. That's part of it, too. But that's not the main point that's going on in the Apostle Paul right now.

What is the main point? He is exploding with praise. He's not just telling others to praise. He's not just saying God is worthy of praise.

He is praising. He's praising. And why is he praising? Because of what he knows that God has done for him in Christ.

And why is he writing this? Because he wants the Christians in Ephesus and he wants you and he wants me to join him in this jubilant, luxurious, ongoing praise. Ongoing praise now. I want us to look at a few things, first of all, the word blessing occurs three times, if you haven't noticed, blessed, blessed, blessing.

The first, of course, is an adjective. You'll get those. Then the verb, you know, then the noun, you know, here.

It's the word from which we get the word eulogy. And it's when you say or write something, according to Webster, of very high praise. Regarding another person, and so oftentimes this is used in the Bible as synonymous with praise.

Now, here's the point I want you to see. In our English text, it says, blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us. That looks perfect tense.

The idea here is Aristoteles doesn't really talk about the past at this moment, really. It's it's. Blessed be the God and father who blessed us.

Now, the question is, when did he do it? Did he do it at the moment of our conversion? Is that when he blessed? Is that when it all started? Is that when God started thinking about us and helping us and blessing us? Was it at the moment of our conversion or does it go farther back than that? Even before the foundation of the world. And yes, it does. And that's what we'll be talking about hopefully next week.

But here's some things that I want you just to look at. I'm going to shorten this a little bit and I'm going to give you three things about this idea that he blessed us before the foundation of the world. God predestined all these spiritual blessings to be given to those in Christ, to be given to everyone in Christ without distinction before the foundation of the world.

Then. Christ won these blessings for us on Calvary, he was not just gaining our pardon, but he was gaining for us this enormous. Treasury of blessing.

And then finally, these blessings began to become realities at the moment of your conversion, you see that. It happened before the foundation of the world, and then Christ came and did what he had to do to win these things that they might be given to you, and then at the moment of your conversion, they began to become realities. And then as you grow in Christ throughout your life, they will become increasing realities, greater and greater and greater realities in your life until the day you step over into glory and then they are absolute reality.

Now, I want us to go on and I want us to look at the concept of spiritual blessing, and this is very, very difficult. So. So, well, it's just it's difficult, this took me a lot, a lot of time and a lot of study and a lot of prayer and a lot of headache because there are differing opinions, even among the most godly men regarding this idea of what are these pneumatikos, what are these blessings, what are they? They're called spiritual.

Now. I've written here every blessing, they refer to every blessing in the spiritual realm, every blessing that the spirit can confer has been given to every believer in Christ. Now, that is really a lame definition, but I tell you what, I challenge you.

You go out tomorrow morning and try to paint the sunrise. You go to the ocean tomorrow and try to count all the sea sand that is there. It would be easier for you to do that than for me or any preacher to open up to you all the beauty of what it means that we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing.

But there are some points that I want to point out. A summary of different things that I think are being revealed by this idea that God has granted unto you now he has given you bestowed upon you every spiritual blessing. First of all, it means that the blessed and only sovereign, the king of kings and lord of lords, has imparted to you something of his perfect state of blessedness.

He has invited you to come into his realm and to share in its infinite blessing. Now, before you become materialistic on me, that is summed up in the person of Christ. God is blessed.

You know, you look at a person, you say he's blessed, but the person is still encumbered with so many problems and so many trials and so many weaknesses, and yet you count them blessed. You say, oh, I wish I was like them. Now, think about this.

Think I wish they would invite me into their blessed state because they seem to be doing a lot better than I am. Well, then think about this. God, who is the only truly blessed one dwelling in heaven, has invited you to come into that.

Now, another thing that I want to point out, these blessings are spiritual in nature as opposed to merely natural, I'm going to read this that I've written, it's based on First Corinthians and First Corinthians 15. Paul contrasts the natural with the spiritual, the natural he describes as weak, mortal, temporal, perishable and subject to corruption. The spiritual blessings to which he refers in our text are eternal, imperishable and incorruptible.

They are blessings of the highest order. You know, one of the things that troubled me in my lostness was this. Because I had seen members of my family.

Die. That I loved, I became such a skeptic. Because I'd say nothing matters if I'm young and strong, I will be old and weak.

If I'm rich, I will be impoverished in the grave, if I am famous, no one will know my name inside of a hundred years, if I fall in love so that it should be written in the greatest works of poetry, she's going to die. I hated the world because there was no blessing in it. Just frolic from one stupid thing to another, but here is eternity here, it is imperishable here, it goes on forever, greater and greater and greater glory.

Do you see why it is so foolish to delight in other things? You see why it would be so foolish to try to build a church on any other thing. To try to promise you just principles to make your life better now. No.

No. The highest order of blessings now, although not these blessings are not limited to them, some of the grandest are laid out for us here in this chapter. And I'll just mention them, election.

Adoption. Redemption and forgiveness, knowledge of God's person and his mysterious, gracious plan and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the hope of final and full redemption, these are just a few. I mean, can you imagine these are just a few? These are just a few.

And but I want you to see and we're going to be talking about this later, this is not something that you should just think about as pie in the sky. These are also realities to us here and now, and we're going to learn that now. I want to go on for just a moment.

These blessings, another thing about them is that they pertain to life in the spirit, both now and in the age to come, they are mediated and communicated to us through the work of the spirit and apart from the spirit, they cannot be known and they cannot be applied. This you see now why I spent so much time emphasizing authority, the authority of the apostles, the authority of God's word, because if you are going to enter into the reality of these blessings, it can only be by standing on the word of God. Realizing they are yours and the spirit of the living God, using the word of God to make them real to you so that they actually do something for you.

A good question that saints used to ask all the time, they didn't ask so much as was the sermon good? They would say, did it do something for you? What did it do? How did it change you, you see now? Also, I

want to point out that these blessings are to be viewed in light of the character of Christ's kingdom. And what do I mean? They are realities, they are becoming realities and they will one day be realities. You say, what is that all about? It's called the already and the not yet of theology.

Some the church, some people have an under realized eschatology, that is, they're not living up to what is theirs now. Other people have an over realized eschatology like the church in First Corinthians and many TV preachers that think they're in heaven already. The fact of the matter is, is this, it's like standing on a platform and a train is coming.

First, the locomotive has arrived and you say the train has arrived and you speak truly, but then also you can say the train has arrived, but the train is coming, isn't it? And then you can also say it is finally arrived when finally the caboose gets there and the whole complete train is there near the platform. Now, it's the same way. There is a kingdom.

And it's not seen by the eye, there is a king. And I have not seen him, but I love him, Peter tells us. All of this is an unseen reality, but it's not pie in the sky because it's based on God's word, and not only that, as we're going to see, it has been made known to us through the spirit of the living God who uses the word of God to confirm these things to believers.

Now, I want us to we're going to end up here. Let me check my. He says that in Ephesians chapter one, verse three, blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places.

In heavenly places, what does that mean? Well, first of all, I want to give you a summary. This idea is found in Ephesians and in the following context, first of all, Ephesians one, three, God has blessed the believer with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places. Ephesians one, twenty, God has raised Christ and seated him at the right at his right hand in heavenly places.

Ephesians two, six, God has raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly places. Ephesians 3:10, angelic rulers and authorities dwell in heavenly places. And Ephesians 6:12, spiritual forces of darkness or of wickedness dwell in heavenly places.

So we've got we've got literally several different things going on here at one moment, it appears to be the very throne room of God. But then over here we realize that we've got also wicked demonic forces dwelling wherever this place is. Now, the first of all, I need to be honest with you, it says in heavenly places, but actually literally it's just in the heavenlies places has been added, I think rightly so.

But now all week, I literally in bed just everywhere, what is this, Lord? Why? Because some of the men I most respect had conflicting ideas. There just shows you doesn't mean they were all right. No, logically, one of them was right and the others were wrong or they were all wrong, but they weren't all right.

But I came across something that seemed to agree most with me, and it's from the Greek scholar Westcott, B.F. Westcott, and I think he's hit it on the head. But again, I want you to study this. Look at this because this difficult passage.

Westcott says it describes the super mundane, now super mundane means beyond what we beyond this world, supra goes over. The supra sensual, that doesn't mean, well, that person is really sensual, supra sensual means it goes beyond what you can see with the eyes or touch with the hand or feel on your face. We see that, don't we? In John chapter three, you don't know from where the spirit comes or where he's

going.

It's supra sensual. All right. Also.

Let me read again, it's it describes the supra mundane, supra sensual, eternal order or, as we should say, generally the spiritual world, which is perceived by thought and not by sight. So he's talking about what we all know the Christian life truly is here we are and we see certain things, we experience certain things, but we believe because of the teachings of our Lord, because the teachings of the apostles, the whole tenet of scripture tells us that all around us is a spiritual world that cannot be seen. But it is real, if not more real.

Than what we ourselves know here, so now what's the application? OK, here we're going to get through this right now. What is the application? First of all, these blessings that we have received and we've mentioned some of them are spiritual realities. But here's what I want you to see.

They are none the less real. They are real. When he says you're redeemed, when he says you're pardoned, when he says you have an inheritance in heaven, when he says all these things, that's more real than anything else.

Do you see that? Please see that. Please live in that light. Also, since they are spiritual realities, they are unseen by the physical eye and are unknown to the carnal mind.

That's Paul's argument, isn't it? In First Corinthians 2:14, he says, but a natural man does not accept the things of the spirit of God for their foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually appraised. And that is why if someone asks you and unbeliever ask you, why are you so joyful today? You say, because my brother reigns at the right hand of God. It's going to look at you as though you need counseling.

Because these things are spiritually because I have Christ within me, the hope of glory, because I will inherit the world. Do you see that? You see how it all fits now. Now, they are veiled even from the natural eye of the believer, if you have a believer who's seeing visions every day of supernatural things, things in their bathroom and everything else, be very, very careful.

Now, I'm not denying that God can't intervene in history and do something unusual. But that's just the fact it is unusual. And we are called to live by faith, to grab a hold of unseen reality.

So these spiritual blessings are veiled even from the natural eye of the believer, things which I has has not seen and ear has not heard and which have not entered the heart of man. Yet, Paul also says they are revealed to us by the spirit and through the scriptures. You ever wonder why some believers seem to walk in a power that you desire, that you long for? Maybe it's because renewing their mind in the word of God, spending time with God, delighting in everything that God has done for them in Christ, the spirit is revealing to them such treasure that you know not of.

They're so drawn to heaven because they can see more with the spiritual eye than you can see. Why do I believe Paul, the apostle, was granted such revelation? I mean, after all, he went to the third heaven, all these things. Why? Because the man.

He was told from the outside of the outset of his ministry how much he must suffer, he needed a heavenly vision. Now, to some degree, we all do brothers and sisters in Christ, we all do, especially in those times of trial now. But I want to make this very clear, even though the spirit reveals to the believer all that has been

given him in Christ, the believer still perceives these realities only dimly as though through a cloudy mirror and must accept them by faith and walk in them.

I wish I having walked with Christ for 30 years, I wish I was more of an example for you. But maybe it's good that I'm not, because you you learn to see we are all so feeble. We are all so needy, we all struggle with so many things.

But I can tell you this, the more that you grab a hold of the scriptures, the more you will see the delightful walls and streets of Zion and be drawn to them. Now, I want to read to you just some passages that are going to help, we're going to close quickly, I'm sorry for going so long. Second Corinthians five, seven, just listen, for we walk by faith and not by sight.

Now, you can't do that, you can presume. But you can't have faith apart from renewing your mind in the word of God, oh, believer, believer, listen to me, it's not enough you hear this sermon on Ephesians, you must run this over in your mind over and over and over. Listen to Hebrews 11, one now, now faith is being sure of what we hope for, of being convinced of what we do not see, how can anyone in their right mind be sure of something they hope for? How can they be convinced of something they've never seen? Only if God has promised it.

And so your ability to grab a hold of these realities and for them to grab a hold of you is dependent upon what? Upon your knowledge of the word of God and God's promises therein. And my one of my favorite passages in all of Isaiah that really throws people off when they've never read it before, it's in Isaiah 50, 10, listen to this, this seems so different. Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of his servant, that walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God, what is he saying? He this is a description of those who please God, another description is given of those who displease God and are under his judgment, and you know who they are, they're the ones who can't bear with just walking by faith, and so they've got to create their own lights in their own fires and then they walk in the light of that light they've made.

Brothers, we're not supposed to be that way. We don't need this stuff, we don't need props and supports, we don't need to create a revival here, as Martin Lloyd-Jones says, we just need to be ready if one comes, what we need to do is learn to walk in these realities. How do you know it's true? The devil rails at you because God is not a man that he should lie.

You walk in that now, finally, we have already said that the spirit of God reveals these things to believers. In First Corinthians, two, twelve through thirteen, I read this now, we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit who is from God so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. What is this saying? Even though we must walk by faith, even though with your own eyes you cannot see the spiritual blessings I'm talking about, it doesn't mean that they're just pie in the sky hopes because we are indwelt with the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit working in our life, reveals these things to us and lets us know that they're sure.

Have you ever, dear believer, have you ever sat there at night or in the morning meditating on scripture, seeing things and the Holy Spirit not speaking to you with an audible voice, but implanting that word in your heart and letting you know this is real. Do you know that? These promises are real, so it's not just we're hoping based on on the word and there's no Christian experience, no, the Holy Spirit will bring conviction of these things into our heart. He is so faithful to do that.

These are real, the spirit has been given to us as a down payment of all these blessings, that's what we're going to learn in Ephesians 1:14 through the spirit, the love of God has been shed abroad in our heart, Romans five, five brothers, don't take that passage, Romans five, five by faith and say by faith, I believe that the love of God has been shed abroad in my heart. That's not what it's saying. It's saying the love of God has been and it's been experienced by you.

He's telling the Roman church you've experienced this. Have you not, believer, you call yourself a believer, have there not been times when the love of God was not just something you clung to by faith, but it was a living reality? Please tell me, yes, please tell me that there have been times when God made his love known to you in a supernatural way. Maybe it was just the calm little wind, but it was real and it was powerful also through the spirit, we are assured of our adoption, the spirit of God.

God. If he is in, you cry out of a father, let you know you really are a child of God, what I'm trying to get through is the first part of this message, I talked about authority. The second part is how you must believe.

Though you cannot see with the natural eye, but the third part is telling you that we have also been indwelt with the Holy Spirit who makes these things real. Why are you converted today? Why are you Christian? Why do you believe? It's not because you guys could stand up and give me 10 historical legal evidences for the resurrection. That's not why you believe most of you can't do it.

I can't do it. Why is it that some person living out in the jungle that's never even heard of a historical legal evidence, why is it that he's willing to suffer martyrdom rather than deny Christ? How do we know that Christ is our savior? John Calvin hit it right on the head. The spirit of the living God illuminated our hearts and minds and bore witness to this truth.

That same spirit bears witness also, even today. In our times of need, he comes to us, our breaks forth within us, better said, and lets us know, yes, these things are true and all of them are only in Christ, only in Jesus Christ. Do you know Christ today? I know that most of you have been in here and you've sat under solid preaching, but the ones who have given that solid preaching say that because I hardly ever preach here.

But the ones who have preached to you, they also fear for your soul. They know it's not enough just to hear. We're not talking about some wild, charismatic experience, but we are talking about this.

Is Christ the reality to you? Is he a growing reality? Has his love been shed abroad in your heart? Do you desire him? Do you desire him come to Christ without delay, if you haven't, there are many who talk to you. You have a need to come to Christ without delay, and especially you young people who you sit time and time again. Under sound teaching of scripture, whether it's in the devotions in your family, or what else, do not presume upon your conversion because of something you did.

Is there a reality of Christ? Is there? Let's pray.

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