

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

Introduction to Ephesians

Ephesians 1:1-2

1998

Introduction

Illustration: Hetty Green, known as "America's Greatest Miser"
(Copeland, Mark. *The "Executable Outlines" Series*. 1997.

<https://executableoutlines.com/eph.htm>)

She died in 1916, leaving an estate worth over \$100 million. Yet, she ate cold oatmeal, because it cost to heat it. She lived in absolute poverty because of her greed. When her young son broke his leg, she tried unsuccessfully to admit him to a free clinic. Eventually, his leg was amputated. She had such great wealth, yet walked through life miserably. Sadly, she lived the life of a pauper, when great riches were at her fingertips.

1. Many Christians live like Hetty Green today:
 - a. In Christ Jesus, we have countless spiritual blessings! – Eph 1:3
 - b. However, many of these life-changing blessings are ignored and unappreciated, resulting in some Christians living in spiritual poverty while they, in reality, are heirs of the kingdom.

2. God wants us to know these blessings, or spiritual "riches" that we have in Christ. In writing this letter to the Ephesians, Paul specifically prayed that they may know "the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints..." - Eph 1:18. In this Ephesians series, let's "mine" for the riches that are ours in Christ Jesus!

I The Author

A. Paul's history

1. Persecutor of the church - Acts 9:1-2

a. At Stephen's stoning

Acts 7:54-8:1 "When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

"Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep. And Saul was there, giving approval to his death. On that

day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria."

b. Pursuer of the believers

Acts 9:1-2 "Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem."

2. Proclaimer of Jesus Christ

1 Cor 1:23 "but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles ..."

1 Cor 2:2 "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."

Gal 6:14 "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."

a. Damascus road conversion - Acts 9:1-19

B. Paul's calling and authority

1. Apostle of Christ Jesus

Apostle = "One specially commissioned by Christ"

Denotes one who is legally charged to represent the person and cause of another

Also denotes bearers of the New Testament message

It stresses the authority of the sender and the accountability of the one sent

a. Are there apostles today?

"apostles" - Yes! Church planters and initiators of new ministry

"Apostles" - No! Eyewitnesses of the ministry of Christ - Acts 1:21-22

2. By the will of God

a. Not of man's choosing

Gal 1:1 "Paul, an apostle-- sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead--"

b. But by the grace of God

Eph 3:8 "Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ ..."

Paul repeatedly states that his calling and apostleship is not due to any personal merit:

1 Cor 15:9-10 "For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them-- yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me."

Gal 1:13-16 "For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles ..."

1 Tim 1:12-16 "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-- of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life."

C. Paul's mission

1. Apostle to the Gentiles

Eph 3:8 "Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ ..."

Acts 9:15 "But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel."

D. Paul's condition

1. Awaiting trial in Rome - Eph 3:1; 4:1; 6:20

a. Written approximately 60-62 A.D. - Ac 28:30-31

2. Chained, yet FREE

Free from anger

Free from bitterness

Free from self-pity

Free from apathy

Free from despair

- a. A prisoner of Christ Jesus - Eph 3:1
 - 1. For the sake of you Gentiles
- b. A prisoner for the Lord - Eph 4:1
- c. An ambassador in chains - Eph 6:10

This epistle was written about the same time as the other "Prison Epistles" - Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon, approximately 60-62 A.D.

II The Recipients

A. The saints in Ephesus

- 1. The word "saint" = "one who has been set apart"
 - a. Related to the word "sanctified or holy" = "set apart"
 - b. In Christ Jesus the vilest sinners are "sanctified" upon conversion - 1 Cor 6:9-11

The Catholic church has tainted the word "saint" to such a degree that it is associated not with the position of the believer because of the grace of God. Instead, they reserve this title for those exclusive few who, by their own works, have been deemed by the church to have met the imposed criteria.

We are not saints because we act saintly, but because God, through the work of Jesus Christ, has declared us to be saints - set apart for Himself.

- 2. The recipients of this letter were those "in Ephesus" and the surrounding area. In many of the original manuscripts the word "Ephesus" is missing. Most likely, this was a circular letter shared by the various churches in Asian Minor.
 - a. No personal greetings
 - b. No specific issues addressed

B. The faithful in Christ Jesus

- 1. They trusted in Him for salvation
 - Eph 1:13 "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit ..."
- 2. They were trustworthy in the truth
 - Rev 2:2-3,6 "I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary ... But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate."
 - a. However, they left their "first love"

Rev 2:4-5 "Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.

Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place."

Note: The faithful "in" Christ Jesus

In one sentence, Paul summarizes the direction of the entire letter and the content of the whole gospel.

Christ is the object of the believers' faith.

Christ is the foundation of the believers' spiritual blessings.

Illustration: Trojan Horse of Greek Mythology

A huge legendary hollow wooden horse filled with Greek soldiers and left at the gates of Troy. When it was brought into the city, the soldiers came out at night and opened the gates to the Greek army, who then destroyed the city.

C. The friendship between Paul and the Ephesians

1. First, for a short stay - Acts 18:19-21
2. Then for over two years - Acts 19:1-10
3. He met with the elders at Miletus - Acts 20:17-38

III The Greeting

A. The blessings of:

1. **Grace** = God's divine favor in spite of demerit. God's gift of acceptance through Jesus Christ.

Ephesians will unfold for us "the riches of His grace" (1:7) that is made available to us through the finished work of Christ on the cross. Twelve times in this one epistle Paul uses the word "grace." All of the following blessings are ours because of grace:

- **Salvation.** Eph 2:8-9 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast."
- **Justification.** Rom 3:24 "We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."
- **Victory over sin.** Rom 5:20-21 "The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."
- **Power to testify** (Rom. 12:3, 15:15; Col. 4:6)
- **Strength for service** (II Tim. 2:1; Heb. 12:28)
- **A spirit of generosity** (II Cor. 8:7)
- **Ability to stand** (I Pet. 5:12)
- **Strength in suffering** (II Cor. 12:9)

2. **Peace** = To be free from war - the opposite of disturbance, conflict

Rom 5:8-10 "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!"

Paul combined the two forms of salutations used by the Greeks (charis) and Hebrews (shalom) to send his Christian greeting.

Grace and peace may be said to sum up all the gifts of Christ. The greeting has thus become a blessing, or a prayer that his readers may know fully the free, undeserved favor of God and that they may know peace with God and with one another.

To accept His grace is to know His peace--peace not only with Him but with others also.

B. The source of these blessings

1. God the Father - The initiator
2. The Lord Jesus Christ - The Savior

IV The Outline of Ephesians

A. Our rich relationship with God (chapters 1-3)

1. Our spiritual possessions in Christ (1:4-23)
 - a. First prayer: for enlightenment (1:15-23)
2. Our spiritual position in Christ (2:1-22)
 - a. Second prayer: for enablement (3:1-21)

B. Our reasonable response to God (chapters 4-6)

1. Walk in unity (4:1-16)
2. Walk in purity (4:17-5:17)
3. Walk in harmony (5:18-6:9)
4. Walk in victory (6:10-24)

Conclusion:

Avoid the mistake of Hetty Green! Learn, embrace and enjoy the rich blessings of God!

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