

Main Idea: Paul sends his blessings and gives a reminder that our purpose and reality is what Christ did for us; He is our redemption that we did not earn or deserve. We are called to give a response. We have a great victory, as we are in Christ! We are God's people. God has a plan for us, even when we do not see it. You are planned, you are given a purpose, and you matter! You and I have the privilege to be in an intimate personal relationship with the God, the Creator, Sustainer and Savior of the universe. God's will is to know Him, grow in Him, and make Him known to others around us by our character and faith. The duty of God's people is to be holy--we are to be set apart for Him. We are to be faithful as this is the greatest gift we give back to Him. To do this, we must be followers of Christ as Lord. To be faithful followers of God, we must be reverent and authentic in our call and praise to and for God's glory! God blesses His people, and sends us by faith, to live for Him; we are for Him when we are faithful and diligent for His glory. We can have favor by God and victorious life that would glorify Christ if we remain faithful.

Contexts and Background:

Ephesians was a "circular letter" of Paul that was sent out to a number of churches he helped plant and ministered to. This epistle was distributed to all of the churches in Asia Minor, to the church at Ephesus (the most prominent thus bearing the name), the churches at Rome, Philippi, Colossae, and others. Paul writes to confront false teachers, erroneous doctrines, and immorality. This addresses our relationship to God, our responsibility with interpersonal Christian relationships, the unity of the body of Christ, church leadership, spiritual warfare, and the practical implications of the Gospel. Paul reminds us of God's love and the exalted position we have in Christ. Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon are called the "Prison Epistles" because they were written by the Paul while he was imprisoned in Rome.

Paul sets up his letter with a statement of authentic, humble authority as a representative of God. This passage is about the praise of God's purpose--that we belong to Christ! Paul covers some of the same main themes he did in Romans 8 and Colossians. In this case, Ephesus had a more mixed Gentile and Jewish congregation; Paul wants to set them straight their unity in Christ, no matter what culture or language we are (Acts 9:2; 19).

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Paul.* Letters in Paul's time began with the writer's name; in this case, the sole author is Paul by the Holy Spirit. Paul was once called Saul; Saul hated the Christians because he felt they were a cult and subverted to The One True God. He used his passion for correct teaching and reverence to God to persecute and kill Christians until he encountered Jesus Christ. Our Lord changes Saul's name and his destiny. In the Power of Christ, Paul realized Christ is God and fulfills the law and prophets. Paul makes the most dramatic conversion and goes from persecutor to Apostle, evangelist extraordinaire. Paul authors thirteen Books of the New Testament and lives for Christ like no one has ever could. With all Paul's accomplishments and positions, he calls himself a "*bondservant*" to Christ. A bondservant was the lowest form of a slave in Greek times and completely at the master's disposal. A picture of his total surrender and complete devotion (Acts 1:21-26; Rom. 9:3; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8-9; 2 Cor. 12:12; Gal. 1:15; 2:20)!
- *Apostle.* This means one who is sent with authority. In Paul's case, he was sent by the Holy Spirit and commissioned by Christ Himself. Paul was not one of the original twelve. His apostleship was unique, thus he needed to give an explanation of who he was. There are NO apostles today in the biblical sense.

If someone says he or she is one, they are either deluded or extremely prideful or do not understand what this term implies (Acts 1:21-26; Rom. 1:1-7; 1 Cor. 15:8-9; 2 Cor. 12:12; Col. 1:1-2; Heb. 2:3-4)!

- *Christ*. This is, of course, who and what Christianity is all about. The Creator of the Universe comes into humanity as one of us. He is our Lord and Savior! He is the source of our faith, hope, and love because of Christ's substitutionary death. For us, we are declared righteous and holy in God's sight. In addition, the work of the Holy Spirit continues to be available for empowerment in our daily lives (John 1).
- *The will of God... his pleasure*. This means to earnestly and sincerely desire to please God, placing Him first and foremost, and seeking Truth as opposed to being self-seeking. God will lead you if you commit to follow Him. He leads us through the precepts of His Word, through prayer and wise counsel. What we do for God does indeed count, but we can't just rest on our past accomplishments, and then do nothing else (Psalm 25:14; Matt. 6:33; John 2:4; 7:17; 8:44; 14:6; 18:37; 2 Cor. 11:10; Heb. 8:10; 13:21; Rev. 3:7-14).
- *God's holy people / saints*. God has declared you holy by Christ as our Redeemer, set apart for Him—the pleasures and wondrous opportunities to be used by Him. This also implies to responding with what God has given with faith and application. We cannot earn nor do we deserve our grace or gifts from Him. We are created by God for a reason and purpose; our lives have meaning and value. This is to result in our gratitude for being in a special spiritual union with Christ as Savior and Lord. Therefore, let us be faithful and treat others as He has treated us (Matt. 27:52; John 3:16; Rom. 3:21-26; 8:32; 1 Cor. 1:2, 30; Gal. 2:20-21; Col. 1:2; 3:12-14; Titus 3:4; Heb. 2:12-18; 1 John 4:9-19).
- *Ephesus*. This was a prominent city in the Roman Empire and the capital of Asia Minor. It was located near modern Istanbul, Turkey. Its ruins are still visible today. It was once a jewel of a city with a population of 250,000. Ephesus had to move many times due to the rising of the ocean levels and nearby river silts, which have since receded. *Ephesus* means "Cayster", the god of the river. The Apostle John may have planted this church, and Paul lived there for three years ministering to them while he wrote this Epistle. Now, it is only a small village where the ruins remain in sight (Acts 18:19-20, 26; 19:8-9, 8-38; Eph. 1:1-3, 15; 1 Tim. 1:3; rev. 2:1-7). See background article.
- *Faithful in Christ*. This is the result of our gratitude for being in a special spiritual union with Christ as Savior and Lord. The principles of the Gospel must impact us so we are influenced and energized by it. This is the importance of Christ's influence of our contagious faith for mobilization, conviction in action, and being kind and good people who get excited and joyful about our relationship with Christ and the call He gives (Col. 4:7-18).
- *Grace and peace*. This means the favor comes from God. It is a standard form of Greek and first century Jewish greeting with a play on words; *greeting* is "charein" and *grace* is "charis." Paul was yearning for them to have favor by God and a triumphant life that would please Him (John 4:2; 14:27; 20:19; Luke 1:28; Rom. 1:1-7; Gal. 1:3; Col. 1:1-2).
- *From God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*. God's most abundant mercy, love, and grace, given to us, without merit. This refers to how lovingly God goes out of His way to redeem us with *new birth* those who converted to Christ as their new living Hope, inheritance, security, and God (John 1:12-13, 3:3-8, 16; 1 Peter 1: 3-12).

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

Paul's thrust and motivation was not just his passion and character, but his realization of the debt he owed Christ and his response of overwhelming gratitude. If we focus only upon ourselves, we will fail badly. We must be like Paul and willfully keep Christ as our head, for He already is (Acts 9:1; Rom. 1:1; Philp. 3:4-14; Col. 4:18).

Paul was an extreme example of multiplying networks and energizing and influencing people for the Lord. Being excited about who you are in Christ is an essential aspect of attracting people and motivating them for and in leadership. New Christians bring in most of the new converts because they are excited and are energized. Even though new Christians may be ignorant on theological and apologetical matters, they are bringing people in versus people who have been Christians for many years, but tend to lose their excitement and, thus, may rarely bring people into the church.

Our call is to be joyful, mature, obedient witnesses with love toward others. Christianity is a journey of our faith development as we encounter more of Christ through our learning and discoveries from His Word.

Church Leadership Tip: How are you communicating Grace and peace to your people? If you are not, you are doing church wrong. Our number one job is to always point to Jesus Christ as the Lord over all. If you want to receive God's Blessings, Spiritual and whatever he has for you, you must do these things as we Praise Christ.

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions, see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. What do Grace and peace mean to you personally?
2. Why would one of the greatest Christian leaders who has ever lived, who personally encountered Christ and wrote half of the New Testament be an authentic, humble representative of God? What should that mean for today's church leaders?
3. What does it mean to you that you are one of God's people? That He has a plan for you, even when we do not see it?
4. Who we are and what we can be all comes from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. So, what can this mean for your best life?
5. How can gratitude for being in Christ help motivate your spiritual life?

6. How can the principles of the Gospel impact your church so we are influenced and energized by it?
7. When someone is depressed, confused or troubled, how would the fact we are planned, given a purpose and we matter help?
8. What is your purpose and reality in Christ? Do you understand what He did for you, your redemption? Thus, what is my response?
9. When do you need a reminder of your worth to what Christ did for you?
10. What gets in the way of us responding to what God has given with faith and application?
11. What can your church do to better communicate Grace and peace to your people?
12. Have you experienced that if we focus only upon ourselves, we will fail badly in the Christian life. What can you do to be more like a great example, like Paul and willfully keep Christ as our Lord?

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