

LSB Ephesians 1:1-3

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at Ephesus & or _____ and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 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,

This morning we embark on an adventure together. The book of Ephesians is the mother lode of understanding the wealth of the family that we have been adopted into.

Orphans neither get to choose nor do they care whether their adoptive parents are wealthy or poor. They just need safety, security, food, and love in order to thrive.

But then later on when they've grown up a little bit and begin to fathom the fact that their adoptive family is not only permanent and loving, they may begin to realize that they are heirs to whatever fortune those folks who adopted them will eventually leave to them.

Orphan Annie didn't care much about Daddy Warbucks millions but then in real life a day comes when you sit down with an accountant who opens up the books and informs you that you are wealthy beyond your ability to even imagine.

That's the average Christians approach to this book. We don't have a clue. But it's time for the accountant to not only tell us exactly who our family is and what the wealth we are inheriting is, but it's also time to grow up and assume some of the responsibilities associated with our family position. This is who you are. Therefore, this is how you act.

I have an old book that my father bought from the Prairie Book Room, which was the bookstore at Prairie Bible Institute, in Three Hills, Alberta, Canada, and I confess I had to look around and make sure Pam was in

another room when I got it down from it's shelf, and literally blew the dust off of it. It's a christian classic. Written in the mid to late 1930's by Ruth Paxson, published in 1939, and the title will be the outline of our book of Ephesians. The Wealth, the Walk, and the Warfare of the Christian.

If you want a copy, I checked and the cheapest one available on Ebay was \$34. Or you can borrow mine and I'll give your \$50 deposit back when you've returned it.

In her introduction page, she has a second title for Ephesians. The Grand Canyon of scripture. The Grand Canyon of scripture! And she makes a fine first point. Experience is at many levels. Some people might watch a 90 minute PBS National Geographic special on their 74 inch screen and think they've experienced the Grand Canyon. Have they?

Miss Pam and I were in Frenchglen Oregon last Friday afternoon and evening to experience the Steens mountains. On Saturday morning I got up around 6:00 AM, peaked out through the window blinds and witnessed a phenomenal scene. You could look across the vast valley and see steam rising from different little draws and canyons everywhere. The land was trying to wake up

I thought to myself, I should get up, get dressed, and take a chair outside and experience the entire drama of sunrise over that magnificent landscape for the next hour and a half, and then I lazily got back in bed. Sort of shameful.

Ephesians is the Grand Canyon of scripture. And for most christians, a 90 minute PBS documentary *about* it is all they have the appetite for. You can read the entire text of Ephesians in 20 minutes. And then you can say, OK, that takes care of that. I've read Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus. Check that box, cross that off the list.

I read a lot. Christian literature, both old and new. One of my favorite illustrations was in L. E. Maxwell's little book, Born Crucified. He tells the

tale of a century before he wrote, which was about the same era as Ruth Paxson.

He tells of a little scottish mother, in Scotland, in the potatoe famine of the 1840's. And she had a fine strong son who had gone to America, and who was thriving in that new land. Even growing rich. But she was in deep poverty and almost at starvation.

And some visitors asked her about her son and her destitute state. Does he not send you any letters. Oh yes, she says. He sends me beautiful pictures. Pictures of fine looking handsome men, he does. And she goes and gets the pictures and they were checques and large bills. Enough money to purchase the whole village she lived in. And she's near to starvation. She needed to cash the checques that she was in possession of.

Most christians are like that little scottish woman. Half dead from starvation, and sitting on the mother lode of wealth. Oh, I've read Ephesians. Fine words, that. And lovely pictures too. Yes, I've enjoyed reading Ephesians. Took me about 20 minutes. Several years ago, but I've been there, done that.

Some of you aren't too sure if Ephesians is in the New Testament, or the Old. It's a wee little book in there some place.

Ruth Paxson, in her apt analogy of the Grand Canyon tells of a trip she made to that magic land. And adding up, or rather subtracting the years from the publishing date, it must have been around 1911 when she visited.

We can picture her description. She would have gotten off of the train, but she went to inspiration point that first evening and experienced the sun set over the Grand Canyon. She says that she rose the second day at 4:00 AM and found her way back to that point. And unlike me in my laziness, she witnessed the ink black depths of that canyon being filled with light over the next hours.

And then she says, seeing the overview was not enough. She got onto a burro and went all the way down those precipices to the river at it's depth, and back up again to the top. She became intimate with that land, and experienced it in depth.

Those are good analogy's, all. And would that you had a more competent teacher, but as best I can, I want us to commit to walk deep into the depths of this book. I want to mine out at least a little of the wealth. And then, I pray, that as a church we will cash some of the checks and enjoy being rich together.

Ephesians is the complete doctrinal statement of our individual and corporate union with Jesus. It is the complete unfolding of what Paul calls the mystery. Mysterion. A new revelation in God's unfolding drama, not seen at all in the Old Testament. The church.

The church is something totally new. God's calling of jews and gentiles, together into one new body, separated out of this world and combined together with different gifts and abilities to be one person. We are the body of Christ.

Ephesians is the complete document that defines who we are, "in Christ". There are no local references to anyone or anything at Ephesus. Paul doesn't mention the pastor there or any of the members. That's why we believe this was probably a circular letter. For all the churches in Asia minor.

And by extension, we could write our name in the blank space there in verse one. *1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at Tonopah Nevada, and who are faithful in Christ Jesus:*

More than any other book, this book tells us who we are, who has called us out of this world system, the cosmos, and who we now belong to, and what wealth we have inherited as a result of our adoption. We can't dwell here in these depths and leave here without being changed. This is our identity.

The world is having a massive identity crisis. I can send off my DNA to try to find out where in the world my species of from. And then I can go to Ancestry dot com and then what. So what??!! I'm descended from horse thieves in Texas. Great. Add some italian alcoholics into the mix. Even better.

The book of Ephesians gives me a new identity. I am called out of this world. Old things are passed away. All things are new. Former sins are forgiven and forgotten. I am adopted into a new family where God is my Father, and I am an adopted brother, a fellow heir with Jesus, who, oh by the way, owns everything.

That's what Paul does his best to explain in this book. And even Paul can't quite tell all of it. Although we're going to be overwhelmed with the verbiage.

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at (b l a n k) Ephesus & or _____ and who are faithful in Christ Jesus:

There is much to ponder here in vs. 1. Ephesus. But scholars have discovered manuscripts that don't say Ephesus at all. And that leads us to believe that this particular letter from Paul was a circular letter that was intended to circulate throughout all of Asia Minor.

In Colossians 4 we read; 15 Greet the brothers who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house. 16 And when this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea. 17 And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."

Paul's letters were written with the intent that they would circulate among all the churches, and indeed, this one made it to Tonopah Nevada, so the idea is a valid one. Paul knew that some of what he was writing was

inspired. The apostles understood that God was speaking through them, that the new covenant was being defined during this apostolic period.

Indeed, Peter supports the idea emphatically, calling Paul an apostle; 2 Pet. 3:

*14 Therefore, beloved, since you are looking for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, 15 and consider the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, 16 as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also **the rest of the Scriptures**, to their own destruction.*

Well, then, if that's the case, why don't we have the letter to the Laodiceans or the other two letters to Corinth. Because God was in control of the total process, and what got included is exactly what is inspired revelation, and the others, well, they're just letters from Paul.

You say then, did Paul actually understand that he had apostolic authority?

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

Sounds like at least one person is convinced. Paul says he is an apostle, and the reason he is an apostle is because of the sovereign will of God. God willed for him to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. His apostleship is linked directly to God. Caused by God.

Paul was untimely born. He wasn't chosen along with the other 11 men who Jesus selected as His special apostles. Jesus had many disciples. He chose 12 apostles, one of which defected, also by the will of God.

An interesting but important side note. In all of history, there are only 14 men who were official apostles of the church. The original 12, selected by Jesus, of which one was a devil. Then Matthias, in the final verse of Acts 1, and last of all, Paul, who was chosen separately from all the others by

Jesus Himself on the road to Damascus. That's IT. No other apostles. No apostolic succession in the Papacy. Just 14, the book was written, the revelation is closed upon the death of John in 96 AD.

Paul was literally an apostle by God's choice. We won't get out of verse 4 of this book before we have a head on collision with God's sovereign choices in election. See it there. Fair warning. If election troubles you, fasten your seat belt. It is in our faces, in Ephesians. But actually we never got out of verse 1 before election is in our face.

*1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus **by the will of God**,*

Paul didn't wake up one morning on his way to Damascus to murder christians and say, you know, I think I'd like to be an apostle of Jesus who is the Christ. That isn't how it happened. It wasn't a fair fight at all. No choice involved on Paul's part.

He got knocked onto the ground and a voice was shouting at him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me??!!! Whoa! Who are you. LORD. When you get knocked into the dirt and a voice out of heaven speaks, you're wise to throw in the Lord language. Who are you, Lord? I am Jesus who you are persecuting!

It's worth our time to look at how this apostleship came to be given to Paul by God's choice and will. In Acts 9:

10 Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." 11 And the Lord said to him, "Rise up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, 12 and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight." 13 But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem. 14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." 15 But

the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; 16 for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name."

Paul didn't ask for apostleship, he didn't seek apostleship, he would have liked to murder God's apostles, that was his intent as he was on his way to Damascus, but Paul IS *an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God*

To the saints who are at Ephesus & or _____ and who are faithful in Christ Jesus:

There is so much here to consider. The first word in this greeting of importance is the word saints. Who are the saints? Well, Paul's going to define it for us perfectly at the end of the greeting, but because there is confusion these days about saints and sainthood we need to stop and look at this important word.

The catholic church says the saints are a select group of believers who are worthy of having their caricatures set about like idols. Carved out of wood Peter's and Pauls and Mary's and others, or set in stained glass panels. Notable men of holiness unachievable by rank and file church members.

Is that who Paul is writing this letter to? The word is hagios. And the ancient greek word simply meant different. Different categorically. And specifically, for christians it is a difference from the rest of the world because of holiness.

We are called out of this world, set apart from this perishing world, and the difference is holy lives. Hagios came to mean a difference because of holiness. Set apart from this world by observable holiness. We don't do what the world does.

And if that distinction isn't there, then, Houston, we've got a problem. If the church looks just like the world and no one can see or tell the difference, that should set off some alarms. Because that's exactly what

Jesus was talking about in Matthew 5 when He said that we are salt.

We are to be distinct, like salt is distinct. 13 “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out to be trampled under foot by men. Mt. 5:13

Hagios is the distinct separateness from the world of holy lives. That's who Paul is writing to. People who have been called out of this world and who are distinct from this world, because they are holy. Chaste. Heavenly. We are the saints. And the reason for that transformation, that distinction from this world, is in the remainder of Paul's intro;

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at Ephesus & or _____ and who are faithful in Christ Jesus:

and who are faithful in Christ Jesus:

The difference of the hagios, wherever they are found, whether in Ephesus or Tonopah Nevada, is because of faith. We have set our faith upon Jesus. We believe He died to absorb the full penalty of our sins without any works from us. We believe He removed our sins and left them at the cross. And we believe He rose from the dead, and in place of our sins He has given to our accounts, His righteousness.

Faith is what called us apart to be different. A holy difference. But notice the final words in Paul's greeting; *in Christ Jesus*

This term, and it's equivalents, sometimes simply stated as a pronoun, **in** whom, or **in** Him, the idea of being **in** Christ is repeated over 130 times in the new testament. We'll see it 14 times in our first chapter of Ephesians.

The theme of the book of Ephesians could be stated in these two words. The tiny preposition; IN And the proper name; Christ. In Christ.

What does it mean. Now, if you've tuned out, screw down your thinking hat for just this brief take away if nothing else. In Christ. The term describes the federal headship of Jesus. But the best way to understand the meaning is to look at the counter point.

In this world there are only two possibilities of federal headship for all peoples. Two groups of humans under two federal heads. Adam, and Christ. That's it. Two federal heads that encompass the entire human race. Either you are in Adam, and condemned, or you are in Christ, and blessed with every spiritual blessing possible anywhere.

Just two groups with two federal heads. In Adam. Or, In Christ. And Adam's race is condemned because of sin. Death and hell are the only possibility for Adam's condemned sinful race.

If you are born into Adam's race and do not flee to Christ for safety, you are under a blanket condemnation. Born into a condemned group. When Jesus said I didn't come into the world to judge the world, it was because the world is already judged.

18 He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. Jn. 3:18

Two categories of people. Period. Those who are in Adam, who are born condemned, whose judgement is already in place, waiting only for their departure from this world, and those who are IN CHRIST, who are purchased out of this condemned world, and set apart under a new federal head, who is Jesus, Lord and owner of all things.

We commonly speak militarily of being IN some defined group under a common headship. I'm in the Army. I'm in the Navy. I'm in the Air Force. Out where I used to work we might shorten that and even leave out the little preposition, IN. I might say, I'm DOE and Pam is DOD. Same idea of inclusion under a common headship.

But in the spiritual world of eternity, only two federal headships are possible. In Adam, judged, and condemned. Or in Christ, with all of the wealth included in that, which is what this book is about.

Are you in Adam, this morning, or in Christ. If you are in Christ, this morning, you have been called out of Adam's race and adopted into Christ's family, under His federal headship, and by reason of that, you are transformed internally, you are a new creation, and we should expect to see a visible difference.

Saints are different because of holiness born into us by the transforming power of regeneration. We are born again. Our new parent is Christ. We have left Adam far behind.

Think about that transformation every time you see those words. In Christ.

To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus:

Faithful. Faith isn't a one time event. If you are IN Christ, faith is ongoing and continuous. Faithful in that verse is dative, masculine, plural. The tense is a faith that is continuous. Ongoing. The faith that saved me is the faith that keeps me walking daily and forever, with Jesus.

It's just part of the change that happened when I left Adam and became the property of Jesus. We are the saints who are faithful. We are IN Christ. It's a big greeting. Just in verse one we've already embraced election by sovereign will, resulting in holiness, set apart from this world ness, our position under the federal headship of Christ, and our resulting continuing faith. Easy peasy. Just wait 'til we dive into the deep waters.

Well, we have a little time left, and verse two will make perfect sense with what we've already spoken of;

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Everything devolves back to the two families, the two races, under the two federal heads. Adam or Jesus.

For Adam's race, there is no grace. For Adam's race there is no peace.

It's been an eventful week. Depravity has reared it's ugly head. We are shocked by depraved men who have sunk to the depravity of chopping off the heads of little babies. Who does that?

We do. We do. Why are we surprised and shocked when we've murdered 10's of millions of babies in the womb. Do you think God see's any difference in babies chopped up outside the womb than He does those inside? That's what Adam's race does.

The veneer of civilization has grown razor thin. We were lucky to have inherited western civilization that had some roots in God's revealed truth. The 10 commandments. Basic things like stable families, moms and dads and little children, protected somewhat by *do not lie, do not steal, do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not covet, honor father and mother, children obey your parents.*

Just those basic building blocks made the place somewhat safe, somewhat livable. But that was then, this is now. Those things brought with them a veneer of civilization. Love of neighbor. Justice. Respect for ownership of property.

What little grace we had and what little peace and safety we enjoyed, were connected to the judeo-christian God and His commandments. All of that is stripped away. We've dismissed God. Our culture has abandoned God. Divorced itself from God.

We go up to the Steens mountains and gape into the vast gorges and read on signs placed by our government that those gorges are carved out by glaciers receding millions of years ago.

But God's revealed word says He made that gorge, in 6 days, about 6,000 years ago. It seems everywhere I go, even to the most beautiful places on earth, God is stripped of the glory of His creation. He spoke that gorge into existence. He made the Aspen trees that glow yellow and red and orange in the fall. He made the seasons.

Adam's race has neither grace or peace. Or for that matter, truth. So when Paul continues his greeting to us with 2 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*. That's a big deal.

Only those who are IN Christ experience real and lasting grace. Only those who are under the federal headship of Christ can experience true peace. A peace not of this cosmos. Not of this world. We have a peace that comes from the security and love of our new head, Jesus. And from our new adoptive Father. God. Inner peace. Inner joy. Grace.

Adam's race is at war with God. War as opposed to peace. There is no peace for anyone who is at war with God the Creator and judge.

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace are mine, IN Christ. What a greeting! What a family! What a wealth. What a God! What a Saviour! We're going to drown in the depths of unimaginable wealth in the next 12 verses.

You had me at Grace, and Peace. What more could a poor lost sinner in Adam's race want? And yet we're going to be showered in wealth by our adoptive Father.