

Introduction to Ephesians

Ephesians

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, September 22, 2019

We are starting a new sermon series in the Book of Ephesians. And so if you'd like to turn back there with me, that is the book we're in this morning. We're going to begin our series on the Book of Ephesians.

And as you're turning there, if you're joining us for the first time today, we just finished a series on the Book of Jonah called the "Whale of a Tale" series. That was the book we were in right before this, the Book of Jonah. And we called it the "Whale of a Tale" series because that's what Jonah is. It's a very unusual story about a prophet who ran away from God. The Lord told Jonah to go to Nineveh, which is this way, and instead, Jonah went to Tarshish, which was that way, and the Lord chased after him.

That's the most amazing part of the Book of Jonah. God went after this rebellious prophet. If you think about it, if you were in God's shoes, you wouldn't have done that, would you? You would have let him drown in the ocean. You would have let Jonah die in the sea, and yet the Lord did not do that. He chased after this man. Jonah 2:9 says, the reason the Lord did this is "salvation is from the Lord." Salvation flows from God, it comes from His heart. Some of your translations say, "salvation belongs to the Lord," which means that God owns it. Salvation is His personal possession, and He gives it to whomever He chooses. If God wants to save Jonah, God can save Jonah. Nobody can stop Him. Nobody can say otherwise. If God wants to save Nineveh, He can save Nineveh.

And I mention that, because it brings us to the Book of Ephesians because Ephesians talks about this as well. It says that salvation is from the Lord. But whereas Jonah talks about it and then moves on to other things, Ephesians doesn't do that. It never moves on from the topic of salvation. Jonah mentioned salvation and then he talks about his bad attitude and the Ninevites and different things like that, but Ephesians stays on this topic of God saving sinners from beginning to end. This whole book is just one long in depth explanation of the Gospel.

And let me introduce it to you like this. The name Hetty Green may not be familiar to you, but in the early 1900s, Hetty Green was considered to be the richest woman in America. She had more money than anyone in the country, any woman in the country. She amassed a fortune, financing local businesses to the point that when she died, her net worth was something like \$100 million, which would be \$1 billion in our economy. She was rich beyond her wildest dreams, but she didn't live like it.

That's the amazing thing about Hetty Green. She lived like a miser who had no money at all. It was the strangest thing. But to mention a few of the things that she did - she ate cold oatmeal every morning to avoid the cost of heating the water. That's pretty miserly. It's pretty gross. Oatmeal is gross enough when it's warm. She never washed her hands for the same reason as well. She said it was too expensive. The heating bill was too much to wash her hands. When her son injured his leg, she took so long trying to find a health care clinic that his leg had to be amputated due to infection. And when she got sick at the end of her life, the doctor recommended that she drink whole milk, but she said that was too expensive and so she drank skimmed milk instead and died early.

But I tell you her story because I think a lot of Christians are living that way today. I think a lot of believers are living like Hetty Green. We're spiritual misers, we're spiritual cheapskates. Spiritually speaking, we are the richest people in Canada. Amen? I mean, spiritually speaking, Christians are the richest people in the world, but we often live like we have no money at all. God has given us so many blessings, so many promises. He's given us grace upon grace, and yet we've refused to spend it for fear that we're going to run out.

I mean, just think about some of the things that Christians say and you'll see what I mean. Think about some of the things you hear in the church. (And we've all done this, so we're all guilty of this.) But you hear people say things like this, "I'm struggling with sin and I don't know what to do with it. I'm struggling with sin and I don't know how to get victory." Now just think about that for a minute. Think about what they're saying. You don't know what to do with sin as a Christian? As a believer, you don't know how to get rid of it? Have you ever read your Bible? I mean have you ever heard the Gospel? Do you know what Christ did? Why do we say those kinds of things? We say that because we're a miser. We say that because we're a spiritual cheapskate. God has given us a way to defeat sin once and for all, put it to death, nail to the cross and we're too cheap to enjoy it. We're too stingy to put it into practice.

Here's another one. Here's another thing that Christians say, and we've all said this. We say, "I'm depressed, I'm so discouraged because my life has no meaning anymore. Nothing makes me happy. God doesn't care about me." You can just think about that one. Jesus died for you and God doesn't care about you? Really? He rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, sits at the Father's right hand, interceding for you, praying for you daily, and you want to say that nothing makes you happy, you're depressed? Why do we say that? We say that because we're spiritual misers, cheapskates.

We're like the men in Pilgrim's Progress who spent all of his time shoveling filth. Do you remember that? He was the muck raker shoveling muck while there was a crown of gold hanging above his head. And all the man had to do was look up and he could have it. All he had to do was trade in his filthy rake and he could wear a crown of gold, and yet he refused. Or we're like the children in C. S. Lewis' book who would rather sit in the slums and make mud pies than go to the ocean for a holiday at sea.

To say it another way, this is our problem at the end of the day. This is the issue that we struggle with as believers is that we look at ourselves too much and we don't look at God enough. Amen? We like the filth too much. We like the slums. We want to focus on our needs, our problems, our wants when we should be looking at His tremendous wealth.

In his commentary on Ephesians, Martin Lloyd Jones says it this way, he says,

Much of the trouble in the church today is due to the fact that we are so subjective, so interested in ourselves, so egocentric. And having become this way, we have forgotten God and become wretched. We spend all our time in the shallows and miseries of life. And the message of the Bible from beginning to end is that we need to stop that and go back to God. The message of the Bible is that we need to look up and find that our treasure is found only in Him.

Can you guys relate to this? Do you guys struggle with this? We live like we have nothing sometimes, don't we? Spiritually? We live like God has given us no answers at all.

I was talking with a friend of mine the other day who works for a pharmaceutical company in Los Angeles. He's a traveling salesman and I said, "As a Christian businessman, does it surprise you to see Christians fight so much? Does it surprise you to see so much problems in the church?" And he said, "No, it doesn't because they act just like the world does. They act like my coworkers at work." Well, that's because we're looking in the same direction. That's because we're focused on the same thing the world is. We're focused on ourselves and we need to be focusing on God.'

And the Book of Ephesians helps us to do that. The Book of Ephesians was written to point us in the right direction as a church and remind us that salvation is from the Lord. He's come to save us from every sin and temptation.

I'll talk about this in a minute, but Ephesians has been called the "believer's bank" and the "Christian's checkbook" for this reason. Because it shows us all the treasures we have in Him. It shows us all the great wealth and blessings we have in our Saviour. You guys know what it's like going to the bank. You can only spend so much money at the bank and then you don't have any more. And I remember when I was in college or I was in seminary, I mean I didn't even know how much gas I could pump before my checking account ran out. It was kind of a scary time. Ramen noodles are very cheap and healthy. I ate those things every day. Ephesians tells us that this is a bank that will never run dry. The bank the Lord has given us in Christ has riches that will never run out.

It's also been called the Grand Canyon of Scripture and the Himalayas of blessing for this reason, because it shows us how deep our blessings go. It shows us how great our treasure is. And just like you can't get to the bottom of the Grand Canyon, you'll never get to the bottom of what all God has done for you in Christ. Just like you can't get to the top of the Himalayan Mountains, you can't get to the top of what we're going to read here in the Book of Ephesians.

Let me tell you this, friends, God was not cheap when He saved you. God was not miserly when He made you a Christian. He spared no expense, He held nothing back, and so you don't have to say things like, "I don't know what to do with sin." Absolutely, you know what to do with it. You don't have to say, "I'm depressed because I have nothing to live for." Yes, you do have something to live for - and that's what this book is about, which is what I want to talk to you about this morning.

This is something, if you've noticed, I've kind of kept repeating to you in these early years together as a church. I'm coming up on my third year as a pastor here and this is our fifth year together, something like that. I started in January of 2017 in our church. So we're in the early years together. We're just on the beginning of our journey and this is something that we've repeated over and over and over again since I've come here. But this is the message we're learning in these early years - God is enough for you. Jesus Christ is enough for you. You don't need another Saviour, you don't need another Lord, He has taken care of everything. He's enough for your home, He's enough for your marriage, He's enough for the sins and temptations of this life, and He's enough for this church. We don't need to turn to the world for help. We don't need to look at ourselves and become subjective and egocentric. We just need to look at Him. And this is what the Book of Ephesians is all about.

And this morning, just to kind of whet your appetite for that, I want to introduce it to you so you can be prepared for what's going to come. I just want to give you an overview of the book in this time this morning. So to do that, I want to give you three introductions to the

Book of Ephesians. So if you're taking notes, that's our outline for today, that's what we're going to talk about. Three introductions to the Book of Ephesians. This morning, I want to stand at the edge of the Grand Canyon with you and look down to see what we can see. I want to stand at the base of the Himalayas and look up and try to take it all in or take some of it. We can't take it all in. And let's do that with three introductions.

The first one is an introduction to the author. First, I want us to look at the author of this book. The author ultimately is God the Holy Spirit, but He spoke through a man named Paul. It was very fitting that Paul wrote a book like this because it really suited him. Of all the people in the New Testament, he had the greatest education. There are 42 words in the Book of Ephesians that are called *hapax legomenon*. That means they are found nowhere else in the Bible. There's 42 of those words, and they're written by a guy with the biggest brain, probably in the Bible, and maybe the biggest heart as well. This book really fit Paul's personality.

And if you read in verse one, it starts out this way by telling you a little bit about him. It says, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God." There you see the author's name there. It's mentioned in the first word; Paul or *Paulos* in Greek. I had a teammate in college from Brazil named Paulo, but this is *Paulos*. Both of them are versions of this word. Paul wrote 13 letters in the New Testament. They all start out this way, they start out with his name "Paul" which means "little"; a very interesting name. If you remember, he was originally called Saul after the first king of Israel. That was his given name because he was of the tribe of Benjamin like Saul was. So Saul was his great, great, great grandfather. But when he was saved, the change was so great in him, the difference was so incredible that Saul changed his name to Paul. That's something I kind of wish we still did today. Amen? When we got saved, we would change our name. And we wouldn't change it to things like Magnificent or Wonderful. It would be like Humble, "My name is Humble. My name is Meek." That's what this guy did. He changed his name from big to small to show that Christ was everything and he was nothing. And he starts out every one of his letters with the word "little," "small."

And he goes on to explain some of his smallness here. It says, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God." You see a couple of credentials there. One is that Paul says he is an apostle or "a messenger" in Greek. That word means "one who is sent out." And in the first century, they didn't have emails or telephones like we do today. So if you wanted to talk with someone, you had to do it in person or you had to send a letter. You couldn't just put it in the mailbox, you had to send somebody with the letter. And you would send a messenger or an apostle. That's what this word means. So for instance, when a king wanted to say something to a foreign ruler, he would send a messenger. But it wasn't just a messenger, it was someone who could speak on the king's behalf. It was someone who could think the king's thoughts for him. He would go to the court with the same weight, power and authority that the king had. That's the word "apostle." Or when a religious group like the Sanhedrin wanted to make an important decision (Sanhedrin, the religious leaders of Israel), they would do the same thing. They had their apostles. And Paul tells the Ephesians that he was an apostle of Christ. So that what Jesus said, he said, what He thought, Paul thought. And he adds to this when he says, "An apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God."

That phrase "by the will of God" means this is not Paul's will that he's writing about here, these are not Paul's words or ideas, these are the words of God. This is the will of God, is what he's saying. So he starts off calling himself small, and then he goes on to say, "And I'm not writing about my own will. I'm an apostle by the will of God." Which leads to another

thing Paul says about himself in this book, and this is interesting, you don't see this one here, but I want to point it out to you.

If you look in chapter 3:1, not only does he say that he's an apostle, but he also says he's a prisoner of Christ Jesus. I don't know about you guys, but if I'm going to take the time to write a letter and I'm in prison, I might not tell anybody. I definitely would not use that as some type of criterion for my authorship. People are often ashamed when they're in prison and that kind of thing. But you actually see Paul mentioning this a couple of times here. If you look in chapter 3:1 he says, "For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles." And then down in chapter 4:1, he says, "Therefore, I, the prisoner of the Lord implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling which you have been called." Most scholars believe that Paul wrote this in reference to his imprisonment in Rome, when he was arrested for bringing a Gentile into a forbidden area of the temple. Acts 21 says he didn't really do that. It was a trumped up charge. But some Jews saw him with a man named Trophimus, who was actually an Ephesian, so he might've been part of this church. So in my mind, I think when this letter is being read out loud and they mentioned Paul being a prisoner, everybody would look at Trophimus. "Hey, you know what? This is your fault. You know that, right?" They assumed he was defiling the temple with him. But if you notice, Paul says this in the most dignified way possible. He calls himself "a prisoner of Christ Jesus." In other words, he's not a prisoner of the Jews, ultimately. He's not a prisoner of the Romans, he's not a prisoner of Nero or Caesar. He's a prisoner of Christ. He had a higher calling. He had a higher purpose.

Which sheds a lot of light on the Book of Ephesians because as Paul is writing this, he says, "I can survive the worst circumstances imaginable when I remember the wealth I have in Christ. I can survive the most lonely, miserable existence, living chained to a Roman soldier when I remember who I ultimately serve. What is ultimately waiting for me is all the wealth I have in Him. My treasure lies in Christ, not in this world. My hope lies in Him, not in my circumstances." One commentator said it like this, he said,

One man will regard his prison cell as a punishment, the other will regard it as a privilege... And what's the difference? Why does one see it one way and one see it the other? The difference is in their perspective, the difference is in their point of view and what they're doing it for. Paul is our example. He regarded himself not as a prisoner of Nero, but as the prisoner of Christ.

By the way, can I say it's just amazing how many people in the New Testament who wrote the Bible spent time in jail? I mean how many of them - and how many of these letters were written from jail? Ephesians, Colossians and Philippians are called "Paul's Prison Epistles." And as you read them, you can almost smell the prison coming off the page. Because it's almost like in Ephesians he's saying, "I don't like my circumstances. I want to think about the Lord. I don't like what's going on around me, this is no good. But there are better things to come, and there are better things for me in heaven."

Charles Spurgeon said that John Bunyan's book, Pilgrim's Progress smelled like the prison because that's where Bunyan wrote it. I think Ephesians does that in the best way imaginable. There were no personal circumstances (very few, anyway) mentioned in this book. There's none of that kind of stuff because it's almost like Paul is saying, "All my circumstances are just not pleasant. I don't want to think about that. I want to think about something better."

The story is told of the time Christopher Wren, the famous architect was building St. Paul's Cathedral in London. And he wanted to see how things were going and so he visited some of the workers. And he asked the first one, he said, "What are you doing? What are you working on?" And the man said, "I'm cutting this stone to go into this wall. I'm doing what I was told." And he approached another one and he asked the next worker, "What are you doing?" And the man said, "I'm earning enough money to feed my family. That's what I'm doing here. I just don't want my kids to starve." And then he approached another worker who did not know who he was. The worker had never met Christopher Wren before. So he asked him, "What are you doing?" And the third worker said, "I am helping serve Christopher Wren to build St. Paul's Cathedral." And the architect said, "I'm going to give this guy a raise. I'm going to make him a foreman because he gets it. He sees the bigger picture." I can't tell you how many Christians I have met who have forgotten this. They have forgotten the bigger picture. They say, "I'm depressed, I'm struggling with sin, I can't figure out what to do with it," because they forget all the wonderful things God is doing in Christ. They forget the great cathedral He's building through His church. As the expression goes, we can't see past the nose on our face. And all we talk about is, "Me and me and my problems and my issues" to the point that we're miserable. And Paul in this book is saying, "Well, I've got problems too, I have issues. But the solution for that is not found in me, it's found in Christ. The solution for my issues are not found in my small picture, in my small rock in the wall, it's found in the whole structure of what God is doing."

This is quite a book to be written by a jailbird. It's quite a book to be written by a prisoner, but Paul did not give up because he remembered the bigger picture. And I can say it this way, because this is important. You may not be an actual prisoner like Paul was today, you may not be in a prison cell, but you are a prisoner of Christ and you need to live like it. Your heart has been captivated by Him no matter what your situation in life. You were bought with a price, you were paid for by blood. And remembering that helps you to remember where your treasure lies. It helps you remember where your hope is. Your hope is found in Him so that even if you're not in a prison, you're still an employee or a manager or a student for Christ. You live for Him whatever you do. You're still a father or a mother or a sister or a brother for Him. You serve Him no matter where you are. That puts life in perspective. That helps you remember what's important.

And that leads us to a second point we need to consider this morning, a second introduction to this book. The first one is an introduction to the author. The author is Paul or Little, an Apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God and a prisoner for the Lord. Those are his credentials. That's his qualifications for writing this book. It leads you to the second introduction for the book, and that is an introduction to the audience. So first, we see the author of this book. And second, Paul goes on to tell us the audience. As he does in most of his books, he gives you the audience right away. He doesn't waste any time - tells you who this was written to. And if you look in verse 1, he goes on and he says, "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."

Just a few thoughts on this, but if you notice, in the margins of some of your Bibles, it says that the phrase, "at Ephesus" was not in the earliest manuscripts of the New Testament. So this verse could read, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are faithful in Christ Jesus." Some early manuscripts leave that out. But on the other hand, almost all those manuscripts also have "to the Ephesians" written at the top of the page. So in other words, the word "Ephesus" is in the document. This was sent to the city of Ephesus.

Some believe it was probably sent to Ephesus but was intended for a larger audience. It was sent to this city and it was distributed from there. Which would make sense because Ephesus was an important city. It was the capital of Asia Minor. So if you were going to send a letter to the region, you would start at this city. It was a very popular place. Like Canada has done with its territories, the Roman Empire divided up its area into provinces. And this one, Asia Minor was a large stretch of land located in the modern day country of Turkey, right between Europe and the Middle East. So if you look at a map, it's right between the countries of Syria and Bulgaria and Greece. Because of its central location, Ephesus was kind of a gateway between east and west. So if you were traveling from Babylon to Rome, you would have to probably go through here. It was a meeting point for those larger cities.

Which means it was a rough place with all the traffic and it had a lot of money in it due to the people passing through their. It contained (interesting fact about Ephesus, an important fact) one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the temple of Diana or Artemis, the goddess of hunting, was located there. The temple was four times the size of the Parthenon in Athens. It only stood 60 feet tall, so it wasn't very tall. But it was 425 feet long and it took 220 years to build it. It was so ornate and beautiful. Now if you think about that, you guys complain because the TransCanada highway takes like years and years to work on. We all do that. You guys know what I'm talking about. Going to Vancouver, you're like, "Seriously, like 2020, that's when this is going to finish?" It took 220 years to build this temple. It staggered the mind. It was absolutely gorgeous. It had a beautiful statue of Diana in it that supposedly fell from heaven as well as the Bank of Asia. This is kind of wild, but the Bank of Asia Minor sat on the temple grounds right behind the statue. And the idea was the temple grounds were so safe that you could put the wealthiest bank in the region right on the grounds. Another interesting fact about the temple - Cleopatra's sister was murdered there. So it wasn't really that safe of a place.

And if you remember your Bible history, this is where Paul got in so much trouble. This is where he almost lost his life. Because while he was preaching there, Acts 19 says that this is what happened. Here was Paul's first encounter with Ephesus. It says,

24 For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, was bringing no little business to the craftsmen; 25 and he gathered these together with the workmen of similar trades, and he said, "Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business [of making idols]. 26 You see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all...and also that the temple of the great goddess Diana [or Artemis] should be regarded as worthless...28 When they heard this and [the Ephesians] were filled with rage, they began crying out, saying, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" 29 The city was filled with confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia. 30 And when Paul wanted to go into the assembly, the disciples would not let him. 31 Also some of the Asiarchs who were friends of his sent to him and repeatedly urged him not to venture into the theater. 32 So then, some were shouting one thing and some another, for the assembly was in confusion and the majority did not know for what reason they had come together. 33 Some of the crowd concluded *it was* Alexander, since the Jews had put him forward; and having motioned with his hand, Alexander was intending to make a defense to the assembly. 34 But when they recognized that he was a Jew, a

single outcry arose from them all as they shouted for about two hours, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”

You want to talk about a bad first experience in a town. Paul had a two-hour riot his first encounter with Ephesus. And the riot was all over the issue, it began over the issue of money. That was the issue. The idol makers were frustrated because he was hurting their business, and so they chanted for two hours, “Great is Artemis (Diana) of the Ephesians.”

Ephesus had such a strong tie to this temple that it was called the “temple warden” or the “temple sweeper.” When people thought of this city, they thought of this pagan place. And Paul says in this book, writing with this in mind from his prison cell, Paul says, “With all of your wealth, you guys need to remember what true wealth really is. With all the money going through the Bank of Asia and through this temple, of Diana, you need to step back a second and remember what really matters to God, and what matters to God is your salvation in Christ. You are saved through Jesus Christ, not through Diana. Your wealth comes from the Son of God, not through some silly temple.”

I couldn't find the statistics for this in Canada, but I read recently that the average house in America has 300,000 items in it. Can you believe that? 300,000 items. And the average 2-year-old has 238 toys to play with. That kind of staggered my mind because my boys could just play with a rock and a stick. They just throw it at each other and that's all they need. But they have so much more than that. They probably have that many toys. And when grandparents come in, they bring in more and they all make noise. I go through the house taking the batteries out of all the toys just so I can sleep at night. The list also said one out of every ten Americans has so much stuff that they have to rent an offsite storage facility to hold it. And 25% of them leave their cars parked in the driveway because the garage is full. Now listen here, Canadians, that happens here. Our garage is full of stuff, isn't it? I drive through my neighbourhood and nobody parks in the garage anymore.

But the most amazing thing about this, is with all of our stuff, with all of this wealth, we're still miserable, aren't we? With all of our riches and all of our treasures and all the items that fill up our house and fill up our garage and fill up our lives, we're still depressed. They say money can't buy you love and it's true. It doesn't have the power to do that. They also say there's no dollar sign on a peace of mind. Because with all this stuff, we're still in a bad place. The author John Steinbeck once said, “We can shoot rockets into space, but we cannot cure anger or discontent.”

And Paul tells us why in this book. He tells us why that is in the Book of Ephesians, because those things are on the inside of us. Anger and discontent are spiritual issues and they have to be battled with spiritual resources. You fix them with spiritual wealth. More money won't help it. More toys won't make you happy. You can fill up your garage from now until eternity, you can give your kids toys from now until the cows come home - it won't help this because this can only be fixed through Jesus Christ. (That's a southern expression - the cows come home. You guys, tracking? Alright, good. Okay.) Some of you have heard of the time, the billionaire John D. Rockefeller was asked how much money is enough. You remember his answer? He said, “\$1 more.” One more thing, one more item, it's never enough. You can only be satisfied in Jesus Christ.

John Piper said, “If you don't see the greatness of God, then all the things that money can buy will become very exciting to you. They become thrilling because if you can't see the sun, you

will be impressed with a streetlight. If you can't see a mountain, you're going to be impressed with a pebble.” This is the message of the Book of Ephesians. This is something these people desperately needed to hear. They lived in one of the wealthiest cities in the world. They lived in a place where they were just overrun with stuff. Just like us, their garages were overrun. And so Paul writes to them and he says, “This is where true wealth can be found. This is where you can have true riches - only in Jesus Christ.” They say, you never see a U-Haul following a hearse. You can't take it with you when you die. Paul says, “But you can take these things with you, so focus on these things.”

Which leads to one more point I want to talk about this morning with you, one more introduction to this book. The first one is an introduction to the author of Ephesians. The author is Paul, a man writing from a prison cell under house arrest, writing about all these wealth and riches. Pretty interesting setting for that. Second introduction to the book is an introduction to the audience. The audience is the Ephesians, the people who lived in one of the wealthiest cities of the ancient world. They had the home of the temple of Diana and the Bank of Asia. Bringing us to one more point that we need to look at this morning, one more introduction for this book, and we'll put it together with this one. That's an introduction to the purpose of this book. Very quickly, I want to talk to you about the purpose of the Book of Ephesians. Like we just said, Ephesians was written to tell you about the riches you have in Christ. That's the purpose of the book. It tells you about all the blessings you have in Him. And let me quickly show you how Paul does this.

If you look in verse 1, he writes and he says, “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.” Just to go through this briefly, grace and peace were a common greeting of Paul's. If you read through the New Testament, every one of his letters start out with this greeting: “Grace and peace.” So for instance, in Galatians chapter 1, you can read this (the book right before this). He says,

1 Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead), 2 and all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia: 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

And you see the same thing in the Book of Philippians right after this, another time Paul uses this introduction. He says, “To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” This was a common introduction for him. He used it all the time.

And just to tell you what it means, the word “grace” is the Greek word *charis* from which we get the word “charm.” It referred to a gift that brought a charm, a certain beauty into your life. There are gifts that you re-gift, you give away, they're not worth anything. But then there are gifts that make your life beautiful. That's what this word means.

Then you see the word “peace,” which comes from the word *shalom*, the Hebrew word *shalom*. It referred to the absence of trouble in your life, the absence of distress. To have *shalom* means to be settled in your soul regardless of the circumstances.

And then Paul says, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” to remind you this is where you get that from. This is where the grace and peace come from.

They come from “God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” They don't come from the temple of Diana, they don't come from the Bank of Asia, they don't come from all the stuff in your house, they come from God.

Which is the point of this letter. This is the introduction to it, but it fleshes out in the point of this letter - God has given you grace and peace. If you have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ, God has brought a certain charm into your life, a certain beauty to it, and He has settled everything down in your soul. Regardless of the circumstances, regardless of the crazy world you live in, God has calmed things down on the inside, or He has given you the resources to do that.

You see this in several key words in this book. Words like “glory” and “fullness” and “riches” are repeated over and over again in here. It means God has made you rich and full. You see this in the outline as well.

The outline for the Book of Ephesians is like this: the first three chapters tell you your position in Christ, and the next three chapters tell you your practice in Christ. Ephesians 1-3 gives you your position. They tell you that God has predestined you. He has made you alive in Christ, “for by grace you have been saved.” And then the next three chapters, 4-6, tell your practice of that. They tell you how your salvation fleshes itself out in your marriage and your home and in your work life. One author I read said that the first half of the book gives you your riches, the second half of the book gives you your responsibility. Here's what you're supposed to do with this great wealth.

He even says it this way in chapter 5 - I read this this week, kind of blew my mind. Ephesians 5 (this is a wild thing to say), but verse 1 Paul says, “Therefore, be imitators of God as beloved children.” Now let me ask you this question, how in the world are you going to be an imitator of God? Imitate Paul, maybe? Imitate, I don't know, David or somebody, but imitate God? How are you going to do that? Paul says, “You do that by understanding everything in the first three chapters, by understanding that God has saved you. ‘For by grace, you have been saved,’ and He has made you alive in Christ, and that is how you imitate God.”

Going back to what we said in the beginning of all this, you don't have to be spiritual misers anymore. You don't have to be cheapskates. You can spend all the wealth the Lord has given you, you can spend all these riches and they will never run out. You'll never be through with them. God is infinite, and what He gives is always infinite. He gives you love, it's infinite love. He gives you grace, it's infinite grace. And when He gives you wealth, it is infinite wealth. The believer's bank will never run dry, the Christian's checkbook will never be empty.

Which leads me to ask, do you believe that today? Do you have your mind wrapped around this? Are you spending the great wealth the Lord has given you? And is it making a difference in your life? Or do you go around saying, “I'm struggling with sin and I don't know what to do with it? I'm depressed because I have no purpose in life.” Do you act, do you believe that this bank will run dry?

If so, I want to encourage you that you don't have to be that way. If you're acting that way, I want to encourage you that you can change. You can go to this bank, you can cash the check and it will never run dry for you. You just need to believe in Him. You need to call out on His name in faith, and all of this will be open for you. All this stuff we're going to talk about

in the Book of Ephesians is available for every person in this room. This is not for the higher Christians, this is not for the better people, this is for everybody.

And if your life has changed through this, if you've experienced this, and you're saying "amen" to a lot of these things, let me ask you this question: have you had enough of His riches? Have you tasted enough of His glory? Or would you like to have more; more of His peace, more of His grace, more of His fullness? I ask you that because if you want more, you can have it. If you want to experience more of these things, you can go to the bank and make a withdrawal because it will never run out for you either. You have not exhausted the streams of His blessing, amen? You haven't asked for too much. I don't care who you are in this room, you've never asked for too much from God. Ask Him for more and He will give it to you, which is what we're going to be talking about in this series.

A tax collector once visited a poor Christian farmer and he asked him how much money he had. To which the farmer replied, "Well, I don't have much, but Psalm 127:5 says, 'Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of children,' and I have that. My house is full of kids" And he said, "Proverbs 31:10 says, 'An excellent wife who can find, for her worth is far above many jewels,' and I have that as well. I have an excellent wife." He said, "Matthew 6:33 says, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all of these things will be added to you,' and I'm doing that. I'm seeking His kingdom and He's adding things to me." And after several statements like this, finally, the tax collector cut him off and said, "Okay, okay, I get it. You are truly rich. You have things that money can't buy, and I can't tax any of it, so have a nice day." But friends, the tax collector was right. These are the things that money can't buy. This is what it means to be truly rich. And my prayer in our study of this book is that you will see that. My prayer as we study the Book of Ephesians is that God will help you to find the things that money can't buy. Let's pray.

Father, as we begin this wonderful book, my prayer is what I just said, Lord, that we would find the things that money can't buy, the things that matter to You. Lord, I pray for my friends in this room, I pray for myself because I don't think there's any of us who don't struggle with this. We are saturated with material things in our culture, and we're saturated with priorities that are just backwards at times. And as a result of that, we often live like we are cheapskates with You. There's not a thing that any man or woman or child in this room needs that You have not provided. There is not a blessing that we would like to experience that You haven't given in Christ. Lord, help us to see that in the study of this book.

Thank you for Paul, for his heart that he would say such things from prison. Thank you for his heart that he would unload such a wonderful book on us. May we take it now and glorify You in it.

Father, we pray for the Lord's Supper this morning as we remember what Christ has done, where the riches started for us, at the cross. Would You be honoured and glorified, Lord. Help us to take it in a manner that pleases You. I pray in Jesus' name, amen.