

Ephesians 1 (The Praise of His Glorious Grace!)

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[0 : 00] Amen. Greetings to all of you in Jesus' name. It's been good to be here. It's been very encouraging. Thank you, Dan, for what you shared.

We were in Ephesians for a little bit, Ephesians 2, that verse that you mentioned, Joe, about, but God, who is rich in mercy.

It reminded me that yesterday morning I shared that chapter, actually, for devotional. My mom was here and two of my sisters yesterday morning.

And so that was a really special time. And then we had a discussion about that chapter, Ephesians 2. But this morning, if you want to turn to Ephesians 1, first chapter of Ephesians, that's where my mind has been lately.

And I would just like to just simply preach out of that chapter today, Lord willing, and see what God would speak to us as a church here.

[1 : 16] So Ephesians chapter 1. And a little bit of background on Ephesians. According to Acts chapter 20, Paul had actually been with the Ephesians.

Probably, I would imagine, he pastored them for a period of three years earlier on. Ephesus was a city, a coastal city, in what we now know as Turkey.

And Paul, when he wrote this letter, these six chapters, to the church at Ephesus, he was in prison. And I'm assuming in Rome, but I'm not sure.

I didn't look into that. But nonetheless, he wrote it from prison, the way I understand. But he had already been with this church, so he knew these people very closely.

He was there and ministering to them for a period of three years, he says, in Acts. This book of Ephesians is an important encouragement to a group of believers who are surrounded by paganism.

[2 : 35] It reminds them to stay true to the faith and resist the temptations of the Roman and pagan society within which they live. And as I read that, I thought, wow, if they needed encouragement because of what they were surrounded with, doesn't the church today need encouragement with what we are surrounded with right here in America?

We are also surrounded with pagan doctrine, pagan society, where people are speaking more and more perverse things, things that are not true.

And we tend to become used to it, to where, you know, and I think that's the enemy's plan, is that we become used to paganism.

We become, our culture will dull our senses if we're not careful. Our culture will start making sinful things feel a little less sinful as we get used to it.

I remember from when I was a young boy, maybe 12, 14 years old, things that are openly discussed today or mentioned today were much more shameful back then, like you barely heard the terms.

[4 : 04] Today it's just kind of a common thing. But we as a church need to be very careful that we don't become dull of those things or become desensitized of the evil that is all around us.

God would have us be very sensitive to His Word and what is His heart and His truth. So today we just want to, we just pray to God that He would just speak to us through Paul's letter to the Ephesians, this first chapter.

One of the things we see throughout this chapter is several times, a number of times, it says, the praise of His glory. Are we full of praise this morning?

Paul is in prison talking about praise. Can you imagine that? Let's start reading. Verse 1. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, to the faithful in Christ Jesus.

He says, Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. He writes, Grace be to you and peace how is it with us this morning?

[5 : 28] Is God's grace in our lives? Do we wish each other the grace of God, the peace of God? Do we have His peace in our hearts?

As we go through this book, let's put ourselves up next to the Ephesian church and see what the Spirit is saying to us through our brother Paul.

That's my heart, is that God would speak through this. I don't know if we'll go through the whole book of Ephesians, maybe eventually, but today we're just going to focus on this chapter, I believe.

But let's allow God to, you know, not just, okay, this was for the Ephesians, but this is for us today. I really believe that. Verse 3 says, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

Now, here he said, Blessed be God. Blessed be the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here in my footnotes, it says, Blessed here means worthy of praise.

[6 : 45] When God blesses man, he confers benefits upon him. When man blesses God, as Paul does here, he attributes praise to him who hath blessed us.

So let's think about that. Blessed be God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus. Paul is blessing God.

He's praising God. Do we do that? Do we praise God? Do we bless him? Verse 4 says, According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

Wow. Can this be said about us this morning? That we are holy and without blame before God. Do you know that's possible?

That should be a reality. Or are we living selfishly for ourselves? There's only two ways. We're either selfish and living for self, or we are holy and without blame.

[8 : 02] Are we able and willing to serve God and each other? Are we willing? Are we fully surrendered to Christ?

You know, I had to think of this morning when Dan shared about, you know, laying down self, and we say that a lot. Joe, you repeated that then and confirmed that.

And I had to think, well, which is first? Do we die to self first? Or does Jesus come first on the scene? Are you able to die to yourself without the power of God?

Without Jesus? I'm just throwing that out as a thought. Something to think about. Because we know we can't save ourselves, right? Only the power of God saves us.

But the answer to that, I believe, is to be willing to die to self. To become, to have a heart that turns toward God and says, God, I surrender.

[9 : 12] Do with me what you want. And God will make sure that we die to self if we have that kind of a heart. So one thing we do need for sure, and that is a willing heart.

If our heart is resisting and we're not willing to die to self, God can't help us either. He won't force us, in other words.

We're not forced into the kingdom. You know, we're not going to go to heaven kicking and screaming, right, Joe? I think I've heard you say that. Exactly. We're not forced to become a child of God.

It's our choice. As we go through this, I had to think, you know, if all the things, if all these things are not true about us, in other words, if we are not blameless before God, think for a moment if it were reversed.

Some of these promises and some of these things, and as we go through, even just going through the Bible and the promises of God, if those things were reversed, what happens if we are not blameless?

[10 : 31] What happens if we're not pure before God and if we're not holy? Then the opposite is also true. That should really make it more serious for us if we are not holy and if we are not blameless before God.

In other words, if we come before God with blame, with guilt, is that how we want to meet God? We know the answer to that.

We want to be blameless. We want to hear those words, well done, thou good and faithful servant. Verse 5, Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace.

There's that phrase again. To the praise of the glory of His grace wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved in whom we have redemption through His blood the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace.

Yes, no more animal sacrifice. No more coming to the priest. You know, the high priest the way they had to like we heard this morning.

[12 : 00] but we have one high priest and one sacrifice that was final for all. The Lord Jesus. Here in these verses we see that it was His good pleasure that we can be His children.

It wasn't our idea. It wasn't us choosing Him so much. It was Him choosing us. It was His plan before the foundation of the earth that this would be the case, that we would become His children, adopted into His family.

In fact, I think that's what predestined means, that it was simply God's plan. It was His plan to redeem mankind. It was His pleasure.

And if we have been born again by His Spirit, then we have been adopted into the family of God. And do we rejoice in that enough?

Does that bring joy to your heart? Just that thought. You know, God wouldn't have had to do that. He could have had a different plan. But it was His good pleasure.

[13 : 20] pleasure. It pleased Him. It makes God happy. Do we rejoice? Do we worship? Do we praise Him? That we have, and then it says, that we are accepted in the Beloved.

Do we praise Him that you are accepted in the Beloved, the One who redeemed us through His blood, according to the riches of His grace?

How is it with us, this morning? Are we rejoicing in this? Do we rejoice in our God, even though we have trials and sometimes we walk on a rocky road?

Sometimes it's the road is rough and it's rocky. But how many of us have felt unaccepted?

Is that a word? unaccepted? Or not accepted? Rejected? How many of us have felt rejected by family or somebody we loved or somebody that we wanted to be, maybe a peer, somebody we just wanted to be accepted by?

[14 : 37] You know, and us as humans are not perfect. We make mistakes and we mistreat each other, unfortunately, sometimes. sometimes intentionally, sometimes unintentionally.

We feel mistreated or not accepted. But here it says that we are accepted in the beloved. He has accepted you. Do we rejoice in that? Are we thankful? faithful. That should melt our hearts. It really should.

That Jesus has accepted us. That God through His Son, having purchased us and by us having faith in Him, we have been accepted.

Let's not forget that word. I remember that morning you were accepted. Right? You were accepted before. You just didn't know it, but when you felt accepted that morning, right, Tim?

[15 : 39] And you knew that, yeah, I'm part of the family. I've been adopted into this family of God through the blood of Christ.

Hallelujah. What a promise to be accepted in the Most High. And I just can't, this morning can't get over it, I guess, that we are accepted by Him.

We are not rejected if we truly believe, if we are surrendered. So even when the road is rocky and rough, and sometimes it gets really rough and we get discouraged, does our heart still rejoice in Jesus Christ, our Redeemer?

remember, Paul wrote this in prison. I'd say his road was pretty rough, wouldn't you? Sometimes when he was in prison, he was in bonds.

You know, they bound his hands and his feet. Apparently not his hands if he wrote this, but sometimes he was in a cell all by himself.

[16 : 54] One time he was with Silas, wasn't he? And they sang songs and worshipped. Is your road that rough? Is it that bad that we can't praise our Redeemer?

I'd say Paul's was pretty rough. Let's go to verse 8. Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known unto us the mystery of his will.

according to his good pleasure, there's that phrase again, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance being predestined according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, that we should be to the praise of his glory, there's that phrase again, to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ.

are we fully trusting in this Christ? Are we trusting him this morning?

Is your life bringing praise to his glory? Oh, that our life would bring much praise, not just our words, not just our tongue, not just reading the Bible or singing a song, but that the way we live our life would be praiseworthy, that would actually bring glory to him, that our life would bring glory to his name.

[19 : 04] Doesn't he deserve it after giving his all, leaving heaven and coming down here and laying down his life for us?

he wouldn't have had to do that, you know, that our life would bring praise to his name. We'll talk a little bit more about that mystery.

Let's go to verse 13. In whom ye also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also, after that you believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession unto the praise of his glory.

There it is again, the praise of his glory. Now, these are some deep verses, and I don't know that I can say I know everything that it means here in verse 14, but I'd like to look, starting in verse 13, and just ask the question, is our life sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise?

Is there evidence in our life of this? That our life is sealed? It says here, let's just read that verse again, it says, in whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth.

[20 : 55] Paul is saying, you heard the word of truth, probably he brought it to them, he preached it to them, you heard it, and then you trusted him, you trusted Jesus, and if that's our case, that we have trusted him for our salvation, it doesn't say you might be sealed with the Holy Ghost, or the Holy Spirit of promise, it says you were sealed, after you believed, after you trusted, not before, but when you trusted him for your salvation, and after you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, again, we need to rejoice in that.

He goes on and says, which is the earnest of our inheritance, that earnest is like a down payment or a, yeah, a prepayment, if you will, and it's like, I'm going to give you a little bit of what you're going to experience in heaven, because then the rest of verse 14 says, it's the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, possession.

And I think what he's saying, what I'm reading into this, I haven't studied it like I should have or wanted to, but until the redemption of the purchased possession, in other words, until we get home, until we are finally redeemed out of the body of this flesh, I think is how Paul put it in one place.

In other words, when we are delivered from this body, from this earth, and we go home to be with him, for there is no more temptation, no more dying, no more crying, isn't that the final redemption?

Isn't that the final victory? No more temptation ever? But until then, you have a prepayment or a deposit of what you will experience there, and that is the Holy Spirit being sealed by the Holy Spirit.

[23 : 31] I just, when I read through this, I just love it because this is a life worth living. This is a life that is real.

And it's simply called the Christian life. It's real. It's worthwhile. But not only do we experience a prepayment, we're going to get the full blessing.

There's more to come, in other words, that we don't experience here on this life. There is more to come. God's love.

And one of those things, and I don't know what all it is, none of us have been there, but there is, we do sit in heavenly places now in Christ Jesus.

But one of those things that I think about when I think of being in heaven and glory, in this place of peace and total rest, is that there will be an absence of all evil.

[24 : 40] No evil present. Nothing. Only good. Only pure. Only what's true. We don't have to discern through lies anymore.

We won't need discernment. Right? It's just pure and holy. It's hard to imagine that here on this earth.

but it's coming. We need to stay fast, stay strong, stay in the faith. Is our life sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise?

And then I had a note here, is there true evidence of this? Is there power in our life? Are we overcomers, or do we sometimes just accept defeat?

defeat? The Holy Spirit will make us to overcome and He will keep us from falling.

[25 : 42] Let's never accept ungodliness or any situation that is giving in to the enemy. Let's never accept defeat defeat.

Because we have the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome defeat. We don't need to be walking or living in defeat.

Whether that defeat is sin, whether that defeat is discouragement, which is also sin. whatever it is, where we feel like giving up, but rather let us rise up in faith and trust God for His power in our lives.

I hope you can be encouraged this morning because when I read through this, I was so encouraged and inspired in spite of whatever we might face in life.

I know a lot of you are traveling this week and going back east and just thinking about that. I hope that you can go encouraged and inspired to press on and encourage others that you don't have to live in defeat.

[26 : 59] You don't have to be under the domineering forces of evil, of discouragement, of depression, of all those things that people face, but rather that we would rise up and be excited about the things of God.

Rising up in faith, trusting God for His power in our lives. Yes, we have that earnest, the Bible calls it, the King James calls it, of our inheritance.

There is a great inheritance coming for the believer. believer. And do we accept this and do we rejoice in it? Because there is much more to come for the Christian.

You know, but for now, you know, we can't live in eternity yet. We're not there yet. but for now, we can walk in victory.

We can experience all that God has for us now. Right? I think that sometimes I think that the church has become weak in teaching that there is a separate life to live.

[28 : 24] There is a reality to live now that is different from an unbeliever. It's very different. In fact, it's light and darkness different.

It's heaven and hell different. And that is available for us now to live that life. In fact, it is God's, it's not only available, it's God's will that we live that life.

That we are part of His kingdom. We think different than we used to. Right? We don't even think the same anymore. We have been translated into this marvelous kingdom of light.

through Jesus Christ. Verse 15, Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.

would Paul be able to write that to this church? I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love unto all the saints.

[29 : 54] Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers. And then verse 17 ends with, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.

That's Paul's prayer for the church of Ephesians. And if the church ever needed the spirit of wisdom and revelation from God, I would say it's now.

If the church needed that back then, she sure needs it now. Because we are in, like we said earlier, we are in a dark and evil world with deception on every hand.

Perhaps much worse than when Paul wrote this letter. Has God given you and I the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of discernment, the spirit of, how does it say here, of revelation, to know God's will, how to walk, how to live, how to deal with life.

We need that so desperately. Or do we still operate just under the wisdom of man, the way the old nature thinks?

[31 : 20] Not the new nature, but the old, how I used to be. Sometimes we, so quickly, we can revert back. I think somebody mentioned that this morning, how easy it is to just, you know, revert back to the old.

And Lord, help us to live in the new and to have that spirit of wisdom. The Bible says that if any man lack wisdom, to ask God for wisdom and he will give it to us, how?

Liberally. He'll give us, I think, more than we need, wisdom. But sometimes we don't ask. We don't ask God for wisdom, we just think we have it already.

Is that the case? I think we're pretty wise. Maybe if we'd realize how unwise we really are, we'd ask more. But God will give it to us liberally.

Verse 18, the eyes of our understanding, being enlightened, that ye may know, it says your understanding, being enlightened that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the richest of the glory, there's that again, of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.

[32 : 59] Now we're just reading here how Paul is saying how that Christ is exalted and is sitting on the right hand.

We know that Jesus sits on the right hand of the Father in heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.

Christ is king and above all this morning. Do we believe that? You know, when we look at this and we consider who our Christ is, who our Jesus really is, and how that he is above all.

He is above all principality, all power and might, all dominion, and over every name that's named in this earth and in the world to come, it says.

not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. Christ is above all. Do we have the faith to believe that?

[34 : 27] Is there any reason to walk in discouragement and to be downcast and to be troubled and you know. bad things happen in this life.

Difficult things happen in this life. Hardships happen. Sad things happen. People die. Little girls are killed accidentally.

And it's hard. And I'm not making that sound easy. It's not easy. But we have a Christ that we serve.

And it should cause us to have a deep faith in our heart that Paul said, I believe also that I can do all things through Christ.

That means we can come through all things through Christ. Because of who he is. Not because of who we are, but because of who he is.

[35 : 29] He is the head of everything. And he has given us his spirit. That spirit of wisdom and revelation.

If we believe, then he is in us. And I believe that our eyes will be enlightened and we can understand.

We can understand the hope of our inheritance in Christ. Christ. If our hearts are turned toward him and surrender, we will understand his greatness and power that God worked in Christ.

He raised him up from the dead, it says. Has he raised you up from the dead? Our old life was death. It was dead.

But we can be new in Christ. That same spirit, that raised him from the dead, the Bible says, is now in you. And that's how we overcome.

[36 : 35] That's how we have courage, how we have faith, how we can believe, even when the most terrific things happen to us in this life.

We worship and we serve a Savior that has everything under his feet. Did you get that verse? He has put all things under his feet.

And that's who we're serving. That's who we're following, dear ones. We're following him. No need to be failing and discouraged and downtrodden and barely making it.

Are we resolved to follow him? he is in control and he is the head over everything in his church, which is his body.

Is he our head? Are we rejoicing in being part of this kingdom, part of God's family? Or are we sidetracked with the details and the burdens of our daily living, daily life?

[37 : 50] sometimes the burdens just want to overwhelm us. We feel overwhelmed with maybe responsibility or work or whatever.

But we must do all to stand and to put on the whole armor of God and to fight like a good soldier. soldier. If we're in this army, then we will put on the full armor that we read later in this book.

The whole armor of God. And then we can fight as a good soldier for our king. Are you a faithful soldier? Or do we look around and we see the waves like Peter did and we start to sink?

Because we're discouraged, we're afraid, we have all these emotions that want to overtake us. Will we endure until this battle is over?

Are we resolved, like that song says, I am resolved to follow the Savior? Are we resolved to press on and to press in to everything that God has for us in this life?

[39 : 08] If anyone's here and you're on the verge of giving up, don't give up. Don't give up. The opposite of all these things are horrific.

Does your heart need a fresh boost of courage? The Bible tells us that David, when he had terrible things happen to him and it was very rough, it says he encouraged himself in the Lord.

God, we can do so today as well. So let's be encouraged to press on. If the church would just rise up and be strengthened, why don't we stand together?

If the church would just rise up and be strengthened and encouraged in our great God, God, we serve a God that is above all.

He is above everything. He is higher than our thoughts. His thoughts are higher than ours. And even the thoughts we have of discouragement at times or whatever, things we go through, let's remember God's higher than that.

[40 : 25] He's bigger than that. And he will get us through. Let's try to be encouraged so that we can encourage each other.

That's another thought. How am I going to encourage you if I'm down in the dumps and I don't have much faith? I'm not going to stir up your faith and you won't mind either if you're that way.

So let's be encouraged encouraged. And remember who we serve. Read his word. Get life out of his word. Spend time with him.

Father, we come to you at this time and Lord, we just want to give ourselves to you and maybe recommit ourselves to you, Lord, that we belong to you, Lord Jesus.

And we want to just thank you this morning for who you are and that you are so great, so almighty. There is none greater. You are above every name, every dominion, every power.

[41 : 26] We believe this. According to your word, we believe all of this about you, Lord Jesus. So today we just want to give ourselves to you and we want to repent of our unbelief and just to believe in you with our whole heart, Lord.

We surrender completely and totally to your will, Lord Jesus. God, I pray that you would make those words real to us and that you would be our king and our God.

Lord, we lift up Brother James and Sister Carol wherever they are today and Father, I pray that they would be just be vessels for you, Lord, and that you would use them to encourage and inspire others and also Dan and Rachel and wherever they are in their travels, Lord, that you would just bless them as well and keep them and we pray for the ones that are planning to travel this week, all the Steere's and Joe's as they travel, that Lord, that you would use them and us that remain here as well.

Also for Merlin's that we would just be able to be vessels in your hand, help our hearts to be strengthened and on fire for you and that we would be sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, that our faith would be sealed in you, Lord Jesus, all for the praise of your glory.

Father, may our lives glorify you and lift you up. We thank you in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated.