

Ephesians

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[0 : 00] Well, I can't hardly believe it, but June is already half gone, and it seems like the older I get, the faster they go. I don't know if you're experiencing that same phenomenon or not, but I sure am.

And we are continuing with Ephesians chapter 2. We're going to begin just reading and save the comment for the new material. I do want to point out to you that very essential and frequently utilized word, three letters in verse 4, but, and how that changes so much.

But is a conjunction of contrast, and it is designed to make a distinction between that which was before and that which follows. And that which was before had to do with our fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath even as others.

But, and here is where the difference comes in. But, and when you add God to it, it is the greatest contrast that you can imagine. But God, who is rich in mercy, imply that he has an unending supply of mercy.

He is wealthy in mercy. He is not stingy, but he is rich in mercy. Mercy means that which you deserve is withheld.

[1 : 38] And mercy is an expression of that. We do not receive what we deserve, but we have mercy extended to us. We're all familiar with someone who has appeared in court and has been charged with a crime.

And the verdict has come in, and the defendant has been found guilty, and he goes before the judge for sentencing. And the judge has got the verdict, and the verdict is guilty, and usually the judge has a certain amount of latitude of sentencing the guilty from A to Z, and somewhere in between.

And very often the defense attorney will encourage his client to throw himself on the mercy of the court.

And he's pleading for a lighter sentence. And it has a discretion of the judge as to whether or not that will be given. The idea is the defendant does not have mercy coming.

He's not entitled to it. It is something that the court can extend. And in this case, it is the court of heaven, and God has extended mercy. But he is able to do so.

[2 : 58] You see, God can circumvent his justice and extend mercy, providing the books are balanced.

And he is free to do that. And that's where Jesus Christ comes in, because he balances those books in his death, burial, and resurrection. God, who is rich in mercy for his great love.

And the word here in the Greek is mega. We're familiar with megatons and mega this and mega that. And it simply means great in abundance. And that's exactly what God's love is.

God's love is not a quantitative thing. It is a qualitative thing.

It is not how much God loves, but it is with what kind of love he loves. And that's brought out in that little word that we've looked at before in John 3.16 that we're all so familiar with.

[4 : 03] God so loved the world. That word so, two little letters. In the Greek is the word hutos. And it doesn't just mean so.

It means in this manner or of this kind. So, God loved the world in this way that he gave.

So, there again, it is an expression of the quality of God's love rather than the quantity. Because when we're talking in quantity, you tend to think of something that can be added to or diminished from.

But this is neither. It is a quality of love. And it indicates a kind of love so that when God loves, he loves with the totality of his being that cannot be added to nor diminished from.

It is an incredible love. Some have expressed it as Calvary love. That's the kind of love it is. And the thing that makes it so startling is that even when we were dead in sins.

[5 : 14] So, God never loved us because we were lovable. He never loved us because he couldn't find us. He found us irresistible. No, no. We were dead in sins.

We had two strikes against us. We had nothing going for us. But God's love, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us or made us alive.

Together with Christ. And we've talked a little bit about that which he makes alive. And that is the human spirit within us. By grace you are saved and has raised us up together.

This is a positional thing. This is looking at the issue from God's point of view. And from God's point of view, it's an accomplished fact.

From our point of view, we are a study in progress. We are moving and developing and maturing and growing. But as far as God is concerned, it's all wrapped up.

[6 : 11] It's all finished. Because he is the one who calls things that are not as though they were. He sees the end from the beginning, the beginning from the end. And in his omniscience and in his omnipotence to make it come to pass, he has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

That in the ages to come, and we have no idea how far into the future that extends. But in the ages to come, he might show or put on display the exceeding riches of his grace.

Kindness, goodness, clemency, all of these expressions have been utilized by different translators to try and get at the nature of the thought.

And then he launches into this verse 8. And most of you, if not all of you, are familiar with Ephesians 2, 8, and 9. If you have not already committed these verses to memory, I would really urge you to do it.

Because they perhaps sum up the whole issue of salvation perhaps more than any other thing that the Apostle Paul has expressed in all of his writings.

[7 : 37] This is kind of like the equivalent of John 3.16, but it's in the epistles. And it is a counterpart. It is not a counterpart, but it is a complement to John 3.16.

And it is safe to say, and I've become more and more convinced of this in the almost 60 years that I have been a believer and studying the Bible and talking to people about really critical issues.

Salvation, eternal life, etc. I am more convinced than ever that there is no single doctrine that is so gravely misunderstood and misappropriated as the doctrine of the grace of God.

If there is anything that escapes man in his human fallen thinking more than this, I don't know what it would be. Because the grace of God is completely counter to human wisdom and human thinking. And we've talked about this before, and I don't want to belabor the point too much, but I don't want to leave it unattended either. And that is, this grace has to do with God's character and God's nature as prompted by God's love, and it has nothing to do with our worthiness.

[9 : 07] It is totally devoid of the merit system. And that is what fallen man insists on working with. And I think the big reason he does is because that's pretty much the way all of life works.

You do bad things, you get bad consequences, bad results. You do good things, and you get good consequences. The moral of the story is, be good and do good things.

And the good consequences will be that God will honor your good things and your good deeds with salvation, and your reward will be heaven. By far and away, guys, that is the majority position.

And it is generally embraced by just about every faith, I don't care whether you're talking about Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, or whatever.

They are all predicated upon human works, human effort, human desert. And this, of course, completely leaves you devoid of any assurance at all.

[10 : 18] You cannot have any assurance. Why can't you not have any assurance and be certain or have the peace that passes understanding because you know you're going to heaven?

Why is it you can't have any assurance? Because you don't know if you've been good enough. And that was the basis for that little book that we've distributed.

I don't know if we've given out thousands of those little books by Andy Stanley. The title of the book is, Since Nobody's Perfect, How Good is Good Enough?

And it's an intriguing title. And you'd be surprised how people will pick that up and read it just because of the title. Because that is a kind of curious, how good do you have to be?

And when they learn that heaven is not for good people, heaven is not for bad people, heaven is for forgiven people.

[11 : 19] Wow. That is a priceless, priceless thing to know. So this whole concept of grace is exclusive to Christianity.

Maybe I ought to say that differently. The whole concept of grace is exclusive to biblical Christianity. Because there is a whole lot that is passed off for Christianity that often is nothing more than churchianity.

And churchianity isn't going to get anybody to heaven. So there are a lot of people in our churches. And virtually all of these churches would consider themselves Christian churches.

And the message these people get Sunday after Sunday is something like this. You should be good because it's nicer to be good. And God appreciates you being good.

And if you're good enough, God will take all of that into consideration and he will reward you. This is amazing that this kind of stuff goes on in churches that call themselves Christian.

[12 : 33] You can see that being part and parcel of cults and other world religions and so on. But not in churches that call themselves Christian. But, fellas, there's plenty of them out there.

And it is so sad. Roger? And his sin is trying to make bad good and good bad. And he's actually twisting things around with people in the world that think they know what's best for you.

Oh, yeah. Absolutely. Absolutely. Totally got away from it. I think as Isaiah 5 says, Woe be unto them that call good evil and evil good.

We've got a lot of that stuff going on today, too. And it is a skewing or a complete warping of what the biblical standard is for good and evil.

And it is amazing how these things have been turned on their ear just by definition. And how these new ideas and new perversions, and there's nothing else to call them perversions, how they sweep a culture and they catch on.

[13 : 51] And the next thing you know, if you are not with that party line in this new thing, you are a hater and a bigot and a homophobe and on and on it goes.

And it's just... But you know something? We need to keep in mind that the world is just busy about the business of being what they are.

And that's all they can be, is what they are. We ought not to expect anything different from the world other than it being the world.

And this is what Paul is referring to when he says, If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are blinded by the mind, whose minds have been blinded by Satan.

And they've got this fallen nature and the warped thinking that goes along with it. And the only thing that will straighten out warped thinking is the Word of God. And frankly, that's why we spend the time that we do here.

[14 : 56] And I trust that's why you spend the time you do on Sunday mornings in church. Pat? Well, you've got somebody that absolutely does not believe. I mean, they don't buy into this supreme being God at all.

And you try to tell them these kind of things. And their comeback is usually, Well, if that's the kind of God you worship, I don't want any part of it. Yeah. So, and this is somebody in my family.

Sure, sure. How do you change that other than prayer? Well, for one thing, when people express what you have just said, they are coming from their concept of God that is a God such as, I don't want anything to do with either.

You know. But there is a basic misunderstanding in the minds of most people as regards the true nature and character of God. And without going too much into detail, let me just inject something here.

And we've talked about this before, but let's just get it on the record because it is perhaps the greatest single sticking point that unbelievers have regarding the character and nature and even the existence of God.

[16 : 25] And that is the age-old problem. We've talked about it before. The age-old problem of being able to being able to accommodate a good God who is holy and righteous with an evil world.

How can we square those? And in my estimation, the only way it can be squared is that God has created human beings with volition, the power to make choices.

And when man makes wrong choices, he creates difficult and evil situations that we see in the world today. And they have been with us from Genesis chapter 3.

Maybe this is not God's fault for the world being as it is, although many people see it that way because they reason like this. Well, if I were God, I'd change a whole lot of things. I'd just move in and wipe out evil and do away with all of these things. But I can't do that. And yet God is so much wiser and so much more powerful than I am.

[17 : 40] Why doesn't He do that? And we've dealt with the issue of human volition before and that God doesn't just override our volition and make us do right things, but He gives us the power of choice and often that includes evil things and that ultimately these things are going to be addressed in a way that is final.

But right now, man has pretty much free reign. And God, of course, often takes a bad rap for it because we think that God should let me have my way wherever I want it, but when I really need Him to, then I want Him to step in and prevent this and block that and all.

You know, that's the way we are. Frank? I've got the same problem that Pat has. With what? I've got the same problem that Pat's got.

I've got a grandson that does not believe. Yeah. And the only way I can handle it is I pray for the boy. Right. And when we're together, he lives in Columbus.

Yeah. I try not to badger him. You know, you don't want to beat him over the head of religion. Sure. You're right. You're right. This drives him deeper. Exactly. So I just pray that God will put someone in His path that will connect with Him.

[19 : 01] Yeah. That's what you do. But you know, I believe that it all came from Omaha State University. Yeah, well, the university settings today are a hotbed of unbelief, really.

What did you say, bro? Mark? There. Yes. Joe? Well, people have an idea. They want a God that's strictly a God of love. But our God is a God of justice, too.

He's a just God along with a loving God. That's right. And therefore, by being just, that's why he had to send Christ. Because he is a just God. He had to somehow forgive all that sin and all that bad things that we get.

Rather than punish him like we should be punished for all that, he sent Christ so that we don't have to be punished. That's God's panacea. And that's what it's called. They want a God that's strictly a God of love. You know, that just loves you all the time regardless of what you do.

He still loves you. But our God is not like that. We have a just God. We do. Indeed. We do. He is both, his attributes are both operative at the same time. Derry?

[19 : 59] Another answer for Pat's question is it's not a slow way, but it's just to set a good example. Yeah. If you're not in the life, that is... That's a powerful...

Some people are envious. They're going to say, how can you lead such a life? That's a powerful witness in itself. And someone... They used to sing a song, I think it was an old Sunday school song.

What you do, speak so loud that the world can't hear what you say. And they're watching our actions. They're watching. You know, there are two basic prongs to the issue of unbelief.

And I'd like to touch on both of those for just a moment because I think everybody who is an unbeliever fits into one of those two categories. And the first is, there are a number of people who do have just an honest, intellectual unbelief.

They have real, honest questions about the existence of God, about the authority of the Bible, about the person of Jesus Christ, about miracles and all the rest. And their questions are honest.

[21 : 06] And they see these as impediments to belief. And they have serious, intellectual questions.

And they deserve serious, thoughtful answers. And there are people whose unbelief is nestled in that. And then there are people whose unbelief is due to a moral issue in their life.

And they are very much aware of what Christianity is about. And were they to embrace that, it would require a departure from certain things that they have built into their life that they really enjoy and want and are simply unwilling to part with.

And they know that would create a dichotomy. And if they believe, they know where that's going to take them and they don't want to go there. So their unbelief is a moral issue that they are unwilling to deal with.

And yes, Pat? This person's unbelief stems from he's very well read and he's very well traveled.

And he has a very hard time saying like people from Russia or people that believe in Muhammad or people that believe in Buddha separating their gods from any other god.

[22 : 41] He said, look, if you were born over there and you were brought up under that circumstance, you'd believe the same way they do. And he's read the Bible. He's read the Koran. So when I try and I don't argue with him.

I'm like you. I just try to be a good example and I pray for him all the time. Sure. Because I feel like you do. If you try to jam Jesus out of the throat he just has more harm. Yeah. But that's a very hard argument because he doesn't want to say that those people that believe in Buddha are wrong and I'm right.

Yeah. And that's where he's struggling. Well, there there are all kinds of things that are available in print and and on cassette and on CDs and things like that.

An abundance of apologetic works that are available today that perhaps were not available and not so much needed a generation or two ago as they are today. But today today today we do we do have a I guess you could call it almost a new brand of atheism that is inundating our culture today and a real hotbed for it is in our universities.

Yeah. You would be amazed you would be amazed to how prominent atheism is among the faculty of some of our leading universities.

[24 : 12] universities and these people are really looked up to by these 18 19 year old kids that go off to these schools because these are intelligent people and most of them are very well spoken and very witty and very easy to listen to and not only that they've got a PhD from Harvard or Yale or they've written books so anything that this professor says you better listen to him because he's got the straight scoop he's a very smart guy and you would be surprised how many of these young people just kind of depart from their faith the one that they took with them to the university or college and they just they've been taken over by this new kind of thinking and most of these kids just don't have the apologetic wherewithal or the answers to deal with this and some of you have seen some of the films that have been made the one like God is not dead you know that kind of thing deals with this very issue yeah

Joe talk about that too about the educated person you presented to him okay there's a truth do you believe in truth you know this can't be true one's got to be true one's got to be alive one's true one's alive you know you've got to choose there aren't two truths there's only one truth Pat if your friend you mentioned reads a lot I don't know if it depends on exactly what he reads but this is my son okay one thing that I would really recommend and I say this because it has had such a profound impact on who knows how many people both in Europe and here in the United States and that's C.S. Lewis' book on mere Christianity mere Christianity this thing is sold I don't know probably in the millions of copies it's the book that the Lord used to bring Chuck Colson to himself and it is very powerful and

C.S. Lewis of course he was on Oxford on the faculty at Oxford several years on Oxford Don and he's got I think more credibility than the ordinary person because C.S. Lewis was coming from a position of atheism and when he came to faith it was quite a juggernaut for academia there in Oxford to handle but he became a fervent apologist for the Christian faith and that book that he has written Mere Christianity is powerful and it's been translated into a number of languages and it's probably the most famous thing that he has written of course he did a lot of children's things too The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe and Chronicles Narnia all of those he did he's a very prolific writer and very powerful books

I'd really recommend that and what I would do when you give these apologetic books to someone like that or like Josh McDowell's book More Than a Carpenter that too is a tremendous book it's probably more simplified and more basic than mere Christianity but when I give those to somebody who's questioning I always tell them you know I have read this book and I thought it really has a lot of merit I got a lot to think about and what I would appreciate is I would appreciate your reading it and give me your estimation of it and if you find things in the book that you consider to be untrue would you make a note of those and point them out to me because I didn't catch them and I'd like to know where they are and sometimes people will read something like that with a challenge that they wouldn't if you just give them the book and leave it at that yeah

Raj oh yeah he's written a number of things yeah Lee Strobel we've talked about him before but he was an attorney and he worked for I don't remember if it was the Chicago Tribune or the Chicago Sun was it Sun but he was the legal editor of that newspaper and his wife came to faith in Christ and he thought that was just the end you know this is not the girl I married what's happened to this woman you know she's gone off the deep end on religion this kind of thing and he decided that he

was going to explore this nonsense called Christianity and then he was going to debunk it and show his wife that she had misplaced her faith and that there's nothing to it and then he'd get his original wife back well what happened of course was he got too close to the fire and he himself came to faith in

[29 : 24] Christ and he's written a number of books along a popular apologetic line and they've been very popular and very well received so the case for faith the case for Christ these are just a couple available in paperback and there's been a jillion of those sold too they're excellent Mark could you repeat that it's almost a limerick what you do is not as important as what you say just by three minutes ago what you do speaks so loud that the world can't hear what you say and it really is an emphasis and stresses the importance of our lifestyle and how we live out Christ before others so you know it's it's great to talk the talk but if you don't walk the walk that neutralizes the talk you see so they need to be able they need to be able to see a demonstration in us of what we are saying we believe and if it isn't there or if it is contrary to what we say guess what they will call you a hypocrite yeah a hypocrite and you know what every Christian

I've ever known including the one who's speaking to you is tainted with hypocrisy none of us has this thing called Christianity altogether we're all flawed every single one of us and as I've often said the person who thinks he is not is also self deceived so he's got a bigger problem he's seen huge changes in me he saw me come from a full blown alcoholic to not even drinking and he thinks that's wonderful and he says if that's what your God does for you you know yay but there's always the but in there that's not what I need in my life I can't handle that I pray that it doesn't get to the point where you cry out because I thought of things that happened in my life where you know it's going to change I assume that you just have to keep praying God says in his word that if you're faithful he'll be faithful you keep praying and sometimes it takes a certain kind of situation sometimes it's a crisis to occur in a person's life before they will actually admit a need and sometimes

I think more people come to faith out of a crisis of some kind they're overwhelmed with something that they can't handle and it's usually a loss a loss of some kind loss of health loss of mate loss of job loss of something that tends to bring us to the end of ourselves and then we're willing to cry out but we are cursed guys we are cursed with this human fallenness that gives us a sense of self-sufficiency I can handle it I can handle it I can make it on my own I want to roll my own boat I want to set my own sail be the captain of my own destiny and the master of my own fate and I can do it and then when something comes into our life wham that really knocks the props out from under as we discover we're not really as strong and as all together as we thought we were and that's our crisis and man's extremity is God's opportunity and that's often when he moves in and shows us that we really don't have it all together that we really do need him and that he is what it's all about and it's a wonderful revelation when that happens yes

Dana you brought up a subject earlier and I'm going to go back to it forgive you for doing this but you mentioned homophobia and that kind of stuff and let me talk about the mass shooting in Florida this last week I find the people that died there I find your lifestyle totally disgusting but I'm not going to judge whether my sins are better or worse than their sins I would be surprised if some of the dead don't go to heaven and I would be surprised if some of the dead don't go to hell also another thing to look at here is let's presume somebody did go to hell by the gunman taking their life when they did they robbed that individual of the opportunity into heaven and the future it's true this is true and you know I'll close with this because the food is here this is something we all need to keep in mind talking about talking about heaven and hell and everything

I look at this I don't know what hell involves all I know is it is really really not good I know that really not good it's a place to avoid at all costs but whatever it is and whatever it involves you can be sure of this it will be a dispensary of absolute pure justice whatever that involves for that individual it will be absolute justice and I don't see anything wrong with that I can't say that I see something good about it but I can't say anything wrong about it because justice means the recipient gets exactly what is deserved is there something wrong with that not really but it still isn't good and yet grace is the dispensing of something that is not deserved and bottom line is this if we will not have anything to do with

[36 : 02] God's grace then there is nothing left but for us to face God's justice and whatever that might be I'm sure that that will be individually apportioned because God knows that what is just for one person would not be just for another so it will be dispensed in accordance with God's wisdom and God's omniscience and yet this opens the path wide for God's grace and fellas there isn't

anything that you want to drink of more deeply than God's grace and that's why it has been provided so thank you all for one more comment and then we'll close Joe I started to live my life this way you've got the sinful nature that's still there and every decision or what you say they're each fighting for the control here which one's going to come out and you have to leave it so you've got to step back and think okay I'm going to do the Holy

Spirit's way and I think you get an answer you know that I should do this or I shouldn't say that talking about living and walk walk you want to walk for the Holy Spirit's walk not the sinful nature's walk which is in there they're both trying to get the throat of your life they're both trying to get the top and you just got to that's the Holy Spirit it's your decision am I going to say bad things to this guy because of what he did to me or am I going to forgive him or go to him with peace offerings how am I going to do it and then that's just constantly have that in your mind all the time ask for help all the time Romans 7 did somebody else did you have a comment yeah yeah yeah I can't say that there are any particular

I would just say that I would just say that just about every denomination is blessed with some sound churches that really teach the word and love the word of God and preach and teach the grace of God I think you'll find that in just about every denomination and unfortunately just about every denomination is also tainted with the churchianity thing that just encourages people and nobody is saying people should be bad but we're just saying that churches give people the wrong impression sometimes that as long as you are a member of this church and your name is on the roll and you pay your tithes and offerings you'd be surprised how many people think I'm good with God I'm good with God because my name is on the church roll and I pay my tithes and I give to this and I serve on this board and everything and that makes me in with God well no it doesn't but there are churches there are some churches in probably every denomination that foster that kind of attitude and you know something some of the pastors of those churches don't know any better that's what they really believe themselves so it's kind of like the blind leading the blind and the only thing that can bring us out of that moral and spiritual blindness is a consistent dose of the word of God taught line upon line precept upon precept K you can you