

Ephesians

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] Well, I want to thank you for your presence, and I am confident, as I've said before other times, I am convinced that there are a number of men out here in our community that would enjoy this time that we have together on Thursday morning if they only knew about it.

So don't hesitate to pass the word around. Everybody and anybody is welcome. And yes, that even goes for other pastors. In fact, we would especially appreciate the input that any other pastors might want to provide.

This is not any kind of a singular thing. Everybody is welcome, and we want you to feel free to welcome others, including pastors. And that will just provide more avenues to the light and the information that we're looking for, and we would appreciate that.

We just recently begun an examination of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. It is another of those epistles that I refer to that has no bottom in it. This thing is deep.

And as we go on, you will see what I'm talking about, because the Apostle Paul has been raised up of God to deliver information that heretofore was not available.

[1 : 12] And it was not available because God had not revealed it. But now he is going to reveal a whole spate of new information to this man, the former Saul of Tarsus, and he's going to charge him with the responsibility of disseminating that information.

And this is the basis of verse 1. We've already talked about the first two words, Paul, an apostle, of Jesus Christ by the will of God.

That's what makes all the difference. Is this something that he is simply fulfilling out of personal ambition or desire or pride or whatever?

Or does he actually have a commission from the Almighty? Because that is the basis for everything that follows.

That's the basis for authority. That's the basis for believing it as an authority. So first of all, note if you will, that it is by the will of God.

[2 : 24] And in connection with that, this isn't on your scripture sheet, but if you have your Bible, look for just a moment at a little elaboration on that from 1 Corinthians 9.

Excuse me. 1 Corinthians 9. And here, as well as in other places, Paul elaborates on what he means by the will of God. And I'm thinking now of chapter 9 and verse...

Well, let's just jump in with verse 16, if we may. Paul said, For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion.

What does that mean? It means Paul is saying, Listen, I didn't volunteer for this gig. I mean, this was not my thinking. And this is not what I had in mind at all when I was en route to Damascus to round up those believing Jews and bring them back to Jerusalem and make them stand trial.

That's what I was about. And then I was accosted by this risen Christ on the road to Damascus and that changed everything. So, when Paul says, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion.

[3 : 50] I mean, I'm doing something that I have to do, not something that I particularly wanted to do. For woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.

Now, here is where an issue of volition and obedience and disobedience comes into play. Because God did not approach Paul and ask for his cooperation.

He approached Paul and said, Hey, this is what you're going to do. That's right. And then, Saul of Tarsus brought his volition into compliance with that.

God did not override his volition from the standpoint that Paul couldn't have said, I ain't going to do it. Well, I think he realized that this was something that he had to do.

And you know, fellas, this something that he had to do was all based upon the truth that was committed to him by the risen Christ. And despite the fact that Paul had persecuted believers in ignorance and unbelief, he was still a man who had great respect for truth.

[5 : 09] And now he's got a truth that he didn't have before and a commission to proclaim it. So he says, if I do this voluntarily, compulsion, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.

For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward. I didn't volunteer for this. That's what he's saying. But if against my will, and that's what it was, it was against his will.

Now, God be praised, Paul brought his will, his volition, in line with the commission so that he didn't fight against it after he accepted it.

But he wants us to understand from the get-go that this whole thing has its origin in God and was committed to him and it isn't something he dreamed up. It is something from the Almighty.

If against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me. A stewardship is something, is a position that the one who is the steward is entrusted with the goods and the assets of the master who has taken him on as a steward.

[6 : 23] It is like a manager. And Joseph was a steward in Potiphar's house because he had risen to a position of prominence and respect and it came to the place of where Potiphar, the pharaoh, was willing to trust Joseph with anything.

And he was a steward over his house. He managed all of the affairs. Well, the Apostle Paul, and I hope you pick up on this, guys, because the Apostle Paul is now labeled as the steward of the grace of God.

He is going to manage this dispensation, this dipping out, the doling out of the grace of God, and Paul is going to be the manager of that.

He is going to be the lead person. And until he came on the scene, this dispensation of the grace of God did not even exist.

It was committed unto him. And what is my reward? That when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge so as to, not so as to, I'm sorry, turned the page here, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.

[7 : 44] For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all that I might win the more. And this, of course, this is a voluntary position that he is taking in making himself a servant or a slave to everybody for the express purpose that I may win the more.

For example, to the Jews, I became as a Jew that I might win Jews. To those who were under the law, as under the law. Though not being myself under the law, that I might win those who were under the law.

What is he talking about here? He's saying, listen, listen, the law, the law of Moses has come to fruition and completion in the person of Jesus Christ.

And we are no longer as believers, we are no longer under law, we are under grace. This is the burden of Romans 6. And yet, he says, but I still adhere to those principles of the law when I am with the Jews and I don't try to talk them out of obeying the law of Moses.

I comply with it in their presence because I don't want to turn them off to the gospel. And this is my inroad to them. I respect their position because I know where they're coming from.

[9 : 05] That's where I was before I came to faith in Christ. So he didn't go into a synagogue and tell the Jews there, fellas, you can forget all about the Sabbath.

You don't need to do that anymore. And you don't need to offer animal sacrifices anymore. And you don't need to circumcise your baby boys when they're eight days old. You can forget all that stuff.

He didn't do that. But were those things true?

Yes, they were. But he's not going to go in and turn everybody off and upset everybody with stupidity like that. So he has a sensitivity to the misunderstanding that people have in receiving the gospel.

And I think that is what he means when he says as being under the law. When he says, I became a Jew that I might win Jews to those who were under the law as under the law, though not being myself under the law, that I might win those who were under the law.

To those who were without the law, that's the Gentiles, as without the law, though not being without the law of God, but under the law of Christ. And this law of Christ is that to which Paul is referring in Romans 8 when he talks about the law of liberty in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death.

[10 : 26] That's the law he was now under. And that's the law you were under. As a believer in Jesus Christ, we are under the law of liberty in Christ Jesus.

And then he goes on to say, To the weak I became weak that I might gain the weak. I become all things to all men that I may by all means save some. So let's go back to our text now, if we may. Yeah. Okay. Let's look at the context here.

Verse 18. The end of verse 18. What is my reward?

Okay. So as to not make full use of, yeah, to abuse my power. That is, I think what he's talking about here, fellows, quite frankly, is money and support.

[11 : 37] And that's the context here. If you look back a little bit earlier in verse 9, see, here's what he's talking about. Well, let's back up. Oh my, how far back do we have to go?

Well, let's go back to verse 3. Okay. We're in chapter 9, verse 3. You've got to, fellas, whenever you study the Scriptures, you've always got to keep in mind the context is king.

context has to do with the subject matter that is involved in the verse before and the verses after the passage that you're talking about. And here, Joe's talking about not abusing his position.

And in verse 3, he says, my defense to those who examine me is this. Do we not have a right to eat and drink? Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?

Or, do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working? Now, what he's talking about is remuneration. It's pay. He's saying that he is a worthy recipient of funding and underwriting for the work that he is doing.

[12 : 59] And he went to great pains to not give any wrong impressions about this. And this is one reason why he was a tent maker, why he employed himself in trying to raise his own support so he wouldn't be dependent on others.

But let's read on. Let's read on. Verse 7. Now, he's going to give an example. Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense?

Well, that's a foolish concept. can you imagine getting your draft notice from the U.S. Army and along with the draft notice, they say, oh, by the way, make sure that you go to your local military supply store and purchase your own uniform and purchase your own weapon and purchase everything that you're going to need when you serve in this.

No, no, no. The military provides you with everything you will need including your underwear. That's their responsibility.

And that's the illustration that Paul is using here. And when he says, who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Well, the guy who does the work in the vineyard ought to get the benefit of the produce from the vineyard.

[14 : 19] And he uses another illustration. Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock? I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I?

Or does not the law also say these things? And here when he talks about the law, he's talking about the law of Moses and he's saying, listen, this isn't something new. This is as old as the law of Moses.

This is established way back in the book of Exodus. An example he gives, for it is written in the law of Moses, you shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.

That is when that ox is walking around in circles all day long with this long yoke attached to him that has this long pole on it that turns this heavy stone, big heavy stone in this trough and this poor ox and just walks around all day long grinding and grinding and grinding that stone.

Paul says, and law of Moses says, listen, don't you put a muzzle on that ox. You let that ox eat the grain that he is grinding out.

[15 : 29] Don't put a muzzle on the ox so that he can't partake of the food that he is producing. And then Paul uses the analogy and he says, why did God say that?

He cares for an ox. God cares for an oxen who's doing all the work that he ought to be able to get the benefit of his work. And he brings that analogy over and he says, so it is with the laborer in the gospel.

And this guy is the whole basis for the priests in the Old Testament when they sacrificed those animals that people brought to them. Unless it was a whole burnt offering and the offering was consumed in its entirety, that animal was butchered.

and the priest cut up that animal and he fed his family with it. The priest didn't have any land given to them. When God divided the land, the children of Israel came into the land.

The tribe of Levi didn't get any land at all. The Lord said, I am their inheritance and all of the people who had land and raised crops were supposed to bring the first fruits of their crops to the temple and that's how the priesthood was supported by the people.

[16:43] And the same way with the animals. They were providing meat for the families of the priests. And those who, well, Paul goes on to say, is he speaking altogether for our sake?

Yes, for our sake it was written because the plowman ought to plow in hope that is in anticipation of benefiting from the fruits and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops.

If we, and Paul's talking I think about his missionary gospel team Paul and Silas and Barnabas and so on and in verse 11 he said, if we sowed spiritual things in you and what that means is if we in our missionary team gave you spiritual food and information and sustained you with the gospel and the teaching of the word of God then he goes on to say, is it too much if we should reap material things from you?

Ought you not to reciprocate our giving you spiritual food by your providing us with physical food? So what do people do? Well, they invite the preacher in for Sunday dinner or something like that or they pay him a salary or benefits, etc.

This is the whole basis of the laborer is worthy of his hire. And this is what he's talking about. And yet Paul says, but at the same time, you know what? I'm very careful.

[18:09] I don't want to abuse that. The last thing Paul the apostle wanted was for anyone to be able to look at him and say, yeah, he's in it for the money.

He's in it for the money. And this is why he labored with his hands as a tent maker and often did without so he would not have to impose upon others so as to remove all possibility of people thinking that he's in that for the wrong motive.

And fellas, there are a lot of people out there who are in it for the money. And sometimes it can be pretty lucrative.

there are those who are experts at fleecing the flock. And it goes on all the time. And while there are a lot of good, solid, Christ-honoring programs on radio and television, there are a number that are out there that are just after the buck.

And you need to be discerning where you send your money because there are a lot of individuals and organizations that are worthy of it and there are a lot of them that are not.

[19:26] And this is partly what Paul is talking about here. So, it's a very, very, when you are in a position of authority, spiritual authority, you are in a prime position to take advantage of people.

because people are vulnerable when they recognize authority and it is amazing how some people are so gullible that they think anything a preacher says, anything that comes from the pulpit comes from God.

Well, no it doesn't. It may have nothing to do with God. So, you need to be discerning, guys. And this is largely what Bible study is all about.

It's to develop an ability to discern and to distinguish between the true and the false. Okay. Yeah. Did I see a hand?

Somebody? Okay, let's go on. Verse 2. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God to the saints. Some translate this to the faithful.

[20:45] The word literally in the Greek is to the agios. It means to the separated ones. That's what a saint is. A saint is separated.

And you're familiar with the word sanctify? Sanctify simply means to separate, to distinguish between. When you became a believer in Jesus Christ, it is just as though God reached down and took a hold of you.

There you were, in with the mix of other people. He took you from that mix of other people and lifted you up and brought you over here and set you down apart from that crowd.

He separated you from that crowd of unbelievers. That's what it means to be sanctified. It means to be separated. To be sanctified means to be sanctified.

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you are a saint. I never forget, I don't suspect there's anybody here that's back from the, no, I'm the only one from the olden days.

[22:03] When we used to meet at the Springfield Wines, downtown Springfield, it was across the street from the post office. The building isn't even there now, it's been torn down. But Paul Pontus

taught that Bible class.

It is this Bible class that started there in 1965. And we've continued it from that time on in different venues, but we've been here longer than probably any place.

But anyway, we had a fellow that came all the way from Dayton. And his name was Ronnie Blades. And Paul was teaching about what it means to be a saint and to be separated and to be in Christ. And he was so fascinated by that, he couldn't get over it. He said, are you sure? And this fellow, by the way, I need to inject here, to the best of my memory, this fellow had a Roman Catholic background.

And of course, he had a completely different view as to what a saint was. A saint is somebody that's canonized by the Pope and elevated and all the rest of it. And then they pronounced him a saint.

[23 : 04] And he was saying, are you sure? Are you sure that we're saints? And Paul said, yeah, this is what the text says. We went to several other passages. And he just couldn't get over that.

So he showed up at our class. He said, I got a new Bible. I want to show you my new Bible. And he passed it around. Everybody looked at it and said, well, I'll be. How about that?

And you know where people have their names sometimes engraved on the outside of the Bible down the corner? He did too. And his read, Saint Ronnie Blades.

And we all got a chuckle out of that. Now, we don't go around calling each other Saint this and Saint that and Saint Ron and Saint Tom and Saint Dick. But you are.

If you are in Christ, you are a saint. What is it that would make anybody doubt that? It's this. Saints don't always behave saintly.

[24 : 05] Sometimes saints can behave in an unsaintly fashion. We have no excuse for that. No justification for that.

But we can do it. We were talking earlier about Christians, professing Christians, and sometimes please don't say this, please don't say, well, he couldn't be a real Christian or he'd never be able to rip anybody off.

Oh, hey, wake up and smell the coffee. a real Christian can be an absolute jerk. A real Christian can be an absolute stinker.

It can be a cheat. He of all people has no justification for that. But don't say it can't be done, because it can. Now, it's true, there are people who profess to be Christians, and they aren't really. All they have is a good dose, maybe, of churchianity instead of Christianity, and they're more capable of taking advantage of others and cheating and lying and all the rest of it than a real believer is.

[25 : 16] But listen, when you came to faith in Jesus Christ, God did not take your old Adamic nature and eliminate it. You still have an ability to refuse to walk uprightly.

You can do that. God will not make you be spiritual. He provides the basis for it, but He doesn't make you be spiritual.

He doesn't make you grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. And this is a very serious thing, but it's something that needs to be addressed. So, this is to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.

One would wonder if he's making a distinction there, because sometimes there is a distinction between those who are saints and those who are faithful. Enough said about that.

Grace to you and peace. And here the Apostle Paul introduces two gracious ladies. One is named Grace, and the other is named Irene.

[26 : 21] In the English, it's peace, P-E-A-C-E, but in the Greek, it is the word Irene, Irene, from which we get the English feminine name, Irene.

And the name Irene means peace in the Greek. And I suspect it's probably related to the word serene also, S-E-R-E-N-E.

We think of serenity and serene as something being very peaceful, like a serene lake that you would look upon as peaceful.

So these two women, two favorite theological words. Grace, a gal's named Grace, and some are named Irene. I don't know if a lady named Irene knows that her name really means peace or not, but she probably does.

Somebody's probably told her. These are two beautiful ladies. Grace to you and peace. I want you to notice the order here because it's important. And very often, the Greek language did not have any way of emphasizing certain aspects or points that they wanted to make because what we would

call italics didn't exist or bold print didn't exist.

[27 : 44] And the way the Greeks had of expressing importance of one thing over another is the order in which they would use the word. And the more important word was placed first.

And that's why he places the word grace to you. He doesn't say peace and grace. No, no, no, no. It isn't peace and grace. It's grace and peace because there is no peace until grace has been realized.

Grace and the recipient of grace becomes the basis for peace even existing. It is therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

But that peace and that peace with God only comes after our justification. Only after grace is applied. So grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

And these are addressed as equals in that this grace and peace is coming from and is resourced from both of these entities not simply one of them.

[29 : 03] And that is an important distinction because right from the very beginning here Paul is establishing in no uncertain terms the supremacy of the person of the Son of God right alongside his Father.

And that's an important distinction and he makes it in a number of places and this is just the first that is going to be a pattern who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

And we want to begin in our next session together exploring what these spiritual blessings are because they are assets. They are divine operating assets that God has made available to us that are part of the package that comes from being in Christ.

Joe? This kind of ties in with what you were saying about the trinity they are equal and when God gave up the Jews and said I can't deal with you anymore so I am going to go another way if you think about Stephen when Stephen was stoned and killed there was reference about the Holy Spirit the Holy Ghost at that time like he was like the Spirit the Holy Ghost was there and it was like finally the Jews had not only rejected God and Jesus the Savior had come but they now rejected the Holy Ghost the Spirit the third part and so all three were now rejected God rejected that is very important Joe I appreciate you making that point and in addition to that I think this is precisely what Christ was talking about when he says all manner of sin shall be forgiven unto man but the sin against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven and he's talking about and to the nation of Israel and those who represented it and when Christ came on the scene the religious establishment of Israel was already in a rejection mode of the Father this is an Old Testament setting they were already in an Old Testament rejection mode when Christ came on the scene this is why Jesus did battle with the scribes and Pharisees and he said you have corrupted the law of Moses you have turned it into something that God never intended and this isolated them from God so they were already in a rejection mode with the Father when Christ came on the scene then they rejected Christ in addition to that and now as Joe's pointed out they have also rejected the Spirit of God that's all three and Paul says he's backing up what

[31 : 59] Christ said in the Gospels about sin against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven this generation and it was that generation of Jews of Israel that were guilty of rejecting all three yeah you said one word that stood out which is very important the word called commission okay commission it says Paul apostle of Christ Jesus commission by the will of God yeah and it started with the name change because God could not commission Saul he had to commission Paul yeah amen yeah you know what I mean yeah yeah because with the same diligence that Saul carried about killing threatening binding and taking God's people to jail yeah killing them yeah

Paul had a certain diligence a certain zeal in that and God seen it well I'll put this thing around here amen he'll go with the same diligence I can commission him in this thing and it goes all the way back to the Old Testament with Abraham God had commissioned Abraham not Abram he commissioned Abraham there you go and he commissioned not Jacob but Israel yes and not Sarai but Sarah yes and when God commissions it is his way of bringing that person under a commission and under a new ownership and when you name it it becomes yours and that's that's important and I appreciate you bringing that out and we see the same thing this is a cultural thing too we don't do this today but back in the days remember when the three

Hebrew children were taken to Babylon and I don't even remember what their Hebrew names were but they changed them they changed their names the Shadrach Meshach and Abednego yes and what that indicated with this Babylonian pagan was asserting ownership and headship over those

three Hebrew children and they were under a new jurisdiction with a new responsibility and a new commission even though that was not a godly one it was still representative of the culture of the day and the way the names were changed and you're right so right and Saul became Paul yes and the rest as I say is history thank you brother I