

EPHESIANS: Grace & Peace Text: Ephesians 1:1-3

Grace and Peace can only be found in Christ

1. The Newspaper tycoon William Hurst built a castle in central CA and collected art
 - a. Sent an assistant to find a valuable painting and months went by w/o finding it
 - b. When the painting was finally found he asked where—it was in his basement
2. Sometimes we forget the most valuable possessions are already given by God

I. PAUL FROM PRISON (v.1)

A. PAUL IN PRISON

1. He has been arrested and brought to Rome and is now in a prison cell
 - a) We know it was cold bc he asks Timothy to bring his coat... (2 Tim 4:13)
 - b) but more important than that he asked him to bring the books and the parchment.
 - c) Roman imprisonment could not stop Paul from the work we now hold it in our hands
2. Nero is the first Emperor to arrest Christians as enemies of the state
 - a) Persecuting and executing Christians... even throwing them to the Lions
3. Paul doesn't know if he will be released or be executed or thrown to lions

B. SO PAUL IS WRITING A PROTEST LETTER FOR JUSTICE — Right?!

1. He is NOT writing to:
 - a) the Emperor of Rome—our salvation is NOT from Government.
 - b) The Judges—Our Salvation is NOT from the Courts of Law.
 - c) The Philosophers—Our Salvation is NOT from the Wisdom of Men.¹
2. He is also NOT Writing:
 - a) A desperate appeal for release...
 - b) A defense of Himself for vindication...
 - c) A protest letter complaining about the Conditions...
3. He is Writing to the Church & Praising God for all our Blessings in Christ!
 - a) God's Eternal Plan is Bigger than Caesars or Popes, Czars or U.N or nations of men or AI Techno-Billionaires who think they're the Masters of the Universe.

C. WHAT ABOUT YOU?

1. We've all experienced our own prison, our own chains, our own suffering.
 - a) It may be bitter disappointments in life... maybe failed relationships or friendships
 - b) An Economic Crisis... Chronic Pain... Loss of a loved one... Unmet Expectations...
2. Whatever your prison is—Paul found the “way of escape” in Christ!
 - a) The Peace that Surpasses All Understanding...
 - b) Notice Paul's prayer for you in this letter... (1:17-18)
 - c) that our eyes would be opened to all the spiritual blessings we have in Christ.
3. Paul's prayer from Prison is for us – the people of God!

¹ Richard Rogers, Paid in Full, p.14

II. TO THE SAINTS IN CHRIST (v.1)

—Notice 3 key characteristics of God's people...

A. CHRISTIANS ARE SAINTS

1. Paul writes to the Saints... but What is a Saint?

- a) Some think a saint is a sinless person (Meaning: "I'm no saint")
- b) Others think a saint is someone who died centuries ago after living an exceptional life and was venerated as a saint by some church counsel for people to pray to.
- c) They think of Saints depicted in Stained Glass Windows in Cathedrals...

2. SAINT (hagios) means holy, sanctified; set apart and made holy

- a) God is Holy — and His Eternal Plan was to make a holy people (**1 Peter 2:9–10**)

3. In the OT: the priests, the temple & ark of the covenant were all sanctified

- a) They were purified & sanctified for holy service... made holy by blood of a sacrifice.
- b) So We are not Saints because of our own personal merit or achievement...
we have been purified & sanctified for holy service by the blood of Jesus.

4. If You've Believed, Repented, Confessed & been Baptized YOU are a Saint!

- a) YOU have been sanctified — cleansed and made holy... by the Blood of Jesus
- b) cleansed of sin, cleansed of guilt, cleansed of condemnation (**1 Corinthians 6:9–11**)

EX: A little girl was asked the question: **What is a Saint?** and thinking about the beautiful stained glass windows she had seen she said, **"A saint is a person the lights shines through."**²

B. CHRISTIANS ARE FAITHFUL

1. True Christians are 1st: SANCTIFIED —> 2nd they are FAITHFUL

- **(Pistos)** It carries 3 connotations of meaning: faithful, reliable, believing

(1) **A Believing Faith:** We Believe and Trust the promises of God (Heb 11:6)

(2) **An Active Faith:** We trust and obey God's commands (James 2:18–24)

(3) **Keeping the Faith:** To Be Faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10)

More than a feeling... more than an opinion... a conviction of Heart, Mind and Soul.

"without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Heb. 11:6)

2. We Believe by Faith... Walk By Faith... Live By Faith... Worship by Faith...

—We Keep the Faith and don't give up!

C. CHRISTIANS ARE IN CHRIST

1. A Christian has been SANCTIFIED, is FAITHFUL and is IN CHRIST

2. Paul repeats this phrase 36x in this letter – 176 times in all his letters

3. All spiritual blessings are in Christ (**1:3**) > (**2:6-7**)

4. There is no condemnation in Christ (**Rom 8:1**)

5. So How Can We Be In Christ? We are baptized Into Christ (**Gal 3:26**)

6. This is how we are sanctified and made holy by the blood of the Lamb

7. We are not worthy—but Jesus is! –worthy is the Lamb that was slain

² The Preacher's Commentary Series, Vol 31, p.144

III. GRACE AND PEACE FROM GOD (v.2)

A. GRACE AND PEACE ARE ONLY FROM GOD

Which is why so few have it — and why so many can't find it!

1. Atheists Would Like Grace and Peace...

- a) But there is none in an Atheistic Darwinian Evolutionary worldview.
- b) Atheists are materialists — nothing exists except matter and molecules...
- c) Therefore: No God, no spirit, no love, no morality, no justice, no good or evil,
no right or wrong... Only Survival of the Fittest...
- d) Atheism doesn't have 10 commandments—It is only one: Eat or be eaten.
- e) These voids in their world-view are so big the house of cards will fall...
- f) So how do they do to fill these voids? They steal them from God to make it work!
- g) They cannot escape the transcendent attributes of God (**Rom 1:18-20**)

2. Others want to Be 'Spiritual but not Religious'...

- a) Meaning ANY spirituality as long as it doesn't include the Bible or Jesus Christ.
- b) The problem of being open to anything spiritual EXCEPT the Lord Jesus...
- c) Is you've now opened yourself up to the DARK side of spiritual forces.

—When a person refuses the Truth—the only thing left is the lie!

- Notice a Parable Jesus gives to People who wanted a Sign but didn't Want Jesus (**Matthew 12:38-45**)
- They wanted Signs more than they wanted the Truth
The Truth who was standing right in front of them!

3. Others fall for a 'Good Person' Gospel...

- a) A gospel of SELF — rather than the Gospel of CHRIST
- b) **EX: The Thomas Jefferson Bible:** on display in a Museum at Washington DC...
- c) He cut out the Miracles and Authority of Jesus leaving the "good" teachings of Jesus

—THE 'GOOD PERSON' GOSPEL is a Scam...

- I'm a good person— why do I need the Bible? or Jesus? or His Church?
- Jesus didn't need to die for me—what was He thinking?
- This is the MORALIST who thinks they don't need the blood of Jesus

—Fake Gospels leave Jesus out—but leave a few moral principles in...

after they have re-defined and re-interpreted them for themselves

- Just Love, Forgiveness, Compassion, Tolerance, Equity, Inclusion...
- Their Main Article of Faith is Don't Judge Anyone—>yet they Judge Everyone!
- Because that's What Moralists Do! (**Romans 2:1-8**)

Fake Gospels do not lead to True Worship—but to the cult of Self-worship

*"A God without wrath brought men without sin into a Kingdom without judgment
through the ministrations of a Christ without a Cross."*

— H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America*

B. GRACE AND PEACE ARE WHAT THE GOSPEL IS ABOUT

1. This is why Jesus went to the cross to die for our sins [CHART]

- a) **God is Holy:** Law, Wrath, Judgement
- b) **God is Love:** Mercy, Grace, Forgiveness
- c) His Holiness and His Love were reconciled in Jesus' crucifixion on the Cross

2. Grace is first because God first loved us—

then by His grace we have the forgiveness that brings peace

- a) A Peace between you and God
- b) A Peace within yourself
- c) A Peace between you and others

"the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7)

C. THIS IS THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

1. You can search all the world's religions—you will not find grace in any of them

- Grace as a doctrine of salvation is unique to Christianity.
- There is no true doctrine of grace outside the Bible.
- In every non-Christian religion and philosophy, the way of salvation is always
 - by human works, human merit, human achievement, human striving.

2. THINK ABOUT IT!

- a) **Hindus** have to save themselves through human works through cycles of Karma and Reincarnation
- b) **Buddhists** have to save themselves through the Eight-fold path of knowledge and self effort.
- c) **Gnostics** have to find the secret knowledge—and when they finally find it—the knowledge turns out to be how the lost person has to save himself!
- d) **New-Age** followers have to have just the right formulas, incantations, mantras and magic spells to save themselves.

And when it fails, they have to try harder, work harder, strive harder...

3. But In Jesus—It is Finished!

- a) This is what Jesus said as He was dying on the cross—'It is finished'
- b) It is one word: 'tetelestai' Meaning: It is finished, it is paid in full
- c) which was written on a ledger sheet when a debt was paid off

4. G.R.A.C.E. – God's Riches at Christ's Expense

- a) Jesus did what no one else could do!
- b) He paid your debt in full but at a terrible cost on the cross

CONCLUSION:

- 1. Your Debt was paid in full by the blood of Jesus**
- 2. This is how we can be made holy—by the blood of the Lamb**
- 3. And we can have Grace and Peace (Romans 5:8–9)**