



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Ephesians 1:1-3

Ephesians

"Rich In Christ"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Thank you, Howard, and good morning. This morning we're beginning a new series in the book of Ephesians. And so we will look this morning at verses 1 through 3 of chapter 1, which is something of a contrast to what we've done in the past few weeks with our study in \_\_\_\_\_. I think our chapters were 40 verses and 35 verses long. And as we went through those, you might have wondered how we were able to fit everything in 45 minutes, and might be wondering how I'm going to be able to *fill* up 45 minutes this morning with three verses. But I can assure you there's a great deal there for us to study and learn as is the case throughout the book of Ephesians. So if you have your Bibles open to Ephesians chapter 1, follow along with me as I read the first three verses.

"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."

May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Our gracious God and heavenly Father, we do thank you for the privilege we have to come together this morning as the body of Christ, as that which Paul will call in this book, "one new

man." We are your creation. We are something new, and we are the products of your grace. And we will see that over and over again in our studies in this great epistle of the Ephesians. And we need to remember that, Father.

We need to learn that our relationship with you is the greatest of gifts, and it is based solely upon your unmerited favor. We thank you for that. We thank you that when we were not seeking you, you sought us out. You purchased us for yourself at the infinite cost of your own Son's blood. And by the powerful work of the Spirit you brought us to yourself.

What can we say, Father, as we contemplate that great truth, other than thank you. And we pray, Lord, that you would instill that in our minds. Because we are so prone to wander and so prone to forget that fact, and instead live as men and women who feel that they must make their own way in this life and do it in our own strength. We become anxious, we become concerned. And yet, we must look to you, Lord, trust you every moment of our lives, knowing that you began the work in us, you'll complete it.

It's your work and it's simply to trust you. And so we commend our lives to you, and we commit to you this hour and pray that you would teach us, you would instruct us and you'd build us up in the faith. We are, as we will see this morning, rich in Christ. And yet, we are constantly in need of your grace. And so we pray for it; we pray for blessing as we study.

And bless us not only spiritually, Lord, but we are a needy people, physically, in terms of the things of this world that we need to live and to function properly. We pray for those who are in particular need. We pray for those who are sick, and we ask that you might give healing to them. Certainly, Lord, in the midst of their affliction, give encouragement. We pray that you would open doors of employment for those who are in need of that.

We pray for those who are struggling with emotional or spiritual difficulties, family problems or problems at work, whatever the case

may be. Father, we pray that you would give them a realization that you are with them in the midst of that, and give them that confidence and encouragement. And we pray that you resolve their difficulties in your time and in your way. We pray, Father, for our nation and we pray that you bless it as you have in the past, as we know you can in the future. And we pray that you will.

We pray that you would quicken souls throughout this land. Bring them to a saving knowledge of yourself. Build up your church and this city and this state, throughout this country, throughout the world, Father. We pray that you would build up the church of Jesus Christ. Make it strong that it might witness to the saving grace that is found in Him and in Him alone. Bless us to that end.

We pray that you bless us now as we study. Bless us again as we come back this evening to worship you, to celebrate the Lord's Supper and remember His death on our behalf and consider all of the ramifications of that, of what it means for us now; that we live, day by day, constantly by the life that He gives to us in the Spirit, and that He's coming again. And that the life that we live now is a temporary situation. The troubles of this life, the advantages of this life, they are all temporary, and they are passing away. Help us to live in light of that and in light of the fact that someday, and maybe someday very soon, your Son will leave His throne in heaven and come back to this world, riding on the clouds, bringing His Kingdom.

May we be prepared for that day. May we live for that day, live for the day in which we will be in your presence for all eternity. Bless us to that end this evening. Bless us to that end now. And we pray that you would bless us now as we sing our hymn, that it would be good preparation for our hearts as we study together. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] It's been said that when it comes to the book of Ephesians, commentators and preachers outdo themselves in lavish encomiums, lavish words of praise. Now, that may be true. The book of Ephesians has been praised as the queen of the epistles, as the

crown of Saint Paul's writings. Samuel Taylor Coleridge called it "one of the divinest compositions of man." It is said to have been John Calvin's favorite letter.

And it's the favorite of many, and with good reasons. It covers a wide spectrum of Christian theology and practice. One write has said that "The epistle to the Ephesians embraces in its brevity the whole field of the Christian religion. That's true. Paul doesn't seem to develop one central theme in this book as he does, for example, in the books of Romans and Galatians with the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

Instead, he develops a number of themes that are essential for the Christian to understand. And two of his central themes, not his only themes, but two that are central to this book are those of Christ and the church. What the church is, what its role is, and its relationship to Christ as Christ's body. Paul is very concerned that Christians realize who they are and what their relationship to Christ means. They are members of a new society with a new relationship to God, with new life and vast spiritual resources.

And Paul wanted Christians – he wanted the church to know that. Evidently, he had seen, among many Christians, a lack of understanding about who they are and about what they had in Christ. And so, in this first chapter, he lays out our blessings in Christ. So often Christians live as though they are spiritually impoverished, not realizing that we have access to heaven's riches and heaven's power. Paul wanted to change that, and so we see this in the first chapter.

We see his great concern, for example, in verses 18 and 19 where he prays "that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe." And so Paul sets before our eyes the blessings that are ours in Christ so that we might live as rich and not as poor. He wrote the letter probably around the year 62. We would think that, because in chapter 3, verses 1 of

chapters 3 and 4, he speaks of his imprisonment. So he probably writes – he writes this while he is in prison, probably his imprisonment in Rome.

And he addresses it, in verse 1, "to the saints who are at Ephesus." Now, there's some question about Ephesus being the destination of the letter because the words, "in Ephesus" are absent in the old manuscripts. So many scholars feel that this letter was sent to a group of churches in Asia Minor and circulated among them, as the book of Revelation was. If so, then it may have arrived first in the city of Ephesus, which was the capital of the Roman Province of Asia. And from there, it was copied and circulated to other churches.

Since it was a circular letter, a blank space was left after the words, "To the saints who are," and that would account for the absence of a name such as Ephesus. But after that statement, and with that blank space that was left, the churches to which the letter was sent, the individual church that was reading the letter, would supply its own name. So it would be something like "To the saints who are in Smyrna," or "To the saints who are in Pergamum," and so on. But it was always associated with Ephesus because of the importance of that city, because that is the city from which the letter began its circulation. And eventually, the name of Ephesus, the church of Ephesus was attached to it.

Now, that's a theory, but it's a good theory. And there's something attractive about it and even appropriate, because the truths of this letter are not for one group. They're not for one church but for the whole church of Jesus Christ – the universal church of Christ, as made up of all kinds of people all over the world down through the ages – the truth that we have been redeemed by Christ, and in Christ we have been reconciled. We have been reconciled to God. We have been reconciled to one another. And all kinds of people, Jew and gentile alike, have been brought together in what Paul will call the body of Christ, the "one new man."

And you see that aspect of reconciliation being brought together in this one new man of this new society, particularly in chapter 2. We were separated from God, we were "sons of disobedience." And yet, by His grace, as he goes on to say in verse 4, He has brought us – He has quickened us. He's brought us to life. He's brought us into peaceful relationship with Him.

And not only that but with one another. Because the Jew and the gentile were at enmity with one another, and yet, He's brought them together in one. And so this is a message for all of the church of Jesus Christ down through the ages. It's a message of unity. It's a plea for unity, and he will really develop that theme at some length as we go on into the letter.

Well, the book divides very easily into two sections. Chapters 1 through 3 state the doctrine, chapters 4 through 6, our duty. And so Paul first grounds us in doctrine, very significant doctrine before he instructs us on how we're to live. That's Paul's pattern and that's the way it is to be. We need to know who we are.

We need to know what we have as our resources, spiritually, before we can begin to live as we should. And so this is how he structures the book. He begins in his characteristic fashion by identifying himself in verse 1, and then blessing the church in verse 2. It begins, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus." So this letter was written with authority, the authority of an apostle, which means the authority of Jesus Christ.

Strictly speaking, an apostle, or the word, "apostle," means one who has been sent. But in the New Testament, it's used in a special way of the gift and title that was given to a unique group of men, 12 men, plus Paul, who were chosen to lay the foundation of the church. To do this, they were spiritually equipped and commissioned by Christ to preach the gospel throughout the world, to teach, in some cases to write the Scripture. They were to do miracles and establish churches and administer authority over them. And so Paul begins the letter with his credentials, his authority.

He was an apostle of Christ. He occupied a high position. He had the greatest of the gifts. But he doesn't state this fact in pride. He doesn't state it as a boast of personal achievement.

Paul was an apostle not by his own choice or by any merit of his own, not because of a popularity contest that he won within the church. If you know the apostle Paul's history – prior to becoming the apostle – as Saul of Tarsus, you know that could never have been the case. He was an apostle, he says, "by the will of God. And that's the only way one can explain Paul as the apostle. It wasn't the will of Paul; it was the will of God.

He chose Paul. And you know how it happened. Luke records it for us in Acts chapter 9. When he was Saul of Tarsus, when he was a rabbi, a brilliant student advancing beyond all of his contemporaries, destined to make his mark in Judaism, God called him. Not when he was seeking Christ, but when he was persecuting the church, when he was, as Luke says, "breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord."

That's when the Lord appeared to him in a blinding light on the Damascus Road, stopped him dead in his tracks and brought him to Himself. You remember the story, how he's blind from the light and the revelation that he's received. His companions lead him by the hand into Damascus. He's left in the home of an individual there, alone by himself for some time. And during that time, the Lord sent one of His disciples, Ananias, to visit Saul, saying, "He is a chosen instrument of mine to bear my name before the gentiles."

So Paul did not choose to be an apostle, did not even choose to be a Christian. He was killing Christians and persecuting Christ when he was plucked as a brand from the fire. And so it is with every believer in Jesus Christ. We all belong to Christ by the will of God. Not by our own will but by the will of God, by His grace alone.

He makes that clear in verse 4 when he refers to the Ephesians as those whom God chose "before the foundation of the world," And he refers to them as the elect. So Paul was an apostle by the will of

God, and the Ephesians were the elect by the choice of God. And that's how he will refer to them. But here in verse 1, he calls them, "saints. To the saints who are at Ephesus."

And maybe we could substitute for that, "To the saints who are in Dallas," since this is, in fact, a circular letter. And it would be appropriate because we are saints. Now, to some that might sound strange, even perhaps sort of arrogant because the word, "saint" is popularly understood as referring to the super pious or to members of an elite group of men and women who have been canonized by the church for their good deeds or their miracles. But in the New Testament, a saint is simply a Christian. In Acts chapter 9, that passage that refers to the conversion of the apostle, we have an example of the meaning of saint, because there the words, "saint" and "disciple," are used interchangeably with one another.

They're synonyms for one another. And so saints are believers in Jesus Christ. That's how Paul defines them here in this first verse. He says that they are the "faithful," the believers.

Literally, a saint is a holy one. And the word, "holy," simply means to be set apart and consecrated to God. So a saint is a person who has been set apart from the world by God and for God. It's a person who has been justified through faith in Jesus Christ and declared righteous, forgiven of every sin and completely accepted by God. That's how we begin the Christian life, through faith and absolutely completely accepted by God at that moment.

That doesn't mean that we're sinless. We're not accepted because we have no sin. The word, "saint," doesn't refer to our conduct. Many Christians are very unsaintly in the way they behave. It refers to our standing before God.

Saints are still sinners. And one of the best examples of that is found in the book of 1 Corinthians, because there Paul refers to them as saints. Now, if there's any church or group of Christians that would seem to be unsaintly, it would be the Corinthian church. You read through that first epistle – and we've been studying through that with



Dr. Johnson for some months now – and one of the things you are reminded of is how far short they fall. The whole occasion for that letter **was** the problems that plagued that church: problems of immorality, jealousy, pride, lawsuits against one another. You name it.

That's one reason that the church of Corinth is such a wonderful church because many of the problems that you and I have are addressed in that very book. We see ourselves in that so much. And yet, how does Paul begin the letter? Chapter 1 verse 2, he address them as "saints by calling." Every Christian is a saint.

Every Christian is a sinful saint, or a righteous sinner. We have a righteous standing before God, not due to our works but as a gift of God. We have the righteousness of Christ which has been reckoned to us through faith alone. Paul develops that in Romans chapter 4. So it's not our works.

Now, our works should come in to play because the saints are being sanctified, and God is conforming us to that declaration of righteous that He makes upon our act of faith. But we're not saints because we're being sanctified. We're being sanctified because we are saints. And so very simply, saints are believers in Jesus Christ. That's how Paul describes them here, as the "faithful in Christ Jesus," meaning believers who are in Christ Jesus.

So Christians, Christians in Ephesus and throughout Asia Minor, Christians down through the ages are saints. They are faithful and they are in Christ. Now, that expression, "in Christ," is one of the key expressions in this book of Ephesians. It's used, or it's equivalent, "in Him," is used 11 times in verses 1 through 14 of the first chapter. And it's used some 20 times in the book as a whole.

So it's obviously a significant expression and one that describes a very important relationship that we have with Christ. It speaks of our union with Him. And we are united with Him in two ways. First we are united with Christ in that He is our representative or our

federal head, meaning he acted in our place and for our benefit. That's how Paul consistently uses this expression, "in Christ."

And a good example of that is again found in the book of 1 Corinthians. This time at the end of the book, chapter 15 in verse 22, where he writes: "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive." Just as Adam caused our death, spiritually and physically, Christ caused our life spiritually and physically. Just as Adam was our federal head, our representative, and brought about our ruin through his sin and the fall, so also Christ, as our representative, has brought about our salvation by His death in our place and guarantees our future resurrection by His resurrection. So the saints are those that have been represented by Christ in His death.

It's as though we were in Him when He died. He represented us in that death, and He still represents us in heaven itself. And "we are seated with Him in the heavenly places," as Paul will tell us in chapter 2. We are in Christ. We are in Christ in that we are identified with Him, united with Him as our representative head.

But our union with Him is not only federal, it is also vital. And so, secondly, we are united to Him as "our living head," as Charles Wesley put it. Having believed in Him, we have been joined to Him in a living union so that we share in His life. The moment we believe, we are in Christ in a vital relationship with Him. And our Lord describes this for us in John chapter 15, a wonderful passage in the upper room discourse, when He describes our relationship with Him in terms of the vine and the branches.

And He describes Himself as being the vine. Just as branches cannot live apart from being in the vine, so we cannot live apart from being in Him. He is the vine, we are the branches, and in that relationship with Him, we draw our spiritual life. And just as a branch produces fruit because it is in the vine, receiving the life of that vine, so we, because of our vital union with Christ, our relationship with Him, we, too, through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, who mediates the blessings to us, who mediates the

blessings of heaven to right here on earth, because of that union we, too, bear fruit, spiritual fruit. Well that's grace, one of the dominant themes of this great epistle.

Paul was an apostle by the will of God. We are saints by the work of Christ, chosen before the foundation of the world. And Paul concludes his greeting to the Ephesians on this theme of grace with the words, "Grace to you and peace." Now, that resembles the customary greeting of that day but with a significant change. Greek and Roman correspondence generally began with the word, "greetings."

We have an example of some Roman correspondence in the book of Acts in chapter 23 where a letter is exchanged between two Roman officials, Lysias and Felix, the governor. And Lysias writes the letter, and he begins in verse 26 of Acts 23: "Claudius Lysias, to the most excellent governor Felix, greetings." Now, that word, "greetings," is the word *Khairain*. Paul changed it from *Khairain* to *Charis*. You can see the similarity between the words.

It's almost a play on words, but a very significant one, from greetings to grace. And in making that change, he gave his letter – or his letters, because he does it elsewhere – the distinctive Christian character, and in so doing, emphasized the theme of redemption. Grace, God's unmerited favor. That's how salvation works. It doesn't work by our works or our deeds or our merit or our heritage.

It works by grace. It is through grace, undeserved kindness and blessing that comes from God. And that leads to peace, which is the traditional form of the Hebrew greeting, Shalom. So Paul, in effect, joins the Jewish with the gentile greeting, or the characteristic blessing of the old covenant with the characteristic blessing of the new. Peace speaks of well-being, generally, or it can be defined as wholeness within a person.

In the New Testament, that wholeness or that well-being refers to reconciliation with God, a peace with God. And because we have peace with God, we have peace with men, and that comes from grace.

And so the order of this greeting is very significant. Grace to you, which will result in peace, grace and peace. And they come from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, come from both of them.

And you'll notice Paul joins God the Father with Christ equally. It comes from both because both are equal with one another in their essence. That's what Paul is indicating here, clearly indicating the deity of Christ. And so putting this greeting together, when he says, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ," really what he's saying here is salvation is of the Lord. He's striking a theme here that is found throughout the Old and the New Testament, that salvation is the work, the full work of God alone.

Salvation is of the Lord and it is of God the Father, it is of God the Son. And we will see as we continue our study in the weeks to come that it is of God the Holy Spirit. And in verse 3, Paul begins that great section of this epistle, and he develops this theme of salvation being of the Lord, salvation being a work of grace. And in developing it, he gives us all of the many blessings that we have through grace and through salvation, or what we have in Christ. And we have much.

We have many blessings. And put very simply, what Paul says here is we are rich. Verse 3 is the beginning of his doxology which continues down to verse 14, twelve verses which praise God's plan and purpose of salvation. Now, customarily, in Paul's letters, he would move from his greeting to a word of thanksgiving for the people to whom he was writing. But instead, what Paul does here is he goes into a lengthy expression of praise that has been described as an outburst, outburst of adoration and a kaleidoscope of dazzling lights and shifting colors.

And you begin to see that the writers or the commentators on the book of Ephesians begin to wax eloquent as they describe this book. And that's understandable because this book is filled with rich treasures of doctrine and advice for us. And I think we'll wholeheartedly concur with what they say. But in this kaleidoscope

of dazzling lights and shift colors, each person of the Godhead is praised for each part in our salvation. In verses 3 through 6, it's the work of God Father in our unconditional election.

So the work of God in election in verses 3 through 6. In verses 7 through 12, it's the work of God the Son in our redemption. And in verses 13 and 14, it's the work of God the Spirit in our sealing. Each section or stanza concludes with the refrain, "to the praise of His glory." Three times we see it repeated. In verse 6, then in verse 12 and then in verse 14.

And so it's through this "magnificent gateway," as one writer puts it, that we enter this epistle. It begins with verse 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." God is the Father of Christ, and because we are in Christ, identified with Christ, in union with His Son, God is our Father too. All that Christ has, we have. And we have much because God is an abundant provider for His children.

He has given us "every spiritual blessing," Paul says. Now, they are spiritual blessings, not material. We naturally tend to think of blessings in terms of wealth and health and material gifts and tangible things, promotions, money, cars, houses, clothes, all of this. And some today have advocated that that is how do receive the blessings, through health and wealth. But that's not what Paul is saying here.

He's speaking of spiritual blessings. Now, in the Old Testament, that is chiefly how God blessed His people Israel, materially. For example, in Deuteronomy 28, when Moses is giving his final sermon to the Nation Israel before they will depart and go into the land of Canaan and claim the inheritance that God has given to them, he promised that when Israel was obedient that they would be blessed materially. They would be blessed with many children and a good harvest and an abundance of cattle and sheep and goats. And they would have leadership among the nations, tangible blessings.

When famine came or when the enemies began to overwhelm Israel, that was God's way of saying to the nation that they had strayed from Him, that they were not living in disobedience. They were under discipline. It was a very rudimentary way of teaching them spiritual truths. Israel was like a spiritual child. In fact, that's the way Paul describes the nation in Galatians chapter 3 under the old covenant.

And children are taught in very tangible ways. They're first books, for example, might have nothing in them but very colorful pictures, and maybe later a few words that are put in very bold type. But still, there'll be lots of pictures. Now, that's the way we learned to read. That's the way we learned to think.

But along the way, we mature and put away the picture books for more difficult, for more abstract literature, for the better books, the better literature. It's the same with the new covenant saints. With the church the people of God had become spiritual adults. We have become sons in God's household, and so the blessings have become greater. They've become much more profound.

The emphasis has shifted from the material to the spiritual. The material is not altogether out. We have material needs. We will as long as we live in this world. And we're to pray about those needs, and the Lord promises to bless. He will bless us according to our needs. Doesn't say that He'll make us rich and he'll make us healthy.

But we are to pray and He will meet those needs. In fact, the Lord has some very significant statements about that in Matthew chapter 6. He says, "Do not become anxious for your life as to what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor for your body as to what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?" And then He says, to prove His point, "Consider the birds of the air.

"They don't sow, they don't reap, and yet God feeds them every day. Look at the fields. God clothes them with flowers and they are more beautiful than Solomon in all of his raiment. And you," He says,

"are worth much more to God than birds and grass." And so He says, "Do not be anxious about what you're going to eat, about what you're going to drink, about how you're going to clothe yourself. Seek first God's Kingdom and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you."

If God has given to us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, then he can certainly provide for us along the way to heaven. And He will, and that's a promise. But the material, as important as it is, it does not compare in its importance, in its importance and its greatness to the spiritual blessings that we have. And they are supplied to us in abundance. Paul lists some of them in these 12 verses of doxology.

They include holiness, adoption into God's family, redemption and forgiveness, an inheritance. We have the hope of glory and we have the Holy Spirit. We are indwelt with the Holy Spirit and He is the one who, as I said earlier, mediates the blessings of heaven to us in this life. And among the blessings that He gives to us are some that are not mentioned here. Love, joy, peace, among many others, the fruit of the Spirit.

Now, those are all great words, forgiveness, adoption, hope, love, peace, particularly when you compare them with the words that characterize our society. Words and phrases such as low self-esteem, depressed, stressed out, obsessive compulsive, identity crisis, midlife crisis, self-alienated, repressed, burned out, bulimic and many others. And the fact that those words are rather common in our vocabulary, words that at one time were more technical to the realm of psychology, but now are the vocabulary of our culture. So that suggests something, and it suggests how unsettled and unstable people are, how poorly people are functioning inwardly, mentally and emotionally. And it's little wonder.

We live in age of instability, an age of uncertainty that produces fear and anxiety. That's the result, the inevitable result when people are not grounded in a solid foundation. And the world can never give

that. It cannot give a solid foundation. It can only be found in Christ and in Him alone.

"In Him," as Paul says in Colossians 2:3, "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." All the blessings that overcome the fears and the anxiety of this age. And what can compare to that? Men will spend their lives seeking to amass a fortune so that they can have the very things that we have in Jesus Christ. And yet, their money can't buy that.

And it only ends up so often in greater frustration and distress. What we have money cannot buy: redemption, Sonship, adoption, joy, peace. We have been brought into God's family and all of that by God's grace. We are like the poor homeless children living on the streets till a great prince or king unexpectedly comes and takes our hand and brings us into his great palace, makes us his sons and sits us down at his table and gives us access to his name and his wealth, and to his power and to his person. Well, that's the kind of scenario that fairy tales are made out of.

Well, it's no fiction with us. It's true, it's real in a far greater sense because we are saints in Christ. And because we are, we have God Almighty as our Father. He has brought us into His family where we have access to Him. We have fellowship with Him and we have access to His wisdom and His riches and His power.

They are all ours. We actually have them. They are our possessions. We simply need to get hold of them and to act upon them. To seek to know God and to grow in our relationship with Him, to do as the Scriptures instruct us to do, draw near with confidence to the throne of grace.

That's how we appropriate the blessings. That's how we have them, through our relationship with our Lord God, through faith in Him. And as we grow in that relationship with Him, we realize those blessings in this life, and we realize them gradually, progressively. We don't have them all at once; we have them in stages. You think of



the apostle Paul, and toward the end of his life when he writes that letter to the Philippians.

He's in prison, probably about the same time as this letter. It's late in his life, he's a mature man. And yet, what does he pray for in chapter 3? "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection. Well, we think he knew that greatly.

And he did, I think, in terms of what we experience. But there was so much more for Paul to come to know and experience. The riches that are ours are infinite. There's no end to them. And we are to be pursuing them, and we do that by knowing Him.

And in knowing Him, living by faith in Him and experiencing His power and all of His blessings. Now, that doesn't mean because we are rich in Christ and we have these blessings that we won't struggle in this life. We will. Life is a struggle. Christians aren't free from adversity, aren't free from discouragement and depression and sickness and pain and financial setbacks.

We suffer all of this. In fact, sometimes Christians suffer that more than the world. But we have the resources to live through them and to triumph over them, over the greatest of trials. And in the midst of those trials, to actually have peace, and have that through our Lord, through our knowledge of Him and the power and the peace that He gives to us through prayer and fellowship with one another and through our study of His Word. We are rich with spiritual blessings.

And so in the weeks to come we will spend time in this book studying those blessings. And we need to do that because so often our problem is that we don't avail ourselves of what we have in Christ. We don't avail ourselves of the riches that are ours. We don't understand nor fathom the promises that we have, and so we don't get ahold of them. Christians are rich spiritually, but they often don't live like it.

I have a story that illustrates that about a woman named Hetty Green. In her day, she was the richest woman in America, but she became known as America's greatest miser. She was a rich heiress.

She became a powerful financier, and often was called the Witch of Wall Street. When she died in 1916, she left an estate valued at over \$100 million.

Now, that was some 80-plus years ago, so you can imagine what that same amount would be worth today, a wealth that is worth less today than back then, and so it was much more than what we would calculate to be \$100 million. She could have lived on Park Avenue. She have eaten gourmet food every day of her life. But instead she lived in a small apartment in Hoboken. She ate cold oatmeal because it cost too much to heat it.

Her son suffered a leg injury, and an injury that resulted in amputation because she took so long trying to find a free clinic. She had wealth, but she didn't use it. And so she lived like a pauper. Now, if that seems foolish to us, and it certainly does, then how much more foolish are we, as Christians, when we neglect the riches that we have, which are far greater than anything that we can accumulate on Wall Street. We have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, every blessing.

So why don't we use them? Why don't we seek to know the Lord and draw near to the throne of grace, walk by faith. Ephesians was written so that we would do that, so that we would increasingly experience God's grace and God's peace. There's another story that illustrates from the positive the wealth that we have and the blessings that we have, and the peace that we can have by God's grace.

And this is the story of H.T. Stafford, a man who wrote a hymn that's very familiar to all of us, one that we often sing. He was a Chicago lawyer, a businessman and a friend of D.L. Moody. He planned to join Moody in Britain for one of his campaigns to be of help to him there, and planned to take his family along with him. Now, that was in 1873. Shortly before that, he had experienced some hard trials.

He lost his son and suffered serious financial loss in the Chicago fire. But he was hoping for some rest with his wife and his

four children, or four daughters, on their trip to Europe. And so he sent his family on ahead of him while he took care of some unexpected business affairs at home. Somewhere in the North Atlantic, the ship that his family was on was struck by another ship, and it sunk in something like 12 minutes. His wife survived, but the four daughters drowned.

Shortly after receiving the cable, Mr. Stafford left to join his wife. And the story goes that as he sailed over the spot where the ship had gone down, he composed the words of the hymn, "When peace like a river, attendeth my way/When sorrows like sea billows roll/Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say/It is well, it is well, with my soul." Now, in that moment and in those words, he captured what we, as Christians, have in Jesus Christ.

We have peace in the midst of trials, and we have the power to enjoy that and to live in a way that the world cannot live. We have abundant riches in Christ. And those who are in Christ have those, and they have them in no other way. That peace, grace itself, is found in Christ and in Him alone. And in no one else can anyone have what we have.

We have redemption, we have the forgiveness of sins, we have adoption into God's family. And it is in Christ alone, and Paul emphasizes that throughout these first verses of this epistle, throughout the book as a whole. It is in Christ. Christianity is exclusive. It does not permit another way.

It is the narrow way. It does not allow other solutions. It does not allow other saviors. Salvation is in Christ and in Him alone. So as we conclude, can you say that you are in Christ, that you have believed in Him?

You can if you have believed in Him. If you've trusted in Christ, you can say that you are in Him and you are secure in Him and you are greatly blessed. But if you are here this morning without Him, if you've never trusted in Christ, I urge you to do so. To believe

in Him, to trust in Him, to gain the forgiveness of sins, to gain life everlasting and, truly, to gain peace in this life.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you that it is well with our souls. Our souls have been blessed. We are rich in Christ. And we thank you for that because we are rich with His riches; nothing we've added that we can claim for ourselves. We are simply rich by your grace and we thank you for the redemption that we have in Him, thank you for the forgiveness of our sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. May we live as men and women who are rich in Christ, and be witnesses in the world as we go out this week to our places of employment, the neighborhoods. Wherever we are, may we live for Jesus Christ. In His name we pray. Amen.