

Message #1081
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"AND GOD SAID...!"
{Genesis 1:1-5; 26-28; 31 and Ephesians 1:1-6}
Trinity Presbyterian Church
January 2, 2005

INTRODUCTION

Are you living like a pauper? I hope not! God has made all of His riches in Christ Jesus available to every one of us!

As we begin the new year we're going to take a journey through a book that I promise will change your life forever! When we finish our study you will be overwhelmed at just how wealthy you are!

I'm not speaking of what some call "Prosperity Theology!" But, you're going to discover that you have limitless wealth and that you need not live like a pauper!

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

In September we traveled together through "The Purpose Driven Life" by Rick Warren. Now we're going to sink our teeth into purpose-centered-book--EPHESIANS. Now, if you feel the need for change in your own life...for deepening your relationship with the Lord...you've come to the right place and you are about to discover the perfect book to accomplish that.

You will recall last fall that we read a chapter a day from Rick's book for forty {40} days. This journey may take a bit longer; however, I'm going to ask you to do something with me...

1. I want you to read this book through once a week during the time we're studying it.
2. Read it through in various versions and in different ways.
3. Read it through in one sitting the first week.
4. Read a chapter a day the second week.
5. Then read a paraphrased version

What I want is for you to become totally saturated in this book.

...let this truth come at you in new and different ways

...and I guarantee you will NEVER be the same person again

...the truths in these six {6} chapters will change you!

So, hold on...let's begin.

"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus." {1:1}

THE AUTHOR

Before one begins a book it's important to know something about the author. This book is...

...written by the Apostle Paul

...formerly known as Saul of Tarsus

...likely named after Israel's first king

Saul was a devoted rabbi...

...a leader of the antichristian movement in Jerusalem

But, while on a mission to wipe out this new Christian movement he encountered the living Christ while on the road to Damascus.

...his life was transformed

...radically changed

He went from being known as Saul of Tarsus to Paul, the Apostle.
...he was a messenger with a message to share to the world
...he was "called by the will of God"...and he spoke by the authority of Christ
...what amazing credentials
...note--he doesn't refer to his training--he doesn't have to
"I am an apostle by the will of God...and that is the ground upon which I write!"
...we read in the Book of Acts about his evangelistic, missionary, efforts
...during this time he visited Ephesus twice { 18: 19-21 and chapter 19}
...once very briefly
...the second time he ministered for over two years
Now, some years later, Paul is imprisoned in Rome and on trial for his life.
...he has a pastor's heart
...he is concerned about the spiritual well-being of the churches he had founded
...so he writes a letter...
"...to the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus...!"

TO WHOM THE BOOK WAS WRITTEN

1. SAINTS

I have good news for you this morning. Are you ready for this? YOU ARE A SAINT!
...you always thought you had to be dead to become a saint!
...for a person to be made a saint they had to go through a process of canonization.
...their life was thoroughly examined
...they had to be responsible for working at least two miracles
...then...that person was qualified to become a saint.
That is an interesting procedure; however, you never see it authorized in the Bible.
...9 times in 6 chapters Paul calls believers "saints"
...these saints are ALL alive...not dead!
...though once they were "dead in their trespasses and sins"
...they had never performed any miracles
...but they ALL had experienced the miracle of the new birth
Guess what? That is a perfect description of EVERY believer; therefore, IF you have
trusted in Jesus Christ as Savior...you are no longer DEAD...you are ALIVE...and YOU
ARE A SAINT!
Write down: I AM A SAINT!
...that means: you have been set apart by God
...you are "in Christ"
...you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit
...and, IT'S THROUGH THE SPIRIT'S POWER that we are able to function in the
world!

{Now, let me make this even more personal. The text says: "To the saints in Ephesus"...however, if you notice the footnote: "Some early manuscripts do not have 'Ephesus'". Most believe this was a circulatory letter that was written to many churches--probably to the seven churches to which Jesus had John address in the Book of Revelation...beginning with Ephesus and ending with Laodicea. In Colossians Paul refers to a letter from Laodicea--many feel this is that letter. It was brought from Rome by Paul's friend, Tychicus, and circulated from church to church, and read in each one. It finally ended up in Ephesus and was labeled: "The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians." Take note of Paul's own footnote at the end of the letter: "Grace to ALL who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love!" indicates it is a letter written to ALL Christians EVERYWHERE. Therefore, you can read it as: "THE LETTER OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE CHURCH IN SAN JOSE...and to the faithful in Christ Jesus!"}

...therefore, saints are ordinary people
...people transformed by the power of Christ
...they are people who belong to God!
...and I AM A SAINT
...and YOU ARE A SAINT!

2. HOW DID THESE PEOPLE BECOME SAINTS?

TWO WORDS: "FAITHFUL" and "GRACE"

These people were not saved by living faithful lives!

...they were saved by putting their faith in Christ!

The word "GRACE" appears 12 times in Ephesians...and it means... God's Riches At Christ's Expense

"GRACE" refers to the KINDNESS of God toward undeserving people!

GRACE and FAITH go together. because the ONLY way to experience GRACE and SALVATION is through FAITH. A verse we should all memorize...

"It is by GRACE you have been saved, through FAITH, and this is not from yourselves...it is a GIFT of God...!" {2:8}

...and with God's GRACE...God's GIFT...we are given God's PEACE

...an inner peace found nowhere but in Christ

...a peace that cannot be duplicated by the world

So, Paul writes here...

"To the saints in San Jose, the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!"

And that brings us to the KEY VERSE of this book...

THE THEME

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.!" {1:3}

Genesis is the book of beginnings...

...creation

...tells of God's pleasure in what He created

Ephesians 1:3 states its theme: The believer's blessings and riches in Christ Jesus!

1. The SOURCE of our BLESSINGS--God the Father--the One who created us!. We read in 3:8--that Paul's mission was to preach of "the unsearchable riches of Christ...!"

...you are a SAINT

...and you are RICH

2. The SCOPE of our blessings--God will meet our EVERY need and will POUR out HIS BLESSINGS via the Holy Spirit on His people! Therein is our wealth.

3. The SPHERE of our blessings: "in the heavenly realms"

...our life is centered in heaven

...our citizenship is in heaven

...our name is written in heaven

...our Father is in heaven

Christ is in the "heavenly realms" right now...and Paul writes in 2:6-7 that...

"God has raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus!"

Therefore, as believers...we live IN the world but are not OF the world. We hold duo-citizenship--while living ON earth...we are citizens of heaven!

CONCLUSION

Dear ones...claim your inheritance

GOD SAYS TO YOU...

...YOU ARE A SAINT

...YOU ARE RICH

...YOU ARE A CITIZEN OF HEAVEN

...YOU ARE A RECIPIENT OF GOD'S GRACE

...YOU ARE BLESSED!