



I. INTRO

- A. A few weeks ago we had a diagnostic team assess our church and one of the issues they raised is that we have a tendency to be more like Martha than Mary.¹
1. In some circles it's called "Martha Syndrome" While we must acknowledge that Martha was doing necessary and important work, the essence of the narrative is that the most effective ministry is born out of having been with Jesus. It is far too easy for many of us to become distracted.
 2. The diagnostic team, I think, rightly assessed us as an "activist church." (And I don't see that changing – we like to DO stuff...) What I do think CAN change is a re-orientation to become more like Mary. Maybe, instead of choosing between Martha and Mary, we aspire to be a church with Mary's heart and Martha's hands??
- B. This is why I am excited for our series in the book of Ephesians. We're going to break it up into two parts: In Part 1 we'll look at the first 3 chapters and call it, Grace To Grow. In Part 2 we'll look at chapters 4-6 and call it Grace To Go.
- C. While I really want this to be a devotional series, I think it is essential that we engage our minds as well as our hearts.
1. One theologian said, 'Pound for pound,' Ephesians may well be the most influential document in history. --Klyne Snodgrass
 2. The appeal of Ephesians is that it presents the basic doctrines of Christianity comprehensively, clearly, practically, and winsomely. –James Montgomery Boice²
- D. Theology matters... (Peanuts Cartoon)

¹ See Luke 10:38-42.

² James Montgomery Boice, *Ephesians*, Baker 1988, 1997:2.



- E. In his letter Paul addresses the true identity of a believer -- Ephesus was an urban **city-center** on a shipping lane, so there was a great mix of cultures, ethnicities, customs, and religious practices. It was also a highly sexualized culture – much like we have today.
1. The church was about 10-years old when Paul wrote his letter and was made-up of a mix of Jewish and Gentile (non-Jewish) believers.
 2. There may have been some tension in the church with these several different and distinct cultures mixing together – so, in addition to instructing them about their true identity in Christ, he also wrote about The true nature of the church (Ecclesiology).
- F. As we turn to our passage for this morning – Ephesians 1:1-14, there is **something VERY distinctive** about this passage that will help us to understand and apply this passage more appropriately.
1. After a brief and somewhat typical greeting (1:1-2), Paul begins one of the loftiest sentences of the New Testament. In the Greek language, vs. 3-14 are a single, glorious, run-on sentence of 202 words.

2. One commentator says Paul is writing in a state of controlled ecstasy.³
3. What is Paul trying to communicate with his worshipful, exuberant, and emotional outburst? Paul is a very educated guy...
 - a. This is what is happening to Paul in this passage: We experience Paul experiencing God! (Similar to Peter's doxology in 1 Pet 1:3-9 or John's in 1 John 3.)
 - b. Experiencing God is when the truth **overflows out** of the mind – and then to all the rest of us. Think of lightning striking a lightning rod...
 - c. When the truth **about** God, or the truth **about our identity** as a Christian becomes real to us – it flows out into every other part of our lives (we'll see that next week...).
 - d. Knowing God is when the truth moves from something we understand to something we stand under.
 - e. One pastor says it's like going from *knowing* to *beholding* (John's language in 1 Jn 3).
4. Think of a father taking his son to his freshman year at college. They unpack the car into the dorm room and the son walks his dad to the car. When they get to the car the father hugs his son, kisses him on the cheek, and says to him, "I love you and I will do anything necessary, even die, to make sure you have everything you need." And the boy weeps...⁴
 - a. What's going on here? This is not new information. The son knew already that his father loved him. It's not a new idea -- but the idea becomes new. He doesn't get new information but the information becomes new. He experiences his father's love in a new and profound way.
 - b. What it means to know God means that We experience God's sweet embrace – and the truth becomes radioactive.
 - c. Maybe it's happened to you and maybe it hasn't. This is what I want for KHC – myself included.

³ Frederick M. Thompson. *Devotions from the Epistles of Galatians & Ephesians*, AuthorHouse 2013:140.

⁴ Adapted from Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680), an English Puritan theologian and preacher. © 2015 Gregg Caruso, King's Harbor Church. All rights reserved. We encourage you to use and share this material freely—but please don't charge money for it, change the wording, or remove the copyright information.

- d. So, what we have in verses 3-14 is Paul emoting – he’s caught-up in worship and adoration! Paul experiences an outburst of praise and exaltation – that is also theologically strong. (writing from a jail cell)
- e. As I read it, picture it as it actually is – a run-on sentence and see if you can get a sense of Paul’s passion and exuberance.

[Greeting] *“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Spiritual Blessings in Christ

³ **Blessed** be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus **Christ**, who has **blessed** us in **Christ** with every spiritual **blessing** in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he **predestined** us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the **purpose** of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious **grace**, with which he has **blessed** us in the Beloved. ⁷ **In him** we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his **grace**, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his **purpose**, which he set forth in **Christ** ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ In him we have obtained an **inheritance**, having been **predestined** according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be **to the praise of his glory.** ¹³ **In him** you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed **in him**, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our **inheritance** until we acquire possession of it, **to the praise of his glory.”**

[Pray]

II. BODY

- A. You will find a handout/insert in your bulletin. Our goal today is to review (or instruct) in four basic doctrines of the faith.
- B. But before we do I’d like to point out some import points that won’t necessarily be covered otherwise.
 1. **The focus of Paul’s exuberant outburst is the spiritual blessings that we have in Jesus Christ.** The word *blessed* or *blessing* is used 3 times in v. 3. The Greek for the word *blessed* is the same word we get our English

word “eulogy”⁵ from. Many commentators refer to this section of Scripture as Paul’s eulogy to God. We often associate the word eulogy with a funeral, but the word means adulation, praise, or blessing, which is what a memorial or funeral eulogy is supposed to be.

2. Also, in v. 5: “[God] predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ.” We’ll get to the word “predestined” but I wanted to point out that some people might think Paul was being sexist here, using the word “sons.” When, in actuality, it’s just the opposite. In Roman times only sons were eligible to receive an inheritance. **So, what Paul is doing here is actually elevating the role of women in the church.**
 3. Finally, There is a natural lens that we can look at these verses with that will help us to see the exuberant outburst with a little more clarity: The verses are actually grouped according to the Trinity, so it appears that **Paul is taking a Trinitarian view of these blessings received...**
 - a. Notice vs. 3-6 are exclaiming the blessings and calling of God the Father.
 - b. Vs. 7 through the beginning of v. 13 are exclaiming the beauty of God the Son (Jesus).
 - c. The end of v. 13-14 declare the presence and the power of God the Holy Spirit.
- C. Now I’d like for us to turn our attention to the handout in your bulletin and spend the remainder of our time with a review of these four (extremely) important doctrines: 1) Our Election/Predestination, 2) Our Justification, 3) Our Adoption (as sons – both male & female), and 4) Our Union with Christ. The first two have the potential to be the most controversial because there are distinctive views held by thoughtful, godly, studied, and prayerful people within the scope of orthodox Christianity. (Yet, I believe I can bridge the gap.)
1. **Election/Predestination** – Notice vs 4-5: ⁴ “Even as [The Father] chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he **predestined** us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will” [v. 11 uses the word “predestined” again.]

⁵ eulogeōtos (εὐλογητός)

- a. The first thing we notice is that God chose us BEFORE the foundation of the world. Think about that: before God said, *“Let there be light”* (Gen 1:3) He thought of you (& me)! That is amazing love and is, perhaps, what sent Paul into his exuberant and worshipful outburst.
- b. The next thing we notice is that the question is not IF we are predestined (or elected), but HOW are we predestined (or elected)?
- c. Look at the handout...
- d. This reflects a very old question that human beings have wrestled with for thousands of years⁶: Are we free to choose or is there a predetermined plan that we can't escape? (It should be noted that this same conversation has been taking place in secular disciplines as well. There is still **robust dialogue** flourishing around what's known as scientific⁷ and philosophical determinism⁸ or fatalism.⁹)
- e. How does the Bible answer the question, Are we free to choose OR is there a predetermined plan that we cannot escape? --With a resounding YES! In western culture we put a lot of pressure on ourselves to choose “this” or “that.” But the Bible is much more nuanced than that.
- f. God has a plan for the fulfillment of the ages, notice v. 11: *“[God] works all things after the counsel of His will.”*
- g. If you hold to the view that “my choices don't matter” it will sap you of any real hope for the future. If you hold to the view that “your choices determine your destiny” it will cause you to be paralyzed with fear (if you're a thoughtful person).
- h. We can see this “both and” perspective in Ephesians if we stand back a bit...
 - 1) The first three chapters of Eph are all about predestination – we are destined to grow into Christ-like character. *“He chose you to be holy and blameless in Him”* (v. 4). Yet, when we get to

⁶ See *Oedipus Rex*, the Athenian tragedy by Sophocles that was first performed about 429 BC.

⁷ The scientific version is “causal determinism,” which in physics is known as cause-and-effect. It is the concept that events within a given paradigm are bound by causality in such a way that any state (of an object or event) is completely determined by prior states.

⁸ All events, including human action, are ultimately determined by causes external to the will.

⁹ All events are predetermined and therefore inevitable.

chapters 4-6 Paul tells us over and over again that we are to choose to follow and serve God -- to strive with every fiber of our being to become more like Christ.

- 2) In the Beatitudes we are told to “*hunger and thirst for righteousness*” --Matthew 5:6 (or, to please God).
 - 3) Acts 2 – Peter says Jesus Christ was crucified according to the “*predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God*” --Acts 2:23a. It was a moment fixed in time -- Jesus had to die. (Right?) And then Peter goes on to say in the same sentence that: “*you nailed [Jesus] to a cross...and put Him to death*” --Act 2:23b Which is it? It’s both.
 - i. This view of predestination and free will is one of the great mysteries of the Bible – like the Trinity or Jesus being fully God and fully human (hypostatic union). God is 100% in charge AND we are 100% responsible. It’s “both and” not “either or.”
 - j. **Paul is saying we can rest because we know that God is in charge, on the other hand we are to be alert because our choices matter. Let’s embrace what the Bible says about God’s sovereign plan and human freedom. There is no place else where we will find this. No other religion or belief system addresses this question like the Christian faith.
2. **Justification** -- ⁷ *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us...*
- a. The word *redemption* means a ransom has been paid.¹⁰
 - b. Take a look at the insert... Here’s the semi-controversial question: Are we “made” righteous or “declared” righteous? (Whose righteousness is it – ours or Christ’s?)
 - c. Catholics, along with some Protestant Christians, teach that the righteousness of Christ is infused (or steeped) into our soul and that we must cooperate with God’s grace to such a degree that we, in fact, are “made” (or become) righteous. (And if we do not maintain that righteousness we could lose our salvation.)

¹⁰ apolutrōsis (ἀπολύτρωσις)

- d. Let's contrast "made" righteousness with declared (or imputed) righteousness.
 - e. *"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"* --Romans 5:1
 - 1) The Greek word for justified in Romans 5:1 does not mean, "to make righteous" but rather "to declare righteous." We are not "made" righteous, or infused with righteousness, we have been "declared" righteous. Righteousness has been imputed (or, credited) to us. This means that it is not our righteousness but Christ's righteousness.
 - 2) Notice how Paul describes himself:
 - a) *"The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost"* --1 Timothy 1:15
 - b) *"Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"* --Romans 7:24
 - c) We rest in Christ's righteousness not our own.
3. **Adoption** – This is not a controversial doctrine, it is one that is woefully underutilized and not understood in the Church.
- a. *[God the Father] "predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ"* --Ephesians 1:5
 - b. Take a look at the insert...
 - c. Our understanding of what it means to be an adopted child of God is the very essence of what it means to be a Christian.
 - d. Adoption is not the result of the child's efforts, but that of the parent. Also, adoption is not a change in nature or behavior – it is a change in legal status. It's a change of parental commitment to the child. Nature and behavior – with good parenting will ensue.
 - e. Here is what we need to see: 1) Our true identity is not achieved, it is received, and 2) As Christians our heavenly Father becomes as committed to us as He is to His own Son.
4. **Union with Christ** -- Paul uses the language of "*in Christ*" or "*in him*" roughly 40 times in Ephesians (and 140 times throughout the NT).

- a. Take a look at the insert...
- b. What union with Christ accomplishes:
 - 1) In God's eyes Jesus' perfect record is credited to you. All that is true of Christ is now true of you.
 - 2) We are treated as if we had lived the perfect life that Jesus lived.
 - 3) We are given a place at the table that Jesus "earned" through His perfect obedience.
 - 4) We have the same access to the Father that Jesus does.
 - 5) The best news is that all of this comes not from us doing anything (i.e., works), but on the basis of faith.

III. CONCLUSION

- A. A woman named Hetty Green died in 1916 and left an estate valued at between \$100-200 million. She went down in history as, "America's Greatest Miser."¹¹ It was said she ate cold oatmeal to save the cost of cooking it. Her son had to eventually have his leg amputated, because she was too cheap to pay for medical care. Hetty Green was wealthiest woman in the world, yet she chose to live like a pauper. Her life becomes an excellent illustration of the way many Christians live today.
 1. We have unlimited spiritual wealth at our disposal, and yet we often live in spiritual poverty.
 2. It was to this kind of Christian that Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians – and to you!
- B. I want you to know that the rest of the series will NOT be like today. You won't get the fire-hose again – at least not with this intensity. I want to put it in your mind and heart that many of us do live like spiritual paupers.
- C. I want us to be Martha's but with Mary's heart.
- D. Worship team & Prayer team (if you want to know more about Jesus, ask the person you came with – or, come forward and talk to one of our prayer team members.

¹¹ She was also known as the "Witch of Wall Street."