

Life is Hard

Ephesians

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Life is tough and then you die.

That is one of the sayings we banter about in our family. Life is tough and we don't like it being so tough. But there is no escaping it.

That fact forces me to grapple with some other questions. What will I do with the tough things in life like duty? I have duty in more areas than I can hardly keep up with at times it seems like: duty in family, duty in church, duty as an owner of things, the hard and tough work of relationships.

Life would be easy, wouldn't it, if there weren't any other people?

Life is tough. Relationships are hard. And then there is this whole issue of my inner thinking, my inner soul, my inner life. Where will I look for guidance in dealing with these things? What will motivate me to stay at the work that is before me? How do I keep from becoming frustrated with disappointments shriveled up because of so many demands or despondent because of the ever watching and exacting eye of my Creator?

Now, maybe you are thinking, I don't know, life isn't at all that tough. You make it sound awfully hard.

Let me ask you a quick question. How are you doing with the commandment to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind? Just chew on that one for a while. It will slay you.

How are you doing with loving all your neighbors like you love yourself? Think upon that one for a little while. There's probably some people on a list that you would just assume were not in that category called neighbor, something else.

The Christian life is a very difficult life if it is taken seriously, if it is approached with understanding. And you ignore it at your peril.

Living the Christian life is not optional.

It is no wonder that our Lord put our relationship with him in terms that he did, terms like self denial, cross bearing, discipleship, giving up one's life for Christ's sake, counting the cost of following Christ and, as I have already mentioned, loving the triune God more than anyone and anything. You weigh these things. You give them due consideration and they will slay you.

These are all concepts of sacrifice and death and surrender. They involve an entirely new way of thinking, an entirely new way of living. And it is pressed upon us 24/7. We don't get to check out. We don't get to take vacation. We don't get to have that time in our Christian life which we say, "Ah, the weekend is here. I don't have to worry about that anymore for a couple of days."

This kind of life is tough.

My conclusion is: The Christian life is the most difficult life to live. While the Creator promises his salvation to believers, he also gives them the heaviest of responsibilities. And I am just trying to be realistic here for a few minutes.

Is it any wonder that so many who are ready to sign up for the Christian life in heaven drop out as they face the increasing difficulty of living for Christ and living under his commandments? We are told that over and over, aren't we, in the Scriptures, that there are those who will profess faith even embracing the Christian faith and the Christian hope with joy who then leave?

Our Savior himself put it this way if you look with me in Luke for a moment. We will come back to the epistle to the Church at Ephesus. Look with me in Luke six. It is a good passage to meditate upon.

Luke six and verse 46.

But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: "He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock."¹

Now what is the rock? Let's get this very clear. The rock is hearing what Christ says and doing it. It is not simply the hearing. It is not just simply the saying, "Yes, I agree, Lord, Lord." That has got to be very clear in our thinking.

So he goes on. "But he who heard and did nothing..."² He who heard and said, "Lord, Lord..." but he did not do what Christ said, "is like a man who built a house on the earth

¹ Luke 6:46-48.

² Luke 6:49.

without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.”³

There is no doubt that there is going to be vehement opposition to living for Christ. You are going to be beat upon. Life is tough.

But the option is horrendous. We must hear and do what Christ says.

Now, are you with me so far? Are you thinking about this? Is it in your mind?

Christ put it this way. “For whoever desires to save his life...”⁴ That’s the hook. We are all going to agree to that. “For whoever desires to save his life will lose it.”⁵

You know, listen. You have got to read that verse every once in a while with just kind of a fresh mind just to let it shock you the way it ought to. You desire to save your life you will lose it. “But whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.”⁶

Now that is tough. That is hard. It is impossible both initiated, salvation also and carried out.

Paul helps us keep our thinking in this direction by what he says in Ephesians chapter four and verse 17. Look back with me in that passage we just read. “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk.”⁷ You used to live that way for your sake. “In the futility of their mind,”⁸ he says, “having their understanding darkened.”⁹

Now what is that is clear is this. No longer do this. Deny who you were. Deny the culture you live in as a believer, now one who is regenerated, one who has come to faith in Christ, one who is walking with the Lord.

There is a different way of thinking, a different way of approaching life. But it is not easier. That is the hard part.

You see, I kind of got the idea before or as I was listening to all this being built up as a young person that this was going to be easier. Paul commanded the church members at Ephesus to entirely change their way of thinking, to deny themselves their life long way of thinking until they have come to Christ, to take the way that they have always assessed things, they have always considered things, they have always made decisions and put it to death for Christ’s sake.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Luke 9:24.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ephesians 4:17.

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ephesians 4:18.

Now how hard is that?

This morning I am asking you to give some serious thought as we return to this study in the book of Ephesians, give some serious thought to the life that we are being called to in this book.

I want to review some things and look at some things, trying to get some perspective before we jump back in in studying the book and looking at it.

Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven, we thank you for the faithfulness of your Spirit in delivering to our care and our keeping the apostolic Word, those things that Christ said to his churches through his apostles. We are amazed that you would put into our care such a treasure. We know ourselves. We were enemies and you came to us and befriended us and we praise you and we bless you and we are ashamed when we behave as enemies again and ask you forgive us our sins. Cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We were unfaithful and you came to us with sovereign, before the world was created election, determination, a plan to save our souls. Father, we bless you. We praise you. And yet we ask forgiveness that we often behave in unfaithful ways. Sometimes we are more like we were before. We pray you would cleanse us with the blood of Christ and give us good meditation upon the work that he accomplished and the thoroughness of that. And we pray today that as we look at this book that was written so many centuries ago, we would find in it the freshest of encouragements to live for Christ, to walk in his ways, to dig down deep and build a foundation upon the rock and erect a house that will withstand the storms that surely come upon us. May we do this because of Christ, for hope in Christ, for the glory of Christ whom you sent to be our Savior. I pray that you would enable me, as I preach today, to be faithful to the text. Give strength to your people. May your Spirit attend what we do here to open our minds to understand the Scriptures, to bow in repentance that we might go out from here to live the life you have made for us, to live as people who are, in fact, reconciled to you. Our Father, we ask your blessing upon all that we do here today in this hour and the next that we might honor you for your Word. We are amazed at your gracious love to us. We praise you in Christ's name. Amen.

Paul commanded the church members at Ephesus to stop thinking as they were used to thinking, as was natural, that was like everyone else around them in the world.

Now that is not real hard to say. But it is very hard to do.

You see, I had this naïve idea when I was younger that this whole issue of the house being built with a strong foundation and the house being built on the sand was just an issue of professing that I was a believer in Christ. I kind of missed part of that.

I don't know how long I had been walking with Christ as a believer when it dawned on me that there is something more to just saying I am a Christian. There is thing of living like a Christian and thinking like a Christian.

Well, there's several things that I want us to do today. First of all I want us to start by giving some consideration to what Paul required of these people, remembering that these are things that the Spirit revealed to him. They were the words of Christ. And he requires these of every church member, of every church throughout the age. The Spirit didn't just give these things to those that were at Ephesus. He gave them to the people at Ephesus for our well being.

Paul laid out a lot of commands on these church members, these believers in Christ. We have—in a way of saying. I don't want to be overly literal here—four... we have got three chapters here, half this book just command after command, after command after command. Change your way of thinking. Change your way of speaking. Change your way of behaving with each other.

He starts out in chapter four, notice this.

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love.¹⁰

Now think about this. Those people were not substantially different from you and me.

If you want to get into their mindset just a little bit, think about three or four or five people that you find very difficult to live with here. Ok? Maybe I am on that short list. I don't know. But maybe you are on mine. Do you think it was any different for them? Maybe the preacher that was standing up there that morning, they thought, "You mean... with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering bearing one another in love?"

And the conviction of the Spirit came upon them.

How in the world were they to learn to deal with each other? They had to learn to love one another as Christ said, "Love your neighbor as yourself,"¹¹ which means I have got to learn to love you like I love me. And you have got to learn to love me the way you love you within the bounds of the Word of God because we can get off real quick on some of that.

Is that hard? Go ahead and say it. It is impossible at times. They had this duty laid on them without exception. They must patiently love every other member of the church there, maybe some who before coming to Christ there was tremendous and horrendous sins against each other.

Every one of them must learn to bring the Spirit's commands to bear in their life.

¹⁰ Ephesians 4:1-2.

¹¹ Matthew 19:19; 23:39; Mark 12:31.

Starting in verse 17 the thinking is changed. Learning Christ the way we should learn Christ.

Verse 25, “Putting away lying, ‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor...’”¹²

“Be angry, and do not sin.”¹³

Provide for yourself and yet have some for others.

“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth.”¹⁴

There was this whole way of... they had to take those commandments and put them into work in their own life. They had to contextualize the Spirit’s commands with themselves.

Even something as simple as taking a trip, for example, to the museum for them. Do you know what that meant? It meant going to the temple of Diana where pagan worship was going on. And they had to think about... ok, now how am I going to deal with this?

Do you think there were mothers there at the Church in Ephesus who had children that they wanted to teach about history and culture and the good things? Do you think there were mothers there that are like you are, mothers? You know there were.

They had to contextualize these commands. They had to think about how am I going to go to the museum with my kids. Am I going to go to the museum at all with my kids?

You have got to do the same thing. You don’t have to deal with, necessarily, the exact same things. Theirs was a pre Christian pagan society. Yours is a post Christian pagan society. There are some differences. They were steeped in the superstition of devotion to Diana. We are steeped in the increasing superstition of American folklore religion. That is the air you breathe and the water you drink.

And they had to take these commands of the Spirit and put them into action in the life that God had laid out providentially for them.

Look with me in chapter six for a moment.

Can you imagine hearing this for the first time and thinking about this.

Chapter six and verse 10. “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.”¹⁵

Yes, yes, we want to do that.

¹² Ephesians 4:25.

¹³ Ephesians 4:26.

¹⁴ Ephesians 4:29.

¹⁵ Ephesians 6:10.

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”¹⁶

You have a great and powerful and intelligent enemy. I have laid out these commands for you. You must live your life by these things, but understand the evil one is opposing you every step of the way so that if you do not put on this armor, you are going to fail.

Paul laid out a lot of commands not these people. Included, as well, were all those things the Spirit gave through Paul that touched on their private life, their public life, their church life, their family life, their work world.

Look at a couple of things, chapter five. “Walk in love,”¹⁷ he says in verse two.

Verse eight. “Walk as children of light.”¹⁸

You had to understand something of what he is talking about with love and light. These are abstract terms.

And then he said, “See then that ye walk circumspectly.”¹⁹

Now those are not different things—love and light and circumspection—they are different ways of looking at the same thing.

Here is the commandment.

See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.²⁰

He is talking about public worship there, that they were entered into the gathering of the saints—wisely, thinking, understanding and submitting themselves one to another. That is not easy stuff. You can’t just coast and everything will work out. That is passivity and fatalism.

¹⁶ Ephesians 6:11.

¹⁷ Ephesians 5:2.

¹⁸ Ephesians 5:8.

¹⁹ Ephesians 5:15.

²⁰ Ephesians 5:15-21.

God commanded them through the apostle to be engaged mentally, to come to worship ready with a thankful heart. But it wasn't just the gathering of the saints. It wasn't just the worship services.

He also said in verse 22, "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife."²¹ He is intruding into their family life. Women who are married in the church, you have got to behave in a certain way. Men who are married in the church, you have got to behave a certain way.

You say you are a Christian. He made these commandments upon them.

Children. Now, see, you may have thought just for a minute, kids, oh, the preacher is talking to all the adults. I can kind of coast here, but no. Children, are you a believing child? You come to faith in Christ? You want to be counted among those who are followers of the Lord Jesus?

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."²²

Now, as difficult as it is to obey God, can you imagine how hard it is for children to obey their mom and dad who don't always get it right. But children, that is what God has called you to do. He lays these commandments upon them.

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."²³

So fathers were to exemplify before their children this headship over their wife, a loving leadership of their wife teaching them by Word and example who Christ is and how God would have them to live, commandment after commandment.

Verse five, "Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters."²⁴ We don't have servants and slaves so much today, but we have employees, don't we? I think there are some principles here for employees, how they were to go at their work.

What does he say there? He says, "Not with eyeservice..."²⁵ You go to your work.

Not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.²⁶

²¹ Ephesians 5:22.

²² Ephesians 6:1.

²³ Ephesians 6:4.

²⁴ Ephesians 6:5.

²⁵ Ephesians 6:6.

²⁶ Ephesians 6:6-8.

And some of you have difficult bosses. Some of you have difficult work to do. And he says, “Do it to the glory of the Lord.”

And if you are one of those bosses, he says he has a word for you.

“And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.”²⁷

He expects Christian men who are employers and bosses to come at their work in a way that betrays Christ.

Is that easy to do? I can’t imagine how at times to put that into place with an employee that is difficult to deal with. If they were all like those described in the few verses before that might be easy. But it is not that way, is it?

He lays these commandments on us: the private life, the public life, family life, work life, worship, everything. He lays commandment after commandment after commandment.

Now, let me say one thing real quickly before we go on. You face some things that your Ephesians brothers and sisters did not. And let me just make a comment about them in this regard.

You face this contemporary, evangelical culture. Contemporary evangelical culture says that what I have been saying so far, what Paul said to them is too harsh. It is legalistic. You live in an evangelical culture that doesn’t want to hear about commandments. It goes something like this.

Jesus died to forgive my sins and now my life will be much easier and more enjoyable. Everything will be fixed. Obedience to commandments smacks of an anti grace approach. We just need to focus on love and not on doctrine.

Now, as I said before, that is the air you breathe and the water you drink in north Texas. You have got to be alert to this because you still have got to bring all these commandments we have talked about and rehearsed so far to bear in your life facing that kind of thing in which if you try to order your life this way, often the people who are going to oppose you are those who profess to be Christians. You are serious about church membership. You are serious about worship. You have the audacity to say that one day in seven belongs to God. And they are going to call you a legalist. They are going to call you harsh. They are going to call you all kinds of things.

Be aware of this. Sometimes it is not real blatant. Sometimes it is very, very subtle. And you may be the only one at work who has this concept that I must live this holy life, I must live a life under commandment, under the authority of Christ. I must change my way of thinking. You may be the only one in your area where you work and maybe

²⁷ Ephesians 6:9.

everybody else there is a professing Christian who takes a look at life seriously like this. And they are going to say of you, “Well, you just suck the joy right out of everything. You just don’t know grace.” And they may not say it, but you know they believe it and they talk about it.

One other thing let me mention that you face that your Ephesians brothers and sisters did not: modern American culture. Modern American culture has been flirting a long time and has embraced autonomy, self law. In other words, there is no fixed standard. And this works its way into everything you encounter in your life, in the TV shows you watch, the books you read, the movies you go to. The unbelievers you rub shoulders with, they do not believe there is a fixed standard, but there is a variety of approaches.

Well, to all these things he mentions here there is a variety of approaches to worship. There is a variety of approaches to sex and to marriage. There is a variety of approaches to family roles. There is a variety of approaches... you can mention anything here you want to.

And it goes something like this. You are arrogant to say that what Paul taught, what the Bible says is the only way to please God. You are arrogant. You are one of those intolerant people.

Now they may not be that blatant, but it subtly works its way, doesn’t it, into everything.

If there even is a God outside of your imagination, he is not fair minded like you are. And this concept of no fixed standard, of a variety of approaches to literally everything pervades everything in your culture.

They may even say something like this. “Why Christians can’t even agree on what Paul said. What makes you think you have got it figured out?”

Contemporary evangelical culture, modern American culture, they war against you all the time. And you have been given all these commandments.

Ok. Now think about that. Consider that. Keep that in mind and let’s move on.

Let’s give some consideration, as well, to the reason that Paul wrote them in the first place. Why did he write this letter and all these commandments to them? Why was he so forward and so intrusive and even parental with these sophisticated Ephesians? Well, because they were fellow believers, because they were Christ followers. They were Christians living in this world.

Hang on to the book of Ephesians and turn back to Acts just for a moment, Acts 19. Let’s refresh our minds with what was written there. What had happened in this city of Ephesus? Just a quick reminder. There is much to be rehearsed.

Pick it up at verse 18. “And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds.”²⁸ They saw the power of Paul, the authenticating signs of his apostleship. And so they came confessing and professing faith in Christ.

“Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver.”²⁹

Do you know what that is talking about there? That is talking about repentance. It is talking about changing a way of thinking. It is talking about those who came under commandment.

Verse 20. “So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.”³⁰

Paul came preaching there and the church was established. And so he is writing to them because of the power of the Word of God in their lives. Paul wrote them because they had believed in Christ. They had believed in the glories of salvation and the age to come that Paul preached. They had become fellow aristocrats in the eternal kingdom, nobility by grace although in disguise, children of high king and joint heirs with the ruler of the universe. That is why he wrote them.

Why is this so important?

Well, frankly, the Christian life is so difficult that no one would attempt it unless there were overriding reasons and privileges attached to the requirements. I think the requirements are all very reasonable. It is just that they are so hard.

Those in Ephesus who had seen the apostolic authenticating signs and had heard Paul preach the gospel had believed on Christ, the one he preached. And then there was this new thing in them, the implanting of a holy principle, new desires they never had before to live for Christ, to live under the authority of the one who saved them.

What I want you to notice and to learn, to never forget is the way that Paul dealt with them in this book. It wasn't... in no way did he diminish commandment or law. If anything, he expanded their understanding of it. But—and here is what I want you to hang on to today—it is that he first explained their blessedness, the favor that was upon them, the privileged status with God that was solely due to his grace to them in Christ. There is... in other words the command... I am looking at the last half of this book, aren't I? Commandment after commandment, after commandment that Paul laid upon them.

But what he had first done is take three chapters explaining their privilege, the blessing of God, their favored status and what that meant.

²⁸ Acts 19:18.

²⁹ Acts 19:19.

³⁰ Acts 19:20.

Theologians refer to this as the indicative which precedes the imperative.

Cindy and I were talking this morning. I hope she doesn't mind my saying this. She said, "Ok, put that in English."

The indicative—who you are. That comes first.

The imperative—what you are to do. That always follows the indicative. The commandments you live by always follows the indicative.

Ok. So that is why Paul wrote them. He gave them commandment. He wrote them for these reasons.

Now one more thing I want you to give some consideration to. What was true about them, then? What are the indicatives? What was the basis from which Paul would require of them all these commandments that we call holy living or godliness, living under the authority of Christ, seeking first the kingdom of God.

Now, if you have missed everything I have said up to this point today, please get this. There are things that are true about every Christian.

Now, I say it that way. You can, you know, if you missed everything get this, because I know, you get this, you will get the other because they always go together. Three major indicatives that I want you to get in your mind and keep in your mind.

What is true about them?

Number one, what was it about them that made the difficult life worthy of their discipline and labor? What was so about them? What is so about...?

Well, turn to chapter one. Let's look there again real quickly. We have got this beautiful sentence. It runs from verse three through verse 14. We have read it. We have thought about it. I hope you can all but quote it in your mind without your Bible open.

But look how he starts that sentence in verse three.

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, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.³¹

³¹ Ephesians 1:3-6.

Now, who are the people he is giving commandment to? They are these people. They are these people whom the Father has united to Christ, his very own Son, by his own electing grace. They are people to whom the Spirit of God... the Father has sent the Spirit to bring them to faith in Christ and to seal them and to make sure and guarantee that every one of them will arrive safely in heaven. This is who those people are.

It is not just somebody randomly in the street. It is those who are in Christ, in him, in the Beloved. I love that, in the Beloved. Do you see that again?

“To the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.”³²

Who is the Beloved? It is the Father’s own Son whom he loves dearly, who is so precious to him, so acceptable to him. And everything he did so pleased the Father. There was never a delight like the Father has in his Son and the Son has in his Father, so much so the Father calls him my Beloved.

And Paul has the audacity to say that those who believe in Christ are acceptable to the Father because they are in him, the Beloved. And just like the Beloved is acceptable with the Father, so those who are in the Beloved are acceptable to the Father. It is a beautiful, beautiful picture.

The rejected are, in fact, the chosen. The dead, in fact, have been made alive. The outcasts have been included all in Christ. He did the impossible for them, for love of them.

Did you notice that in the text we quoted together in unison? It is just beautiful, isn’t it? If you have your bulletin that is fine or turn to it in your Bible in 2 Thessalonians where he says there that, “We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord.”³³

Now, I don’t know what the first thing you would say is about your relationship with God, but Paul fresh on his lips regarding these believers at Thessalonica is that they are brethren beloved of God.

Verse 16. “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us...”³⁴

He did the impossible for them, for the love of them. It was his delight to bring them to his Father. And this is not true of a select few, but of every Ephesian believer and every believer everywhere. God adopted former enemies into his very family and household and made them his own children, his own daughters, his own sons.

³² Ephesians 1:6.

³³ 2 Thessalonians 2:13.

³⁴ 2 Thessalonians 2:16.

This is who they are. This is what is so of them. All of this grace, grace that flows to the believer not because he is an effective worker, but because Christ is an effective worker and because Christ has accomplished these things.

Verse seven. “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”³⁵

They are people who realize their absolute, totally abject poverty and found in Christ all the treasures of the universe in eternity. This is who they are.

It wasn't that they saw obedience as a means to gain God's favor because no one can do that, but that they saw it as the will of the one who most loved them and cared for them, who more than any other had provided their entire, complete well being. That is who they are. Christ redeemed them, granted them pardon of all iniquity, justified them and reconciled them to his Father in a full reconciliation. They had resisted Christ's work. Now they rested on Christ because of his great love. They counted that it alone saved them justly, Christ's work. They are acceptable to the holy God because they are in Christ, the Beloved. That is who they are.

Indicative.

Now I mentioned there are three major indicatives. That is the first one. Who are they? They are in Christ under God's grace.

What is the second indicative? It is that which moved them. It is these blessings that are upon them that give them the highest of motives and reasons to live this life. Now how did he put it?

Look at verse six again. “To the praise of the glory of His grace.” We know it is talking about God. He is the only one worthy of praise. He is the one that is of grace. All the glory is his. What is to the praise of the glory of his grace? The fact that you were chosen in Christ, the fact that you were united to Christ, the fact that you will find a grace working out in you a holy and blameless life that finds its fruition in heaven.

What was so of them becomes what moved them. The ones who lived life by the apostolic Word are the very ones that bring glory and praise to the God of grace. To the believers at Ephesus what meant nothing to them before became their very reason for existence. Who they are, what moves them?

Verse 12. Look at this. “That we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.”³⁶

What are we going to do? We are going to bring praise to who he is. We are going to bring praise to what he has done by how we live. So we are going to give shape and

³⁵ Ephesians 1:7.

³⁶ Ephesians 1:12.

manifestation to what is taught about in chapters one, two and three by how we live in chapters four, five and six. You are not the center of the world or the universe. But you get to live in such a way that you bring attention to the one who is.

Now what's our problem? We focus so much on ourselves we have decided this. But here is the picture. Before they were rebellious, they refused God, they cowered before him. They hated him. And now by grace they are submissive. They are accepted. They come to him voluntarily and they love him. And that moves them to want to live for him.

Third indicative. The first indicative: What was so of them? Who are they? Second: What moved them? Third: What basis of confidence do they have?

That all of this is so and all this is going to work out somehow to the glory of God even if it means I die in the process. What gave them confidence? Paul added grace to grace in telling them this, that the Father secured them in grace by giving the one who shed his blood for them all rule and authority. It doesn't get any better than this, does it? The one who so loved you he gave himself for you is granted by the Father all rule and authority so that you cannot be lost, so that what is true about you will always be true about you and no one can take it away from you. So what moves you will always move you.

Look what he says in chapter one toward the end of that chapter, verse 22.

“And he put all things,”³⁷ that is, the Father, “put all things under His feet,”³⁸ that is Christ's feet, “and gave Him to be head over all things to the church.”³⁹ That means for our well being, because the Church is those who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world and adopted in Christ, into the Father's family.

So God sits back. He looks at this—I am speaking as a human to humans. He says, “How are we going to make sure all this works out? I am going to give all authority into the hands of the one who was willing to give himself to purchase men.”

How beautiful is this?

Chapter two, notice what he says in verse four.

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.⁴⁰

³⁷ Ephesians 1:22.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ephesians 2:4-6.

It may look like you are sitting here. You have flesh on you right now that will die. The position—may God give us faith to see this so that we will live in accordance with it—positionally it is as if you were sitting right next to Christ.

You are as secure as he is. And that is the confidence that undergirds everything that you do as a believer. In this way he accomplished his goal of getting a people who will glorify him on the earth and for the age to come. He goes on to say that in chapter four, in the next verse.

“That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”⁴¹ In this age and in the age to come we get the glorified God because we are held securely in the hands of Christ.

Christ then bestowed on all his people, Jew and Gentile, the highest privileges of full reconciliation. Now what do I mean by that?

Look at verse 18 of chapter two.

“For through Him we both [Jew and Gentile] have access by one Spirit to the Father.”⁴²

It appears that I am stuck here in this body. But virtue, my union of Christ, in virtue his sovereign rule over all things, I have free access. We have free access into the holy of holies, into the throne room of the God of the universe.

Christ has accomplished this, this reconciliation that has two sides to it. Real quickly, there are free access into the Creator’s throne room, into the presence of the holy and sovereign Lord on the one hand. On the other he, as the sovereign Lord, indwells in them and took up his habitation in them.

He closes this chapter out that way, chapter two.

In whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.⁴³

You have free access. He indwells us. We can come before him in Christ without obstacles safely. And God indwells us. When we gather, he is with us. He has taken up his habitation.

Three indicatives: Who they were in Christ, their motive for living for Christ, the confidence they had in that.

⁴¹ Ephesians 2:7.

⁴² Ephesians 2:18.

⁴³ Ephesians 2:21-22.

Listen. All the indicatives set us up for the imperatives. Who we are in Christ, in grace, gives us a basis for approaching the commandments. If we approach the commandments without that, well, let's think about that for a minute.

How should we respond to these things? The Christian life is a difficult life. Let's don't kid ourselves. It is hard to live day in and day out for Christ. And if you have been a Christian for a period of years, I know you have regrets. What are those regrets? Because you did not live for Christ.

We are all in the same boat. So how do you respond to this? As you live out your day sorting out your duties and their priorities, remember the indicatives. Sink your mind into them. Remember the Lord's grace to you and to all of us who make up Heritage Baptist Church. We were chosen in Christ. We were adopted. We were redeemed. We are reconciled. We are sealed. Our Savior rules everything for our well being. We sit with him in the heavenlies. We are his workmanship. All these things. Keep these in mind. Why do I say that?

Listen. If you forget the indicatives—who we are and our proper motive and our confidence—if you forget the indicatives, the imperatives will grow heavier and heavier and heavier upon you. You will see your duty and not your advantages and blessings and privileges.

And can I say this? And this sometimes kind of works backwards to help us. Duty for duty's sake is as a dry as a desert.

If you continue trying to do your duty without remembering the indicatives, your motives will reverse and you will get.... Listen. Your brain, you... Left to yourself, do you know what you will do? You will, in a heartbeat quit resting in Christ and start resting in your works. And that is a fool's errand, isn't it? But you will do it. I will do it. We have got to remember the indicatives or we will be upside down in our approach to Christianity and obedience. We must delight in grace, delight in worship, delight in the kingdom hopes or those things will become totally foreign to us. Coming to Christ means coming to commandments that will free us from the slavery to sin.

Read chapters one to three. Meditate upon them. List out the provisions of grace to us. Everything Paul wrote of them is true of us because we are disciples of Christ.

Listen, look at the bulletin just for a second. On that second inside page there is a commentary on 2 Thessalonians and I have underlined a couple of things. I just want you to read them and to get you to think about them.

The beneficiaries of God's saving work cannot afford to lapse into lethargy. But let's respond with loyal steadfastness. Stand firm and keep a firm hold on the traditions, the teachings taught them by Paul and his associates.

Why? Because God loved them and God chose them and God set them apart unto himself by sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

Down there at the next underlining. Paul prays that the encouragement provided in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ may be apportioned inwardly. Literally, encourage your hearts as a motivation for giving in strength for every good deed and word.

The indicative, who you are, forms the foundation for what you are to do, for what you are to be, the imperative.

So if you forget the indicatives, the imperatives will grow heavier and heavier weight upon you so the blessing that God intended them to be. However, if you forget the imperatives, the indicatives will lose their sweetness to your soul.

Listen, you live in violation of the things he lays out in chapters four, five and six and you will not enjoy the things he lays out in chapters one, two and three. It just works that way, folks.

You can fall far from the life Christ purchased you to live. And when you do you will find that disobedience robs you of the enjoyment of that which will sustain your soul. You can lose the sweetness and enjoyment of your position in Christ before God if you do not remember the imperatives that follow.

If you can't...

By the way, let me say this. If you can turn to a life of disobedience after having once named the name of Christ, I fear you show yourself to have never known the Father's grace. I think one of the great evidences of true faith is renewal to repentance over and over and over again.

So how should we respond to these things? Remember the indicatives. Remember the imperatives.

One last thing. Make much of the Father's work. Make much of his grace in election and igniting you to his Son. Make much of the Son's work purchasing you by his death on the cross and providing a complete pardon. Make much of the Spirit's work who gave you life and faith and a guarantee of eternal salvation. Only meditation upon a Trinitarian based salvation will sustain you in obedience to the commandments laid out in the Scriptures for you. Only what God has done will sustain you in the difficulty of life.

Life is tough.

Grace is sweet because of Christ.

Obedience is hard, but grace sustains.

Perseverance and self denial is unattainable except for God's grace in Christ that moves us to follow his commandments.

Are you struggling profoundly with some sin? Then drink deeply of the indicatives of grace. Go there again and again praying and praying and thanking the triune God for his gracious salvation. Steep your mind in these things. Meditate upon them.

Listen. Don't talk yourself out of this. Don't let anybody else talk you out of this. Here is your only hope. Christ came to call sinners to repentance and the unrighteous to righteousness and the sin sick to walking in his ways.

Christ pardons the iniquities of those who have no other means of cleansing and forgiveness. And that is the reason for living the commandments that Paul laid upon those at Ephesus and the Spirit lays upon us

May God give us grace.