



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Ephesians 1: 1-2

Fall 2023

"Saints In Christ"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, and good morning to all of you. It's good to be back with you and good to be in the book that we are starting this morning; Ephesians, as Seth said and as we announced, I think, some weeks back. Ephesians chapter one, verses one and two,

1 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: **2** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1: 1-2

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

Father, what a privilege it is to be with Your people, at any time, but on this day, on the LORD's day, when it is proper for us to assemble together and not forsake the assembling together, "as is the habit of some". Well, that's the concern that the author of Hebrews, (10:25), had for the church to whom he wrote his letter, and a concern, that really, is true for the ages; it's true in every generation. It's so easy to drift a bit, and yet this is where we need to be, as Your people. We need to be in fellowship, as we visit with one another. But the real fellowship in Christ is being together, opening the Word of

God, hearing about the things of our LORD, discussing them with one another—this is how we're built up in the faith. This is what we need, Your Word.

And so, as we consider this brief passage this morning and we consider the introductory material to this great book of Ephesians, we pray that You would instruct us and teach us; build us up in the faith, encourage us, and challenge us with what this book will challenge us with—the truth and the revelation that You have given.

So LORD, the object of the Book of Ephesians was to build the saints up and equip them; and fit them for the challenges of life that we meet every day—and we pray that for ourselves. And we pray that for ourselves in this hour, on this Sunday morning, that You would bless us, and equip us for the day and for the week before us.

We thank You for all that You've given us in Your Scriptures, and we thank You that it's based upon the person and the work of Christ whom You've sent into the world: Your Son, Your eternal Son, the second Person of the Trinity, who took to Himself a body, a human nature, in order to be our substitute in death—and in so doing, save us. And not only save us from the wrath to come, but equip us for life; we thank You for that. Thank You for Your grace, which we will be considering over the next weeks and months. We thank You for Your love for us.

LORD, we don't have too many names listed on the prayer request this week and we thank You for that; but we know there are individuals who are dealing with many issues, and we always will have that. While we are saints, while we are saved in Christ, (if we're believers in Him), we have a glorious future as well as a certain present because You're in control of all of the events of life; and You are taking care of us in ways we are not even aware of. Nevertheless, we have trials and difficulties; it's part of the life for the saint, for the believer in this fallen world. And so we know that we do have those difficulties, and we pray Your blessings upon those who are dealing with that.

LORD, we know in Your hands we are secure regardless of the trials we go through—and we can look to You and know that You will work things out for Your glory and our good. And I pray that for our time now, in this hour, and in the hour to come, that You would bless us with Your truth and that the Spirit of God, (who has “sealed”

our heart, as Paul twice in this book explains to us), that the Spirit of God within us would instruct us, encourage us, challenge us, show us the blessings that are ours in Your Son, and give us encouragement.

So we pray that You would build us up in the faith, and that You would be glorified in it. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

(*Message*) The late British minister and commentator, John Stott, wrote of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, "Nobody can read it without being moved to wonder and worship." It's been praised as "The crown of Paul's writings, and the queen of the epistles." It's been described as, "Briefly giving the whole field of the Christian religion."

So rather than have one subject, like justification by faith, (as we might find in the Book of Romans, where there is more than just that theme in the Book of Romans, but certainly it's occupied for the first half of that book primarily with that subject of justification)—in distinction from that, Paul's aim in Ephesians was to give a broad statement of Christian truth which would have been needed in the early church.

Ephesians divides into two parts: Chapters 1-3 give Christian doctrine; chapters 4-6 give Christian duty. So, first *theology*, then *conduct*. The two always go together because *thought* influences *behavior*. And while Paul covers a range of doctrines, certainly an important one is, 'the grace of God in the salvation of sinners.' Princeton theologian, Charles Hodge, who wrote an excellent commentary on this book, thought that that was, "The unitive theme of the book. Paul explains the plan of redemption to show us the greatness of the blessing in order to move us to live with the dignity of the sons of God." And it should produce that within us as we consider the great thoughts and truths that Paul unfolds for us in this book.

The Book of Ephesians was John Calvin's favorite letter. He began preaching it in Geneva on May 1, 1558, through the summer of 1559. During that time Geneva became a haven for spiritual refugees; the city was filled with them. John Knox was there from Scotland. Others were there from England during the reign of Mary Tudor,

("Bloody Mary"). There were French and Waldensian refugees, and Italians—all landless exiles.

The timing of his preaching was providential and significant, because one of the main subjects of the book is the church—and the church as a new society. In chapter 2, (vs19), Paul describes Christians, Jewish and Gentile, as "fellow citizens"; Jews and Gentiles joined together in one group, (or God's "household" as they are described), and His "temple", (Eph 2:21), and "the body of Christ." (Eph 4:12). So, while the world had rejected these refugees and driven them from their homes and lands, God had chosen them and made them His new society—and "citizens" of heaven. (Eph 2:19). They were the blessed ones: That's what the Book of Ephesians teaches; the riches that we presently have by God's grace and the sacrifice of Christ.—And what would have encouraged those refugees then, will encourage us today.

The book was written to the church in the city of Ephesus, one of the great cities of the ancient world. It was the capital of the Roman province of *Asia*, located on the Aegean Sea on the west coast of modern day Turkey. It had magnificent buildings; like baths, gymnasiums, a stadium for gladiators, civic buildings, market places, and theaters.

But the *Temple of Diana*, (or in Greek, the *Temple of Artemis*), was the most important. Ephesus was the capital of that cult, 'the cult of Diana, *Goddess of the Hunt*.' The temple was massive. Its platform was slightly larger than an American football field, including the end zones. It was one of *The Seven Wonders of the Ancient World*.

Ephesus was also the center of the practice of magic and the occult. Bruce Metzger wrote, "Of all ancient Greco-Roman cities, Ephesus, the third largest city in the empire, was by far the most hospitable to magicians, sorcerers, and charlatans of all sorts."

Paul had extensive contact with the city. He visited it briefly on his 'second missionary journey'. He had intended to go there first, but the Holy Spirit prevented it and led him instead to Europe. At the end of that journey he did, at last, come to Ephesus.

Paul wanted to go to Ephesus, the great city—and the Lord wanted him to go to Ephesus; they only differed in the timing of the visit. It's an instructive lesson, I think, on the leading of the Spirit. We make our plans, (as we should, that's only wise), but the Spirit can, by His providence, overrule them with a better plan. I think we need to remember that in life: As we make our plans and things don't work out the way we want, it's because in the providence of God, He has something else for us. —He certainly did for Paul.

Paul was well received there, but this first visit on that journey was short. On his 'third missionary journey' he returned directly there. He taught in the synagogue for three months until he was dismissed from there; and then he taught in the school of Tyrannus for two years—so it was an extended stay there in the city of Ephesus.

Jews and Greeks throughout the province of Asia heard the Gospel preached by the apostle Paul. They experienced Paul's miracles—the miracles God did through His apostle; he healed the sick, he cast out demons. There was a great revival and Luke records that in Acts chapter 19. People renounced their practice of magic and burned their magic books and books of sorcery. It was worth something like "fifty thousand pieces of silver", (vs19), which, perhaps, doesn't mean a lot to us today, but that was a great fortune then.

And Luke wrote, "So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing." (vs20). "The word of the Lord"; it was a great awakening—which is *good news*, the *very best* news. But bad news always follows quickly when there is a revival because Satan hates to lose souls to the Lord. —And also because men hate to lose money.

And that's what happened. The revival was a blow to the idol sales and to the idol factory and its bottom line. The guild of silversmiths had a very lucrative business making and selling shrines of Diana and shrines of the temple. When the great awakening occurred, the people stopped buying. It caused a riot...Nothing came of it, but that was the beginning of the end of the cult. That's the power of the Gospel. Within a few generations the idols of Rome were abandoned—and the temples left empty.

That will happen again today, when churches preach the Word of God and Christians proclaim, and live, the Gospel. 'God's Word', (as Warren reminded us in his prayer from Hebrews 4, verse 12), 'is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword.' That's where the power is; it's in the Word of God.

Paul's final contact with the church occurred on his last journey toward Jerusalem. He met the elders of the Ephesian church in Miletus, which is a town just south of Ephesus, and there he gave to them his farewell address. He reminded them of his ministry to them: That he had 'not coveted anybody's money or possessions', and he had never 'flinched from declaring to them the whole purpose of God', and never 'ceased to admonish them', he said, 'with tears.' He loved that church, and he loved those people. He taught them 'thoroughly the Word of God', and exhorted them to live lives that are pleasing to the Lord. It was an emotional reunion. They all wept and said goodbye, knowing that they would never see each other again in this world. (See Acts 20:17-38).

From there, Paul went on to Jerusalem where there was another riot and Paul was arrested. Eventually he was sent to Rome—and there, in his Roman jail, he wrote this letter to the Ephesians.

Today, Ephesus is a ghost town. It's a splendid ruin of ancient marble buildings and is a monument to the futility of human ambition. Today it's just a tourist attraction. I visited it 50 years ago; and one of the things you see are the piers where the merchant ships from the Aegean Sea would dock with their goods, and where the ships from Ephesus would leave—all of which made Ephesus a rich city. Today those piers go out into a field. The sea is now almost five miles away, as a result of the sedimentation from the Cayster River that flowed into the harbor and silted it up. It was the chronic problem of Ephesus. They dredged it at one point, centuries earlier, but it filled up again—and eventually, over time, it doomed the city.

Eventually Ephesus was abandoned. That's providence. It's Psalm 49, verse 12, "Man in *his* pomp will not endure; He's like the beasts that perish." Only God's glory lasts; which is Ephesians chapter 3, verse 21. "...to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever, Amen." Or as the King James puts it, "...world without end. Amen."

What did Paul think of the pride of Ephesus when he wrote that prayer of praise? It was a statement of confidence and victory. (Interestingly, a statement of confidence and victory from a man who was confined to prison, chained to a Roman soldier, and waiting for his trial before Nero.) Still, he was thrilled with the glory of God because he was filled with the knowledge of God. There will be no appreciation of the glory of God, and no growth from it without the knowledge of God. And he had that: God, who is personal and guarantees us a future and glory which, (unlike this world), does not fade away.

He began the letter in the form typical of the Greek and Roman correspondence of his day, with his name—which seems to me to be a very good way to begin a letter; it's just good common sense. We end our letters with our names, "Sincerely yours, Jack." So, if we want to know who wrote to us, we have to look at the end of the letter; or we have to look at the return address on the envelope. The Romans avoided the mystery by opening with the writer's name: "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus." (vs1).

So he began with both his name and his credentials. He was the "apostle", signaling that what he wrote had authority. Basically, the word '*apostle*' means, 'one who has been sent.' But in the New Testament it's used in a special way of a unique group of men who were chosen by God to lay the foundation of the church. Paul described himself as, "an apostle of Christ Jesus". (vs1). So: 'A genuine apostle, sent by Christ as His ambassador, with His authority.' —Which meant that this letter should be received as, 'From Christ', and we should read this letter as, 'From the second Person of the Trinity'; (Well let's say, 'The entire Triune God.')

But if this wasn't enough to establish Paul's authority, he added that he was an apostle, "...by the will of God." (vs1). Not by study; not by ambition or achievement. It wasn't by a College of Cardinals voting and signaling their decision with a puff of white smoke from a chimney. Or today, it's self-promotion on social media. Those are our ways, (well, not my way; I don't know anything about social media, but that's the way of the world today.) (*laughter*). God's ways are not our ways.

And His ways often surprise us. Paul was an apostle "by the will of God". Not his choosing, not Paul's choosing, but *God's choosing*—which is true of all the gifts. An *apostle* is listed as a gift, (we'll see that later in chapter 4, verse 11); 'apostles; and prophets; and teachers; and evangelists...' And Paul said that this was "by the will of God."

And he taught that in the larger context in 1 Corinthians 12. There we read, chapter 12, verse 11, that the Holy Spirit, (he said), is "distributing to each one individually just as He wills." 'Distributing the gifts to each of us, as the Spirit wills.' Every saint, everyone of you who are believers in Jesus Christ—you have a gift. And it's not our choice, it's His choice, according to His infinite wisdom.

So the application and the implication of that is, 'It's our responsibility to learn what treasure He has given us—and make use of it.' 'Paul was an apostle by the will of God.' It was an act of grace, "grace upon grace", (*Jn 1:16*), and no one was more surprised by that than Paul himself. Saul of Tarsus, devout rabbi, and persecutor of the church; it was in that very act of persecution that his calling and election were revealed on the road to Damascus, while he was on the way to stamp out the church and blot out the name of Jesus Christ.

That's when the Lord stopped him dead in his tracks, appeared to him in the blinding light, and brought him to Himself. That's sovereign grace. In a moment, He made His persecutor, His apostle. A few days later He told His servant, Ananias, that Saul is, "a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles..." (*Acts 9:15*). And that's what he did before those Gentiles in Ephesus.

Well, it is the story of amazing grace, of 'a brand snatched from the fire', and yet it's really the same for each one of us. It took as much grace, it took as much redeeming blood to save you as it did Saul of Tarsus. He makes that clear, Paul does, in verse 4, where he stated that God "chose" us, all of us; "He chose us...before the foundation of the world"—before we did anything good or bad. When we were just a thought in the eternal mind of God, He chose us before the foundation of the world.

In chapter 2, (vs5), he wrote, "...when we were dead in our transgressions, (*He*) made us alive..."—and there are not, 'degrees of death'. The dead are dead—and that's what all of us were spiritually. We did no more to achieve our salvation than Saul of Tarsus did when he was breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, and was 'snatched as a brand from the burning', in the midst of that. Snatched away and changed completely by the Lord. And that's true of us; we are all 'brands snatched from the burning'. That's what changed us, who are sinners, and made us into '*saints*'.

That's what Paul called the Ephesians, "To the *saints* who are at Ephesus." (vs1b). This is the *first* of three descriptions that he gave of them. Saints are not the 'elites'. They're not the '*super-spiritual*' or the exceptionally '*holy*'. A saint is simply a Christian. In Acts chapter 9, for example, the words *saint* and *disciple* are used interchangeably all through that chapter.

The word *saint* is the word '*holy*'. But the basic idea of *holy* in the Bible is '*separated*', or, 'set apart and consecrated to God'. Inanimate, impersonal things, like the temple, or like Aaron's, (the high priest's), garments are called *holy*, because they were separated from common use and dedicated to God's service. Obviously, it doesn't mean morally pure. A vessel in the temple was called '*holy*' but it wasn't anything about morality; it's about being separated unto the LORD for His special use, His service. And all believers in Christ have been separated from the world and consecrated to God and His service. It refers to our standing with God, not so much our moral perfection. We're all still sinners.

Of course, because we are saints, we are to live saintly; and the aim of the book of Ephesians is to help us do that. Chapter 4, the second half of the book, begins with Paul, “imploring” the Ephesians, “to walk in a manner worthy of their calling...” Doctrine and conduct go together—and that statement of Paul’s only demonstrates that a saint is not perfect, in that he would ‘*admonish*’ them to live correctly.

We are always struggling saints. The reformers described Christians as, “righteous sinners, justified, but still sinful.” We’ve been set apart by God and for God; we’ve been consecrated to Him; we’re justified and forgiven through faith in the person and work of Christ—but we’re not perfect. We will be some day, but not in this life. We are living a life of pursuit in perfection; pursuing perfection, pursuing holiness, striving to be saintly.

Saints are “faithful”. That’s Paul’s *second* description of these Ephesians. “To the saints who are in Ephesus and *who* are faithful..”, (or we could translate that, “*believing*”). This word, *faithful*, can have an active meaning, that of *trusting, believing*, or it can have the passive idea of being *trustworthy* or *faithful*. Here, I think it probably has the active meaning. Paul was not so much distinguishing between faithful and unfaithful saints. He wasn’t writing to those faithful saints and not the unfaithful. He was writing to the whole body of Christ and so he’s simply defining here what a saint is: A saint is a *believer, a believer in Christ*.

And all believers are, “in Christ Jesus”. That’s Paul’s *third* description of these Ephesians—and of all Christians. It’s true of all of us: We are saints; we are set apart for the Lord. We’re believing; we’re believers in Jesus Christ—and we are “in Christ”. (Which is a very common phrase in Paul’s writings—and you know that if you read through the Bible every year, as you should.) At least, you should be in the Word of God all the time and you’ll come across that phrase. It’s particularly in the writings of the apostle Paul for he used it about 200 times in his epistles. And it’s an important expression here in the Book of Ephesians: It’s used 11 times in just the first 14 verses of the book, and 20

times in the book as a whole. So obviously, it is a significant phrase and one that describes the relationship we have with Christ—which is a close union with Him.

We are united with Christ in two ways. First, believers are united with Him, and He with us, as ‘our *representative*’. He acted in our place. It was as though we were literally ‘in Him’, doing what He did as He did it. We were ‘in Christ’ on the cross, ‘with Him’ in the tomb and the resurrection.

We were ‘in Him’ when He ascended through the clouds into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God the Father. Paul wrote of that in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 6, that God, “raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *place*, in Christ Jesus.”; we are seated, presently, in heaven. Now how is that? We're not actually there; we were not actually on the cross; we were not actually in the grave; and now we're not actually in the heavenly places.

But we are there in Christ Jesus as our *representative*. Because He's there, we're there. In Philippians chapter 3, verse 20, Paul wrote that, “our citizenship is in heaven.” We are now citizens of heaven—and *virtually* there because our representative is there.

Now that gives us, the believer, the greatest assurance that we are secure for all eternity. We are *effectively* there in heaven now, and that assures us that we will *actually* be there in the future. And we presently have the rights and the privileges of heaven and are receiving its power here as we live saintly in this fallen and hostile world, enjoying the benefits of our heavenly citizenship.

So we are “in Christ”, united with Christ *representatively*, but we're also in Him *personally*—in Him *vitality*. Our life is joined to His ‘like a branch in a vine’, as the Lord put it in John, chapter 15. His life is in us through the Holy Spirit so that we have the power and the ability to live obediently and remain faithful because, through the Holy Spirit, Christ lives ‘in us’—which is to say; ‘We're well equipped for all of the challenges of life.’ Not in and of ourselves, (we have nothing to boast of in and of ourselves), but with Christ in us, and His life in us through the Holy Spirit that guarantees us success as we walk by faith in Him.

Well that's necessary because John Stott observed that, "The Ephesian saints are described as both 'in Ephesus' and 'in Christ' —in two opposite places." Well, that's true of us; we are 'in Christ', but we are 'in the world'. And we are always under pressure to conform to the world as the Ephesian saints were to conform to the pagan culture of Ephesus.

The city, as I said, is now a great ruin. But archaeology has uncovered a lot of it and enough to reveal that it was a prosperous city; a pagan city; and an immoral city. One of the early discoveries archaeologists made was the brothel across from the city library. Etched in the marble street is a footprint pointing the way with a figure of a woman next to it; I've seen this. Also, carved in the marble pavement is an advertisement; "Turn left at the crossroads where you can buy a woman's love." Well, that's pagan love.

But Paul wrote to the saints in Ephesus, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church." (Eph 5:25). How did He love the church? Unto death, completely, sacrificially. 'Husbands, don't go there. Love your wives, as Christ loved the church.' Be separate from the world. Be pure. Be saintly. Be like Christ—and more, be like the Triune God.

In fact, beginning with verse 4 of chapter 1, Paul affirmed that God is true, God is real, and God is Triune, (against the pagan polytheism of that day). And there he explains, in this first great section of this first chapter, the ministry of the Triune God: First the ministry of the Father, and then the ministry of the Son, and then the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Father "*chose*" us and "*predestined*" us to adoption as sons. (vs5). The Son "*redeemed*" us, (vs7); He *bought* us through His precious blood. And then we were '*sealed* by the Holy Spirit of promise', (vs13)—and made secure. After describing the ministry of each Person of the Godhead, Paul wrote, "To the praise of His glory." Three times he says that. (verses 6, 12, & 14).

Ephesus was the capital of the cult of Diana; they would say, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." But Paul indirectly dismissed her as nothing, and all pagan gods as, 'No gods; just myths'. There's one God and He exists in three Persons—all others are a lie.

I mentioned Calvin preaching Ephesians from 1558 to 1559; it was a period when the Italian congregation there was divided over the doctrine of the Trinity. Calvin preached on it; and as I said, 'It was providential.' When we preach or teach through the Bible systematically, consecutively, book by book, chapter by chapter, we cover all of the doctrines of God and their application to us—and it corrects and strengthens.

I can't predict what problems are going to come tomorrow or what issues you are dealing with; but as we preach through the Scriptures we touch on the very issues that are problems and in the providence of God. He knows what's happening; He knows what's coming. And so as we preach, we deal with these things. That's what The Reformers did. It's what the church must do to be well-fed and spiritually strong. What Paul wrote in the 1st century was just as relevant in the 16th century—and it's just as relevant for us today as well.

Just as it was in the 8th century B.C., when Isaiah wrote, "All flesh is grass...The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever." (Isaiah chapter 40, verses 6-8). The saints will only continue in holiness as long as they live in the Word of God. And this brief book is a handbook for Christian growth with its thorough account of the Christian faith and Christian practice.

Of those practices, a Christian should be characterized by honesty and generosity. Well that was a challenge for young believers in that materialistic, mercantile city, and not to cheat a little to get ahead in business. So Paul wrote to them in chapter 4, verse 28, "He who steals must steal no longer." Well, evidently some of these saints were not quite altogether above board and honest. "He who steals must steal no longer." 'Stop doing that!', he's saying. Instead he said, 'Work with your hands so that you can share with one another who has need.' (ibid)

Now, that's the new society of the church. It's made up of saints—selfless saints who look out for others rather than themselves. It was revolutionary—and it should be today as well. We are living in a day of moral and spiritual confusion that challenges our faith. It's nothing new. This is not the worst the world has ever been; but I don't know what age that would be—it's bad in every age. But in the 8th century B.C. Isaiah wrote, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil." (Isa 5:20). And it was rampant in his day: Idolatry and immorality, cruelty and dishonesty. Well that's our day, like Paul's day—dark.

But the apostle didn't despair. He confronted error with truth and gave the faithful a better way: To encourage them to live as lights in a dark world—and with hope. We the have the hope; and it should be seen and heard from us.

And he gave that hope in the next verse, in verse 2, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." And God could and would give that 'grace and peace' to His church living there in the midst of that great pagan city of Ephesus. 'Grace' is God's free gift of blessing. The word in Greek is actually related to the Greek word 'joy'. And that's one of God's great gifts to His people: Joy in the presence of this world; Joy in the midst of heartache; Joy that's supernatural. That's a gift of God's grace; it goes with grace; it's part of grace.

And 'peace'. We think of peace as the absence of conflict; peace as the absence of war. (And we think of that particularly now as we look at the news or read the paper and see what's going on in the Middle East at this very present time.) And that is peace, and that is a great blessing, and that's generally how the Greeks, and how we in the west, think of peace.

But among the Hebrews, *peace* was something fuller than that. *Shalom* is more than that—it is also prosperity. Paul, the Hebrew, wrote of peace in that way—'of prosperity.' Leon Morris described it as, "a gloriously positive idea." It is spiritual protection and spiritual prosperity.

They could not avoid conflict; Paul knew that. In fact, in chapter 6 he describes the spiritual war that they, (and we), are in daily, against the forces of darkness; "spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*." (vs12). And it would require "the full armor of God" in that dark city of Ephesus.

And it requires the same for us. But we are able, by God's grace, "to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*." (vs16). We can triumph; we can do that every day. As Paul told the Romans, (8:37), "We are more than conquerors." That's what Paul aimed at in this letter to the Ephesians, that we grow and prosper and triumph over the world, the flesh, and the devil.

That's our hope and prayer for the months ahead as we study this great book and 'Crown' of Paul's writings.

But, of course, to do that, you must first be a son, or daughter, and child of God; You must be *born again*. That happens only by God's grace, and through faith alone. If you've not believed in Him, I exhort you; Paul would exhort you with tears—"Turn to Him." Seek God's grace and trust in Christ, God's Son; and the Savior of souls—the only Savior there is in this world. The moment you do that, you're justified, you're forgiven, you become a saint and a citizen of heaven—and blessed forever. May God help you to do that.

(Closing prayer) Father, when we are there in Your presence, 10,000 years will go by like the blink of an eye, and there'll be no end to it, no end to our existence with You. It's eternal life, and we will praise You, and only increase in our praise and our joy and our glory without end, growing exponentially for all eternity. It's something we cannot comprehend, but it's all a gift of Yours to us.

To us, and to an innumerable multitude upon whom You poured out Your grace and mercy; we thank You for it. Thank You for the death of Your Son, which was planned from all eternity, in order to redeem a people for Yourself—an innumerable multitude

who will glory in You and give praise to You for all eternity. We thank You for that, and thank You for Christ.

And now, Father, the LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. Prosperity. Spiritual prosperity. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

(End of Audio)