

Ephesians Series

1. Chosen by the Father [Sermon Notes: Ephesians 1:1-22]

Freebies. “There’s no such thing as a free lunch”. In fact we never trust free offers because we believe (often quite rightly) that there is a catch.

You can't even give it away! When we teach Sharing Jesus we stress that eternal life is a free gift - what's remarkable is that people find it difficult to believe that there isn't a catch. *The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 6:23*

It's the same for us who have been Christians for some time: everything we have and do is simply due to what God has done for us. Let's illustrate this point by looking at a few ideas from Ephesians 1.

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, we get the finest example of what God has done for us.

1. We have satisfied his righteous requirements
 - now holy & blameless
 - we are redeemed and our sins are forgiven

God satisfied his own righteous requirements - by offering eternal life as a free gift. Why a free gift?

- we understand why eternal life had to be a free gift when we understand more about man - all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. When we break one part of the Law, we have broken it all. We are not capable of doing anything about it.

- we understand this more when we think about what God is like - God is just - he must judge sin. But God is a God of love and He is faithful and just not wanting anyone to perish but to find eternal life.

God's love and justice come together in the person of Jesus Christ.

Rom 5:8 - *"while we were still sinners Christ died for us."*

If this were all then that would be more than enough - we were sinners, we were rebels, we didn't deserve anything other than judgement but God acted on our behalf. For those of us who have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ, then we are God's people - we have been rescued.

2. But there's more - God didn't leave it at that - he has given us a place of honour - he has adopted us as his children. This is a high honour and God has chosen to give it to us.
3. But that isn't all - he has made known to us the mysteries of his will - know his mind - relationship is a close one.
4. We are part of his plans for the world - to bring glory to him - *11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, 12 in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.* - perhaps you don't feel much like this but that's how it is!

But why has God done this for us?

It is a matter of grace v6 - charis - grace - unmerited favour - the merciful kindness by

which God, exerting his holy influence upon souls, turns them to Christ, keeps, strengthens, increases them in Christian faith, knowledge, affection, and kindles them to the exercise of the Christian virtues. God' s riches at Christ' s expense. We got it even though we didn' t deserve it. *"By grace you have been saved through faith, not of works so no-one can boast."*

And it isn' t a grudging grace - God has lavished them on us: v7-8 - in accordance with the riches of God' s grace 8 that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

Why should God do this

- because he loves us V5 "In love he predestined us"

1 John 3:1 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!

But how does that affect our lives in the here and now. We owe everything to God' s grace - our salvation - our current lives. God loves us and wants us to be his people.

1. The free gift is still there. But everything we have today is a gift of God - our lives, our homes, our families - how do we treat God' s gift - EE illustration about being offered a gift and trying to think that we can somehow pay for it. God' s plans for us stretched right back into eternity. The Ephesians didn' t even have to do anything until verse 13. Oh that we would appreciate more just what God has done for us.
2. The work of God is one of grace - it is the starting point of everything - if we want things to change we' ve got to start with God - because only he is going to change things here! It' s so easy to feel tempted to do something - but if we want things to change here - to see the Lord glorified in our midst - than we' ve got to start with him - in prayer - and let everything flow from that - because it is only he who can rescue people.
3. We are special to God - how special is he to us - how much are we prepared to commit ourselves to him? God' s free gift should bring a response from us. If we' re not Christians then it is a matter of repentance. If we are Christians then it is a matter of re-committing ourselves to the Lord. We sit down and say "But I know all this" We realise just what the Lord has done for us. But we don' t do much about it. Here we have a God who didn' t spare his own Son but gave him up for us all (Rom 8:32) - we want to make that response - the big commitment at a conference or mission - but it never comes to much. I believe this evening that God wants us to commit ourselves to him anew - will you follow?

Like God' s work in this area, our own commitment starts with God. You may say, but God can' t use me - yes he can and wants to. He' s a God of grace and whatever our history has been, he is a gracious and loving God and still wants to use us.

CHALLENGE - as we consider afresh what God has done for us this morning, let' s commit ourselves to him afresh .

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