

The Gift of God's Grace

Ephesians 4: 1-16

7/28/02

Intro

- Pray for the Africa team
- Writing scriptures on the walls of the new building.

.....

In the first three chapters of Ephesians Paul tells us about the fact that God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. He says in chapter 2 that he made us alive with Christ, raised us up with Him, and seated us with Christ in heavenly places. All this is in the past tense. God has already blessed us with every spiritual blessing. In chapter 3 we saw how lavish is God's grace.

Then, starting with chapter 4-6, Paul tells us how we should respond to God. He is the initiator and we are the responders. We do not have a works relationship to God, but rather a grace relationship. So many times in the church, Christians try to get God to respond to them rather than they respond to God. One indication that we get this is rather than bragging about how much we have done for God, we speak of how much God has done for us.

This is so counterintuitive. We have been raised on the mentality of trying to earn things.

Illus- When we were young we had to constantly work for grades .Grades are an indication of approval, of acceptance. But even if we are trying to earn extra credit, it's wrong. What grade are you looking for? We already have the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, how are we going to improve on that?

He begins in chapter 4 by telling us how we should live in response to God.

These verses tell us how to walk worthy of our calling. He has given us a gift and a calling and we should know how to walk in it.

I. Walking worthy means we have the qualities of Christ's nature.

A. What is the significance of walking *worthy*?

- This is to say that we walk in such a way that we show the value of what God has done. We should let our lives show who we are in Christ Jesus.

Illus – Two people were riding in a train car and were talking together about another man they could both see. One says, “See that man, I bet he’s the Archbishop of Canterbury...”

B. What are the qualities that show we are walking *worthy*?

- Humility – Giving consideration to others. Poor self image is not a quality of Christ. In fact, mature faith would give a person a strong God-confidence.

Illus - In that day it was cultural that only slaves would be humble. Pride was an indication that a person was free.

Illus- I have found that the greatest mark of Christian maturity is humility.

- Gentleness (or meekness) – keeping power under control.
- Longsuffering or patience – This is being patient with other people's faults.
- Preserving the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There should be peace in the church of all places.

Illus – It is so sad when people built walls of division within the church. There is one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. Some churches won't accept the baptism of another, or won't allow a person to take communion unless he becomes a member of that church. We are not baptized into a church, we are baptized into Christ.

These qualities show the incredible grace of God and the fact that we are so unworthy of it.

II. We need to walk according to the power of God's gift of grace.

Vs 7-13

- A. To each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.
- There are certain aspects of grace that God gives to all Christians, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the adoption as children, and the seating together with Christ, etc.
 - And there are certain aspects of grace that are given individually...
 - He gives some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, etc.

Illus- One of the greatest problems we have, though, is that of envy – we envy someone else's grace. We think that others have a higher calling. But there is no such thing as a higher calling.

- B. Why are God's gifts of grace connected to Christ's ascending and descending?

- Because God's gifts are empowered by the power of God – what power? The same power that raised Christ from the dead.

Illus – Today we every convenience in appliances, but each one has something in common – they must have power.

What kind of power do we need? Maybe we need a powerful personality or the power of positive thinking. No, God's gifts are empowered by God Himself.

III. What is the purpose of God's gifts of grace?

Vs 12-16

- A. The building up of the body of Christ.
- B. Until we attain the unity of the faith.
- C. And of the knowledge of the Son of God.
- To a mature man.
 - To the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.
- D. As a result, we are no longer to be children.
- Tossed to and fro by every wind of teaching...
 - But speaking the truth in love we are to grow in every aspect into Him.

Conclusion

Paul then finishes with the goal that the body should work together which causes the growth of the body - the building up of itself in love.