**EPHESIANS**

**The Secret God Couldn’t Keep**

**Ch. 1: You Can Have It ALL, After** ALL

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n *What Got You Here Won’t Get You There*, Marshall Goldsmith cites life’s big questions: “Who am I?” “Why am I here?” Graham Cooke says, *“If you know who you are, it’s because you know who God is.”* What’s your real identity? How will you discover it?

Writing in 62 A.D., Paul is imprisoned in Rome for preaching God’s “secret” or “mystery” gospel (Ephesians 3:1-6). Quoting Paul, “They saw that the “G**ospel pertaining to the *Uncircumcision***” was committed to me, and the **“Gospel pertaining to the *Circumcision***” to Peter” (Galatians 2:7, 3:19-25).

Prior to the gospel given to Paul by the resurrected Lord, Israel had a *conditional* relationship with God, i.e., *IF* they obeyed the Mosaic law, Peter said, the Messiah would bring the Kingdom of Heaven to the land God promised to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3 17:9-14; Deuteronomy 28:1,2; Romans 3:19-28, 9:30-11:36).

Under Grace, said the risen Savior to Paul, there are *no conditions*; salvation is a *free gift* received by *faith* (Ephesians 2:8,9). We don’t serve a bi-polar, “Gotcha God” who makes us wonder if we please Him. Performance-based religion controls, but “It’s for freedom that Christ has set us free” (Galatians 5:1)!

Values crumble, but God never changes (Malachi 3:6a; James 1:17; Numbers 23:19). You always know where you are with Him. You have His Word on it. God’s opinion of you depends on who He is, not on your efforts. Jesus is the only constant; He is the foundation of ALL trust.

Cooke reminds us, “Situations do not define our identity. They reveal who we need God to be for us and what He’s conforming us to become.” We may struggle to be one with God, but He never struggles to be one with us!

**Where There’s A Will, there’s an inheritance**

Ephesus, the “first and greatest metropolis of Asia,” Caesar’s third largest, is today’s Selcuk in western Turkey. It was home to one of the world’s 7 “Wonders,” the Temple of occult goddess Artemis.

Ephesians has two themes: (1) By His death and resurrection Jesus Christ has made things right between Him and **ALL** of Creation; and (2) He has gathered people of every race, gender and station as “the Church, the Body of Christ.”

The Bible says *every* believer is a “saint.” Having placed their faith in Jesus, God placed them “in Christ” -- united with, hidden in and living for Him (Colossians 3:1-4; Philippians 1:21).

Picture this. You’re attending the reading of your rich uncle’s will, hearing one jaw-dropping bequest after another; ALL left to YOU! Listen for your name as Paul reads God’s will. God lavishes these dazzling gifts on those who love His Son. Let’s read Ephesians 1:1-23 (p. 869, NIV).

DISCUSS: Let’s unwrap each treasure you’ve inherited as God’s adopted son.

**Let’s Take Inventory**

Paul pleads with God to help us comprehend these gifts (Ephesians 3:16-19, 4:13-16). “What’s in your spiritual wallet today?” As a Christ follower, you can’t be wealthier or more secure! That should transform how we think, worship and live. Let’s count our blessings!

(1) The byproduct of God’s grace (His bottomless, undeserved generosity to you) is His peace. Being grace-filled and peaceful transforms you from the inside out, supplying you with:

 Your Identity: “By the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Corinthians 15:1-10).

 Your Message: “Let your speech always be gracious” (Colossians 4:2-6).

 Your Sustenance During difficulty and suffering God’s grace is ALL you’ll ever need (2 Corinthians 11:30-12:10).

 Your Mission: You’re God’s ambassador of grace (2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

(2) God has blessed you with *every* spiritual blessing “in Christ” because that’s His nature.

(3) You’re in His grand plan which will be accomplished; count on it!

(4) Christ is holy. Because you’re one with Him in God’s eyes, God declared you to also be holy (“set apart”) and blameless in His Son (1 Corinthians 1:8; Ephesians 1:4, 5:27; Colossians 1:22; Jude 24,25).

(5) God loves you so completely that He chose His only Son to be the perfect Sacrifice for your sin, clearing the way for Him to adopt you as His son, heir and citizen of heaven (Romans 3:23-26; Ephesians 1:5-8; Philippians 3:20)!

(6) God showers you with undeserved favor (Ephesians 1:6, 2:4,5).

(7) Christ’s “blood money” paid the ransom to pardon ALL your past, present and future sin (Ephesians 1:7; Romans 5:1,2, 8:1-4).

(8) God has given you wisdom and increasing understanding to grasp the scope of His great love (1 Corinthians 2:16; Ephesians 1:8).

(9) God has told you His heretofore hidden plan to place ALL of Creation under Jesus (Ephesians 1:3-10,22,23). We have “died” with Christ, were buried and rose with Him, and are seated with Him!

(10) God did not decide who’d believe and who’d disobey, trumping your free will; instead He set the conditions by which we can have life “in Him” (Romans 10:1-13).

(11) God will get the glory for what He’s done for you.

(12) Christ is living in you - and you in Him - because God let you hear and accept by faith the “Gospel of the Grace of God.”

(13) The Holy Spirit will guard ALL of these bequests for you, guaranteeing that you and God will never ever be separated.

**“Isn’t There Something That I Can Do?”**

What’s our response to our great God for His gifts?

• Thank Him.

• Praise Him.

• Trust Him.

• Love people.

• Learn from Him.

• Let your hope in Christ saturate your choices (Ephesians 1:18).

 DISCUSS: Despite being declared “forgiven” and “perfect” in God’s sight, how does the believer handle the sin he commits in this life?

Paul tells us, “The grace of God has brought salvation for ALL people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives (Titus 2:11). But sadly, not everyone will be saved (Matthew 7:13-14; Romans 1:16).

Imagine this! God calls you His “inheritance!” You possess His universe-creating, death-defying power! There’s nothing He can’t accomplish in, for or through you. Therefore, you CAN have it “ALL.” ALL of WHAT? Let’s find out in Romans 8:28 (p. 841), 31-32,38-39, 11:32,36; 2 Corinthians 5:14,15 (p. 860); 1 Thessalonians 5:14,15 (p. 879); 2 Peter 1:2-3 (p. 903).

DISCUSS: How does knowing that you DO have “it” ALL affect you?

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