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Be who you are
Ephesians 1:1-2

When I was in high School and would leave with friends to go out on a Friday night my mother would often send me out with these words. **“Remember who you are”**. I made a joke of it feigning amnesia, forgetfulness. Mom didn't know it then...or perhaps she did, but she was giving me the main point of Ephesians in a sentence. Remember who you are. *Positively*, I need to remember who I am because I am a child of God. With that come a certain privilege, an access, a certain amount of resources, a rank and a responsibility. I am a prince of the King of the universe. Jesus Christ has risked and sacrificed all just for me. I have been bought with a price. I have been by God's amazing grace adopted into His family. I have been sealed with the Spirit of God inside me. I am “In Christ”. I have ultimate resource at my disposal, blessed with every spiritual blessing to challenge every test that comes my way. I am a child of the king and I must remember who I am...and then the implication is that **in remembering who I am then I will live like it**, act like it, think like it no matter what I might encounter that Friday evening or Monday morning. No matter the situation I may find myself in. No matter the conversation I may be unexpectedly thrown into. No matter the temptation...if I remember who I am, whose I am, then I will have a far better chance at living in keeping with that.

This morning we begin an exciting journey through a gold mine of truth in the book of Ephesians. The first three chapters of Ephesians speak of the incredible position we as believers have in Christ. These are the great truths of the faith that we can claim and we must grip these in our hearts, know that they are true for us.

Last year, Forbes noted that Bill Gates is one of the wealthiest men who is living on this earth. In 2003 he was worth 40.7 billion dollars. For

most of us if we had a million dollars tax free cash in hand we would be very rich. If Gates were able to spend a million dollars every hour for 12 hours a day 365 days a year, It would take him over 10 years to spend it all. That sounds rich to most of us, yet Ephesians tells us, compared to the spiritual wealth we have in Christ, Bill Gates is on welfare.

Ephesians explains how we can draw on these resources for effective living. The first three chapters tell of our incredible position in Christ explaining diamonds of truth. The first three chapters springboard us into the last three chapter that challenge us how to live. You could say “because of this” chapter 1-3 then live like this chapters 4-6. First half is our privilege, the second half of Ephesians speak of our responsibility. The first half is our position, the second half is our practice. This is a **message that you and I need to hear** right now because *it tells us who we are, who God is and what we are to do about it.*

Other commentator’s have divided up the book of Ephesians into three parts; Chapters 1-3 the **wealth** we have in Christ. Chapter 4-5 is the **walk** we are to take as believers in Christ. Chapter 6 the **warfare** as we battle against the evil one that desires to pick us off and cause us to forget who we are and cause us to stumble. Wealth, Walk and Warfare. That might help some of you to remember the outline of the book.

Watchman Nee wrote a book dividing Ephesians up into three parts he labeled; **Sit, Walk, Stand**. Christianity he says does not begin with a big DO but a big DONE. Most Christians make the mistake of trying to walk in order to be able to sit. But the reverse is the true biblical order. Our natural tendency is to think that how can we possibly get some place without first walking to get there? What can we possibly attain without any effort on our part? How is it possible to get anywhere if we do not move? But Christianity is very strange in that if at the start we seek to attain something, then we miss everything. So Ephesians in the very third verse starts out saying that God has “blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” Right at the start God

invites us to sit down and enjoy everything that God has already done for us. To walk implies effort and yet God says in Ephesians chapter 2 “we are saved, not by works, but by grace through faith. What does that mean to be saved “by faith?” It simply means we depend on him and what Jesus has done to save our sin soaked lives based not on what we have done but on what He has done for us. I can do nothing to save myself, but by His grace God has done everything for me in Christ. To SIT is to rest. Something has been finished and we must sit and rest in the whole weight of ourselves our future, our sin mess up all upon the Lord. We let him carry it. To sit is to affirm that God has done everything for us and we are going to let him take it by His grace through faith. The first chapters of Ephesians remind us of the incredible riches God has lavished upon us all due to no merit of our own. The Christian life begins by sitting down and realizing, relishing the truths of what we have.

The problem is that some of us who are believers have fabulous spiritual wealth at our disposal and we either have never been told we have it, we have forgotten what we have or we choose to ignore it. Ephesians tells believers, “your spiritually rich!!” You may Bill Gates look like a pauper...so why are you living like you are a spiritual pauper?

Hetty Green is known as Americas most famous miser, She died in 1916. Even back then she left an estate valued at over 100 million dollars. That is 17 billion adjusted in today’s dollars. You may think your spouse is a tightwad, but on her 21st birthday she refused to light her candles on the cake so as not to waste them and then after the party she wiped the frosting off the cake and returned them to the store. Hetty ate her oatmeal cold because it cost money to heat it up. Her 14 year old son Ned had a sledding accident and dislocated his knee. She delayed treatment and then spent so much time trying to find a free clinic to fix the leg that it became infected beyond cure and they had to have his leg amputated. She was incredibly wealthy with money, but she lived like a

pauper. Too many believers today live like Hetty Green. We have limitless spiritual wealth at our disposal, yet we continue to live like paupers.

That is the kind of Christian that Paul is writing to in the book of Ephesians. We are to begin by sitting in the position of incredible blessing and then in chapter 4 Paul tells us we are to walk, 3:1 “I entreat you therefore to walk in a manner worthy of what you have been called to.” This is the riches you have been given...so then...you need to be living like this. Remember who you are and thus live like it. Ephesians tells us that the Christian life begins by sitting and resting in the truth and grace filled riches that God has given us, but it doesn't stop with hoarding our wealth. We are not to be Hetty Green Christians we are to exercise and live and walk based on who we are and what we have been given. Then in chapter 6 of Ephesians he tells believer that they need to Stand. To stand against the attacks of Satan. And he explains that God has given us all the equipment we need to stand and fight the fight. He has given us the Helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the, belt of truth, the sandals of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith and sword of the spirit.

The book of Ephesians calls believers to Sit, to walk and to Stand. The book reminds us of our wealth, challenges us to walk and strengthens us in our warfare against the evil one. The book of Ephesians is saying Believers! This is Who you are in Christ. This is your position...so live like it. Remember who you are.

I have said all that as we begin our study in the book of Ephesians in order to give us a look at the big picture. We want to get up in a helicopter and see the whole forest of Ephesians before we land and start walking through the trees verse by verse. The big picture is like a rod found in your closet used to hang clothes on. Once you have a rod in your closet you then have something that you can begin to hang clothes on. The overview is like a rod you can begin to hand truth on and when

you begin to see how it fits in the whole picture it begin to make more sense. So this is an overview, big picture sermon.

When beginning to study a book of the Bible it is very helpful to gain some information about who wrote the book, to whom it was written, where, the date, place, time. So turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Ephesians. More accurately it is an epistle or letter. In v. 1:1 we read the author's name right up front "Paul". He was the guy who wrote this letter. What do we know about Paul? From Acts we know that Paul was a Jew from Tarsus, a significant city in Asia Minor. He must have grown up in a strong religious home as his parents circumcised him on the eighth day in strict adherence to the law. As a boy he was trained in the holy law under the famous Gamaliel. He probably came from a wealthy family who was able to afford such schooling. He was a Roman citizen. He had a brilliant mind, strong character, strong leadership qualities and was well on his way to taking a seat on the Sanhedrin to become a ruler of the Jews.

So Paul grew up as Pharisee, a rising star, expecting great things. The Pharisees expected that God would send a Messiah to free Israel from the bondage. But their idea of a Savior, a deliverer was quite a bit different from Jesus. So that after Jesus died and rose again and some of the Jewish people began to preach that Jesus was this Messiah, many Pharisees fought against them. Paul was one such of these who fought against the early Christians. He would hunt them down and even chase them to foreign countries to persecute and imprison them. It was in AD 35, on one such Christian persecution to Syria that Jesus, the risen Lord appeared to Paul, confronting him in a blinding flash of light. Paul gets it and finally sees that the very God he professed to worship he was going against. Paul came to learn that because of Jesus, the Pharisee law keeping wasn't necessary any more and could even be detrimental to following what God wanted. His conversion was radical, total change and he joined the small number of people as a Jesus Christ follower.

In v.1 of Ephesians 1 we read that Paul was an apostle. Greek word is Apostolos, it means “one sent”. This was a group of men who had seen the risen Jesus and were handpicked by God for a special purpose. Paul was sent by God to proclaim the good news of Jesus not only to the Jews who needed their eyes opened to the truth but to the Gentiles as well.

In v.1 we read that Paul is an apostle not by his own plan, not because of his own spirituality. Not because he had a brilliant mind and was gifted. Paul writes to the people at Ephesus not as a great missionary hero. It was not about Paul. He did what he did by the will of God. He was simply following God’s plan not his own.

Lets read the next phrase there. “to the saints who are in Ephesus”. Paul’s addressing this letter to saints. Does that surprise you? Are you thinking to yourself. That is not me. I certainly would never call myself any saint. Maybe in your mind you have thought of saints as dead people who have been officially recognized for holiness and has been responsibly for working at least two miracles. That process called canonization might be interesting, but it is no where found in the Bible. In this letter to the Ephesians Paul refers to the believers at Ephesus 9 times as saints. These people were alive at the time of writing, even though once they had been dead in their trespasses and sins. They had performed on miracles, Saint simply means “one who has been set apart”. If you have trusted Christ as your savior you are no longer dead in your sins, but alive spiritually in Jesus. Saint is related to that word sanctified. The process by which God takes a believer who is still living in the world and places him and his desires and actions in another place. He is actually placed “in Christ”.

I love to snorkel in warm water with beautiful tropical fish. I can spend hours because it puts me in a whole different world then the air breathing one I usually live in. I can swim and observe and interact with this world because of a special equipment, a snorkel. Just like that. A

believer has special equipment given to him by God, that is the holy spirit who dwells in him so that he is able to live in an alien environment. We saints, We believers are no longer of the world. We are in the world but not of the world. We are now 'in Christ'. And because of that we live in a whole different way.

V.1 these saints, believers just like you and me lived in a town called Ephesus, but they were "in Christ" and were not "of Ephesus" God had given them special equipment, holy spirit snorkels to breath and live in an alien environment. Believers. This world is not our home. No matter how comfortable it may be we are just passing through. God has a job for us to do while we are here on this earth, He has given us all the equipment we need to do that job, but as Kirby mentioned last Sunday we must not get too comfortable here. We must not feel too settled here because our real home is in heaven.

These saints Paul was writing to happen to live in Ephesus in the area we now know as Turkey, He wrote from a Roman prison around AD 62. What was it like there? It might help us to understand a bit of the culture and times as it may help bring light to understanding what Paul is writing. Paul wrote at a time when Nero ruled the Roman empire. I could tell you about the sick sadistic torture Nero put Christians through, soaking them in oil and making them into torches to light up his gardens at night for his wild evil parties. The believers in Ephesus had better know what they believed in and give a defense for their faith, and be ready to die for it.

Ephesus was a main link in the highway between the east and the west parts of the Roman empire. It was the gateway to Asia and the largest center for trade west of Tarsus. Prior to the first century it was a major seaport city, with an excellent harbor 4 miles inland from the Aegean sea. However the Cayster river was continually filling in the harbor with silt and the city neglected to dredge so as the sea receded, the harbor fell into disrepair and disuse. Ephesus had a amphitheater

that was the size of the Rose Garden and could hold 25,000 people. Ephesus was renowned for its paganism. The temple of Artemis rebuilt by Alexander the Great in 334 BC stood prominently as one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world. 127 pillars, 70 feet high, all made of marble. 418 ft by 339 ft. It was four times larger than the Parthenon in Athens. This temple now only cast a huge shadow on the pagan thinking of Ephesus but it also drove their economy. Paul found this out the hard way. In Acts 19 the head of the silversmith union, a guy named Demetrius who made shrines for the temple gathered his fellow trademen and stirred them up into a frenzy against Paul and other believers who were preaching that they no longer needed to worship idols made with hands but to worship the one true and living God. Read the story in Acts 19 they were ready to kill Paul. Paul learned that Ephesus was not a safe place to be a Christian but continued to challenge the believers to walk and openly live as a Christian according to the calling which they have been called.

Paul had been a missionary for 17 years before he came to preach to Ephesus (Acts 18). Two of his missionaries had already been there preparing the ground, Priscilla and Aquilla. Paul returned to Ephesus on his 3rd missionary journey and taught them in the synagogue and later in the local hall of Tyrannus. Paul spent almost 3 years there. That is the longest he spent with any local church. And now Paul while under house arrest in Rome, awaiting his trial before Caesar sits down at a desk takes out a pen and ink and begins to write a letter to the saints, the believers at Ephesus.

“Paul, an apostle, by the will of God. To the saints...who are at Ephesus...who are faithful in Christ Jesus. Grace to you and peace...” These are faithful men and women. One could interpret that to mean they were currently “exercising their faith” or they were “keeping their faith”. Paul probably meant both. The focus was that their faith was “in Christ”. They were joined “in Christ”. They vitally united to Christ like a

branchy to a vine. Like fingers to a hand. This is a huge concept in Paul's letter to the Ephesians and we will expand on this in future study.

Paul goes on to extend his greeting in v.2 Grace and peace. Charis kai Erieni. A typical greeting in the Ancient Near East was rejoice and peace to you, Charein kai Erieni. Paul was making a play on words to make a point. It all starts with grace. It all starts with God's favor to us that we don't deserve. It all starts with God's unexpected love, benefits and blessings to us. It means that even while we were still sinners, still enemies of God, we are loved and are blessed with his unmerited favor.

Peace is one of those byproducts of grace. When we have been blessed by God with a gift of salvation we don't deserve, we are no longer enemies of God, but we are now on the same team. We have peace with God. The wrath of God no longer burns against us. We have a peace within ourselves. A peace that surpasses all comprehension. Paul included in his greeting an desire that all who read this letter would experience the unmerited favor of God and rest each day of their life. Grace and peace. That can be yours today. Some here this morning have been believers, saints for a long time and know that its time to start living in keeping with the spiritual wealth that is yours. Some of us need to rediscover those treasures of truth for a second time, like going into your attic and discovering a valued item that you had forgotten was stored up there a long time ago for some unknown reason. I'd like to dust off those great truths for you and help us rediscover them anew. Possibly for some this morning you need to accept God's most gracious invitation of grace. Ephesians 2:1 says that we were dead in sins...that is the way we used to walk. We were probably not as bad as we could be. Some of us might be pretty good guys. But we are as bad off as we could be. Because we are in sin. But God V.4 even when we were dead in our sins he made us alive together with Christ. V8,9 For it is by grace you have been saved through faith and not of yourselves...you can't walk before you sit...it is a gift of God not of works so no one should boast about it. Jesus invites

you to come and be a follower of Him. If in your mind you agree that you are a sinner, Jesus died for you to pay that sin debt. If you are ready to say yes to God. I want to accept that free gift of grace by salvation, do it now.

We are called to be saints, “set apart” to live differently. Easy believism will not survive Ephesians, for as we know who we are, who God is then the pattern of our lives must change. If you are a believer you must live your life differently. Remember who you are.