

Ephesians V

7/2010

Paul spoke of the glorious church in chapter 1. He then explained how we can practically build up such church by crucifying five things from 2:1 to chapter 3. Paul goes on and speaks of how he became who he is now by the grace of God from 3:1-13. He is called to be an apostle to the Gentiles. A believer cannot understand the calling of God if not by grace. **In the chapter 1 we saw the calling to Jesus Christ, the calling to the church, and finally the calling to the missions.** The calling comes through the grace. So, can we not receive the calling apart from grace? The calling we have is not coercive like “if you don’t do it, you will die.” It is more like “**I can’t help but to give all my life to the owner of this love**” after realizing the amazing love of God. That’s the type of calling we have. In short, if the grace is not given whether it is a believer or a pastor, there is no calling.

When the church becomes legalistic, the sense of calling disappears. Furthermore, **when believers come legalistic, their sacrifice and devotion become a sense of responsibility.** I have ministered many believers and half of them are like that. They sing the famous hymn everyday ‘I must tell Jesus! I must tell Jesus! I cannot bear my burdens alone.’ Their service to God has become a sense of obligation and responsibility, so it becomes so heavy. They serve in several departments and do a lot in and for the church, but they are heavy burden. However, **when a believer is filled with grace, the work of God becomes an inheritance.** So, it becomes so exciting and fun. He is willing to die for it.

Apostle Paul by grace is called to be an apostle to the Gentiles. How does he take on the calling of God in grace? That’s what he shares next. Let’s look at the characteristics of grace.

First, **in verse 1 Paul says, “For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles.”** One of the difficulties we face in understanding of the Pauline Epistles is that Paul frequently puts double or triple meanings to a word in his letters. **“Prisoner of Christ Jesus”** means Paul is literally put in prison and it can mean that he is imprisoned in Jesus Christ because he is seized by grace. **In 2 Timothy 2:4,** Paul speaks to Timothy to train the believers as the soldiers, “No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life.” When we are sized by grace, we are imprisoned in Jesus so that we no longer do things according to our private thoughts, ways and plans. Being an apostle to the Gentiles is not a glorious position for a Jew. He could have received such position as a shame but Paul considers it as glory because the Creator called him and imprisoned him in grace. **Every calling is glorious to Paul.** Paul is called to be an apostle to Gentiles and has become a prisoner of Jesus: therefore, he is not interested in any other things beside what God has called him to do. **He does not consider other things glorious and he also does not compare himself to others “how come I cannot do great things like them?”** What God has given us is everything to us.

Suppose you receive an imperial gift, a commode, from King. If you say, “That’s it?” then you get in trouble let alone peeing in it. You will go “this is imperial commode” and it will become a family treasure for generation after generation. That is the characteristic of servants who are called by grace and who have seen the glory. What God has given is everything. You cannot see anything else but what God has given you. **Committing everything you are and everything you have for that alone is true devotion.**

Do you think trying different spiritualities will deepen your spirituality? No, that’s not how you deepen your spirituality. Sacrifice is focusing on one thing. That is the characteristic of the prisoner of God. They cannot think of anything else. Paul thoroughly became an apostle for Gentiles as the prisoner of the Lord, so he never sought after other things on his own apart from God’s calling. When God tells him to go, he goes. When He tells him to come, he comes. That’s what Paul does, and is willing to die for it. That’s Paul’s dynamics that we, pastors, can learn from.

In **Philippians 3:12** Paul says, **“Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.”** Paul always pressed on toward the goal. He didn't think of anything else. From this perspective we see that the great men think alike. Famous Korean musician, Mr. Jung Hoon Myung, tell other young musicians “dig into music” and “hold fast to music alone, then money and glory will follow.” It is the same with us. Hold fast to God alone, then money and glory will follow. Without holding fast to God alone any attempt to grab money or glory will fail. **Once you become the prisoner of God and focus on God only, God will take care of the rest.** You do not need to bother with any of them. This is the characteristic of servant. Why do servants worry about food and other things? That's why they are not dynamical.

Second, Paul can't work with his own things since he is called by grace, imprisoned in Jesus, and focused on Jesus alone. Paul speaks in verse 7, **“of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power.”** Paul works according to the working of God's power, not according to his own power or his will. Paul is living by the gift of God's grace. Please do not try to pastor, pastors, with things that are not from God. Please do not preach the word God has not given to you and the word you haven't obeyed. If you do, deception will flow in to the hearers.

There is not a single time the great work of God is done with the human resources. God told Moses, “Part the Red Sea!” Moses cannot part the Red Sea with what he has or human resource. When Moses says, “I can't do anything,” and raises the staff, God would do it. We should minister with the power God supplies. This doesn't just happen! It happens to those who have embodied this lifestyle of living by the early rains and late rains. People who live by the Nile River cannot live this lifestyle. What is Nile River? It represents things that you have on your own. What is the problem of Nile River? It can be corrupted or polluted anytime and it can be dried up anytime. However, no matter how dried up the land is or how terrible the situation is if you have the right relationship with God, God will send the early rain and late rain which will turn the parched land into rich soil.

Paul speaks of such characteristic starting in **verse 2, “If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you.”** The stewardship refers to a plan. It is not just any plan but the plan of grace.

Paul also speaks in **verse 3, “that by revelation there was made know to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief.”** Paul ministers according to the revelation exactly like what God told him, what God showed him, and what God revealed to him. That's the reason God reveals the mystery. Paul works exactly according to his understanding of the mystery. Paul did nothing on his own.

Let's look at **verse 4 “and by referring to his, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ.” “The mystery of Christ” is from God.** Paul does all things with what God provides him; he never does things on his own. Paul always works with what God reveals to him. I pray that you will become a true servant like Paul. When I prophesy for the pastors, sometimes I say, “The circumstance is not good.” What I mean by that is I want the pastor to discern the will of God, instead of allowing the circumstance to control, and minister accordingly. When the work of God is decided, other things will be filled. Pastors should live by this faith. When you make a decision and say, “Since I have come thus far I will make a decision accordingly,” then that's not the work of God.

The characteristic of servants is humility because they don't minister with what they have originally. Paul says in **verse eight, “To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ.”** If you live like a servant is

supposed to live and live by the provisions of God, you will be filled with thanksgiving. Those that live according to their own plan reveal their own righteousness. Servant of God that lives by the provisions of God remains in humility always has tears. Their profession is "I didn't do it with what I have. God, You did it!" We are not arrogant because we minister with the provisions of God. **If a pastor makes a decision inside of him "I won't be arrogant," says it to himself all the time, and yet minister with what he has, then he will naturally become hardened and arrogant.** That's the spiritual order. Once a pastor has more than 200 members in his congregation, he thinks no one is higher than him. If a pastor of a big church which has more than 1,000 members, do you think he would even come to this conference?

Finally, since Paul lives in the grace of God, he has the riches of God and thus he preaches the riches of God. We can clearly see the characteristic of church once the church is established according to the principles in Ephesian Church. Moreover, the clear blessing that we can minister in the name of Jesus Christ is that the church will be rich. **In the Book of Ephesians we encounter "riches" numerously.** In the latter half of **verse 8 we see "to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ."** If you pastors minister your church according to the Ephesian principles, your church will be rich. It will be lots of fun. Your church won't be good in just one thing but in everything. Let's take a look at the riches of Paul.

Paul says in **verse 9, "And to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things."** Although we don't do thing with our own, the mystery starts to be revealed. The mystery of God who created all things is revealed through the church. God reveals the administration of the mystery and what is that exactly?

In **verse 5 we see "which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit."** The riches of God are revealed. "Other generations" refer to the Old Testament. "Sons of men" refer to the Gentiles in the Old Testament. The riches of God that were revealed through apostles and prophets in the Spirit had not been revealed to the Gentiles in the O.T.

Paul says in **verse 6, "to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel."** What is the rich? It is the rich of heirs. As the church matures in grace, Gentiles will inherit the riches of God; thus, they become "heirs and members of the body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus." The Gentiles become the heir of God and enjoy the same riches in the words of covenant that could not have been enjoyed outside of Israel. It is possible through the gospel. It is only possible when one lives in the grace. I want to emphasize that **it is impossible to have the authority of heir when one is not in the grace of heir.** In any given church the spiritual maturity of the majority of church members should be heir or higher. So they can naturally reveal the **spiritual authority, personnel authority, material authority, and natural authority.** They will also develop their inheritance and life of their children within the realm they possess when they are either in the state of heir or beyond.

Second, what type of rich do we see? Paul says in **verse 10, "in order that the manifold wisdom of God might be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places."** Let's look at the authority of wisdom in the church. "The church" in verse 10 has a definite article in front of church, **so it is referring to not just any church but the Ephesian Church.** In another word, the wisdom is not given to just any church but to churches like Ephesian Church which is filled with the fullness of Jesus which in turn fills all in all. So what's the wisdom? **The church teaches the wisdom of God to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.**

Angels receive the wisdom from God and obey the commands of God. Reversely, the church reveals the plan of God to host of angels and commands them. The almighty power of God includes commanding angels. Pastors who studied the traditional theology may say, "Why are you talking about angels?" The Bible is meaningless when Jesus is taken out. Angels do not have the same magnitude but once we take out angels from the Bible, lots of pages of Bible will go missing. If the church is to become glorious, it must reach the level to reveal the wisdom of God. **When we address the authority of God, the predicament is not having the authority in the church but in not having faith in what God has given already and to seek and use them.**

In our ministry many things take place that are beyond our imagination. Some people may attack me for it, but we move the host of angels. It is like a field commander who follows the commands of the headquarter but he also makes decision and acts accordingly on the field. **God has given the title of tetrarch to church and He also has given a permission to command the angels directly.** I can pray to God who receives it and gives a command to the angels accordingly. However, instead of praying to God I can command the angels to minister. Which way is faster? The latter is faster. Why? There are numerous instances to make a quick decision with regard to the work of God.

For example, the American soldiers have entered a street battle. Right in front of them someone pops up and they don't know whether he is an ally or an enemy. Platoon leader must decide to shoot to kill or not. But he radios the headquarter and says, "Hey, Jim this is Iraq and I need to speak to the President." The platoon leader goes on and says, "Hello, Mr. President, should I kill this man who just appeared right in front of us or not?" That would be too late. If the platoon leader kills this unidentified man and he turns out to be an enemy, then member of his platoon will live. If the unidentified man turns out to be a civilian and not the enemy, then America will be blamed for this incident. The platoon leader must make this decision. It is the same. The true churches are in the front line of this spiritual warfare. They make the immediate decisions with the background of knowing the will and plan of God and of proper knowledge and experience. They can command the angels as they minister in the Kingdom of God. People don't know it because of their ignorance and because they have no idea about all this. When we command the countless hosts of angels, we can take on the great spiritual battles. Suppose the prayer of one million can bring about a great victory. We can use the power of God and take on the same spiritual battle with just ten people. In short, **the authority to command the angels is included in the almighty power of God.** Church can reveal the wisdom to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. Seek, discover, and use all the powers God has endowed the church with.

In **verse 11 Paul says, "This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord."** The rich is predestined. God is determined to endow His riches to the church. It is because God has given us His inheritance. This is His determination. This is not a matter of whether it will work or not. It must be done. We looked at the eight blessings in chapter 1. The blessings of believers will be given through the church.

In **verse 12 Paul says, "In whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him."** The Greek word of "**boldness**" is *parresian* which means "**freedom of speech**" and "**not ashamed.**" It has dual meaning. Believers that live in the grace have the freedom of speech. They have the power to ask Him anything. However, those that live in legalism is uncertain of what to ask for "should I ask for this or that?" In the midst of uncertainty they waste time and thus can't pray. If you live in grace, you can draw near to God and with boldness "ask whatever you wish and it shall be done for you." We pray based on this principle of 100% answer from God. That's why when we do not receive an answer from God for once, we mourn and repent. "Lord, we are supposed to live by 100% answer to our prayers from You. How wicked am I that You cannot answer our prayer?" God didn't give/answer to our prayer because if He does, it will ruin us. That's why we repent. When my son does something wrong, he can't look straight up to my

face in our conversation. On the other hand, when he studies hard and gets good grade on test, he says, "Daddy, buy me this and that." How confidently he speaks to me! I know then that he did something right. We all should be bold.

Long time ago when a slave or a servant is recognized for a great effort on behalf of a kingdom or dynasty, he would receive a reward from a King. When a slave of recognition proceeds to come before a King, he does not come as a slave or a servant. He is elevated to at least 8th degree government official (lower the better). When we say that we can draw near to God, it means that we are elevated to the Lord's approval. When we live by grace, we are elevated to the office of heir so we can draw near to God. Furthermore, those that can draw near to God in confidence should not be meddled with. People have problems because they don't draw near to God in their Christian walk. They don't know what to do. **The rich refers to the boldness and the right to draw near to God.**

We see the conclusion in **verse 13**, "**Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory.**" Now we live by the grace of God and spread the gospel, and are being established as a glorious church. So it is ok to go through tribulation. Paul doesn't care about it. He says that his tribulation will benefit you and others. Paul further says that the circumstance and conditions do not become hindrances in his ministry. Being called by God to serve as an apostle to Gentiles by grace of God is great for Paul that he is content in any circumstance. Whether he dies or lives, whether he possesses or dispossesses, and whatever happens, he is fine. **In Colossians 1:24 Paul says, "...in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions."** Just like Paul's confession I would like God to perfect such affliction and confirm it in me. That's the life I want to live...in the amazing grace of God. When we live by grace, the affliction/suffering becomes a catalyst to bring us closer to God much faster. So, that's how Paul fulfilled his mission...by grace.

In summary Paul is speaking to us three things. **First, we are prisoners of Jesus Christ.** We can't see anything else beside Him. We can't think of anything else beside Jesus. **Second, since we live by grace of God, we do not do things with what we have.** I hope pastors can embody this. We should always live by the provisions of God. Let's live by the late rain and early rain. I pray that you get "hit" by rain twice a day. **Third, we preach the unfathomable riches of God.** One characteristic of Ephesian Church is in the riches of God. They have plenty of everything. May God bless you to be the strong church that has the authority of wisdom and can command the host of angels! I am amazed as I pastor, work on spirituality, lead the Zoe Ministry, and reveal one at a time that how powerful the church can be. God says, "I am the church!" That's right. People speak of the Kingdom of God theologically and the Kingdom of God is church. Why? Because God reigns the all things through the church. That's why the Kingdom of God is church. God has entrusted this church to you pastors as servants who love His church.