Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Introduction to Ephesians
Scripture: Ephesians 1:1-2
Code: 1901

This morning we come for our Bible study to a book that is indeed a treasure of mine and of every believer - the book of Ephesians.

Early in the history of Grace Church, the history of John MacArthur at Grace Church at least, it was obvious to me that God had something very special in mind for this church. I didn't come here with any idea of what that would be. In fact, I'm not a kind of a person who sets numbers or figures or anything like that but I just felt that God had something very special for this church. And when early in my time here, about the first year that I was here, I was challenged by the Holy Spirit in my own thinking to teach the book of Ephesians. All that I had ever dreamed a church could be came to crystallization in my mind as I studied Ephesians. It formed for me the whole pattern of the church; what it is, how it operates, everything just came together in the study of Ephesians. The result of that study was I wrote a book entitled THE CHURCH: THE BODY OF CHRIST.

Those months that we spent studying Ephesians eight years ago, seven or eight years ago, were the months that formed the character of Grace Church in terms of its present dimensions of ministry. Grace Community Church is a church built on the principles of the book of Ephesians. In those days, I suppose maybe we had 4 or 5 hundred people who studied with us all the way through the book and now, at this point, we've got 5,000 people and so the elders felt there are a whole lot of folks who ought to know what Grace Church is built on. And so we're going to study the book of Ephesians together.

I'm so excited about this because it's a book that I absolutely love. I've taught it many, many times in other situations and the riches of this book are unlimited. Really, more than any other book in the Bible I feel this book was the catalyst that launched Grace Church. And, people, if you're a part of Grace Church you are a part of something that is indeed unusual. A church that has gone from 500 to 5,000 people in nine years, a church where so many ministries have developed, it's just really an incredible thing. And it isn't due to one individual, it's due to the will of God but it's due also to an understanding of the principles of the book of Ephesians -very vital book. When I think about how God has expanded this ministry it just boggles my mind. We were talking the other day that the receipts over the last two weeks that have been given to Grace Church by you, God's people, for the ministry here are more than the entire year's giving of 1969. It's incredible what God has done.

And I really feel that the growth and the maturing of the saints is a result of what was formulated out of the book of Ephesians and so we're going to look at it again.

Now just as an introduction, look at the first two verses of the first chapter and we're going to talk a little around that thought. "Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God to the saints who are at Ephesus and to the faithful in Christ Jesus, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." And thus does Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, introduce to us this marvelous book.

The Los Angeles Times reported several years ago the story of a man and wife who died in their fifties and they found them dead in their apartment and the autopsy revealed they both died of malnutrition. What was interesting was that when the police found their bodies, which had already begun to decay by the time they were discovered, they searched the apartment and found in the closet a whole pile of little paper bags and they opened the little paper bags and found a total of $40,000. It's a little ridiculous to die of malnutrition, and have $40,000 in paper bags in your closet.

There was a lady known in American history known as Hetty Green. Hetty Green was called "America's Greatest Miser." When she died in 1916, this is a long time ago, when she died in 1916 she left an estate value at $100 million. That's a lot of money in 1916. But Hetty Green was so miserly that she said she ate cold oatmeal because it was too expensive to heat the water to warm it. Her son had a severe leg injury and it was so severe that she was delaying trying to find a free clinic where it could be treated and she delayed so long it had to be amputated. In fact she got apoplexy one time and hastened her own death by arguing the merits of skim milk because it was cheaper than whole milk. Now that's a strange lady, folks. To die with $100 million in your estate and your son loses his leg and you actually encourage your own death and eat cold oatmeal all your life - that's really not understanding how to use your resources.

Now the book of Ephesians is written to Christians like that. You say - Well, what do you mean? What kind of Christian is like that? The kind of Christian who doesn't understand the riches he has in Christ. The kind of Christian who wanders through life with a case of spiritual malnutrition, who doesn't know where the feast is. The kind of Christian who doesn't know how to tap his resources maybe because he doesn't know what they are and so he never really finds out how rich he is. If you get a handle on the book of Ephesians you ... some people have called it the bank of the believer. This is your spiritual checkbook and every time you write a check out of this bank your funds are non-diminished. In other words, you can write checks on all the riches of God as often as you want for as much as you want and never diminish the account. Isn't that nice? That's the book of Ephesians. It's a book about riches. It's a book about fullnesses. It's a book about being filled with things. It's a book about inheritance. It's a book that just tells us what we own in Christ. Some have called it the treasure house of the Bible.

During the Depression, I read one time, where banks were only allowing people, in some cases, to withdraw 10% of what they had in the bank at one time. But God's bank doesn't work like that. You can draw out all you want, all the time and never diminish your account. But you don't know that unless you understand the principles in the book of Ephesians. So you want to get the book of Ephesians and get it down good. It will absolutely revolutionize your life. And I think we're going to have a re-revolution of Grace Church by the time we're through with this book. Because of its incredible riches. It will teach you who you are, how rich you are, and how you are to use those riches, for God's glory.

Now I want you to see that the book is based on this kind of thing, this idea of riches and fullness and inheritance by just a couple of illustrations. For example, chapter 1 verse 7 talks about the riches of His grace, at the end of the verse. Chapter 3 verse 8 talks about the unsearchable riches of Christ. Chapter 3 verse 16 - the riches of His glory. So you have the riches of His grace, the riches of His glory and the riches of His Son. In other words, God is unloading all of His riches in the book of Ephesians. The word grace is used 12 times. And the word grace means God's unmerited, undeserved kind-ness and favor. Grace is behind all of this lavishness that God pours out. So the word grace is used 12 times.

The word glory is used 8 times. The word inheritance is used 4 times. The word riches is used 5 times. The words fullness and filled are used 7 times. And the key to everything is the phrase "in Christ" which is used 27 times. It is because we are in Christ that all of the fullness of all the riches of the inheritance of the glory of His grace is ours. Do you see? Because we are one with Christ in His church, because we are redeemed, this incredible fullness is ours. Maybe the sum of it all is in chapter 3 verse 20 - "That you might be filled with all the fullness of God." It's an incredible thought that literally the believer can be filled with all the fullness of God Himself. That we would know the unsearchable riches of Christ. That we would be able to do exceeding abundantly above all we could ask or think according to the power that works in us. You see, it's all such magnanimous, grandiose concepts - fullness, riches, inheritance, wealth, resources - all in the book of Ephesians.

There are enough resources in heaven to call ... cover all past debts, present liabilities and future needs and still not diminish your account. That's God's plan.

In chapter 3 verse 19 - the fullness of God. In chapter 4 verse 13 come to the knowledge of the stature of the Son of God to the perfect man to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. So you have 3:19 - the fullness of God, 4:13 -the fullness of Christ; 5:18 “Be filled with…the Spirit - the fullness of the Spirit.” The fullness of the Spirit the fullness of Christ, the fullness of God, the full glorious gracious resource of God -it's all ours. And, by the way, there is a gilt-edged guarantee for all this. You know, whenever Harry VonZell gets on there and tells you about the fact that you can give your money to Home Savings and know it's secure, he always gives you a whole bunch of stuff about

- it's, you know, the Federal whatever takes care of this money and we've had 45 years and never lost ... you know and all that ... we've got so many assets. Well, people are like that - they want to know a guarantee. So the guarantee for the believer in all of this is 27 times where it says it's in Christ. And as secure as Christ is in the plan of God and in the love of the Father and as available as the resources of God are to Christ so available are they to you, see. Cause in our union with Christ we become, according to Romans 8, joint - what? Heirs. And as Hebrews says, "He is not ashamed to call us brother." "And he that is joined to the Spirit," 1 Cor. 6:17, or joined to the Lord rather, "is one spirit." So we have what He has. We possess what He possesses. All His riches are at our disposal. Peter calls it an inheritance that is laid away, incorruptible and undefiled, reserved in heaven for us. That's Ephesians. Now it's all in Christ. It's all because we're in Christ. And if you're not in Christ you're poor, you're destitute, you're a pauper, a beggar. If you're in Christ you're rich beyond all wild imagination. It's all based on Him. It's not anything we did. Not anything we earned. It's all His. For example, in Ephesians all of our riches are based on these things- His will, chapter 1 verse 5; His grace, chapter 1 verse 6 and 7; His glory, chapter 1 verse 12 and 14; His power, 1:19; His love, 2:4; His good pleasure, 1:9; His purpose, 1:11; His calling, 1:18; His inheritance, again 1:18; and His workmanship, 2:10. It's all because of Him. It's all that we are in Christ and thus these things become ours.

So, this is your bank book. This is the treasure house. This is where you check out your resources. And in the first, now watch it, in the first three chapters he tells you what they are and in the last three he tells you how to use them. You got to get it all. You've got to stay with us for the whole thing. You can't spend it if you don't know what they are and if you know what they are you've got to know how to spend them. So the first three chapters, the theology of the rich believer; the practice in chapters 4 to 6. And there are other things that are involved, but that's just the main thing.

Now let me go a step further and turn the corner a little bit in your thinking, just kind of follow that category of riches related to Ephesians and I want to talk about another dimension. . It not only talks about our riches but it talks about the whole idea that all this is ours because we are in the church. Okay? It's all ours because we're in the church. Now by that I don't mean that we're Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, or we've been catechized or Sanforized or anything else. What I mean is simply that we are in the body of Christ, that we are saved people, we are in Christ. That is the key phrase. In acts, you saw it as we started to read the book in the very first verse, it ends “in Christ Jesus.” You're going to see it 26 more times. But because we are in Christ and in His church, all these things accrue to us. That's a key.

Now the book, then, discusses the church. It discusses what the church is, how the church functions, how we function in the church and it discusses the riches of the church. The key thought relative to the church is the statement of Paul made in the third chapter, I'd like you to look at it, verse 3 and following. This will help us get a grip on this, now don't worry about getting lost just stay with it now and grab all you can get and we'll pick up the slack as we go through the book. But in Ephesians 3

Paul is talking about himself as an Apostle, as one who speaks the message of Christ, and so forth and he says here is the special message I want to give you in this book of Ephesians. Verse 3; "How that by revelation He," referring to Jesus Christ in verse 1 or God in verse 2, "He made known to me the mystery.' Now Ephesians is about a mystery. You can really call it the mystery of the church, the mystery of the church. The mystery of the church. What mystery? Go down to verse 5, skip the parenthesis, "Which in other ages wasn't made known to the sons of men as it is now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." It's the mystery that's been hidden, it's been a mystery for a long time, but it's not a mystery anymore because it's now revealed, verse 6; "That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and of the same body." Now mark that term “body.” Circle it in your Bible. It’s the key to understanding Paul's definition of the church, "And partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel." Now - stay with me, we're going to talk about this a minute ....

The book of Ephesians presents the mystery of the church - the mystery of the church. Now what is this? Verse 3 - it is revealed. By revelation He made known to me the mystery. So, that's...it's been revealed to Paul. Now what is the mystery? Verse 5, "Something in other ages that wasn't made known." And it was made known, and what was it? That the Gentiles are fellow-heirs of the same body, partakers of the promise in Christ by the gospel. In other words, the hidden secret of the past was revealed to Paul and what was it? It was that the Gentile and the Jew would be in one body in the church. Now stay with that. We're going to expand it a little bit.

Let's talk about how God reveals things. This will help you to understand this. There are three ways, basically, that I want to mention to you.

Number one; there are some things that God never tells anybody. Okay? God has some secrets that He never reveals to anybody, anytime. These are secrets. You just don't know them, I don't know them. Nobody knows them. God doesn't reveal them. Deuteronomy 29:29 tells about these things, it says this: "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong unto us and our children forever." In other words, there are some things God reveals but the secret things belong to the Lord. Those He doesn't reveal. Now beloved, you'll never know everything because God hasn't told us everything. Our little puny, pusillanimous minds could never handle it. Our little pea-brains could never conceive of all the grandeur of God's knowledge. So we are very, very limited. I imagine we don't know one-zillionth of what there could be. And so it's very minute. The secret things still belong to God. He chose to reveal some things to men and some things He chose not to reveal at all to anybody, anytime. So God has some that are always kept secret.

Second category, God has some secrets that He reveals to special people all through history. You say, "What are these, the super elite, are these the people who come and say, 'I have a message from God?"' No. The special people are believers. And all believers are on the same boat really. Anything God ever revealed for His people is for all His people to know. That's why they are recorded in the pages of the Word of God. In Psalm 25:14 it says this: "The secret of the Lord is with them that

fear Him. And He will show them His covenant." Proverbs 3:32 says; "His secret is with the righteous." Amos 3:7; "He reveals His secrets unto His servants." So the righteous, the servants, the people of God, those that fear Him, they know His truth. Now who are they? Believers, you and me. The fact of the matter is that there are some things that nobody knows, the second part is there are some things that only believers know. We know things the unsaved don't know. Right? Now they know some things about God, Romans 1 says they know something about His eternal Godhead, His power so that they are without excuse. The world knows some things about God but the secrets of God belong to the righteous people, the godly, those that are His children. So God reveals some things to nobody, no time. He reveals other things to His people. In fact when He came in Matthew 11, He told the disciples certain things that He never told the others because He said; "I'm hiding them from the wise and prudent and revealing them unto babes." See.

There's a third category I want you to get. There are some things which God keeps secret from everybody for a period of time and finally reveals to His special people in the New Testament. All Right? Now don't get lost. Point one - God keeps some secrets permanently. Point two - He reveals some things to all His people through all history. Point three - He keeps some secrets through history until the New Testament and reveals them only to the New Testament people. Do you know that we know things that the Old Testament saints didn't know? That's right. The New Testament wasn't written yet. The New Testament is new truth for a new age. Sacred secrets revealed by God. In fact the Old Testament saints used to look to try to see what things meant. Read it in Peter's epistle. He says they were searching what this thing was they were writing. Do you know that the angels long to understand some of the things that we know? Such as the meaning of salvation. There are some things that God has kept secret through all history and finally just revealed in the New Testament. Now these are the mysteries. These are the musteerion, the Greek word.

What is a mystery? Whenever you see the word mystery in the New Testament what is it? It's not some kind of an Ellery Queen thing, it's not some kind of thing you've got to sneak around and find the answer to. A mystery simply means something that has been hidden and is now in the New Testament revealed. And what was this mystery? That the church would come into existence and that it would be one body incorporating Jew and Gentile in one living organism. That is something the Old Testament saints never saw. They never saw it. It's a mystery to them, revealed through Paul. Now by the way, the man who was given for the most part the job of revealing the mysteries was Paul the Apostle. He was the mystery man. He was the one to whom God revealed the sacred secrets that had been hidden from the Old Testament saints.

So, these are the mysteries. So when you see the word “mystery” in chapter 3 verse 3 it simply means a spiritual truth never before revealed but now revealed in the New Testament. New truth for a new age.

Now, beloved, hang on to this, now get this, listen to me. We know things that people in all the history of God's dealing with man never knew. We have spiritual truth, spiritual resource that they never had. Do you see? I mean, we are rich. And that's the basis on which the riches of Ephesians is made available. It's in this new age, with new truth that they never knew in the past.

Now let me talk about this concept a little bit by having you look with me at Matthew 13 verse 11. I want to give you some back-ground, Matthew 13:11, so you'll understand this idea of mystery. Now Jesus was speaking in parables in order to reveal things just to His own people and to keep them from the others, God has always kept His secrets from His people, the righteous. II Cor. 2:14 says or I Cor. 2:14 rather, says: "That if you don't know God - the natural man understandeth not the things of God, they're foolishness to him, they're discerned by the Spirit." And he doesn't have the Spirit. So it's always been to His people. So when Jesus talked, He talked in a way when He was on earth that His people would understand it and the unbelieving would not and He talked in parables. Right? So they said to Him in verse 10; "Why do You speak in parables? And He said, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven but to them it is not given." Again, the mysteries are something hidden that God reveals to His special people in the New Testament age. Look at verse 35 of Matthew 13, He spoke in parables again, it says, "In order that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets saying, I will open My mouth in parables. I will utter things which have been kept secret from," when? "The foundation of the world." In other words, the mysteries of the king-dom of heaven were secrets from the foundation of the world until the New Testament era when Jesus opened His mouth and taught them. Beloved, I'm trying to tell you something. You know things that people in the Old Testament, no matter how devout they were, how devoted to God, how godly they were, never conceived of. What a spiritual resource. What a treasure house of divine reality is ours because we are in Christ and in His church and living in this incredible age where God's revelation is full and complete.

Now it says in verse 11 of Matthew 13 that these are the mysteries, plural, of the kingdom of heaven. Now what is the kingdom of heaven? Well, the kingdom of heaven refers here to the mystery form of God's kingdom. Now let me show you, if I can give you an illustration, to help you understand it. There's no mystery in the Old Testament about the Kingdom, none at all. I mean, the Old Testament prophets prophesied it, Isaiah, Jeremiah, they all said the Kingdom was coming, the Messiah would come and He would set up His Kingdom. The word Messiah meant king, Christ means king. The Anointed One was prophesied clear back in Genesis 49 that the scepter would be in the hand of the One from Judah. They knew there was a king coming. They knew there was a kingdom. Now watch, there was no mystery about a Kingdom. There was no unrevealed stuff about a Kingdom in that sense. They knew the Kingdom was coming, they believed it, they waited for it, they anticipated it. In fact, when John the Baptist came he said; "Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." When Jesus came He said; "Repent for the Kingdom is at hand," and He offered Israel a Kingdom. He was a king, He was born a King, the wise men acknowledged Him a king, Pilate confronted Him with His claim to be a king, He came to set up a Kingdom. Every Jew knew that was what was going to

happen. You say - Well it says the mystery of the Kingdom, what's the mystery? Listen, the mystery is not that the king would come and bring a kingdom. The mystery is what happened when they rejected the king. Now watch. After 33 years on earth when the final verdict was in this is what they said, “We will not have this man to, what? Reign over us.” So they rejected the king. They forfeited the kingdom. And you know what God did? God postponed the kingdom. Christ came here, He was a king with a kingdom, they rejected, He postponed the kingdom and so we believe the kingdom is future. Right? We believe Jesus will come again to set up His earthly kingdom. And Revelation tells us that He will come and He will set up His kingdom on the earth and He will reign for how long? A Thousand years. That is the future kingdom. We say we are pre-millennial. That is we believe He comes back previous to the millennium and sets up His earthly rule. Some people are amillennial, they don't believe in any earthly kingdom. We do. We believe God's promises to Israel will be fulfilled. We believe God's promise in the book of Revelation will be fulfilled. We believe Jesus will come and set up an earthly kingdom, He will rule as King, He will reign as King, He will be crowned as King and that will be the fulfillment of His kingliness, His right to rule. Now watch...

Now watch. So Christ came a king but the kingdom was postponed because He was rejected. Now what have you got in the middle here? This whole period in the middle? Now watch. This was never seen by the Old Testament saints. They never saw it. They never saw this gap. They never saw this parenthesis. They never saw this thing in the middle. So, this is the mystery form of the Kingdom of heaven, the part they never saw. You see? And in this mystery form there are a whole bunch of mysteries, that's why it's plural in verse 11. You see if the whole period was never known, things that occur in the period were never known either. So you and I are living in the sacred secret. We are living in the time that never was seen in history. There are no definitions of this age in the Old Testament. There are no descriptions of it. There is no time foreseen when Jew and Gentile would be one in the church. There is no time foreseen when God would set aside Israel and call out a Gentile people for His name. That’s not seen. Gentile conversion is seen in the Kingdom. Gentile conversion occurred in the Old Testament. But never a time when God called the Gentiles to be His people in the way we see it in the church age, united with Israel, in one body, in Christ. This is the mystery. Never revealed. Incredible secret. Never known or understood.

Now you say - But, John, it's called a mystery form of the Kingdom, in what sense is this a Kingdom? The King is absent. The King is in heaven. Yes, but listen, and this is very vital. This is a kingdom, this is a kingdom. In fact, in Colossians 1 it says when you were saved you were translated out of the Kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of His dear Son. Right? This is a Kingdom. You say - How can it be a Kingdom? After all, the prince of the power of the earth is Satan, Satan rules the world. What do you mean? Now watch. Here's something that will help you. In the future thousand year reign, Jesus reigns on the earth, right? He rules, there's peace, that's His Kingdom. But in this time period in the middle, the mystery, Christ does not rule externally but He rules in the hearts of His people internally. Now watch, about 7 or 8 years ago I did a study of this that really opened this to my understanding and I noted that everything that happens externally in the millennial kingdom happens

internally in the present mystery form. I'll ask you this. Will Christ rule and reign externally enthroned of Jerusalem in the city of David in the millennium? Yes. Where does He reign now? In the heart of the believer, He is enthroned. In the Kingdom will there be peace? Yes, In the heart of the believer is there peace that passes understanding? Yes. In the Kingdom Christ will dispense salvation. He has dispensed it in our lives now. In the Kingdom there will be joy and happiness and blessing and things will flourish and so do they in the life of an obedient believer now. You see? So what is external in the millennium, and is internal in the mystery form. And so we are enjoying a kind of pre-fillment. That's why when the church was born. That’s why, when the church was born, Peter got up and quoted the passage out of Joel and said, "This is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel, that His Spirit would be poured out unto all flesh." You see he said, This which is prophesied for the external Kingdom is coming to pass internally in this form. You see? It was like a pre-fillment, a preliminary fulfillment, a mystery form fulfillment of what ultimately will occur in the Kingdom. So we're living in a sacred secret. We're living in an age the Old Testament never saw, the mystery form of the Kingdom. An the key to this mystery is the incredible truth that God would take Jew and Gentile and make them one and make them one body - one body. That's the great secret. We are one body in Jesus Christ.

Now within this mystery Kingdom there are all kinds of other mysteries. And the New Testament is loaded with them. There is the mystery of the indwelling Christ, Colossians 1:26. The Old Testament saints never saw the reality that Christ would dwell in the hearts of His people. Why? Because they saw an external King-dom. They didn't see the mystery form which is internal. And so they didn't see the indwelling Christ. You know, in Colossians 2:2 and 3 it even talks about the mystery of God in flesh. They didn't even see the divine incarnation clearly. The Bible talks about it in Romans 11:25, the mystery of Israel's unbelief. They never saw that Israel would come to such full unbelief they'd be completely set aside and the Gentile church would be taking their place. II Thess. 2 talks about t e mystery of iniquity. The Old Testament saints didn't see where iniquity would finally end up. Revelation 17, the mystery of Babylon, the terrible, vile, economic and religious system of the end times wasn't seen in the Old Testament. The mystery of the unity of believers in Ephesians. The mystery of the Rapture, "I show you a mystery, we shall not all sleep." The Rapture is not in the Old Testament. Because the church isn't in the Old Testament. You see? And the Rapture is our exit. And by the way, this whole mystery age will end according to Revelation 10:7 when Jesus returns. The mystery of God will be complete.

And it talks about the mystery of the bride in Ephesians 5 and the mystery of the church as a body. That was never seen, never. So all this age is full of sacred secrets just being revealed.

Now, beloved, we're a part of this age where God has revealed incredible truth and put at our disposal unbelievable riches and the book of Ephesians will unlock all of that.

But the key truth that I want you to get in the book of Ephesians is that the church is presented as a body, Ephesians 3:6, a body. What a metaphor. What's a metaphor? Somebody said to graze cows

in. Well that's not really what it's for. A metaphor is way of saying something that gives you a better understanding of it. Now the metaphor is of a body, the church is like a body. That it is an interlinking organism. The church is not an organization, it's not something you just join, it's not a building, it is an organism. We are all one in Christ and through us pulses the blood, as it were, of the life of God. We're one inextricably united. And if one believer in the body doesn't do what he's supposed to do, the body malfunctions at that place. And when it malfunctions and somebody else has to pick up the slack and the body limps and that's why the world thinks Christ is a cripple. The body must be whole and complete and that's why in Ephesians 4 it says -"Till we all come to the fullness of the stature of Christ." Christ should stand up in full functioning form in His body, the church, just as He did in His human body in His incarnation. I like to call the church Body II, Body I was incarnate Jesus, Body II is Christ incarnate in His church. And we should be just as whole and just as full statured as He was when He came in one body. The church is a body. Oh, there are other metaphors used. The church is called a lot of other things in the New Testament. And they have parallels in the Old Testament. But body isn't one of them. For example, in the Old Testament God called His people a bride. Remember Hosea? Hosea took a bride, her name was Gomer. She turned out to be a prostitute. Of course, anybody who would marry a girl name Gomer is bound to run into some kind of problem. She turned out to be a prostitute. And God said this is what has happened to Me. I, God, have chosen you, Israel, and you have prostituted yourselves to false gods. So Israel was a bride, betrothed to God, entered into a marriage covenant with God. And in the Old Testament, another metaphor that was used was a vine. God says in Isaiah 5; "1 planted Israel a vine on a very fertile hill and I waited for Israel to bring forth grapes and she brought forth wild grapes." But He saw Israel as a vine. He saw Israel as a flock, He led Joseph like a flock. Isaiah 40; He lifted up and carried them. He gathered the lambs in His arms and gently led those that were with young. He saw Israel as a flock. In Psalm 23, they said “The Lord is my Shepherd.” So, the idea of the vine and the flock and the bride, that's Old Testament. But you know something? It's New Testament too. In the New Testament, are we not the church seen as the bride of Christ, Ephesians 5? Are not we seen as the vine and the branches, John 15? Are not we seen also as the flock, John 10, "He's the good Shepherd, I know My sheep, they hear My voice, they follow Me?" And there are other metaphors used. For example, God's people are a Kingdom. In the Old Testament they were a Kingdom, in the New Testament they are a Kingdom. We've been delivered into His Kingdom, Colossians 1. In the Old Testament God saw Israel s a family and they were to call Him Father. In the New Testament we are the household of God, Ephesians 2 says.

And in the New Testament we're called a building, a spiritual temple. And I think that's an Old Testament concept as well. So, the metaphor of Israel and the church are synonymous until you get to one metaphor and that's the body and there is no Old Testament use of that metaphor. That is the unique, mysterious, unrevealed, brand new, new truth for a new age. We are a body in which God can reincarnate Himself in Christ and manifest Himself. And, beloved, that's why we all have to be functioning. And the body functions through the use of spiritual gifts, through the responsibilities of fellowship and mutual ministry. And then Christ comes to full stature in His church. And the reason

the world has a hard time believing us is because of the unbelievable confusion of the church that puts forth a Christ that is really not very clear. We are a body.

So, unity is the key. One body. The other metaphors give the idea of it but the body is the best one of all. We are one wife with one husband, one flock with one shepherd, one set of branches with one vine, one kingdom with one King, one family with one Father, one building with one foundation and one body with one head. And in a body you see unity in a way you can't see it anywhere else. A single body and yet just amazing diversity and mutual dependence. The human body is a perfect illustration of how the church is to function.

When Grace Church learned these truths and we stopped being a group of people sitting in our own little sanctified seat, watching it happen and we started functioning like a body, coordinating and mutually ministering and loving and sharing, then we begin to move. And then we began to understand the riches of our resources in Christ.

Now, the first three chapters of Ephesians give as the theology of the body, the last three the behavior. The first three, doctrine, the last three, practice. And you're going to see how this marvelous body of Christ functions, how rich it is and how you take those riches and those resources and use them for God's glory.

Let's go back as we close to look at the introduction. First two verses. I've given you kind of a general thrust of the overview of the book and now I just want to come back and pick up the first two verses because they'll illustrate what I've said. I told you this was a book about riches, this is a book about inheritances, this is a book about fullnesses and being filled and having abundance and all in the church and all in Christ. And that's exactly what you find in the first two verses because everything Paul says in these two verses he says in a double-barreled way. First of all a double source of authority, verse 1 - "Paul, an Apostle," now watch, "Of Jesus Christ by the will of God." It would be enough to say - Paul an Apostle of Jesus Christ. Not if you're writing Ephesians. You've got to say Paul an Apostle of Jesus Christ - number one. And number two -by the will of God. 'He brings in the fullness of God and Christ, that's the nature of Ephesians. It's a book about fullness. What can you say about Paul? It starts out, the first word, Paul - and we could go on and on for months. We won't do it. What can we say about him?

His name wasn't always Paul. Once it was Saul. He was of the tribe of Benjamin and I'm sure his dear mother, wanting to pick out a godly name for this little fellow, picked one that was the most well-known Benjamite who ever lived, the first king of Israel, Saul. And she named her little guy Saul. And he went out to become a great rabbi. He was well trained in the school of Gamaliel. He was a world man. He knew the societies. He knew the philosophies. He knew the scriptures of the Old Testament. He became a very well known rabbi, a leader, a teacher, a member of the Sanhedrin. He became the most devout anti-Christian leader in the Jewish community. He hated Christians and he went after

them tooth and nail. He was on his way to get some in Damascus when the Lord stopped him in his tracks, converted him and made him a preacher of the gospel. Just to make sure there wasn't any confusion, he took the S off the front of his name and game him a P instead. He was a new man, he needed a new name, Paul. From there he went to pastor a church in Antioch. After a few years in the Arabian Desert, he went to pastor a church in Antioch. He pastored there with four other fellows for a while. And one day the Holy Spirit came in Acts 13 said - Separate unto me, Paul and Barnabas, for the work to which I've called them. And the Lord said to him, "Get out of here now, you're going to get fulfilled when I told you on the Damascus road; you're going to take the gospel to the Gentile world." And he started on what has to be considered the greatest missionary enterprise in the history of the church. He founded churches in the Gentile world and the gospel became more than a small Jewish sect. It became a world-wide message.

And after years of ministry here and there, all the way as he traveled he would sit down and write. On his third missionary journey, somewhere between 60 and 62, he sat down to write this wonderful letter back to the those churches which he himself had founded.

And by the way, the words - at Ephesus - in verse 1 do not appear in all the manuscripts. In some manuscripts there is a blank. And there's a reason for that. There is no local mention of any person in this entire letter. There is no mention of any city in this letter. There's no statement about any individuals at any congregation. "There's nothing personal or local or geographical in the whole thing because this was a letter about fullness. And this is a letter about the whole body of Christ. This is not a localized thing. And so even in that he talks to the whole church about the identity of the whole church. And the reason there are blanks, most scholars feel, is that this is a circular letter sent to the churches of Asia Minor, one of which was Ephesus and every church stuck its own name in the blank. And so we know that Paul even mentioned a letter to the Laodiceans and well may have had in mind this one. It could have gone to Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Ephesus, all the way around the cycle of churches and each would have written their own name in the little line where you have added Ephesus. Perhaps to the Ephesians first and then from there. This is Paul's message to the church about the church's identity and being local isn't part of his issue here.

Now notice he calls himself an Apostle. He's not just another guy with another opinion. He speaks for God. He is the mouthpiece for Jesus Christ. Do you realize there are only 14 men in history that could call themselves Apostles with a capital A? Fourteen; the first twelve, Judas dropped out the thirteenth was added, Mathias, and later on the fourteenth was Paul. Only 14 men could be said to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. That is a mouthpiece for Jesus Christ, especially credentialed. And that was all the credentials he needed. Those men were chosen for a special era. Ephesians 2:2 calls them foundation people. They passed away with the passing of that era. They were the Scripture writers; they were the ones who laid down the Apostle's doctrine. They were the ones who spoke for Christ. They were the ones who spoke divine revelation in those early years. And Paul - that's all he needs for credentials, he doesn't say - Paul, AA, BA, MA, PhD, DDLLD, blah, blah,

blah, blah. He doesn't give a list of credentials, he says - Paul an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God - what else do you need? God said this is My will, Christ called me, and sent me and thus I speak. And that's enough credentials to make everybody sit down and listen. There's no vanity in his heart. There's no self-glory. There's no personal merit. He said – “I am what I am by the grace of God.” And to Timothy he said “I was a blasphemer,” I was a persecutor, I'm the chief of sinners, I'm not worthy of this but God somehow counted me worthy to make me an Apostle. And he speaks for God. He had a unique call, Jesus stopped him in his tracks on the Damascus road, blinded him with his own vision of His glory and then he said, you're My man, to go to the Gentiles. He had a unique relation to Christ He was a bond slave and he said - For to me to live is Christ. That's all I live for. That's the only thing he knew to do in all of life. He had an incredible commission, he was dispatched, apostolos means “a sent one,” to carry the gospel. He had delegated power. The power of Jesus Christ. And he always recites this fact, in every letter that he writes, in the very beginning, he says he's an Apostle. The only exceptions are when he begins a letter by using his name and somebody else's. Like if he says - Paul and Silvanus unto the church at so-and-so. If he includes anybody else who is not an Apostle he can't use that term, but every case where he just mentions himself he calls himself an Apostle. Because people questioned it. They said - He wasn't one of the original twelve. How do we know he's for real, etc. etc.? So, he always reinforced it.

In I Cor. 9:1 he says - Am I not an Apostle? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Which was the basic qualification, you had to personally see the risen Christ. Are you not my work in the Lord? Aren't you proof of it? So it is that God took this man who was a Christian persecutor, persecuting the faithful. Turned him around, made him an Apostle. And he was double-barreled in his authority; it came from Jesus Christ and the will of God. And those two are always in agreement.

And so he states a double authority, the fullness of his authority from God and Christ. By the way, what were the Apostles duties? Let me run them by you quick. One was to preach the gospel, I Cor. 1:17. Apostles were to preach the gospel. Two, teach and pray, Acts 6:4; "Giving ourselves continually to the word and prayer." Do miracles, II Cor. 12:1 Acts 14:23, they were to build leaders for the church. And Ephesians 1:1, etc., to write the word of God. So the Apostles were to preach the gospel, teach and pray, do miracles, build leaders and write the Word of God. That was their task. And Paul was one with double-barreled authority.

Second, we see not only a double barreled authority but we see a double designation of believers. And this is very simple; I'll quickly mention it to you. It says at the end of verse 1 - "The saints who are at Ephesus and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." He calls Christians by two terms, the saints and the faithful. And that covers both sides. From God's side He's made us holy, from our side we exercise faith, we are the saints - divine definition; the faithful - human definition. And it is by virtue of being full of faith that we have been made saints. You say - Now when we say we're saints do you mean those little plaster things? No, a saint is not a plastered Christian. A saint is not a canonized Catholic. A saint is not a sanctimonious individual. A saint is anybody who is a Christian.

Every one of us has been made hagios, holy. Every one of us has been set apart unto God in Christ. Every one of us has been made righteous in the righteousness of Christ. We are all saints. From God's side we're saints. And the reason is from our side we're faithful. We acted in faith toward Christ. So a double designation of believers. We are the saints, we are the faithful. We have believed in Christ and He has made us holy. Boy, isn't that a great beginning? We've been made holy in Christ. We'll see more of that as we go through the book.

So, double authority, double designation of believers and then a double blessing in verse 2, you knew that would happen didn't you? Grace to you and peace - there's the double blessing. Now this first one - grace to you -what a great statement. In fact we have it on our new bulletin Grace To You. We call our radio program Grace To You. You see, we've been doing that getting all ready for months just for this little point in the sermon this morning. We're so well organized it's amazing. Grace To You - and peace, that's the double blessing. That incidentally was the typical greeting. Grace is the New Testament word charis. It means kindness of God toward undeserving people. And when they met they said grace to you. You know, we really have missed that. We should do ... after all the name of this church is Grace, it couldn't be a better name. You say - Well why did the Christians always say that? Well, it was a lovely term. It was like saying - I wish to be gracious to you. But more than that it had a theological meaning. It meant something to them in their faith. It was a reminder that they were what they were by grace, you see. I mean, we go to somebody and we say -Hello. What does hello mean? That's really not very fulfilling or meaningful. Or else we say - How are you? How are I? I was because my mother and father were and then I was, that's how I are, you know. Or else we say - How do you feel? With my hands, what do you think? We have all these little things, you know. How are you doing? How are you doing what? I'm not doing anything, you know. We have all these meaningless little deals. How much more significant if when we met each other we said grace to you, grace to you? That's great, isn't it? God's loving grace to you. My graciousness to you. Grace to you. That would be a constant reminder that we are what we are by grace. This whole community of believers that constitutes a church is all built on grace. That is why it's the best name a church could be is Grace Community Church. It's all grace. By the way, grace is the fountain of all blessings. It's out of His grace that everything comes. And it's just a reminder when you greet each other -try to break some habits, just after you've given a holy kiss, then say “Grace to you.” Be biblical.

And then there's another one, the double barrel greeting. The Old Testament word was shalom, the New Testament word is “eirene” and it means peace. Grace is the fountain and peace is the stream. Because I have grace from God I have peace with God. Right? And so that's the other side. So when you go to somebody and instead of saying some dumb thing like, “How are you?” Say, “Grace to you and peace.” Oh, wouldn't that be good? That would just remind folks ... by the way, if you start saying that to everybody you meet they'll pretty soon figure that you're somebody different than they are. “Why do you say that?” And then you can tell them why you say that. “Oh, because I wish to offer you God's grace so that you might have His peace.” Huh? And then you can move right in. Grace and

peace. It is because of His grace that we have His peace. There would be no peace without His grace.

So double authority, double designation of believers, double blessing and finally a double source for all the grace and peace, it comes from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. You see all this fullness double stuff in the first two verses. And you get the idea you're going to get some tremendous riches coming your way out of Ephesians. It's all from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. And by the way, the word chi in the Greek can mean an equivalent. And I think here it does, God the Father even the Lord Jesus Christ, one and the same. Listen, Paul's message throughout the book of Ephesians is this - that you might understand God's grace, that you might possess His peace because you are a part of His church and you have at your disposal His infinite riches. This is going to be a fantastic study. I hope you will get your heart and mind attuned to what God has to say.

Let's pray.

Father, as we look at the mystery age and we see the tremendous joy that is ours because of all the riches You have deposited in our account, we're reminded to say Thank You. We are reminded to express our love and praise. Thank You for the grace that gives the peace. Thank You for making us one body with You as the head and putting at our disposal the riches of all divine resource. Teach us to know who we are, how rich we are and how to use the riches we possess for your glory, we pray in Christ's name. Amen

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