

Ephesians 1:1-3

We have what we need in Christ.

This week as I was contemplating discipleship and how we spur one another on to the things Jesus has set before us, I kept thinking about Orion in the wilderness! If you don't know Orion, he is one of our Middle School students who for Christmas wanted tools to help him become a wildman!

He wants to eventually be able to hunt, kill, and cook his own food in the wilderness. So he was outfitted with a tent, knife, all the instruments you would need for such an endeavor. To survive in the wild. Admirable. Exciting.

Then his dad and he set out to camp and live into his calling as a man of nature. The result of the trip was caught in a picture of Orion and Arron eating peanut butter sandwiches in the cold.

I am told that at the end of the trip Orion told his dad that he "wouldn't survive in the wild."

You don't just wake up as Bear Grylls because Santa brought you a knife! Orion will eventually be able to survive - if he doesn't give up, but keeps learning, growing, gaining skill. He needs to be taught, mentored, disciplined into these things.

As we roll into a new year, the call of the wild matches our experience - we want to grow in godliness, we want to be further along, we might not be sure we can survive.

Enter Ephesians. The written call to the church everywhere to live in light of the one we call Savior.

And it begins by telling us **We have what we need in Christ.**

Ephesians, an epistle, a letter from the apostle Paul to the church.

Paul the one-time hunter of Christians, had a miraculous conversion after meeting the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus. He then gave his life to proclaim the gospel and plant the church throughout the world. And he would write to the believers he knew, and those he had yet to meet, to encourage, and exhort them in the way of Jesus.

This is one of his prison letters. Believed he wrote it, along with Colossians and Philemon, while in prison. This letter, while many manuscripts match our translation of being to those “in Ephesus,” was likely a letter meant for all the churches in Asia Minor, among them Ephesus being the largest and the place Paul spent years discipling those that trusted in Jesus.

“These letters all emphasize the universal sovereignty of Jesus and the call for the churches to model, in their own communities, the cosmic reconciliation achieved by God through him.” Wright

Ephesians is the least situational of all Paul’s letters because it does not explicitly address any specific problem. But as a circular letter, it is a manifesto for the church, describing its essence and identity: who it is, how it came about, how it must conduct itself, and what its mission is within the larger framework of Christ’s cosmic rule.

“Its ecumenical message is for the Church everywhere and in every age: namely, that Christ reconciles all races and cultures by bringing them to himself and making them one with him and with one another. It is a message of unity, a message for the Church, and a message for a fragmented, war-torn world.”

The letter’s central message: peace and unity in Christ.

This is where we begin.

Ephesians 1:1–2 “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: [2] Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (ESV)

To those set apart and full of faith.

Those that believe in Jesus, that His life, death, and resurrection was for you - these descriptors apply to you. Maybe though not in the way you think...

Set Apart

To the saints... hagios: holy, set apart, consecrated, dedicated. Saints.

Holy. We often think of holy as a word defined by perfect - which it is kind of - but not our perfect. It always has this uniqueness to it. Being different. Provisioned for something specific, for God.

For all of redemptive history, it is what God's people are called to be - holy. His, and only his.

But there is now a new covenant and the predominantly Gentile audience of Ephesians gets in on the action.

“Applying the privileged word “saints” to pagan Greeks was mind-boggling to those with a Jewish background. Hebrew detractors considered it a rape of sacred vocabulary. But from the Christian perspective it was a fitting word to celebrate the miracle of God's grace.”

This is the church - By faith, Christ, through his death, has made them holy (Eph 5:25–27; cf. Acts 15:9), i.e., set them apart to be God's people of the new covenant. Nevertheless, believers must also reflect the holiness of the God who called them (v. 4; see “Holiness”). By appropriating a term that was used for God's covenantal people in the OT (Exod 19:6; 22:31), Paul reminds his Gentile readers that they stand within the stream of God's redemptive history.

In the New Testament it is among the only descriptors given to believers.

“Scripturally speaking, the “saints” are the body of Christ, Christians, the church. All Christians are considered saints. All Christians are saints—and at the same time are called to be saints... Christians are saints by virtue of their connection with Jesus Christ. Christians are called to be saints, to increasingly allow their daily life to more closely match their position in Christ. This is the biblical description and calling of the saints.

Life now in Christ.

The focus of Ephesians is not so much the believer's union with Christ in his death (though cf. 1:7; 2:13, 16; 5:2, 25) but the believer's union with him in his resurrection, exaltation, and enthronement (1:20–23; 2:5–6).

Recognition of our standing, as blameless, righteous in Jesus.

If you follow Jesus, you are a saint, and that means God has set you apart for his special purposes in this world and has sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in you.

“Saint doesn't mean perfect, not by a long shot. Saints means set apart for holy use.

After we are born again, as Jesus calls it, God never looks at us and thinks, there goes that sinner saved by grace, bless her heart. Rather, He looks at us and calls us saints... redeemed and set apart.

If we see ourselves as just sinners saved by grace, then we'll act like sinners saved by grace and expect very little from our transformation as a new creation in Christ. However, if we see ourselves as saints, then we'll be more likely to see ourselves as set apart for the things of God.

If we continue to see ourselves as just sinners saved by grace, we'll approach the Father expecting judgment and begging for crumbs, rather than as grateful grace-filled saints expecting promises fulfilled.” Sharon Jaynes

Not by our own work, or perfection, caliber - but Christ's. Because of what Jesus has done we are given his place. Security, standing, identity.

“I can't survive...” but Jesus can. In him we are given the grace and peace we need to make it.

And in him, as saints, we are distinct. Unique. Saints stand out. Identifying with Christ in our lives. Our hopes aspirations, the way we work, create, love, and serve others.

Ephesians is essentially two halves. A theological foundation and its practical implications. The foundation compels us to live set apart, dedicated to Christ.

The church looks different than those outside of it. Not in a pretentious sense, as if we are better than others, but in a humble reliance on Jesus to live his way.

Being a saint is not an add-on to believing in Jesus. It is who you are. *You don't have to answer if you want fries with that*, it just comes in faith in Jesus.

We are saints in a place. Know that Jesus purposed for you to be where you are to trust him and reveal him to others.

More than this, we are saints who are faithful.

Full of Faith

I think this is more than just flourish in the greeting portion of the letter.

Saints who are faithful in Christ Jesus.

Following the reality of being saints, being faithful is not something that is an earned title here. Even though that's often how we read the word.

“In verse 1, the word “faithful” does not mean “dependable” as much as “full of faith in Jesus Christ.”

The sense here is one of hope - where we place it. The church is those who have full faith in Jesus.

Becca during our celebration service highlighted the difficulty of raising kids and the sanity that comes when doing that in community. Realizing we are all trying our best, and we are all in need of Jesus.

The saints in the church are those that recognize our need and dependence on Christ for all of life. And we live this because he gives us what we need.

2 Peter 1:3–4 “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and

excellence, [4] by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.” (ESV)

All things that pertain to life and godliness by knowledge of him.

2 Peter 1:3-4 “Everything that goes into a life of pleasing God has been miraculously given to us by getting to know, personally and intimately, the One who invited us to God. The best invitation we ever received! We were also given absolutely terrific promises to pass on to you—your tickets to participation in the life of God after you turned your back on a world corrupted by lust.” (MSG)

Sometimes we can put the pressure on us - we make circumstances about “our faith” or “my faith.” We think *that* faith isn’t strong enough and that’s why we miss things, or life doesn’t go a certain way. *Movements that spiritually abuse people in that way.*

It’s not however about your ability to gin up faith, it’s the **object of our faith** that matters. Can Jesus deliver? Yes!

2 Timothy 2:11–13 “The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; [12] if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; [13] if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.” (ESV)

As Spurgeon once said, “He that gives us heaven will surely give us all that is needful on the road thither.”¹⁶ And, “We shall have enough spending money on the road to glory; for he who has guaranteed to bring us there will not starve us along the way.”

Just as being a saint is the fruit of Christ’s work for us. Faith too is a gift to us.

Ephesians 2:8–9 “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (ESV)

Elsewhere Paul will say that it has been granted to you for the sake of Christ that you believe in him.

What good news! Rejoice! Keep going saints. Keep trusting Jesus, being full of faith in Christ.

Marked by his finished work on the cross, by his resurrection, his capability for finishing what he started in you for his glory and your good.

“Paul uses two words to describe the Christians in Ephesus: saints and faithful. Every Christian is both. The word “saint” means holy ones. We have been sanctified, or set apart, unto God. We are saints because of what Christ did for us. He made us clean and makes us holy. A Christian is a person made holy by God (a saint) and a person who trusts in Christ (faithful).”

Worship is where this leads.

Ephesians 1:3 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,” (ESV)

“The truth is: Christ is in the heavenly realms and so are we! He is there literally, and we are there representatively, as members of his Body. He is there as our Head and brings our actual presence with him because we are in him. Believing this will greatly elevate our Christian living. Paul’s massive conception of the heavenlies and his present relation to them that we see here in Ephesians and elsewhere *endowed him with noble motivation and great energy for his earthly ministry.*” And it’s meant to do the same for us!

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

We are blessed in Jesus with every spiritual blessing heaven has to offer. And we get to live in light of this reality!

We have what we need in Christ.

That’s better than roasted squirrel on the campfire!

This is life. It is what we need to survive and thrive. By the work of Jesus for us, being saints: holy, set apart for his glory; who are faithful: full of faith in Him.

Get in on this - believe in Jesus. That he is God with us, who lived a life of obedience we could not, and who gladly gives himself so that we would become the righteousness of God. Repent, turn from pursuing what's below and trust him. Put on a new self in Jesus.

Colossians 3:1–4 “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. [2] Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. [3] For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. [4] When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (ESV)

Get going with this - Live his way, in community for the good of others. Let the foundational truths of Ephesians live through you in practical ways. Commit to living as faithful saints together.

Some nights may get cold, some mornings our stomachs may long for warm food - but we have what we need in Christ and it only gets better from here. This is where we begin.