

Ephesians: Sit. Walk. Stand.
43 ~ Three Things to Learn
About Your Purpose in Christ

Periodically, we need to refresh ourselves with an overview of the book of Ephesians. Understanding these messages in context is important. Today is message 43 in this series. I figure we ought to review the context at least every 15-20 messages, don't you think? *So what is the theme and purpose of the book of Ephesians?*

The first three chapters are theological—emphasizing God's purpose for His church.

The last three chapters are practical—emphasizing how to *fulfill* our purpose as God's church.

But above all—The purpose of the book of Ephesians is to remind believers of our blessings in Christ, and to challenge us to live in a manner worthy of these blessings.

Ephesians is broken down into three sections: SIT. WALK. STAND.

SIT. [Chair] Ephesians 2:6 (NIV) *And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. God has given us His grace—to save us and to sustain us. We need to learn how to stop striving and stressing. We need to learn how to sit—and rest—in Christ. Admittedly, I struggle with this.*

WALK. [Stick] Ephesians 4:1 (NASB) *Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called. We are called to glorify Christ in the way we walk—in our values, in our priorities, and in our progression of holiness.*

STAND. [We need to *stand firm*] Ephesians 6:11 (NASB) *Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. Resting in Christ is hard. Living a life worthy of our calling in Christ is even harder—especially in light of an Enemy who seeks to destroy us. We must learn how to put on the armor of God that we may stand firm in Christ. God has so much to teach us—shall we continue to learn?*

Last week, we learned about humility from the Apostle Paul...We asked the question, **Is it possible to be genuinely humble? In Christ, it is. But how?**

First, humility is a matter of focus. Those who are humble focus on Christ, not themselves. The more that we focus on ourselves, the less humility we have.

Second, humility recognizes the Source. Who gets the credit for whatever good is within you?

In talking about himself, Paul said that he was “*less than the least.*” “***Less than the least***” is actually an impossibility. It’s not possible to be lower than the lowest. Paul was a very godly man! I would hate to stack up my “resume” against his! And yet, Paul saw himself as “*the leaster*” of all God’s people.

So what is humility? Humility is a focus on God in which you recognize. . .

- **God is the Source of all that is good within you. (And...)**
- **All that is good within you is undeserved.**

Let’s pick up where we left off last week, **Ephesians 3:8** (NIV) Paul said...
[Although I am less than the least of all God’s people, this grace was given me:]
to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Paul recognized his weaknesses, and he often regretted his past, but he *knew* his purpose in Christ. By the grace of God, Paul knew ***what*** he was to do, to ***whom*** he was sent, and what the ***content*** of his message was to be. Paul *knew* his purpose in Christ. Do you know your purpose in Christ? Ultimately, for all of us, **Our purpose is to know Christ and glorify Him.** But in terms of the *specific applications* of our purpose in Christ, there are three things we must learn...

1. We Must Learn What We are Called to Do.
(Vs. 8d)

[Paul said. . .this grace was given me] *to preach. . .*

Preaching! Though some of its practitioners have dishonored preaching by their scandalous lives, and though the non-Christian world often looks upon preaching with disdain, preaching remains one of the high callings of God, and it continues to be the *most* important activity in the corporate gatherings of any church.

The strength of the Church has always risen or fallen on the strengths or weaknesses of its pulpits. The act of preaching has always been, and forevermore always will be, the heartbeat of the Church. **When the pulpit is weak, the church is weak. But when the pulpit blazes, the whole church ignites.**

George Whitefield, a well-known British pastor of the 1700's, and a contemporary of John & Charles Wesley, was a humble man, but he *knew* the significance of his ministry. Unwilling to exalt himself, he told his followers not to wrangle with the followers of Wesley. Whitefield pleaded, "*Let the name of Whitefield perish.*" Although Whitefield *was* a humble man, he knew that his *calling* was exalted. He called his pulpit his throne, and when he preached, he said that the power of God came upon him, enabling Christ to rule men's hearts more gloriously than any other king ever could. Even Ben Franklin, a religious skeptic, was mesmerized by Whitefield's preaching. Hearing Whitefield preach for the first time, Ben Franklin emptied his pockets into the offering plate. From then on, whenever Franklin went to hear Whitefield preach, he left all of his money at home. I would not encourage us to follow Ben Franklin's example!

Preaching is a noble calling. [PIC] When William Carey, a Baptist missionary of the 1700's was laboring in India, his son Felix became ambassador to the king of Burma. Carey wrote, "*Felix has drivelled into the role of an ambassador.*" William Carey deemed even the highest earthly office to be an utter waste—*IF* to assume such a position required a minister to forsake his call to preach. Follower of Christ—what are *you* called to do? Are you doing it?

2. We Must Learn to Whom We are Called. (Vs. 8e)

[. . .to preach] *to the Gentiles. . .*

Paul knew what God called him to do—"Preach!" He also recognized to *whom* he was to preach—"Gentiles." Some of the Jews of Paul's day referred to us Gentiles as "*uncircumcised dogs,*" but Paul truly loved us. Who were Gentiles in Paul's day? **The Gentiles of Paul's day were crude, arrogant, idol worshippers.** Although it's been 2,000 years, not much has changed. And yet, *Paul* valued us and preached to us! When very few people cared about us, Paul did. Paul succeeded because he loved the people for whom he was responsible.

The outreach of many churches is inhibited by a lack of love for lost people. More of us should be going to the mission field, but our tendency is to think mostly of ourselves—we tend to not *think*, or *pray*, or *agonize* about people who live elsewhere. Let me bring this even closer to home. Many churches do not earnestly love the people in their own communities. When was the last time we awoke in the middle of the night, burdened for people who live within a 10-minute drive of our church? Dare I press this even further? When was the last time we grieved over a lost soul with whom we work or socialize? Let me share a little bit of my own struggle in this area...

About four years ago, I felt sad and frustrated that we, as a church, were not participating much in any form of evangelism—as best I knew. We had trained in various ways. We had also emphasized inviting others to small groups and to church. We had prayed. But as best I knew, very little was happening through the people of Parkway in evangelism. One day in my quiet time, I cried out to God in prayer, “*God, I don’t know what else to do! What’s the problem?*” Be very careful about the questions you ask God...

“*What’s the problem?*” I sensed a still, small voice inside me saying: “*You are. You are the problem, Lindy.*” The conviction of God rushed over me, and I began to cry. Then to the best of my understanding, here’s what I heard next: “*Lindy, you don’t love lost people like I love lost people.*” I felt ashamed. I prayed for forgiveness. And I asked God to change my heart. From that point forward, every quiet time, I’ve prayed this heartfelt prayer: “*God, help me love lost people like You love lost people.*” Have I arrived? NO. But God *has* been working in my heart. Four years later—I want to share Jesus with everyone who breathes. Why? Because I’m *learning* to love lost people like Jesus loves lost people!

The term “preaching” means proclaiming. Most people do not see themselves as preachers, but every follower of Christ should see themselves as proclaimers of the Word of God. Our task is not frivolous. Our assignment is of the utmost seriousness. People really and truly *are* lost and going to Hell, and yet many of us seem oblivious. “*Let someone else do it!*” “*Let someone else share Jesus!*” “*Let the preacher do it—that’s what we pay him for!*” “*Not my spiritual gift!*” Biblically, sharing Jesus with the lost is *every* believer’s responsibility! **So when will we take this responsibility upon ourselves? When we start to love lost people like Jesus loves lost people.** If we are *not* sharing Jesus with the lost, it’s not a *methodology* problem, it’s not a *training* problem, and it’s not an *ability* problem! *It’s a heart problem!* May I encourage you to *pray* as needed that God will change *your* heart to match *Jesus’* heart?

Love for the people assigned to us is our only hope of success. Missionary David Livingstone spoke of Africa as if no other continent existed. Missionary David Brainerd spoke of the American Indians as if speaking of his own soul. These men *loved* the souls assigned them. May God help us to do the same. We are to minister to *everyone* in Jesus’ name, but—Are there those for whom your heart is especially burdened? If so, start there...just be sure you start.

3. We Must Learn What the Content of Our Message is to Be. (Vs. 8f)

...*the unsearchable riches of Christ*...

Paul knew his task, his audience, and also his assigned topic: “*the unsearchable riches of Christ*.” This is the language of someone who had a deep, passionate love for someone else. Paul *loved Jesus* with a contagious enthusiasm! Paul was never at a loss for words on this topic! Paul had *mastered* this topic—and he preferred to *talk* about this topic above all else. At the drop of a hat, anywhere, anytime, in any situation, Paul couldn’t wait to say, “*Let’s talk about the unsearchable riches of Christ*.”

Paul never tired of speaking about Jesus because this topic was inexhaustible. The “*riches of Christ*” are “*unsearchable*.” The word *unsearchable*, taken from the sport of hunting, refers to that which cannot be fully tracked: We begin the hunt, we start down the trail tracking as we go, but can *never* find the *end* of the trail. That’s what it’s like to *search* the *unsearchable riches* of Christ. In this life, believers only *begin* to enjoy Christ’s riches. To the degree that we *assimilate* these riches, they are ours to enjoy, but we will *never* exhaust them.

Christ’s riches cannot be totally comprehended by men. Calculations are unable to compute this treasury. Any attempt to *measure* the riches of Christ will end in failure. Trying to measure the riches of Christ, we find ourselves like someone who tries to measure the size of a lake, only to discover that it’s *not* a lake, but it’s the an arm of the ocean, and thus, it is immeasurable. Go ahead—try to measure the riches of Christ. Start down the trail. See how far you can go. But in the end, be content to end up next to Charles Wesley, who said that he was “*lost in wonder, and love, and praise*.”

Let me also say that Paul’s emphasis here was not any *particular* trait of Christ. In other places, Paul talks about “*the riches of his kindness, restraint, and patience*” Romans 2:4 (CSB), “*the riches of his glory*” Romans 9:23 (NIV), “*the riches of [his] wisdom and knowledge*” Romans 11:33 (NIV), “*the riches of his grace*,” Ephesians 1:7 (ESV), and we also read that God is “*rich in mercy*.” Ephesians 2:4 (NIV)

But in Ephesians 3:8, Paul presses *beyond* any *particular* trait to highlight the Source of these riches. The emphasis is *not* “*the unsearchable riches that Christ wants to give you*,” but rather, the fact that Christ Himself *is* “*the unsearchable riches*.” If you have Christ, you have unsearchable riches.

Paul stood in absolute reverence before Christ. In teaching the *doctrines* of Christ, Paul never lost sight of *the Christ* of the doctrines. The most important thing to emphasize is always Jesus Himself. What Jesus gives, though significant, is always secondary to Jesus, Himself. **I fear that we often seek stuff from the Savior more than we seek the Savior.**

In this one phrase, “*the unsearchable riches of Christ*,” Paul has summarized both the *simplicity* and the *infinity* of the Gospel. Let me explain...

The old saying is this: “*All roads lead to Rome.*” But if this is true, then it would also be true to say, “*From Rome, roads lead everywhere.*” The same is true of Christ. Everything in life leads *to* Christ, but at the same time, all things emanate *from* Christ. Like the song we often sing, **Jesus is my all in all. Jesus is to be the content of our message. Don’t get sidetracked by side issues. Jesus is everything!**

In Jesus, God was clothed in human flesh. Herein we see “*the unsearchable riches.*” While in human flesh, his God-ness shone through. The wind recognized Him and stilled at His command. The waves knew Him even as He walked upon them. Angels acknowledged Him and ministered to Him. Demons recognized Him and fled from His presence. At the touch of His hand, disease was healed. At the sound of His voice, death lived. In the person of Jesus, we find unsearchable riches *beyond* what the human mind can grasp, and beyond what the human tongue can tell. That’s why we need to seek the *Savior* more than we seek the *stuff* the Savior gives. In the end, it’s not about the stuff—it’s about the Savior! Jesus is the Source. Since the Source is infinite, the supply is also infinite.

The only way to know the riches of Christ is to know the Christ of the riches.

Do you know Him? I preach to you the Christ of “*unsearchable riches*,” but I cannot preach you to Christ. I cannot force you to come, but I *will* implore you to come. Come just as you are. Do not insult Jesus by trying to earn His favor, as if you have something to contribute to His salvation. Bring your emptiness and bring your sin, because Jesus fills and Jesus forgives. Bring your stains, because Jesus cleanses. Bring your hunger and your thirst, because Jesus *is* the bread of life and the living water. **Bring it all to Jesus.** Let Him cleanse you and let Him forgive you. You will find unsearchable riches in Him.

There’s no better time than now.