

Fight Like a Rich Man

Ephesians Overview

(preached Pine Grove 4/24/16; Sunday PM)

Introduction

Hetty Green was known as the richest woman in America in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Living in an age where all the wealth was concentrated in the hands of men, Green proved herself to be a financial genius..

She invested in railroads and mines and real estate and eventually turned a modest inheritance into over \$100 million dollars at the time of her death in 1916...

In today's dollars, that would amount to over 3 billion dollars...

Yet, the strange truth about Hetty was that she was the most miserly person imaginable...

The stories of how tight she was with her money are incredible...

According to people who knew her, Hetty never used hot water to bathe or cook...

Often eating cold pies and oatmeal that she heated on the radiator in an office she used.

And bathing only once a week.

She owned just one black dress that she never changed and only washed when it was clearly dirty or smelly.

One particular night, her husband claims that she spent half the night searching their old horse drawn carriage for a 2 cent stamp.

Yet, the greatest tragedy of her frugality was the day her son broke his leg...

Instead of taking him to a hospital, she tried to get him into a free clinic...

When the doctor on staff recognized her and scolded her for taking advantage of the free medical service, she stormed out with him...

By the time she reached the hospital, his leg had gotten worse and eventually had to be amputated.

Hetty Green is an example of a rich woman who lived poorly in every way.

It is one thing to possess wealth, it is something else to be able to use that wealth wisely...

That was the problem in the Ephesian church...

The church had all the wealth imaginable since they had been saved by Christ and were in Christ, but they were not using that wealth at all...

Instead they were living in poverty by neglecting all the wealth available to them in Christ...

The city of Ephesus was located on the Aegean Sea at the mouth of the Cayster River..

It is probably best known for being home to one of the seven wonders of ancient world..

Which was the temple of Artemis, or by the Roamn name of Diana...

Here are some pictures of what that temple may have looked like in its day.

It massive structure. 425 feet long and 200 feet wide and 6-8 stories tall...

All that remains of it is seen in this picture here.

We will get back to the temple in a minute because it was the most important part of Ephesian culture.

The city had much in common with Corinth.

Both were near the sea and contained harbors, so Ephesus saw much of the same crowd as Corinth did...

Sailors, people escaping other areas of the world, merchants, travellers.

The population was a mix of the Mediterranean world...

And for that reason, Ephesus had many of the same problems as Corinth...

All kinds of false religions, sexual immorality, crime were all part of the Ephesian culture...

Now, add to that this incredible temple to the false god Artemis and you have a city that would make Las Vegas blush...

The temple dominated the false religion of Ephesus.

Artemis was the name of the greek god and Diana was the Roman name of the god of Ephesus.

Now, we have in our minds a statue of a beautiful woman for Diana, but that was not the case at all...

Diana was a cow like creature that was supposed to be worshipped to gain good favor from her...

However, not much worship happened at the temple because the Ephesians declared it a safe place for all sorts of criminals...

If a murderer went to the temple, he would find safety and escape the penalty for his crime.

Thieves could hide their goods in the temple without risk of them being confiscated by the authorities..

And above all, the temple was a place for all sorts of sexual immorality..

The statue of Diana had all sorts of temple attendants to care for her every need, but most of the time they sold their services to others who visited the temple...

And all sorts of sexual perversion happened there that aren't fit to be mentioned from a pulpit...

But understand this, this was the Ephesian idea of religion...

Unbridled passion with loads of immorality to boot.

The immorality in and around the temple was so bad that even an Ephesian historian wrote this..

"The morals of the temple were worse than the morals of animals, for even dogs do not do the things that happen there."

And so in the middle of all this chaos and sin is the church at Ephesus...

It was founded by Priscilla and Aquila, who were Christian church planters in the 1st century...

And eventually, Paul himself came to the church and pastored it for 3 years from roughly 54-57 AD.

It was church surrounded by immorality on all sides much like the Corinthian church...

All of the sin and corruption left the Ephesian church feeling helpless...

What can they possibly do to make an impact on their culture?

They are just a few Christians in the midst of a vast majority of unbelievers...

They felt helpless and ill equipped to impact people around them with the gospel, much less impact the culture...

And so the main much of Paul's letter is this...

Ephesians, you are not helpless...

You are not poor.

You are rich because of who you are in Christ Jesus.

Stop your moping and your pity parties....

You have been saved and equipped to live in the world, so go and live out your faith in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

Does this sound familiar?

Well, it should because this is the situation that the American church finds itself in today...

Christianity is no longer on the field in American culture...

WE have been pushed to the sidelines and marginalized and put on the back row and made fun of...

And in a way, it is good because it is weeding out those who aren't truly Christians...

Just saw this week where Carrie Underwood endorsed same sex marriage....

She sings about Jesus and and about being baptized
and talks about her Baptist upbringing...

But once you stand contrary to the word of God,
you have shown yourself to be outside of the faith..

I see all this controversy over public restrooms and
who can and can't go into them...

50 years ago that idea would have been laughed out
of any level of government...

Now it is becoming the law of the land...

Christian influence is on its last breath, and many
people who call themselves Christians are rolling
over to the demands of the culture and revealing
their true colors...

This is the age in which we live Pine Grove Baptist
church....

We live in an age where our culture stands contrary
to you if you believe the Word of God...

We live in a day where no one cares what you
believe as a Christian...

And for that reason, many who attached themselves
to the church because it helped their reputation are

jumping off the boat because it is hurting their reputation...

To them, I say good riddance...

I pray that the Lord will save you, but thank you for no longer being a believer in name only...

But what do I say to the true church?

I say what Paul says to the Ephesian church tonight...

Stop your whining about how bad things are getting and stop wishing it would all change...

And go out and live lives that look different than the rest of the world that is one the fast track to hell...

Speak different, act different, reject sin when you see it, do compromise the word of God...

Now is the time for the church to be the church...

For so long, everybody around us has behaved like us even if they weren't saved....

For so long, we have been blessed with a culture that was influenced by Christianity even though it never was purely Christian....

But dear friend that day has passed, and it will not return as much as we would like it to...

However, that isn't bad news...

That just means that you now possess a way of life and a voice that sounds different than what the rest of the world is bowing down to...

I hear people all the time wanting to make a difference for Christ...

Well, just speak the truth today and live the truth and you will make a difference...

It may cost you more than it ever has, but God will be honored and your impact will be great...

So, what do we need to know to go into a culture that is anti-Christian?

We are about to find out in the book of Ephesians...

It has two distinct sections...

Chapters 1-3 deal with the truth you need to know...

And chapters 4-6 deal with the life you need to live based upon the truth you know.

So let's dig in to the first 3 chapters of Ephesians which describe the position of a Christian...

In other words, this is who you are in Christ...

Getting back to my introduction of Hetty Green...

She had forgotten who she was in how she lived...

She was the richest woman in the world, but she lived like a homeless woman...

And there are many Christians in this world who think they are poor and powerless to live lives that make a difference in the world...

So, for 3 chapters, Paul is simply going to remind us of who we are in Christ as saved people...

So, let's begin with....

I. The Christian's Position - Doctrine (1-3)

A. Blessed in Christ (1)

Look at verse 3 with me....

After Paul extends a greeting to the church, he writes in verse 3...

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

In other words, a believer has access to all the blessings of heaven...

What does that mean?

First, it means you have access to wisdom in how you live and what you believe...

You have the treasure of God's Word to keep you growing in wisdom and knowledge...

And that wisdom and knowledge helps you be able to speak wisdom into the world...

When people ask, "what do you think about this?"

Your answer can and should be, "... Well, God's word tells me this...."

But second, you have the Helper, the Holy Spirit to guide your actions and your speech as you live in the world...

He is an untapped resource in most Christian's lives, as we often discard Him and replace it Him with our own willpower and wisdom...

In other words, you have the power of heaven behind you as you seek to live in an ungodly world...

Listen to psalm 27:1-3

27

1 The Lord is my light and my salvation;

Whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the [a]defense of my life;

Whom shall I dread?

2

When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh,

My adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled

and fell.

3

Though a host encamp against me,

My heart will not fear;

Though war arise against me,

In spite of this I [b]shall be confident.

And though we don't have time to look at it tonight, verses 4-14 are the best description of the truth of salvation in all the Bible...

One of my top 5 favorite passages in all the Bible is this one, but we must move on for the sake of time tonight...

However, Paul continues to describe who believers are in Christ at the end of chapter 1...

Not only do believers have access to the all the blessings of heaven...

We also serve the authority of heaven...

Let me read you verses 18-22 of chapter 1....

18 I pray that the eyes of your heart [x]may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the [y]saints, 19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might 20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And He put all things

in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Let me sum that up in just a few words for you....

As a Christian in this world, you have identified yourself with the highest authority in all the universe...

That means that even the highest authorities on earth do not compare to the authority that we serve...

Everything is under the rule of Jesus Christ...

If you remember Jesus went before Pilate, and Pilate arrogantly told Jesus that he needed to speak up because Jesus' life was in Pilate's hands...

Do you remember Jesus' response?

He told Pilate that no authority had been given to Him unless it came from God, and he remained silent..

What does this mean for us?

Christians are going to start being called to the carpet on their views...

And the consequences for disobedience to the immoral culture will begin to grow...

And the powers that be will begin to throw around their authority....

We have the power to tax you or to confiscate your property or to send you to jail...

And what believers need to remember is that you serve a greater authority when you stand upon the Word of God...

This does not mean we have permission to not submit or rebel...

You simply stand on the Word and you accept the consequences, but you remember that your Lord is the greatest authority.

In Christ, you are a servant to the highest authority in the universe...

What can man do to you that is outside the authority of God?

And the answer is absolutely nothing...

Matthew 10:28

Jesus said, “28 Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in [x]hell.

In Christ, you have access to all the blessings of heaven....

But you also serve the highest authority under heaven...

B. Motivated by Christ (2)

Then in chapter 2 verses 8-10, we are reminded of what we are to do in Christ...

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and [h]that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Long story short, in Christ, you have been made to be a producer of good works..

In other words, you don't have permission to sit at home and withdraw from the immoral culture around you...

The Ephesian church couldn't just decide to stay in their houses, close their blinds and wait to die for fear of going into that immoral culture...

No, they were to go about their daily lives producing good works as a way to make an impact on their city...

If you are a Christian here tonight, being a hermit is not an option...

Look, I would love to move to an island of my own and stop having to see the immorality around me...

But that is not who I am in Christ...

I have been saved to go out and do good...

That is my mission.

That by doing good, I silence the critics of Christianity...

C. Joined to Christ's Church (3)

Finally in chapter 3, there is one more truth about who believers are in Christ....

You are not alone in your mission...

You are part of the church that Jesus established in this age to carry his message to the world...

The church is not a place that you go to out of habit...

The church is the heartbeat of every Christian....

Our lives should revolve around the church...

We go there to get equipped to do work..

WE go there to get our cuts bandaged up when the world attacks us and we need encouragement...

We go there to serve the needs of our fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord...

The church is not a social club, it is our heart and soul as believers in this age...

Most Christians have a completely unbiblical view of the church...

And most of the time, it is because their parents had a completely unbiblical view of the church....

Sad to say, but most Christians put the church in the list of burdens in their life...

We HAVE to go to church is usually the phrase of fathers to their families instead of we GET to go to church...

One great blessing, if you can call it that, of living in a culture that is growing more and more hostile to Christianity is that the church will get back to its purpose...

The days of fighting over carpet and light fixtures and the maintenance on a church building will fade into the background when the church finds its purpose again...

And that is to equip the saints to go out and live in a world that hates them...

Church will return to being a time of getting encouraged rather than being discouraged by other believers...

The church will return to its biblical purpose of caring for the saints instead of passing out money to people who take advantage of the generosity of believers...

The church will once again become a place where people will look for answers in sermons and bible study instead daydreaming and sleeping...

Tonight, I want you all to know that you are part of something bigger than yourself as a Christian...

You are part of the Lord's body in this age called the church...

And though we enjoy the fellowship of it, we must also tap into the blessings that it brings into our lives...

And you cannot tap into them if you are not fully committed to it..

The church should be the center of who you are in Christ, not something a few items down on the list....

Now, let's quickly move from the truth of who you are in Christ....

You have access to all the blessings of heaven...

You serve the greatest authority in heaven..

You were created for good works under heaven...

And you are part of a pice of heaven in the church...

Now, let's move from those few truths to how you should live in light of those truths...

II. The Christian's Practice - Duties (4-6)

We will move through this section quickly as we get to the practical part of the book of Ephesians...

And don't get me wrong, this is just as important as the truth section in chapters 1-3....

But let me speak to you as a minute as a fellow southerner....

Most southerners consider good preaching as preaching that steps on their toes and tells them how to live...

When preachers get up and talk about how behavior should change, the amens are all around....

And I am not opposed to that at all...

Preaching needs to touch our actions, but let me remind you of something that needs to be said here...

If I can talk you into acting or behaving a certain way, it will only only last as long as the sermon lasts in your head...

However, if the truth of why you should behave or act a certain way gets into your heart, your life will change forever...

And I think you see that in how the letters of the NT are arranged....

God inspired the *why* to be taught before the *how*...

In Ephesians you get 3 chapters on the truth of why you should be able to live in a fallen culture before you get 3 chapters on how to act

I dont think this is accidental because it occurs in nearly every letter of the NT...

God seeks to change your mind before He tells you how to act...

Getting back to Southerners, we have a reputation of being people who disregard intelligence and critical thinking...

And that is a shame, but it os often true as we stress manners over intelligence at times...

And in my opinion that has filtered down to the church...

Don't give me the theology and the doctrine and the truth, just tell me how to live and I will amen and go out and do it...for a while...

Until I forget why I am doing it...

We are going to look at how God told the Colossians to live in light of the truth....

But I want to encourage you tonight....

Don't be content to just know the how and what to do....

Start filling your minds with the *whys* of Scripture as well...

Let me give you an example....

If you were going in for brain surgery, would you want a doctor who was watching a monitor where another doctor was telling him every move to make...

Or would you prefer a doctor who knew the truth of brain surgery and was able to let his hands be guided by the truth?

In the same way, the church doesn't need believers who have to be told how to take every step..

The church needs to be full of believers who let the truth guide their lives in every way every day...

A. Duties in unity and behavior (4)

Ephesians chapter 4 describes the actions of believer in the world in relation to their behavior and unity...

We dont have time to deal with all the behavior issues, but let me stress how important living in unity is in the midst of a God hating world...

There is nothing that mockers of God love to see more than disagreements within the church...

It is fuel for their fire that the Bible can't be trusted because the people who say they believe in it disagree about it...

There is no question that disagreements over the interoperation of Scripture will continue to the end..

But UNLESS and that is a big UNLESS...

UNLESS it is a matter of supreme importance in the gospel, believers need to show unity even in the middle of disagreement.

Disunity is one of the most damaging aspects of the church's witness...

The Ephesian church needed to have a united front as they lived among an unbelieving world, and we need much of the same in our day...

***B. Duties in love, purity, humility and marriage
(5)***

In chapter 5, we get some specific commands on how to live in a hostile world...

Paul mentions 4 - how to walk in love, purity, humility, and marriage....

Let me point out an important verse in our time that has been really helpful to center my life....

Ephesians 5:15-17..

15 Therefore [j]be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 [k]making the most of your time, because the days are evil. 17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

To get straight to the point....

Our society is not the only society that has been incredibly busy...

I think it is safe to assume that the Ephesians lived in a hectic culture as well..

With the sea near and all the trade going on, I am sure the Ephesus was also a city that offered much to do...

2016 is the same for most of us as well..

Life is busy and there are always things to do,...

But please underline the first portion of verse 16...

And the Lord's command to make the most of our time...

In other words, don't waste too much time on things that have no lasting value...

That is not to say that you can't enjoy hobbies and such, but be careful not to let insignificant things dominate your life...

What do I mean by insignificant?

Well, does the activity bring Glory to God or glory to just you?

Does the activity become habitual and even interfere with your growth in the Lord....

Bible reading, church attendance, family devotions...

Does the activity cause you to spend more money on it than you give to the church?

I would simply say, do things that make the most of your time and help you accomplish verse 17 in understanding the will of God....

And how do you understand the will of the Lord?

You spend time in his Word, rather than away from it...

The final chapter deals with family issues and how a Christian is to act as a parent, an employee, and a soldier that is engaged in a spiritual battle...

C. Duties in family, work, and spiritual battle (6)

And this is a great place to end...

You can read about the commands that come to you as a parent and employee, but let wrap this up with instructions on spiritual warfare...

Though you may not know it, living in this world as a Christian puts a target on your back...

And though the unbelievers you know dont have on uniforms, they are ready to see you fall in battle and may even take a shot as well...

So, Paul offers some wisdom on how to fight tis battle that applied to the Ephesians and to the church in America in 2016....

And though we can only touch on part of this, look with me at these verses in chapter 6 beginning in verse 10.....

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against [e]flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 [f]in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

1000s of sermons have been preached on these verses...

Some good and some bad, but let me just point out one thing about the armor of God that you need to put on....

All of it is defensive...

Gird your loins..

Put on a breastplate...

Cover your feet...

Take a shield...

Put on a helmet...

It is all defensive in nature as we go into the world...

And here is the great truth, you have but one weapon to fight with...

The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God...

We don't fight with human wisdom and personal attack or through political parties and philosophy...

WE fight in this world with the Word of God...

So, you better believe it, you better know it, and you better use it...

Conclusion

And that my friends is what the book of Ephesians is about...

It is a book to remind the church to go into a godless culture like ours...

Be filled with the truth of who we are in Christ...

We have access to all the heavenly blessings....

We serve the greatest authority...

We were saved to do good...

And we have the help of the church in the fight...

And then to live out that truth wherever the Lord places us....

And to fight the battle defensively and offensively with the Scriptures...

I will end with a portion of a sermon by Charles Spurgeon, one of my favorite preachers...

On a message from Ephesians about spiritual warfare, he wrote....

You must either be fight against evil, or you will be overcome by evil.

You cannot let evil alone and evil will not let you alone. You must fight, and in the battle you must either conquer or be conquered. The words before us remind me of the saying of the Scotch officer to the Highland regiment when he brought them up in front of the enemy and said, "Lads, there they are: if ye dinna kill them, they'll kill you." So does Paul puts us in front of evil culture, and like a wise general he tells, "Fight or be defeated."

Let us pray.