

## **Loving Jesus by Applying His Glory and Grace (Ephesians 6:21-24)**

*Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on January 20, 2013*

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Imagine your pastor was travelling on a mission trip overseas to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and he was detained and arrested on charges of child trafficking. You know the charges aren't true. You also know the prison conditions over there aren't good, and that this is spiritual warfare. It's also a known fact that people die in his situation, and so you pray for him in your family devotions or prayer time each night after dinner. It's been a long time since this you've heard from him. No blog, skype, email access, no way to text him, or even talk to him on the phone. Imagine also that the US Embassy no longer allows Americans come and visit DRC.

Your church has good teaching in his absence, a number of elders and Sunday School teachers bringing the Word of God each week, but each Sunday during the service you pray for this pastor you love and wonder how he's doing. It's expensive to send anything by mail to or from Congo by DHL (over \$100 to send a document) and the jail won't let him write anything anyway. But Pastor Didier has been in contact with him, and visits him, and you get word that he's coming to America, and he has a hand-written letter from your pastor written to his former church Didier's going to read in church.

Cliff announces to the gathered church that this is a special Sunday and we're going to just pray, sing a few songs together, then Didier will read the letter from your pastor, which will take about 20-25 minutes, and then there will be Q&A to hear more how your pastor is doing and how to pray for him. It can't be recorded for security reasons, and no one wants to listen to it later on tape anyways, everyone wants to be there, nursing moms are in the back, toddlers on dad's lap, some of the shut-ins are there with special assistance, former members have come as well, eager to hear this letter from a pastor endeared to so many. Didier, that faithful minister and beloved brother in Christ, starts to read it ...

“To the brothers and sisters at Gold Country Baptist Church who are faithful believers: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's all of us praise God for blessing us so much – I am incredibly blessed and so are you! Praise the Lord for the doctrine of election – that He chose us out of all people in eternity past! Praise the Lord for predestination, not only of us to salvation, but God's predestining all things, even me being in jail.”

The letter keeps telling you to praise God for every blessing and aspect of salvation, from earth to the heavenlies, from the past to the present to the future, from the Father to the Son to the Spirit. It keeps mentioning God's glory and grace and saying to praise it, because everything God does in life is for God's glory and praise.

Instead of telling you how to pray for him, he tells you how he's praying for you: *I keep thanking God for you with joy and I pray that God will open your eyes to see the hope that His election of you should produce, how glorious your future inheritance is, and how great the power is of your supreme sovereign Christ over all.*

*That same power that raised Christ from the dead is the power that raised you from spiritual death in your sins. You weren't able to do anything to initiate your salvation, but God regenerated you and gave you life, so you gave your life to Christ in faith, but even that was not of yourselves, but was part of the gift of God, not of you. And that power of the gospel has brought this very diverse church of believers together, which brings glory to the Christ who builds it.*

That is essentially the context and the content of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, chapters 1-2. He finally mentions his situation in Eph 3, but he doesn't complain about the conditions of his imprisonment. The whole first part of the letter talked about God's sovereignty in all things to remind you that includes jail. He's not a "the prisoner of Congo or Rome," he's "the prisoner of Christ" who is sovereign:

Eph 3:1 *For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus ...*

*... <sup>13</sup> Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf which are your glory.*

But it's not till the end of the letter that he says how to pray for him:

Eph 6:19 *and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*

It's like your pastor saying don't pray the US ambassador gets me out of these chains, pray I'll be a good ambassador in these chains

<sup>21</sup> *But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you. <sup>22</sup> I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us, and that he may comfort your hearts. [ESV "encourage your hearts"; compare also Colossians 4:7-9, 16]*

<sup>23</sup> *Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

<sup>24</sup> *Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love.*

Other verses describe this love as "in sincerity" or "undying love." And again, this passage by the inspiration of God, was not just for the original readers, but should cause us to consider if this is addressing us in v. 24. Do you love Jesus with a sincere, incorruptible, undying love? At the end of John's gospel Jesus asks that question 3x to Peter "*Do you love me?*" Do you love Jesus? In Paul's final letter to this same church in Ephesus, to its Pastor, he says the Lord promises reward on the last day "*not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing*" (2 Tim. 4:8). Do you, do I, look for and long for the appearing of Christ in the last day, and do we love to think of it?

It's not the last time Christ would pose that challenge to this church in Ephesus. In Revelation 2, the Lord gives His final revelation to the church, starting with this same church in Ephesus, and He says: *I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent ... He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches ... (2:4-7)*

The Spirit warns those who've lost it, and others who never had it. The Spirit says to another church, at the end of 1 Corinthians 16, "*If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed*" (v. 13). An anathema of damnation or divine judgment is pronounced on those who do not love the Lord Jesus. If the first and greatest command is to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, then you could argue the greatest sin is *not loving the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, strength*. Jesus said that is the first and greatest commandment that all God's law depends on, with the 2<sup>nd</sup> that is like it and flows from it, to love your neighbor as yourself. And so our failure to love in the Lord's eyes may be the greatest sin of all.

Man's greatest sin is not homosexuality or abortion; it's not loving the Lord. And all failure in God's commands is a symptom of our lack of love for Him. Jesus said "*If you love Me, you will keep my commandments*" (Jn 14:15). We can't expect those who don't love the Lord to keep His commandments, and we certainly can't expect them to love the Lord if they think we hate them (which many gays and abortionists do). We need to show them the love of Christ that offers forgiveness even for someone who's committed an abortion and hope to change even for the homosexual who feels he can't, in a Lord who gives grace to all who sincerely love Jesus.

But Eph 6:24 doesn't say grace is for those who still love sin and its corruption, grace is for those who have turned from their sin to the Savior who they love now with incorruptible love. To love God is just another way to describe a Christian (for example, Rom 8:28). The grace of Eph 6:24 is only for those who love the Lord Jesus, and the peace of v. 23 is only for those who are brethren and have faith. "There is no peace for the wicked," Scripture says. But for the saints, which is how Eph 1:1 begins this book, ones God has saved and set apart (that's what a saint is), there is grace and peace (Eph 1:2). The book begins and ends with *grace to you and peace*. The letter opens with "*Grace to you and peace...*" and closes with 6:23-24a "*peace be to you...grace to you who love the Lord Jesus*"

All who love the Lord, *love because He first loved us* (1 Jn 4:19), because His grace first came to us who did not naturally love Jesus and never would have, if left to ourselves. If you love the Lord, it is because you first experienced "*grace to you.*" If you look back at Ephesians 2, it's clear it was by God's grace and great love for us, it wasn't by our good choice in faith or our great love for the Lord.

Eph 2:4: "***But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,***<sup>5</sup> *even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),*<sup>6</sup> *and raised us up with Him...*"

The Greek word 'dead' in v. 5 is used in Mark 9:26-27 for a corpse that Jesus 'raises' (also same Greek word). Here in v. 7 the grace of Jesus is something God will display the riches of, in all the ages to come, in other words eternally. So in the context of v. 5, GRACE can be defined as:

**G - God**  
**R - Raising**  
**A - A**  
**C - Corpse**  
**E - Eternally**

God Raising A Corpse Eternally (G.R.A.C.E.). That acronym G.R.A.C.E. can help you remember what grace means in Ephesians 2: God Raising A Corpse Eternally. It's God taking us who were dead spiritually in our sins (corpses don't do anything other than stink, that's their contribution), but God raises us just as He raised Christ from the dead, with Christ, to eternally praise Him

Remember, the end of v. 12 says, you were hopeless without God. "*But God*" v. 4 says, v. 5 says "*when we were dead...made us alive ...by grace you're saved*" (grace=God Raising A Corpse Eternally). Because of regenerating or resurrecting grace, we respond in v. 8.

Grace is defined in v. 8-9 as how God saves us *through faith*, but that grace and salvation and faith is *not from ourselves, it's a gift* from God to us, *not of anything we do, so that no one can boast*. Even faith isn't something that just originates in us which we give to God and then He gives us salvation like a gift exchange; it is all a gift from God, including faith, so I can't boast or take credit for it. God gets 100% of the glory.

The result of GRACE (God Raising A Corpse Eternally) is that we would be eternally amazed in v. 7 at the riches of God's grace to us who were spiritually dead back in v. 1, "*but God*" in v. 4, "*because of His great love for us...made us alive,*" so we love Him forever. Grace in Eph 6:24 is how we love the Lord with an undying love.

"*Grace to you and peace*" in Eph 1:2 is not just a formality, it's the gospel outline of Ephesians 2: Grace to you (2:1-13), and the peace that results between us and God and us and each other (2:14-17). If "*grace to you*" has come, then there can be peace among brethren, even among very diverse people who might have natural divisions. When Paul says "peace to the brethren" in Eph 6:23, the context is gospel peace a few verses earlier, 6:15 "*the gospel of peace.*" Paul concludes the letter by reminding them of gospel grace and peace.

There are a number of lessons for us in how Paul ends this letter. In chapter 4:13 Paul described the goal of ministry as maturity, and as I see how Paul concludes, I see several marks of spiritual maturity. If you're a note-taker, Paul models for us spiritual maturity in trials not in 10 commandments of law, but in 10 consequences of grace:

1. **Speech not filled with grumbling, but filled with grace to others (6:24, 4:29).** When Paul expresses grace to these believers in the last verse, he practices what he preached in Eph 4:29 '*Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear*' (edifying grace-imparting speech)

Here's an acronym to help you T.H.I.N.K. before you speak

T – Truth - Is it truthful in love? (Eph 4:15 "*truth in love*")

H – Help - Is it helpful? (4:29a "... *only such as is good*")

I – Impact – Is it impactful positively? (4:29b "*edification*")

N – Need - Is it needful? (4:29c "*the need of the moment*")

K – Kind or merciful - Is it kind, merciful, or gracious? (4:29d "... *so that it will give grace to those who hear*")

James 1:19 tells us we need to be “slow to speak” and this grid from Ephesians 4 should help us think before we speak

- consider Truth in love, consider if it Helps, consider the Impact, consider Needs of the moment, consider Kindness
- THINK: is what I’m about to say *truthful* in love, *helpful*, *impactful* positively, *needful* right now, and *kind/merciful*?

This first application alone can change your life, but I see other applications from Paul’s example in writing this letter and how he ends it, applying what he taught earlier. Paul had worse trials than any of us, but the speech of the spiritually mature is not filled with grumbling; as you grow in grace, your speech becomes grace-filled

**2. You don’t want your brethren to be troubled by your suffering but to have the peace you have (6:24, 3:13)**

3:13 “*I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulation ...*” (another version “*not to be discouraged at my suffering*”). Eph 6:24 “*Peace be to the brethren, and love in faith...*” You can study this principle further in Philippians 4:6-13, how Paul had peace even knowing a corrupt government might kill him soon.

Paul doesn’t call them to disturb the peace, to protest about his unjust imprisonment, to boycott Roman businesses and only buy products from others, to march on the capitol of Rome, to pass around letters about how terrible the leader of their government was (or join Zealots). Paul wants us to have faith and peace in the sovereign Lord (Caesar is not).

**3. Your speech doesn’t reveal love for yourself but love for your brethren (Eph 6:24 “to the brethren...love in faith”)**

When things become difficult, sometimes what we say is really revealing about how much we love ourselves, but in Paul’s case, his speech revealed love for his brethren. Jesus said “*the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart*” (Matthew 12:34). If our heart is filled with self-love, it will come out when things get shaken up, just like a cup spills out whatever is inside it when you shake it. But if you are growing spiritually, your love for your brother and sisters in Christ will be growing more and filling our heart more, so that your love will come out more even as things shake you

**4. You are more concerned that others be encouraged than you (6:22b “that he may comfort/encourage your hearts”)**

Again, it’s just a passing comment but it reveals a spiritual maturity in Paul that we should emulate and cultivate. Ask God’s help to grow into more of an encourager, a Barnabas, not focused on your needs, but the need to encourage others

**5. You’re not ashamed to let believers know how you’re doing and where you need their prayers (Eph 6:19-22a)**

We don't want to swing so far the other way that we don't admit we need prayers and support of others. That can be a subtle form of pride and can rob the blessing of intercession

## 6. **Your prayer request is for courage, not comfort (6:20)**

Comfort can be a great enemy of Christianity. Comfort can be an idol – something we elevate and will do anything for, or we want it so bad we're willing to not do what God says. Don't buy into "the myth of me-time," the lie that I *need* ease and peace *for me*, the deception and I *must have* quiet or calm or comfort when/how I want it, otherwise I have an excuse for my sinful attitude. The psychological idea that I have this *need* or even that I *deserve this comfort* is a lie.

That's not just an idea, that's an idol. Eph 5:6 says coveting is idolatry. Eph 5:6 says "*this you know...*[and he describes sinful man as an] *immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater...*" [coveting isn't wanting sinful things, in the 10 Commandments it's wanting anything that you don't have that someone else has; craving is coveting, and elevating something else to the place only God should have, which violates the first and the last commandment]

You say, "well, is my comfort, or desires for my kids, or how I want things to be in my home or when I come from work, is that such a *BAD* thing?" Well if it becomes a *BIG* thing, and so important to you that you're willing to sin if you don't get that desire (in speech or attitude or action), or you're willing to sin to get what you want (anger, words, or manipulation, etc.) then you're coveting, and that's an idol. Col. 3:5 (KJV) links 'inordinate affection' to coveting and idolatry.

If I can quote a theologian here (my wife Jaime) when our kids say "Mom, I need..." I've heard her say several times "No, you need Christ, but you want that." She's a good theologian, because Jesus said to Martha about Mary '*one thing is needed*' (Jn 10:42), not Martha's desire for her home, her true need was Christ.

Don't be deceived by psychological language of "needs," think in Scriptural language of James 4:1-2 like "desire" or "want" or what we have a "passion" about, or one version says "*your desires for pleasure...covet and cannot obtain.*" James calls it not just idolatry, but adultery (James 4:4), to seek ultimate satisfaction apart from Christ's covenant love or to put greater importance on something other than Christ

Eph 5:7 says: "*Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes ...*"

We don't *deserve* comfort, we deserve condemnation. Paul could not have been very comfortable in an ancient prison, but his prayer request in Eph 6:20 is for courage. He asks them to pray, not that the door would be opened to let him out, but that his mouth would be opened to let out the gospel.

It is not his “best life now” Paul prays for, it’s *boldness* Paul asks, for to declare the good news of a best life in the future when God delivers us from earthly life now to heaven.

*There’s a 7<sup>th</sup> mark of spiritual maturity Paul models for us, another way you can know you’re growing in grace ...*

7. **You ask others to pray more for the gospel than your good circumstances** (Eph 6:19 – we talked about this last week, but it’s instructive to note again, that Paul’s prayer and heart is always for the gospel whatever his lot in life)

Flip forward just a page to Philippians 1 to see more of Paul’s heart in prison, Phil. 1:12: *Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out **for the greater progress of the gospel,*** <sup>13</sup> *so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else,* <sup>14</sup> *and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord **because of my imprisonment,** have far more courage to speak the word of God ...* <sup>18</sup> *What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, **Christ is proclaimed;** and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice,* <sup>19</sup> *for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance **through your prayers** and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,* <sup>20</sup> *according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that **with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted** in my body, whether by **life or by death.*** <sup>21</sup> *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*

*Which leads to an 8<sup>th</sup> mark of spiritual growth or maturity:*

8. **You talk less of yourself but much of Christ** (Eph 1-6)

A spiritually *immature* person wants sympathy for suffering and people to join their pity party, but a spiritually mature believer wants people to join in their *praise party* of Christ. That’s what Paul does in Ephesians from start to finish. He speaks a little of himself in it but refers to Christ over 100x, and starting in chapter 1 it’s all to praise and exalt Christ, to praise His glory (Eph 1:6ff)

Steve Fernandez is the lead teaching pastor of Community Bible Church in Vallejo, and president of Cornerstone Seminary, and he has spoken here at GCBC. Steve was diagnosed with a brain tumor and aggressive cancer on September 4, 2012. As much as anybody I know, Steve is someone who talks much of Christ. His ministry is called Exalting Christ Ministries, and he’s continued to live out the name of his ministry since. The next day after his cancer diagnosis was the Exalting Christ Conference he had set up. Steve spoke on:

Exalting Christ in His Fullness (9/5 sermon title)

He’s also been practicing what he preaches since. Sermon on 9/23: Christ on Eternity, Possessions, Kingdom Living

10/28: The Glorious Greatness and Grace of Christ

11/4 morning: The Glorious Delivering Christ

11/4 evening: The Glorification of the Father in the Son

11/18: Exalting the Glories of the Son of God

11/25: Exalting the Glories of the Son of God, Part Two

3 months ago, he spoke to his church from a wheelchair for a few minutes on “Exalting Christ With a Brain Tumor.” He read the passage we just read from Philippians. I saw the video and it was evident he wasn’t able to use his left arm at all as he sat in the chair and needed someone to turn the pages of his Bible for him as Steve read “Christ is proclaimed, and in this I rejoice...and I will rejoice. Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.”

He said after the cancer doctor told him the news, “after the initial tsunami, God gave Karen and me this controlling passion that Christ would be exalted whether I live or whether I die.” And he read Philippians 4:13 “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” And he read in v. 5 of the same chapter we must know He’s near and give thanks to have Christ’s strength or peace. PLAY THIS CLIP FROM 8:13: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1T7q4EZazUA>

The point of that is not that we make much of the man, but that we make much of Christ who is exalted through man. As we grow spiritually, the 8<sup>th</sup> evidence of that we see in Paul and in those who follow him as he follows Christ, is we speak less of ourselves, and make much of Christ instead, giving Him the attention, exaltation, and glorification. There’s a 9<sup>th</sup> mark of grace that is closely related:

#### 9. You really believe and live like it’s not about you (Ephesians 1-6)

As Christians we all give a nod or even an Amen to the phrase “it’s not about you,” but the spiritually mature believe it and live like it, and others can tell it’s not about them to them. Let’s go from the last verse in Ephesians “Grace to all who love the Lord,” and go back to the start of the book “Grace to you,” and show you how Paul begins the book so clearly emphasizes *it’s not about you*. As I read, notice who the emphasis is on, what all of grace is all about:

**Eph 1:2** *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* <sup>3</sup> *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,* <sup>4</sup> *just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.* In love <sup>5</sup> *He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,* <sup>6</sup> *to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.* <sup>7</sup> *In Him [in Christ] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace ...*

Notice the emphasis on “grace” (3x in v. 2-7) and the God-centered focus (a title for God is used 14x in v. 2-7 and another 11x we read “He/Him/His,” referring to God). All, in all, if we count different names or titles for God and pronouns referring to God, I found 46 in just the 1st 14 verses of Ephesians. There’s no more emphatic way for Paul to say “It’s not about you! It’s all about God!” The salvation of sinners is not about a person making a good choice, it’s about the praise of the glory of the grace of a God who needed all 3 persons of the Trinity to rescue us from our choices in 2:1-3!

Remember GRACE is God Raising A Corpse Eternally in Eph 2:5. Eph 2 helps you understand why you needed to be chosen in Eph 1 as 1:4 says and predestined as v. 5 says according to His will, and v. 6 says it’s all “*to the praise of the glory of His grace.*”



Ephesians 1:11: “*also we have obtained an inheritance, having been **predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,** <sup>12</sup> to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be **to the praise of His glory [Christ].** <sup>13</sup> In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, <sup>14</sup> who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, **to the praise of His glory.**”*

There’s a 10<sup>th</sup> consequence of grace or mark of spiritual growth ...

### **10. You praise God’s glory and pray for God’s glory**

3x in Eph 1 we’ve seen “to the praise of His glory,” now he prays:

“... <sup>18</sup> *I pray that the eyes of your heart 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 saints...***”

Look also at chapter 3, the next time Paul prays and how he prays:

**3:16** *that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man ...* <sup>20</sup> *Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, <sup>21</sup> to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.*

God’s glory is not just a main point of prayer, it’s the main point of the universe, mankind, the church, everything else in Ephesians 4-6 we’ve studied. How do we apply this in prayer?

If you don’t yet know Jesus as your glorious King, if you have not bowed before Him as Lord, you need to pray for His grace, not because you are worthy, but because His glory is worthy. You need to recognize the heavens declare the glory of God, but you sinfully “*did not glorify Him as God, nor were [you] thankful*” (Rom 1:21 NKJV). You need to recognize you “*have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (Rom 3:23). You need to respond to the “eternal gospel” of Revelation 14: “*Fear God and give Him glory...worship Him who made the heaven and the earth...*” (v. 4-5). As Revelation says later, you need to “*repent so as to give Him glory*” (16:9). You need to, in the words of Philippians 2, bow the knee and with your “tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God...”

Pray Ps 79:9 *Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name; And deliver us and forgive our sins for Your name’s sake.*

If God has already been glorified by saving you, pray like Ps 115:1  
‘*Not to us, O LORD, not to us, But to Your name be the glory*’

Ps 57:6: *Be exalted above the heavens...your glory above the earth*

Psalm 72:19 *And blessed be His glorious name forever; And may the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen, and Amen.*

Jeremiah 14:21 *Do not despise us, for Your own name’s sake; Do not disgrace the throne of Your glory ...*

Jesus Himself prayed in a greater trial than Paul's in John 12:27 "*My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour.*"<sup>28</sup> "**Father, glorify Your name.**" Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." [May He today]