

Reveal Who You Really Are

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[0 : 00] This is at hand. We're looking at Ephesians, chapter 1, verses 1 and 2.

And this is the beginning of a series on the epistles of the Ephesians. And if you all want to read it with me, then we will all know that we're at the right place and reading the right thing.

And if you're using a Blue Pew Bible, then you will find it on page 180. And the first two verses doesn't take us very far, but it takes us far enough.

Are you with me? All together. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God, for the saints who are also faithful in Christ Jesus, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Just bow your heads with me for a moment. Father, we just ask that because this is your word and because we can't interpret it apart from your Holy Spirit, inspiring and enlightening our minds and hearts.

[1 : 22] And because it's very dangerous even to hear it, if we have no intention to obey it, grant that we may be kept by your Spirit as we share these things in order that we might hear and we may obey.

In Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Now, I'd like Mr. Jeff Greenman to come and explain this pink slip to you because I haven't figured it out yet, and he's insisted that we all have one.

And it's in your folder tonight. So, Jeff, you tell him what this means. Look at it. This is going to help you because this series on Ephesians is going to go on for several weeks now, and this is just the beginning.

It does for some people, Jeff. Yeah. Have you ever gone meandering?

Just say yes by raising your right hand. Well, what you were doing, the name of the river that comes down to the coast where the city of Ephesus was, was called the Meander.

[3 : 13] And I guess it meandered, and that's why we still do. There was a great city there, and that was one of the colony cities of the Greek Empire, which was established by Alexander the Great.

And it was a coastal city with good harbor facilities at a place called Miletus, and it's on the coast of what is modern-day Turkey. And this city had been through many stages of history.

And in the course of that history, there had developed a central reality to this city of Ephesus, which was called the Temple of Diana of the Ephesians.

And in the days when they used to talk about such things, the Temple of Diana of the Ephesians was described as the greatest thing, the greatest man-made thing, the sun, the most beautiful man-made thing, the sun observed on its daily round.

It was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Have any of you seen the Parthenon in Athens? I haven't, but maybe some of you have.

[4 : 30] This was four times the size of this. And it was created, this temple was created of a hundred sculptured columns, which are thought to have been pirated since then, and to be part of the great church of Constantinople and probably of many of the cathedrals in Italy because all the marble has been taken away.

The city of Ephesus and the temple are now in ruins and the subject of archaeological exploration. But it was a great city. And at the heart of this great city was a temple.

The temple was dedicated to Diana of the Ephesians, or Artemis as she was known in Greek. And the central sort of mysterious object in this temple was a black stone, which is thought, according to the passage in Acts, to have been a meteoric stone which fell from the sky.

And it's thought that possibly that meteoric stone was taken to be a kind of God-given statue of Diana of the Ephesians.

Diana, if you remember any of your mythology, was a very beautiful lady who drove a coach that was pulled by four stags, and she had a bow and arrow.

[6 : 12] And she was ready to shoot anybody who misbehaved with her bow and arrow. And she did shoot, she in history apparently did shoot several people.

She was at various times the goddess of the moon, the hunting goddess, the morality goddess, the chastity goddess, the protectress of youth, of maidens, of nature, of agriculture, of firstfruits.

She was the goddess of nymphs and the goddess of childbirth. So she was a very able lady, as you can see, covered a lot of different things.

And she went around preserving the morality of young people and making sure they didn't fall in love, because she never fell in love. And she was, this statue, whatever it was, apparently it was a statue of a goddess that had many, many breasts.

And this goddess was worshipped for being the goddess of chastity, but around the temple, there were fertility rites, which, with a religious pretext, promoted a great deal of unchastity, in that there were temple prostitutes and people who operated within the precincts of the protection of the temple of Diana of the Ephesians.

[7 : 39] And around the thing, I mean, I don't know if you saw it, but this week, several times, I've run into stories stories of how the Pope's visit has precipitated a great business in souvenirs, you know, of the Pope, and some of them are weird beyond all imagining.

Well, that was part of the business in Ephesus, too, and the silversmiths of Ephesus created little silver models of the temple and silver depictions of Diana herself, and these were sold to the tourists who came to Ephesus and it was a very lucrative business.

And these silversmiths made a lot of money out of it. Well, if you follow in the New Testament, there's quite an extensive story about how the church in Ephesus got started.

It was started first by a preacher who was apparently a brilliant preacher, came to the synagogue in Ephesus because all the way through the Mediterranean world, almost wherever the Christian church went, the first place it came to was the Jewish synagogue and they went there and preached about Jesus Christ so that this preacher who was a famous preacher from Egypt, from where was he from in Egypt?

Does anybody here know? just to check you out to see? There was a tremendous size synagogue in, it wasn't in Alexandria and it wasn't in Cairo, but it was in Egypt and he came to Ephesus and he preached there and there was a couple in the congregation called Priscilla and Aquila and Priscilla and Aquila heard him preach and took him home for lunch and told him what was wrong with his sermon and how he hadn't fully understood the implications of what he was preaching and they passed on to him what the content of the Christian message really was.

[9 : 48] Well, Apollos then was sent across the Aegean to Corinth where he had a very significant ministry and then Paul came to Ephesus and he got there and he found a group of people that professed to be the disciples of Christ.

There was apparently 12 of them in Ephesus and he talked to them and they were believers in Christ and he asked them if they'd received the Holy Spirit and they said we never even heard that there was the Holy Spirit and so they were baptized and they spoke in tongues and it was a kind of dramatic as there so often was with the beginning of a new church a very dramatic outpouring of the Holy Spirit so that these people became the nucleus of a church in Ephesus.

Well, they continued to be members in good standing of the synagogue and so Paul went to the synagogue every Sabbath and there he argued about who the scriptures said Jesus was and why they should put their whole faith and trust in Jesus Christ and he argued with them for three months until the elders of the synagogue started to speak evil of the way and they said bad things to Paul and so Paul with great courtesy and diplomacy moved next door and started up in business there in what was called the Hall of Tyrannus.

He took with them him, the leader of the synagogue and several important people in the synagogue who by then had been convinced about the truth of the Christian faith and there he began to preach to them in Tyrannus and to argue and because Ephesus was so central a city people were traveling into this port city and out all the time and there they heard the gospel and then they went back up country up the river or by sea to some other part of the Mediterranean world and they took the news of the gospel with them so that the church in Ephesus became a very important fulcrum in the history of the early church because of the impact of the preaching that Paul did there for two years day in and day out all day long Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and

Saturday and that was how the gospel got started there there was a it became from this small group of twelve disciples it became a larger and larger group of people and they had a widening circle of influence and inevitably there was a collision course between those who were the followers of Diana of the Ephesians and those who were the followers of Jesus Christ and it came in a particular way in that the silversmiths began to lose money because people gave up the sort of vain superstitions of Greek mythology and turned to the personal discipleship of Jesus Christ and having done that they then spoke about business and they made the extraordinary statement gods made with hands are not gods and the silversmiths became very incensed with that to me it sounds like a line from

Monty Python you know gods made without hands are not gods that's a it seems almost obviously true but it wasn't true for the silversmiths there and so they started a riot in the city and tried to have this new Christian sect put down and they they succeeded in creating a riot and the ultimate opposition to Paul meant that he had to leave but the church continued on there and having continued on there's another section of the Acts of the Apostles which tells about Paul coming back and visiting and saying goodbye and how the church had become consolidated and what an important fulcrum it was in the in the establishment of the of the Christian church in the whole of the Mediterranean world the reason I tell you that is because when we turn to this epistle to the Ephesians this tiny manuscript that you have you can compare it with the ancient archaeological site of the temple of

[14 : 35] Diana of the Ephesians which has been abandoned for centuries destroyed pillaged ruined and forgotten and is only a matter of kind of historical interest to a few specialist archaeologists and the only reason they know anything about it is because of the record of the church which never even had a building that were recorded they worked in rented premises and so that this little manuscript that we're going to be looking at these Sunday evenings in the fall represents something far more durable than the green marble and the black meteoric stone and the huge architectural display which was the temple of Diana of the Ephesians well that's to give you a little background and to make you aware that that the significance of this letter which we're going to be looking at in some detail over these weeks is tremendously important tremendously important because it has continued to change men's lives while the temple of Diana of the Ephesians has been forgotten you can take a hammer and a chisel and a stone and you can shape it and that may last for a while when you take the word of God and shape men's lives and give direction to men's lives by that word of God it isn't something that's lost in time it's something that becomes of eternal significance as the impact of this word is used in shaping the character of men and women and of bringing them into touch with the living

God so that's just some background material on the letter that I want you to be aware of and then I want to do one other thing while I'm here and that is to tell you about one word in the introduction and that one word is the word grace see Paul an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God it's Paul who's writing the letter you will all be familiar that we sign off yours sincerely Joe they started Joe I'm writing to you they started with the name of the sender of the letter and the definition of who he was and he knew himself to be an apostle of Jesus Christ and he wrote to the saints and the saints is always a plural word in the New Testament they never come one by one we think about individual saints but the New

Testament thinks about a group of people so you're you are a saint consider the staggering implications of that remark you are a saint insofar as you are part of a company of saints on your own you probably wouldn't last too long under direct scrutiny but none of us would so it's to the saints who are the faithful in Christ Jesus and Paul writes grace to you and it's that word grace that I want to describe to you and to give you some awareness of what I think it means and how you and I should understand it because grace becomes the kind of basis basis of our working relationship with God and it's the only basis on which we can do business with God and I wanted to tell you about it and the way

I want to tell you about it is to make a confession to you that I went to the movies not long ago over in that wonderful place called that temple of modern commerce called what is it called yeah it's right over there and there I went to a movie called Roxanne and it was a powerful powerful movie now my children grown up and mature though they may be consider my preoccupation with analyzing movies to be unwarranted and usually wrong but I'd like to tell you about about this one because I was very impressed by it it's the star of it is

Steve somebody or other tell me his last name again Steve Martin there he is and the thing that characterizes Steve Martin on this occasion is a nose that long that comes out to about here and he is a great lover but it's very hard to be a great lover when your nose is six inches long and the movie centers around that particular problem he he's the head of the fire department in in a little town called Nelson BC though I don't think it was emphasized that it was BC and he he's very fit and very agile and very admirable and altogether a very intriguing character and this beautiful lady named [20 : 51] Roxanne comes into the village of Nelson and she falls in love with one of his subordinates who I guess would be described in modern vernacular as a hunk totally devoid of intelligence of any kind but nevertheless having all the other virtues which young ladies seem to want in their husbands to be so there he was and you have the kind of contrast between this one on the left whom I am embarrassed to refer to again and Steve on the right with his six inch long nose well the the hunk can't isn't very good at making love to this lady and so

Steve moves in and helps him and writes letters to her and speaks to her in the night and gradually she falls in love with him not as he appears she thinks he's this fellow over here but she falls in love with him without knowing that it's him that she's fallen in love with and he knows that this love affair is hopeless because if she ever found out who he really was she wouldn't love him but would ridicule him and he knows that nobody could know him and see him and really love him he's absolutely convinced of that and we who are watching the movie tend to be convinced of that too it just wouldn't work I kept wondering about the future of that romance and what would happen if his wife had quintuplets with nose six six inches long and the problem would be compounded very considerably so the possibility of there ever being love coming into this person's life is so remote as to be quite ridiculous he recognizes that and the movie goes on and this great hunk collapses because he just is totally incapable of sustaining any kind of significant relationship and Steve's place in the world is that nobody could love him if they knew who he really was and you know that brilliant scene in the and I gather from my friends that it was Richards on Richards Street or something that took place where somebody made a joke about his nose and he made 20 far better jokes about his nose than was ever seen it was a magnificent portrayal if I might say of a Christ like figure he comes off in an amazing way as a very Christ like figure simply because of that that ability to be as Christ was despised and rejected because that's who he was and he allowed that to happen and in a kind of wonderful way he brought it on himself in a way so that people couldn't possibly like him or take him seriously they they knew and he knew that he was surrounded by people who you remember all

I don't know if any of you have seen this but you remember nobody was allowed to mention about this nobody could mention it and nobody was allowed to talk about it and though it was the most obvious reality in every situation in which he found himself all his friends were committed not to say anything about it because they knew that it would destroy him if they did so you kept this he was kept in a kind of cocoon of unreality where nobody could face the reality of who he was and the problem that he had and so he was in a very real sense accepted on the one hand but on the other hand deeply and hopelessly rejected and I what I want to explain to you about this is that becoming a

Christian involves being deeply hurt the reason it involves being deeply hurt is that you have to come to terms with who you really are there is no way around that Christianity simply doesn't buy in to who you would like to think of yourself as being it doesn't buy into the whole process of disguising ourselves pretending we're something that we're not trying to fool other people into thinking that we're something that we're not it's a deeply wounding experience because it forces us to acknowledge who we are you know what the greatest single shock to me in going to that movie was that I sat through it and

[26 : 49] I saw all those people you know the really with it people in the movie and they were all beautifully dressed in wonderfully casual clothes which were just the latest in everything I went to the early movie and I came out and there in the foyer was a whole gang of people dressed exactly the same way it was almost like I'd walked out of the movie into the set because there they were waiting to go in and all carefully hiding themselves from who they really were and using the types and patterns of this movie to give themselves a disguise to hide behind it was it was it shook me to see them I really didn't know what to do I wanted to go up to the people in the foyer and touch them and see if they really were people or whether I was just suffering from watching the movie still without knowing what had happened to me but there they were and this you see the difficulty is and

I think that the thing that

I found so helpful about it was that Stephen Martin with his long nose that long nose has represented for me you know I mean I have quite a shapely nose I've always thought but that long nose represents my awareness of who I really am and I don't want anybody to see it I don't want anybody to see who I really am because I know I live in a world where if they could see who I really was they wouldn't be able to relate to me the possibility of love simply wouldn't be there and so I have to play the game of pretending to be somebody that I'm not and disguising who I am and the hell of that is that I can't ultimately deceive myself about it

I still know who I am deep down and that's the problem now no less a prominent philosopher than Soren Kierkegaard talks about this problem in a way that I want to share with you and I want to read something that he wrote and this was his deep consciousness of himself because he was a terribly lonely man he says I was this is Kierkegaard speaking but it might be Steve Martin I was never like others oh in the days of youth it is of all torments the most frightful not to be like others never to be a single day without being painfully reminded that one is not like others never to be able to run with the herd which is the delight and joy of youth never to be able to give oneself out expansively always so soon as one would make the venture of relating to be reminded of the fetters of isolating peculiarity which isolating to the borders of despair separates one from everything which is called human life merriment and joy true one can by a frightful effort strive to hide what at that age one understands as one's dishonor that one is not like the others to a certain degree this may succeed but all the same the agony is still in the heart and after all it succeeds only to a certain degree so that a single instantaneous moment may revenge itself frightfully in that you have revealed to someone else who you really are and that's the pain and of course that's the pain of Steve Martin with Roxanne he knew that she was in love with him but he didn't know whether she knew who he really was and the great and poignant moment in the movie is when he says who he is and she embraces him but it was a very costly thing for him to do because he knew at the very moment at which he revealed who he really was the likelihood was that he would be rejected and you see that's what Christianity is about we're afraid of Jesus Christ because of our long nose not really that but because we know who we really are and we're afraid that if we revealed to him who we really are we would be rejected that there wouldn't be any love affair there would be rejection and when by God's grace we allow ourselves to be deeply wounded and it's deeply wounded when you tear your heart open and reveal who you are to somebody and risk the possibility of ridicule and rejection and that's that's what that's what destroys us now what created the Christian community in Ephesus and the reason that Paul says grace to you is because grace this is the discovered reality that when you reveal who you are to someone else that person receives you at the very point at which you expect condemnation ridicule and rejection Jesus turns to you in a sense and says I too have been deeply wounded and I have been wounded for you so I know who you are and I know what you've suffered and as we reveal ourselves to Christ so Christ reveals himself to us and in that moment we find the whole of our world is turned upside down but it's a terribly lonely thing because you see in in all the history of the human race there has never been anybody quite like you you know you try we all try to disguise the fact and try to be as much like our friends as we can but there in fact is nobody quite like you and so there is always the risk that if you were to reveal yourself knowing that no one else like you has ever done it before because there's never been anybody else like you when you take that risk of opening as it were your heart to Jesus [35 : 30] Christ you can't help but think I will be condemned ridiculed and rejected and it's only when you risk that when you accept that that you discover what grace is that he unconditionally reveals himself to you and says I too have been wounded for you and the relationship is thereby established the wounded person reveals himself to the wounded healer and the wounded healer reveals his love to you and that's what grace is all about that's what creates a unique community of Christians that they have dared to acknowledge before God who they really are and have made the amazing discovery that they have not been rejected that they have been deeply loved deeply healed and deeply cared for and that's what makes us Christians that's what makes us saints when we share that discovery with one another you know that a lady came to me after the service this morning and said

I'd like to join this church but I'm afraid to because I really don't think I qualify and I told her what you probably heard before I said the only qualification for joining the church is the recognition that you don't qualify because the basis of our membership is not what we do but the fact that when we have

risked revealing who we are we have discovered the grace of God in loving and receiving us and I'm concerned that that should be the experience of all of you it is undoubtedly the experience of some of you and we need to share that with one another so that it may become the experience of all of us may God give you grace to be able to do that let's pray together