

“When the Saints Go Marching In”

The Family of God

Ephesians 1:1-2

Dr. Jeff Stivason

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Jeff: All right. Remember Kirk’s prayer, for me to say exactly what you need to hear and find ways to apply it. I’ll just leave the application to you. *(Laughter)* All right. Well, why don’t we turn in our Bibles to Ephesians? We have a long passage today to study together, verses 1 and 2. *(Laughter)*

Bill Stolze: I got it.

Don Maurer: Me, too. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Let me read it to you. It’s Ephesians 1:1 and 2.

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Don: This is the word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: It’s been a while since we’ve said that. *(Laughter)* So let me talk to you a little bit about today’s outline. Let me tell you something about the book of Ephesians before I get to talking to you about the outline, though.

One of the things that you need to remember about the gospel is that there’s a certain grammar to it, a certain rhythm and flow to it. And Ted was actually helping us with that earlier in his comments about the text that was read to us that was meaningful to Kirk. And that is this. There is a flow, a grammatical flow to it. So when you think about it, it starts with the indicatives and moves to the imperatives. In other words, the indicatives are descriptive of what is, and the imperatives are calling us to action. And so there’s a sense in which God does something for us. And because of what He does, He calls us to do. He calls us to obedience.

So the book of Ephesians is perhaps the quintessential book that is descriptive of that particular division. So the first three chapters are filled with indicative statements about what God has done for us. And I think that maybe there is one imperative in all of the first three chapters. But once you move beyond chapter 3 and get into chapters 4, 5 and 6, what you find are imperatives. Do this. Don’t do this, and so on. And so the first three chapters are telling us about what God has done for us. And the last three chapters tell us what we’re called to do as a result.

Now just think about that a minute. When you think about that sort of grammatical flow to the gospel, you begin to understand that if you mess that up, then you’re in real trouble. For instance, let’s just say that you have indicatives but no imperatives. What are you left with?

Don: Antinomianism.

Jeff: Yes. You’re left with what is technically called *antinomianism*. You’re against the law; you’re against any sort of doing. And you just say, “Well, the grace of God has saved

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me and I can live as I please. I can live like the dickens because of the grace of God.” Sin boldly because God’s grace abounds, right?

Sig Tragard: What’s the matter with that? *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Why don’t you just come up here? *(Laughter)* I have an intuition. Who’s missed Sig? *(Laughter)* C’mon! Who’s missed him? You know what? Let’s clap here. *(Applause)* Now come up here and sit down. *(Laughter)*

What happens now if you just have imperatives?

Bishop Rodgers: Moralism.

Jeff: Yes, you have moralism. If you forget the indicatives and you just have the imperatives, you’ve got moralism. So there’s a grammatical flow to the gospel that’s vital, it’s important. You can’t mess it up. You can’t put the imperatives first and then the indicatives, because you have some sort of legalism. You have “you do this in order to get God to do this.” You can’t have the indicatives without the imperatives because then you just have grace only, which is really not the gospel. And so you mess up the order and you don’t have the gospel. It’s indicatives and imperatives. And the book of Ephesians really communicates that well within the simple structure of the book. Now—

Bill: Are there any chasms? *(Laughter)*

Jeff: You know what? It was actually heard that the doctor was able to keep the chasm that he pulled out of your heart. *(Laughter)* But he said that the tool he used to do it was an inclusio. *(Laughter)*

So we’re going to talk today about *our sense*. Now one of the reasons why I decided to approach the text this way is because we’ve been dealing with a lot of information over the last 22 weeks or so with the Old Testament. Not that it’s been devoid of application, but I just wanted to talk to you about your sense of saintliness as it comes from the text. And so we’ll say a couple of introductory things. We’ll set the stage to talk about *our sense of saintliness*. We’ll then talk about *our sense of saintliness in love*, and *with regard to the brethren*. So that’s what we’re going to be thinking about today as we look at this particular text. So let’s first of all look at some introductory points. That’s obviously wrong. I don’t know why I—

Don: What’s obviously wrong?

Jeff: Well, it’s not for you to know, Don. *(Laughter)* I just had the wrong title up there.

Don: Oh, all right.

Jeff: So first of all I want you to understand that if you want to contextualize the letter of Ephesians, you have to set it in its background of Paul’s third missionary journey. And you’ll find an abundance of information about the Ephesians in Acts 18-19.

Now just to give you a sense of where Ephesus is, it’s right above Rhodes in Miletus; it’s right there. And so it’s in Macedonia. And that’s the chart of Paul’s third missionary journey. I’m not going to stay with that. But you get the idea as to where it is. And then I want to say a few words about what we discover in Acts 18 and 19.

For instance, one of the things that we discover is disciples of John the Baptist in the Acts 18-19 portion. And if you remember John the Baptist you remember a guy who was cloaked in camel’s hair. He ate locusts and wild honey.

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And I want you to know something. I’m not sure of this. But I am certain to a certain degree that disciples always mimic their master. And I know from human nature and just the study of psychology that we often adopt the worst traits and habits in those we most admire first. So when you think about those followers of John the Baptist, you can just imagine what kind of people they might have been.

Now they’re not the only ones in the Ephesian church. You also have displaced Jews. It’s here that we read about Priscilla and Aquilla. And here we understand that this is a group of Jews that have been displaced from Rome under Emperor Claudius and displaced because of the great deal of disruption that has taken place in Rome because of the fights between Jews and Christians. And so there are displaced Jews and displaced Jewish Christians in Ephesus. So there are followers of John the Baptist and displaced Jews.

And then we notice that there is a Jewish/Gentile tension. And we discover that not necessarily from Acts 18 and 19, but we discover that from Ephesians chapter 2. Ephesians chapter 2 tells us. You often know that when Paul writes a letter he often writes not just good things and edifying things about theology and so on, but one of the things that he does very emphatically is that he deals with some of the problems that are in churches to whom he’s writing. And so when we find that he’s dealing with the Jew and Gentile problem, we understand that Ephesus had that problem. And so he’s addressing it, the Jew and Gentile tensions.

We also notice that there are some magicians in town. In Acts 19 we notice that there were those who practiced the black arts. Now this becomes really fascinating. And I’ll say more about it when we get to chapter 4.

But the interesting thing about it is that in the cult of Diana there was magic going on. And it’s interesting. And again, I’ll say more about it later. But I want you to just kind of put this picture together. When they found artifacts of the Diana cult, one of the things that they discovered was bulbous images of Diana. You understand what that means. I’m cloaking that for those young-years in our midst. I don’t think they got that, Tom.
(Laughter)

Sig: You mean she’s full-figured? (Laughter)

Jeff: Yeah. Thanks, Sig. (Laughter) And so Diana was a sexual figure. And there are also citations in extra-Biblical literature that Diana would be able to cast a spell, a love spell on someone. And so I want you to think about that in relationship to the Christian who still has a pull or an inclination to go and visit the cult of Diana you know, as he passes by, as he thinks about the times he used to have in that cultic practice.

I want you to understand that he wouldn’t have just understood it to be a battle of the flesh. But the Ephesian believer would have understood or at least believed that he was dealing with the magic of the cult itself. And so as he was taught more and more he would disabuse himself of that sense. But you can imagine the early believer who comes out of the Diana cult feeling as if there’s still a hold, a magical hold on him, and that he’s dealing with more than just the sinful flesh. Again, he would disabuse himself of that if he exposed himself more and more to the teaching of Paul.

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But that certainly would have been there. That was certainly there with Martin Luther in the early days of Luther’s own conversion. He believed that there were goblins in the woods and all of those sorts of things. So it’s interesting, what we deal with when we’re converted. Was there a hand?

Don: A love spell for Valentine’s Day?

Jeff: Oh! Love Potion No. 9. *(Laughter)* By the way, who’s got flowers for the wife?
(Laughter)

Jim O’Brien: Who’s getting flowers? *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Yeah.

Brave Man: And chocolate.

Jeff: Oh, chocolate! Ah! Good, good, good! *(Laughter)*

Bill: Ultimate date night at the church.

Jeff: Ultimate date night. All right! Over-achievers. All right. *(Laughter)* Don’t tell my wife I said that. *(Laughter)*

Now how does Paul describe this group of people that are in the church? Now this is just a portion of the people that are in the church. There are followers of John the Baptist. There are displaced Jewish Christians, displaced Jews. There is tension between them.

Brave Man: He’s describing the saints.

Jeff: He’s describing the saints, isn’t he? He describes the holy ones. He says, “*To the saints,*” to the holy ones.

Now the question is, what is a saint? Oh, yes.

Brave Man: Well, I was actually going to ask about this. When you read this it says, “*To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful.*” Is that to mean that there’s a mixture?

Jeff: You know what? Actually, that’s a great question. I’m going to address that.

Brave Man: You were going to define the saints.

Jeff: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Let me put that off for the first point.

Brave Man: All right, yes.

Jeff: So what is a saint?

Bishop Rodgers: Anybody who believes in Jesus.

Jeff: Yes. A saint is anybody who believes in Jesus. When you think about the word itself, when you think about the holy ones and you think about what holiness is, you think about something that’s set apart and something that’s devoted to. So when you think about the holy things of the temple, for instance, when you think about the holy things of the temple they are set apart from common use, and they are devoted to use in the temple. And so there’s a dual aspect to the idea of holiness.

And so when you think about the saints in Ephesus in terms of what is the architect type way of thinking about it, what is sort of the base line thought about it, you need to think about those who have been set apart from the world and devoted to God. And you find those people in the church, and this is a description of them.

Now that means that they are special to God. If they have been set apart by God from the world and are being devoted to Him, that obviously means that they are special to Him. And the thing that I think that we need to remember is that that’s easily forgotten.

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And this is the aspect that I think that I want us to focus in on today. I want us to focus in on that sense of what it is that we are.

Now I’m obviously going to talk to you not about imperatives. I am going to talk about some imperatives today. But I want us to talk about *our sense of what God has done for us*. And so that’s really somewhere between the indicative and imperative paradigm. I do want us to reflect a bit on what it is that God has done in setting us apart and devoting us to Himself. But I want us to think about that so that we can have a sense of it.

And here’s why. I said that it’s easily forgotten, isn’t it? What it is that God has done for us is easily forgotten, and how we’re supposed to respond to that, or the sense that we’re supposed to have of that. And I want us to focus on it.

What’s our direction? Well, we’re certainly going to think Biblically. We’re certainly going to think theologically. But I want us to think experientially today as well. So I want us to think about it. When I talk about our sense of saintliness, I want you to be asking yourself some experiential questions. You should be asking yourself, what’s my sense of saintliness? And there’s a lot that we’re going to talk about, and so on. So I certainly want us to think experientially about this, not just Biblically and theologically.

So let’s think about our sense of saintliness. And it says, *“To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus.”*

Now let’s set aside this phrase *“who are in Ephesus.”* So *“to the saints who are in Ephesus,”* let’s set that aside, and let’s focus on *“the saints who are faithful in Christ.”* These are saints in Ephesus. But let’s focus on the phrase *“to the saints who are faithful in Jesus Christ.”*

Now who are the faithful in Jesus Christ? I think it is something of a tautology. In other words, I think they are synonyms. I think that you can use this expression of this idea of *saints* and *faithful* to express a like idea. In other words, those who are saints,—so Robert, here’s your question answered, at least from my perspective,—the saints are the faithful. And if you see a faithful believer, then you say, “He’s a saint,” right? And so there’s a parallel between them.

In other words, let’s put it like this. Let’s say that you have a friend who says, “You know, I don’t believe in any of that doing stuff. I was told when I was saved that Jesus saved me because I said the prayer. But no one said anything about doing anything else. There was a guy that came to my door and ran me through this story. He said, ‘Do you believe it?’”

I said, “Well, I guess so. And, you know, I had two or three beers at the time.” *(Laughter)* “And it sounded good to me—forgiven of all your sins, you know? And so he told me that if I said this prayer that my sins would be forgiven and I’d be all good. I went back in the house, had three more beers, went to bed, woke up, and felt the exact same way.”

And here’s what you’re telling your friend. You say, “Well, wait a minute. Let’s think about this. If you said a prayer, and you’re forgiven and you belong to Jesus, that means you want to go to worship Him, right?”

“Well, not really.”

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Well, what am I describing for you? I’m describing somebody who has the indicatives of the gospel down pretty well. Jesus forgave me of my sins. But he has no inclination to do the imperatives.

And so you say, “Well, I know guys like that, or guys that approximate that, and they’re not faithful. Are they saints?” And you see, that’s exactly what Paul is getting at. You see, that’s a guy with the misunderstanding of the gospel, who doesn’t have the gospel experientially. He’s got a rudimentary, fundamental understanding of the gospel. It was painted for him in a story told to him at his doorstep. But his profession of faith is dubious.

And this is what Paul is communicating. Paul is already setting us up. What is Paul doing? In this statement Paul is setting us up. Why? He’s setting us up to understand the first three chapters. As saints this is what God has done. He has set you apart from the world and devoted you to Himself. And you are faithful. There are the last three chapters in Ephesians. The last three chapters expose to us what faithfulness looks like. And what Paul is saying to us is that you possess both together in Christ, because when you’re in Christ you possess all the benefits that are in Christ. This is what Calvin called “*the duplex gratia Dei*,” the twofold grace of God.

Let me put it on the board. (*Laughter*) Oh, there’s no board. (*Laughter*) So I possess the benefits, the forensic benefits, the forgiveness and the renovative benefits of sanctification. I possess them in Christ. I don’t just possess forensic benefits and say, “Sanctified benefits? I get those later on, you know.” No. When I’m in Christ I am both a saint and faithful.

So Paul is already setting us up for the twofold division of this book. So what questions do you have before we move on? Yes, Kirk?

Kirk Ellerbusch: In light of what you just said, first off we have to start by examining our own walk with the Lord. But what would you say if we see maybe a fellow person in our church who isn’t exhibiting the faithfulness aspect. How do you approach that when he’s claiming to know the Lord?

Jeff: Yes. Well, I think that what you do is to do it very carefully, right? So I think this kind of thing is best done by those closest to a guy, those who have authority over others, right? Even better yet, you know, I sat across from a guy. There was a guy in my congregation who left his wife. I tracked him down, I sat across from him, and I talked to him about his faith. And he said, “Jeff, I’m a Christian.”

I said, “Then go back to your wife.”

And he said, “Well, I’m not going back to my wife.”

I said, “You know, the problem is that you can’t have what God has done for you and blatantly ignore what He has called you to do as a result. What you do is, you call your profession of faith into question when you do that.”

There was a friend of mine. I knew a guy, believe it or not, and you probably will believe it. But I knew a guy at one point who was disciplined by his church. He was a minister of the gospel. And do you know what? I probably should not say this as I’m thinking about this. No, I’m not going to say that. But you get the idea. I just had a thought that I probably should not go that far. Even if I cloak it, it would not be good.

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Jim: Isn't it true that anyone who joins a church gets the title of a saint? They profess Jesus. We don't know that they're believers. We'll never know that they're believers, in one sense. We just know that they've professed the faith. And by a judgment of charity, a generous judgment, we say, “Okay, you're a believer. We don't know the secrets of their hearts and lives, of course. They may not be in fact converted, and so here's an exhortation. And so to say “the saints” is to say everyone who is part of the church, but with the implication that not everyone who is part of the church is part of Jesus. And so there's this judgment of charity. Then we have this theological distinction of the visible church—everybody who shows up—and the invisible church, because you can't see the heart; it's invisible—those who are really believers in Jesus. You always have this tension in the Bible, where this concept of sainthood is for everybody who is in the church. But not everybody in the church is faithful.

Jeff: Yes. Jim is making a good distinction to help us along. And here's what I would add to what Jim is saying. So you have the visible and the invisible church. And everybody who makes a profession of faith to the leadership and before the church is to be considered a believer.

However, let's say that you have that friend of yours in the church. He's made a profession of faith in the church, okay? How do you treat him? He's in the church; he's made a profession of faith. But he doesn't attend anymore. He doesn't do the things he's supposed to be doing, but he's in the church. We treat him according to his profession; that's what Jim is saying. We treat him charitably. And what do we do? As we treat him according to his profession, we call him back to his profession. It is up to those in leadership to put him out of the church if his profession is called into question to such a degree that it warrants a judgment of excommunication.

This is where I would encourage us to be very careful. As we are in the church with others, it's very easy for us to make personal judgments and pronouncements about people in the church. And sometimes we do that because the leadership will fail in its duty to put people out of the church that ought to be put out of the church. And so what happens?

I mean, for instance, it's like a husband and wife relationship. Why is the wife sometimes in a position where she makes all the decisions? Because the husband has abdicated his duty, so she is forced into a duty of relationship which she probably enjoys.

In the church it's the same way. If the church abdicates its leadership, the people will step into their place and start making personal pronouncements or judgments about other people's conversions. And that can lead to sedition in the church.

So the proper Biblical way to go about it is to treat those within the church charitably. And when you find someone not walking according to their profession, you step alongside of them and call them back to that profession. And you leave it to the leadership to handle the pronouncement of excommunication if it goes in that direction. I believe the bishop is up.

Bishop Rodgers: I think that another cause is that not everybody is presenting the full gospel. I mean, some people don't know that there's an imperative which flows inexorably from the grace that you've been given.

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Jeff: Yes, that’s right.

Bishop Rodgers: They really don’t. Consumerism is the big thing in our culture and we put the gospel into that.

Jeff: Yes, that’s correct.

Tom Hansz: What you’re saying then is that in the church there are Christians with all different ranges of faith.

Jeff: That’s right.

Tom: Some barely get across the threshold, and others are great examples to follow. Who are we to judge?

Jeff: Yes. And if we’re not in authority we ought not to be. But that’s not to say that we ought not to look at our friends with discernment, right? Because, for instance, if I had a friend like the one we described, and my friend says to me, “You are acting as if I’m not a believer,” I would say this. I’d say, “Look, I’m not saying that you’re not a believer. I’m just saying that at this point in your life, you’re not living according to your profession of faith, because here’s what a profession of faith is. A profession of faith is somebody who regularly seeks to worship God and lead his family into that worship. That’s fundamental, and I don’t see you doing that. I mean, I see you staying at home and maybe showing up quarterly. Do you know what I’m saying to you? That does not look like a person who is living according to his profession. So I’m not saying that you’re not a legitimate card-carrying Christian. What I’m saying is, you don’t look like you are by your conduct. And so I think that kind of discernment is fair game. Go ahead.

Ted Wood: Two observations on what has been said so far. First of all, all the comments have to do with the imperative, starting off with that we first have to look into our hearts. What about looking at the indicatives, which is do you have the correct understanding? And that’s critical. It’s interesting that all the comments have had to do with what I’m doing and what somebody else is doing. Secondly, people are talking about the unfaithfulness of others. Are you not fearful of your own unfaithfulness? When do you step out of the vault? So I just thought that was very interesting. We’re all very much tied into what am I going to do?

Jeff: Yes. And that’s what’s interesting, right? Take the log out of your own eye before you take the splinter out of someone else’s eye. Those are the kinds of cautions that were given in the Scriptures before we run afoul of them, right?

Sig: Like Ted and the Bishop, you’re presuming that there needs to be close relationships among brothers and sisters of the faith to be able to say what you’re saying—that we know them, we’re friends with them, we hang out with them, as opposed to just seeing them on Sunday. The people I just see on Sunday or on a Friday morning that I don’t know intimately, most of you guys look pretty faithful. And they talk the talk and they have the right “buzz words.” But when you get to know somebody, that’s when you can say what you’ve just said, Jeff. That presumes, then, that there is a fellowship, and we mention things to hold each other accountable. That’s a big gap in most churches.

Jeff: It’s a big gap in most churches. But I think that we have to be careful when we think about fellowship in the church. I think that if we’re thinking experientially about who talks to others, that means that we have to remember that the larger the church is,

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even when it's smaller, the larger the church is, the larger it grows, the more the church is going to look like a family reunion. And if you've ever been to a family reunion, you know that you don't talk to everyone there, right? Cousins gravitate to cousins and siblings gravitate toward their group and their cousins. And the older folks sit around. So everybody gravitates to their own group, right?

And yet, you know, if somebody sees Grandpa fall down in the grass, you know the younger cousins are going to run over immediately and help. So there's obviously an interest area that's involved in that, obviously in caring that extends beyond the interest groups of the family.

So I think that it's incumbent upon us to plug ourselves into any group that we're a part of. If we're standing aloof from the size of a church that's a hundred, 200 or a thousand, if we're standing aloof from it, I think the problem is that we've not plugged ourselves in. It could be that the church hasn't welcomed us. But the greater problem is that we've not plugged ourselves in sufficiently. Don?

Don: Jeff, I find it interesting that the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians addresses the Corinthians as saints. And yet the whole book is just filled with the problems and sins of that community. And yet Paul bends over backwards. He warns them obviously. But he never presumes that they're not saved. And I think that's rather interesting. And even the incestuous man who was excommunicated, Paul said that we're doing this so his soul can be saved.

Jeff: That's right.

Don: So it's interesting.

Jeff: You know, here's the other thing, too. And the preacher needs to learn this lesson or he'll fail. You know, the book of Hebrews is really a kind of pointed book. He calls them “*dull*” and “*sluggish*.” He says that “by now you ought to be teachers, but you're infants.” He says all of these things. And then he gets to the end of that section and he says, “You know, I'm calling on you like this because I think better of you than this. I have better thoughts concerning you.” In other words, wherever you are now, you'll rise to the occasion, because I know where you are. You're in Christ. And if you're in Christ, really in Christ, then you'll rise to the occasion. And so I think that's what Don is getting at. I think that when you look at anybody, whether it's the writer to the Hebrews, Peter, Paul or anyone, the posture of the pastor ought to be toward his church. Even if I have to say hard things to you, it's not that I'm saying them because I think that you're outside the pale. No, it's because you're in the pale, and I want all of you to respond according to your profession of faith.

It's like this. You punish your kid by talking to him harshly. What you're saying to him is not “You're not my son.” What you're saying to him is, “Since you're my son, I expect this from you.” And that's the idea.

Jim: Let me just say this. It's extremely unlikely that the people at church are going to talk about the deepest issues of their heart and tongue, because while confession is good for the soul, it's terrible for your reputation. And so we have to believe what we see and what people say. But we don't actually know what's going on in the secret private places with their lives. And so we just call them to that. But as the gentleman said across the

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room, the first place where you do that is yourself. Am I walking with Christ? And sometimes we have to have deep valleys in our lives. And so we need to ask ourselves, where am I? Am I really a believer, because I’m stuck in this situation. You’re so sick, and then you decide whether you’re going to trust Christ, repent and move on. But this whole business of who’s a saint and who is not is why we take people on what they say, because it’s very rare to know who they really, really are.

Jeff: Well, I would never want someone in a prayer group to stand up and say, “These are the things that I deeply struggle with.” But what I would want to happen is for that person to have someone in the church that he goes to and he says, “This is what I’m struggling with.” And so having a person or a group of people that one can open up and share with does not provide the devil his opportunity, because if we have no one with whom to share these things, what begins to happen is that a life of secrecy begins to develop, and then a double life grows up, right? And that double life is destructive to a profession of faith.

Bill: We talk about those who have fallen away. I have been rebuked. And I was going down the wrong path. In fact I was rebuked by a man in this room. And I feel so much closer to him for him having rebuked me. It changed my ways and made things right with the Lord. And so if it’s done rightly, and maybe not in front of a crowd or whatever, because I’m sure I don’t draw the crowds, you can overcome your struggles. So I confess it just to let you know.

Jeff: Well you have to know the person, right? Gregory of Nazianzus, writing in the early church in the 300s, he is the first guy to talk about the pastor as the physician of the soul, who has a tool bag that he can apply. He can apply the feather to one person and the coterie to another person. You have to know your people. You have to know how to apply your tools to your people.

I had a guy in church who would just give it to you. He would just give it to you. But he would expect me to give it to him in return.

So one time he got mad at me because I basically ended up parenting his daughter when he should have been parenting his daughter. And he got mad at me and stopped coming to church.

So I walked over to his house one night after he hadn’t shown up for church in three weeks. I pounded on his door and he said, “What do you want?” That’s what he said — “What do you want?”

And I said, “I have one message for you. If you don’t get your butt back in church next Sunday, I’m calling your butt before the session. That’s all I’ve got to say to you. Do you want to have me in?”

He goes, “Nope.” *(Laughter)* I walked away. He was in church the next Sunday. *(Laughter)* And at the end he goes, “I don’t like you very much.” *(Laughter)*

“You don’t have to.” *(Laughter)* Some people are just easy to read, right? Some people are a little more complex and you have to take great care.

All right, so let me finish this point. I want you to know that I knew this was going to provoke discussion, unlike the overview of the Old Testament. So we’re going back to the overview next week. *(Laughter)*

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Sig: Since we’re delayed, can I ask you one important question related to this?

Jeff: Sure.

Sig: Growing up in the church in high school and college, I never met anyone who came to know Christ who didn’t have some overwhelming, powerful experience that changed their life. Now maybe down the road, years down the road, they come into situations like you’re describing. But back to the Bishop’s earlier point, based on some of these examples we’ve used, there are men and women who haven’t heard the full gospel, where it has really touched their lives and changed their lives. I don’t think that’s what you’re talking about though, is it? It’s more or less someone who has had an experience in the church for a time. And I don’t know if that’s the situation in Ephesus.

Jeff: Well, I mean, I’ve been describing a guy who gets evangelized then falls away. But, for instance, I think that the people that you might describe there are people who have been raised in the church by covenant families, faithful to catechize their children and teach them the Scriptures. And then those children grow up and say, “You know what? I never knew a time when Christ’s death was not for me.” And they transition from making a profession of faith to a life of faithfulness. And that’s not fool proof, right? You should never think that just because I was born into a Christian family that means I’m going to be a Christian. That’s not it at all. But we shouldn’t be surprised to see sort of dramatic conversions, but also conversions where kids grow up and embrace the gospel from the earliest ages, where they transition into a life of faithfulness after a profession of faith. I think that’s just the norm.

So the latter explains the former. Saints are to exercise faith. And I’m just going to mention this. This is over against the Roman Catholic view. You remember when Mother Teresa was being considered for canonization as a saint. This is what the Archbishop of Calcutta said. “We must be sure that someone who is declared,” (and that means someone who has been declared by the church), “to be a saint is truly such.” So this is a view that’s set over against the Roman Catholic view that says that the church declares people to have this special position of sainthood upon their death, and are declared to be such by the church.

But we know from this text that God makes saints. The church doesn’t declare them.

Ted: I must object.

Jeff: Please.

Ted: First of all, the Roman Catholic doctrine teaches that all people who have been regenerated are saints. There are special heroes that they recognize as saints, like Mother Teresa. But there is not a Roman Catholic theologian who would say that people are not saints unless they’re physically—

Don: But in the popular way of thinking--,

Ted: It’s a popular way of thinking, but—

Jeff: Yes. But here’s the thing. The problem is that the Roman Catholic Church does anything it wants to it. It’s like guns against the wall; they pull them off when they need them. For instance, they are happy to allow the infallibility of the Pope as it’s popularly conceived to run amuck in the church. In fact, when papal infallibility first came about, they actually did not squelch any popular conception of it. So too with sainthood. I know

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there are many nuances to this whole thing. But they treat this very much like the popular conception. Go ahead.

Ted: Fair enough. But the church doesn't declare them. In fact, the church does declare people to be saints at baptism. Not everybody who comes through the baptismal process ends up getting baptized. I mean, just because you say that you want to get baptized, that doesn't automatically mean that you're going to get baptized; there's a scrutiny that has to take place. That has always been the case.

Jeff: So I would say that the church does not declare baptized people to be saved as much as it pronounces the name of the Lord upon them in baptism while they are developing in the church.

Ted: That's true.

Jim: That wouldn't be true for babies, though. If they're members of the church, their children get baptized.

Ted: It's just like when everybody says, “Well, I'm a saint.” If they're saints, there has to be a validation of it by the church.

Jeff: Sure, sure. Well, we're going to stop there. *(Laughter)* No, this is good, right?

Father in heaven, we give You thanks and praise for this day and the time You've given us. Father, thank You for the discussion that we've had about those in the church and how to care for others, and how to think about not only ourselves but others in the church. We pray that You'll bless us and our thoughtfulness regarding this subject. We ask it in Christ's name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. *(Applause)*