

“Ephesians”

Fall Series 1

Lesson 1

“Introduction to Ephesians”

Objective: To understand the message that Paul meant to convey to his audience and then to come to understand what that message means for us today as those living in the 21st century. We will seek to ascertain what this message means and to determine how we are intended to live our lives as those who are disciples of Christ in our modern context in light of the message it contains.

Materials: We will begin by examining carefully the Greek text of Ephesians, examine other early translations such as the Syriac Peshitta, and any other sources along with the historical setting of the first century Roman world that can help us to understand the original meaning. We will then examine early interpretations and understandings and examine commentaries and modern interpretations to enlighten our understanding for our contextual situation.

Procedures


- 1.** We will begin by translating the text from Greek into English
- 2.** We will examine the contextual setting and seek to understand as much as we possibly can about the historical, cultural and social settings in order to understand the message.
- 3.** From here we will seek to find out how to best apply the calling that Paul has for the early disciples to our modern contextual framework in order to do our very best to live as disciples of Christ in our modern era.
- 4.** We will seek to understand the attitudes that we are called to have as disciples and to reflect not only the actions that are the calling of a disciple, but also to learn how to form our attitudes to reflect our calling as followers of Jesus Christ.

The Letter to the Ephesians, like Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon is traditionally referred to as an “imprisonment epistle” (3:1; 4:1).¹ In our experiences with “quarantine” perhaps it is possible not only for us to relate more to Paul’s experience of prison, but also to recognize the way he did not allow his mission to be stopped, or hindered, by his circumstances. Paul powerfully used his circumstances (imprisonment) to continue to advance the Gospel.² Every time he had the opportunity to do so he proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the letter that we know today as *Ephesians* is one of those proclamations from his imprisonment. This letter was intended to provoke the followers of Jesus Christ to be more faithful in their following of Him. As we undertake this study it is my hope and aspiration that our study will do the same for all of us today.

In a variety of ways Ephesians will have exerted an influence upon the early Christians. Paul’s words in Ephesians will have been couched in terminology and in a contextual framework that will have been understood by his audience in the ancient world. It

¹ Victor Paul Furnish, “Ephesians, Epistle to the,” in David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 2 (New York NY: Doubleday, 1992), pp. 535-542.

² Philippians 1:12-14; Acts 16:22-34. 24:10-21; 26:1-29.



is therefore important for us to understand something of that contextual framework as we begin this study lest we misunderstand Paul's words and misapply them as if he were writing to a twenty-first century audience living in the United States. The culture of the ancient world differed markedly from our own culture and understanding of how things work and even the means of convincing others uses different means and methodology.

There are some unique aspects to ancient Ephesus, and the Roman world, that can aid us in understanding more correctly the message that Paul intended to convey to his readers. It is appropriate for us to first do our best to understand the message of Paul for his original audience before we can then appropriately translate the meaning of that message for us today. I cannot emphasize this enough. I have heard people say that the Bible means what it says and says what it means. There are a number of over simplifications and errors in judgment and just plain good common sense. Context is critical for understanding and without considering carefully the context of any form of communication will lead to misunderstanding and confusion of that message.

From the outset of our study there is controversy and confusion with regard to this ancient work. We call the book *Ephesians*, but have you ever wondered where such a title originates. It was not the title written on the top of Paul's letter the way we might envision. This is a title that comes from the first line of the writing, which is a way that many ancient documents will have received their title. For instance, *Genesis* received its title from the very first word in the writing which in Hebrew is *Bereshith*, but for us in English we did not accept this title. In the Old Greek translation of this book the title was changed to *Genesis* based upon the phrase "the generations of heaven and earth."³ Not as simple or straightforward as many of us imagined it to be. When we begin to investigate and seek deeper understanding of things it is most often the case that complexity rises, and the more understanding grows so too complexity grows.

Such is certainly the case with understanding the Bible as the word of God. It is a writing made up of multiple writings written over more than a thousand years, with numerous human authors involved, living in many different cultural and historical

³ Genesis 2:4. **These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.** NRSV.

settings. These writings seek to communicate to many audiences in ways that seek to engender and cultivate trust in a being that is so beyond being simple that this is perhaps the greatest understatement that could ever be made. The greatness and complexity of God are beyond all else and one of the reasons that “faith” is so crucial is that we are never going to figure out all the complexities of God. He is beyond our understanding, but in the midst of all of this the calling of God is clear, that message is a calling to trust Him, to believe in Him, to understand that He knows what is best and pursues that, always in the midst of our confusion and misunderstanding. Let us move onto exploring now the letter that we know as *Ephesians*.

There is some dispute among scholars as to whether the Epistle to the Ephesians was actually written specifically to the Ephesian Christians. The earliest New Testament manuscripts (hand-written copies of the Bible): including $\text{p}46$ (University of Michigan, Date 200-225), \aleph^* (Codex Sinaiticus, British Museum, 4th century), B^* (Codex Vaticanus, Vatican Library, 4th century), 424^c (Miniscule 424, 11th century, Austrian National Library, Vienna) 1739 (Miniscule 1739, 10th century, Great Lavra, Athos),

as well as manuscripts mentioned by Basil (4th century) and the text used by Origen (2nd to 3rd century) do not include the phrase “in Ephesus” (ἐν Ἐφῆσῳ) in their writings about this letter or references from this letter. There are certain internal features of the letter along with Marcion’s (85-160 A.D.) designation of this letter as “To the Laodiceans,” along with the absence in Tertullian (155-240 A.D.) and Ephraem (306-373 A.D.) of an explicit quotation of the words “in Ephesus” (ἐν Ἐφῆσῳ) that have led many commentators to make the suggestion that letter was intended as an encyclical, with copies being sent to various churches, “... of which Ephesus was the chief.”⁴

Trebilco would add that he does not believe that this letter was actually written to the Ephesians due to the lack of any personal greetings and the lack of any details about the audience in the letter.⁵ He believes that Paul would have greeted those that he knew in Ephesus, as he knew many people quite well at that location. This along with the manuscript evidence would certainly seem to leave this question open. With regard to the evidence of

⁴ Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Corrected Edition (London: United Bible Societies, 1975), p. 601.


⁵ Paul Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), p. 89.

Marcion; Tertullian writes as if Marcion professed to have tampered with the title as a result of his most diligent inquiry.⁶ If that is the case then his evidence is then highly suspect. Tradition has come down to us that ascribes the letter to those “in Ephesus” (ἐν Ἐφέσῳ). Though this evidence may be far from what we would like, all other evidence is from silence, which is an incredibly weak argument, or speculation which, without further evidence is weaker still. We will refer to the letter as *Ephesians* and treat it as if at the very least they were one of the groups that were to receive this writing.

As we move on it should be noted that a great many modern scholars would ascribe authorship of this letter to a disciple of Paul and not to Paul himself.⁷ To be fair there are some good points made by many of these authors that are interesting and sometimes tedious and speculative. After examination of the arguments, and the evidence they all seem inadequate to

⁶ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1970), p. 508. Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*, v.17 - “On the Epistle to the Laodiceans.¹ [Eph. 1 and 2.] By the church's truth we have it that this epistle was sent to the Ephesians, not the Laodiceans: Marcion has been at pains at some time to falsify its title, in this matter too an industrious discoverer of new ways. But the title is of no concern, since when the apostle wrote to some he wrote to all, and without doubt his teaching in Christ was of that God to whom the facts of his teaching rightly belong.”

⁷ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary series, Vol. 42 (Dallas TX: Words Books, Publisher, 1990), p. 7.



overthrow the overwhelming external attestation of Paul as being the author of this letter.⁸ In this study we will approach our study by accepting that Paul is indeed the author of this letter and that Ephesus was at least one of the destinations of this letter.

We will now undertake an examination of some information regarding the city of Ephesus. This was a letter written to real people living in a real place in a real cultural context. In the midst of all of this, Paul was seeking to guide these people into a deeper discipleship of Jesus Christ, to encourage them to think like Him, act like Him and react like Him. Whether or not the letter was written to Ephesus or a wider audience in Asia Minor is not in my opinion greatly significant. The cultural situation of Ephesus will have displayed many significant affinities with the rest of the culture of Asia Minor. As the capital it set the context for a great deal of the cultural context of the entire province of Asia. This city was a very influential and powerful force in its time and place.

The city of Ephesus is regularly mentioned in numerous ancient literary sources. The first serious archaeological explorations of Ephesus were undertaken from 1863-1874 and

⁸ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, p. 507.

there have been numerous explorations since that time giving us a detailed knowledge of a great many facets of life in this city. From about 1000 to 550 B.C. the city of Ephesus was located at the northern base of Mount Pion, near to the location where the Cayster River met the Aegean Sea. From 550 B.C., the city was relocated to a location near the Artemisium. Due to subsidence of the land in this area Lysimacahus founded a new city in 281 B.C. on higher ground in the general area of the place where the city was located in the imperial period (the time of Paul).⁹ The people were reluctant to move to the new location until Lysimacahus blocked the sewers during a downpour of rain and this inundated the city. Despite their reluctance they moved then. He also built a wall to fortify the city; the wall extended more than five miles and a new harbor was also established.¹⁰

In the third century B.C., the city was under authority of the Seleucids and then later came under the authority of the Ptolemies of Egypt. The city was independent only briefly from

⁹ Paul Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius*, pp. 11-12.

¹⁰ Strabo, *Geography* 14.1.21.

202 to 197 B.C.¹¹ After the defeat of Antiochus III the city was subject to the rule of Eumenes II in 188 B.C and appears to have flourished under Pergamene rule. Attalos II of Pergamum sought to improve the harbor by trying to reduce the silting problem that was a persistent issue. He made the entrance to the harbor narrower through the construction of a mole, but this made the silting problem worse. Ephesus came under Roman control after Attalos III bequeathed his kingdom to the Romans in 133 B.C., although Ephesus was granted its freedom by Rome. In the war that took place between Mithridates and Rome, Ephesus sided with Mithridates and even tore down many of the Roman statues in the city. For this they paid the penalty not long afterwards.¹²

Mithridates made Ephesus his headquarters and ordered that all Romans and Italians living in Asia should be killed. The Ephesians complied and even executed those who had taken refuge in the sacred precincts of the temple of Artemis, disregarding the ancient right of asylum of the sanctuary. Ephesus was deprived of its freedom in 84 B.C. by Sulla after he defeated

¹¹ David Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, Vol. 1 (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950), pp. 76. David Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, Vol. 2 (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950), 933 n27, 936-937 n31.

¹² Paul Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius*, p. 12.

Mithridates and the city of Ephesus did not regain its freedom again until 47 B.C. The economic hardships imposed on the city by Sulla for their rebellion greatly affected their economy for some number of years. During the rule of Julius Caesar he twice saved the money deposited at the temple of Artemis from being seized. Ephesus also became a temporary centre of resistance in the conflict between Octavian and Mark Antony. Mark Antony and Cleopatra spent the winter of 33/32 B.C. in the city.¹³ The people of Ephesus seem to have had a real knack for being on the losing side in a conflict.

After the victory of Octavian (later known as Augustus Caesar) at Actium in 31 B.C. Ephesus seems to have remained at least nominally free. Later, Ephesus was elevated to the status of capital of Asia in place of Pergamum by the Emperor Augustus. During the reign of Augustus, Ephesus experienced tremendous growth as a result of its participation in the *Pax Romana* (Roman Peace). In 29 B.C. Augustus granted Ephesus the right to dedicate sacred precincts to *Dea Roma* (the goddess Roma) and *Divus Iulius* (the deified Julius Caesar). The city also received the much prized

¹³ Paul Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius*, pp. 12-13.

title as “the first and greatest metropolis of Asia.”¹⁴ Strabo speaks of the significance of Ephesus at this time (around A.D. 20) writing that “the city, because of its advantageous situation, ... grows daily, and is the largest emporium in Asia this side of Taurus.”¹⁵

You may be wondering why all of this background for Ephesus? It is important for us to understand that Ephesus was an incredibly important city in the ancient world. It stood at the crossroads of culture, commerce, banking, and religions. This was a city that greatly affected the rest of the world, especially Roman Asia, in numerous ways. It was a very cosmopolitan city bringing together influences from far and wide, a place where new ideas, new religious ideas, were incredibly prominent and this was a place where many tested these new ideas on the populace there. This was an ideal place for the proclamation and dissemination of the good news about Jesus and the Apostle Paul, the emissary of Jesus, who spent a great deal of time here and indeed it is said the good news was heard by everyone living in the province of Asia while Paul was in Ephesus.¹⁶

¹⁴ Paul Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius*, pp. 13-14.

¹⁵ Strabo, *Geography* 14.1.24 (641), cf. also 12.8.15.

¹⁶ Acts 19:8-10.

Ephesus was a growing and prosperous urban area where a great deal of building was taking place. One of the most notable structures in the city was the Temple of Artemis, which was far more than just a place of worship, it was also a banking centre. If you wanted to keep your money safe this was a great place to do this. Large deposits of money were kept in the temple of Artemis. They loaned money and managed that money to bring great wealth to those who invested, as well as to the institution of the temple itself.¹⁷

The dimensions of the temple (during Paul's day) were 377 feet by 235 feet.¹⁸ It contained 127 columns, each approximately 2 meters in diameter and 20 meters high. It dominated the city with its size, grandeur and influence. Even when the city was attacked and fell, no one dared to sack the Temple of Artemis, or to touch the funds deposited there (they were afraid of the goddess, or perhaps her followers). Today the ancient temple lies in ruins in a swampy area that has protected much of the rubble from looters and the many earthquakes that shake the area.

¹⁷ Richard Oster, "The Ephesian Artemis as an Opponent of Early Christianity," in Theodor Klauser and Ernst Dassman, eds., *Jahrbuch Für Antike und Christentum* (Münster Westfalen: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1976), pp. 24-44.

¹⁸ John McRay, *Archaeology and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 1991), p. 256.



This was the most secure place to deposit money in the ancient Roman world.¹⁹ Ephesus was the site of Paul's longest missionary tenure as presented in Acts, but was also the base of operations for Paul and his associates as they spread the Gospel into the adjacent cities and regions of Asia Minor.²⁰ Artemis was probably the most popular of the Hellenic deities and was worshipped wherever the Greeks settled. Known by the Romans as Diana after being identified with the Italian goddess of that name, she was considered to be the goddess-proper of human childbirth. She represented what the Greek male both admired and feared in the female.²¹

Some scholars believe that it was from Ephesus that the Gospel of John, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John were written, though later than Paul was there.²² This was also the city where Timothy was left behind to help the church and where he was when Paul wrote

¹⁹ Richard Oster, "The Ephesian Artemis as an Opponent of Early Christianity," in Theodor Klauser and Ernst Dassman, eds., *Jahrbuch Für Antike und Christentum* (Münster Westfalen: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1976), pp. 24-44.

²⁰ Richard E. Oster, Jr., "Ephesus," pp. 542-549.

²¹ Hubert M. Martin, "Artemis," in David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 1 (New York NY: 1992), pp. 464-465.

²² Paul Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius*, pp. 237-292.

1 and 2 Timothy to him.²³ This City would be incredibly important in the development and spread of Ancient Christianity. It stood at the head of the list of the seven churches of Asia that are mentioned in Revelation.²⁴ They were noted by John as people that did not put up with those that were evil. They were commended for their endurance and testing of those who claimed to be apostles but were liars.²⁵ They were chastised and warned because they "... let go of the love you had at first."²⁶ It is in this contextual milieu that Paul wrote what we today call Ephesians.


No one knows how many Christians there were in Ephesus during the first century. All that we can be certain of is that there were at least two house churches, with the average house being able to hold a maximum group size of about 30 people. I think that sometimes we allow our imaginations to make us think that the churches to whom Paul wrote went to church that looked very much like our church looks today. In this time, and for a possibly another two hundred years after, there were no church building as

²³ 1 Timothy 1:3, 2 Timothy 4:12.

²⁴ Revelation 2:1.

²⁵ Revelation 2:2-3.

²⁶ Revelation 2:4.



we think of them. There were perhaps a few houses that were modified as church meeting places, but never on the grand scale that we now see in European churches of later years. They met together in houses, some large, some small, but houses in this first century.


You can imagine that such meetings would have far less formality and rigidity than we are accustomed to today. This was someone's home and thus very different in environment and demeanor than most of us have experienced. When Michele and I moved to Washington England in August of 1989 we, and the other 3 families that moved there with us began meeting for church in our homes. That was an extremely different experience than we had ever before experienced. Communion was different, preaching was different, singing was different. One of the things that happened because of meeting in homes was that we became much more conscious of the neighbors. Some liked our singing and meetings, while others were far less than enthusiastic. It is to groups meeting like this that Paul wrote not only this letter, but all of his letters.

The letter to the Ephesians falls into two distinct sections though they are not totally separate from one another. Chapters 1-3 and chapters 4-6, with the “Amen” (ἀμήν) at the end of chapter 3²⁷ which marks a transition to direct exhortation at the beginning of chapter 4. There is a clear demarcation between these two sections and maintaining a recognition of these two parts is extremely important in understanding content, structure, genre and style. These two parts reflect the two major concerns of Paul often described loosely as theological or doctrinal, and ethical. Chapters 1-3 are the ones described as theological or doctrinal, but this does not do justice either to the form or content of these chapters.²⁸

Contained within these first three chapters there is a framework of extended thanksgiving that contains a reminder to the Gentile Christian readers of the privileges and status that they enjoy as believers in Christ and as members of the Church. This was meant to convey to them the significance of their place in God’s plan for history and the cosmos. The second part of the letter then makes an appeal for its readers to live in the church

²⁷ Ephesians 3:21.

²⁸ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. xxxvi.



and in the world in the light of these realities and not simply to be merged into the culture of the surrounding ethos.²⁹ Those who are “in Christ” are to stand apart from this culture in ways that reflect their allegiance to following “the way” of Jesus. They are to live in the light of the great honor and gift that God has bestowed upon them, and not to assimilate to the culture in the ways that most were encouraged to do in the Roman Empire.

In chapters 1-3 the calling is outlined and described, while in chapters 4-6 they are challenged to live into that calling, to live in a manner that is worthy of the call they have received.³⁰ There is a tremendous call for unity in this letter. Paul understood that there was perhaps no greater threat to the church than disunity. As human beings it is incredibly easy for us to see the world and the church from our own perspective and to come to the conclusion that our perspective is correct and indeed the only correct perspective. Such a narrow understanding shatters unity and thus destroys the assembly of Christ’s people; it destroys the missional perspective of the church and creates new agendas that

²⁹ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. xxxvi.

³⁰ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. xxxvi.

keep the church very busy indeed, but not busy fulfilling their God-given destiny as followers of Jesus.

Paul seeks to encourage his readers by leading them into understanding the nature and scope of what they had to be grateful for as Christians. If they could come from this vector of gratefulness then they could then be challenged to live in a manner that was “worthy” of their calling. Gratitude makes a great foundation for unity, not doctrine or ethics. These things should grow out of the foundation not form the foundation. Certainly ethics and doctrine are important, but they must be set in proper perspective upon this foundation of understanding the great and matchless gift bestowed upon those that God has adopted as His children.³¹ As children of God there are different expectations now and those expectations are expected to rise from an understanding of the grace granted to these children. Paul wrote, **“You are saved by God’s grace because of your faith. This salvation is God’s gift. It’s not something you possessed. ⁹ It’s not something you did that you can be proud of. ¹⁰ Instead, we are God’s accomplishment,³² created in**

³¹ Ephesians 1:5.

³² In other versions this section is translated as “you are God’s workmanship.” ESV.

Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives.”³³

As we conclude our study for today we should contemplate the nature of God’s gift to us, His grace, His calling, and His faithfulness. It is in the light of these things that we can begin to comprehend the message that Paul had for His readers.

Everything we are and everything we do should be infused with this understanding of the grace of God. It is through that grace that we live and move and have our being as His followers. It is in that grace that our hope rests. Grace must be a hallmark of all who would truly live as followers of Jesus Christ.

³³ CEB.

Synopsis

The City of Ephesus was an incredibly important and influential City in the ancient world. Understanding the culture and milieu of Ephesus can give us a window into life in ancient Asia Minor and perhaps help us understand Paul's writings more effectively. Despite the fact that there is a great deal of uncertainty regarding aspects of this letter the message has proven inspirational to followers of Jesus for many centuries. Having some understanding of that ancient culture will aid us in understanding the message in a way that will enlighten our ability to translate that message into our modern contextual framework and apply it more appropriately.

Ephesus was a City of commerce, trade and banking. This presented unique temptations and challenges to those living in the City and in the province. In order to counter these influences Paul chose to help them to understand what God had done for them and the place that they were now called to live into as His children. He sets this as the foundation for motivating them to change their behavior and to live as God's children because of this hope. This hope, that is based purely and resoundingly in the



“grace” of God, will act as the foundation for all that will follow in chapters 4-6.

In the second half of Ephesians Paul will challenge His readers to live lives that are worthy of their calling as should be exhibited by their behavior and their unity. The basis of that unity is centered upon the “grace” of God that was bestowed upon those who are now “in Christ.” Paul calls upon those readers to live into that “grace” in a manner that will enable them to withstand the temptations that they will face living in the midst of a world that holds a very different perspective on what is important and on what basis life, and people, should be valued and the way we should treat others.

Questions

1. Have you ever misunderstood something that someone said because what you heard was heard out of context?
2. How would you clear up such confusion?
3. Why do you think Paul wrote letters to churches in the first century?
4. What are some ways that people can influence others positively today?
5. Why do you think Paul's letter to the Ephesians has had such an enduring influence upon people through the years?
6. What are things that encourage you to trust others?
7. How much do value traditions? Why do you value them, or not value them?
8. When you write a letter do you always use a similar structure in your letter or similarity in your wording? Why or why not?
9. What are some ways that you weigh evidence to decide the truth of something that you hear or read? Why?
10. What are some unique cultural aspects of living in West Texas?
11. In what ways does having an understanding of history aid in understanding of people and their culture?
12. What are some things that you see as culturally acceptable by much of our society today, but unacceptable for a follower of Jesus?
13. What are some ways that the way you live seeks to express loyalty to Jesus?

14. What are some ways that the City of Lubbock exerts influence on the wider culture of Texas? How might that relate to the influence that Ephesus might have on Asia Minor?
15. How important are banks in the everyday life of people? What influence do you think they might have had in Ephesus?
16. Why do you think the ancient people of Asia Minor found the Temple of Artemis to be such a safe place to deposit their money?
17. How would meeting for church in a house make the experience of church different from meeting in a church building?
18. How does being thankful change people?
19. How would you define “grace?”
20. How is “grace” foundational to being a follower of Jesus?
21. What are some ways “grace” promotes unity?
22. What are some ways that you seek to make “grace” a hallmark of your dealings with others?

To Take Home

What is Important to know?

It is important to know that the Letter to the Ephesians has inspired Christians for hundreds of years. As you think about the message of Ephesians and the influence that it has had through the years what are some things that influence you today?

Where is God in these words?

God is seen in the message of Ephesians challenging people to see the world from a different perspective. God has chosen people to be adopted as His children in order to accomplish His plan. How do you seek to live into the challenge of being a part of God's plan?

What does any of this mean for how I live my life?

The Letter to the Ephesians was meant to challenge its initial audience to live in the light of what God had done for them through His Son Jesus Christ. He had a plan for His creation and He had chosen them to be agents in accomplishing that plan. His choosing of these people was an act of pure grace, there was no way that the people were ever going to be earn the favor of God; instead God gave His great favor as a gift. In light of this, how do you think this understanding should challenge the way we treat, and interact with other people?

What is the word of God calling us to do?

The word of God is calling us to trust God. In the midst of our anxiety and uncertainty we can be certain that we can trust God. There is not much else that we can have such trust regarding. Sometimes it is the case that we can begin to forget these things. This is one of the reasons that we are challenged to meet together on a regular basis; so that we can remind one another of who we are, and more importantly of who God is, and what He has done for us. What are some ways that other followers of Jesus can remind you of these things?