

### **Numbers 6:22-27**

<sup>22</sup> The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>23</sup> "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying: Thus you shall bless the Israelites: You shall say to them:

<sup>24</sup> The LORD bless you and keep you;

<sup>25</sup> the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;

<sup>26</sup> the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

<sup>27</sup> "So they shall put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them."

Says the Lord.

### **Ephesians 1:1-2**

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

To the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus:

<sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Luke 16:19-31**

"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. <sup>20</sup> And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, <sup>21</sup> who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores.

<sup>22</sup> The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. <sup>23</sup> In Hades, where he was being tormented, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side.

<sup>24</sup> He called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in agony in these flames.'

<sup>25</sup> But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things and Lazarus in like manner evil things, but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. <sup>26</sup> Besides all this, between you and

us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.'

<sup>27</sup> He said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house— <sup>28</sup> for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.'

<sup>29</sup> Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.'

<sup>30</sup> He said, 'No, Father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'

<sup>31</sup> He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.' "

### **REPEAT EPHESIANS PASSAGE**

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God.

That's it, I could almost, almost end the sermon and sit down.

Almost.

This one sentence sums up the 13 letters of Paul. It sums up what Paul thinks / feels about himself and about us.

We start with the very first word - his name. It is easy to skip. What's in a name? I just made that up!

Paul. But we know he was born Saul. Saul is a Jewish name. And he was a great Jewish believer. A PK, pastor's kid from a family of Pharisees. From the elite tribe of Benjamin. A Pharisee with no equal.

Educated by Gamaliel the greatest rabbi of all-time – Like having doctorates at both Duke Divinity School and Princeton Seminary. Minute follower of the Law of Moses. Go to guy of the Council. All his history was important. It all contributed to make him who he was right now: An apostle of Christ Jesus.

He is Saul of Tarsus, can never be anything but.

He is also Paul. This is his Greek name. And the name with which he now identifies himself.

He is saying, I am Jewish, no denying. I claim it. But after I was called by Christ Jesus himself on the road to Damascus, I realized, this Greek name, Paul, was given to me so that all people may be secure in the fact, that Jesus calls ALL people to Himself.

I go by the name of Paul, to literally show that: There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for WE are all one in Christ Jesus. We belong to Christ, so we are all Abraham's descendants), and siblings in Christ.

Names were hugely important in the ancient world, and still today.

Telemarketers may not cherish your name, but God and the People of God do. To the computer calling at 7:30 on a Saturday morning, I might be Stef-fan Norful. Most of the time I am good old Pastor Steve, but I was intentionally named Stephen. S-T-E-P-H-E-N.

My great-grandma intentionally named me after Stephen, the church's very first deacon. And I am proud that I was a deacon before I was ever a minister.

What I am about to say isn't to brag on my sons (much...a little), but to show how important our names are.

Kim and I are so proud, our oldest son, Charles *Stephen*, has lived into the name, hearing the call of God and Covenant PC, he was ordained as a deacon / servant of God. It is not just a nice thing he does because someone on Nom Comm couldn't find anyone else. He was a great active deacon. He found his ministry calling.

Our youngest son trains at the Olympic Training Center in Chula Vista. He is one of the top 6 male archers in America. The last time we were at the Center, after a shoot, we were in the equipment room and we were waiting (as usual) for our youngest son, Matthew Martin to put his equipment away.

One of the dads whose son was attending an archery camp at the Center, peeked in as he walked by. He stopped and looked at us funny and asked, "Are you his parents?" Doing the head not thing at Matthew Martin.

Yes...

"I just wanted to say..." And he complimented our son, not on his proficiency as an archer, but as a person whom he points out to his son as a role model.

Kim's response startled me. "He was named after a very kind man."

Martin Languis was our across the street neighbor when we were first married and the ruling elder who taught Kim how to be a pastor in a gentle, loving way in her first call.

YOU have been named after the God of all creation.

Your name can be Frank, Kelly, Joy, Mike, Joy, Lorelei or Sue - AND your deepest true name is Child of God. Like Saul / Paul, claim it, identify yourself by it. And work at living into the name.

Paul's first self-identifier. I am Paul, a Christian.

Whenever I celebrate a baptism, I always ask the parents or the person to be baptized: What name do you give your child? What is your name? I get a funniest look, "You know us. What a dumb question."

We baptize by name because Christ claims each of us by name.

Then as congregations, we promise / make covenant to help the newly baptized live into the name Child of God.

Paul (Jew, Greek, slave, free, male, female, a name representing all the Children of God), an Apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.

Apostle of Christ Jesus. The very defining moment of Paul's life was being knocked down on the road to Damascus. It is one of the most repeated stories in the whole Bible. Between Acts and the Epistles, it is told and retold 6 times.

Paul was incredibly blessed in that the Risen Christ spoke directly to him, calling him to faith and ministry. Most of us have not had this blessed experience, but here you are by the will of God. Here you are! Joyce, Becky, Libby, Christian, Mac, Sandy...all of us have been called to faith.

You have been called by name by Almighty God.

You have been called by name by God who has known you by name from before time even existed. You are God's beloved. God has always protected you in the shadow of God's wings. God became human for you. God died and is risen for you – YOU!

I (say your name out-loud) am a child of God. Let's do it again...

And you are also an Apostle. A Sent One of God.

From the Damascus experience to his martyrdom, Paul spent the rest of his life, going all over the place telling people about Christ. Helping others live into the name Child of God, and always living it out the best he could.

And Paul knew he deserve it. He wasn't worthy. He readily admits how hard it is to live into being "an Apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God."

In 2Corinthians 12, he also readily admits, it's COOL being an Apostle.

Paul never lacked for ego strength, He was basically saying, I am good at it. I enjoy, thrive and help others thrive as they get to know Christ.

But he wrote, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

Much ink has been spilt over what the "thorn in the flesh" may have been. Some have even theorized, it was a bad back because of the fall he took to the Damascus Road. Others, bad eyesight, because of the bright light of Christ during the Damascus thing. I have read about any thorn in the flesh malady you can imagine.

The theory, and it is only a theory, that I like best is that the thorn was not actually in Paul's flesh, but in his psyche. The pain he constantly feels is the guilt he feels over aiding and abetting in the murder of Deacon Stephen. Your remember, Saul, the ace Pharisee, go to guy of the Council, held the coats of those who stoned Stephen to death.

Dr. Earl Palmer, one of my heroes in preaching, theorizes, Paul never got over the guilt of that moment. He carried around the agony of knowing he was guilty, and that guilt spurred on his ministry, and was a living reminder to him and

a living witness to everyone that Jesus forgives us, even when we don't forgive ourselves.

We all have burdens and regrets. We do. I forgive you, a lot faster and easier I forgive myself. I am NOT alone in that.

Paul carried the sting of his regret as THE persecutor of the church of Christ. But it didn't stop him from becoming an Apostle - a sent one of Christ. It kept him humble **but didn't stop him.**

I don't know about you, but I too carry my regrets around – instances of failing Jesus and His people. I often think, Lord, I am not worthy. I know that. And if I only listened to this voice (pointing at my chest) I wouldn't be in this or any church this or any other morning. I couldn't pray, because I wouldn't believe I am a Child of God. I would always carry the burden that I am not enough.

Yet, by the will of God, I am an Apostle of Christ Jesus. You are apostles of Christ Jesus. Are you worthy? No. Are you loved and called? Yes.

You, my brothers and sisters can and will do it because in Christ you are enough.

I keep fighting voices in my mind that say I'm not enough  
Every single lie that tells me I will never measure up

You say I am loved, strong, held. I am yours. I am enough.

I want you to hear again the voice of God saying You are Enough:  
Say your name. Say it...I ( ) am an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.

End of story. You just summed up all of who you are. And you are enough.

I literally once had this perfect truth hit me right between the eyes. Literally, right between the eyes.

You will find out I am a walker and I pace. It's what I do.

One day, I was pacing around and around the Fellowship Hall at Covenant PC in C/S when I was serving as their interim pastor.

Covenant is a larger, busy church with several of the parachurch groups in Colorado Springs using the building. There is literally a group in the Fellowship Hall about four nights a week.

That day as I paced, I noticed white board that usually lives in there was written on. Obviously, young children had been drawing on it. White boards are kid magnets aren't they? So, I got the cleaning stuff and a rag, and set to work. I turned it around to clean the back and "You Are Enough" hit me right between the eyes. Don't know who wrote this or where it came from.

Thank the Lord for cameras on our phones. Help me, please share these with all of you

Look at how many ways it is affirmed in the Bible that YOU ARE ENOUGH!

Side one is the picture I took. Side two is the listing of the 73 Biblical statements in alphabetical order that claim for us, We Are Enough!

This one, three-word sentence sums up what God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit thinks of you. Claims for you.

Take it home and, put it on the fridge, or next to your chair. Read it over and over again. Read for yourself the truth: I am what I am by the Grace of God. And He thinks you are pretty great.

I asked Lorelei to affirm God thinks you are great by singing "You Say." Don't just hear her beautiful voice – listen to the lyrics.