



of Biblical Studies
Ephesians 2:4-9

THE GOD WHO SEEKS THE SHUNNED

Course Commentary



1 John 4:17

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Course Requirements

- 1) Read Course Commentary
- 2) Take Mid Term Exam
- 3) Take Final Exam
- 4) Submit Exams to Dr. Gray @ graceESBS@bellsouth.net
- 5) Dr. Gray will email you your Course Grade

The God Who Seeks The Shunned

Chapter 1: The Woman At The Well

She waited patiently until the coast was clear and the service had stated. She didn't want to run into any of the other women who had made it painfully clear to her that her presence was repugnant to them. She could no longer stand the gossip, snide remarks, and disapproving eyes. Several weeks ago as she was nearing the sanctuary, the other women, fully aware that she was within earshot, began warning one another to keep their husbands far away from her.

“She’s a seductress!” one had whispered loudly. “Do you know that she has had five husbands from other churches?” Another woman had chimed in: “And the man whom she’s living with now is not even her husband.”

Nursing each other’s insecurities, they began to make all kinds of baseless accusations about her.

“She’s a loose woman!”

“She’ll steal your husband in a heartbeat.”

“Don’t you be taken in by her innocent doe eyes and beguiling smile!”

Juicy variations of her “husband stealing” prowess had soon spread throughout the church where she lived like a swarm of locusts, devouring every remaining shred of her dignity.

She had quickly become an outcast in the church. No one dared to befriend her. Since moving to this church, she had tried everything to keep her past under wraps.

However, once the news broke, no one cared to hear her side of the story. She was pigeonholed as the woman with a shady past. The verdict was already in— she was a home wrecker! What else was there to know?

It had been weeks since she had spoken to anyone. Wild stories about why she had had five husbands spread virally through the church grapevine. To insulate herself and avoid further contact with the other ladies, she had devised a system. Since all the women would be visiting at the reception table between Sunday School and the service, she would only take her seat in the service, after it had started. She would much rather a few minutes of the service than bear the heat of their scorn and ridicule or the cuts of their razor sharp tongues. Every Sunday since then, she had come quietly to the church, interacting with no one at all, and faded back into nonexistence after getting her fill of the life giving words each week.

Unbeknownst to her, on this day, as she was waiting patiently for the service to begin, the Sun of righteousness was already by the entrance waiting for her.

A Savior Who Reaches Out to the Imperfect

You can actually read about this woman in the Gospel of John (see John 4: 1– 42). When you read her story or any story in the Bible, I encourage you to activate your imagination— not to change the meaning of the biblical accounts, but to draw out the essence of the details and gems that God has for your benefit. Put yourself in the narrative. These characters are not part of a fictional story. They are real people, with real challenges and a very real Savior! I took the liberty of changing a few details in the story to illustrate that Jesus’ response to a person and their struggles, and the churches response to a person and their struggles is not always the same. And, it His response that is the one we need to focus on!

There are no insignificant details in the Bible. It tells us specifically that it was about noon when Jesus was at the well waiting for the woman. It also records that Jesus was traveling from Judea to Galilee and that “He had to go through Samaria” (John 4: 4 NLT). The New King James Version says that “He needed to go through

Samaria,” and the King James Version puts it this way: “He must needs go through Samaria.”

Had to. Needed to. Must. Words that speak not just of necessity, but underscore a steady resolve and even urgency!

Jesus’ disciples must have been surprised when He said that He needed to go through Samaria. They had never taken that route before to Galilee. It was the custom of the Jews of that day to avoid any contact with the Samaritans, whom they perceived to be spiritually inferior. Jesus’ disciples didn’t know that He had deliberately scheduled a divine appointment with the woman at the well.¹

We know from the account found in John chapter 4 that this ostracized, lonely woman had a life-transforming conversation with Jesus at the well. But make no mistake— it wasn’t she who sought out Jesus to talk to Him. It was Jesus who pursued the one whom others shunned.

Do you know that He is still doing that today? Do you have a past that you are ashamed of? Are you struggling to overcome something that you know is destroying you? Do you feel all alone and that no one understands the pain you are going through?

I want you to know that Jesus hasn’t changed. He is the same, yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). Just as He was for the Samaritan woman, the loving Savior is still your very present help in your time of need (see Ps. 46: 1). He knows the suffering, the shame, and the struggles you are going through right now. And even if what you are going through is a consequence of bad life choices and mistakes of your own doing, He doesn’t abandon and forsake you. No! He goes out of the way, just like He did for this woman in Samaria, to have a personal appointment with you, to restore and rescue you. The fact that you are reading this right now is a confirmation that Jesus is reaching out to you with His love, grace, and forgiveness. My dear brother or sister, this is who Jesus is!²

¹ Prince, *The Power of Right Believing*, p. 20.

² *Ibid*, P.20-21.

He Comes to You in the Midst of Your Storm

Our Jesus comes to you at your point of need. When His disciples were out at sea, caught in a turbulent storm and tossed by the waves, who came to them in their darkest hour? It was Jesus Himself. Jesus came in style, walking on the raging waters.

What does this tell you? That He is above the storms. He walks above— He is greater than— every adversity and every opposition that you may be facing right now, and He comes, to you, to rescue you!

With the billowing waves beneath His feet, His first words to His disciples were, “Don’t be afraid. Take courage. I am here!” (Matt. 14: 27 NLT).

What comfort those words must have brought to the disciples who were exhausted and shaking with fear. Storms are good at doing that to you. They overwhelm you. Wave after wave of relentless battering that knocks you off your feet till you don’t know which side is up. Till every ounce of energy is used up and you feel so weak, abandoned, and lonely.

But don’t go by these negative feelings and emotions you are experiencing, my brother or sister. Live by the truth of God’s Word, which encourages you to “be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid and do not panic... For the LORD your God will personally go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor abandon you” (Deut. 31: 6 NLT). Our God is a personal and loving God who is with you in your boat. He knows what storms are ahead and how to lead you to victory every time. He cannot fail you!³

The Good Shepherd Goes Ahead of You

³ Prince, The Power of Right Believing, p. 22.

“Let me share with you a story from Jenny, about a golfing holiday she went on with her husband in a mountain resort. That morning as they stood at the first tee, there was a light mist overhanging the beautiful and serene green golf course. She had been meditating on the Lord being her shepherd in Psalm 23 and felt so loved by Him as she took in the picturesque, pastoral landscape and the cool, clean mountain air. She pictured herself being led by the good Shepherd, Jesus, who makes her lie down in tender green pastures and leads her beside still waters.

“Even though Jenny had never played on that course before, she ended up playing her best round of golf. How did that happen? It was because they had an experienced caddy with them, and she had benefitted from every bit of observation and advice that he had offered her. She wasn’t a regular golfer and had been a little anxious about the challenges ahead, but the caddy had assured her confidently, saying, “Don’t worry, I have thirty years of experience on this golf course. I have been all over this course, and I am familiar with every hazard and every trap that is ahead of you. I will show you what to avoid and where to aim.” And by just heeding his guidance, her golf ball landed on every fairway and she played the best round of golf in her life!”⁴

My brothers and sisters, you have more than just an experienced caddy in your life. You have the One who created the universe as the shepherd of your life! This shepherd has been to your future. He knows every hazard and every trap that is ahead, and He has laid out a path for you that is filled with His favor. And even when you make a mistake or take a wrong turn in life, He is still with you to help and rescue you. Look at what the psalmist says:

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. —Psalm 23: 4
KJV

The Door of Hope in Your Valley of Trouble

⁴ Prince, The Power of Right Believing, p. 22-23.

Notice from the verse that it was not the good shepherd who led the psalmist into the valley of trouble, as the psalmist says, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...” Yet the Bible is so clear in stating that even if your trouble is due to your own willfulness, God is still with you. He has never left you, and He never will. He will never forsake you. You are precious in His eyes. Can you imagine living life with that kind of confidence, assurance, and peace? Then believe in no uncertain terms that God will never abandon you and leave you in the lurch!⁵

In fact, the Bible says that God will turn the Valley of Achor into a door of hope for you (see Hosea 2: 15). In the Hebrew, “Achor” means “trouble.”⁶ So even if you find yourself in the valley of trouble, you will not remain there for long. You will walk through it and not remain or camp there. God is opening a door of hope in your life today for you to step out of your darkness and into His marvelous light (see 1 Pet. 2: 9). Things are going to get better. The breakthroughs that you have been waiting for are coming your way. Step through the door of hope and out of your valley of trouble today. Jesus is your door of hope! Believe in His love for you and allow Him to lead you to freedom.

Some people think that when they fail, God leaves them and only returns when they get their act together. They think that they must clean up their lives and overcome all their struggles on their own before they can come before the presence of God. Well, I have a simple question for them: Do you clean yourself before you take a bath? Of course not!

God wants us to come to Him just as we are, with all our weaknesses, idiosyncrasies, wrong beliefs, hang-ups, and all our bondages, fears, and addictions. He is the bath! So don't try to clean yourself up before you come to Him. In the presence of His love, His joy, and His grace, you will find restoration, healing, and forgiveness. He will restore your life and transform you from the inside out. Right now, He is extending His hand of grace, love, and help to you.

⁵ Ibid, p. 23-24

⁶ Brown, Driver & Briggs, OT: 5911.

There is no shame in coming to Jesus just as you are. He who knows you perfectly loves you perfectly!

To Know the Truth, Go to the Source

“But Dr. Charles, isn’t God disappointed and angry with me for all my failings, mistakes, and sins? I’m too embarrassed to go to Him. I feel that I should sort out all this mess in my life before I can go back to church, read the Bible, and pray. “

I understand how you feel. And I can tell you that you are not alone in those sentiments. I have personally counseled with believers who feel exactly the same way. But the most effective way to address our problems and wrong beliefs is to go to God and find out the truth from His Word. In order to get our believing right, we need to first discover what the “right beliefs” are, based on the solid foundation of God’s Word. We can’t base our beliefs on feelings, circumstances, human conjectures, or what we may have heard someone say about God. We have to go to the source!

If you heard a rumor that someone you knew was saying horrible and negative things about you, don’t believe it immediately. Go to the source first. Ask this person if this is what he or she really said or if this is what he or she really meant. Many people allow precious friendships and relationships to become fractured because they believe the rumors. They become bitter, angry, and disappointed without ever verifying with the person if he or she had actually said those nasty things.

In the same way, in the world we live in, there are all kinds of wrong beliefs perpetuated about God: “God is angry at you.” “He is disappointed with you.” “God is allowing all these negative things to happen to you because He’s punishing you for your past sins.”

Please, DO NOT believe all this baseless gossip about God! Such impressions of God have damaged many people’s relationships with Him, and they live with a distorted perspective of who God really is. Instead of receiving His love, His grace,

and His forgiveness, they become afraid, distant, and fearful of Him. Instead of allowing Jesus to come into their situations, they live their life running away, avoiding and hiding from Him. Come on, let's honor God and go to the source.

So what does the Bible— God's own Word— say about Him? Let me quote from one of my favorite psalms of David:

“The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy... He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” —Psalm 103: 8, 10– 12
NKJV

Isn't this a beautiful psalm? Don't be thrown off by the phrase, “toward those who fear Him.” Jesus defined the word “fear” as “worship” (see Deut. 6: 13 and Matt. 4: 10). So “those who fear Him” speaks of those who reverence and honor God in their lives. It is not the practice of being fearful or afraid of God. The whole context of this passage is about who and what God really is— gracious and merciful. And I strongly encourage you to memorize verse 10 if you can:

“He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities.” Matthew 4:10 NKJV

God Abounds in Mercy Toward You

Let's get back to your earlier question: Is God disappointed and angry with you for your failures, mistakes, and sins? No! Read the above Scriptures again. The point here is that as a child of God, all your failures, all your mistakes, and all your sins have already been judged and punished on the body of Jesus at the cross! That's why God is no longer angry with you for your sins and He doesn't deal with you according to your sins. Because of the cross, He deals with you according to His bountiful mercy and grace.⁷

⁷ Prince, The Power of Right Believing, p. 27.

Just in case you missed it, the psalm repeatedly stresses that God is merciful. It tells us that “the LORD is merciful” and goes on, almost immediately, to say again that He is “abounding in mercy.” In the King James Version of the Bible, it says that God is “plenteous in mercy.” I like the word “plenteous.” It speaks of abundance, excess, and lavishness. His mercy toward you and me is plenteous. He abounds in mercy toward us!

My dear brother or sister, God has exhausted His anger toward all your sins at the cross. The cross is an act of His love. If you ever doubt or question God’s love for you, just turn your eyes to the cross. If God wants to deal with us and punish us according to our sins, He wouldn’t have sent His Son to be scourged, beaten, and crucified, but He did! This is the good news of the gospel of grace. God sent His only beloved and precious Son to redeem us from the penalty and punishment of sin.

Now, can you imagine how far the east is from the west? You cannot think just in terms of the geographical boundaries of the earth. God is the Creator of the universe. So, let me ask you again, how far is the east side of the universe from the west side of the universe? Are you getting this? The human mind cannot fathom the distance between the east and the west. There are frontiers in the cosmos and galaxies beyond our own that our most advanced telescopes cannot see. God thinks in infinite terms that our finite minds cannot wrap around. And this God of the infinite universe declares in the psalm that “as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us!”

Let us reason together. How can God still be judging and punishing you for your transgressions if He Himself has removed them? I can hear the chains of your wrong beliefs about God falling to the ground as you read this! This is what I call the power of right believing. You start to believe right when you start to believe in His love for you. The truth is, we can’t go further if you don’t first begin to believe that God is for you and not against you. The first key to right believing is to be

established in His grace, anchored in His love, and secure in His mercy toward you.

From Self-Conscious to Savior-Conscious

Let's return to the story of the woman at the well in Samaria, the one whom Jesus went deliberately to meet. This woman had a past that she was terribly ashamed of, which is why she came at noontime to draw water. She didn't want to meet anyone. What she didn't know was that Jesus was there and He wanted to meet her. He hadn't come all that way to embarrass, judge, or mock her. Read the account in John chapter 4 for yourself. Jesus drew her in with His love, His grace, and His compassion. She never felt exposed or ill at ease in His presence.

When she said that she had no husband, Jesus didn't call her out and humiliate her. Instead, knowing that she was self-conscious and insecure about her background, He commended her twice by saying, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly" (John 4: 17– 18, emphasis mine). He sandwiched what He already knew about her between two compliments! Jesus must have spoken to her with so much compassion and love in His eyes, and with no judgment or sarcasm in His voice, that it caused this woman to let down her defenses and open up to Him.⁸

By the time she left His presence, this self-conscious lady who once feared meeting people was so occupied with Jesus' love and acceptance that she became an evangelist of Jesus and His grace. She went back to the village and testified about Jesus (to the very people she had been terrified of before), and the Bible records that "many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, 'He told me all that I ever did' " (John 4: 39). In the same way, my brothers and sisters, Jesus is not out to embarrass you today. He is here to meet you right where you are. He knows absolutely everything that you have ever done and still loves you with an everlasting love. Allow His love to change and transform you from within, just like it did for the woman at the well.

⁸ Prince, *The Power of Right Believing*, p. 29-30.

Perhaps like the Samaritan woman, you know what it's like to look for love in all the wrong places. Today Jesus offers you true intimacy that fully satisfies every aching need. He offers you a deep sense of rest that can only be found in His perfect and unconditional love. Perhaps you've had a past that has imprisoned you in shame, guilt, and self-loathing. Perhaps you've allowed the things that you have done to convince you that you'll never have God's acceptance or love. If you've always only known or heard of a hard and judgmental God, a God who holds every misdeed you've ever committed against you, then I challenge you to encounter the real Savior who has already forgiven you and invites you to discover, taste, and experience for yourself His unfailing love.

It doesn't matter how ugly a mess your life may have spiraled down into. If you will open your heart to Jesus and allow His love to heal you, He can change the trajectory of your life and give you a fresh start and fulfilling future. Everything can change for the better when you begin to believe right about His love for you and learn to draw upon it!

God Is Pleased When You Draw On His Love

Do you know that Jesus finds great joy when you draw on His love? Look at how the Samaritan woman's encounter with Jesus ended. When the disciples left Jesus at the well to buy food, He was weary and tired from the journey. When they returned, they were amazed to find Him refreshed, and they wondered if someone had brought Him something to eat. Jesus answered them by saying, "I have food to eat of which you do not know" (John 4:32).

What food was Jesus referring to here? He had not eaten or drunk anything. All He had done was minister to the woman from Samaria. In other words, Jesus found nourishment, strength, and joy when He ministered His love to her. When you draw from men, they become depleted and weak. But the opposite is true of Jesus. When you draw from Him, He is strengthened, refreshed, and rejuvenated! Jesus

wants us to know that He derives great joy and pleasure when we draw upon His love for us.⁹

When the Samaritan woman asked Jesus why He (a Jew) would ask her (a Samaritan) for a drink of water, this is what He said to her: “If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water... Anyone who drinks this water [from the well] will soon become thirsty again. But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life” (John 4: 10, 13– 14 NLT).

Jesus is saying the same thing to you today: If you only knew who it is who comes to you in your darkest hour and weakest moments. If you only knew this gift of God who will never leave you nor forsake you, who has gone before you and who comes to you in the midst of your storms. If you only knew the One who reaches out to you even when you have failed and who doesn't hold your past mistakes or current failures against you.

Beloved, if you only knew this gift of God who offers the living water of His unconditional, endless love to you and you drink of that love, you will never thirst again. You won't need to look for love and acceptance in all the wrong places and have your heart broken. You want need to be fearful about the future and have your life derailed. You can wake up with a fresh expectation of good every day. Jesus was essentially inviting the woman to ask Him for the living water of His love. Will you do that today? Your life will never be the same again when you personally experience His love!

⁹ Prince, The Power of Right Believing, p. 31.

Chapter 2: The Man Born Blind

Chapter 3: Zacchaeus

Chapter 4: The Woman Caught in Adultery

Chapter 5: The Woman With The Issue Of Blood

Chapter 6: Ruth

Chapter 7: Rahab

Closing Words

There were some surprises when doing the research for this commentary. Like many, I assumed that the topic of Condemnation was a fairly well understood subject. It was quite surprising to find how little most Christians (including myself) actually know about the subject.

The topic of Condemnation and its effects on people has been and remains a poorly understood subject. It is my prayer and hope that we may find that rediscovering the Biblical teachings about Condemnation can enrich our lives and our ministries.

Throughout this course, I have endeavored to show you the gospel of Jesus Christ through the Scriptures as well as through the testimony of others. Because of Jesus' finished work at the cross, He will never be angry with you nor rebuke you even when you fail. So don't ever forget the main clause of the new covenant, which says that your sins and your lawless deeds, He remembers no more!

Many believers are defeated today because they do not know the God of the new covenant of grace. I believe with all of my heart that because you took this wonderful journey with me you saw for yourself, all the things concerning Jesus Christ and His finished work, your heart would now burn with His extravagant love for you. Jesus truly puts the "amazing", the "wonderful" and the "marvelous" back into grace!

Today, God is all about blessing you with His grace — His undeserved, unearned and unmerited favor — in every area of your life. Stop trying to deserve and earn your own acceptance before God with your own works and efforts. It will only frustrate the grace of God and nullify the effects of the cross in your life. My Dear brother or sister, Jesus already finished the work! Believe with all your heart that it is not about what you need to do today, but about what has already been done and accomplished on your behalf.

My Beloved brothers and sisters, I have proclaimed to you the gospel of Jesus Christ and am fulfilling the commission He gave me to bring Jesus back to central place in the church by rolling away the stone and opening people's eyes to reveal more of Jesus and His finished work. I know that if you have believed this good news of His grace, your life has begun to be radically transformed, together with the countless believers around the world who have already been impacted by the Gospel Revolution. I pray that this course has torn down the fences of controversy that the enemy has erected around the teaching of God's grace and the gift of righteousness, so that you may indeed receive not just grace, but the "abundance of grace", and receive not just righteousness, but the "gift of righteousness", and start reigning in life. Start reigning over sin, over sickness, over condemnation, over financial lack and over the curse of the law through the ONE, Jesus Christ.

All that I have shared works most powerfully and effectively within the environment of the local church. These truths are for the greater good of the body of Christ and should never result in you becoming a law unto yourself. Beloved, I want to see you enjoying the safety of the covering of a local church where there is accountability and submission. This is where our blessings are tremendously multiplied.

I thank you for taking this journey with me and for giving me the opportunity to unveil more of Jesus to you. You have been a wonderful traveling companion. We should do this again soon! In the meantime, until the next course begins, BE BLESSED!!!

In His Grace, *Dr. Charles.*

I look forward to hearing from you about how our Lord Jesus has touched and impacted your life with His amazing grace.

It is all about Jesus and His finished work!

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Recommended Reading:

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Joseph Prince, *Grace Revolution: Experience the Power to Live Above Defeat*, (New York: Faith Words, 2015).

Joseph Prince, *Unmerited Favor*, (Lake Mary: Charisma House, 2010).