

Introduction to Ephesians
Ephesians 1:1-2 (Introduction)
Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Bethany Baptist Church
March 12, 2017 (a.m. service)

...pray...

First century *Ephesus* was the **3rd** largest city in the *Roman Empire*, with a *population* approaching a *quarter of a million* souls.

Ephesus sat on the *west coast* of *Asia Minor*, where the *Caystor River* emptied into the *Aegean Sea*.

It was a key Roman city - *politically, economically and culturally*.

It was the *capitol* of the Roman province of *Asia Minor*.

The city boasted a *theater* that would seat **24k** people!

The Ephesians claimed to have an *image* of the mythical *Goddess Artemis* (*Diana*) that had *fallen* from heaven on the *site* of the city.

Her *Ephesian temple* was one of the *Seven Wonders of the Ancient World*, with a footprint as big as a modern football field (endzones & all)!

Imagine being the first person to *preach* the gospel & *start* a church in a city like **NY** or *Boston* or *Miami* or *Houston* or **LA** or *San Francisco* or *Seattle*!

That was Paul's *Great Commission* goal as he entered *Ephesus* with his friends *Aquila & Priscilla* in ca **52 AD**. He was on the return leg of his **2nd Missionary Journey**, headed home for *Antioch*. Paul *preached* in the synagogue & then *set sail* for home, leaving behind his **two** loyal, tent-making friends!

Two years later, on his **3rd Missionary Journey**, Paul returned. By now there was a *church* and Paul stayed & *pastored* the *Ephesian* congregation for **3** years.

By late **57 AD**, the apostle's ministry in *Ephesus* was *fruitful & powerful*, and it finally provoked the anger of the *idol makers & worshipers* of the mythical *Atremis*, leading to a *riot* & Paul's subsequent *exit* from the city.

A few months later, the apostle arranged a meeting with the *elders* of the *Ephesian* church, in the neighboring city of *Miletus*. Paul *reminded* them of his ministry, *exhorted* them to be on guard against false teachers, then *prayed* and *sailed* away.

Four years later, Paul had been imprisoned **2** years in *Caesarea*, followed by **two** more years in *Rome*. Under *house arrest*, chained to a *Praetorian* guard.

From *Rome*, he wrote letters to the churches at *Philippi & Colossae (Philemon) & Laodicea ... & to Ephesus*. The date of the Ephesian letter is **61 or 62** AD, and as he wrote, Paul anticipated his *imminent release...*

Turn w/ me to Paul's greeting to the church in Ephesus... (read vv.1&2)

At first reading, this would have seemed like a *typical 1st century letter greeting*: the *name of the sender*, the *identity of the receiver*, & a polite word of *blessing...*

But this has *never been* a typical letter!

As Paul addressed this *familiar church*, his thoughts seemed filled with *eternal truths & vital instructions*.

We *outline* Ephesians **6** chapters: **3** chapters of *doctrine* reinforced by **3** chapters of *application*.

Paul's *purpose* seems focused on the *theology the church (1-3)* followed by the *lifestyle of the church (4-6)*. His teaching is seasoned with concepts like God's *sovereignty*, man's *salvation*, *Christian unity & love*, personal *holiness*, & the outworking of the *Spirit-controlled life*, & the necessity of *spiritual warfare*.

Even Paul's *opening remarks* (here in vv.1&2) are *theologically rich!*

And, of course, *that's* where we'll begin: ☺

Paul's almost ordinary greeting introduces four extraordinary truths (2X):

- 1. Selected Apostle: Paul**
- 2. Sainted Audience: Ephesian readers (& you & me!)**
- 3. Spiritual Blessings: esp. Grace & Peace**
- 4. Sovereign God: God the Father, Christ the Son**

God *selected* Paul to be an *apostle* of Christ Jesus.

1. If you are familiar with the **NT**, then you've no-doubt read this title, "*apostle*," many times. But have you ever stopped to *ask* yourself: "**What is an apostle...and why do I care?**"
 - a. "*Apostle*" – means "*one who is sent.*" It suggests ideas like *representative* or *emissary* or *ambassador* or *proxy*.
 - b. An *apostle of Christ Jesus* was Jesus' official representative whom He has appointed & who met criteria that He specified.
 - i. They had been *with Him & witnessed His resurrection* (Acts 1).
 - ii. The first & clearest examples were the *Twelve* (led off by *Peter & John & James...*).
 - c. As Christ's *ambassadors* His apostles *traveled, preached, taught, worked miracles, established churches, strengthened churches, &* (under the direction of the *Holy Spirit*) wrote/sponsored the **NT**.
 - d. The basic idea of **NT** apostle was *authority* by right of *representation*.
2. Then *how* did Paul become an *apostle*? Originally introduced in the **NT** as *Saul of Tarsus*, this earnest & orthodox Jew attended *Pharisee* school, not *Apostle School*!
 - a. In fact, *Saul* hated *Jesus & His Gospel & His apostles & His people!* In the beginning of **Acts 9**, *Saul* sets off on mission to **arrest** Christians, "*breathing threats & murder against the disciples of the Lord.*"
 - b. But Jesus stops the *angry young hater* on the road to Damascus and transforms him from *lost* to *found*, from *Saul* to *Paul*, from *enemy* to *apostle!*
 - c. And Christ said this: "[Paul] *is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles & kings & the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.*"
 - d. Jesus selected the *fastidious & furious Pharisee* to serve as His *ambassador & apostle* to the *Gentiles*.

3. Why does Paul *immediately stress* that he is Jesus' apostle? (In fact, that is his *pattern* in the *greetings* of **2/3** of his **NT** letters).
- a. Paul's point is *authority*. The reminder that He is *an apostle of Christ Jesus* packs a punch. That reminder is then immediately *underlined* by the fact that Paul's *appointment* is by God's *will*.
 - b. Paul is beginning with a *reminder* of his *authority* for the *good* of his first *readers* (Ephesians).
 - i. The apostle is going to *outline crucial doctrines of the faith* (e.g. predestination & election & the Mystery of God's plan for the Gentiles & God's pattern for the church & the Spirit-controlled life).
 - ii. The apostle is going to *admonish* the Ephesians to pay attention to their *Christian walk* (love, unity, social ethics, family relationships, spiritual warfare).
 - iii. In these vital *doctrines* & these non-negotiable *applications* the Ephesians need to know that Paul isn't *making this stuff up* – when the *apostle* speaks, *Christ* speaks!
 - c. This *same reminder* still holds for *us*, beloved!
 - i. When we study over the next few months about the doctrine of *God's sovereignty* in *choosing us to salvation* or about the instruction to *control* our tongues or *love* our wives or *submit* to our husbands....
 - ii. We will need to remind ourselves that when the *apostle* speaks, our *Lord Jesus* is still speaking to *us* through *him*.
 - iii. And that principle holds true for *every page* of your Bible!

That's why *God selected Paul!*

So the apostle Paul is now writing to an audience of *saints*!

1. Despite the *title* on the page of your NT, there has been some *debate* about *who* Paul wrote to.
 - a. That's because the phrase "*at Ephesus*" doesn't show up in *every* early **Greek ms.**
 - b. But the *very early Church* was overwhelming convinced that Paul *had* written his letter to *Ephesus*, and perhaps also intended it to be read in churches in the *immediate area*.
 - c. (Remember that Ephesus was very *large*. There could have been *multiple local churches* in/around the metropolis.)

2. But really, more to the point, Paul wrote to the *saints*. The Gr. term means "*holy ones*" which suggest to be *set apart for God*.
 - a. It became a *synonym* in the NT for *Christian...every* true Christian. Here, Paul writes to the *saints who are at Ephesus*, this morning I preach to the *saints at Bethany*.
 - b. To be a *saint* is **not** a *reward* for *outstanding righteousness*, it is a *status* or *position* for everyone who has been *reckoned righteous* by God through *faith* in the sinless life & sin-paying death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Paul adds **two** truths about every Christian (v.1) ...
 - a. *First*, the saints have *faith*. Paul's primary point here is *not* that a Christian lives a *faithful life* (although he would elsewhere encourage that), but that a Christian is a man/woman of *faith*.
 - i. Spec. *faith* in Jesus & Jesus' story, the *gospel*. **James Montgomery Boice** writes that *saving faith* → gospel *understood*, gospel *loved*, gospel *trusted* – for *you*, personally.

- b. *Second*, every Christian is “*in Christ Jesus*.” Paul loves this (similar) expression (**10X** in **ch.1**): *in Christ Jesus, in Christ, in Him*.
- i. This is more of the *apostle’s shorthand* for the *Christian & his identity & his life!*
 - ii. *In Him* summarizes the **NT** truth of your *essential, vital, indestructible, eternal union* with Christ.
 - iii. At this point, **Boice** writes that “*in Christ*” implies that the saved man/woman is *joined* to Christ so that what is *true of Jesus* is *true of you!* E.g. **2:6-7 (read)** – we are *raised up w/ Christ & seated w/Him* in the *heavenly realms* in Christ Jesus.
 - iv. This mind-boggling spiritual reality, *in Christ*, is *reinforced* by in the **NT** by images of our *union to Christ* as a **marriage**, as the **vine & branches**, as the Spirit’s **temple**, as Christ’s **body**.
4. So Paul pens these words to Christians: *reckoned righteous, trusting Christ, united to Christ*.
5. Before we move on, I read something helpful in an explanation of being a *saint*. Harold Hoehner writes that you aren’t a *saint* because you are *holy*, but ... you are *holy* because you’ve *become a saint!*
- a. Do you *get his point?*
 - b. If your profession of *faith in Jesus* is real, your life will begin to *change*.

That’s a part of being a saint!

Paul's greeting has a *double dose of spiritual blessing: grace & peace* for every saint. (Read v.2)

1. *Grace*. God's fundamental blessing on your life is His *grace*!
 - a. There are many helpful def'n of "grace."
 - i. The Gr. term is comes out of the vocabulary of a *gift* (*gift* → something *good* someone just *gives* you).
 - ii. A very simple (useful) definition is "*un-deserved favor*."
 - iii. Or you can define the word w/ an *acronym*: **G.R.A.C.E.** – *God's riches at Christ's expense*. ☺
 - iv. I have a more *developed* def'n: "*Grace* is God giving you the *desire & power to do His will, first* at salvation (2:8,9), and then *every day that follows*."
 - b. *Grace* appears all over Ephesians!
 - i. God's grace is seen in His *choice of the saints* in eternity past (1:6-7)
 - ii. In trusting in Christ for *salvation* (2:5, 8-9),
 - iii. By enabling the saints to be *faithful* (4:7),
 - iv. Grace happens in *another Christian* as a result of your *wholesome speech* (4:29 – you can *give grace* to someone else just by the way you *talk* to them!),
 - v. Grace is a *spiritual treasure* for all who love Christ (6:24).
 - vi. Paul begins & ends our letter w/ *grace* (6:24): *Grace be w/ all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ w/ incorruptible love*.

2. *Grace...and peace.* Beloved, this morning you have *peace...*

- a. **You can have *peace with God*** because your sins are paid for by His Son, Jesus Christ. Paul has written to the Romans (5:1) – *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace w/ God thru our Lord Jesus Christ.*
- b. **You can have *peace of mind*** because you understand that you *belong* to God and He is *good* and He is *in control*. V.11 – [God] *works all things after the counsel of His will*
- c. **We can live in *peace w/one another*** because Christ has *commanded* us & *enabled* us (*grace?*) to live in peace.
 - i. Paul was appointed as “*Christ’s Apostle to the Gentiles.*” We’ll explore that further in **ch.2&3** (“*Mystery*”).
 1. The apostle will stress that *peace* is possible between *Jew & Gentile* because *both groups* now have peace with God in Christ Jesus ...
 2. **2:14** – *For He Himself (Jesus) is our peace, who made both groups (Gentile & Jew) into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall.*
 3. Beloved, this means that you & I can get along with Christians who seem *quite different* than us!
 - ii. In fact, in **4:3** Paul will encourage each of us to *strive for unity* in our church through the *binding power peace*.

3. *Grace & peace* are for every Christian! ☺ Your life is *fueled* by *grace!*

- a. **NASCAR** *racers* have their sponsors written all over their *cars*. Not surprising, they are often *high-performance products*: **K&N Filters**, **SunOil fuels**, **Mobil oils**, **Goodyear tires** &...**M&M** chocolates!
- b. Beloved, do you know what *makes you go!* Do you know what’s *plastered* all over your *soul*? **Grace!** *God’s grace fuels His saints*, ...and gives them *peace!*

The letter is from Paul but the apostle's *authority* & our *blessings* are all about *God!*

1. *Apostleship, authority, sainted status, saving faith, union with Christ, grace & peace* – **where** do they all come from? *God* – God the *Father* & God the *Son!*
2. It all comes from *God*.
 - a. And important teaching in Ephesians is the sovereignty (divine rule) of God. Paul writes (1) – *by the will of God*. And when God *wills* something, it comes to pass. Whether it's *Paul's apostleship* or the believer's *salvation*.
 - i. **V.5** – [God] *predestined us to adoption as sons thru Jesus Christ to Himself according to the kind intention of His will*.
 - ii. Again, **v.11** – [God] *works all things after the counsel of His will*.
 - b. Yet the sacred Scriptures *never* portray God as an impersonal *despot* – our blessings (e.g. *grace, peace*) *flow from the throne* of the King who is our heavenly *Father*.
 - i. **V.1** immediately reminds us that God is our *Father*.
 - ii. **V.5** stresses that our God has adopted us *to Himself*.
 - iii. And the **2 gifts** (*grace & peace*) that Paul opens his letter with are the Father's *good gifts* for you & me – His royal *children*.
3. And it all *authority & blessing* come *through/from* God's Son, the *Lord Jesus Christ*.
 - a. He is *Lord* (= *Master*). The same term is used in the **OT** of *Jehovah*.
 - b. He is *Christ* (= *anointed one*). The same term is translated in the **OT** as "*Messiah*" → promised *King* & promised *Savior!*
 - c. **His name is Jesus**. Perfect & sinless Man. He lived the *righteous life* we couldn't live & then on the cross, paid *for* our sins *in* our place.

Peace, grace, union, faith, righteousness, office – praise God from whom all blessing flow!

Paul packed a lot of truth in just these two verses! I want to conclude by focusing on just *one*: **grace**. *Grace* - the gift word...

Harold Hoehner writes: “*Grace is the gospel in one word.*” (2X)

The *gospel* is the *good news* of God’s *gift*. *Forgiveness & salvation are free!*

No one has ever lived like a *saint*! In fact, we enter this life as *rebels*...

And God’s moral obligation as your Creator & Judge is to judge *your rebellion*.

But there is an *alternative*...only *one*:

God sent His Son, *Jesus Christ*, to *die* in the place of His people.

On the cross Jesus was *bearing* the punishment of sinners and *offering* forgiveness.

His gift of salvation is *free*, but it carries this *condition*: your *trust*. You *believe* that His story is true & your *trust* that it is enough for you.

Will you *trust in Christ*? You *must* make that *choice*! To *refuse* to decide is to *decide* against Him!

Are you in *Christ*? Are you *God’s child*? *Trust in Christ today!*

...pray...