

Paul Greet the Ephesians

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – the introduction of Paul to his readers, and his greeting of grace and peace
2. aim – to cause us to seek the peace of God in our relationship to him by grace through faith
3. passage – Ephesians 1:1-2

b. outline

1. The Author of the Letter (Ephesians 1:1a)
2. The Audience of the Letter (Ephesians 1:1b)
3. The Adoration of the Letter (Ephesians 1:2)

c. opening

1. the **systematic exposition** of the letter to the Ephesians
 - a. systematic = working through the letter in the same order in which it was written
 - b. exposition = providing a comprehensive description and explanation of the material
 1. **technical**: form, context, grammar, meanings (**i.e.** of words and phrases), interrelationships
 - a. **i.e.** what does it say?
 2. **theological**: religious and spiritual concepts, principles, meaning, personal value
 - a. **i.e.** what does it say *to me*?
 3. **teleological**: purposes, applications, directions, goals
 - a. **i.e.** what am I going to *do about it*? (**distinguishes preaching from teaching**)
2. the **preaching approach** of the letter to the Ephesians
 - a. we will work through the book at a *moderate* pace (**i.e.** not too quickly, not too detailed)
 - b. we will work through the book at a *pericope* pace (**i.e.** taking logical “chunks” along the way)
 1. **e.g.** we will spend just one week in this greeting of **1:1-2**

I. The Author of the Letter (Ephesians 1:1a)

Content

a. Paul, the *man*

1. like *all* of his letters, Paul begins by identifying himself *directly by name*
 - a. born Saul of Tarsus *and* Paul, a dual-citizenship and name (not a name “change”)
 - b. he begins using his *Roman* name starting from Cyprus on his First Missionary Journey (**Acts 13:9**)
 1. **symbolizing #1**: his *radical conversion*: no longer a servant of *Judaism*, but a servant of *Christ*
 2. **symbolizing #2**: his *apostolic call*: not to *Jews*, but an apostle to *Gentiles* (**Acts 26:16ff**)

b. Paul, the *apostle*

1. *apostolos* = someone set aside *specifically* for a mission; those appointed *directly* by Jesus Christ
 - a. to establish the **initial call** of the gospel – to win the first converts to faith in Jesus Christ
 - b. to establish the **ecclesia** (the Church) – to establish *leadership* and *boundaries* within it
 - c. to establish the **doctrine** of the faith – to communicate the fullness of an *apostolic* teaching

c. Paul, by the *will of God*

1. **interpretation #1**: that his position as an apostle grants him authority *over the Ephesians*
 - a. **i.e.** God’s will is for him to act with authority over them and to instruct them properly
 - b. **i.e.** they must listen to him because he speaks under God’s will over them
 - c. clearly understood by Paul to be true: he speaks with great *personal* authority in his letters
2. **interpretation #2**: that his position as an apostle is entirely due to God’s will *over him*
 - a. **i.e.** his position as an apostle flows from the decretive will of God to establish him as such
 - b. **i.e.** his existence, his conversion, and his position as an apostle are all due to God’s will over him
 - c. **i.e.** Paul uses “*servant*” in three (3) other greetings (**Rom., Phil., Titus**) to say the same thing
 1. *doulos* = lit. a slave; a bondservant; someone serving *under the will of* another
 - a. Paul *fully intends* to describe himself (here) as one under the absolute will of God, not as a “voluntary servant” who has placed *himself* under the mastery of Jesus
3. Paul’s authority over the Ephesians is **derived** from the will of Christ Jesus over him
 - a. thus, they must listen to him and obey him *as though Christ himself is speaking to them*

II. The Audience of the Letter (Ephesians 1:1b)

Content

a. the saints

1. “*saints*” [root: sacred, holy] = holy ones; the dedicated; lit. the sanctified ones of God (**x61 in N.T.**)
 - a. in Roman Catholic circles, someone *specifically* set apart by the church to be venerated because their *personal righteousness* exceeded that of others, and who now offers the “excess” of that righteousness to those “less” able to produce it in themselves (**i.e.** the Treasury of Merit)
 - b. in biblical language, all who are sanctified (set apart) and declared holy (righteous) through the imputed merit of Christ appropriated by faith alone in him
2. **the elect** – those set apart by God both theoretically (in his decree) and actually (by faith) – believers

b. the saints, in Ephesus

1. **note:** some manuscripts do not contain this phrase (**see previous sermon**)
2. however (assuming it was *original*), Paul wrote to a specific audience of believers (**i.e.** to a church)
 - a. note that all of Paul’s N.T. letters are written either 1) to a church or 2) to the leadership of a church
 1. **e.g.** Philemon (a prison epistle) was written to the *pastor of a house church* (**see Philemon 2**)

c. the saints, faithful in Christ Jesus

1. Paul assumed that the church was made up of believers – by definition, the *ecclesia* is the gathering together “out of the world” of those are followers of Christ (**i.e. regenerate church membership**)
2. and, Paul would repudiate the idea of the church “catering” (primarily) to unbelievers
 - a. nothing wrong with unbelievers coming into the church, but they should be confronted by 1) the worship of a God to whom they are in rebellion and 2) hear preaching and teaching designed to edify (build up) *the saints*
 - b. **IOW:** the gospel heard *within* the entirety of a people praising God for his grace (**no altar call**)
3. thus, Paul insisted that those who belong to the church are (by definition) “*faithful in Christ Jesus*”
 - a. “*faithful*” = reliable; trustworthy; sure; someone who’s belief (or action) continues without waver
 - b. **ontological:** those who have trusted in Christ for salvation are (by definition) those who remain faithful to Christ throughout all of life – **i.e.** their faith is both consistent and visible
 1. **note:** my invitation in late June to preach on the perseverance of the saints at camp

III. The Adoration of the Letter (Ephesians 1:2)

Content

a. the salutation of Paul

1. the **common nature** of this salutation (**i.e.** as a *similar* form to all of Paul’s epistles)
 - a. in 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy, “*mercy*” is added (the only place it is)
 - b. in Galatians, an *addition* regarding the work of Jesus follows the greeting
 - c. in Colossians, the reference to Jesus is *omitted* (but the rest of book regards him)
 - d. in 1 Thessalonians, the persons of the Godhead are mentioned *first*
 - e. in *all* of the greetings where Jesus is included, the term “*Lord*” is used of him
2. the **trinitarian nature** of this salutation (**i.e.** as an indication of his view of God)
 - a. **notice #1:** that Paul has a *Trinitarian* view of God, not a simple *unitarian* one (**like Jesus!**)
 1. remember: this is in light of Paul as a 1st C. rabbinical Jew, being *fiercely monotheistic*
 - b. **notice #2:** that Paul sees Jesus as a *member* of the Godhead, not as a “deified human”
 1. remember: the *primary* reason why Saul originally persecuted the church was its *insistence* on Jesus as *God* – not *just* because the church saw Jesus as Savior (or Messiah)
 - c. **notice #3:** that Paul references Jesus in *every aspect* of this greeting
 1. i.e. an apostle of Jesus, believers being faithful to Jesus, grace and peace from Jesus
 - d. by making a reference to God as “*Father*” *and* including Jesus as a person in the Godhead, it is obvious that Paul now has a deeply *Trinitarian* view of Yahweh, with Jesus as its **central Person**
3. the **supplicatory nature** of this salutation (**i.e.** *what* Paul is seeking as a blessing to the Ephesians)
 - a. **grace** (*charis*) = kindness; good will; favor (unmerited); gift or blessing
 1. **error #1:** that grace is a favor bestowed by God on the *basis* of something seen *in us*
 - a. **e.g.** *prevenient* grace = the “completed” work of Christ to remove all obstacles to faith
 - b. **e.g.** *religious* grace = God’s *willingness* to accept our “cooperation” (**synergism**)
 2. **error #2:** that grace is a *tangible* favor bestowed by God upon us in some way
 - a. grace is the choice to do so, the benefits he gives are the tangibles (**e.g. forgiveness**)

3. grace in the biblical sense: the character of God whereby he chooses to bestow upon certain people the blessings of his benevolence
 - a. in common grace, God showers people with the “normal” blessings of existence
 1. but, it is still a grace for him to do so (i.e. not everyone gets the same stuff!)
 - b. in salvific grace, God showers *the elect* with the specific benefits of his redemptive plan
 1. the tangibles: forgiveness, atonement, propitiation, satisfaction, adoption, peace
- b. **peace** (*eirēnē*, Heb. *shalom*) = harmony; tranquility; freedom from worry; genuine rest
 1. in the *modern* sense = a lack of hostility; a sense of calm (emotionally)
 2. in the *biblical* sense = a change of *relationship* that precludes any sense of continuing rebellion or hostility, *specifically* in the Creator-creature sense
 - a. genuine peace is a *new relationship* with God whereby our rebellion against him and his wrath against us is *propitiated* by the redeeming work of Christ
 - b. religion *cannot* produce such a relationship since it does not address the underlying issue
 3. **principle: the only way to have any true peace is through a relationship with God by his grace which subsumes all of our life under his sovereign control – no grace, no peace**
4. **Paul opens his letter with a proper view of himself, a proper view of the Ephesians, a proper view of Yahweh, and a proper view of the relationship between them and the Triune God**
 - a. those who are “*saints*” get this view right!