

Ephesians 1:1-2

"Greetings"

There are 4 letters that Paul the apostle penned from prison. The book of Ephesians one of them. I point that out, not to invoke a sense of sympathy for Paul, but to bring greater glory to God. If we stop & think of what Paul is enduring as he writes this letter it blows our minds all the more as we make our way through these chapters...

Because Ephesians doesn't point out what a drag it can be to serve the Lord; how difficult, demanding or daunting ministry can become. To the contrary Eph (thought of by many scholars as the pinnacle of Paul's writings) is all about the *wealth* of the believer (Ch's 1-3), the *walk* of the believer (Ch's 4-6), & what it means to wage wise/effective *warfare* (Ch 6:10-20) as believers in J.C....

& The order of those things is important; outlined by Divine Design. Because once we realize who we *are* in Christ, the resources we *have* in Christ (what He's done *for* us, who He is *to* us), the overflow of that understanding is a desire to *worship* Him, wanting to *walk* intimately w/Him, desiring to effectively *serve* Him.

So the 1st 3 Ch's are doctrine (this is who we are & what we have *in* Him), the last 3 Ch's are duty (this is how we respond appropriately *to* Him). It's not a "got to", it's a "get to". Not legalism, wisdom. Not obligation; opportunity to serve Him in a manner that *glorifies* Him & *edifies* the body.

& That's why we want to pay attention to the way God's word is written. Because if we're not careful we can get things backwards. A lot of believers (or even some churches) can tend to emphasize *duty* (what you need to be doing) before they really understand doctrine... & That can be a real problem. For a # of reasons; not the least of which is, what we believe determines how we behave. & I understand the desire to want to be successful in your walk, successful in your marriage, successful as a parent & in your profession. We all want to stand strong on the battleground of spiritual warfare... but listen. If we don't understand who Jesus is *to us*, what Jesus has done *for us*, how can we hope to respond appropriately & walk worthy of Him?

So as we make our way through this letter you'll note that the order goes from being *seated in the heavenly*, to *walking in a manner that's worthy*, to finally *standing firmly (strongly)* in the Lord & in the power of His might. It all stems from discovering your position & your possessions *in* Christ (who you are *in Him*, & who *He* is *in you*).

Something else we'll see along the way is the tension between God's sovereignty & man's freewill.

It's interesting how man's freewill & God's sovereignty are inextricably woven together. I promise you we won't have some great grip on it when we're finished either ☺. But this much we are assured of. There are no accidents in the kingdom of God...

Some parents have perhaps communicated to their children that they were an accident, an unplanned mistake, not really thought *about* or cared *for*. So they bear the weight of feeling like an unwanted burden their whole lives. But what we're going to discover in this 1st section of scripture (next week) is that in reality it's just the opposite! Your parents may not have had a plan, but *God* has planned you & purchased you w/the precious blood of His Son from before the foundations of the world! You're a part of God's *plan*, in Christ you've been purchased & predestined & by His Spirit you've been preserved. You'll be w/Him forever.

Each member of the Godhead was involved w/these truths (planned by the Father, purchased by the Son, permanently preserved by the Spirit).

If you'd like a little background on Paul's ministry in Ephesus you can read the book of Acts Ch's 18-20. God did an amazing work through Paul in that city, he spent a couple years there (starting what might be considered the 1st bible college there) ministering daily in the school of Tyrannus. There was a radical revival that broke out, tons of people were being saved, miracles were happening, people who crafted idols for a living were being put out of business & they had a massive book burning party where people who'd formerly practiced magic all got together & burned their books, the value of which when added up amounted to 50,000 pieces of silver. Acts Ch 19 tells us, "*So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.*"¹

It was about that time that a man name Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines for the pagan goddess Diana caused an uproar that nearly led to a riot & the whole city rushed into the amphitheater (that held 10's of thousands of people) & began shouting, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" This went on for about 2 hours before the city clerk was able to talk the people down... So the believers encouraged Paul to go ahead & leave before things went from bad to worse...

Ultimately Paul made his way back to Jerusalem where he was arrested & eventually wrote this letter from prison... When Paul was around 1 of 2 things was going to happen, you could expect a revival, or a riot but one way or another a change was coming ☺.

¹ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Ac 19:20]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Vs 1-2

So right off the bat we're given the "who", the "what" & the "how" concerning the penning of this letter. "Who" is writing? Paul. "What" gives him the authority to write & share w/us who Christ is, what He's done & how we're to respond in light of those things? The fact that he is "an apostle of J.C."

In brief the word "apostle" means, "one sent" or a "delegate". In the biblical sense of the word if one were given the title "apostle" it meant that they were taught directly by Christ, they had seen the risen Christ & they were personally commissioned by Christ to speak/minister on His behalf.

That's why when you study the N.T. you discover that Paul considered himself as one born out of due time. He says in 1 Cor as he's speaking of the reality of the risen Christ & the witnesses to his resurrection, *"After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time."*² He had all the necessary credentials of being an apostle, (he'd seen the risen Christ, had been taught by Christ, had been commissioned by Christ) it was simply that these things happened in his life after Jesus rose from the dead rather than having the opportunity to sit under Him while He ministered on the earth.

I'm not sure if we'll get around to actually looking at Paul's conversion story but if you're interested in it you can find it in Acts Ch 9. It's a fascinating account of how he was seeking to *destroy* the work of *Jesus*, but Jesus had a mind to *save him*. So Jesus revealed Himself to Paul (Saul at the time) on his way to Damascus & as I've been saying as of late, an encounter w/the risen Christ changes everything. *Saul would never be the same (& we thank God for it). But after he was saved (we discover in the book of Galatians) that he went under the radar for 3 yrs while the Lord ministered to him & prepared him for the ministry in Arabia & Damascus.*

So, don't think of Paul as kind of a 2nd class apostle as if he wasn't taught & prepared by Jesus personally. He very much was (again that's why he says that he was born out of due time) the Lord gave him some "catch up" courses (if you will)☺. & Ultimately he exceeded them all. Not because he thought he was all that, to the contrary he considered himself the least of the apostles therefore he worked twice as hard (kind of a thing).

So... Paul, an apostle of J.C. (notice) "...by the will of God".

² [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [1 Co 15:7-8]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Family, this is so important. There are overtones of God's sovereignty in this word translated "will". Paul is making it clear that he didn't appoint himself as an apostle. He wasn't elected or requested by a church body to be placed in the office of an apostle, there was no popular vote, no academic achievement that placed him in the position of an apostle. He became an apostle through the authoritative decree, the sovereign will of Almighty God.

& Such should be the case regarding whatever it is that we do as believers in J.C. Peter exhorts us in the 1st Ch of his 2nd epistle that we're to be diligent to make *our* calling & election sure! You should rest assured that you are what you are, by the will of God. If you were writing this letter, just take Paul's name out of there, place your name in there & whatever it is that you are... It might be, ... "a school teacher by the will of God" "a construction worker by the will of God", "a doctor by the will of God" "a retail worker by the will of God". Maybe you're in the privileged place of being, "a stay home mom by the will of God."

Not everyone is called to be an apostle, not everyone is called to be a pastor or preacher. Not everyone is called into ministry vocationally & I should say it's wrong to try & be something that God hasn't called you to be.

I think that sometimes as believers we can be lured into the subtle trap of thinking perhaps the ministry (vocationally) is the highest calling of God when in fact it's not at all... "Oh, he's answered the highest calling of God, he's going into the ministry!" Ministry isn't the high calling of God. "Look at her, she's going to be a missionary, she's following the highest calling. Wrong again! ☺ God's highest calling for you is wherever it is that He has you presently, whatever it is that He's equipped you for practically! There's no 2nd class citizens in the kingdom. As if vocational ministry is 1st class & everything else kind of takes a backseat... that's nonsense.

God places His people everywhere & in each place that we might be salt & light in a hurting, desperate & dying world. Don't feel like if you're not in the ministry you're somehow missing out on God's best. Believe me there's plenty of pain, plenty of deprivation, heartache & heart break that pastors & people in the ministry go through & experience. What happens behind the pulpit or in the public eye is just 1 small slice of the pie... Be grateful God has you wherever God has you, it's His high/holy calling upon your life... Of course we realize that God owns the editing rights to our lives & He can move us around, place us in different places as He sees fit.

But godliness w/contentment is where it's at, that's where great gain is found (1 Timothy 6:6).

"To the saints who are in Ephesus, & faithful in Christ Jesus." "Well, that counts me out, I'm definitely no saint!" Are you in Christ Jesus? Well, yeah. Then this is to you. Listen, scripturally, sainthood isn't predicated upon what you do practically, it's predicated upon where you are positionally. If you're "in Christ" than you're a saint! How does that feel? 😊 There are only 2 kinds of people in this world, those are saints & those who are "aints" 😊.

& Again it's not about who you are, but where you're found. The word "saints" here literally means, "holy ones" or ones who are set apart/separated exclusively for God's use.

In other words if you're in Christ, you belong to God. You have been set apart for His purpose, to be used of Him. It doesn't mean you're perfect practically (no one is), it means separated to Him exclusively. **Like the vessels of the tabernacle in the wilderness. They were referred to as "holy" vessels. Why do you think that is? Is it because they were crafted of fine gold & maintained a level of highest quality? I doubt it. After 40 yrs being drug around in the wilderness they were probably worn, beat up & battered. But they were holy because they were set apart exclusively for God's use. If that's you, if you're *in* Christ, you are holy, you are a saint.**

So when you read this letter, it's to the saints who are in Joplin, or Webb City, Carl junction, Carthage, Neosho... "& faithful in Christ Jesus." This is another way we realize this letter was meant to go beyond just the church in Ephesus. This word "faithful" here doesn't speak of persevering, those who've remained committed or whatever. It carries the meaning of "believers in Christ Jesus." We might understand it like this, "To the holy ones who are in Ephesus, & full of faith in Christ Jesus."

Again, the phrase, "in Christ Jesus" describes your spiritual position. You may be in Joplin (or wherever you are) practically, geographically, but you're in Christ spiritually, positionally. Jesus said that we were *in* the world, but not *of* the world. Same idea here.

Your identity isn't in this world, it's not in your vocation, it's not found in your academic achievements, your identity is in Christ. You in Him & Him in you, we are joined together w/Him. He is the head of the body, we are the body. Now unless my head directs my body, my body cannot, will not move. So to is Christ, He directs us, He is joined *to* us & we to Him.

Vs 2

This is sort of a traditional greeting from the apostle Paul.

Having said that I don't want to undermine its significance. Commonly referred to as the Siamese twins of the N.T. Grace & peace are always linked together in Paul's letters & always in this order. Why? Because you cannot know the peace of God until you have 1st experienced the grace of God.

However, once you've experienced the *grace* of God... Now what is "grace"? We often define it as "unmerited favor" don't we? It's the undeserved, unearned loving kindness & good will of God toward man. Strong's Greek concordance expands just a little bit on it defining "grace" like this, "...of the merciful kindness by which God, exerting his holy influence upon souls, turns them to Christ, keeps, strengthens, increases them in Christian faith, knowledge, affection, and kindles them to the exercise of the Christian virtues."³ I like that. It informs us of the fact that every aspect of our relationship to God (from salvation, justification, sanctification) is rooted in His grace, His merciful kindness.

He would've been completely just to let us perish in our sin, yet in His grace He influences us in such a way as to turn us *to* Christ, strengthen us *in* Christ & put in us a desire to live *for* & honor Christ. That's all grace... in Vs 8 of Ch 2 Paul amplifies it a bit. He says it like this, "*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,*"⁴ & It's through the sacrifice of J.C. upon the cross that God's grace has been made available to you & me.

& It's through the grace *of* God that we can experience peace *with* God. To the Romans Paul put that like this, "*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*"⁵ In the book of Colossians Paul speaks of how God reconciled all things to Himself *having made peace* through the blood of the cross of J.C. Grace & peace, they go together, & they go in that order. Peace *with* God comes only through the grace of God.

Ok, couple quick things here & we'll be done. & we'll be done. Paul says here, "Grace & peace *from* God our Father & the Lord J.C. I want you to realize that in putting these names together like he does, we have to draw the inescapable conclusion that the Lord J.C. is on equal par w/God the Father possessing the same essence of deity.

How so? Because the grace & the peace that Paul desires you to experience only comes from God our Father... & the Lord J.C.

³ Strong, J. (1995). *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*. Woodside Bible Fellowship.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Eph 2:8). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ro 5:1-2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Jesus is here named w/God our Father as the giver of Divine grace & peace! It would be impossible that Jesus should offer the same grace, the same peace that God our Father offers unless He is of the same “rank” as God Himself. *Is there a distinction here between the Father & the Son? Yes, we see 2 Persons. But the distinction isn’t found in their power or ability (grace & peace come from both), the distinction is found in their relation to the believer... God is our “Father” as by adoption (something we’ll see in Vs 5) we are His children.*

Jesus is our Lord, He is the head of the church. He has defeated death, paid the penalty of our sin & overcome the grave... He is the Lord J.C. So many people it seems just believe it’s part of His name. 1st name= Lord, middle name = Jesus, last name = Christ. *That’s not the case... His name is Jesus. The word “Christ” or “Messiah” is indicative of His mission. He’s God’s promised Savior, the Anointed One, the One who would save us from our sins. “Lord” is His title. It speaks to my relationship w/Him. I am His servant, He is my Lord.*

Now listen, it’s important that we get this part clear in our head & in our heart. He is our Lord, we are His servants. Do you remember in Luke’s gospel when Jesus said, *“But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?”*⁶ You see, there’s inconsistency there. How many people display this same kind of inconsistency? Calling Him Lord but not obeying His commands, His word. Listen, if Jesus is your Lord you will be subservient to Him. He said, *“If you love Me, keep My commandments.”*⁷ *“Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”*⁸ *So the relationship is important isn’t it? You can say Jesus is Lord, but until you’ve entered into a relationship w/Him; He is your Lord, you are His servant... you’re not saved. He is the Lord & it’s His desire to be your Lord.*

For, *“...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”*⁹ “Grace to you & peace from God our Father & the Lord, J.C.”

⁶ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Lk 6:46] Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁷ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jn 14:15-16] Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁸ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Mt 7:22-23] Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ro 10:9] Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Prayer Points:

God we thank You for Your word. We thank you for Your grace & we thank You for Your mercy. We thank You for the peace we have with You having been reconciled to You through the cross of J.C. We ask that as we enter into the book of Eph that You would bless our time spent in Your word. That we might know all that we have *in* You, drawing on those resources to live in a manner that glorifies You.

God's grace is available *to* you, His peace is waiting *for* you. Believe on the Lord J.C. Experience His saving grace today & you'll never be the same, turn from your sin & trust in Him today.