

EPHESIANS
Introduction Of The Letter: Part 1
Message 2; Sept. 27, 1998

Intro: In the last message we were introduced to this letter by way of looking at the historical city of Ephesus, Paul's trip to Ephesus and a brief overview of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Today we will begin looking at the introduction of the letter as found in Ephesians 2:1-2.

B. Introduction of the Letter (1:1-2)

1. Epistolary

In the epistolary we have information regarding the writer and the recipients of the letter. If we did not have this first word of this letter, the name of the writer, we would still be wondering who actually wrote the letter as we do with the letter to the Hebrews. Now there are more clues that Paul wrote Ephesians than there are that he may have written Hebrews. Nevertheless, the epistolary of the letter in verse one eliminates any kind of need for us to determine who actually wrote the letter. Now there are still some critics who argue that Paul did not write this letter but it is not worth spending time with them.

a. The writer

The name: Paul

What's in a name? Wouldn't a rose by any other name smell the same? Well, Paul by the name of Saul wouldn't quite be the same. I think there is a lot to be learned from this name. In the letter to the Philippians the writers are Paul and Timothy. Now there are two entirely different names and two entirely different individuals. In my experience in Christian work, when God wants to use a man like Timothy, a shy reserved, kind of man, He has to pick him up and encourage him and say, "Yes, you can." When God wants to use a dynamic, outspoken man like Paul He has to put him down and say, "No, you can't." A man like

Paul, with all his gifts and energy must be brought down until he realizes that with all his strengths of personality and with all his gifts, he can do nothing unless Christ strengthens him.

It is interesting that this man should be called Paul. The Hebrews placed great emphasis on the meanings of names. From the naming of John the Baptist we learn that children were often named after some relative. The name Saul means "asked for." Here is a wanted child, he was asked for by the parents and God gave them a son. So a son like this could say. My parents wanted a son and asked God for a son. I'm God's answer to their prayers. Or, my uncle Saul was asked for by my Grand parents and God gave them my uncle and I'm named after my uncle. You see, it was a special name.

But now we come to this name Paul. It has nothing special in it at all. As a matter of fact here is a name that Paul probably got because he was so small in physical stature. It means "little one." Now it was not uncommon for Jews in Paul's day to have a Jewish identity and a Roman identity. This Roman identity was Paul, or "little one."

I wonder if you are familiar with a term called worm theology. Psalm 22 is a Messianic Psalm speaking prophetically of the anguish and suffering of Jesus Christ. In verse 6 He says, "I am a worm and no man." Now if our modern culture analyzed the Lord Jesus Christ they would say, "Here is a man with poor self-esteem. This poor man needs to realize He is not a worm." Our present self-esteem teaching, inside the Church as well as outside, has no use for worm theology. We are very busy telling people they are not worms.

But I suppose Paul believed in worm theology. He did not say, "Listen, I am the great apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ by the will of Jehovah God Himself and I want to be called Saul, not Paul." Now look at Ephesians 1:1.

This great apostle is identifying himself. Could he not have used his Jewish name? The letter could say, "Saul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God." But it is not so. He identifies himself as "Little one, an apostle of Jesus Christ..."

But let me point out something about worm theology. It does not leave self, grovelling in the dirt in self pity. You see the biggest trouble with self esteem is the self part. Permit me to give you a very simple remedy for the self-esteem disease. Get your eyes off of self and onto God Almighty and on the importance of others. Listen to Paul, who has his eyes in the right place, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13).

Occupation: an apostle

Now if Paul does not suffer from self-esteem from fearing to identify his exalted position either. He identifies himself here as an apostle of Jesus Christ. Now this is the highest position ever attainable in the Church of Jesus Christ. There are only 12 apostles and Paul identifies himself here as one of those. Some day you and I will be introduced to the places Jesus Christ is preparing for us in heaven (John 14:1-3). That, I believe, is the New Jerusalem we find in the book of Revelation. And when we look at that city we will see 12 gates over which are inscribed the names of the 12 tribes of Israel. We will see the walls of this city resting on 12 layers of foundation stones. Now these are not regular stones. They are precious stones. And one of those layers of stones was meant to have the name Judas Iscariot on it. But that name will not be there. You know why. Now the question is, whose name will that layer of stones bear that should have Judas' name on it? Will it be Matthias, the one chosen in Acts 1? Or will it be Paul, the one we have identified here as, "Paul, an apostle"? Well, I can't prove it but I think it will be Paul. Won't it be exciting

to get a glimpse of those 12 foundations and scan through the names?

Well, maybe we should look at what an apostle is. The Greek word is *apostolos* which come from the word *apostelo*, meaning *to send*. So an apostle is a *sent one*. The closest ministry we have in the Church today to apostles is a missionary, who is also a sent one. But when it comes to the office of apostle we have a very special office. There is no succession of the office of apostle such as the Catholics profess in their popes, or such as the Mormons have in their group of 12 living apostles. If that were so, whose names would be on the foundations of the New Jerusalem?

Now did Paul view himself simply as a *sent one* or did he view himself as the one who replaced Judas Iscariot? I think he did. In 2 Cor. 11 he defended his apostleship before the Corinthians who questioned it. In 1 Cor. 9:1 he says, "Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?"

Did Paul realize how unique this position of apostleship was? Well, who would have understood better than Paul. When he says, "Paul, an apostle..." there is tremendous weight behind those words. There is a full recognition of the significance of that claim (Eph. 2:19-3:7).

Now permit me to go back to a little matter. Paul did not hesitate to call himself "little one." But now notice the opposite is true as well. He is not afraid to call himself by the highest title anyone can be called in the Church universal. It is not a matter of boasting, for then he would have said, "Saul, an apostle..." It is a matter of fact. This letter has the authority of an apostle behind it. Now an apostle by necessity of the name itself, a sent one, must be sent by someone. That is what Paul will tell us about next.

Lord/Master: of Jesus Christ

Paul now further identifies himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ. There were a lot of people in Judaism called Jesus. Its the name we find as Joshua in the OT. The name Jesus is more special than the name Saul. When Joseph found out that Mary was expecting and he was cast about as to what to do the angel informed him that this Child was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Then in Matthew 1:21 the angel said, "And she shall bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." So important was this name that the angel told Joseph what he had told Mary earlier (Lk. 1:31), His name was to be Jeshua or Joshua or in Greek, Jesus.

So Paul's Lord is this same Jesus, the One promised by God through the prophets. Now the primary reason why He would bear this name which means, Jehovah is salvation or Jehovah saves, is because He would save His people from their sins. This morning, right now, Paul's Lord is still in the business of saving people from their sins. Are you here this morning, in bondage under some sin? In this man and in this name there is deliverance made possible for you.

But His name is Jeshua Hamashia, Jesus Christ. Now there is an interesting thing about names. I think a persons last name is an adjective while the first name is the noun. Adjectives limit. Example: I caught a fish that weighed two pounds. *Pounds* is the noun but it is limited by the word *two*. Now I might say my name is Phil Schlamp. *Phil* is the noun but there are other people by that name as well so we need an adjective that tells us which one and so we have a last name. Usually in names, two are sufficient. That is not true in LaCrete. Here we have to say something like Phil, box 42 Schlamp, or Phil, S Schlamp. Each addition to the name further limits and describes the noun.

Now the name Jesus is variously modified. Each modification has a divine purpose (See 1:1, Jesus Christ and Christ Jesus. 1:2, Lord Jesus Christ. 1:3, Christ etc...) For Paul to identify of whom his apostleship was only one modification was necessary, it was Jesus Christ. There are, even in our day, a lot of people called Jesus, but there is only one Jesus Christ all others bearing that name are imposters. You see, the name Christ means anointed. This Jesus was the anointed Jesus. He was of course anointed by God the Father (Is. 61:1-3).

Ultimate authority: by the will of God

Paul was a son of God by the new birth and what was uppermost in his mind was to do the will of God (Rom. 1:10; 15:36; Eph. 6:6). John, contrasting the world with the the will of God says, "...the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:17).

Now the acknowledgements of an epistle work like an address on a letter.

Phil Schlamp
Box 74
Buffalo Head Prairie, AB, Can.
T0H 4A0

Canada limits the destination of this letter as to country. *AB* limits it to province. Buffalo Head Prairie limits it to town, village or city. *T0H 4A0* limits it to a smaller postal area. *Box 74* limits it to one particular box in that postal area. *Phil Schlamp* limits it to only one of the members who use box 74. So from anywhere in the world, a letter addressed to that address will eventually come to one particular person in one particular locality out of billions of others people and places.

Now in order for the Ephesians to know who wrote the letter that has been sent to them,

several deliniating bits of information were needed. The first is the name. We have seen that it is Paul. But since there were many Paul's some smaller denominator must be used and so it reads, "Paul, an apostle" and then an even more definitive piece of information, Paul, an apostle, of Jesus Christ. Now we know his name, his office and under whose lordship he is working but who is ultimately in charge? It is God.

Now it happened some times that some people wrote to others and instructed them in spiritual matters and then claimed to be Paul. (2 Thess. 2:1-2). But such imposters were not doing what they were doing by the will of God.

Can you say something like this today: John Doe, a farmer of Tompkins Landing, AB, by the will of God? Are you doing what you are doing by the will of God? I think the will of God has at least two categories. There is the general will of God which is true for all. And then there is the special will of God which is true of you alone. It is my task as pastor to guide you along in the general will of God. I can encourage and maybe help along sometimes in the special will of God but that area belongs to you.

Let me explain. It does not matter who we are or what our profession or where we live, there are some things that God wants for all of us. This is His general will (1 Thess. 4:3; 5:16-18). We can pray for others that they might stand perfect and complete in the will of God (Col. 4:12). But we have need of endurance for Hebrews 10:36 says so, and after we have done the will of God we will receive the promise.

God's special will has to do with what He wants me to do in everyday life. Whom, should I marry? What job should I do? Which car should I buy? Which machine should I buy? Should we buy that house? Should I go to Bible school? What ministry should I enter?

Do you want to know God's special will for you? Let me first alleviate your fears. Sometimes we think, "If I will fully commit myself to God and His will He's going to ask me to do that thing I don't want to do." We have a very hard time getting through our heads that there is none good but One, that is God. He is not out to get me. He is good. And if you should discover God's special will for you you will find that He is good. Let me share with you a helpful verse (Rom. 12:1-2). There are two things necessary to understand the will of God. First is whole hearted commitment. The offering of our bodies as a burnt sacrifice. The second part is two pronged with a negative and positive point. Negative, do not be conformed to this world. It may come to you as a surprise but this has to do with our external appearance. That is what the Greek word *schema* refers to here. Do you seek the approval of the world by dressing like it? Do you seek approval of the world by walking or talking like it? Then your discernment of the will of God will be hampered. The positive is that we are to be transformed by the renewing of the mind. The renewal of the mind is mostly dependent on the intake of the Word of God. I am sorry to see often that so many do not put a premium on learning the Word of God. No doubt, a lack of intake of the Word of God will keep us from being transformed by the renewing of the mind.

Now all of this is "...that you might prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Now let me tell you that those the most concerned about knowing the will of God, and those seeking to meet the requirements of Romans 1:1-2 will probably have the greatest difficulty determining the will of God. But let me share something with you from a pastoral point of view. I am not too much concerned with those who are seeking in every way to please God, and are taking in the Word of God at every opportunity, but still wrestle with knowing the will of God. I am confident in the midst of all the

uncertainty God will lead them. I am concerned with those who do not take in the Word of God at every opportunity and who are not so concerned about being totally sold out to God; and hardly have to consult God about decisions.

Now in light of all that and the will of God let's look at an encouraging verse (Rom. 8:27).

CONCL: Look at the words of the text this morning once more, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God..." Can you say, "John or Henry or Jim, a farmer, a clerk, a truck driver under the Lordship of Jesus Christ by the will of God?"

Oh, may we, each one of us live godly lives so as to ascertain the will of God and walk in it because we have been bought by the precious blood of Jesus Christ who lived and died and is now seated on the right hand of God so that we might be delivered from our sins and live in the perfect will of God.