

Ephesians 001 - 1:1-2 - 2014-05-25

Call to Worship: Isaiah 55:6

Scripture Reading: Genesis 7:11-23

Sermon: "Of Christ, In Christ, From Christ" Ephesians 1:1-2

Benediction: Isaiah 55:7

Today we begin a study of the letter called "Ephesians."

Why are we doing this?

What are we hoping for?

Read the text:

Ephesians 1:1-2 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus: (2) Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. I hope that the Holy Spirit will renew and maintain and increase our focus on the glory of God in the Lord Jesus Christ

A. The Lord formed this particular church by tearing people away from a man-centered church life to church life designed to humble the pride of man and exalt the grace of God as shown through Jesus Christ

B. If to any degree I have been losing that, or you have, or the church has; or, if any of the younger people or those new to the church have not caught on to that, then I hope that in this study of Ephesians, the Holy Spirit will do that work in us

C. See how the very opening phrases begin this work. We are taught or reminded that

1. we have heard the gospel and received this blessed letter from an apostle of Jesus Christ
2. our common bond is that we trust ourselves to Christ Jesus; we are the faithful, meaning we are the ones God has made to believe in Christ, and to continue believing in Christ
3. grace and peace from God come to us from the Lord Jesus Christ

I hope that the Holy Spirit will renew and maintain and increase our focus on the glory of God in the Lord Jesus Christ

II. I hope that we will better learn the truth about the very fundamentals of true Christianity

A. Why I see this as necessary

1. for some of us on certain points we just don't know at all what is meant by certain words in the bible, even words that communicate foundational concepts
2. more often, though, our situation is worse than just ignorance; instead of not knowing, we think we know, but we are wrong in what we think to be true
- illus. Which is a worse problem--- a house not yet built, the foundation not even laid or a house partially or even completely built on a foundation that is not stable
3. APPLICATION: Having heard what you have to say about some things, and having studied to know what you have been listening to, I know that you have a wrong understanding of some very fundamental matters as to religion
4. NOTE: I unashamedly tell you that as we study through Ephesians together, I intend to emphasize areas that your elders know to be problems among you. I intend to make applications to what we know to be actual issues in this particular group of people. I'm not writing a book on Ephesians for general consumption, but preaching a series of sermons through Ephesians for the building up of this particular congregation.

## B. What foundational concepts I mean

### 1. the will of God

#### a. false ideas

- i. something that is set by God's reaction to man
- ii. something that can change
- iii. something God has planned for you, and wants you to do, but you can miss if you don't somehow find out what it is
- iv. what you would do if you had all the facts

#### b. true definition: twofold

- i. He knows what He wants to do, what He will do; being unchangeable, He has always known it; being the first cause of everything, the uncaused cause, the unmoved mover, He does not have any ideas of what He will do that are reactions to the creature e.g. it was the will of God that Paul be an apostle of Jesus Christ; lo and behold, He became an apostle of Jesus Christ!
- ii. He has commanded us what is right and what is wrong, what is moral and what is immoral. This is His will.

### 2. the saints

#### a. we often are pressured to think wrongly about whom to call the saints

- i. anyone who self-identifies as a Christian in any way
- ii. since the church is made up of the saints, the idea is that we should then

#### b. who are the saints, really?

- i. those who are set apart from the world by the Lord
- ii. and are being perfected by the ongoing work of the Lord
- iii. but, in that it is impossible for us to see inside hearts

c. whom may we call “the saints”?

- i. those who claim to be set apart by the Lord by professing the faith of the gospel
- ii. and do not destroy that profession
  - a). by foundational errors
  - b). or by unholiness of lifestyle

3. faith or belief

a. there are many mistaken ideas about what faith or belief is

- i. that faith is half of what’s needed to be saved (James)
- ii. that faith is the first work God requires us to do

a) Joh 6:28-29 Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" (29) Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

b) but the Lord Jesus Christ spoke in this way not to teach that faith is a work we do, but to cancel entirely the idea that any of our works can save us

c) to talk of faith, and then say that it is a work God requires of us, and gives us the power to do, is to tear something down as fast as you are building it

iii. that faith is equivalent to saying or thinking a prayer

a) somehow this has become standard; countless preachers do this to us

b) they tell us we can be saved through faith in Christ; then they tell us a prayer we are supposed to say; when we indicate that we have said the prayer, they congratulate us on being saved

c) this is an error that destroys in a person or a church the whole foundation of Christianity

iv. many of us are used to hearing that faith is “envisioning what God wants to do in every area of your life”

b. but faith is trust, reliance, dependence

- i. it is possible to trust in our works or our prayers
- ii. but the only things worth trusting in is Jesus Christ, in His works done on our behalf

4. grace

- a. many of us are used to hearing “grace” defined this way  
“God’s grace is a dynamic power that He gives to every single person in the world to do His will.” OR “the power and desire to do His will”
- b. now, it could be that if I were talking about some aspect of God’s grace, and it is a many-faceted thing, and I described it as God giving us power to do His will,” that might be a helpful comment about grace
- c. but, given as a definition of grace, that description of grace is a false doctrine
  - illus. What if I wanted to teach you what love is, and I said, “Love is scrambling eggs.”? And if, whenever I talked about love, I always said, “Love is scrambling eggs,” would I be giving a true or a false definition of love. Is love essentially the act of scrambling eggs? Now, if as part of comments on love, I observed that a person who loves his family, when he would rather stay in bed for another hour of sleep, or would rather go do his own thing, instead he faithfully goes in the kitchen and scrambles eggs for his family’s breakfast, and that is an example of love, that would be a good point, right? But what if I held seminars and over and over again for years taught people, as the definition of love, that love is essentially and really scrambling eggs? I would be teaching falsely what love is.
- d. grace is, essentially, the favor of God; because God is perfect and we are sinful, if God favors any sinner, it is not because he deserves it or merits it, because he doesn’t deserve God’s favor. So, grace is the undeserved or unmerited favor of God toward people. That is an accurate definition of what grace is.
  - i. because God is all-powerful, God’s grace always leads to Him acting gracious toward the subjects of His grace; He does all kinds of wonderful things for us and gives us all kinds of amazing gifts, so that the bible calls those things grace or graces
  - ii. one of the things He gives us is the power and desire to do His will; but remember, grace is essentially God’s favor toward us who are undeserving, not a power or a desire He gives us

E. APPLICATION: If I just called your ideas false, then I urge you to dig in to this study of Ephesians

I hope that the Holy Spirit will renew and maintain and increase our focus on the glory of God in the Lord Jesus Christ

I hope that we will better learn the truth about the very fundamentals of true Christianity

III. I hope that we will see the right approach to rules for Christian living

A. First, the loving, gracious, merciful work of God through Christ for our salvation, then his commands for how we are to live

1. Ephesians 1:3-7 - this goes on for three chapters; then Ephesians 4:1 - this goes on for three chapters

2. ethical section of Romans begins chapter 12

3. first 19 chapters of Exodus are how the Lord redeemed Israel from slavery in Egypt; Exodus 20:2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

B. We are taught by this that our primary reason for obedience is that we want to live lives worthy of what has been done for us in Christ Jesus

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I hope that we will see the right approach to rules for Christian living

IV. I hope that those of you who do not yet trust in Christ will be brought to faith in Him

A. This letter is not directed primarily to you, but to the saints

B. Yet the bible tells us that when the word of God is proclaimed, those who are present may well hear what is being said and be convinced of the truth of it and be convicted of his sins, and, falling down on his face before God will worship God

1689 chapter 26

2.\_\_\_\_\_ All persons throughout the world, professing the faith of the gospel, and obedience unto God by Christ according unto it, not destroying their own profession by any errors everting the foundation, or unholiness of conversation, are and may be called visible saints; and of such ought all particular congregations to be constituted.

I. We will be studying the words of an apostle of Jesus Christ  
then in prison

meaning of "Saul"; having given up his proud Jewish name; Acts 13  
Saul stood head and shoulders above his fellows; the meaning of Paul is "little  
one"

II. We will be studying what was written to those who have faith in Jesus Christ

Joh 20:27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."

Gal 3:9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

III. We will be studying what will bring grace and peace from Jesus Christ

grace

Webster 1828

the free unmerited love and favor of God, the spring and source of all the benefits men receive from him.

Henry

By grace we are to understand the free and undeserved love and favour of God, and those graces of the Spirit which proceed from it

Hodge

Grace is unmerited favor

Hawker

the free, unpurchased, everlasting love and favor of Jehovah

Trapp

God's love and favour

Poole

free love and goodwill

Clarke

the Divine favor

Calvin

the favor of God

saints

Hodge

those who are cleansed by the blood of Christ, and by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, and thus separated from the world and consecrated to God.

faithful

Hodge

it is equivalent to believing. The faithful, therefore, are believers

grace

Gill (from Romans 1:7)

nor the love and favour of God, which these persons were sharers in, as appears from their above characters; nor the principle of grace, which was now formed there in their effectual calling; but an increase of grace, as to its degrees, acts, and exercise; every grace is imperfect in this respect, and those who have the most stand in need of more; there is such a thing as growing in grace, which is very desirable, and may be expected from God, who is able to make all grace to abound, and has promised to give more:

Henry

By grace we are to understand the free and undeserved love and favour of God, and those graces of the Spirit which proceed from it; by peace all other blessings, spiritual and temporal, the fruits and product of the former. No peace without grace.

(from Romans 1:7) the favour of God towards us or the work of God in us

Trapp

These go fitly together; because we must seek our peace in the free grace and favour of God. The ark and mercy seat were never sundered.

Hodge

(from Romans 1:7) Χάρις is kindness, and especially undeserved kindness, and therefore it is so often used to express the unmerited goodness of God in the salvation of sinners. Very frequently it is used metonymically for the effect of kindness, that is, for a gift or favor. Anything, therefore, bestowed on the undeserving may be called χάρις. . . . In the text, it is to be taken in the comprehensive sense in which it is used in the apostolic benedictions for the favor and love of God and Christ.

Grace is unmerited favor; and the grace or favor of God is the source of all good. Peace, according to the usage of the corresponding Hebrew word, means well-being in general. It comprehends all blessings flowing from the goodness of God. The apostle prays to Christ, and seeks from him blessings which God only can bestow.

Hawker

the latter is the fruit of the former. Grace is the source and cause of all our blessings, because this is the free, unpurchased, everlasting love and favor of Jehovah, in his threefold character of Persons, towards the Church in Christ, and from whence all the effects in pardon, mercy, and peace, result.

Calvin:

Nothing is more desirable than to have God propitious to us, and this is signified by grace; and then to have prosperity and success in all things flowing from him, and this is intimated by peace;

Vincent

many are hungry, and this is food  
“the best new convert’s manual”  
this book sets out that God is God and we are not!  
Paul wants you to learn to think like a Christian