

## EXPOSITION OF EPHESIANS

### Message #2

### Ephesians 1:1-2

There is a statement in the Bible that was made by James, the half-brother of Jesus Christ that says: “Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above coming down from the Father of lights...” (James 1:17). I am not too sure we fully grasp the significance of that statement because what it actually means is that any good thing we have ever had in life and enjoyed in life has been given to us by the Sovereign God of the Bible. God the Father has sovereignly given us every good thing we have or will ever have. The problem is, in most cases, God does not get the credit for this. Humans like to take the credit and therefore they do not acknowledge God properly and they do not worship God properly.

However, there is one area where the theology had better be right. There is one area that we had better give God all the glory and it is our grace salvation. Any person who has believed on Jesus Christ has been given a grace salvation from God. It was God’s sovereign will that chose us and it was God’s sovereign will that saved us. That point is stressed in the opening two verses of the book of Ephesians.

**EPHESIANS BEGINS BY EMPHASIZING THE FACT THAT EVERYTHING WE HAVE IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IS BY GOD’S SOVEREIGN GRACE.**

The book of Ephesians is designed to take us deep into our understanding of the grace of God. As the letter opens there are three main introductory points that Paul communicates:

**INTRODUCTORY POINT #1** – The writer of the inspired letter. **1:1a**

Right at the beginning the writer tells us his name; he immediately identifies himself as Paul. The first word of the Greek text is the same first word of the English text and it tells us who wrote this letter, and it reads exactly the same way in English as it does in Greek “Paul” (Παυλος).

When Paul began any letter, he typically gave an opening salutation introducing himself and the target of his letter. In this way a scroll would not have to be completely unrolled to see who the letter was actually from. There are three main facts Paul reveals:

**Fact #1** – Paul is an apostle.

The importance of this word “apostle” to the Grace Age is seen in Ephesians 4:11-12. It was a vital gift given by God to the church. It was the highest ranked gift and it was one that meant the person held the highest position in the church. What this word apostle actually means is that Paul was a very sacred, set apart messenger of God who was sent on a specific mission by God (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 55).

**The term “apostle” means that Paul is sent out by God and was given a specific sacred gift of being an apostle, and he was sent out on a specific expedition or mission by God.**

By using this word “apostle,” Paul is establishing the fact that this is a very authoritative letter written by an official gifted apostle. **As an apostle, Paul had full right and authority to proclaim God’s inspired Word in ways that were verbal and in ways that were written.** He was specifically commissioned for the task of proclaiming God’s truth in verbal and written form. What this means is that an apostle became an apostle by a specific commission of God. He did not become an apostle because he put a sign on a shingle saying he was an apostle.

What this practically means to this book of Ephesians is that this is not some warm, fuzzy devotional book written by some spiritually minded man; this is an inspired document written by an apostle of God.

**Fact #2** – Paul is an apostle of Christ Jesus.

**The prepositional phrase “of Christ Jesus” not only shows the object of Paul’s apostleship, but the source of it as well.** In other words, Christ Jesus is the focus of Paul’s apostleship and it was Christ Jesus who authorized him to be an apostle. Jesus Christ actually commissioned Paul to be an apostle.

We may notice that the proper noun word order is “Christ Jesus” and not “Jesus Christ.” The reason for this is because Christ stresses the fact that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah and Jesus stresses the fact that He is the Savior. Paul’s theology of Jew first is revealed in this word order right here. In fact, it was Jesus Himself who said “salvation is from the Jew” (John 4:22), and since this is an epistle that will take us to the depths of our salvation, it is very appropriate that Paul begins by first using the name for Jesus as the Messiah.

**Fact #3** – Paul is an apostle by the will of God.

**This point is so critical and so neglected. Paul did not become an apostle by aspiration or usurpation or nomination or manipulation or by preparation; he became an apostle by God’s sovereign determination.** He knew that he was an apostle by the Divine choice of God. No man had anything at all to do with Paul being an apostle, not even Paul himself. It was all by the sovereign will of the sovereign God.

Paul became an apostle by the will of God, not because he wanted to be an apostle. He did not make some career decision to become an apostle. In fact, when we look at Acts 9 and see what happened on the road to Damascus, he didn’t even want a relationship with Jesus Christ and he certainly had no intention of becoming an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Paul was always fully aware of the fact that his apostleship was by God’s will. He knew that God had a sovereign plan and assignment for his life and his apostleship was by God’s will. It was not due to his ambition or presumption; it was due to God’s will.

Now this idea of having a relationship with God because of God’s will is a major point in Ephesians, because Paul will use this same word and connect it to every believer (1:5, 9, 11). Just as he never forgot about the fact that God’s will made him an apostle, we should never forget about the fact that God’s will saved us.

If we are to praise God and worship God properly in our salvation, it starts in realizing God's sovereignty in grace.

**INTRODUCTORY POINT #2** – The targeted recipients of the inspired letter. **1:1b**

There are three specific recipient targets of this letter:

**Target #1** – The letter is written to the saints .

**To be a saint by biblical classification, you don't have to be dead; you have to be alive unto God.** The basic idea behind the term "saint" is something that is set apart by God and consecrated to God as sacred. This refers to a positional sainthood that every believer has given him by God. The very word "saint" stresses the sovereignty of God. **Paul is not saying that every believer lives his practical life as a saint; he is saying that every believer has the position of being a saint.** The term saint refers to anyone who is saved.

This is a very important theological point. We do not do what is right to become a saint, we are already a saint and that is what should prompt us to do what is right. Arminians miss the very heart of this word. This very word "saint" stresses the fact that God is the Sovereign God who set that person apart unto Himself.

**Target #2** – The letter is written to the saints in Ephesus .

When you read the Greek text of Ephesians the words "in Ephesus" appear in brackets because there are some manuscripts that do not contain the words "in Ephesus" (εν Εφεσω). One writer said "a great deal of ink has flowed concerning the textual problem 'in Ephesus' in Eph. 1:1." This has caused some to speculate that it really wasn't written to the church in Ephesus, but rather as a circular letter to be given to all churches.

There are some very lame and shallow commentaries on the market today that just drift along with this thinking and don't even bother to check the facts. For example, one modern day commentary says: "The words 'in Ephesus' are not present in three earliest manuscripts. Therefore, this was very likely a circular letter..." (*Life Application Bible Commentary, Ephesians*, p. 4). Here is a popular commentary on the market published by Tyndale and that is their statement. If you were an average person reading that, you would wonder, well do the words "at Ephesus" belong there or not. Well let's clear this mess up once and for all:

**First**, the total amount of key ancient manuscripts that contain the words "in Ephesus" are thirty, and the total amount of key manuscripts that do not contain the words are five (*The Greek New Testament, UBS text, Fourth Revised Edition*, p. 654).

**Second**, it is interesting to me that even the Greek texts that question the matter leave the text in brackets, which would seem to indicate that they believed it should have been there. One of the most brilliant textual critics to ever live was Bruce Metzger.

He said "since all witnesses except those mentioned (five manuscripts) include the words in Ephesus, the Committee decided to retain them, but enclosed them within square brackets" (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, p. 532).

**Third**, all early translations from the Greek text into another language leave the words “in Ephesus” in the translation. This is true with the Latin Vulgate, the Old Syriac and the Coptic Version. Furthermore, the English translations leave it in.

Now why would all of the great biblical linguists include these words? This would seem to clearly indicate that even the great translators did not want to remove them from the text, which would seem to suggest they all felt it belonged there.

**Fourth**, all of the manuscripts that eliminate the words “in Ephesus” come with an inscription at the top which reads “to the Ephesians,” which proves this letter was known as the Ephesian letter. H.C.G. Moule observed “every known manuscript... without exception reads ‘To the Ephesians’ as the title of the Epistle...” (*Studies in Ephesians*, p. 27).

In a very technical study of this issue by Harold Hoehner, he ends his discussion by saying “In conclusion, both the external and internal evidence favor the inclusion of ἐν Ἐφεσῶν” (in Ephesus) (*Ephesians, An Exegetical Commentary*, pp. 144-148).

**So our conclusion is when you read that this letter is written to the saints at or in Ephesus, it is exactly what Paul wrote and what God inspired.**

Now today, the city of Ephesus is in ruins, but in Paul’s day it was one of the most important cities in the world. The ruins of ancient Ephesus are located about four miles inland from the Aegean Sea on the west coast of modern-day Turkey, but when this book of Ephesians was written, Ephesus was a booming city and according to one scholar was the third largest city in the Roman Empire. It was known as one of the great world trade centers of the world.

There was a first century geographer whose name was Strabo who described Ephesus as being a Roman province that sat at the mouth of the Cayster River. Ephesus was a city with some magnificent structures. There were baths, gymnasiums, a stadium for gladiators and wild animals. There were civic centers and commercial centers. There were two very prominent structures in Ephesus.

**First**, there was a major theater located on the western slope of Mt. Pion, which was expanded by three Roman Emperors-Claudius (A.D. 41-54) who enlarged it; Nero (A.D. 54-68) who built a two story stage and Trojan (A.D. 98-117) who completed it. This theater measured 475 feet wide and ninety-eight feet high. It had a seating capacity of 24,000 people and it was supported by thirty-six pillars. When Paul was in Ephesus this theater was being expanded. It was in this theater that Demetrius protested against Paul and his message in Acts 19:23-41.

**Second**, there was the temple of Artemis (Greek name) or Diana (Roman or Latin name), which was considered to be one of the Seven Wonders of the World. It measured 225 feet wide by 425 feet long. It had 127 columns that each stood sixty feet high and were six feet in diameter.

Life in Ephesus revolved around this temple, which focused on the worship of a goddess named Artemis or Diana. There was immorality at this temple and a lot of satanic and magical rites (Acts 19:18-19).

Now the Apostle Paul had an amazing relationship with the Ephesians.

- 1) He first visited Ephesus in the fall of A.D. 52 on his second missionary journey. He had been in Corinth and he took Priscilla and Aquila with him to Ephesus and he left them there when he left (Acts 18:18-21).
- 2) After returning back to his home church of Antioch, he took off on his third missionary journey and eventually ended up in Ephesus in the fall of A.D. 53 (Acts 18:23; 19:1). Paul taught in the synagogue for three months and then taught for two more years (Acts 19:8-10). According to I Cor. 16:8, Paul intended to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost (June 56), but he left a little early and traveled to Macedonia and Achaia (Acts 19:21; 20:1-2).
- 3) Paul spent three winter months in Greece (Acts 20:3) and then headed toward Jerusalem desiring to celebrate Pentecost there (Acts 19:21; 20:16, 22). On his way he stopped in Miletus and sent for the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:3-16) and they came to meet him (20:17-18a).
- 4) Paul went to Jerusalem and caused such a stir that he ended up in jail in Rome in A.D. 60-62 and from there he wrote this letter to the Ephesians.

**Target #3** – The letter is written to those faithful in Christ Jesus.

To be classified as one of the faithful, one must be “in Christ Jesus.” This Greek construction refers to those who are of the faith in Christ Jesus, rather than those who are not of the faith in Jesus Christ.

Now there aren't too many commentators who pick up on the little prepositional phrase “in Christ Jesus” (εν Χριστω Ιησου), but C.I. Scofield didn't miss it. He accurately states that “This is the Christian's place as a member of the body of Christ, vitally united with Him by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:12-13)” (*Scofield Reference Bible, NASV*, p. 1624).

Satan has done his very best to keep most of Christianity in total ignorance of what Spirit baptism actually is because he knows if you actually and accurately understand it, your spirituality will soar and your grasp of grace causes you to worship an amazing God. This is vital theology. Spirit baptism is not about tongues or experience; this is a theological doctrine that is critical to grace.

**The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the work of the Holy Spirit in which He places the believer into the family of God by permanently uniting that believer and identifying that believer with Jesus Christ and everything He accomplished. The Holy Spirit actually and really places a believer into Jesus Christ.**

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a feeling or an experience; it is a theological reality wrought by the sovereignty of God.

- 1) Spirit baptism so links us with Jesus Christ that we are judicially freed from all sin (Rom. 6:1-4).
- 2) Spirit baptism so links us with Jesus Christ that we are one body (I Cor. 12:13).
- 3) Spirit baptism so links us with Jesus Christ that we actually put on Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:26).
- 4) Spirit baptism so links us with Jesus Christ we have a body unity with the Godhead (Eph. 4:4-6).
- 5) Spirit baptism so links us with Jesus Christ that we are spiritually circumcised (Col. 2:9-13).
- 6) Spirit baptism so links us with Jesus Christ that we are saved from God's wrath (1 Pet. 3:21).
- 7) Spirit baptism so links us with Jesus Christ that we are forever saved (Mk. 16:16).

Paul is writing to those who are faithful believers by virtue of the fact they have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into Jesus Christ. The believer is united to God by faith in Him. It is faith in Christ, not their works that links them to God and gives them the classification of part of the "faithful."

### **INTRODUCTORY POINT #3** – The source of all grace blessings we have. **1:2**

There are two specific sources brought out concerning our salvation:

#### **Source #1** – Grace and peace come from God the Father .

The first word Paul writes in **verse 2** is "grace" (χάρις). This word directly connects to God's undeserved, unearned and unmerited favor in which God provides salvation and saves sinners. Twelve times in this book of Ephesians Paul will mention God's grace (1:2, 6, 7; 2:5, 7, 8; 3:2, 7, 8; 4:7, 29; 6:24). Peace is that tranquility that one has in one's relationship with God and with one's self when one believes. **It has been observed that grace is the cause of God's gracious work, and peace is the effect of God's gracious work.**

In Paul's letters there are forty references to God as Father. In this book of Ephesians Paul mentions this eight times which is more than in any other book (1:2, 3, 17; 2:18; 3:14-15; 4:6; 5:20; 6:23). **Paul uses this term not just to describe the fact that God is the Father of everything in existence, but specifically, the Father of the grace salvation that we have.** He is the Father of grace and He is the Father of peace.

#### **Source #2** – Grace and peace come from God the Son .

The noun "Lord" means Jesus is God; the noun "Jesus" means Jesus is Savior and the noun "Christ" means Jesus is the Jewish Messiah. He is God's Sovereign Son. The conjunction "and" (καί) which joins together the Father with Jesus Christ is a coordinating conjunction and not a subordinating conjunction, which means there is a co-equality between the Father and the Son. There is equal Divinity involved in giving grace and peace to sinful man.

Eighteen times in Ephesians Paul uses the formula "Jesus Christ" or "Christ Jesus." As we pointed out last time the noun "Christ" is used forty-seven times, whereas the single name Jesus is only used twice.

Now when you look at these two opening verses it is very clear right at the outset that Paul wants us to realize that everything we have in our salvation, in our sanctification is all by sovereign grace given to us by a sovereign God.

Do you have the peace of this grace in your life?