

## Paul's Greeting to the Ephesians

### Ephesians 1:1-2

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: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."*

#### Background Notes

The epistle to the Ephesians is one of the Apostle Paul's "prison epistles." It was written from Rome in the early 60's AD, while Paul was under house arrest, awaiting his trial before Nero. We read about this situation at the end of the book of Acts. *"Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house and received all who came to him. Preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one was forbidding him" (Acts 28:30-31).*

So, Paul was allowed to live in his own rented house, and he was able to teach and preach and write letters and send fellow-workers on missions, etc., etc. However, he was a Roman prisoner, and he was chained to a Roman guard at all times. Look back at Acts 28:20 - *"...because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain."* Paul was allowed to write letters, and during this time he wrote the four "prison epistles" - Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon. But remember, this was not the greatest or most pleasant of situations! He was chained to a Roman guard at all times.

The church at Ephesus was probably established during Paul's third missionary journey, in the mid 50's AD. In Acts 18 we learn that on Paul's return from his second missionary journey he left Aquila and Pricilla at Ephesus. Do you remember Aquila and Pricilla? They were a Christian husband and wife team. They were totally dedicated to the work of the Lord, and they are great models for Christian husbands and wives today. In fact, I would challenge younger married couples or couples who have just gotten engaged -- if you're looking for a model to follow as a married couple, a Christian married couple, look up the Scriptures on Aquila and Pricilla. Read those Scriptures, and you'll find a great model for your Christian life together.

Aquila and Pricilla were left at Ephesus when Paul returned from his 2nd missionary journey, so it may be that Aquila and Pricilla started the church at Ephesus. Most likely they had a Bible study in their home, and most likely they led several Ephesians to the Lord. We do know that they helped teach Apollos, an eloquent preacher who was passing through Ephesus at that time. Read about that in Acts chapter 18.

When the Apostle Paul returned to Ephesus on his third missionary journey (Acts 19), the church at Ephesus was fully established. A number of churches in that area were established at that time -- probably all of the "Seven Churches of Asia" that are addressed in Revelation 2 and 3. Paul began to teach a daily Bible school at Ephesus during his third missionary journey. Acts 19:10 - *"and this [the teaching and preaching at this Bible school] continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks."* So, it seems that a number of churches in the area of Ephesus were either started or established at this time, on Paul's 3rd missionary journey.

For this reason, many Biblical scholars believe that the Epistle to the Ephesians is an "encyclical," or a circular letter that Paul meant not only for the church at Ephesus, but to be passed around and read also in the other churches the Ephesus area. This would include the church at Colossae. In Colossians 4:16 Paul wrote, *"Now when this epistle [that is, the epistle to the Colossians] is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea."* There's a good possibility that the letter that was coming from Laodicea to Colossae was the circular letter that was addressed to the Ephesians.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Believers are "saints."

Verse 1: *"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus and faithful in Christ Jesus."*

Paul was not addressing two groups of believers here at Ephesus: the "saints" and the "run of the mill" faithful Christians. No! All the Christians in the church at Ephesus were saints! Paul was addressing one group: *"the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus."*

All believers are saints! In the Greek language of the New Testament, the word "saint" comes from the same word as "holy" and it means, "separated from sin." So all believers are "saints" or "holy ones." Now you might be thinking, "Wait a minute -- I know a lot of Christians that are not saintly and holy and separated from sin! I know a lot of Christians who are unholy -- in fact, I'm sitting next to one of them right now!" (laughter) Well, maybe that person is thinking the same thing about you -- that you're not so saintly all the time or separated from sin all the time! And that may be true -- but before God (get the point now) before God, you and the Christian you are sitting next to are holy. That is, your sins are forgiven, and you are thus separated from sin, as far as any penalty for sin goes. And you are separated from sin because you are in Christ, as far as your spiritual position goes.

So, you may not be "saintly" all the time, but if you're a true believer God sees you "in Christ." He sees you not only as a forgiven sinner but He sees you as righteous. Righteous in Christ -- that's our spiritual position! Thus all true believers are saints. You're either a saint or an "ain't" -- you're either saved or you're not saved. There's no middle ground. If you

haven't come to God for salvation in Christ, then you are in the "ain't" category. You're not saved. You're not born again. You're not a Christian. However, if you have come to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, then you are a saint.

Now saints should try to be more saintly and more faithful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ in our everyday living, like the faithful saints that Paul was addressing at Ephesus. That's for sure! But remember -- the Bible teaches that all believers are saints. Even the Corinthian believers, who were anything but saintly, are addressed as saints in 1 Corinthians 1:2. All believers are saints.

## **2. Believers are recipients of God's grace and peace.**

Verse 2: *"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."*

You'll recognize this phrase as the familiar "Pauline" greeting that is used in many of Paul's epistles. First century letters would usually have a section of greeting, and typically they would include the Greek word *charan*, which means, "rejoice." However, Paul changed a couple of letters and made the word *charis*, which means, "grace." So, combined with peace this 'Pauline' greeting then becomes a blessing.

*"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."* Believers are recipients of grace and peace. The "grace and peace" that are in view here are not the grace and peace of God for our salvation, but rather the grace of God and peace of God that we need daily to live our lives as believers. All believers are saved by the grace of God and all believers have peace with God. Our sins are forgiven and we're no longer at war with God.

But -- praise God -- we also have the grace of God and peace of God that are available to help us through life. Would you agree? God has graciously provided for Margie and me in every way over the years -- undeserved favor, again and again! That's what "grace" is: undeserved favor. And what a blessing it is to know and rest in the peace of God in these troubling days when it looks like the world is falling apart.

Have you experienced this grace of God and this peace of God --the grace of God and the peace of God that He gives us for daily living? Some Christians miss out here because they don't wait on God. An exhaustless reservoir of the grace of God and peace of God is always available. Believers are recipients of God's grace and peace.

## Practical Applications

### 1. We, too, are “apostles by the will of God.”

Verse 1: *“Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God.”*

You probably know that the word *apostle* means, “one sent forth.” It’s used in the New Testament both in a narrow sense and a wide sense. In the narrow sense it’s restricted to the twelve apostles, including the Apostle Paul, as we see here. But in the wide sense, it includes you and me. We too are “sent forth” ones -- sent forth with the good news. The great commission is to go into all the world and preach the gospel to everyone.

How are we doing as apostles, as “sent ones”? How are you doing in your neighborhood, in the place where you work? How are you young people doing on the high school campus or the college or university campus? Are you doing what God has called you to do, to be an apostle? As Paul was an apostle by the will of God, and we, too, are apostles by the will of God. He has willed us to be apostles! Let’s do what we’re called to do. We, too, are apostles by the will of God.

### 2. Do you know God as “Father”?

Verse 2: *“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

The concept of God as our Father is only fully revealed to us in the New Testament. Just two weeks ago I was sharing this truth with a Jewish lady, a non-Christian lady, and she said, “Wait a minute. What about the Lord’s Prayer? Our Father who art in Heaven.” Well was she surprised when she found out that the Lord’s Prayer comes from the New Testament! Somehow she thought that it was in the Old Testament!

Let me ask you: do you know God as Father? That is, not only as the Creator and the One who is Almighty -- but do you know Him as your heavenly **Father**? When you become a Christian you are forgiven for your sins, and you are also brought into the family of God! You become a child of God -- God is your Father! What a special relationship! You can call God your Father!

Do you know God as your personal, loving Father? Do you have that personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ? Are you able to talk to Him that way when you pray? Or do you just pray, “O God,” and you’re thinking of God only as the Creator and the Almighty God who is somewhere out there? Do you know God as your Father?