

## Introducing The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians

### Ephesians 1:1-2

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

#### Introduction

- A. It is my joy this morning to begin a new sermon series. We are returning to a book of the Bible.
1. Parenting teens
  2. Outreach
  3. Giving
  4. Before that we went through 1 Corinthians and Nehemiah
- B. With this sermon we are **Introducing The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians**. Why Ephesians (besides the obvious ... the Word of God is always in season)? Four reasons:
1. One, if (and happily we don't need to choose) I were restricted to one book of the Bible the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians would be that book. It is my personal favorite.
    - This brief letter only contains 3009 words, 155 verses, 88 sentences, 27 paragraphs and six chapters. But, Ephesians packs a punch.
    - We plan to invest some 17 sermons in this book (letter). Martyn Lloyd-Jones invested 230 sermons (skipped the last four verses of chapter 6). Ephesians is rich.
  2. Two, in Ephesians we learn about God (our Trinitarian God) and how God desires His people to live their lives.

Consider that in these mere 155 verses there are some 120 direct references to Jesus Christ, 80 references to God the Father, and 15 references to the Holy Spirit. In addition, Paul talks to "you" over 80 times, and "us" about 45 times. So God appears about one and one half times per verse, and you are talked about almost once per verse! Paul is compelled to mention Christ and you in almost every sentence. It's not hard to get what this letter's about. If you're even semi-conscious, Ephesians ought to produce an intensely personal encounter with God. David Powlison in *JBC, Vol 17, #2*, p 11

- In learning about God we will see who God is and we will see what God has done for us. We will see the riches of our position in Christ. And, our response.
3. Three, as we build Living Hope relationally in marriages and families and care groups and in other relationships we will find that we counsel one another. Ephesians equips you.

You will not go wrong if you plunge into Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Master it. Be mastered by it. Work Ephesians into your thinking, your living, your prayers, your conversation, your practice. The Bible is vast and deep, and human life is diverse and perplexing. But in a pinch you *could* do all counseling from Ephesians. David Powlison in *JBC, Vol 17, #2*, p 12

- Ex: A biblical counseling program that didn't know Ephesians?  
 Ex: Beth is memorizing Ephesians (what about me?).

4. Four, Ephesians speaks directly to our greatest need. What is our greatest need? If you say God you are only half right. Our greatest need is to be saved by God from God.
  - This means our greatest needs are grace and peace.

- Grace is help and peace with God means we are no longer enemies.

C. This is why Ephesians 1:2 is a most precious verse. Paul is not simply saying hi. Paul (God breathing out His Word) is already grounding them in doctrine.

Ephesians 1:2 (ESV) Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Both these nouns are particularly appropriate at the beginning of Ephesians - 'grace' indicating God's free, saving initiative, and 'peace' what he has taken the initiative to do, namely to reconcile sinners to himself and to each other in his new community. John Stott in *TBST Ephesians*, p 27

## I. An overview of Ephesians.

- A. Let me encourage you to take 20 or 30 minutes and sit down and read Ephesians. It will give you the big picture and it will serve you as we preach through this letter.
- B. It is generally well known that Ephesians consists of 6 chapters. Most commentators see a division of chapters 1-3 (doctrine or theology) and 4-6 (practice or application).
1. The first three chapters are doctrine and we are only told by Paul to one thing. That one thing is remember (see Ephesians 3:11-12) that at one time you were separated from Christ.
  2. The first three chapters are about God, sin and redemption which means these chapters are about grace and peace.
  3. Chapters 4-6 are about our relationships in 4 different settings:
    - To one another in the church
    - To the world
    - To one another in the home
    - To powers of darkness
- C. It is a growth point for us in living the Christian life when we understand that our practice follows from our doctrine.

When we talk about theology, all we are talking about is what we think about God. What you believe about God and what it means to live for God *is* your theology... What kind of theologian are you? It's not hard to tell. Whether we realize it or not, our ideas about life, needs, marriage, romance, conflict, and everything else reveal themselves all the time in our words and deeds, inevitably reflecting our view of God. Dave Harvey in *When Sinners Say I Do*, p 20-21

1. Since practice flows from theology we are wise to lessen the distinction between them. Someone once described Jonathan Edwards this way: "His theology was all application, and his application was all theology." David Powlison in *JBC, Vol 17, #2*, p 2
2. Put another way, to live the fruitful Christian life for the glory of God means we need to read chapters 1-3 as often as we read chapters 4-6.

## II. Some important details about The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians. We'll consider the author, the recipients, a date of authorship and important themes.

- A. The letter begins with a greeting from the human author. Paul, that remarkable apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.
1. Paul has been accepted as the author until the early 1800s. Then questions arose about the

impersonal tone and theology (heavenly places). So various theories arose.

- At times these higher critics are annoying because they seem to sit above the Word but they have sharpened scholarly thinking and the Word still stands.
2. None hold sufficient water for us to shift from Paul. F.F. Bruce said simply that if Paul didn't write this his equal or superior exists. Who is that? Where is he?
  3. Paul knew that he was an apostle by the will of God (not his will). The account of Saul (later Paul) on the road to Damascus is found in Acts 9.
    - Saul goes from breathing out threats and dividing families to following Christ. The change is so dramatic Jews seek to kill Saul.
    - Therefore, Paul never could get over the grace of God. Paul was under no delusion about free will and he marveled at God's patient kindness towards him.
- B. The recipients would seem rather obvious. To the saints who are in Ephesus. The letter is called Ephesians. But, as it turns out things aren't that easy.
1. The letter is written to saints (most common NT name). Saints are not elite believers, saints are every believer. The saints are faithful and they are trusting in Christ.
  2. The saints are in Christ. They are branches and Christ is the vine. Therefore, their life comes from Jesus Christ.
  3. ESV says in Ephesus but the oldest manuscripts don't have Ephesus. It may have been for Laodicea (Marcion) or it may have been a general or circular letter (Ephesus first).
  4. Happily Ephesians is written to all saints for all time. This letter to the Ephesians is one rich gift for which we are grateful.
- C. The date is also debatable. Paul is in prison, most likely Rome. This means Paul probably wrote Ephesians around 63 A.D. Paul will only live one more year.
1. Colossians (very similar) and Philemon were written from the same place. Possibly only 2 Timothy follows these letters.

### III. Important themes in Ephesians.

- A. I would like to mention five. Very briefly:
1. God and His sovereignty (mystery)
  2. Grace and peace (the work of Jesus Christ makes a new creation).
  3. Unity in the church
  4. Prayer
  5. Evangelism

### Close

- A. Grace and peace to you, Living Hope. Ephesians will ground us in these sweet, savory truths.

1. But, I wonder if we all have peace with God. There are only two options. There is God and there is idolatry.
2. To surrender your life to Christ is to find peace and joy.

Man is in a state of internal conflict and he does not know why it is so. He wants to do certain things, but something inside tells him it is wrong to do so. He has something in him which we call conscience. Though he thinks he can be happy whatever he does, and though he may silence other people, he cannot silence this inner monitor... Man was made by God in such a way that he can only be at peace with himself when he is at peace with God. Man was never meant to be a god, but he is for ever trying to deify himself. He sets up his own desires as the rules and laws of his life, yet he is ever characterized by confusion, and worse. Something in himself denies his claims; and so he is always quarreling and fighting with himself. And still worse, because of all this, he is in a state of warfare with everyone else. Unfortunately for him everyone else wants to be a god as well. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in *Ephesians Vol 1*, p 38-39

3. In short, to go your own way, apart from Christ, is to choose eventual internal misery. It is a misery that is eternal.
- B. To come to Christ all you do is believe you are a sinner and you need a Savior. That Savior is Jesus Christ and I pray you know His grace and peace.