

GOD

Ephesians 1:1 – to Whom it is Written

The Book of Ephesians has been called the greatest revelation given to the Church of the Body to which we belong in this Grace Administration.

The first eight chapters of the Book of Romans set forth the doctrine regarding our individual standing in Christ: we are justified by believing and inseparable from God's love. Then Ephesians unfolds to us the Great Mystery: we all collectively make up the Body of Christ. As members of this Body, we are in the Lord as we faithfully stand together with Christ as the head; then we have unity, great freedom, and victory. The first three chapters of Ephesians are doctrinal, while the last three chapters provide the practical application of this doctrine in our day by day walk.

Consider the opening verse in Ephesians, Paul's salutation to those to whom this epistle is addressed:

Ephesians

1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.

This verse introduces the writer (Paul), who wrote what God authored by divine revelation, and states to whom the epistle was addressed.

Before examining this verse in detail, let's read the next verse, Paul's greeting to the intended readers:

1:2 Grace *be* to you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

This verse states God's desire for His people: grace (God's unmerited favor) and spiritual peace, or peace with God as we live in harmony, unity, and tranquility. Both grace and true peace are only available from God, and are available to us by the accomplishments of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Both grace and peace are vital for the born-again believer to be able to reap the greatest benefits in our walk with God.

If you were to read the salutation of the other epistles written by Paul, you would see the same expressed desire of grace and peace to those to whom those epistles are addressed. In Paul's epistles to Timothy and Titus, mercy is also mentioned, a quality needed for leadership.

Now let's take a closer look at verse 1. This verse starts off with: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God..."

Here we see that Paul was an apostle. Apostle is one of five ministries that God makes available to the Church in this administration, as we see in Chapter 4:

Ephesians

4:8 Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

“Gifts” in this verse is the Greek word *doma*, gifts which benefit others in the Body.

4:11 *(when you read this, remove the commas after the word “some”)*
And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers.

There are five ministries God gives in this Age of Grace (5 is the number for grace). Actually, the gifts mentioned in verse 8 are the individuals in the Body who operate one or more of the ministries mentioned in verse 11: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

The purpose of these ministries is given in the next verse:

4:12 For *(purpose)* the perfecting *(mending)* of the saints *(refers to our walk in the renewed mind since we are already perfect spiritually)*, for *(with a view to)* the work of the ministry, for *(with a view to)* the edifying *(building up)* of the body of Christ *(the Temple, the Church of Grace – Us)*

4:13 Til *(Until)* we all come in *(to)* the unity of the faith *(the family faith)*, and of the knowledge *(full, experiential knowledge)* of the Son of God, unto a perfect *(mature)* man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

These ministries will be around until the Return of Christ. Only then will we gain a full, experiential knowledge of our Lord and Savior, when the Body of Christ of which we are a part will be fully mature.

In Ephesians 1:1, Paul mentions that he is an apostle (and today he is often referred to as “The Apostle Paul”). But Paul also had at least two other ministries:

I Timothy

2:7 Whereunto I became ordained a preacher *(evangelist)* and an apostle (I speak the truth, and lie not), a teacher of the Gentiles in believing and truth.

Even though Paul was also an evangelist and a teacher, in the opening verse of Ephesians he only mentions that he is an apostle. The word “apostle” is from *apostolos*, meaning “messenger.” An apostle is one who brings new light to his generation, and the doctrine set forth in Ephesians certainly qualifies as new light.

Paul also refers to himself as an apostle in his opening statements in several of the other epistles he wrote: Romans (in which he also refers to himself as a servant *(doulos)* of Jesus Christ), I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Colossians, I and II Timothy, and Titus.

In Philippians, an epistle of reproof, he just refers to himself as a servant (*doulos*), while in Philemon he is a prisoner of Jesus Christ. In I and II Thessalonians, Paul gives himself no title (there will be no titles at the Return, which these two epistles deal with).

It's interesting to note that while the word "apostle" is used 9 times in the Gospels, it is used 69 times in the Book of Acts and in the Epistles, emphasizing the new light that comes with this Grace Administration.

Ephesians

1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.

In this first verse of Ephesians Paul calls himself an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. While some manuscripts read "an apostle of Christ Jesus", emphasizing the vertical relationship of Paul to the anointed one, the use of "an apostle of Jesus Christ" emphasizes the horizontal relationship from man to man, with the ministry in operation as a service to others in the Body, and this is probably the more accurate reading for this verse.

Paul was an apostle "by the will of God". "The will of God" is a Figure of Speech, in which instead of just saying "by God's will" the genitive is used to emphasize God: "by the will of God". God, not man, is the one who decides who has ministries.

The word "will" here is *thelema*, passionate desire. God through His own passionate desire chose Paul to carry out the ministry of an apostle, bringing the new light of the doctrine contained in this epistle.

Verse 1 continues: "...to the saints which are at Ephesus..."

A saint is anyone who is born again (that's us). The Greek word *hagios* means "holy one" or "separated one". A saint has the gift of holy spirit: in other words, as a saint you have "Christ in you". This is your standing as a son of God. I John 3:2 says "Beloved, now are we the sons of God". You are a member of the Family of God, with God as your heavenly Father and Christ Jesus as your "big brother".

"Christ in you" is salvation, which you received when you confessed Jesus as Lord and believed that God raised him from the dead, as it says in Romans 10:9.

We know that Colossians 1:27 makes the bold statement regarding the Great Mystery that it is "Christ in you, the hope of glory", but the truth of "Christ in" was actually known years before Paul wrote the epistle to the Colossians in roughly 62 A.D. while he was a prisoner in Rome. Consider a couple of pertinent scriptures:

II Corinthians (written about 5 years before Paul wrote Colossians)

13:5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobate?

Galatians (also written about 5 years before Colossians)

2:20 I was crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Returning to the first verse of Ephesians:

Ephesians

1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.

Verse 1 says this epistle is addressed to “the saints (born-again believers) which are at Ephesus”. The words “at Ephesus” are not found in some of the oldest manuscripts, and writings of early Christians from 230 and 350 A.D. do not include these words when quoting this verse. Also, unlike Paul’s other epistles, Ephesians does not contain references to specific believers at the location that the epistles were sent to, like for example in Romans Chapter 16 where it says to salute people such as Priscilla and Aquila, Epaenetus, Mary, and Andronicus, among others.

We know that Paul’s epistles that were addressed to specific groups, like Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians were read at those locations first and then circulated around so other believers in other locations could benefit too, but the epistle to the Ephesians seems to be unique in that the addressee was apparently left blank in the original. It is possible that copies of this great doctrine expounding on the greatness of the Mystery were sent out to several localities rather than waiting for one group of people to read it first. The blank space could be filled in with the location to which a particular copy was sent, such as “Ephesus”.

Consider Colossians Chapter 4, verse 16:

Colossians

4:16 And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the Church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.

Where is “Paul’s epistle to the Laodiceans”? E. W. Bullinger pointed out that it would be unthinkable that one of Paul’s epistles could have been lost, and we also know that with seven Church Epistles we have a spiritually perfect number (7) for the “all truth” available to us in this administration. It has been suggested that this “Epistle from Laodicea” was this same epistle that was also sent (as a different copy) to the saints at Ephesus.

Laodicea, Colossae, and Ephesus were all located in the southwestern part of Asia Minor (present-day Turkey), with Laodicea a bit less than 100 miles east of Ephesus, and Colossae a little more than 50 miles east of Laodicea. Copies of this one epistle could have easily been delivered to both Ephesus and Laodicea, then shared with the believers at Colossae.

It's true that Paul's other epistles, even though originally sent to one specific group of people, apply to everyone in the Body of Christ, including us, but it's even more exciting to know that in this one epistle called "Ephesians", with the addressee left blank, we can directly put our own names in this space: this greatest revelation to the Church is addressed most directly, and personally, to us today!

Now it's time to consider the last part of verse 1 of Ephesians Chapter 1: ...and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.

To be faithful in Christ Jesus, you must first be a saint, a member of the family of God, as has already been mentioned in this verse.

If you aren't born again; if you don't have "Christ in you", you cannot be in Christ Jesus, and you definitely then cannot be "faithful in Christ Jesus".

First, what does it mean to be "in Christ Jesus"?

Notice that it says "in Christ Jesus" and not "in Jesus Christ". "Jesus Christ" refers to the humiliated one, the man who was crucified, whom God raised from the dead. We are not in the humiliated one. "Christ Jesus" refers to Jesus the anointed one, the victorious one, now seated at the right hand of God.

When we are "in Christ Jesus" we are in fellowship with God. Fellowship, from the Greek word *koinonia*, is a full sharing, and it works in both directions. The epistle of I John contains great truths about having fellowship not only with God our Father but also with other believers. We won't take the time to turn to that epistle, but let's look at a couple other verses that tell us about some of the benefits of being "in Christ":

II Corinthians

1:21 Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God.

God establishes us in Christ.

II Corinthians

2:14 Now thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

When we are in fellowship, we triumph, and people notice and the Word moves.

Galatians 2:4a

And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus...

When we are in fellowship, we have liberty.

(back to Ephesians 1:1)

So, this epistle of Ephesians is written to the saints, the born-again believers, members of the Family of God, who are in Christ, in fellowship with God.

But it goes much further than that:

Verse 1 says this epistle is to the faithful in Christ Jesus.

It's one thing to be simply "in Christ Jesus", in fellowship: it's another thing to be faithful in Christ Jesus. The word "faithful" is the Greek word *pistos*, which is used 67 times. It is translated "faithful" 54 times, but all the other times, when it is translated by words such as "sure", "believing", and "believeth", use of the word "faithful" would be at least as accurate.

A dictionary might define "faithful" as "steady in allegiance or affection; loyal; constant", or "strict or thorough in the performance of duty".

When we are faithful in Christ Jesus, we stay in fellowship, not only in fellowship with God, but also in fellowship with other members of the Body of Christ. As we stand together in fellowship with God and with other believers, we are what God's Word calls "in the Lord".

So, this epistle is written not only to the saints (those with "Christ in"), and not only to those in fellowship ("in Christ"), but it is written to those who are standing together with other members of the Body.

The phrase "in the Lord" does occur in the salutation for Paul's epistles to the Thessalonians, but Ephesians is the epistle that so greatly expounds on what it is to be "in the Lord", faithful in Christ Jesus as we stand together.

It is only in the Lord, standing together in the Body with Christ as the head, that we can have unity. This is the only way that we can "keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace" as it says in Ephesians 4:3.

Take a look at I Corinthians:

I Corinthians

7:22 For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant (*doulos*), is the Lord's freeman: likewise, he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant (to men – *in text*)

As we stand together in the Body of Christ, we are free.

I Corinthians

15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

As we remain steadfast and unmovable, abounding in the work of the Lord by operating the manifestations of holy spirit and walking with our minds renewed, our labor is not wasted, and we see fruit produced.

Ephesians

5:8 For ye were sometimes (*once*) darkness; but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.

I John 5:1 says that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. As we walk in the Lord, we are light.

To tie all this together, we'll close with Ephesians Chapter 2, starting in verse 19:

Ephesians

2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God:

2:20 and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ (*Christ Jesus in the text*) himself being the chief corner stone;

2:21 in whom (*in Christ Jesus*) all the building fitly framed (*harmoniously fitted*) together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

2:22 In whom (*in the Lord, standing together in the Body with Christ as the head*) ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the spirit.

Our examination of the first verse of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians showed us to whom this great pinnacle of the all truth is addressed: to those who are in the Lord, standing faithful with other members of the Body of Christ (that's us!). As we work through this epistle, we'll uncover many great doctrinal truths and practical applications that we can apply in our walk.

- Dr. Rick Batt