

## Introduction To Ephesians

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: <sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

**A young boy happened upon an old man who was fishing in the mighty Mississippi River.** Immediately the youngster began to bombard the aged fisherman with a myriad of questions as only young boys can do. **With the patience of the ages, the old man answered each question.** **Suddenly the shrill whistle of the majestic River Queen paddling relentlessly down river interrupted their conversation.** The sight of the ship gleaming and splashing spray in the sunlight caused the surprised spectators to stare in awe and appreciation. **Then above the noise of the paddle wheel was heard a small boy's voice calling across the water; "Let me ride! Let me ride!"** **The old man turned to the boy and tried to calm him down explaining that the River Queen was too important a ship to stop and give rides to little boys.** The young child cried all the more, "Let me ride!" Old eyes bulged in disbelief as that great ship pulled for shore and a gangplank was lowered. **In a flash two young feet scampered up and onto the deck.** The ship with its new cargo safely on board began to pull back into the main stream. **The old man continued to stare after the ship.** **Then a shock of yellow hair appeared above the rail.** It was quickly followed by two blue eyes, button nose, and cherub lips, "Mister, I knew this ship would stop for me. The captain is my father!"

**Do you really know who you are in Christ? How do you see yourself as a Christian?** Do you see yourself as **powerful?** **Or do you see yourself as powerless?** Do you understand of **what it means to be a child of God?** Do see yourself in **rags** or in **riches?**

As begin our study of this epistle, we will soon realize that God uses Paul to answer these questions, and many others, as he discusses some of the great doctrines of the Church.

**For the historical background of the Ephesian letter, we must go to the book of Acts 19-20.** Paul preached at Ephesus longer than he did at any other city or community, as seen in Acts 20:31, "Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears." As a result of Paul's ministry in Ephesus, there was a ***tremendous spiritual awakening***, as seen in Acts 19:18-20, "And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed."

**But, when revival breaks out among God's people, you can be sure that Satan and his crowd is not going to just sit by and let it happen without putting up a fight!** We are told in Acts 19:23-28, "And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but also throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods that are made with hands. So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship. Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

**Let me remind you that Satan has not changed from the early church until today, for if you want problems in your area, just start taking your stand for the cause of Christ, starting smiling and enjoying**

life, and start turning negative conversations into something positive.  
And I promise you; you will start no small stir among the brethren.  
John 3:19 tells us that when Jesus is lifted up as the Light of the world, He reveals the dirtiness of sin and of sinful ways, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." We can also see evidence of this truth in the Old Testament, when Elijah was going about doing God's will and work, as seen in 1 Kings 18:17, "And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he who troubleth Israel?" Notice also in Acts 4:1-4, "Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand." You will notice here the people that Peter and John were upsetting were the regelionest of that day and time. But also notice what happened to Stephen in Acts 7:52-54, "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them who showed before the coming of the Just One, of whom you have been now the betrayers and murderers; who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it."

The reason for this kind of reaction is found in 1 John 3:11-13, "For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and killed his brother. And why killed he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." The presence of righteousness always reveals the awfulness of sin! The presence of a Spirit-filled Christian always reveals the reality of lukewarmness.

The result of the uproar of Satan's crowd is seen in Acts 20:1, "And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed to go into Macedonia." Souls had been

**saved!** A city had been revived! Churches had been started! **But as a result of Paul's preaching, he had to leave for another place.** One of the saddest commentaries on any church, is for the people to allow their pastor to be "run-off" because he would not compromise with the devil's crowd!

**So, there we have the background for this epistle.** Look with me at Paul's opening remarks to the Ephesians in verses 1-2, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God, our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

The writer of this Epistle identifies himself as "Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ." **The apostle Paul was a very special man in the plan of God.** He was trained in the Jerusalem school of Gamaliel. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, and a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin. **The conversion of Saul of Tarsus marked the beginning of one of the greatest individuals who ever lived.** But his greatness is explained in his own words as recorded in the introduction of Romans, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ." The thing that made Paul great is the same thing that will make you and I great - our willingness to become "servant(s) of Jesus Christ."

You will notice that Paul places his apostleship "by the will of God." Paul was "an apostle" - not by man, nor by his own desires, but "by the will of God." There is no doubt that Paul was keenly aware that God had given him a special and unique message to be proclaimed, as seen in Romans 1:1, as he assures the believers in Rome that he was "called to be an apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God." And also in Galatians 1:11-12 as he testifies, "...I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after men. For I neither received it of men, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." And in 1 Thessalonians 1:5 he speaks of the Gospel, which "came not to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, in much assurance." When speaking of himself, and of his own divinely appointed ministry,

he testifies in 1 Corinthians 9:16, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel." This is the reason that Paul could preach Jesus with such fervor and courage - his commission had been handed down from God above.

We have many ministers today that simply see the ministry as an occupation, just another means of making a living, but, oh how we need Godly men that feel the call of God on their lives to service. How we need to realize that our place, our message, our work, and our assignment comes from heaven. And often tell young men and women who talk to me about going into the ministry, "If you can do anything else, do not surrender to the ministry." Because "surrender" is exactly what you have to do to be effective in the ministry. There is no greater "calling" on the face of the earth, but to be obedient to that calling, there must be a total surrender. You have to be willing to go, willing to follow, willing to change, and willing to say "Yes," and walk by faith, when your family and circumstances sometimes say "No." I am convinced that when we realize that great revelation, then we too can say with the man of God, as recorded in Acts 4:19-20, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to harken unto you more than unto God, judge you. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

Paul is writing "to the saints...in Christ Jesus...which are at Ephesus." This is the "environment" of the Christian life. "Environment" means "to circle around," and we are encircled by three things. First, we are "in Christ." Our Christian life is lived "in Christ." Second, our life is lived in the fellowship of the "saints." Third, our life is lived "in Ephesus," that is, in the world around us. That is our inescapable lot. We are not "saints in heaven;" we are "saints in Ephesus." We are in this world with all of its evils, trials, challenges, paganism, and humanism. Our life is lived in those three categories; namely, in Christ, in the fellowship of the saints, and in this present world.

**Remember, every born again, blood-washed, child of God is a "saint."** The word "saint" actually means "to have been set apart or to be made holy." The word "saint" refers to the believer's standing "in Christ," as seen in 1 Corinthians 1:2, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." All believers are "saints," because all believers are "in Christ."

One of Paul's favorite expressions was the words "in Christ," and he uses it 164 times in his writings: "in Christ for forgiveness;" "in Christ for salvation;" "in Christ for assurance;" "in Christ for holiness;" "in Christ for direction;" "in Christ for service;" and "in Christ forever."

For example, look at the wonderful verse in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." If a man is "in Christ" there is a new love, there is a new vision, a new dream, a new life, a new hope, and a new dedication.

**It is a rather simple, but often overlooked, truth.** We are "saints" "in Christ," but we live in the world. But never fear, for because we are "in Christ" we have victory over the world.

Look at the Words "Grace be to you and peace..." **This is not the peace with God that is deposited in the heart of every believer that was provided for us by the blood of Calvary's cross.** In other words, every child of God, because of his or her faith in Christ, should know what it is to have peace with God, as seen in Romans 5:1, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." **But this is the peace of God, filling our hearts as we go through our every day living.** The peace of God settles on our heart because of our faith in the promises from the Word of God.

**Let me try to illustrate what I am saying?** In Matthew 8:18 Jesus said to His disciples in the ship, "Let us go over to the other side." Where were they going? To the "other side." **When they got into the boat, He**

went to sleep in perfect peace, and in the middle of the night the elements raged. The disciples were terrified and they awoke Jesus and said, "Master, don't You care that we are about to die?" Jesus, wakened from His sleep, looked at them, and said, "O you of little faith." **Little faith!** With the thunder roaring, the lightning flashing, the wind blowing a gale, and the sea raging, why, you surely could not blame them for being afraid. But you see, Jesus did not say to them, "Let us go out into the middle of the lake and die." He said, "Let us go over to the other side..." And they should have rested on His Word. If they had, they would have had the same "peace" that He experienced.

Child of God, do you want the "peace" of God to carry you through this life? If so, then trust Jesus and stand on His Word.