Introduction

Welcome to an in-depth analysis of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. If you have studied our *Romans 1-8* series, you will find those truths mesh perfectly with Paul's words to the church at Ephesus. Thus, Paul's epistle to the Romans is the perfect backdrop for what he records here. I perceive *Romans 1-8* as a delicious cheeseburger—Ephesians as a T-bone steak. Much "chewing" is required to digest the grandeur of this epistle, so enjoy every tasty morsel!

Paul wrote this epistle between 60 and 62 A.D. during his first imprisonment in Rome (Ephesians 3:1). Some theologians perceive Ephesians as a letter read by multiple churches in Asia Minor. More than likely Paul wrote it to believers in the region of Ephesus, where he spent at least three years (Acts 20:31), two of which he taught at the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9-10). However, the phrase, *"at Ephesus"* (Ephesians 1:1), is not included in some of the most ancient manuscripts. Paul dictated this letter to Tychicus who delivered it from Rome (Ephesians 6:21-22).

Since Paul had spent considerable time with the recipients of this letter, he could go into greater depth with his readers. Consequently, this letter is filled with the "deeper things of Christ." In fact, chapters 1-3 are inundated with these "deeper things" while chapters 4-6 teach practical ways to "live out" these wonderful truths. Expect to be encouraged as we begin our journey. It should be much fun.

Note: Words and phrases are sometimes underlined in verses for emphasis. Words are also inserted within brackets in particular passages for clarity.

Ephesians 1

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

Paul not only addresses his apostolic authority, but also the fact that these believers are saints and faithful. We will break down this verse, as well as all of the verses in this epistle, and deal with them phrase-by-phrase.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, (1:1a)

Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13). The apostles were messengers of God sent by *"Jesus Christ, and God the Father"* (Galatians 1:1) to lay the foundation of the gospel of Christ. Their teaching was the final authority in the early church (they had *"seen"* Christ—1Corinthians 9:1) and was confirmed by signs and wonders and miracles (2Corinthians 12:12). Hence, when the believers at Ephesus received this letter, they likely took every word to be absolute truth. Because Paul met Christ after the resurrection (Acts 9:1-30), he was *"untimely born"* (1Corinthians 15:8). He, however, was not inferior to even *"the most eminent apostles"* (2Corinthians 12:11-12).

by the will of God, (1:1b)

God's *"will,"* not Paul's, determined that Paul would become an apostle. Thus, sitting under Gamaliel (Acts 5:34; Acts 22:3), a great teacher of the Law, failed to qualify him. His overwhelming apostolic authority came from receiving his gospel through a revelation of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11-17). He actually saw Christ (Acts 9:1-9), a prerequisite for the original twelve (1Corinthians 9:1).

to the saints who are at Ephesus, (1:1c)

Paul wrote this epistle to *"the saints"* (holy ones) at Ephesus, believers with whom he had spent much time during his missionary journeys. As we discussed earlier, he taught at Ephesus for a prolonged season while on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:1-10). Therefore, Paul's readers would have likely understood exactly what he meant by *"saints"* (or holy ones). Also, Paul writes in several other epistles that all New Testament believers are saints (Romans 1:7, Romans 8:27, 1Corinthians 14:33, 2Corinthians 13:13, Ephesians 1:18, and Philippians 1:1). He taught that God makes New Testament believers holy and blameless at the point of salvation/justification (Romans 3:20; Romans 5:1; 1Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 3:24; Ephesians 2:8-9; Ephesians 1:4; Titus 3:5). Because this truth was the foundation of Paul's gospel, these readers would have understood his message. Note: A saint is <u>not</u> a person who lives void of sin. A saint is an individual who has, at the point of salvation, been made holy in his person (in his soul and spirit) but whose behavior is progressively increasing in holiness.

and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: (1:1d)

Paul also states that these *"saints"* were *"faithful in Christ Jesus."* This phrase can be viewed from a couple of perspectives.

The first perspective stems from the fact that these believers could not quit the race—quit being Christians. The God Who had begun a good work in them would see it to completion (Philippians 1:6). Hence, God is responsible for completing the believer's salvation—not the believer (Hebrews 7:25).

The second perspective is influenced by the environment surrounding these believers. Wuest, in his commentary on the book of Ephesians, writes:

> There were two kinds of saints (*hagios*) in Ephesus, those who were devotees of the pagan religions, and those who were devotees of Christianity. The Greek word was taken by Paul from the Greek mystery religions and transplanted into Christianity. It, therefore, needed careful definition. It was the saints who were believers in Christ Jesus to whom Paul was writing, not the 'saints' in the pagan religions. (Wuest, 1989, p. 20)[i]

This insight supports Paul's words, *"to the saints who are at Ephesus, and who are faithful in Christ Jesus,"* confirming that his readers were believers in Jesus Christ—not unbelievers who followed the pagan religions of Paul's day.

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

"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" is one of Paul's favorite statements. He also employs it in Romans 1:7, 1Corinthians 1:3, 2Corinthians 1:2, Galatians 1:3, Philippians 1:2, Colossians 1:2, 1Thessalonians 1:1, 2Thessalonians 1:2, 1Timothy 1:2, 2Timothy 1:2, Titus 1:4, and Philemon 1:3.

Grace to you and peace (1:2a)

In 2Corinthians 9:8, Paul states that *"God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed."* Abundant grace is available for every need in the believer's life. Peace, which results from accepting God's grace, is a *"fruit of the Spirit"* (Galatians 5:22).

Grace can be defined as "unmerited favor" as well as "the power to do God's will." Paul realized that accepting God's grace is a prerequisite for peace to inhabit the soul. Paul is not only dealing with saving grace here, he is also referencing the grace accessible to the believer as he faces life's challenges. When this grace is accepted, peace results and the believer is energized with God's authority and power. When it is rejected, turmoil and confusion are inevitable and the believer walks in defeat.

God's grace is sufficient for any situation the believer faces (2Corinthians 12:9). Paul urges Timothy to *"be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus"* (2Timothy 2:1), and the writer of Hebrews revealed that this grace is found by boldly approaching God's throne (Hebrews 4:16). Peter also states that grace is *"multiplied"* to the believer as his knowledge of God and Jesus Christ increases (2Peter 1:2), and that the believer is to *"grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"* (2Peter 3:18).

from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (1:2b)

This phrase confirms that God the Father and Jesus provide grace and peace. Because the Father and the Son are members of the same Godhead, Jesus is Deity just as the Father is Deity (Colossians 2:9). Thus, both grace and peace are *"from God our Father and the <u>Lord</u> Jesus Christ."* (The Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Godhead, also provides *"peace"* based on Galatians 5:22.)

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[i] Wuest, Kenneth S. (1989). *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament,* Page 20. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Grand Rapids, MI. www.eerdmans.com. Used by permission.