

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 1

INTRO: Paul normally uses a broad outline of all his epistles: Salutation/Greeting, Doctrine, Practical Result/Expectation of that Doctrine and the Salutation/Farewell.

Paul's habit is to magnify God and teach doctrinal truths before using his "therefore" conjunctions. "God is this and has done that, so therefore, you have every reason to do this and every encouragement to do that."

True, God-revealed doctrine is essential to true, God-honoring living. Just living a moral life without regard or relationship to the God of the universe is mere pharisaic piety and morality.

The Grand Theme: "The glorious destiny which belongs to the church in virtue of her union with Christ." - Geoffrey Wilson. "The Church Glorious." William Hendrickson. "The eternal purposes of divine mercy." - Albert Barnes. "Ephesians is an inspired exposition of God's purpose for the whole universe." - Curtis Vaughan. And the old Puritan Thomas Goodwin tells us that the main argument (theme) "is to lay open the doctrine of free grace, and of God's eternal love in, and redemption by Christ, and the blessings issuing therefrom, and the dependence that our salvation hath on both."

This is all a far cry from the prevailing religion in Ephesus - Diana worship. Make sacrifices, give offerings, pay the prostitutes, buy the shrines to take with you and put in your loved ones' graves. Pure superstition. Then there was the practice of magic arts mentioned in Acts 19:19. Rampant in the Roman world - and still part of our so called civilized world in the 21st century.

I. PAUL'S GREETING - vs. 1,2

A. Vs. 1a - Paul's credentials

1. "an apostle" - Gr. "*apostolos*" - lit. *from to send* - one sent forth, messenger, engaged to carry out a commission

- used of Jesus (Heb. 3:1), the twelve disciples (Luke 6:13), Paul (I Cor. 9:1), and in a lesser sense (Barnabas, Andronicus, Junias, Epaphroditus, etc.)

- Paul is claiming full apostleship (I Cor. 15:8-10) - Capital "A"

- What are the marks of full apostleship? - Eyewitness of Jesus Christ, able to perform miracles (and give that gift to others), commissioned to teach all nations, possessed an infallibility in preaching and writing (although still prone to err personally as Peter in Gal. 2:11), exercised God-commissioned authority in the churches.

- Warnings against taking undue titles: Mt. 23:6-9 - Gill relates that the Jews of old said that King Jehoshaphat addressed the teachers of his day by rising from his throne, embracing and

kissing them and calling them, “Father, Father, Rabbi, Rabbi, Master, Master.” Here Jesus uses these three titles to warn against worshiping, adoring, and receiving every word as Gospel truth from them. If I love being called “teacher” I need to reject its use. If others call me “teacher,” thinking I’m speaking the words of God Himself, I need to reject its use. If others call me “teacher” as one who has superior authority over them, then we all need to reject its use. Jesus is warning against false and idolatrous use of these names.

- So I can call Marc, “pastor,” knowing that he’s the servant of Christ, commissioned to shepherd his flock under the lordship of the Chief Shepherd, and knowing he isn’t flaunting that title by lording it over the flock put under his care.

- Many use these verses to castigate the Roman Catholics for their use of “father” when addressing their pastors. But the same rule applies: what are the motives on both sides? There is much biblical precedent and many examples of using “father” in a spiritual sense or a sense of respect, along with the word, “son.”

- Also see I Peter 5:1, where Peter doesn’t call himself an apostle, but a “fellow elder,” showing his love and humility. Gill - “he does not call himself the prince of the apostles and pastors, and the Vicar of Christ, as his pretended successor[s] [do], but a fellow elder.”

2. “of Jesus Christ” - sent by Christ Himself (Acts 9:13-16)
3. “by the will of God” - Let’s think on this for a moment: Acts 9:21,22 - Paul’s conversion was *more* than spectacular and amazing. It was divinely appointed, established and performed by God’s divine providential working - in spite of Saul’s plans, hatred and evil heart. It was God’s will, not his own. He needed a new heart first.

“No sins before, and I may add to it, nor yet after conversion, can hinder God’s free grace from using men in the highest employments in the Church, but magnify it the more.” Thomas Goodwin - Examples? David, Solomon (Ecclesiastes), Peter, and here, Paul.

- Note: not all accepted his claim. Galatians 1:1-2:14; I Cor. 9:1-5

- Are there Apostles today? No one meets the 1st century qualifications. Both Paul and Peter warned against false apostles. The Catholic church, Mormons and some Pentecostal churches are wrong in perpetuating apostolic authority unless they can meet all the criteria and qualifications for the office.

B. Vs. 1b - Paul’s addressees

1. “to the saints” - from the Gr. “*hagios*” - lit. *the separated* - those devoted, set apart for God, sanctified in calling and practice.
- Why don’t we continue to use this greeting in the church? We say

Saint Paul, Saint Peter, Saint Augustine, Saint Aquinas - why not Saint Vicky, Saint John, or Saint Sue? We hardly even use "brother" or "sister" anymore. Why? And what about being commanded to give each other a "holy kiss?"

2. "in Ephesus" - Only the heretic Marcion favored deleting the location of the receiving church. Only 2 manuscripts and 1 fragment delete it. The church fathers accept it, as does logic. Chapter 1:15 and 3:2 are mentioning those in the church who had newly come to faith since his departure, along with those in other churches who would also read the letter.
3. "and faithful in Christ Jesus" - Are these "faithful" on a different tier than the "saints?" No, all saints are faithful, all faithful are saints. This is not a mere head knowledge of the Christian faith. It is a heart belief in Jesus as Lord, Savior, and lover of our souls personally. It is a love relationship knowing He first loved us and has forgiven our sins and intercedes for us and will come again for us.
- "in Christ Jesus" - the truth that our union with Christ as Author and Finisher of our faith, the Head of the church, is the indispensable foundation for claiming to be a Christian. He is the foundation and source of every spiritual blessing.

C. Vs. 2 - "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." - What do you think of when you hear the words "grace," and "peace"? - Hendrickson, Grace: "God's spontaneous, unmerited favor in action, his freely bestowed lovingkindness in operation, bestowing salvation upon guilt-laden sinners." Peace: that state of joyful reconciliation between God and us when Christ's redemption is applied to us, ending the enmity between us.

1. "God our Father" - we could not call God Father before Grace. Note the relational truths of Christianity vs. other religions.
2. "and the Lord Jesus Christ" - noting deity. Only God can bring divine Grace and Peace. Colossians 1:20, "[Christ] made peace through the blood of the cross." - What are the world's sources for Grace and Peace?

II. OUR BLESSINGS IN CHRIST vs. 3-14

- A. Vs. 3 - "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."
 1. God's exaltation - Paul begins a 7-blessing doxology in a long, continuous sentence of praise. He's excited and amazed at God's grace. He starts his list by blessing God.

2. How can we “bless” God? Isn’t He the source of blessing toward us? How can we give Him anything that adds to His perfections?
3. “Eulogetos” and “Makarios” compared. “Eulogetos” used of God only. Definition: to be adored, lifted up, praised. “Makarios” is used of God and man. Definition: state of God-conferred benefits, both material but mostly spiritual, as in the Beatitudes. Doesn’t just mean “happy” as Rick Warren and many others insist. We are blessed of God whether we’re feeling happy or not.
4. “God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” – Why does Jesus, who is God Himself, call His Father His God? (Matthew 27:46; John 20:17) – Refers to Christ’s human nature, whereas sonship refers to his divine nature. The unfathomable mystery of the Trinity will be an eternal mystery to our Lilliputian minds.
5. “who has blessed us” – the Church, and ultimately individual believing, faithful saints. Not a future only blessing, but a past, present and eternal enjoyment of grace, mercy and sonship. And if God has blessed us, what does it matter who curses us? As fallen creatures we are prone to fear in just about every area of life. “If God is for us, who can be against us?” Romans 8:31.
6. “with every spiritual blessing” – not just a sprinkling, but a perpetual fountain of God’s love lavished upon those who have found mercy through Christ. Included with this list of blessings is God Himself. He blesses us with Himself as the chief prize. John Trapp, “. . . spiritual blessings are so knit together, that they all make up one blessing; and where God gives one, He gives all.” Can we list those blessings? [ON BOARD] Paul is going to list a number of them that we’ll look into next time. But without looking. Salvation from the penalty of sin: God’s wrath; now holy and blameless; knowing truth; personal relationship with God and Christ; fellowship; spiritual gifts; others.
7. “in the heavenly *places*” – see chapter 2:4-7 and Phil. 3:20. These blessings are “heavenly”, they come from heaven. They fit us for heaven. We are children of the Kingdom. This world is not our true and lasting home. We look for a city whose builder and maker is God. But there is a present tense sense and reality that God in Christ is ruling all things NOW. We share his Kingdom now. Why aren’t we more enthusiastic about experiencing Jesus as Lord in His Kingdom right now? In a war that seems to be overwhelming, discouraging, and endless.
8. “in Christ” – Christ is the cornerstone of our salvation, and Paul emphasizes and reemphasizes this 12 times in his letter. We have been translated from the kingdom of darkness to his heavenly kingdom, not because of anything in us that is meritorious or deserving; not because of our faith (which is a gift as well);

but because it was God's good pleasure to bless us IN CHRIST. We didn't give ourselves new hearts: He did. We didn't pay for our own sins (and couldn't): He did. We couldn't confer "every spiritual blessing" upon us: but He did. Salvation is all of grace, and all of Christ, and all IN Christ.

- B. Vs. 4, "Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love . . ."
 - 1. "Just as He chose us in Him" - We'll have to wait until next time to dive into the meat of these blessings.