

## EPHESIANS 1

The Roman Empire of the first century AD was a Mediterranean conglomerate of conquered and inherited lands after the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great had fallen. The great cities of Rome's Empire were sprinkled along its Mediterranean belt like so many jewels; the great cities of wealth, art and commerce included Rome itself, Greece's Corinth and Athens, Egypt's Alexandria and Asia's Antioch. But in Asia Minor – today, the modern day country of Turkey – no city was more famous or populous than Ephesus, one of Rome's foremost urban centers.

Ephesus was an ancient and revered city centuries before Jesus was even born. By the time of Paul's visit around 50 AD, the city was a large, well-populated commercial enterprise connecting the western Roman Empire to the

The apostle Paul had first visited Ephesus on his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey (49-52 AD.).

The residents of Asia first heard the Gospel from those returning from Pentecost 30 AD (Acts 2:8), some 15 years before, but their knowledge was limited...

Acts 19 records the first contact Paul had with the disciples in Ephesus, a mere dozen, who had a very limited understanding of the Gospel; they had not even heard there WAS a Holy Spirit and they were practicing the baptism of repentance John the Baptist had taught, rather than baptism based on the finished work of Christ.

Acts 19 also records the effectiveness of Paul's ministry as well as the setbacks . . . *“Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.”*

Paul prob. wrote this epistle to the Ephesians about 10 years after his first contact with them. Ephesus at that time was the most imp. city in Asia Minor (today, Turkey); no city in Asia was more famous, commercially successful or as populous as Ephesus. It had a large, well-protected harbor and set at the intersection of several major trade routes; it was a thriving commercial hub serving as gateway to the interior of Asia Minor. The city of Ephesus was thoroughly romanized and worshiped several Greco-Roman deities. The temple of Artemis (Romans called her Diana) was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The city also boasted several large gymnasiums, a stadium, a public theatre, shopping centers (*agora*), a lecture hall where philosophical debate could go on, Roman baths and an enormous amphitheater on the slopes of Mt. Pion which could seat 25,000 people!

Unlike many of Paul's other letters, Ephesians does not address any particular error or heresy. Rather, it is a letter which sought to expand the horizons of its readers, so that they might better understand the vastness of God's eternal purpose and grace and come to appreciate the high goals God has for the Church.

## II. TEXT

**v. 1** Paul had undergone a name change upon his conversion; anybody remember his previous name? (Saul – named after the first king of Israel; a proud name). “*Paulos*” means “little one...,” “runt.”

“**An apostle**” – had seen the risen Lord; called to that task by Him. Can I say, we are all “called.” There is no “highest calling,” except that which God has for you! “*Make your calling and election sure*” (2 Peter 1:10). It's a mistake to think of what you're doing as “second-best,” and “full-time ministry” as the best – wrong! Your calling? Construction worker, teacher, lawyer, judge, butcher, baker, banker, chef? Stay at home Mom – which is really a combination of ALL OF THE ABOVE!!! **JUST ASK!!!** And ask God to guide you



into it! Put your self in a place where God can move you. Don't be like a sailboat with the canvas STOWED, wondering why you're not moving very fast. A rudder only guides a moving ship!

**"By the will of God"** – our job is to submit our will to His; His plan for us is revealed one day at a time.

**"To the saints"** – (Greek: *hagios*) we all are! "I'm no saint," you say; in Christ you are! "The faithful" (f.n. says "or believer") – both the same root word in the Greek (*pistos*).

**v. 2** Paul often links "grace" with "peace" and always in this order. Once you've experienced grace, peace becomes possible.

**vv. 3-14 is the single longest sentence in the entire NT: 214 words! Run-on sentences allowed.**

**v. 3** Notice where the most important blessings are stored – **"in the heavenly realms;"** (not here). **"Every spiritual** (vs. material) **blessing in Christ."** Also notice the phrase **"in Christ"** – mentioned **12 x's** in vv. 3-12 (this phrase or one like it); refers to our position in Christ.

**vv. 4-14** Really emphasizes the sovereignty of God; it is not till we get to chs. 4-6 we see the emphasis shift to the responsibility of Man.

God's sovereignty is a COMFORT meant to give us rest, peace and a hope! Not something to scare or intimidate us – nor something that should cause spiritual laziness or apathy. Notice the extensive use of the personal pronouns used in reference to God in these verses: **"He...him...his."** The emphasis is on God and what He has done; He's the Initiator!

**v. 5 "Predestined us"** – Greek is from 2 words: *pro* (before) and *horidzo* (horizon); to predetermine, ordain or predestine are the usual translations. Literally, it means to see/know something before it appears on the horizon! See . . . .

1 Peter 1:1-2 *"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, 2 who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance."*

Greek: *pro*—before; *gnosko*—to know... What did God know beforehand? EVERYTHING!! Including who would say, "Yes" to the offer of eternal life! God's foreknowledge of your choices does NOT mean He forced you to make those choices!!! Just as Adam and Eve had a free will in the Garden of Eden, so does Man today. *"If any man thirst, let him come and drink of the water of life freely!"*

Last week we saw the Book of Revelation close out with an INVITATION from the glorified and risen Lord Jesus: **Rev. 22:17** *"The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.*

**"Come!"** (Greek is *erchomai*: present middle imperative). **"Come"** in Scripture is always an invitation that DEMANDS an RSVP! When you are "invited" to something, an answer is obligatory! YES or NO, the choice is yours! As are the eternal consequences of our choices...

- Isa. 1:18 **"Come** now, let us reason together," says the LORD. *"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."*
- Isa. 55:1 **"Come**, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost'."
- Mt. 11:28 **"Come** to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. '"
- Mark 10:14 *"Jesus . . . said to them, 'Let the little children **come** to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these'."*
- John 1:39 *"Jesus...asked [the disciples following Him], "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi", "where are you staying?" **"Come,**" he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour."*



Cf. Rev. 3:5 “*He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.*” Suggests every person’s name is written in the Book of Life; “*God is not willing any should perish...*” (2 Peter 3:9). Hell was never created to house one single human soul; it was created for Satan and his [fallen] angels (Mt. 25:41 “*Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels’*”). You’ve heard the expression, “Over my dead body” – like it will never happen; the only way anyone can go to Hell, is over the dead body of God’s Only Son!

**vv. 15-18** Paul starts using “you” and “your” a lot more; this is our responsibility; God has done His part . . . are we doing ours? Are we responding to His initiative? Paul had spent about 3 years with the Ephesians (Acts 19:10).

**v. 15** (Gal. 5:6) “*The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.*”

**v. 16** Thanksgiving should make up a good portion of your prayers!

**v. 17 “Wisdom and revelation”** – revelation is God’s revealing Himself to you (through His Word, prayer, praise & worship; spiritual gifts in others); wisdom to know HOW to put into practice the revelation you receive. The FIRST thing God wants to do is REVEAL Himself to us! Then . . .

**v. 18 “The eyes of your hearts”** – your mind or understanding or inner awareness. This is where Paul Baloché’s song came from, “Open the Eyes of My Heart.” What does God want YOU to know/understand?

- “*The hope to which He has called*” (the objective certainty of your eternal future);
- “*The riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints*” (v. 18b) and;
- “*HIS incomparably great power for us who believe*” (v. 19). This same amazing power is working in, on and thru believers today! Power to serve, endure, to conquer your flesh and Satan, to do His will; the power to live victoriously, joyfully, despite life’s circumstances! Resurrection power!!! (v. 20).

**vv. 19-23** Back to the emphasis on God and Christ intermingled with the sovereignty of God is the responsibility of Man.

**v. 21** Over all supernatural powers, princes, kingdoms, and principalities, on, under, over and above earth!

**III. SUMMARY / APPLICATION / RESPONSE** – Ch. 1 is all about WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST AND WHAT WE HAVE (now and in the future) IN HIM! The first 14 vv. of ch. 1 remind us:

- (1) GOD IS SOVEREIGN, (“God rules!” Makes me glad, at peace and rest in Him) and;
- (2) WE ARE IN UNION WITH HIM

**A. The Spiritual Blessings We Have in Christ:**

- First of all note their LOCATION: “in the *heavenly* realms;” (v. 3)
- Second of all note what KIND of blessings we possess: “every *spiritual* blessing;” NOT MATERIAL!
- Thirdly, notice, God chose us (v. 4), redeemed us and is revealing His will to us; and in His time, He will bring all things together under One Head, Jesus Christ!
- Fourthly, we are marked in Him with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians initially clung to John’s baptism and didn’t even know there WAS a Holy Spirit – cf. Acts 19:2). All believers have the Holy Spirit today! Though not all are Spirit-FILLED and/or controlled...

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**B. Another purpose in Paul’s writing is “That we might know Him better” (v. 17) – how? Same as the Church in Acts 2:42ff “*devoting themselves to communion, prayer, fellowship and the Apostle’s teaching.*” God wants you to know Him better, more . . . like He knows YOU!**

C. That we might know, experience and live out His incomparably great power (v. 19); resurrection power!

- **Eph. 6:12f** *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.  
13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand....”*
  - **Romans 8:35-38** *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?  
36 As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”  
37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.  
38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,  
39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*
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