

Study Notes: Ephesians 1:1-2
August 7, 2022: “Don’t Overlook the Greeting”
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Background: The book of Ephesians was a letter written by Paul to the church at Ephesus, sometime around 60 AD. At this time in his life, Paul had been arrested and was living under house arrest in Rome. Paul had spent a great deal of time in Ephesus (see Acts 18:23-19:41) and had come to know and love the people there. The letter was split into two main sections, with the first three chapters focusing on the hope of the Gospel, and the second three chapters explaining how the Gospel should impact our lives as individuals and our place in the body of Christ.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

- In first-century letters, it was common practice for the author to list his name first, then the name of the recipient (or recipients), and finally a greeting of blessing or encouragement.
- Paul identified himself as “an apostle of Christ Jesus.” In the majority of his letters, Paul used this title for himself.
- Paul’s call to apostleship happened on the road to Damascus, and was described in detail in Acts 9. Along with calling himself an apostle, Paul also noted that this was by or because of the will of God.
 - The Pillar New Testament explains the implications of how Paul identified himself, “To speak of himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus not only signifies that he belongs to Christ, but also that he is a messenger who is fully authorized and sent by him. As an apostle, he has the authority to proclaim the gospel in both oral and written form, as well as to establish and build up churches. He has been called to this ministry ‘through the will of God’, an expression that appears four times in the space of a few verses (vv. 1, 5, 9, 11), and has particularly to do with God’s saving plan or some aspect of it. Paul’s calling to be an apostle to the Gentiles fits within that gracious divine plan (cf. 3:1–13). He had not appointed himself to this position; God chose him. Hence the words by the will of God have overtones of God’s unmerited grace, and emphasize that there was no personal merit on Paul’s part either in becoming an apostle or continuing as one.”
- In the rest of Ephesians chapter 1, Paul discussed in more detail how the will of God is involved in every Christian’s call to salvation and ministry.

To God’s holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:

- The Faithlife Study Bible explains that Ephesus was “a harbor city located in southwest Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey); capital of the Roman province of Asia.” We also know from the book of Acts that Ephesus was the location of a large temple and business devoted to the Greek god, Artemis (see Acts 19:21-34).
- Paul wrote specifically to people who were identified using the Greek word *hagios*, which is translated as “God’s holy people” or “saints.” The Faithlife Study Bible explains that this “refers to those who are set apart or who belong to God, not to the moral quality of being without sin.”

- What makes these people God’s people is their faith in Christ Jesus. The phrase “in Christ Jesus” is a key phrase in chapter one of Ephesians. Paul used the phrase several more times, and each time it is a reminder that Christ Jesus is the foundation of our faith and the source of all our spiritual blessings.
 - The Tyndale New Testament Commentary explains, “The phrase, so frequently used by Paul, especially in this letter, sums up very much of his understanding of the gospel. It, or an equivalent, is used eleven times in verses 1–14 alone. Christians not only have faith in him; their life is in him. As the root in the soil, the branch in the vine (cf. John 15:1ff.), the fish in the sea, the bird in the air, so the place of the Christian’s life is in Christ.”

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- The blessing of Paul for followers of Jesus at Ephesus was for God to bless them with grace and peace. While this was a standard greeting, it also serves as a reminder of our daily need for the grace and peace that comes only from God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ. Even though the recipients of this letter were called “holy people” or “saints” who were “faithful,” they still needed the grace of God constantly operating in their lives!
- The Faithlife Study Bible adds, “Paul’s typical greeting throughout his letters (compare Rom 1:7; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2). It summarizes his gospel message: God’s work through Christ (grace) brings people into a harmonious relationship with God and one another (peace).”
- The Pillar New Testament Commentary further states, “Paul’s readers have already experienced, in some measure, God’s grace and peace in the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle recognizes this, and in his salutation he expresses his desire that these twin blessings may be understood and experienced in greater measure, especially through the letter itself, for these two major themes are taken up again and again throughout Ephesians.”